IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE USE OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING TECHNIQUE AT STMIK RIAU PEKANBARU

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to describe and explain to what extent Reciprocal Teaching could improve the reading comprehension of semester II/E students of STMIK Riau Pekanbaru and the factors that influenced the change of their reading comprehension through Reciprocal Teaching. This research was a classroom action research, every cycle consisted of four four fundamental aspects namely, planning , action, observation, and reflection. The participants of this research were the semester II/E students majoring in Computer Science/Informatics STMIK Riau Pekanbaru totalling 35 students. The instruments of this research were a reading comprehension test, an observation sheet, field note, and interview. There were two main findings of this research: (1) Reciprocal Teaching could improve the students' reading comprehension; (2) Teaching material, class acitivity, class management, and lecturer's approach were the factors that could influence the change of students' reading comprehension.
Keywords: reading comprehension, reciprocal teaching, factors.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the skills that the students should master in learning English in order to get information from the English materials. The aim of teaching reading is to enable students to read English texts effectively and efficiently. They do not only have to understand the structure of the texts explicitly but more importantly they must comprehend the meaning implicitly. Reading is the common source to achieve and develop students' knowledge and skills. Therefore, students need to have effective reading skills in order to improve their knowledge of foreign language and their ability to access the world information which is commonly provided in the form of electronic media and printed materials such as textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, email, etc.

Based on the researcher's experience and observation in teaching Reading subject to semester II/E students majoring in Computer Science/Informatics at STMIK Riau Pekanbaru in the academic year 2014, it was discovered that the students had low achievement in reading comprehension tests, most of them had problems in comprehending texts. It was also found that the students still had difficulties in finding information in the

texts and did not know the components of reading comprehension, namely; finding factual information, finding main ideas, finding the meaning of vocabulary in context, identifying references and making inferences. The students' difficulties were noticeable from the results of the test given by the lecturer. The result of reading comprehension test showed that none of the students got A (>85) or A- (81-85). There were only 2 students who got B+ (76-80), 5 students got B (71-75), and others failed. The lowest score was 45, and the highest score was 80. The result of the test showed that the average score was only 62.13. For reading skill, the minimum standard of score is 71 (B) or higher based on reading scoring rubric. It seemed that the students had low ability in comprehending texts.

The above phenomenon must have been influenced by some factors. This was based on the interview conducted towards the students. First, the students were not interested in reading so that they had low motivation in learning reading. Second, the students lacked vocabulary; so, it was difficult for them to comprehend the texts. The third factor was teaching technique and teaching material used by a lecturer in teaching reading. The lecturer only used a discussion technique, where she gave an explanation, asked students to read the text and answer the comprehension questions. This way of teaching reading was less effective in teaching reading because it did not encourage and motivate the students to improve their comprehension. The lecturer very much relied on using reading materials from one book whose materials might not be appropriate for Computer Science/Informatics students. Such a mistake in choosing reading texts could cause the students to have difficulties to comprehend the texts that could affect their reading comprehension.

Realizing the phenomenon above, appropriate techniques in teaching reading should be implemented in the classroom because using various teaching techniques could give a great effect to the students' success in reading. The technique used by the lecturer should be appropriate to the students' comprehension level. The technique that might be implemented is reciprocal teaching that is suggested by Palinscar and Brown (1984). This technique of teaching deals with a problem-solving approach to reading. It helps the students to find solutions to the problems they encounter during their reading.

Related to the description above, the researcher was encouraged to implement reciprocal teaching during teaching and learning reading in order to solve the problems in her class. For this purpose, a classroom action research was carried out. The objectives of this research were to explain to what extent Reciprocal Teaching could improve the reading comprehension of semester II/E students of STMIK Riau Pekanbaru and the factors that influenced the changes of their reading comprehension.

Reading Comprehension

Reading is one of the skills that should be learnt by the students. It is a thinking process for the students to comprehend or analyze a text or a paragraph that encourages them to gain more information from what they are reading. Neufeld (2005) states that comprehension is the process of constructing a supportable understanding of a text. He added that comprehension involves two important features: being actively involved with the text and using appropriate

background knowledge to interpret the text. Therefore, when students are comprehending the material their brain works to try to make meaning of information presented. According to Klingner (2007:8) reading comprehension is a multi component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text as well as variable related to the text. Based on the definition, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is a process of interaction between readers' background knowledge with the information from the text while they are reading.

Reciprocal Teaching

The goal of Reciprocal Teaching is to instruct students with specific strategies that they can apply to all kind of texts. In the process of Reciprocal Teaching, the students work in groups, discuss the material through some steps of strategies that will lead them to be effective readers. Reciprocal Teaching consists of four strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing.

Predicting involves previewing the text to anticipate what may happen next. The students make predictions about what the author might discuss in the text by using text clues, background knowledge, or picture clues. Then, clarifying is the strategy that readers use while monitoring comprehension. The students identify when they do not understand and take necessary steps to restore meaning. In questioning strategy, the students make or create questions based on the text that they have read. The purpose of this strategy is to test whether the readers understand the text and to help students to identify important information. The last strategy is summarizing in which readers are

required to identify the key idea of each paragraph. Students have to recall and arrange the information and construct the overall understanding of a text.

According to Oczkus (2003:14) Reciprocal Teaching is different from other strategies because the strategies used may not be fixed, being flexible depending on the text and the reader. Thus, the lecturer should consider the material to be presented before using a certain strategy. He also states that Reciprocal Teaching can be used in a variety of classroom settings to enhance students' reading comprehension, such as whole class sessions, guided reading, and literature circle. In addition, Herrel and Jordan (2008) viewed that Reciprocal Teaching is a reading strategy in which students take turns in predicting, summarizing, clarifying, and questioning until all section of text have been read and work in a small group. It supports learning in several ways and encourages students to self-monitor for understanding. As a result, this technique increases the students' self-confidence and success in their understanding. Therefore, the lecturer needs to provide guided practice in the use of the four comprehension strategies of reciprocal teaching. It means that before the students use these four strategies, the lecturer models the use of the strategies and provides guidance in the discussion that follows. To make the learning process run well both lecturer and students should follow all indicators of Reciprocal Teaching strategies; that is, predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing.

From the definition above, it can be concluded that Reciprocal Teaching is a scaffold discussion method that is based on reading comprehension strategies of Reciprocal Teaching the lecturer has to model all strategies to the students, then show them the scaffold

until they are really independent to implement this technique, and finally the lecturer monitors their own thinking through reading process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is kind of an action research. It is used to help the teacher to improve the way of teaching in classroom. Kemmis et al (2014:5-10) state that action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social justice of their own social or educational practices, conducted by the teachers or researchers to gain information about how well their particular schools execute their educational programs, how well teachers teach their students and how well their students. There are four fundamental aspects of action research namely; planning, action, observation, and reflection. In short, action research is done to give an improvement to the situation where the research is applied. It is commonly applied to solve some problems being faced by participants in the classrooms and schools. The participants of this research were the researcher, a collaborator and the semester II/E students majoring in Computer Science/Informatics STMIK Riau Pekanbaru totalling 35 students in the academic year 2014. The researcher decided to choose this class because she knew this class had lower ability in reading comprehension than other classes. The instruments of this research were a reading comprehension test, an observation sheet, field note, and interview. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher evaluated and analyzed the students' reading comprehension test scores in order to know the significance of their progress before and after learning through Reciprocal Teaching.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results during cycle 1 and cycle 2 conducted for eight meetings, it was found that the scores of the students' reading comprehension in each indicator in cycle 1 was not yet satisfactory. Therefore, the process continued to cycle 2; in fact, students made some improvements. The data showed that students' scores of reading comprehension through Reciprocal Teaching in each indicator increased significantly. The difference between the improvement of students' comprehension before and after using Reciprocal Teaching can be seen in the following diagram
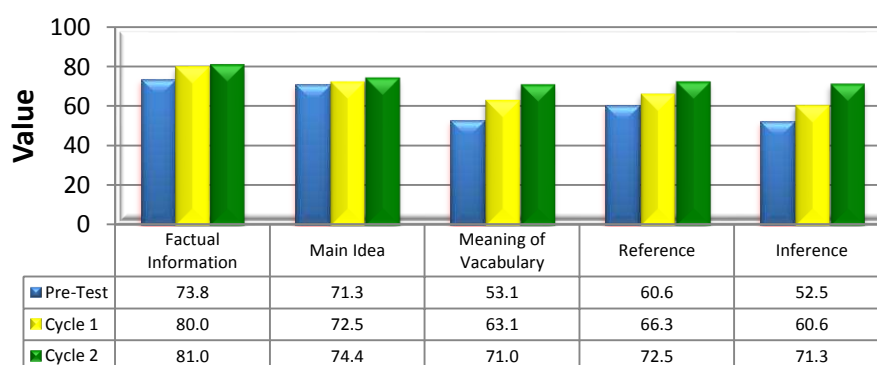
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	Factual Information	Main Idea	Meaning of Vacabulary	Reference	Inference
Pre-Test	73.8	71.3	53.1	60.6	52.5
Cycle 1	80.0	72.5	63.1	66.3	60.6
Cycle 2	81.0	74.4	71.0	72.5	71.3

Diagram 1. The Comparison of the Test Results of Each Indicator of Reading Comprehension in the Pre-test, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2

The above diagram shows that all indicators of reading comprehension test are improving after the use of Reciprocal Teaching technique.

The following diagram shows the improvement of students' average score of reading comprehension before implementing Reciprocal teaching during cycle 1 and cycle 2
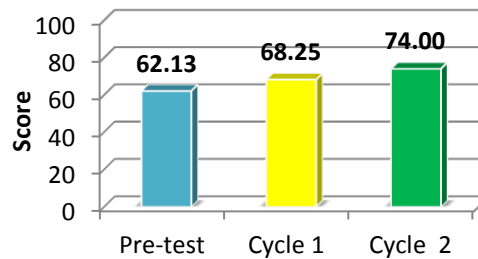

Diagram 2. The Comparison of Students' Average Score of Reading Comprehension in the Pre-test, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2

Diagram 2 shows that there was improvement on the average score in reading comprehension before and after implementing reciprocal teaching in teaching reading. In fact, the average score of students' reading comprehension through Reciprocal Teaching in cycle 1 and cycle 2 is better than before applying reciprocal teaching. The average score of the students' comprehension increases 6.12 points at the end of cycle 1. The diagram shows, however, that the average score is not significantly increased. At the end of cycle 2, the average score of students' comprehension increases 11.8 points. It means there was significant improvement which already reaches the minimum standard score of reading skill at STMIK Riau which is 71 (B) or higher based on the rubric. What's more, the number of students reaching the passing standard of reading score increased as it was expected. Furthermore, the results in cycle 2 showed that 80% of the students reached passing standard. Therefore, the researcher did not need to continue her action to the next cycle. Based on the research findings in two cycles, it was discovered that the implementation of Reciprocal Teaching could better improve the reading comprehension of semester II/E students of STMIK Riau Pekanbaru. The findings were congruent with Soonthornmanee (2002) who found that Reciprocal Teaching could improve Thai students' reading comprehension at university level.

After implementing Reciprocal Teaching in teaching reading comprehension and having analyzed the results obtained from observation checklists, field notes, and interview, it was found that there were some factors that influenced the changes of students' reading comprehension, i.e. teaching material, classroom activity, classroom management and lecturer's approach. This matches what Paris and Stahl (2005:61) state that there are factors that can influence the students' reading comprehension; namely, learner factor, text factor, and instruction factors. In addition, Crawley and Merritt

(2009:124) state that the teacher's approach to teaching structure of informational text could improve both comprehension and recall of key text information.

As a final point, Reciprocal Teaching could improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning process which is aimed to increase the students' reading comprehension. In addition, the implementation of Reciprocal Teaching in learning reading comprehension could positively affect the students' reading comprehension

CONCLUSION

After conducting this research in two cycles, it can be concluded that Reciprocal Teaching can better improve the reading comprehension of semester II/E students of STMIK Riau Pekanbaru. The improvement can be seen from the average score of reading comprehension test from pre-test, cycle 1, and cycle 2. There were some factors which influenced the changes of students reading comprehension through Reciprocal Teaching; that is, teaching material, classroom activity, classroom management, and lecturer's approach.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this research could be explain as follows; Reciprocal Teaching technique increases students' interest, activeness, self-confident, leadership skills, and motivation in learning reading. It gives them more opportunity to share their ideas through discussion in group

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the previous explanations and the findings of the research, implications and some recommendations are offered as in the following:

1. The researcher as an English lecturer should continue using Reciprocal Teaching in teaching reading because it can better improve the students' reading comprehension.
2. The researcher suggests to other lecturers, who have the same problems in teaching reading, to apply reciprocal teaching technique in reading class

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