

IMPROVING READING SKILL THROUGH THE USE OF DIRECTED READING-THINKING ACTIVITY (DR-TA) STRATEGY FOR THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP NURUL JADID BATAM

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to improve the students' reading skill through the use of DR-TA strategy for the eighth grade students of SMP Nurul Jadid Batam. The data were collected through classroom observations and students and English teacher interviews. The data were in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, and pictures. The research instruments for collecting the data were observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and a camera. To overcome the problems, some actions were implemented 1) using pictures as learning media in the beginning of the lesson, and 2) conducting DR-TA strategy. There were two cycles of this study. The results of the first cycle showed that the implementation of the actions did not reach maximum results to improve students' reading skill. There were some aspects that still needed some improvement. The results of the second cycle showed that the implementation of the actions could improve students' reading skill. The indicators of success of the implementation of the actions were 1) students were more interested in studying English and 2) students' reading scores increased from cycle one to cycle two.

Key words: Reading Comprehension, DR-TA Strategy.

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Introduction

Studying English is not easy for Indonesian students because English and Indonesian are very different in terms of spelling, sounds and pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. The students often find difficulties in understanding the content of English texts that they read. There are many factors causing the low reading ability of the students. It can be caused by internal factors (by the students themselves) and external factors such as the teacher and teaching technique used by the teacher. In Indonesia, some English teachers still use traditional or conventional methods to teach reading. A conventional method usually makes students reluctant to learn because the method is monotonous. Besides, the students are not so active; they easily get bored. One of the ways to make the teaching reading effective is by making them active – making them enjoy learning – so that they can improve their reading skill.

The students' way of learning can influence their reading comprehension. Based on the pre-observation in SMP Nurul Jadid Batam, students worked individually, therefore they found difficulties in understanding the materials given by the teacher because there was no interaction or discussion in comprehending the text. In reference to the problems above, the researcher intended to assist students of SMP Nurul Jadid Batam in maximizing their comprehension ability in reading process. Through various reading activities and strategies, it was expected that the students could improve their comprehension ability in reading. Therefore, a method or technique that facilitates the implementation of various reading activities and strategies was needed in the teaching of reading.

To investigate the problems, the researcher observed the eighth grade English reading class in SMP Nurul Jadid Batam and interviewed the English teacher and the students. The interviews were done after the classroom observation. From those actions, it was revealed

that the problems during the reading class were affected by three major categories. They were the students' reading skill, the teaching and learning activities of reading in the class and the use of media. Problems in this study were restricted into two major problems. The first problem was related to the teacher. The second problem was related to the students. This study aimed at improving eighth grade students' reading skill of SMP Nurul Jadid Batam through the use of DR-TA strategy.

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) strategy is the teaching of reading strategies developed by Russell Stauffer. DR-TA strategy is used in each of the three stages of reading: before reading, while reading, and after reading. It can be implemented both in groups and individually. In DR-TA strategy, predictions play an important role to provide learners with reading purposes. The teacher can raise questions that help learners activate their prior knowledge and uses clues such as the title and pictures from the text to stimulate the learners to make an accurate prediction.

The teacher should also pre-teach vocabulary because vocabulary is considered important to support learners making an accurate prediction of the text. DRTA strategy can be adapted for any material and any level of difficulty and may be used for both group and individual use (Vacca & Vacca in Renn, 1999:22). The value of Directed Reading-Thinking Activity strategy is making predictions before reading each section (Odwan, 2012:141). This value is linear with the process of acquiring comprehension that is activating learners' background knowledge and experiences. Learners are encouraged to use context and clues and to set up the purpose of reading.

In implementing DR-TA strategy, readers should make predictions before reading a text. To make predictions, they should use any hint that they find in the text and their background knowledge of the text. Then, their reading purpose is to find whether their predictions about the text are accurate or not. In addition, DR-TA strategy is also beneficial to improve learners' reading skill especially in recognizing the relationship among segments or paragraphs that related to cohesive aspect in reading.

Research Method

This study was action research. The researcher collaborated with the English teacher as a research member. This research focused on the use of DR-TA strategy to improve the students' reading skills. Progress and changes during the research were rigorously observed. The research design consisted of four steps. The first step was diagnosing step. It involved naming the issues. All the problems needed to be recorded clearly. The second step was planning actions. It enabled the researcher to formulate and develop possible actions to solve identified problems. Collaboration in planning action was highly emphasized. The third step was taking actions. It was the step where plans were put into practice. The last step was evaluating actions whereby outcomes of actions were analyzed. This research took place in SMP Nurul Jadid which was located on Bengkong Laut, Batam, Kepulauan Riau. The school was a private school that had six classes with two classes for each grade. The school provided students with complete facilities. The research was conducted for one month from October 2015 to November 2015.

Findings and Discussion

Reflection in Cycle 1 and 2 was made based on results from transcripts of interviews with the English teacher as the collaborator and the learners, field notes as well as the comparison between learners' mean score in the pre-test and post-test. Those results highlighted the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities of reading using DR-TA strategy from the point of learners' reading comprehension ability and learners' participation. As it was explained in the previous section, the activities of DR-TA strategy implemented in

this research consisted of three stages, namely *predicting*, *reading* and *proving/disproving* the prediction.

In the predicting stage, learners were expected to be able to make predictions related to the parts of the text given and to present their prediction in front of the class. They also compared their prediction with other groups. In fact, the implementation of DR-TA strategy in this stage had not run as it was planned. In the reading stage, the learners read a part of the text that was predicted in the previous stage. This reading was meant to find some information within the text which later would be either proved or disproved. The students were then asked to read their prediction aloud. However, they were reluctant to do so. In the proving/disproving stage, the learners were expected to be able to prove or disprove their predictions using information that they found after reading. However, like in the previous two stages of DR-TA strategy, there were a few learners who participated in the discussion activity in proving or disproving predictions. In addition, in relation to the learners' reading skill, the learners still had problems in proving and disproving the predictions.

Conclusion

To solve the problems in the teaching and learning process of reading, the researcher implemented DR-TA strategy in the teaching and learning process. The results indicated that the use of media such as pictures in the beginning of the lesson helped learners to focus on the topic and the researcher's explanation easily. DR-TA strategy successfully facilitated learners in identifying information within the text through making predictions, reading and confirming their predictions. Pre-teaching vocabulary and prediction activities helped the learners to recognize clues, to guess, and to understand unfamiliar words from the context. Group discussion helped learners to actively participate during the reading class. The number of classroom interaction also increased. It could be seen from the learners' participation in the class that increased, learners' ability to complete tasks within given time, and decreasing number of learners who asked "What is the instruction?" or "What should we do now?". The use of the technique decreased the number of learners who make noise during the lesson. The students' scores improved from cycle one to cycle two.

References

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