IMPLEMENTING WEBQUESTS TECHNIQUE AND OPTIMIZING READING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are: (1) to find out whether and to what extent WebQuests Technique improves students' reading comprehension (2) to describe the class climate when WebQuests Technique applied in reading class. The research data were collected by using techniques of observation, interview, field note, photographs, and test (pre-test and post-test). Related to the purposes of the study, the research design used in this study was action research. The research findings show that the implementation of WebQuests technique could improve students' reading comprehension and class climate of reading class. The research results also indicated that these Web-based learning activities could make students more engaged in the learning process.

Keywords: reading, WebQuest, reading strategy, SMP students

Abstrak

Tujuandaripenelitian ini adalah*: (1)* untuk mengetahuiapakah dansejauh manaTeknik WebQuestsmeningkatkanpemahaman bacaansiswa*(2)* untuk menggambarkaniklimkelas ketikaTeknik WebQuestsditerapkandi kelasmembaca. Data penelitiandikumpulkandengan menggunakanteknik observasi, wawancara, catatan lapangan, *foto,* dan tes*(pre-test dan post-test).* Terkait dengantujuanpenelitian, rancanganpenelitian yang digunakan dalampenelitian ini adalahpenelitian tindakankelas. Hasil penelitianmenunjukkan bahwapenerapan teknikWebQuestsbisameningkatkanpemahaman bacaansiswadan iklimkelasmembaca. Penelitian inijuga menunjukkanhasilbahwakegiatan pembelajaran berbasis Webbisa membuatsiswa lebihterlibatdalam prosespembelajaran.

Kata Kunci*:* membaca, WebQuest, strategimembaca, siswaSMP

Language has a central role in the development of intellectual, social, and emotional of the students and brings the key to success in learning all fields of study. As one of the language that mostly used in the world, English becomes a tool to communicate in oral and written form. English also uses as an instrument for everyone who wants to broaden his knowledge beyond particular national boundaries. Reading is a very important activity in human life. This is due to the fact that most people mostly get information through reading. In this modern era, moreover, when every aspect of human life develops faster and faster, it becomes more essential since the development is recorded and issued through media including printed media.

Reading especially in second language learning is one of important skills because it is able to enlarge and increase peopleknowledge. As stated by Aebersold and Field (1997: 15) reading happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text. Supporting this statement, Wallace(1996: 4) says that reading is as interpreting means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. In other words, it can be stated that reading involves communicative intent on the writer's part which the reader has some purposes in attempting to understand the content.Based on theories above, it can be concluded that reading is a process of decoding written symbols, guessing, following and responding a message of the text from a writer in attempting to understand.

Based on pre-observation and pre-interview in SMP N 1Wonogiri, there are some problems in reading. Their problems in reading comprehension are also indicated from 2 indicators, students' reading problem and class climate.The indicators of the reading problem are: (1) the students are unable to catch specificinformation from the text; (2) the students get difficulties in inferring the implied meaning; (3) the students get difficulties to find the meaning of new vocabularies; (4) the students get difficultyto identify the referent of word in the text;and (5) some students get difficulties in identifying main idea of the paragraph.

The classroom climate indicates the problem as follows: (1)some students did not bring the text book; (2)some students did not pay attention to another student who read; (3)the students tends to neglect new vocabularies while and after reading session; (4)the students needs to repeat reading more than twice to understand the text; (5)the students spent long time to read a short text.

Some other causes bring the problem out. Viewed from the teaching materials and technique, there is limited teaching and learning technique to conduct English lesson and specifically in reading activity. Viewed from the teacher,there are few variations of teaching and learning activities that used by the teacher in facilitating the reading lesson. The mainproblem caused by the students themselves; (1) The students rarely read any other texts or books outside the class; (2) the students tend to lose their focuses during the lesson;

(3)the students tend to read interesting topic and text form; and (4) the students lack in background knowledge about the text.

As an RSBI school, SMP N 1 Wonogiri provides a Wi-Fi network around the school to support the teaching and learning process. The students were also bringing their laptop at the school. Considering the condition, one of suitable techniques in teaching reading to the condition of the teaching learning process at 7A of SMP N 1WonogiriisWebQuests and combined with optimizing the reading strategy to solve their problem indicator in reading.WebQuests technique facilitating the students in learning reading directly to the website and provide the authentic material to adapt in daily life. WebQuest technique was also supporting the students' interest on their laptop.

WebQuests were first introduced in 1995 by Dr. Bernie Dodge, a professor at San Diego State University (SDSU). He originally designed the WebQuests model to integrate the use of the Web into classroom activities, defining it as an inquiry-oriented approach with some or all of the information for learners to work with, coming from resources on the web.

WebQuests are a combination of project-based instruction and innovative use of technology for language teaching and learning, these Web-based lessons provide opportunities for learners to be exposed to a variety of authentic texts from the Internet. As there are a lot of attempts to look for ways to make reading and writing a more communicative and authentic learning experience for language learners, WebQuests can then be utilized by teachers who wish to make an effective use of technology to achieve these goals (Egbert &Handson-Smith, 1999).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is action research method. Action research definition is given by Carr and Kemmis in Burns (1998: 30) that action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situation in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of this practices and the situation in which these practices are carried out.

Kemmis and Taggart in Burns (1999: 33), state that Action Research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process, which consists of four fundamental steps in a spiraling process as follows: 1) Planning.Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening. 2) Action.Act to implement the plan. 3) Observation.Observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs. 4) Reflection. Reflecting process on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed and so on, through a succession of a stages.

The researcher uses some techniques in collecting the data in this Classroom Action Research Method, they are as follows:

1. Document Analysis

    Document includes portfolios of student' work, student records and profiles, lesson plans, classroom materials, and previous tests or examination papers. It can be used to diagnose the changes that have been implemented are working (Burns, 1999: 140).

2. Interview

    The interview has been done to get data from the students in their interest. In this research, the interview designed as type of semi-structured interview the students will be asked some open questions for further information; (Wallace, 1998: 147).

3. Observation

    Observation is one of the instruments used in collecting the data. The writer observed the students' activities while the teaching-learning process is given. The result of the observation can be recorded on observation sheets as a useful stock of data. The collaborator English teacher could assist the researcher to give him inputs and suggestions in relation with the teaching materials (Burns, 1999: 80).

4. Notes and diaries

    Teacher diary will be used to record the observation during the learning process (Burns, 1999: 85). It is an alternative to field note which will help teacher to reflect reflection on the teaching as it is more subjective and personal than the relatively formalized recordings of note.

5. Test

    Test instrument is used to collect students reading score. The test has been administered two times was pre-test and post test term in the form of individual written test (formative assessment).

    McKernan in Burns (1999: 156) states that there are five stages in analyzing the data:

1. Assembling the Data
   The first step is to assemble the data that the researcher collects over the period of the research: field-notes, journal entries, questionnaires and so on.
2. Coding the Data
   In this stage, once there has been some overall examination of the data, categories or codes can be developed to identify patterns more specifically.
3. Comparing the Data
   At this stage, comparison can be made to see whether themes or pattern are repeated or developed across different data gathering techniques.
4. Building Interpretations
   It is the point where moving beyond describing, categorizing, coding and comparing to make some sense of the meaning of the data.
5. Reporting the Outcomes
   The final stage involves presenting an account of the research for others.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Research

    In order to know the condition of the English class in 7A RSBI, a pre-observation was conducted before

implementing the action research. It was found that most of the students actively used internet for their leisure time but never utilized it in learning, especially for English class. The material being taught by the teacher was taken from a printed book.It was found on the observation that the students got difficulty in doing reading task. It was indicated by their expressions after reading a short poem about bird and answering some questions on vocabulary, implied meaning, specific information, and main idea.The students were passive and waiting for their friend or their teacher to answer it for them. In addition, the students had no passion on reading class although they like reading.

After the observation, pre-test was held in order to know the detailed problems of students' reading comprehension. From the result, it was found that the students' mean score was 70.40 and it was lower than the minimum standard which was 80.00.

Based on the pre-observation, pre-interview to the English teacher, and pre-test to collect the detailed data, it was identified that the students' reading comprehension should be improved. Therefore, WebQuest was used as the teaching-learning technique during the reading class. It was used as the main sources and the online worksheet which allowed the students to explore their skill.

Cycle 1

Planning

In cycle 1, it was planned to have two meetings which was conducted twice a week. The materials were taken from the internet and from eBook that is linked to the educational website. In the eBook can be found the material and online worksheet about the indicator of the reading skill that is found on the pre-test; vocabulary, referent, main idea, implied meaning, and specific information.It was about descriptive text as aimed in the curriculum.

Action

In this cycle, the researcher started implementing WebQuestsas teaching technique in the class.There are two meetings in this cycle. In the first meeting, the researcher distributes the eBook as learning media. The students use the eBook to solve the problem indicators in Vocabulary, Referent, and Main idea. It was also helped by the optimizing skimming and guessing strategy. Students also have the online exercise from the eBook.

In second meeting, the material was specific information and inferring implied meaning. The scanning strategy was used in specific information. The students also have their exercise with online worksheet. In inferring implied meaning, the students work in group of 5. They were discussed how to infer meaning from the eBook before practice it in the front of class.

Observation

In the first meeting, the students looked interesting with the eBook and active during the lesson. The eBook helped them to solve their difficulties in reading indicators. The class situation could be well controlled for the first

meeting by implementing WebQuest. The use of internet connection was also under control because the eBook only redirect the students to the site linked previouslywhich was about descriptive text.

In the second meeting, it was found that they were interested in the online worksheet while they were asked to do it in front of the class; they even could do it at home since they already had the eBook.The communication between group members and another group were actively identified although they got it hard to start. The students got some oral questions that should be answered orally. In this session, the groups were active and they helped their group members when they got incomplete answer. From the formative test it can be concluded that students still have minor problem dealing with their confidence in answering questions.

Reflection

After analyzing the observation result in the first cycle, the researcher did reflection in order to evaluate the teaching and learning process done so far. The students got the lesson interesting because of the use of the technique and media.Their interest on the laptop was supported and facilitated in the implementing of WebQuest technique which motivated them to learn by themselves in everywhere they brought their laptop. Some improvement from the reading comprehension also can be seen: The students identified pronoun as referent and helped by looking the sentence before and after the referent existed;The students used guessing strategy to find the meaning of

the vocabulary they found in the text; They used skimming as the way to find the main idea of the text;The implied meaning could be inferred by analyzing the information lies behind the text; Specific information from the text could be found by the use of scanning strategy.

There are still found minor problem in the first cycle that the students' confidence was still low when answering questions, it was decided to continue the research with the cycle 2 which focused on reviewing material so that the students' confidence will increased.

Cycle 2

Revising Plan

Depending on the result of Cycle 1, it was decided to continue the research to Cycle 2. There were minor problems in Cycle 1 which were related to students' reading comprehension to resolve.The revised plan was about reviewing the material that has been taught thatwere focused from the difficult material according to students. The use of eBook still helped to strengthen their comprehension on the material.

Action

There was one meeting in this cycle since the objective is to increased students confidence by reviewing the material. The lesson was initialized by reviewing vocabulary, main idea, and referent. It is also reviewing on how to use guessing and skimming strategy on reading text. The next review focused on inferring information and specific information material. The review was

about optimizing strategy in inferring information and finding specific information. The scanning strategy was also applied in the process of learning. After the oral question section, the researcher asked about students' readiness on post-test and they were looked optimistic and ready for the post-test.

Observation

The meeting was conducive since the students prepared themselves to get the lesson.the students were given more chance to discuss with their friends and the researcher. The students asked their difficulties dealing with the material to the researcher and got answered by the explanation of the researcher and even by their own friends.The researcher and students also did reflection about what they had learned. Students' readiness for the post-test indicated that their self confident were increased and ready for having post-test.

Reflection

Based on the result of the observation, the researcher reflected the result of the action in the second cycle. There were some positive results reflected in the second cycle. First, the overall reflection about the students reading score shows that there was an improvement on it. After the cycle 2, there mean score of students' writing test was 93.07. It was higher than the mean score of pre-test scorewhich is 70.40.

Second, the class management was better than the prior situation. The

students were more cooperative and excited during the learning process since they could utilize the eBook in the WebQuest implementation reading class.

Third, the students could fully focus on the lesson without any distraction from their laptop since their laptop was used in teaching and learning process so that they did not use it to do non academic activities.

Fourth, the students shared their opinions and understanding to their friends and having more practices in reading outside the class. It indicates that their confidence was increased and they could actively be involved in class activities and explore their skills more.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The implementations of WebQuests as the teaching technique in teaching learning activity showed that: 1) WebQuest is able to improve students' reading comprehension. It is supported by the results of the test scores and the situation of the class. From the results of the test scores, it can be seen that the mean of pre-test score is 70.40 and it increases up to 93.07 in final post-test. This result proves that teaching writing using affinity grouping can improve students' reading comprehension. 2) WebQuest technique is able to improve situation in the reading class. The classwas conducive since the students were interest with the media being used. They were also fully involved to the lesson. The point is that students' interest on laptop was

supported so that finally they attracted to learn more and finally the utilizing of the laptop supporting teaching and learning process.

Suggestion

After conducting an action research and based on the research findings, the researcher would like to add some suggestions for the English teacher, the students, and other researcher. The researcher hopes, WebQuests become an input in determining the appropriate teaching technique, which improve students' reading skill as follows:

1. For teachers

    The teachers should provide attractive media and appropriate teaching method readingso that the English class commonly quite interesting for the students. The teacher could use WebQuest technique in collaborative learning other than the previous method mentioned. Teacher can change the media into video, song, or other media that can be utilized so that they could also develop various material of teaching reading. WebQuests technique is adaptable so it also can be used in other skills and other subject depends on the creativity.

2. For students

    The students should beutilized the facilities provided in order to support their learning abilities. The students can use internet to gain more information to increase their comprehension about the material.

3. For institutions

    The institution should encourage and support the English teacher to improve the quality of their teaching. It can be done through providing ICT training to improve their ability in using and developing ICT-based material.

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