IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE DRTA STRATEGY

Muchsin
Universitas Serambi Mekkah

ABSTRAK

This research is aimed at improving the reading comprehension ability of Serambi Mekkah English students on narrative texts through DRTA (directed reading thinking activity). The strategy was conducted beyond the consideration of finding that the researcher found during the preliminary study. Many of the students at the university, especially the students of English department encountered problems in comprehending the texts or passages. It was found that students hardly understood the narrative text especially about factual detail, main idea, and word meaning. Therefore, researchers implemented the DRTA strategy. The researcher used collaborative classroom action research design. It was conducted in two cycles by following the procedures of action research, i.e., planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. Each cycle was carried out two meetings of strategy implementation and one meeting for the test. The data of the study was gathered through observation sheet, students' observation sheet, reading comprehension test and questionnaire. The result of the research showed that the DRTA strategy has improved students’ reading comprehension. The improvement could be seen from the increase of the students' score in reading comprehension which reached the target score (70 in the range of 0 to 100), i.e., in preliminary the mean score was 6,42. Then the mean score increased to 6,96 in post-test cycle I. The mean score of the student's proficiency improved to 8,33 in post-test cycle II. This evidence suggested that the students had already reached the intended target score, namely 7,00. It means that many students responded that the application of DRTA strategy was helpful to improve their reading skill, and the strategy was very good to improve the student's comprehension of main idea, factual detail and word meaning.

Key words: DRTA strategy, reading comprehension.

I. INTRODUCTION

In learning a language involves the mastery of four major skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as the other components of language such as:

Email : Muchsin@serambimekkah.ac.id
structure, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. So the four language skills in the teaching learning process must not be separated. However, among the four skills, reading skill has more emphasis to be taught or reading skill as an integrated – skill unit cover the other language skills and almost in every unit of subject of study or discussion begin with reading text. The important of reading is undoubtedly questioned because it gives impact to students’ successful in learning many things particularly in daily life. Without the skill of reading, they can not make satisfactory progress.

Giving more support on the essential of reading, Clark (1982:242) argues that reading can enrich our personalities, expand our horizons, involve varied experience, organize our through and feeling, and stimulate our creativity. Deal with the phenomena, reading skill plays a great role both in school and our daily life, therefore lecture should try to make reading as interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful as possible also some what challenging in order to avoid boredom and confusion.

The researcher can conclude that the process of teaching learning of English especially reading at the English student year is still far from satisfaction. During the process of teaching learning in the classroom, the researcher found that many students are very passive and reluctant while studying English in the classroom.

Previously, the writer has taught English especially reading comprehension activities in the classroom, and realizes that the teaching was still in a monotonous way in the sense that class was still predominantly dominated by lecture while the students took active role. So that teaching of reading comprehension more taught in the traditional way of teaching where student were firstly asked to read the text orally (usually three to five students individually), to find meaning of unfamiliar words from dictionary and finally to answer the reading comprehension question.

Based on the research’s record at last semester, English ability for reading skill was low (only 30 % students got score more than 65 and 70 % students below 65). This condition leads to conclude that most of students are unable to comprehend the text firmly because they were lack of reading skill so that they can not meet the learning objectives as has been put in the lesson plan.

As far as the preliminary observation was concerned, the majority of the students encountered problem in comprehending the text or passages. In the process of teaching learning had been done in class, students hardly understood of narrative text especially about Factual Detail (FD), Main Idea (MI), and Word Meaning (WM). One of the causes is
ineffective strategy implemented in the teaching learning. In order to know how further detail the problem we will be held a pre-test then administered to english students.

From the description stated above it can be said that the lecturers are not quite innovative in developing students reading skill through suitable method or strategies that can attract student’s interest and did not make any reflection over lecturers in the sense that they have not utilized more interesting and effective methods. Therefore, researcher is offering an innovate method in learning-teaching reading which is called strategy of Directed Reading -Thinking Activity (DRTA).

The Directed Reading – Thinking Activity (DRTA), according to Stauffer (1969) has three basic steps namely: predicting, reading and proving. Predicting involves what the students interpret as to what will happen in the text, proving involves the students and the lectures react to the story as a whole. This method encouraged the students to develop their own reading and thinking process by setting their own purpose for reading.

Moreover, in teaching learning process one factor contributed to the success of reading comprehension might relate to the teaching technique used by the lecture. In line with lecturers responsibility for the success of the student, it was then proposed a technique called “DRTA Strategy” as an alternative solution to cope with the problem face in reading comprehension.

There were some studies was conducted earlier implementations of the DRTA strategy to improve students’ reading comprehension. Ani Mutadayyinah (2009) conducted a study on the DRTA strategy to implement in the teaching of reading comprehension at the eleventh-year students at MAN Kandangan Kediri. The study, which was designed in the classroom action research, aimed at improving students’ reading comprehension. The result of three cycled study showed that the students’ score improved in the comprehension when they were taught by using the DRTA strategy. Beside, it also made the students more active and motivated in following the instruction.

Meanwhile, Amin (2005) studied the use of Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy in reading classes to the second-year student in reading at MTsN Samudra. The study was designed to develop the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy to increase the student’s reading skill. Thought this action research, it was found that the DRTA strategy proved to have some strength. First, it could improve the students reading skill. Second, the strategy also made the students active and happy in the reading process. The study was conducted in three cycles.
Furthermore, Gelewa (2005) conducted the study on the implementation of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity strategy (DRTA) in teaching reading comprehension at SMPN 12 Samarinda. The study was addressed to the third-year students. The aim of the study was developing an appropriate sequence of activities of teaching reading comprehension using the DRTA strategy. Through the classroom action research, the three-cycled study showed that the implementation of the strategy was helpful for students in comprehending a reading text. The study also showed that the strategy could attract students’ attention.

Considering the brief argument above, the writer believed that Directed Reading – Thinking Activity (DRTA) Strategy could be effective for the reading comprehension of Serambi Mekkah university especially for the English department

1.1 Problem of Study

In relation to the research background above, the problem could be formulated as follows:
1. How effective is the implementation of DRTA strategy improving student’s reading skill?
2. How DRTA strategy can be implemented in reading class in order to improve students’ reading skill?
3. How do the students respond to the implementation of DRTA strategy to improve in their reading comprehension?

1.2 Objective of Study

In relation to what has been described in the statement of the problem above, the objective of this study are:
1. To know how effective the implementation of DRTA in improving students’ reading skill.
2. To know how DRTA can be implemented in reading class in order to improve students’ reading skill.
3. To know the responses of students toward the implementation of DRTA strategy to improve in their reading comprehension.

1.3 Success Indicators

The result of analyzing the data from the instruments used in accordance with the research objective will be shown by some provided successful indicators. The successful indicators are as followed:
1. The students are able to complete the reading test provided. The average score of the reading test produced by the students is above 75%.

2. The students understand 75% of materials taught.

3. 80% of the students feel comfortable with the implementation of DRTA strategy.

1.4 Significance of Study

1. The findings of this classroom action research is expected to give a practical contribution for teaching reading especially to the learning and teaching reading comprehension.

2. To increase student's motivation in developing reading skill toward variety of texts through DRTA strategy so that their understanding will be better and more attractive way of learning.

3. This technique also can be used as reference for other researchers in conducting the study relating to the teaching reading, especially toward simple text of narrative.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the research methodology employed in the present study. In general, the discussion includes six headings; (1) research design, (2) setting and subject of the study, (3) the model of this Classroom Action Research, (4) Procedure of Data Collection (5) Points for Revisions, and (6) Data Analysis.

1. Research Design

The design of the research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). This design was chosen since it has similar characteristics with the problem and the objective of this study. According to Borg (1987:15), the goal of action research is to gather evidence that can help the lecture or administrator make decision related to the local schools. Furthermore, he explains that the action research is a scientific method applied to solve day-to-day problems and the researcher concerns only with a single school or classroom.

The study aimed to improve to students’ comprehension in reading a text. An action based research according to Kemmis and Taggart (1998) that was cyclic process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. This study presents the data collected from both subjects that is the students and the lecture, during the teaching and learning process of reading comprehension.
The Classroom Action Research taken as design is collaborative between researcher and his collaborative counterpart directly conduct it. Cohen and Manion (1989:221) believe that action research function best when it is cooperative action research. This method of research, the researcher worked together with collaborator in planning the action, implementing the data, observing the action, analyzing the data, and reflecting the observation result. This collaboration was done to make the data of the research more objective since the observation was done to make the data of the research more objective since the observation was done by the other person, especially, or the lecture who never did the action research before Alamsyah (2007: 151). Since it deals with the classroom setting, this research is directed to find a solution to the students’ problems concerning with reading comprehension. To cope with the student problems in reading comprehension, the researcher applied cooperative learning strategy by pairing or small-grouping student during the teaching and learning process.

In conducting the Classroom Action, the researcher did action in the form of cycle. It comprises of six stage, the research prepared a suitable strategy, design a lesson plan, made a test battery, provide media, design observation sheets, and made field notes. In the observing stage, he focused on having checklists on the observation sheets during the implementation of the planning. While in reflecting he concentrated on making a judgment whether or not the action should be stopped. This study was continued to the following cycle when criteria set before were not achieved.

In the next cycles, the research made some revision on steps of teaching or lesson plan, or whatever assumed hindering the achievement of the student in reading comprehension. Therefore the CAR possibly occurs in repeating cycles depending on the problem found in the classroom and achievement of criteria set before the action.

These descriptions are suitable with what the research want to do in this research that is to implement the DRTA strategy in the hope to improve the teaching and learning reading comprehension.

2. Setting and Subject of the study

This research choices this school because the research want to improve in teaching at the school. The research finds out that the student’s reading skill is far from being sufficient because they are rarely being trained to read the text in English efficiently so that
they always fail in comprehending variety of texts. The subject of the study is students of Serambi Mekkah University at English department. The class consists of 35 students, 10 boys and 15 girls. The students come from different family background.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher and her collaborative lecture did the reflection toward the action that had been run at the second cycle. It was done to find out whether or not the revised actions had reached the improvement and whether or not the students’ achievement had reached the success indicators. The deep analysis toward the action can be clearly stated as follow.

1. The Analysis of the procedure of the Implementation DRTA Strategy in teaching Reading Comprehension.

The analysis took account of the lesson plan, the action which involves the lectures and the students’ observation sheet, the lesson plan prepared comprised the procedure of DRTA strategy in teaching reading comprehension of narrative text especially about Factual Detail (FD), Main Idea (MI) and Word Meaning (WM). Through this observation, the researcher and the collaborator could see the strength and the weakness of the actions which had been executed in the first cycle.

2. The Analysis of the researcher’s performance in teaching learning process.

In the process of learning and teaching activities. The researcher and the collaborative had been designed and revised lesson plan. All of activities in this cycle could be finished on time for each meeting; furthermore almost all of the students participated in the group activities as the result of motivation from the researcher. Consequently, the students participated in the second cycle reach the criteria of success.

The researcher had given example of narrative text. This skill is very important for the students in order to measure whether it had been taken place or no. The researcher also led the students to answers or to quests based on the narrative text. During the class the students used English as their media in conveying idea as shown from some excerpts of their conversation in the classroom. Even thought the English was sometimes very Indonesia like or used some local word in the conversation. The researcher considered it a normal circumstance. However the researcher noticed there had been an increase of
English use seen from the first time he entered the classroom compared with the last time. The researcher also found there are some students’ weaknesses on comprehension and hard to comprehend English speech. When the researcher talked in English, the students were hard understood and to catch what the research meant. Finally, the researcher had to explain the instruction in Indonesia or write the meaning into Indonesia in order to make the instruction clearer.

The other point was the researcher was able to make the students increased motivation to influence their arguments. This can be seen from the process of students’ activities when the students were solving all questions and exercises assigned by researcher.

3. The Analysis of the students’ activities in teaching learning process.

The student’ work on the reading comprehension produce of observation checklist designed for the student, there were notes that notified the students had reached some improvements during the teaching learning process in cycle 2.

Firstly, the students had been familiar with the concept of DRTA strategy. It was shown through their motivation in the classroom. They want to influence their argument about the topic what had been discussed. The students were also already having a good comprehension toward the genre of narrative. This covered the schematic structure, the purpose and the language feature used in it. It was shown through the result of the tests.

Secondly, during the class the students used English more confidence than before. It was shown as the students posed more questions and answers when the material presented. The students could be seriously did the task given as shown when the students finished the task on time.

Thirdly, the researcher had tried to overcome the students’ problem in vocabularies. The students did not have to spend most of their time to look up dictionary concerning to the theme prior to the teaching learning process. Moreover the researcher also tried to make the students familiar with the topic of the material by asking to do homework relating to the topic for the following meeting. It could be effectively helped the students since the students had already had the rude version.

4. The analysis of the Post-Test Cycle II
The post-test II was administered to the students in order to measure whether the ‘DRTA Strategy’ could improve the students’ achievement in reading comprehension or not. The mean score of the reading comprehension achievement obtained by the students was 8.33 (good). The improvement reflected that after the strategy was implemented. Based on the gradually increasing points of the students’ mean score. It could be concluded that ‘DRTA Strategy’ could improve the student’s reading comprehension from insufficient to very good.

The result of the students’ proficiency after being given treatments twice could be seen in appendix 13.

From the result of the post-test II, it could be seen clearly that the achievement of the students in reading comprehension was 75.9 (good). In other words, the students had achieved the target score.

While from the result of the questionnaire, some reflections could be made as the following.

For items number 1, 2 and 3 which deal with the students’ attitude as to how to find main idea, the factual detail and the word meaning, it was indicated that 9 (25%) of the subjects felt difficult in finding main idea, 8 (27.7%) of the subject felt difficult in finding word meaning. This fact has suggested that the specific treatment was given by the researcher could minimize the student’s difficulty in comprehending the text.

For items number 4, 5 and 6 which deal with the student’s motivation in reading text, in making prediction and in understanding the passage, it was indicated that 6 (15.8%) of the subjects were unmotivated in making prediction of the text, and 11 (28.9%) of the subjects were unmotivated in understanding the text. As such, the DRTA Strategy was assumed to be effective for motivating the students in comprehending the content of the text.

For items number 7 and 8 which asked whether the subject were interested or not to the application of DRTA Strategy and whether the students liked it or not, it was indicated that 2 (5.5%) or the subjects were uninterested to the application of DRTA strategy and 7 (19.4%) of the subject did not like it. This fact suggests that the majority of the students were interested to the application of DRTA strategy and the students liked it very much.
For item number 9 and 10 which asked whether the application of DRTA Strategy could help the subjects in finding the main idea or not, it was found that 8 (22.2%) of the subject answered that it was not helpful especially in their effort to find the main idea and 5 (13.8%) of the subject answered that the application of DRTA could not help them to comprehend the passage. This fact suggest that the strategy of DRTA could help them to comprehend the passage.

Seen from the mean score of the students’ profiency cycle II, that was 7.75 (good) means that the intended target score (70) had been achieved by the students. In other, the researcher would stop give treatment to the students since the students had a good achievement in reading comprehension.

5. The analysis of the Questionnaire in Cycle II

The questionnaire was administered to the students in order to tap information pertaining to the application of ‘DRTA Strategy’. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items, which were intended to tap information pertaining to the students’ attitude (item 1-3), motivation (item 4-6), interest (item 7-8), and learning style (item 9-10). Each of the item’s number had 4 options.

From the result of questionnaire given, it was clear that there were various responses given by the students for every item. In details items 1, which deals with the students’ attitude in finding the main idea of the text, indicated that 8 (22%) of the subjects felt it difficult, 5 (15%) of them felt it very difficult and 18 (50%) of the subject felt in not so difficult, and 4 (13%) of them felt it easy.

Items number 2. Which deals with the students’ attitude in finding the factual detail of the text it, indicated that 9 (25%) of them felt it difficult, 14 (40%) of them it not so difficult and 5 (15%) of them felt it easy, 4 (10%) of them felt it easy.

Item number 3, which deals with the students’ attitude in the finding word meanings of the text, indicated that 10 (30%) of the subject felt it difficult, 2 (10%) of them felt it very difficult and 14 (40%) of them felt not so difficult, and 8 (20%) of them felt it easy.

For items number 4, which asked whether the students were motivated or not in reading the text it, indicated that 7 (19%) of the subject were unmotivated, 3 (11%) of them
were strongly enough motivated 18 (50%) of the subject were motivated and 8 (20%) of them were strongly motivated.

Item number 5, which asked whether the students were motivated or not in making prediction about the text, indicated that 2 (6%) of the subject were unmotivated, 6 (18%) of them were strongly enough motivated 9 (26%) of them were motivated, and 19 (55%) of the subject were strongly motivated.

For item number 6, which asked whether the teaching and learning process with ‘DRTA Strategy;’ could motivate them to understand the passage, indicated that 8 (20%) of the subject were unmotivated to understand the passage, 11 (30%) of them were strongly enough motivated to understand the passage, and 8 (20%) of them were motivated to understand the passage, and 3 (10%) of them were very motivated to understand the passage.

Item number 7, which asked whether the students were interested or not to the application of DRTA Strategy, indicated that 5 (15%) of the subjects were uninterested, 9 (25%) of them were strongly enough interested, and 8 (20%) of the subjects were interested.

For item number 8, which asked the whether the students liked or not with the application of DRTA Strategy, indicated that 3 (11%) of the subject did not like it. 18 (50%) of them strongly enough like it, 7 (19%) of them liked it, and 8 (20%) of them liked it very much.

Item number 9, which asked about whether the application of DRTA strategy could help them to know the main idea of the paragraph, indicated that 4 (10%) of the subject answered that it was not helpful, 21 (60%) of them said that it was helpful enough, and 4 (25%) of them said that it was very helpful, 2(5%) of the subject was enough helpful.

Item number 10, which asked whether the application of the DRTA strategy could help the students to comprehend the passage, indicated that 9 (25%) of subjects answered that it could not help them to comprehend the passage, 14 (40%) of them answered that it could strongly enough help them to comprehend the passage, and 11 (30,2%) of them answered that it could help them to comprehend the passage, 2 (5%) of them answered that it could not strongly enough help them to comprehend the passage.
Discussion

As stated earlier, the main objective of the study was to improve the proficiency of the students in reading comprehension, especially comprehension of main idea, factual details and word meaning by using the ‘DRTA Strategy’. Based on the findings above, the reading comprehension proficiency had improved with the application of DRTA Strategy. The following was the detail discussion about the teaching and learning process as well as the students reading comprehension proficiency in every cycle.

In general, the student’s proficiency in reading comprehension improved through the application of the ‘DRTA Strategy’. This fact could be traced back from the teaching and learning process as well as their reading comprehension proficiency in every cycle, the respond of the class was still passive during the teaching and learning process. It might be caused by the strategy, in which it was still new for them. While in cycle II, the teaching and learning process was successfully improved during the action. It was reflected from the students’ feeling, motivation, and interest in following every step of the activities. Moreover, the students were interested in practicing the steps of ‘DRTA Strategy’ and were also well motivated to communication with each other in discussing the reading text.

The success of teaching learning process was also mainly indicated by the result of the written achievement test obtained by the student. The students were significant improvement of the students’ proficiency in reading comprehension in different cycles. The improvement of the students’ proficiency in reading comprehension was presented in graph 4.1.

Graph 4.1 General Improvement of the Students reading comprehension
The graph 4.1 above shows a continuous improvement from the Preliminary to cycle I and continued to cycle II. The students’ mean score was 6.96 (sufficient) for cycle I and 8.33 (good) for cycle II compared to 6.42 (insufficient) for Preliminary’s means score. Furthermore, general improvement of the students’ reading sub skill could be seen in graph 4.2.

Graph 4.2 General Improvement of the students reading sub skills.

The graph 4.2 clearly shows that the student’s mean score improved in all of their reading sub skills. For the comprehension of main idea, their mean score increase 13.2 points in cycle I, and it increased again 15 points in cycle II. So, the total improvement for the students’ comprehension of main idea was 27.7 point compared to the result of Preliminary. While in comprehension of factual details, the students’ mean score totally improved 27 point, in which it increased 11.2 Points in cycle I, and increased again 15.8 point in cycle II. And the students’ mean score for comprehension of word meanings increased 24.2 points in cycle I, and 10.6 points in cycle II. The total improvement was 34.8 points compared to the result of the Preliminary.

In short, the ‘DRTA Strategy’ conducted in each cycle was really helpful for the students in improving their ability to comprehend the text content. Additionally, based on the result of questionnaire obtained in cycle II, it was indicated that the application of
DRTA Strategy was helpful to improve their reading abilities. It was found that the students had great chances to communicate and interact by sharing their own abilities in discussing the reading passages.

IV. Conclusion and suggestion

1. Conclusion
The effectiveness of the strategy was obvious that it helped the students in reading comprehension. However, this was still considered unsatisfactory since the target score (70) had not been achieved. For example in the preliminary the mean score was 6.42. Then the mean score increased to 6.96 in the post-test cycle I. However, the student’s improvement further was optimized in the second cycle when the researcher modified the teaching and learning process. In the second cycle the students were arranged to work in seriously. To overcome the students, problem in finding the word meaning, the researches gave the students a list of difficult words that was found in the texts then defined the words or gave their synonyms. As a result, the mean score of the students proficiency improved to 8.33. This evidence suggested that the students had already reached the intended target score that is 7.00.

Furthermore the students had got some improvement in reading comprehension also supported by the result of the questionnaire in which the majority of students responded that the application of DRTA strategy was helpful to improve their reading skill.

More importantly it was found out that the DRTA strategy was very good for improving the student’s comprehension of main idea, factual detail and word meaning, when applied in groups rather than individually.

2. Suggestion
Considering the above mentioned points, the researcher could made suggestion as follow:

a) Reading is an active skill and also complex skill that involves linguistics and nonlinguistic factor the lecture is expected to be creative especially in finding the appropriate techniques that he or she can be us’e to help the students. Linguistic factor refer to the subject of writing external relationships the author’s intention, attitude, and viewpoint.

b) To improve student’s ability in understanding reading texts, of course the lecture should make recommended to make some modification in relation with your class room condition if it is considering necessary.

c) Directed reading thinking activity (DRTA) strategy it was highly expected to be help for teaching reading in order to improve the students reading comprehension, especially in comprehension of main idea, factual detail, and word meaning.

REFERENCES


