IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING ABILITY
USING GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD

By

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at revealing: (1) To find out whether Grammar Translation Method can improve the reading ability; (2) To find out the strengths and weaknesses of Grammar Translation Method.

The Class Action Research was carried out in MA Salafiyah Cirebon in academic year of 2011/2012 from April to June 2012. The population was the first semester of MA Salafiyah in academic year of 2011/2012. The number of population was 22 students.

The results of this research were: (1) The Grammar translation Method can Improves the students' reading ability, it can be seen in the table 1; (2) The strengths of Grammar Translation Method was the students challenged to read the difficult texts. And the weakness of Grammar Translation Method was felt bored to memorize the vocabularies and irregular verb.

Key words : Reading ability, grammar translation method, and class action research.

INTRODUCTION

Mastering English means mastering the four skills supporting the language namely speaking, reading, writing and listening. From all the skills, reading is one of the skills that is easily found in the daily life. The reading facilities are found everywhere.It is exposed not only in a systematic publication like newspaper or magazines and text books but also on the street through any announcements or advertisements. The reading material exposure is abundant.Anyhow if the reading ability is notgood, students will not be able to comprehend messages conveyed in it. Anticipating this, reading lesson has a purpose to develop the students' ability to extract the message the text contains (Nuttall, 1988: 20).

The key for success in reading is the ability to find and understand the main idea, detail information, reference, inference, and vocabulary of the text. Once a student can findall of them, he will be able to easily understand the text and get all the information conveyed. By understanding the text, students will have no difficulties in answering

questions about the text and, of course, it will improve their academic achievement. Finally, they must reach the KKM score which is 68.

It seemsso simple to makestudents master reading skill but unfortunately the facts reveal the opposite. The studentsrarely understand the contents of the text after reading. They were not able to get the main idea, supporting ideas, and more over to conclude the text. This happens because they have difficulties in finding the meaning of wordsin the reading context. They are also sometimes confused with the grammar in the reading text. Although students are curious enough to search for information or to comprehend the reading text, they fail to understand or to interpret it because of these grammatical reasons. The result of the preliminary research that the researcher did at Class XA students of *MA Salafiyah*, was the students mean score was 45. It means that the students did not achieve the KKM yet.

In addition there are some factors affecting student's difficulties in understanding reading. They are teaching methods, teaching strategies, school's facilities and students' motivation.

In a classroom context, teachers often do not have enough techniques to explore the strategies and methods to develop students' reading comprehension. Reading is merely reading followed by answering questions. It becomes a hard work for students without teachers showing them how to answer the questions efficiently and accurately. In this situation, reading becomes a favorite activity among teachers but a frustrating activity for students during the teaching learning process.The condition is worsened by school

condition that does not support students in developing their talent and interest in reading. Schools, especially private ones mostly have only two classes per grade and aroundtwentyto twenty five students in a class. Of course this creates only low level of competition among students and in turn low motivation in self development.The absence of the library or even various reading sources is another example of factors weakening students' motivation in reading. With such a low motivation, it is quite imposible for students to comprehend the text.

It is a common class situation that in a reading class not all students participate actively to understand the reading text.Many students are passive and even did nothing at all.They just wait for information of an answer from his friend They have no motivation to try to do the tasks themselves So, it is extremely important to build students' motivation to build a dynamic class atmosphere. Chan (1994: 351) mentioned that most students are activated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. So in this case teachers have the opportunity to build an external motivation for students. As soon as the extrinnsic motivation is built, the intricsic one hopefully will be awakened.

Viewing the issues described above, the researcher try to use a method that make students interested in reading material and then always able to understand the content of the reading text. This method is an Grammar Translation Method. Although this method is very old and is considered the old-fashioned teaching method, it does not mean that it is not applicable to schools with certain conditions.According toKolln (1982: 2)

grammar has great contribution to the understanding of a concept.

To solve the problems mentioned before, the researcher conducting the class action research using grammar translation method that aims to raise student's ability, whereas the students' scores are still under passing grade. Results from the preliminary observations confirmed that the grammar is one of the biggest factors that make students loose interest in reading because they cannot always grasp the contents of the reading or text. Therefore, the researcher conducted class action research with the title "Improving Students' Reading Ability using Grammar Translation Method: A Classroom Action Research at Class XA students of *MA Salafiyah Cirebon* in the 2011/2012 Academic Year.

THE ORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents some theories about reading, grammar translation method, and motivation.

Reading

According to Rumelhart (in Aebersold and Field, 1997: 5) reading involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the reader and the text. Furthermore, Heilman (1981: 182) states that reading is a complex process in requiring not only the ability to recognize words, but also the ability to comprehend and evaluate the meaning of written text.

Kustaryo (1998: 12) states that comprehension involves understanding the vocabulary, seeing the relationship among words and concepts, organizing ideas,

recognizing the author's purpose, making judgments, and evaluating. Further, Spears (2000: xxvi) states that there are eight important reading comprehension skills that help learners to read more systematically. They are comprehending the main idea, determining the author's purpose, distinguishing between the main idea and supporting details, making inference, distinguishing facts and opinion, analyzing structure, annotating, paraphrase and summarizing.

Grellet in (2008) states that reading comprehension is understanding a written text or extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible.

From definitions above, it can be concluded that reading is a written text that requires the reader is able to comprehend the text systematically. It means the reader is able to find out main idea, find out vocabulary, find out detail, and find out reference make inference.

In reading English text, generally students' ability is very low. Basically, the students have some problems as follows :

1. The students can not find the main idea,
2. The students can not find detail information,
3. The students can not find reference,
4. The students can not understand vocabularies, and
5. The students can not make inference.

Motivation

There are some aspects make students are achievement in the school. The one of them is students' achievement. It in line with Harmers' theory, Harmer (2004: 51) state that

motivation is a internal drive that encourages someone to do something untill getting the goal. Furthermore, Burder in Harmer (2004: 51) notes that motivation is a cognitive passion that instigates a decision to serve as a result of is sustained intellectual and / or physical effort so that the person can achieve some privious set goal. Beside that, according to Brown that motivation is someone who willing to invest effort in learning process and to come forth students' motivation makes teaching and learning more easier and more pleasent.

GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD

According to Howwat (1984: 131) state that grammar translation well-accepted as basic principles of language teaching. Partor and Murcia (1979: 3) point out the caracteristic of grammar translation:

1. Using mother tounge in teaching-learning process.
2. Teaching vocabulary is isolated from the words (making form of list).
3. Long, detailed explanations of the intricacies of grammar are thaught.
4. Grammar gives the rules to put words together, and instructions often focus on the form and words inflection.
5. Reading difficult texts.
6. Give attention to the texts content, to analysis its grammatical.
7. Exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the source language.
8. It does not teach pronunciation.

Besides, Sears (2000: 16) state that the principal characteristics of the Grammar-Translation Method:

1. Grammar Translation is a way to study a language that approaches the language through detailed analysis of its grammar rules.
2. Reading and writing are the major focus of grammar translation method.
3. Teaching vocabulary based on the reading text used, memorization and word is thaught using bilingual word.
4. Accuracy is emphasized. Students are expected to achieve high standards in translation.
5. Teaching Grammar deductively, by presentation and the grammar rules,then practiced through translation exercises.
6. To teach the students' native language usinginstruction medium. It used to explain new items and to enable comparisons between the foreign language and the students' native language.

From the above characteristics of grammar translation method, it shows that students can be helped to improve their reading skill. By this method, students are able to understand the content of the text, able to find out the main idea and make inference because the teacher will explain the grammar rule, the meaning of the vocabulary before teaching the next text and she/he always gives students translation exercise.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Participants

This research was carried out on Class XA students of *MA Salafiyah Cirebon* in the

academic year of 2011/2012. The class consists of 12 female students and 10 male students. The reason for choosing this class as research subjects is the students have difficulties based on the preliminary research, it can be concluded that the students need a method in the learning reading. So, in this classroom action research, Grammar translation method is used to solve students' problems in reading. By using grammar translation method, it could increase the students' reading ability.

PROCEDURES

The procedure which is used is action research. According to Neff that is quoted from Kemmis (1992: 22) state that action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry taken by teacher, students, or principles (as participants) insocial (including education) situation forimproving the nationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practice, and (c) the situations (and) institution) in which these practices are carried out.

Besides, Elliott (1993: 30) said that action research is studying a situation of sicial (including education) with improving action quality in it.

From the definitions above, it can be drawn an inference that research in this study means the systematic study of attempts to improve the teaching-learning process in order that the students' achievement is very satisfying. It can also be a critical research to assess teacher's ways in teaching whether the method that she used is effective or not.

THE DATA

This paper uses quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative dataare taken from the result of students' reading assessment both taken from a pre-test and a post-test.The qualitative datawhich are taken from observation, interview, questionnaire, documentation.

The researcher used the written test to measure the improvement of the student's ability in understanding text. In this research, there were two kinds of test, pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was given before the students studied reading text using grammar translation method. There were 20 questions in pre-test and all of them were multiple choice.

To measure the validity and reliability of the test, the researcher used the following formula :
   a. Validity
   b. Reliability

While, to measure questionnaire, the researcher uses the following formula :
   a) Validity
   b) Reliability

In scoring the test, the researcher calculated the mean of students' scores by using the following formula :

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

M   = Mean (the score)
Σx = The total score
N   = Number of students

In calculating the students' score in the test, the researcher used the following formula:

$$Score = \frac{Number\ of\ correct\ answers\ x\ 100}{Number\ of\ all\ items}$$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The Score of Pre-test; Post-test in Cycle 1; and Post-test in Cycle 2

The following table shows the improvement of the students' reading ability :

The table above shows that students' reading ability improved. The table shows the percentage of the students' improvement in each indicator in Pre-test, Post test of Cycle 1, and Post test of Cycle 2.

Reading Indicators	The Scores of Pre-Test	The Scores of Post-Test 1	The Scores of Post-Test 2
Main Idea	38.9 %	53 %	80.4 %
Detail Information	53.8 %	70.3 %	89.5 %
Inference	44.4 %	52%	77.6 %
Vocabulary	54.5 %	68.7%	85.2 %
Reference	57.7 %	71.9 %	86.1 %
Average Scores	49.86 %	63.18 %	83.76 %

The improvement of the students' ability in answering main idea, detail information, and inference, vocabulary, and reference was 49.86% in Pre-test, 63.18% in Post test of Cycle 1, and 83.76% in Post test of Cycle 2.

Improvement the Students' Motivation

In the preliminary research, the researcher found that most of the students in Class XA of *MA Salafiyah Cirebon* had low motivation in reading. Then the researcher tried to improve the students' motivation by Grammar translation method. The result of teaching and learning reading text using grammar translation method showed that students' motivation increased in each steps.

The Result of Questionnaire in Pre-Research; Cycle 1; and Cycle 2

No	Explanation	Pre-Test	Post-Test in Cycle 1	Post-Test in Cycle 2
1	The Highest	60	80	95
2	The Lowest	30	45	60
3	The Average	50	64.54	81.13

From the results of questionnaire showed that students have different response toward reading in each steps. The data in pre-test showed that the students were hate, bored, lazy in reading but had been given treatment in post-test 1 and post-test 2, they were love, enjoy, and challenged to read more. The improvement of the students' motivation can be shown in following table:

CONCLUSION

Having conducted class action research on teaching English Reading using the grammar translation method in senior high

school, the researcher concludes that:

The grammar translation method can improve student's reading ability. The improvement of students' reading ability is also supported by the result of the test score. The mean of Pre-test score 60 and it improves to 80 in Post-test 1. Then it increases up to 95 in Post-test 2. From the test result, it shows that there is an improvement of student's reading ability after the researcher conducted the research. It proves that teaching reading using the grammar translation method can improve student's reading ability. On the other hand, the technique which is used in teaching reading such as; (1) doing brain wash to understand the text is easy if the students know the content of the text, (2) doing exercise to understand the grammatical rules.

The strengths of grammar translation method, they are: for students, they feel challenged to read with more difficult text and have high motivation to read more. For teacher, learning-teaching process is faster because students always give good responses. The weakness of grammar translation method, they are; students feel bored to memorize the vocabularies and irregular verb.