

Literacy Lessons and a Reading Contest to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension (A Case of Students in an Indonesian Senior High School, SMAN 1 Soe)

Yabes Olbata

STKIP Soe

yabesolbata@gmail.com

Marike Nelwan

SMA Negeri 1 Soe

marikelennv@gmail.com

Getreda Y Oematan

SMA Negeri BenlutuS

oematanyosmi13@gmail.com

Abstract

Teaching and learning is a good way to reach the educational goals. This is a classroom action research. The objective of this study was finding out how reading literacy improve students' comprehension. This study used mix method design. The instruments used were test. The data of this study were collected through spreading questionnaires and doing interviews. The result of the study showed reading literacy could improve students' comprehension. The data analysis showed that there was a significant improvement of students' comprehension in cycle I compared to cycle II. It was because reading literacy could facilitate students in identifying problems, brain storming, analyzing, formulating problems, and presenting well.

Keywords: *students' comprehension, reading literacy, literacy implementation.*

Introduction

Nowadays, the process of teaching and learning has a really good effect on the students' achievement. Students' achievement can be measured by their grades when they are doing a class test (daily test), semester test, even in the national exam. By knowing their grade, student will exactly know their ability in learning certain materials in a subject or lesson. There are some indicators that can be used by students to reach their grade. One effort that is done by the students in order to get good grade is by reading a lot. The ability to read and process information is a necessary part of our educational experience. The teaching of reading and writing is key for the formation of literacy for students since they attend school starting from lower level to higher level of education. Literacy is now, more than ever, essential for basic survival on a day-to-day basis. The student that struggles to read will struggle in all subject areas, affecting and perhaps perpetuating a negative attitude towards reading and school in general.

An early introduction to reading before the elementary school years can greatly increase literacy development and reading comprehension. Literacy scholars advocate that reading since early childhood helps prepare them for greater success in school (Anderson & Cheung, 2003). When a child does not have this early introduction to reading from their parents or primary caregivers, the child is essentially behind coming into school. Moreover, an early introduction to reading fosters the development of a positive attitude towards reading (Lawson, 2012). But, when a child comes into the elementary school setting with no prior experiences with reading: the school, teachers, and principal need to be very aware of the different interventions to use to educate the child in reading comprehension and literacy development. Educational leaders must address the needs of families, even before the children reach school age, to ensure the academic success of all students.

Literacy activities so far are identical with reading and writing activities, but literacy actually involves how someone communicates with the surrounding environments. Thus, literacy also has a meaning to the social relationship including knowledge, language and culture. UNESCO mentions that information literacy is the ability to identify, determine, find, evaluate, and effectively create information to solve various problems happen in real life. Those kinds of abilities are needed to be owned by everyone as an important part to participate and live as human who learns to create good communication with others.

School literacy activity is an effort or activity which is done in school involving not only the students but also the teachers as the school members. This activity needs collaboration from many school elements in order to achieve the goals of education based on 2013 national curriculum. In order to reach the education goals, literacy is implemented through reading in which students are demand to read the materials for 15 minutes before starting the lesson. Teachers are also need to spend 15 minutes to read the materials before teaching the students. Since the teachers and students do this activity for a long time, then it will be a good habit for school members in improving their knowledge and ability in absorbing and understanding every material that is going to be learned.

In implementing school literacy, there should be a fix schedule which is done to assess the impact of its implementation. By doing so, the school members will find out the result in implementing school literacy from time to time where all activities related to literacy can be improved to be an integral part of human life. In this case, literacy is more than reading and writing in which it includes the ability of how to think critically using the sources of knowledge in any form in order to face the competition era (globalization era) that is going towards the information literacy.

Education should be equitable with the demand of globalization era recently where the students' needs become the main reason for achieving educational goals. Research indicates that students with pre-reading promotion in the school environment have an educational advantage once they begin elementary school. Previous studies have been conducted to determine how teachers in SMA Negeri 1 Soe implement school literacy through reading in order to improve students' understanding towards the lesson taught in classrooms. This is an important thing that happens to the school setting which is based on what is stated by the experts on the role of school literacy towards the students' success in achieving good grade as the result of its implementation in that directly affects student literacy. "Understanding the role of school literacy practices in children's language and literacy development during the preschool years has important implications for children's later literacy success" (Roberts, 2005, p.48).

Literacy viewed as a comprehensive set of skills involving the ability to use and comprehend printed information (Athanasou, 2011). There is a need for teachers to value and build what students know and can do. There is also a need to develop intellectually challenging and connected learning opportunities that account for the rapid change of communication practices in classroom teaching and learning. Besides, there is a need to build teachers' role for applying approaches to the teaching of literacy in the classroom or even in the whole school. These practices should include a balance of skills including the systematic teaching of reading, writing, spelling and pronunciation, and the whole-language approaches such as; the scaffold and contextualized teaching of reading comprehension. The integration of comprehensive approaches to the teaching of literacy in the curriculum based on explicit instruction enables the students to read, speak, listen, and write in order to shape the habits for learning in and out of school.

Reading has some different meanings based on the goals of the readers. Reading is a process which is done by the readers in order to get the message which is delivered by the writers through a piece of writing (Tarigan 2008). Sathono and Slamet 2014 argued that reading activity is a process done by someone based on the collaboration of some skills such as; observing, understanding, and thinking. Therefore, reading skill is closely related with these three skills. Reading also defined as a complex activity by giving most of the attention and action which involve understanding, imagination, observation and memorization.

On the other hand, reading is a cognitive process or activity in the form of finding many kinds of information which are written in a text. This means that, reading is a thinking process to understand and interpret the content of a text (Dalman, 2013). Comprehending something which is written in a text becomes the main goal of reading because by doing so, the readers will automatically recognize the main idea of a text whether it is written or not because comprehension is the only way to be used as a product measured in reading.

Based on the definition of reading stated above, it can be concluded that reading is a cognitive activity that is done by the readers to comprehend messages, opinions, ideas, and everything which is delivered by the writers in a piece of writing. The comprehension toward the content of the text becomes the result which is gained through reading activity. So, good reading skill can improve someone's understanding towards everything that is written by the writers when it is done continually and regularly. Above all these activities, something really important that needs carefully attention is the goals of reading. There are many goals of reading depends on the needs and the reading materials. Someone who reads by a clear goal of reading will understand more what is read compared to someone who reads without any purpose or goal.

There are some aspects need to be noticed when reading a text. According to Broughton (in Tarigan 2008), there are two important aspects in reading namely mechanical skills that is considered to be the lower level in reading. For instance the ability to recognize the letters, the ability to figure out the linguistic features and the ability to comprehend and identify the reading form. Another important aspect in reading is comprehension skills which becomes the higher level or higher order in reading. This aspect includes the ability to understand the simplest, significances or meaning, evaluation, and the flexibility of reading speed.

In relation to the level of reading understanding, reading ability is categorized into four level or categories namely; literal understanding, imperative understanding, critical understanding, and creative understanding. Literal understanding deals with how do readers understand the symbols of language in a text. Imperative understanding is an understating that is higher than literal understanding where in this level the readers will catch the message conveyed in the text. Critical understanding is a reading level higher than imperative understanding in which in this level, the readers not only able to interpret the meaning or message conveyed in the text but also the readers will analyze and make a synthesis from the information obtained through the text read. The highest understanding level is creative understanding in which in this level the readers will do an experiment in order to create something new based on what is understood based on the text they are reading (Stevens,et al 2013).

Methodology

Participants

The English teachers in SMA Negeri 1 Soe teaching English in grade 10 participated in this study. Given that the selection of the subject is an important step in conducting research, there were 5 English teachers and 32 students taking part in this study. They all have experience in the implementation of reading literacy in SMA Negeri 1 Soe.

Research Design

The design of the research was a form of qualitative research because it focused on figuring out and describing the way teachers in SMA Negeri 1 Soe implemented reading literacy in order to improve students' reading comprehension. Cresswell (1994: 145) stated that one of the purposes of qualitative research is to understand the participants' point of view of the events, situation and action that they are involved and of the explanation that they give about their lives and experiences. In relation to research design, Nunan (1993: 2- 3) defines research as a process of formulating questions, or problems, or hypotheses.

Data and data collection

There are three elements that are proposed by Nunan such as; problem, data, and data analysis and interpretation. Any activity which lacks one of these elements should be classified as other than research. In this study the design will be employed to get the depth understanding towards the implementation of reading literacy which gives impacts on students' learning achievements in order to reach educational goals.

Unit of Analysis

Some things analyzed in this research were how do teachers implement reading literacy in teaching and learning process, what are the problems faced by teachers in implementing reading literacy, how do teachers cope with the problems faced, and what are the impacts of reading literacy implementation towards students' learning achievements

Findings and Discussions

Students' learning result on the pre-test

Before implementing reading literacy to improve the students' reading comprehension, the students were given pre-test that aimed at finding out the initial ability in reading comprehension. The result of pre-test showed that only 1 student who got good score which was 82 while 4 students got 68, 6 students got 50, 17 students got 35, and 4 students good poor grade where they only got 15. The result of the pre-test analysis was shown in the table below.

Table 1. Students' pre-test result analysis

No	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	81 - 100	1	3. 13%
2	61 – 80	4	12. 50%
3	41 – 60	6	18. 75%
4	21 – 40	17	53. 12%
5	0 - 20	4	12. 50%
Total		32	100%

After analyzing the result of students' scores in the pre-test, the researcher did an observation to see the students' activities in joining the literacy implementation. Below is the result of observation done when implementing literacy in the classroom in order to improve the students' reading comprehension.

Description and Data Analysis Result of Cycle 1

Observation Result of Students' activity

The observation was done towards the students' individual activities in small group and bigger group by looking at the frequency of the students' individual in the classroom when the reading literacy was implemented. The

following was the observation result of the implementation of reading literacy in cycle 1 to improve students' reading comprehension during 4 x 30 minutes (4 meetings).

Table 2. Result of Students' Observation in cycle 1.

The students' activities	M 1 F	M 1 P	M 2 F	M 2 P	M 3 F	M 3 P	M 4 F	M 4 P
Clarifying unfamiliar term	20	62.05%	22	68.75%	24	75.0%	26	81.25%
Problem definition	20	62.05%	21	65.62%	23	71.87%	26	81.25%
Brain storming	30	93.75%	31	96.87%	32	100%	32	100%
Analyzing the problems	19	59.37%	21	65.62%	23	71.87%	25	78.12%
Formulating learning issues	18	56.25%	19	59.37%	21	65.62%	24	75.0%
Reporting	20	62.05%	21	65.62%	22	68.75%	23	71.87%
Finding main topic	18	56.25%	19	59.37%	21	65.62%	24	75.0%
Average	21	65.62%	22	68.75%	23.7	74.06%	25.7	80.31%

Description: M=Meeting, F=Frequency, P=Percentage

Based on the observation result in cycle 1, it could be seen that there was improvement of students' reading comprehension after implementing reading literacy. It was shown by the score gained in meeting I with the average score was 21 or 65.62%, the average score of meeting II was 22 or 68.75%, the average score of meeting III was 23.7 or 74.06%, and the average score of meeting IV was 25.7 or 80.31%.

Students' Reading Post-Test result

After implementing reading literacy, then post-test was done to see the improvement of students' reading comprehension in four meetings. The competency and reading level of difficulty in post-test I was the same as post-test II by giving different reading text. It could be seen that the mean score of post-test I was 70.03%. The result was shown in the following table.

Table 3. The result of Students' Score on Post-Test 1

No	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	81 - 100	10	31.25%
2	61 - 80	10	31.25%
3	41 - 60	7	21.87%
4	21 - 40	4	12.50%
5	0 - 20	1	3.13%
Total		32	100%

The result of post-test I showed that there was improvement on students' reading comprehension on reading. The result of post-test I improved compared to the pre-test result after the implementation of reading literacy in 4 meetings.

Reflection of Cycle 1

Based on the data gained through the result of pre-test and post-test I there was an improvement of students' reading comprehension after implementing the reading literacy. The average score of post-test I was 70.03% while the average score of pre-test was 45.81.

The average improvement of the pre-test was significant compared to the average score which was 24.22 but the treatment will be continued to the cycle II because the result of cycle I post-test has not reach the in criteria of basic standard yet which was 78.

The observation result towards the students showed that most of the students have not implemented yet based on the standard of reading literacy actively during the implementation of reading literacy in the process of teaching and learning. Based on this result then it can be concluded that the research was continued to cycle II. There were some important aspect that become the main consideration in order to do cycle II namely; reading literacy was implemented as usual, teachers needed to explain the materials before the class begin, the students needed some stimulus before learning, students need to be assisted to work in group, students need analyze and solve the problems they identify in learning process, and intensive guidance for every group need to be improved especially in finding and using learning resources.

Description and Data Analysis Result of Cycle 2

Observation Result of Students' activity

The observation was continued on students' individual activities when reading literacy was implemented. The observation focus was still on the students' individual activity frequency of the implementation of reading literacy on learning and teaching process in the classroom. The following was the observation result of the implementation of reading literacy in cycle 1 to improve students' reading comprehension during 4 x 30 minutes (4 meetings).

Table 4. Result of Students' Observation in cycle 2

The students' activities	M 1 F	M 1 P	M 2 F	M 2 P	M 3 F	M 3 P	M 4 F	M 4 P
Clarifying unfamiliar term	28	87.05%	29	90.62%	31	96.87%	32	100%
Problem definition	30	93.57%	32	100%	32	100%	32	100%
Brain storming	26	81.25%	26	81.25%	30	93.57%	30	93.57%
Analyzing the problems	24	75.00%	26	81.25%	28	87.05%	30	93.57%
Formulating learning issues	24	75.00%	25	78.25%	27	84.37%	31	96.87%
Reporting	24	75.00%	26	81.25%	28	87.05%	30	93.57%
Finding main topic	25	78.25%	27	84.37%	27	84.37%	32	100%

Description: M=Meeting, F=Frequency, P=Percentage

Based on the observation result in cycle 2, it could be seen that there was improvement of students' reading comprehension after implementing reading literacy. It was shown by the score gained in meeting I, II, III and IV where the students' score was improved in every meeting. The aspects of reading literacy which become the indicators that the students learned during reading literacy implementation mostly completed or reached well. This showed that the reading literacy implementation in teaching and learning process was succeeded.

Students' Reading post-test Result Cycle 2

Looking from the result in cycle I, the researcher did some revision and continued to implement reading literacy in cycle II. Cycle II was done in 4 meetings. The competence and questions level of difficulty in the second cycle were same as the first cycle where the numbers of questions were 40 and 4 texts. The following was the table that show the post-test result of cycle II.

Table 5. The result of Students' Score on Post-Test 2

No	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	81 - 100	14	43.75%
2	61 - 80	13	40.63%
3	41 - 60	5	15.62%
4	21 - 40	0	0
5	0 - 20	0	0
Total		32	100%

The table above showed that the implementation of reading literacy could improve students' reading comprehension. Based on the classification of students' comprehension it could be seen that 14 students were on the level of excellent, 13 students were on the level of good and 5 students were on the moderate level. It could be concluded that reading literacy implemented by the teacher in the classroom when teaching and learning process could improve students' comprehension in learning.

Research Reflection Result

Based on the data and analysis of the observation result, it could be seen that the students were active in learning process especially in reading literacy because the students were mostly got perfect grade on the test.

The result of post text in cycle II was better than the result of post-test in cycle I. in cycle II the students more comprehend the procedures and steps in reading literacy so they were really active in learning process compared to their activity in cycle I. When doing presentation, everyone in the group was working well because everyone presented their material well in a good way. It meant that all group members were actively participated in formulating, analyzing and finding solution to solve the problem.

It was very clear that the implementation of reading literacy help the students to improve their comprehension in learning process. The improvement could be seen by the result of cycle I and cycle II were the students grade were improved from cycle I to cycle II.

Conclusion and Suggestion

After the implementation of the reading literacy, there were some improvements in the teaching and learning process of reading as well as the students' reading comprehension. The findings of the research in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 were presented below.

1. The implementation of the reading literacy improved students' participation. The students were encouraged to be active in giving their ideas. They discussed their reading and used the strategies of predicting, organizing, searching, summarizing, and evaluating to comprehend the text.
2. The implementation of the reading literacy improved students' interaction. The steps of the strategy were conducted both in individual and in group. These activities allowed students to interact with their classmates. The researcher also could interact closely with the students when she gave guidance and assistance during the discussion activities.
3. The implementation of the reading literacy improved students' reading comprehension. It helped the students read strategically and allowed them to have practice in predicting the text, organizing the prediction, searching the main ideas of each paragraph, summarizing the text, and evaluating their understanding by implementing reading literacy.

In brief, students' reading comprehension improved as displayed in the increase of the gain score gained by seeing the mean score of the post-test in cycle I and the mean score of the post-test in cycle 2.

There were some suggestion to the English teachers namely; English teachers should be more creative in choosing the activities. The teachers should know what students need to improve students' weakness. If they want to use the reading literacy, they should consider the situation of the class so that they can manage the class well. They also should consider on the topic of the text that influences students' enthusiasm in reading.

The students should manage themselves to always have positive attitude toward English lesson. They should know what is really important for them to comprehend the text. Always practicing and equipping the right reading strategies are useful to comprehend the text better and improve their vocabulary. Furthermore, they should participate more active in the process of teaching and learning. They should also manage themselves to work in pairs, in groups, or individually.

This research only deals with the implementation of reading to improve students' reading comprehension. Therefore, it is suggested that the other researchers may explore this strategy using different type of research such as experimental or correlational ones.

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