

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF THE GRADE VIII STUDENTS THROUGH DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY (DRTA) STRATEGY

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to find out whether Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy could improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu or not. This research applied pre-experimental research design. Therefore, there was only one class which given pre-test and post-test. The sample was selected by using purposive sampling technique. The data were collected by using two kinds of instruments: observation and test. The data of observation was analyzed descriptively. The result of observation indicated that the students were not active and difficult to comprehend the material during teaching and learning process. Whereas, the data were analyzed by using statistical analysis. The result of the data analysis indicated that there was a significant difference of the students' achievement both in pre-test and post-test. It showed that the mean score of pre-test was 64.66 and the mean score of post-test 73.65. The t_{counted} (9.64) was higher than t_{table} (1.706) by applying 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) was 27 (27-1) 26. It means that the hypothesis is accepted. In other words the use of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy can improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu.

Keywords: Improving, Reading Comprehension, and Directed Reading Thinking Activity, Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important skills in language learning besides listening, speaking, and writing. In reading skill, the students are expected to be knowledgeable and familiar with what the teacher has explained in the context. It means that the students are expected to have more skills to explain the content of the text or passage after they comprehend the reading text. That is why the purpose of reading is to get some information from the text.

Reading is not an easy activity to do because it requires various skills, and components eyes movement, and brain work. It means that in reading, not only can the

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students pronounce the words and know their meaning but also they can understand what is the message that the writer puts into the text. According to Smith (1995:23) “Reading is an interactive process in which the reader’s prior knowledge of the world interacts with the message convey directly or indirectly by the text”.

Reading is an activity of understanding meaning. Without understanding the meaning of the text, reading is nonsense because you will lose the important messages that you will get by reading. This statement is relevant to what Tarigan in Harras and Sulistianingsih (1997:11) states, “Reading is a process done and used by a reader to get message sent through written media”. It means that through reading someone will get information or message needed. The standard competence gives the teachers guidelines in designing teaching material as good as possible. It means that by comprehending those reading texts the students enable to embark the knowledge from the text. Therefore, the students can comprehend the text well.

Reading comprehension is a process of reading to understand the meaning of the text. Reading comprehension is not only reading with a loudly voice but also establishing to understand the meaning of the word, sentences, and paragraph sense relationship among the ideas (Hornby, 1998). If the students only read and cannot understand the content of the text, it means that they fail in reading comprehension. Furthermore, Smith and Johnson (1978:56) states, “Reading comprehension means the understanding, evaluating, utilizing of the information and gained through an interaction between reader and author.” This statement implies that reading comprehension is such a kind of language between an author and a reader in which the written language becomes the medium of the dialogue that happens when the people communicated through the written material.

Based on the researcher’s preliminary observation at the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu, when students were studying English, the researcher found some problems. First, they found difficulties in finding main idea of the text. Second, the students have lack vocabulary. Third, they found complexity in getting information of the text. Fourth, they only answered the questions given but never had good comprehension of message in the text. As the result, the students difficulties to answer the questions and to retell the information from the text.

Considering the importance of reading, there are many kinds of reading techniques that can be used to improve reading comprehension. One way to help the students’ problems in comprehending reading text is using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy. According to Opitz and Lindung (2009:148) “DRTA is a strategy that boosts reading comprehension by making transparent how proficient readers make and confirm predictions

while they read". It means that in teaching reading by use DRTA strategy, ask students to make and confirm predictions while they read. This way, will make students be understand about the text that they read. And also can boosts students reading comprehension.

Stauffer (1969) describes the concept of DRTA strategy:

DRTA encourage students to make prediction while they are reading. After reading segments of a text, students stop, confirm or revise previous predictions, and make new predictions about what they will read next. DRTA draws on empirical research, which demonstrates the effectiveness of predicting, clarifying, monitoring, and evaluating strategies, and so it has indirect but powerful support for its instructional activities reading.

DRTA is a strategy that encourages students to use their minds while reading a text. It guides students to ask questions based on what they read, make predictions on the story line and read further to confirm if their predictions were right. This process helps develop them into thoughtful learners, making their active to comprehend more from the text. By applying DRTA strategy, the students can share each other about the difficulties in understanding the text. Having better comprehension and understanding of the text is very important for the students because they can answer the questions correctly and understand what the text tells about.

Likewise (1998) state that the DRTA helps students become aware of the reading strategies, understand the reading process, and develop prediction skills. They add that this strategy stimulates students' thinking and makes them listens other opinionsand modifies their own in light of additional information.

Based on the students' problem and the way to solve it, the researcher formulates her problems statements as: *"Can the use of DRTA strategy improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu?"* The objective of this research is to find out whether the use of DRTA strategycan improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher applied pre-experimental research design. It means that there was only one class as the sample of the research. By using this design, the researcher

administered pre-test before giving treatment and post-test after treatment. The design of this research was taken from Creswell (2009:160) as follows:

O1 X O2

Where:

O1 : pre-test
 X : treatment
 O2 : post-test

The total number of the students was 52. The researcher used purposive sampling technique. The sample of this research was eighth grade. Referring to the title of the research, the researcher used two variables presented. They were dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable was *the students reading comprehension* and the independent variable was *DRTA strategy*.

The researcher used two kinds of research instruments to collect the data, they were observation and tests. She used the observation to get information about how the teaching-learning process was taking place in the classroom. Then, the test was used to examine the students' reading comprehension before and after treatment.

Before conducting the treatment, the researcher administered a pre-test to know the prior knowledge of the students in reading comprehension. In the pre-test, there was one reading text only for the test containing 15 questions which were divided into two parts. The first ten items were in the form of essay test, and the second five items were true-false statement. For essay test the score of each number was 3 points. Then, true-false statement was 1 score for each number.

To make obvious, the researcher drew the scoring system as seen in the table below:

Table 1:
The scoring system of the test

No	Kind of test	Number of items	Score of each correct item	Maximum score
1	Essay Test	10	3	30
2	True-False statement	5	1	5
	Total	15		35

After conducting the pre-test, the researcher gave the treatment. The students of experimental group learned how to understand the reading comprehension well through DRTA strategy. The treatment was conducted for eight meetings. Then, after conducting the treatment, the researcher gave the students' post-test to evaluate the students' improvement in reading comprehension. The post-test consisted of the same test in the pre-test.

In order to assess the progress of the students' reading comprehension after the treatment, the researcher gave post-test at the last meeting. The post-test was designed in the same form as the pre-test. The purpose of doing the post-test was to clarify and to explain whether the treatment was efficient or not by looking at the difference between pre-test or post-test.

Next, the researcher computed the individual score to analyze the gained data by using formula recommended. The researcher analyzed the data by using statistical analysis. It was used to analyze the test instruments which were pre-test and post-test.

The result of the score of the test was analyzed statistically. First the researcher computed the individual score of students. In scoring system the researcher used the formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:308) as follow:

$$\sum = \frac{x}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

\sum = standard score

x = obtained score

n = maximum score

100 = constant number

To compute the students' mean scores, the researcher applied a formula as stated by Arikunto (2002:78) as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = the mean of the score

$\sum x$ = the sum of the score

N = the number of the students

Furthermore, the researcher computed the mean deviation by using formula proposed by Arikunto (2002:276) as the following:

$$Md = \frac{\sum d}{N}$$

Where:

Md = the mean deviation of pre-test and post-test

$\sum d$ = deviation of pre-test and post-test

N = the number of the students

After that, the researcher also computed the square deviation by using formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:308) as follows:

$$\sum x^2 d = \sum d^2 - \frac{(\sum d)^2}{N}$$

Where:

$\sum x^2 d$ = the sum of deviation squared in each subject
 $\sum d^2$ = the sum of squared deviation
 N = the number of the students

After getting the result of deviation square, the researcher used t_{table} test to find out the significant difference between the result of pre-test and the result of post-test as well as to prove either the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The researcher used the following formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:306):

$$t = \frac{Md}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum x^2 d}{N(N-1)}\right)}}$$

Where:

t = the value of t_{counted}
 Md = the mean deviation of pre-test and post-test differe
 $\sum x^2 d$ = the sum of deviation squared in each subject
 N = the number of the students
 I = constant number

FINDINGS

The data of this research were analyzed descriptively and statistically. The researcher used descriptive analysis to describe the result of the observation while the data from pre-test and post-test were analyzed statistically.

The researcher did the observation in the first meeting. The observation was intended to know the real condition of teaching-learning process in the classroom. This process included students' performance in learning English and teacher's technique in teaching reading to the students. Since doing observation, she found that the English teacher did not use DRTA strategy in teaching reading. When the researcher observed the students, she found that they had difficulties in reading comprehension. During the teaching-learning process, only few students were active to ask questions to their English teacher and the rest only kept silent.

After conducting the observation, the researcher gave the pre-test to measure the students score in reading comprehension before giving the treatment. The researcher used the test into two forms: essay test and true-false test. The test contains 15 items. In other words, after finishing the treatment, the researcher gave post-test to the students in order to measure whether the use of DRTA strategy improve the students' reading comprehension of grade VIII students SMPN 12 Palu or not.

The researcher administered test to the students. The mean score of the pre-test was 64.66. The mean score of post-test was 73.65. After getting the mean score of the pre-test and post test, the researcher continued to count the mean deviation and the square deviation. The result is presented in the following table:

Table 2
Experimental Group's Deviation on the Pre-test and Post-test

No.	Students' Initial	Standard Score		Deviation	D ²
		Pre-test	Post-test		
1.	ADN	62.86	71.43	8.57	73.44
2.	ADF	68.57	74.29	5.72	32.72
3.	ASH	68.57	71.43	2.86	8.18
4.	ACR	67.14	72.86	5.72	32.72
5.	DWN	57.14	60.00	2.86	8.18
6.	EPT	84.29	95.71	11.42	130.42
7.	EDT	65.71	71.43	5.72	32.72
8.	FNF	60.00	74.29	14.29	204.20
9.	KRN	75.71	90.00	14.29	204.20
10.	LST	62.86	72.86	10.00	100.00
11.	MFS	60.00	67.14	7.14	50.98
12.	MHR	60.00	72.86	12.86	165.38
13.	MHS	48.57	57.14	8.57	73.44
14.	NRW	64.29	71.43	7.14	50.98
15.	NVR	57.14	68.57	11.43	130.64
16.	NRA	70.00	74.29	4.29	18.40
17.	RSW	67.14	78.57	11.43	130.64
18.	RSA	74.29	82.86	8.57	73.44
19.	RSN	55.71	70.00	14.29	204.20
20.	SFT	58.57	70.00	11.43	130.64
21.	TSP	65.71	78.57	12.86	165.38
22.	WDP	68.57	82.86	14.29	204.20
23.	WSU	51.43	70.00	18.57	344.84
24.	YNT	68.57	70.00	1.43	2.04
25.	KFP	67.14	72.86	5.72	32.72
26.	MSR	68.57	71.43	2.86	8.18
27.	YNW	67.14	75.71	8.57	73.44
Total				242.9	2686.32

From the table above, it can be seen by the highest score of the pre-test in comprehending narrative texts. It was 84.29 or four students had the highest score, while the

lowest score was 48.57 or twenty three students have the lowest score. The result of pre-test indicated that many students still have low comprehension in reading narrative texts and are not active during teaching and learning process before the researcher gave the treatment.

Meanwhile, the highest score of the post-test in comprehending narrative texts was 95.71, twenty three students had the highest score, and the lowest score was 57.14, four students have the lowest score. It is clearly, there are increased score both pre-test and post-test after the researcher gave the treatment. Based on the students' result of post-test, the researcher concluded that they more comprehend the reading narrative texts and learning English. The standard score of the school that should be passed by the students was 70.

The result of the computation of post-test showing that there was a progress showing difference between the the students' mean score in pre-test and post-test. The students' mean score at post-test was 73.65 and the students' mean score at pre-test was 64.66. It proved that the students' achievement in the post-test or after treatment was improved. In other words, applying DRTA strategy can improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu.

Having counted the mean score on pre-test and post-test, the researcher computed the deviation which was 8.10 and square deviation which was 501.12. Next, the researcher needed to statistically analyze the data in order to know the significant difference between pre-test and post-test. The computation was 9.64.

From the above calculation, it was found that t_{counted} was 9.64. Then, the researcher compared the value of the t_{counted} with the value t_{table} by applying the level of significance 0.05 and degree of freedom ($df = (27-1)$). It is found that t_{counted} (9.64) was higher than that of t_{table} (1.706). This means that the research hypothesis is accepted. In conclusion, applying DRTA strategy can improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu.

Referring to the result of observation before the researcher applied the treatment, it showed that there were some differences among the English teacher, the researcher, and the students' performance in teaching-learning process in the classroom. The first difference is the strategy that the English teacher and the researcher used in teaching reading. In this case, the English teacher did not use any specific strategy to teach the students' reading comprehension. She only emphasized the topic which was taught. Moreover, the English teacher also did not monitor students' understanding about the reading passage during her teaching process. It is different from what the researcher did in her teaching process. The researcher did not only focus on the topic that was taught, but also taught the students to

make a prediction on the story line and to guide students to ask questions based on what they read. The researcher in teaching students' reading comprehension used DRTA strategy.

In doing the research, the researcher focused on two scopes. They were comprehensibility and accuracy containing narrative text as part of DRTA strategy. The standard score at SMPN 12 Palu was 70. The students' percentage in pre-test was only 14.8% or 4 students could pass the passing grade of comprehensibility, 29.6% or 8 students could pass the passing grade of accuracy. It means that the students' reading skill before having giving the treatment was very poor.

After knowing the students' score in the pre-test, the researcher gave the treatment to the students by using DRTA strategy to improve students' reading comprehension. In giving treatment, the researcher divided several steps. Firstly, the researcher divided students into a small groups. Each groups consisted of four students. Secondly, each groups was given a paper containing narrative text. Thirdly, the researcher wrote the title of the reading passage on the board and she asked the students to read it. Fourthly, the researcher asked the students to make prediction about the title using this questions: what do you think about the passage? Why do you think? This process helped the students to develop them into thoughtful learners and made them active to comprehend more from the text. Therefore, by asking questions to the students, the teacher taught them to monitor their understanding to the reading text, consequently they would analyze the content of the text. Lastly, the students read the passage silently and confirmed or rejected their predictions.

After conducting the treatment, the researcher gave the post-test to the students. The result of post-test was there is a significant progress between the result in the pre-test and the result in the post-test after they were given treatment by using DRTA strategy. The number of students who can reach the passing grade more than the result of pre-test. The students' percentage who could pass the passing grade of comprehensibility in post-test was 85.2% or 23 students, 62.9 % or 17 students could pass the passing grade of accuracy. It means that in comprehensibility the percentage increased from 14.8% in pre-test to 85.2% in post-test. The increasing number can be seen in the accuracy which is increasing from 29.6% in the pre-test to 62.9% in the post-test.

After comparing the result in the pre-test and post-test, the researcher concluded that there was a significant progress in students' reading comprehension by using DRTA strategy. It means that the DRTA strategy could be used in improving students' reading comprehension. This finding supported by Samara (2006) who stated that the DRTA is an effective strategy for teaching reading comprehension because it helps students to set reading

purposes by making predictions, reading more enthusiastically, and remembering more information from what they have read.

The research about DRTA strategy in improving students' reading skill had been conducted by many researcher previously, one of them was Suci (2011) who conducted research in SMA Negeri Tayu Pati which entitled "Improving The Students' Reading Comprehension in Narrative with Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy (The Case Study of the Eleventh Grade Students of SMAN 01 Tayu Pati in the Academic Year of 2010/2011). She basically focused on the effectiveness of this strategy, especially how the students can solve their problems in reading activities by using this strategy. The result also shows that the DRTA strategy practically can improve students' reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, using this strategy with students will help them make prediction about what they will be reading with the generation of question they would like to have answered. This strategy also help them to organize what they have learned when they finished reading.

By understanding the research above, the researcher tried to apply this strategy in SMPN 12 Palu. Yet it was different from the previous research, the researcher emphasized on the use of DRTA strategy. However, after applying this strategy, the researcher found that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore, the researcher concludes that DRTA strategy is effective in improving students' reading comprehension

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After analyzing the data, the researcher finds that the value of t_{counted} (9.64) was greater than t_{table} (1.706). This showed that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. The data also showed that the mean score of the post-test (73.65) was greater than the mean score of the pre-test (64.66). it concludes that the used of DRTA strategy can improve reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu.

Considering the importance of reading the researcher would like to give some suggestions for those who are involving in English teaching and learning process. Firstly, the English teachers should be creative in choosing appropriate strategy, method, or technique in teaching reading. Secondly, the use of DRTA strategy can improve the reading comprehension of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 12 Palu. Therefore, the researcher

strongly suggested the teachers to apply this strategy in teaching reading. Finally, in teaching reading, it is better for the teachersto use various topics in order to improve the students' vocabulary.

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