

## UTILIZING SHORT STORY TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT

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**Abstract:** The objectives of this research is to investigate (1) whether there is any significant difference of the students' reading comprehension after being taught through Short Story, (2) the aspects of reading is mostly affected by Short Story, and (3) the students' reaction after being taught through Short Story. The population of this research was the second year students of SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu consisting of 30 students. One group time series design was carried out to analyze the significant difference. Besides that, questionnaire and interview were given to see the students' reaction after being taught through Short Story. There were three pre-tests (T1, T2, T3) and three post-tests (T4, T5, T6) in the research. The means of the pre-tests are 52.5, 56.6, and 57. While the means of post-tests are 49, 58, and 73.1. The significant (2-tailed) value was ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), it showed that the hypothesis was accepted. The specific information was analyzed as the most increase of the five reading aspects and the students had positive reactions after being taught through Short Story. Therefore, Short Story can be applied and recommended as a material to teach English in reading class.

**Keywords:** Aspects of reading, reading comprehension, short story.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is a process that requires thought; it needs the students' ability in understanding the meaning and the main idea of the text they are reading. Clark and Silberstein (1987:21) define that reading as an active cognitive process of interacting with printed material and monitoring comprehension to establish meaning. Reading is the instant recognition of various written symbols, simultaneous association of these symbols with existing knowledge and comprehension of the information and ideas communicated.

Reading dominates the teaching material in almost English textbooks where there are some types of reading text that should be mastered by the students of Senior High School. Senior High School students should be able to use the language skills. This objective is basically the same as comprehension of reading texts where the students are faced with the text written in English then they are hoped to read it in order to gather information from it.

In general, the researcher found that students still had difficulty in comprehending the idea in reading text. There are some factors that cause the students difficulties in comprehending the text: (1) interest in material, (2) ignoring reading material, and (3) be lazy to read the text.

Moreover, reading is a process of interpreting or understanding the text in terms of the question that the reader formulates about the text (Smith: 1983). It is commonly acknowledged that reading is an active process in which the reader should formulate the brain by using his previous knowledge in order to understand

the text easily. It is supported by Mackey (1979) who said that reading is an active process. The readers form a preliminary expectation about the materials then select the fewest.

According to Nuttal (1985) there are five reading aspects (Nuttal: 1985) which help the students to comprehend the English text well, they are: main idea, specific information, references, inference, and vocabulary. Reading with comprehension one will recognize the purpose and the important point of the text besides understanding the surface meaning of the text. According to Patricia in Simanjuntak (1988: 6) understanding a text is an interactive process between the readers' background knowledge and the text.

In comprehending a text, the reader relates new information from the text being read to his previous knowledge that he has stored in his mind. Reading comprehension is a complex intellectual process involving a number of abilities. Two major abilities involve word meanings and verbal reasoning. Without words meaning and verbal reasoning, there could be no reading comprehension; without reading comprehension, there would be no reading (Brown, 1982: 6).

English syllabus in KTSP for SMA/MA students stated that English reading material should be taken from many sources. Based on the statement above, the researcher would like to solve the problem by using short story as reading material because the researcher wants to find a better material to teach reading. This material is applicable for teaching reading comprehension used in Senior High School, because short story as reading material not only entertain the

students but also give the message and information to the students from a narrative of human relationship in life.

Keegan (2003) defines short story as a narrative, rarely over 10.00 words or below 500 words, more commonly 1500-5000 words-a single-sitting read, but with enough time and weight to move the reader. In common, short story consists of about 1.500 until 5.000 words that has a clear beginning, middle, and ending. In this research, the researcher selected short story as reading material based on the criteria that short story should be matched 'the students' level and interest. Level here deals with the age of the students and theme of short story given, while interest here deals with the type of text which is narrative text.

According to School Based Curriculum (KTSP), there are many kinds of text. They are descriptive, procedure, recount, narrative, and report. A narrative is a construct created in a suitable medium (speech, writing, images) that describes a sequence of real or unreal events.

Narrative text has function to amuse, entertain and to deal with actual or various experience in different ways. It is important to know that the social function of the narrative text is to inform and entertain. Narrative text will tell the story with amusing way.

## **METHOD**

This research used One Group Time Series Design to see the significant difference before and after being taught through Short Story. Two classes were chosen; one as the try out class and the other as the experimental class. The design of the research was presented as follow;

### **T1 T2 T3 X T4 T5 T6**

Where:

T1 T2 T3 : Pre-Tests (a test that is given before the treatment is applied)

X : Treatment (teaching reading by using short story)

T4 T5 T6 : Post-Tests (a test that is given after the treatment is applied)

Hatch and Farhady (1982)

The questionnaire and interview were used in this research. The questionnaire consists of ten statements about the use of short story and interview consists of ten questions about the use of narrative text in teaching learning reading comprehension. Questionnaire and interview was given to know the students' reaction after being taught through Short Story.

The population of this research was the all second year students of SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu. Two classes were selected randomly through random probability sampling using lottery.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Before the pre-test was conducted, the researcher administered a try out test first. It was chosen randomly to analyze the reliability, level of difficulty, and

discrimination power to achieve a good instrument for this research. The number of the try out was 75 items that the time allocation was 90 minutes. Those items were in the form of multiple choices, which contained four options of answer for each (A, B, C, and D). After analyzing the data, the researcher got 15 items were bad and dropped because they did not fulfill the criteria of level of difficulty and discrimination power.

To analyze the reliability of the test, the researcher was used Split-half technique to estimate the reliability of the test and to measure the coefficient of the reliability between odd and even group, *Pearson Product Moment* formula was used. The result showed that the reliability of the test was 0.08. Then, by using *Spearman Brown's Prophecy* formula, it was found a whole item was 0.15.

The purpose of conducting the pre-tests was to identify students' reading comprehension achievement before the treatment. The material used text book. The means of pre-tests was 52.5, 56.6, and 57. The highest score in pre-test 1 was 65; the lowest score was 35; the median was 50; and the mode was 50. In the pre-test 2 the highest score was 70; the lowest score was 45; the median was 55; and the mode was 55. In the pre-test 3 the highest score was 80; the lowest score was 35; the median was 55; and the mode was 55.

After implementing three treatments by utilizing Short Story, the post-tests were administered to know the students' score whether there was a significant after being taught through Short Story. The post-test items used Short Story as reading material. The means of post-tests was 49, 58, and 73.1. The highest score in post-test 1 was 65; the lowest score was 30; the median was 45; and the mode was 45.

In the post-test 2 the highest score was 75; the lowest score was 40; the median was 60; and the mode was 65. In the last post-test, the highest score was 85; the lowest score was 35; the median was 75; and the mode was 75.

Comparing the result of the pre-tests and post-test, there is an increase in the mean of students' score, even though from pre-test 1 to post-test 1 was decrease. It caused the students not adapted from text book to short story yet and the vocabulary has no develop well from the vocabulary text book to vocabulary literary text. The mean in pre-test 1 from 52.5 to 49 it was decrease. In the mean in pre-test 2 from 56.6 up to 58, and the mean in pre-test 3 from 57 up to 73.1.

According to Nuttal (1985), the content being measured was students' skill in reading comprehension, i.e. determining main idea, finding the detail information, references, inference, and understanding vocabulary. Table below provided the students' gain of each aspect in reading comprehension.

**Determining Reading Aspects**

No	Aspects of reading	Gain pre-test 1 to post-test 1	Gain pre-test 2 to post-test 2	Gain pre-test 3 to post-test 3
1	Main Idea	16	-16	35
2	Specific Information	52	30	79
3	References	15	17	65
4	Inferences	-16	54	13
5	Vocabulary	6	66	90

It can be seen that specific information has the highest increase of all. According to Nuttal (1985) states that specific information or supporting sentence develops the topic sentence by giving definitions, examples, facts, an incidents, comparison, analogy, cause and effect statistics and quotation. As Suparman (2007) states that in trying to understand the main idea contained in a text,

proficient readers may put aside or skip some details that do not directly support the understanding the main idea or which might even be confusing for the readers.

Besides that, it also shows that inference has the lowest increase of all. The skill of making inference takes an important role in comprehending a text. Suparman (2007) states that to comprehend explicitly stated information, the readers need conscious knowledge of the language and background knowledge of the topic under discussion. Inference is needed in order to make a sense of the ideas of the text.

In testing the hypothesis, *Repeated Measure* t-test was used and was also statistically tested by using statistical computerization (SPSS 17), in which the significance was determined by  $p < 0.05$ . The T-test revealed that the result was significant ( $p = 0.00$ ). Thus, there was a significant difference of the students' reading comprehension through Short Story. In other word,  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_1$  was accepted.

**Paired Samples Test**

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 pretest - posttest	-16.16667	16.33081	2.98158	-22.26469	-10.06864	-5.422	29	.000

The questionnaire and interview was conducted in the experimental class to find out the students' reaction after being taught Short Story. In the questionnaire the representative there was all of the students in the experimental class. The



questionnaire consists of ten statements about Short Story and has five answers, dislike, almost dislike, neutral, like, and strongly like. While in conducting the interview there was 10 representatives chosen randomly. The interview consists of ten questions about the use of narrative text in teaching learning reading comprehension. Every students answer based on their arguments.

From the result of questionnaire and interview, it can be concluded that teaching learning reading comprehension by utilizing short story can be used to increase students' comprehension achievement and short story gives positive effect in teaching learning activities in the class. Besides, students felt that Short Story as reading material is enjoyable and interesting.

The students more interesting to read story than read a material from the text book, and they could find a new story from those narrative text. The researcher got some findings in relation to utilizing short story as reading material on her treatments:

First, question and answer of short story to the students before implementing it as a treatment was necessary because this activity introduced the students to the short story, elicited or provided appropriate background knowledge to the students, activated the necessary schemata toward the story given.

Second, during the session of discussion, it was found out that the students enjoyed this activity and the class pays high attention to express his/her opinion about short story they read.

Third, the session of class discussion of the students' answer helped the students realize their mistakes in answering the test. This condition encouraged them to work better.

By observing the activity in the class, it was found out that the students were more enthusiastic in reading short story than reading material from their text book since short story was so much different than the reading text they usually read, it made them feel entertained and not bored especially when they read stories in theme of romance that close to their life. Since the students were enthusiastic in reading short story, the result of their reading comprehension of short story (post-tests) became higher than the result of their reading comprehension from material in their English text book (pre-tests).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

After conducting the research at the second grade of SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu and analyzing the data, the researcher draws the conclusions as follows:

1. There is a significant difference between score of the students' reading comprehension achievement before and after being taught Short Story.
2. This research was focused on five reading comprehension aspects. Then, the most increase was on getting specific information aspect and the lowest increase was inference.
3. Teaching reading through Short Story as reading material suitable to the students' level and interest because it can make the students enjoy reading comprehension activity.

Regarding the conclusions states previously, the researcher would like to propose several suggestions as follows:

1. Since short story can give better result, it is suggested that English teacher apply short story as a variation of material in teaching reading.
2. The teacher should be careful in selecting the short story. Short story given to the students' level and interest. Level here deals with the age of the students and also the theme of short story, while interest here deals with the type of the text, such as narrative text.
3. Since inference was the lowest increase of the aspects of reading comprehension, the teacher should be give more exercise about how to finding the inference.
4. Enjoyable material is suggested to be used in the classroom activity, which can increase students' eagerness and to learn new material.

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