



Improving Reading Comprehension Through the Use of Extensive Reading in the Teaching of Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate students reading comprehension through the use of extensive reading in teaching at MTs. Fatahillah, South Jakarta. Using a qualitative research approach with a case study method, data was collected through questionnaires and interviews from 24 students. The results showed that students experienced anxiety when not understanding all the words in the text and felt doubtful whether they understood the content of the reading. However, students agreed that reading has benefits in shaping personality, although their speed reading ability still needs to be improved. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in creating a comfortable reading environment and motivating students through interesting reading materials, such as novels and comics. This research provides new insights for educators in addressing the challenges of teaching extensive reading, which can help improve students' overall reading skills.

Keywords: reading, comprehension, extensive reading, teaching

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pemahaman membaca siswa melalui penggunaan membaca ekstensif dalam pengajaran di MTs. Fatahillah, Jakarta Selatan. Menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara dari 24 siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami kecemasan ketika tidak memahami semua kata dalam teks dan merasa ragu apakah mereka memahami isi bacaan. Namun, siswa setuju bahwa membaca memiliki manfaat dalam membentuk kepribadian, meskipun kemampuan membaca cepat mereka masih perlu ditingkatkan. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya peran guru dalam menciptakan lingkungan membaca yang nyaman dan memotivasi siswa melalui bahan bacaan yang menarik, seperti novel dan komik. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru bagi para pendidik dalam mengatasi tantangan pengajaran membaca ekstensif, yang dapat membantu meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa secara keseluruhan.

Keywords: membaca, pemahaman, membaca ekstensif, pengajaran

Page | 137

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of communication with others using symbols, paired words, and thoughts. It can be used in various forms, especially through oral and written communication and using sign language.

According to Brown (2007, p.384), "language is a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings using conventional signs, sounds, gestures, or signs that have understandable meanings," Every human being, society, ethnic group, and even country in the world has its own language. The Republic of Indonesia has many regional languages, but there is only one national language, namely Indonesian. Indonesia as a developing country that plays a role in the international community needs to be able to speak international languages.

Language is both a skill and a means of communication. When people communicate by speaking, there are people who listen. When someone writes something,



it is assumed that there are people who read it. Speaking, listening, writing, and reading are the four language skills that must be mastered by everyone who learns a language.

The United Nations states that there are six international languages used for international communication. These languages are English, Arabic, French, Russian, Chinese, and Spanish. We can choose these languages to communicate in this era of globalization. However, most people in this world use English as their official language. English has become an international language, especially after the second world war and more than a million people use it as their first, second, or third language worldwide.

English is used by many people universally because it is the language of choice for international communication or the language of social life. On the other hand, English is also the language of globalization, such as in business, politics, and diplomacy. In addition, we need language skills to study science, computers, and the internet which mostly use English. So, every nation in this universe, like it or not, if they want to be successful, they must master English well.

In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language subject taught from elementary school to university. Based on KTSP 2006 (Teaching Unit Level Curriculum), four skills must be mastered by students in learning English, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. So, these four skills are called the four language skills. All of these skills must be practiced by students in their learning process, both inside and outside the classroom.

Reading is one of the English skills that must be mastered by students at every level of education. Reading is an important skill not only in learning a language but also in understanding other subjects. Without reading, our lives will be colorless.

Reading activities help and increase students' insight, so that it will grow human civilization in the future. A nation that implements reading activities as a good culture will experience progress in every line of life. Japan is one example.

Teachers should know the best teaching techniques to develop students' reading comprehension, such as using extensive and intensive reading for students' reading activities both inside and outside the classroom. Reading cannot be separated from other skills if students want to communicate in their target language. That is, all skills in a language must be supported by each other's skills in acquiring a language.

According to Harmer (1998), reading is beneficial for language acquisition. Reading also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary, spelling, and writing skills. Because reading is the main thing in learning a language, English is not the only language we need to master, for example in mastering Arabic, French, Javanese, Mandailing, and so on. Reading can provide us with a lot of information and knowledge to improve our English skills. A lot of practice is needed to help students learn their target language.

Teachers must find the best strategy in developing students' reading skills. A teacher must know the purpose of the subject matter before explaining the subject matter to students. This is used to help students understand the subject matter so that they can understand the nature of learning.

In explaining reading comprehension, teachers can apply extensive reading. Extensive reading is one way to teach reading (Yamashita, 2004). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), "extensive reading means reading in quantity and to gain a general understanding of what is read."

The main activity of reading lessons is that students read texts without listening to teachers, without answering reading comprehension questions, without writing answers to comprehension questions, without discussing the contents of the text (Day, 2002). Day and Bamford (1998, as cited by Huang, 2015) argue that attitudes toward reading in a second language can greatly affect students' desire and motivation to read in a second language. If





students fail to have a positive attitude toward reading in a second language, they will not be motivated to read in a second language.

Extensive reading is one of the techniques to build students' skills in understanding the contents of learning texts. This means that teachers follow students in choosing reading materials freely, so that students gain a general understanding of the text they want to read. In addition, teachers must foster students' motivation in studying reading by preparing interesting assignments and tests. Students will automatically build their abilities if they enjoy studying the subject matter according to their interests or desires.

However, motivation is very important for teachers and students in teaching and learning activities. Students will succeed if they have the best motivation in doing this reading activity. Students will easily understand the material when they are relaxed. Teachers must have the best motivation so that they will help students to master their subjects by preparing interesting assignments, exams, and also activities in each English skill.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. This study aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of students' reading comprehension through the use of extensive reading at MTs Fatahillah, South Jakarta. Data were collected through three main techniques, namely questionnaires, interviews, and document studies. Questionnaires were used to evaluate students' perceptions of extensive reading, while interviews explored students' experiences and views on the reading activity. In addition, document studies were conducted by analyzing available reading materials, such as story books and novels, which students used to support the learning process.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively through steps such as data recognition, coding, and theme grouping. The validity of the study was enhanced using the triangulation method, namely by combining the results of questionnaires, interviews, and document studies. The case study approach was chosen because this study focuses on a particular context, namely a group of students in the school, with the aim of exploring an in-depth understanding of extensive reading learning. This approach allows researchers to gain a more holistic insight into the role of extensive reading in improving students' reading comprehension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the existence of students' anxiety in understanding English texts, which is relevant to the Affective Filter Hypothesis theory by Krashen (1982), which states that high levels of anxiety can be a barrier to language learning. These results support previous studies showing that students often feel hampered by unfamiliar vocabulary, as expressed by Horwitz et al. (1986) in a study on foreign language anxiety.

In addition, although students acknowledge the benefits of reading in shaping their personality, the lack of progress in speed reading ability indicates the need for more adaptive teaching methods, as proposed by Day and Bamford (1998) in the Extensive



Reading Approach theory. By providing interesting and relevant reading materials, teachers can help students develop better reading habits and gradually reduce their anxiety.

The practical implication of this finding is the need to develop more innovative reading teaching strategies, including the use of technology in providing varied reading materials. This is in accordance with recent research showing that technology can increase students' interest in reading and enable access to a variety of reading materials (Park, 2016). Thus, this study not only contributes to English language teaching, but also encourages the integration of innovative approaches in the education system.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates how students respond to their anxiety using reading in comprehending narrative texts, and how extensive reading can improve students' comprehension in reading.

After getting the data from the questionnaire and interview, the researcher conducted a document study to support the findings of the questionnaire and interview. First, participants felt anxious if they did not know all the words. They also felt anxious if they were not sure whether they understood what they read. Most of them said that they felt tired when faced with long texts. Fortunately, they did not choose to avoid reading as much as possible. Although they said that reading was fun, there were more participants who did not choose reading as their hobby.

Second, all participants agreed that reading is useful for shaping personality. However, they felt that they still could not read quickly and their reading ability had not advanced, although half of them felt that they had read a lot. This is in line with Iftanti (2012) who said that the results of the study showed that most EFL students did not show good English reading habits even though they had studied English formally from elementary school to university. The length of time studying English does not guarantee the growth of good English reading habits.

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DOI FOR THIS ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.37010/int.v5i2.1533>

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