IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH STORY GRAMMAR STRATEGY

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Abstract: Reading comprehension is a bridge to understand scientific books that is why the students of Indonesia should to understand and comprehend. The study aims to know whether story grammar strategy improve the students' reading comprehension or not. The focus of this study was the tenth grades students of SMA Negeri Bangun Jaya, X1 as experiment group and X3 as control group. The sample was chosen by the cluster sampling technique. This study was non-equivalent control group design. The data was analyzed by using pretest and posttest data. The result showed there was significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using story grammar strategy and those who were taught by using conventional strategy. The students who are taught by using story grammar strategy could improve their reading comprehension achievement significantly. Most of the students in the experimental group could share the information of the next to their classmates.

Keywords: reading comprehension, story grammar

INTRODUCTION

Today, English is very important to be mastered because most people in the world use English to communicate and absorb knowledge, culture and technology. By mastering English, students can access information written in English and promote international relations. Furthermore, the aims of learning English in Senior High School are to develop fluently and accurately the students' ability to communicate in oral and written language. Graduates of senior high school are expected to master the four English skills to reach the informational literacy level. One of the skills is reading.

According to Hill (2006) reading is the process of constructing meaning from print and from other symbols. Therefore, Gunning (1992:9) consider reading as an active constructive process with focus on the reader's experience, cultural background and point of view to determine his or her comprehension of written piece. It means that there is an interactive process between the reader and text. The teaching reading is very important part of foreign language learning because it is one of the most important academic skills in teaching and learning process (Pretorius, 2000).

Reading is important for everybody in order to cope with new knowledge in the changing world of technological age. Teaching reading is the instaneous recognition of various written symbols, simultaneous association of these symbols with existing knowledge and comprehension of the information and communicative ideas. This statement implies that teaching reading is the combination of word recognition, intellect, and emotion interrelated with prior knowledge to understand the message communicated.

Johnson (2008: 133) said that story grammar is just as sentences that have a certain grammatical structure (nouns, verbs, and the life), stories to have a structure (character, setting, a problem, and a solution / resolution). Understanding story grammar enhances students' ability to comprehend text even in stories.

Domino, Gersten, Carnine and Blake (1990) examined an interactive comprehension strategy based on schema theory and story grammar. This approach focused on identifying the important story grammar elements such as problem/conflict, main character, attempts, resolution, twist, character information, reactions, and theme. The purpose was to determine the extent to which the instructional methods improved the students' ability to answer a wide range of comprehension questions independently. The results of this study indicate that story grammar instruction significantly improved low-performing students' responses to basal, story grammar, and theme questions based on short stories and their written focused retells of them. Story grammar instruction

provided a framework that assisted students in assimilating and retaining story information. They were taught to build a foundation from which inferences could be drawn and themes determined. Providing the students with a story grammar scaffold seems to provide students with a means for retrieving relevant information and discerning relevant from unimportant information. Based on the study's finding, it was determined that explicit story grammar instruction clarifies, expands, and helps students organize ideas they intuitively have.

From this explanation, the researcher conducted the study entitled improving students' reading comprehension through story grammar strategy. This study focus on the SMA Negeri Bangun Jaya students. This story grammar can allow the students in comprehending the narrative text, story, or novel and make students curious to know more what the story tells about.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Brown (1992:2) teaching has been defined as an attempt to help someone acquire, or change, some skill, attitude, knowledge, idea or appreciation. Therefore the function of the teacher in the teaching learning process is as a director, facilitator, moderator and motivator of learning. A teacher who teaches on an individual basis may be described as a tutor. The objective is typically accomplished through either an informal or formal approach to learning, including a course of study and lesson plan that teaches skills, knowledge and/or thinking skills. When deciding what teaching method to use teachers consider

students background knowledge, environment, and their learning goals as well as standardized curricula as determined by the relevant authority. A teacher may follow standardized curricula as determined by the relevant authority. The teacher may interact with students of different ages, from infants to adults, students with different abilities and students with learning disabilities. Based on explanation above, the researcher concluded that teaching is an activity to transfer the knowledge by the teacher to the students based on the basis of national curriculum and to reach the goals of teaching.

According to Ruddel (1993:35) the most common goal of reading comprehension, the instruction of meaning that in some way corresponds to the author's intended meaning. In school, however, the reading has three goals:

1) *Learning:* students read not only to understand the text, but to extend their knowledge in subject areas as well.

2) *Increasing Reading Skills:* at each grade level, the students are expected
to become better readers and to read increasingly difficult texts.

3) *Application:* Through out middle and secondary grades, the students are expected to apply knowledge constructed from reading text.

According to Hill (2008: 176) there are three main steps in a reading lesson:

- **Before reading,** the teachers build up the students" prior knowledge and link this to the book being read. Sometimes teachers talk through the book or build up sematic webs so that the new vocabulary in the book

can be discussed and classified.

- **During reading,** teachers often use prompts to support students to problem solve and use several information sources such as the meaning, syntax to figure out the print.

- **After reading,** teachers plan a range of activities for the students to practice what they need so they can become more independent readers.

Foreign language teachers should design and prepare meaningful exercises, which will lead to assist communication between the writer and the reader. The activities should be flexible and varied. Reading comprehension activities should be chosen to suit the texts. It is fundamental to take the author's point of view into consideration for a full understanding of the text. This may be covered through open- ended questions, multiple-choice questions, true-false statements, etc. Otherwise text comprehension may simply turn into a non-linguistic activity such as matching pictures and paragraphs (Saricoban, 2002).

According to Teirney, Readence, and Dishner (1990:226) there are nine strategies which range from procedures for preparing students to read by selection: (1) graphic organizer, it can be used as pre teaching or post teaching strategy for purposes of introducing of reinforcing the key concept in a text and how they might be structured. (2) study guides, it can guide students through their content area textbook reading by focusing their attention on the major ideas presented. (3) selective reading guide, it provides the content teacher with an opportunity to guide the students to the

relevant information within the content unit. (4) guided reading procedure, it attempts to improve attitudinal and skill aspects of reading comprehension. (5) idea mapping, it is a method of spatially representing the overall structure of expository text. (6) text structure strategy, it based on the premise that if students are taught different prototypical expository structures, they can use an understanding of these structure as an idea an aid in comprehending texts that have similar structure. (7) story grammar, it provides students with a framework for identifying the plot structure and other key element of a story. (8) sentence combining, it aims at increasing the syntactic knowledge of the students. (9) cloze variation, it involves the systematic replacement of words deleted from passage. In this study, the researcher chose the story grammar strategy in teaching reading.

Story Grammar in Teaching Reading

Johnson, 2008: 133 said that story grammar is just as sentences that have a certain grammatical structure (nouns, verbs, and the life), stories to have a structure (character, setting, a problem, and a solution / resolution). Understanding story grammar enhances students" ability to comprehend text, it also can be used as a pre reading activity. Here important characters, the setting, and one or more problems are introduced.

Students are then asked to read to find out how the problem is resolved. It can be also used to provide structure for students doing book talks. Meanwhile, Short (1984) just as sentence grammar provides a way of describing how a sentence is put together, story grammar helps to specify the basic parts of a story

and how those parts tie together to form a well-constructed story. What do most well-developed stories have in common? While individual story grammars may differ somewhat, most would agree that a story's structure centers round setting and plot. The following elements are generally included in story grammar:

- a beginning or initiating event: either an idea or an action that sets further
  events into motion.
- internal response (followed by goal or problem): the character's inner reaction to the initiating event, in which the character sets a goal or attempts to solve a problem.
- attempt(s): the character's efforts to achieve the goal or alleviate the problem. Several attempts may be evident in an episode.
- an outcome(s): the success or failure of the character's attempt (s).
- resolution: the long-range consequence that evolves from the character's
  success or failure to achieve the goal or resolve the problem.
- a reaction: an idea, emotion, or a further event that expresses a story character's feelings about success or failure of goal attainment/problem resolution or that relates the event in the story to some broader set of concerns.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design that can be used in this study was non-equivalent control group design. Before the treatment, the researcher gave the pretest to the sample students. Then, the researcher gave the treatment to the

experimental group 14 times, 90 minutes per each meeting. After the treatment, the researcher gave the post-test, which was the same as the pretest.

Population

The population of this study was the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri Bangun Jaya as the populationwith the total number 170 students.

Sample

In this study, the researcher used cluster random sampling. It involves the random selection of naturally occurring groups or class and then the selection of individual elements from the chosen classes. The researcher chose cluster random sampling because the researcher argued that this type of sampling that was suitable with the condition of the population the researcher was going to take as the object of the research. In choosing the sample, the researcher wrote the name of class (XI, X2, X3, X4, and X5) in five pieces of paper. Then, they were put in a cup that was covered and hollowed out in the middle. Next, the researcher shook it and the researcher got class XI and X3. The researcher used flip of coin to choose the experimental group and control group. The head side was for experimental group and the tail side was for control group. Table 1 shows the sample of the study.

Table 1
The Sample of the Study

No	Group	Class	Male	Female	Total
1	Experimental Group	XI	23	12	35
2	Control Group	X3	23	11	34

Techniques for Collecting the Data

The test was administered twice as the pretest and posttest. The pretest would be given to find out the initial difference between experimental and control group in students" reading achievement before the treatment. The posttest would be given after the experimental class receives the treatment for certain period of time. It aimed at measuring the difference of the student's reading achievement. In Pre-test and Post-test the researcher used reading comprehension. Twenty questions were given to measure the students' reading comprehensionbefore and after the treatment. The students were given four texts and each text consists of five questions. The total questions for reading comprehension are 20 questions.The test had been tried out to students from the others school of as the sample to find out the reliability and validity of the test.

FINDINGS

The Result of the pretest and posttest of reading comprehension in the experimental group is described in table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistic of the Pretest and Posttest in the Experimental Group
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Pretest Exp	35	25	80	1820	52.00	1.989	11.770
Posttest Exp	35	50	90	2480	70.86	1.304	7.716
Valid *N* (listwise)	35						

The table provided above showed the result of pretest of the students' reading score in the experimental group. It showed that the lowest score was 25 and the highest was 80. The mean score was 52.00. Moreover, the statistical data also described the result of posttest of the students' reading comprehension score. It showed the lowest score was 50 and the highest score was 90.

The score distribution and the percentages of pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group are shown in following table and chart below.

Table 3
The Score Distribution in the Experimental group

Score Range	Category	Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very Good	1	3%	4	11%
70-79	Good	1	3%	20	57%
55-69	Average	12	34%	10	29%
40-55	Poor	15	43%	1	3%
<40	Very Poor	6	17%	0	0%

Table 9 provided above showed the percentage of pretest of the students' reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group. It showed that 17% of the 35 students were in very poor category, 43% of the 35 students were in poor category, 34% students were in average category, 3 % students were in good category, and 3% students were in very good category. It means almost students were in below average in the pretest.

Meanwhile, the percentage of posttest of the students" reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group showed that 0% student was in very poor category, 3% of the 35 students were in poor category, 29% students were in average category, 57 % students were in good category, and 11% students were in very good category. It can be concluded that there was a

progress of the students' reading scores after the treatment. However, only one student didn't have improvement after getting the treatment that was in poor category. The reasons why he was different from the others were: he didn't like learning English so that he didn't focus on the researcher's explanation and

he thought about the next activity for him because he joined basketball club in that school and this club met and practiced together after the time of treatment was up.

The Result of the pretest and posttest of reading text in the control group is described in table 4.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistic of the Pretest and Posttest in the Control Group
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Max	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Pretest Control	34	35	60	1645	48.38	1.262	7.357
Posttest Control	34	45	70	1895	55.74	1.197	6.977
Valid N (listwise)	34						

The table provided above showed the result of pretest of the students' reading score in the control group. It showed that the lowest score was 35 and the highest was 60. The mean score was 48.38. Moreover, the statistical data also described the result of posttest of the

students' reading score. It showed the lowest score was 45 and the highest score was 70.

The score distribution and the percentages of pretest and posttest scores in the control group are shown in table 5:

Table 5
The Score Distribution in the Control group

Score Range	Category	Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very Good	0	0%	0	0%
70-79	Good	0	0%	3	9%
55-69	Average	5	15%	10	29%
40-55	Poor	27	79%	21	62%
<40	Very Poor	2	6%	0	0%

The table 5 provided above showed the percentage of pretest and posttest of the students' reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group. The percentage of pretest showed that 6% of the 35 students were in very poor

category, 79% of the 35 students were in poor category, 15% students were in average category, 0% student was in good category, and 0% student was in very good category.

Meanwhile, the percentage of

posttest of the students' reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group showed that 0% student was in very poor category, 62% of the 35 students were in poor category, 29% students were in average category, 9 % students were in good category, and 0% student was in very good category. It can be concluded that the students' reading comprehension achievement below average even in pretest and posttest.

DISCUSSION

Both experimental and control groups achieved significant difference in reading achievement. It was found that, the experimental group got better reading comprehension achievement it was compared to the students in control group. Furthermore, in the setting of experimental group, the students could read and comprehend the detail information from the text, apply their comprehension in sharing information to each other, and find the answer to each question they formed.

The researcher literature suggests a number of reasons why the experimental group students might have been successful. For example, the students could comprehend better, concentrate better, retain better, and have a tool for efficient learning (Shelton, 1999), and the students were provided organization and repetition that brain needed to put information into long tern memory (Ameer, 1992).

There were some reasons why story grammar strategy gave significant contribution to help the students in comprehending the text. Firstly, based on the observation during the learning process, the researcher saw the students in the experimental group were very active in telling what they have known about the text given. They could fill the chart of the story grammar and answer the questions completely and correctly after the researcher explained story grammar strategy. The students in the experimental group were given and asked to read sometexts and by using those, the students used story grammar strategy to answer some questions related to the story in that text. The different achievement also might be caused by the different teaching strategy used by the experimental and control group. The experimental group students used story grammar strategy, whereas the control group student only used conventional strategy.

The secondly, story grammar strategy could be affectively in improving the students' reading comprehension achievement. Most of the tenth grade students in the experimental group had better development and improvement, one of the factors that made the result of students' posttest higher compared to the result of the students' pretest was because of the similar questions related to the story grammar strategy in the posttest when the students apply the story grammar strategy.

The thirdly, the story grammar strategy made students enjoying and interesting in learning reading. In the applying the treatment, the researcher divided them into a group. It made them interesting and enjoy the learning process because they didn't work alone.

The findings data showed that the students' reading comprehension achievement gained significantly progress. The students in the experimental

group got a better progress in the reading comprehension achievement than those of the students in the control group. From the result analysis, it showed that before treatment the students' reading comprehension achievement in the experimental group was still low which was not big difference with the mean score of the students' pretest in the control group. After the treatment, the researcher got the results of posttest of the experimental group. From the data gathered, the students' posttest scores of the reading comprehension achievement got some difference. The mean score of the posttest was higher than the mean score in the pretest, so it showed a good progress.

CONCLUSION

Firstly, there was significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the students who were taught by using story grammar strategy and those who were taught by using conventional strategy. It can be seen from the scores of posttest in the experimental score and control group.

Secondly, the story grammar strategy significantly affected the students in comprehending. It can be seen from the analysis of the data gathered during the experiment and after the experiment. The students who are taught by using story grammar strategy could improve their reading comprehension achievement significantly. Most of the students in the experimental group could share the information of the next to their classmates.

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