IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

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Abstract

This paper discusses improving students' achievement in reading comprehension through the application of language experience approach. This paper will answer the question "Does the application of Language Experience Approach improve the students' achievement in reading comprehension?" The objective of the study is aimed at finding out whether the application of Language Experience Approach improves the students' achievement in reading comprehension. The sample of the research was the second grade students of SMA Panca Budi Medan, class XI – 2 science which consisted of 39 students, 19 boys and 20 girls. The technique of collecting data was by using three tests with two cycles in action research. The result showed that the application of language experience approach improved the students' achievement in reading comprehension.

 Key Words: *Reading Comprehension, Language Experience Approach*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reading is one of the four language skills which should be learned, besides listening, speaking, and writing. In the process of reading, the students are expected to understand the texts they read. It is not an easy thing because many aspects should be known, such as words, word combinations, context of the texts, and many others. These aspects influence the readers, especially the students that put reading as a problem for them. By having these aspects, the students will be easy to understand the text they read. Reading, like speaking, occurs in a context rather than in isolation. The meaning of a text is not found just in the sentences themselves, but is derived from the previous knowledge stored in the students' mind and the processes through which the students tackles it.

Other aspect that is important in reading is comprehension. The reader reads a text without comprehension, he is likely less to get the main idea or the meaning of the text. In reading comprehension, the students are expected to have their background knowledge to construct the meaning of the text. Then they recreate the meaning intended by the writer and interpret the information well. Reading comprehension requires very rapid and automatic processing of words, strong skills in forming the general meaning, and representation of the main ideas.

Reading comprehension still becomes a problem for student. Most of the students still find reading comprehension difficult although they have done it for many years. They do not know how to comprehend a text and get some information from the text. They feel confused if they read an English text, while they assume that English is a foreign language. Consequently, the students become slow down and bored. Therefore, reading comprehension is in fact not as easy as some people think. These difficulties in reading English texts for Indonesian students are the problem of comprehending the texts which are written in English. There are two tasks that they have to do: firstly, they must know the English words, and secondly, they must know the meaning of the whole

paragraphs as well as the text.

Previous researches had been done deal with the students' achievement in reading comprehension. Widowati (2009: 39) in her research found that eight students achieved reading comprehension score that is higher than 75. Lubis (2010: 74) in her research found that four students achieved reading accomplishment score when she gave the first treatment. These two findings show that the achievement in reading comprehension is still the problem by the Indonesian students.

This research is interesting to be implement because it was found that the students got problem in understanding reading comprehension when the writer had a chance to teach English at vocational school in Lubuk Pakam, as the three months experience of Teaching Practice Program (Praktek Pengalaman Lapangan (PPL)). Besides, this approach is still good and is applicable in relation with the teaching reading comprehension when it is used in teaching reading comprehension.

Research Question

This paper will answer the question as follow "Does the application of Language Experience Approach improve the students' achievement in reading comprehension?"

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is aimed at finding out whether the application of Language Experience Approach improves the students' achievement in reading comprehension.

Conceptual Framework

Reading Comprehension

Klingner, et al. (2007: 8) define reading comprehension is a multicomponent, highly complex process that involves many interaction

between readers and what they bring to the text as well as variables related to the text itself. Here, the reader comprehends creatively in constructing the meaning needed from the text. He discovers some particular meaning that he needs by his knowledge to achieve his goal in reading.

Other opinion is defined Grabe and Stoller (2002: 29) that reading comprehension is an extraordinary feat of balancing and coordinating many abilities in a very complex and rapid set of routines that makes comprehension a seemingly effortless and enjoyable activity for fluent reader.

In a specific understanding, Cook (2003: 11) defines reading comprehension is determined by the following: what the *reader* brings to the act of reading comprehension, ways the printed *text* has been written and organized by the author, the learning *context* that defines the task and purpose of the reader and the reading environment, and *Strategies* the reader consciously applies to achieve comprehension.

Basic Skill of Development of Reading Comprehension

Davis in Smith and Johnson (1980: 130) identifies nine skills judged by reading authorities, which assumed to be the basic to the reading comprehension. They are (1) knowledge of word meanings, (2) ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents, (3) ability to recognize the literacy devices used in a passage and to determine its mood, (4) ability to follow the organization of a passage and to identify antecedents and references in it, (5) ability to identify the main through of a passage, (6) ability to answer question that are specifically in a passage, (7) ability to answer questions that are answered in a passage, but not in the word in which question is asked, (8) ability to select the appropriate meaning for a word or phrase in the light of its contextual setting, and (9) ability to determine a writer's purpose. Intent and point of view to draw inferences about a writer.

These basic skill refers to the activities that is done by the students

while comprehending the text. It is expected that all skill will be achieved by the students during their reading activity happened. So the students produce the satisfied outcome in reading the text.

Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension

There are some factors that affect students to comprehend in reading. Alexander (1988: 161) states that there are several things in influence the development of reading comprehension. They are the total program of reading instruction, the quality of text cohesion in reading material, the ability and experiential background of the reader, and memory plays.

Based on the factors above, reading comprehension shows the signal to the writer to recognize how reading comprehension came from. These factors become the clue to the writer what things should be suitable in improving students' ability in reading comprehension. These will be easy to the writer to make a suitable instrument to be given to the students, in purpose of giving assessment to the students while they comprehend the text.

Level of Comprehension

Reading has different levels of comprehension. Burns,et.al (1984:177) and Westwood (2001: 21) divide comprehension into four levels. (1) Literal comprehension refers to the ability to understand what is stated by the writer or taking the idea and facts that are directly stated on the printed page, (2) Inferential comprehension refers to the ability to go beyond what is stated directly, to understand what the writer means by looking for the inside meaning, (3) Critical comprehension refers to the ability to make analysis, evaluation, judgments and personal reacting about the ideas of information that writers offers in a passage, and (4) creative comprehension refers to the ability of reader to use his/her imagination when reading the passage.

Reading Comprehension Assessment

Assessment is an essential part of the teaching–learning process. Results of

assessment help teacher determine which instructional objective to teach or reteach, decide appropriate strategies and material to use. Assessment involves four steps (Caldwell 2008: 3). First, we identify what we want to assess. We usually do this in the form of a question. Second, we collect information or evidence. Third, we analyze the evidence. Fourth, as a consequence of our analysis, we make a decision.

Caldwell adds that assessing a student's reading performance is no different. We ask a question about a student's reading. We select evidence that is appropriate for answering our question. We analyze the evidence and use it to make judgments about the student's strengths and needs. Then, we take instructional action. At any point in the process, we can encounter the same problems we meet while assessing the weather or the state of the gas tank. However, reading assessment poses several additional problems.

Language Experience Approach

The foundation theory used in this research is Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA is an approach to reading based on activities and stories developed from personal experience of the learner. The stories about personal experiences are written down by a teacher and read together until the learner associates the written form of the word with the spoken.

Grabe and Stoller (2002: 260) states that Language Experience Approach is teaching reading whereby students and teacher prepare reading materials together. They also said the sequences of LEA are started by students' activity. The students dictate a story to the teacher about a topic that they are interest to. Then, the teacher writes the story down. The students copy the story and read it.

Furthermore, Nessel and Dixon (2008: 15) formulates the LEA framework which includes these components:
  a. Shared experiences that afford opportunities for observation and conversation,
  b. Accounts about the experiences (dictated by the students to the teacher) that serve as the primary texts for reading instruction,

c. Reading texts (dictated accounts) that reflect the students' individual and cultural perspectives,

d. Additional texts for reading practice (e.g., books, magazines, and digital texts),

e. Daily opportunities to practice reading dictated accounts and additional self-selected texts,

f. Regular opportunities to write in English and to build, refine, and extend writing skills,

g. Regular opportunities to build vocabularies for listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English,

h. Instruction in specific word-recognition strategies (phonetic analysis, structural analysis, the use of context clues, and the use of dictionaries), and

i. Instruction that builds students' skill at comprehending written English, from the comprehension of their original dictated accounts to the comprehension of the additional texts they choose to read and of textbooks and other required readings.

Here, LEA has some specific strategies in the classroom activities which include:

a. Planning engaging experiences for students that encourage them to speak English,

b. Facilitating talk among students during and after planned experiences,

c. Taking dictation from students based on a shared experience and reading the account to and with students,

d. Using dictated accounts to build students' sight vocabulary and reading fluency,

e. Using dictated accounts to teach specific reading skills (e.g., the use of context clues and phonetic analysis), and

f. Using the process of oral composing and students' dictated accounts as the basis for students' own writing. (Nessel and Dixon 2008: 15)

The Advantages of Language Experience Approach

Alexander (1988:342) states that Language Experience Approach brings some advantages. They are:

a. The first reading experience are successful because they use the everyday language pattern of the children. Children who speaks a nonstandard are not penalized or made to feel inferior because they do not measure up verbally to the standard. Likewise, children whose language pattern are beyond those expected are not frustrated by the task of having to learn simpler right word.

b. The approach requires fewer and more inexpensive materials, which are readily available.

c. Children can utilize the sight vocabulary they bring to school (from signs, labels, and televisions).

d. It is individualized in that each child is working at a level he can comprehend and with words he or she understands and can recognize.

e. Children learn that listening, writing, and spelling are part of the reading process and, thus, that the languages arts are interrelated.

f. Both phonics and sight words are used. Children see the relationship of sounds to the symbols used to represent them in writing.

g. Children learn to make choices and to function independently as they works with the skills.

h. Children feel their ideas are respected and accepted. This helps develop a positive self-image.

i. Motivation for and interest in reading are greatly increased, which may result in a positive attitude toward reading and creative expression.

j. Children are motivated to increase their spoken and written vocabulary.

k. When the approach is used with the basal program, the teacher may find that many of the words found in the preprimer may actually be learned before the books are represented; this situation generally permits a successful experience with the formal reading program.

l. Children have insight into what goes into a story and can critique and discuss the writer's idea because they are writers too.

m. Childrens' writing enables teachers to learn a great deal about the children themselves, such as their thoughts, their interests, their home backgrounds, their activities.

The Procedure of Language Experience Approach

According to Nessel and Dixon, as reported by Wurr (2002), the procedure of LEA is as follow:

a. Teacher and student discuss the topic to be focused on in the dictation. Observations and opinions are exchanged. Oral language skills are developed and reinforced.

b. The student dictates an account or story to the teacher, who records the statement to construct the basic reading material.

c. The student reads the story several time (with the teacher helping as needed), until the story has become quite familiar. Reading comprehension is made easier by the fact that the student is reading material that is self-generated.

d. Individual story words are learned, and other reading skills are reinforced through teacher-designed activities related to the story.

e. Students move from reading their own dictation to reading other-author materials as they develop confidence and skill with the reading process.

These procedures hopefully can improve students' ability in reading, and the application of these steps can be derived to activities that refer to reading comprehension.

Students' Achievement in Reading Comprehension

Achievement can be defined as a result of what an individual has learned from some educational experiences. It may conclude that students' achievement is the result, the successfulness, the ability, or the progress in reaching particular goals, statues, or standard in his/her educational learning especially by efforts,

skills, and courage.

Here, the teachers have a work to find out what the students should achieve in the classroom activity. Ahmann and Glock (1981:38) states that the Taxonomy Bloom can be the criteria of educational objectives which were classified into 3 domains. They are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Three domains of Taxonomy Bloom above are important in students' reading comprehension. Here, the cognitive and psychomotor, rather than affective, help the teacher to get the students' achievement. Teacher will make a test to assess the student by these two domains – cognitive and psychomotor – to see how the students improve in reading comprehension through Language Experience Approach. In cognitive aspect, students have to construct their comprehension of the text and their prior knowledge of the text that they have known before, so the final output is produced and the achievement can be got well by the students. In psychomotoric aspect, the students have to be able to create their own opinion or perception in understanding the text and give complex response of the text according to their background knowledge. These two aspects are expected to achieve the result in reading comprehension through some indicators.

The indicators have functions as a guide mark how student achieve a satisfying result in reading comprehension. Some indicators are:
1. Students are able to identify the main idea of the narrative text,
2. Students are able to read the narrative text well and fluently,
3. Students are able to comprehend the narrative text through its generic structures,
4. Students are able to answer the questions related to the narrative text well.
5. Students are able to retell the story based on their experience well.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study was conducted as a classroom action research. Burns (2005: 2) defined that action research was related to the idea of reflective practice and the

teacher as researcher. It meant that action research involved taking a self-reflective, critical, and systemic approach to exploring the teaching context. Action research allowed the teacher becomes an investigator or explorer of her personal teaching context, while at the same time, she was one of the participants in teaching and learning process. Burns added the aims of action research was to identify the problematic situation or issue that the teacher or researcher consider to look into more deeply and systematically.

Moreover, Naughton and Hughes (2009: 2) states that action research was a cyclical process of 'think-do-think' to research and create a change. It meant that the researcher thought about what she did at present, then she did something to create change, then she thought again about what she had done and its effects.

There were four steps in doing action research, which they were planning, action, observation, and reflection. These steps would be done for a cycle, and it could be done more for the researcher to achieve a satisfying outcome.
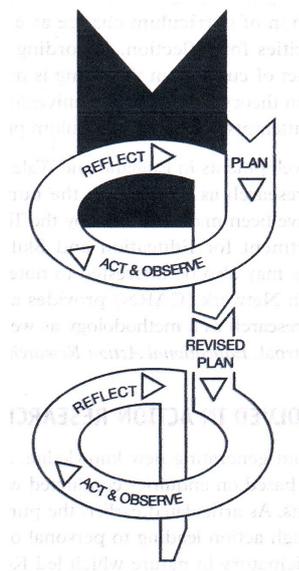

Figure 1. Action Research Spiral by Kemmis and McTaggart (Koshy,

2005:4)

The subject of this research was the first grade students of SMA Panca Budi Medan, class XI – 2 science. It consisted of 39 students, 19 boys and 20 girls. The reason of choosing this class was that the students in this class had some problems in reading comprehension.

In this research, quantitative and qualitative data were used to collect the data of the research. In quantitative data reading test was conducted. The form of the test was multiple-choice test in purpose of to measure the students' ability in comprehending the reading text and to know the students' mastery of the subject they had learned.

Moreover, in the qualitative, the researcher used observation sheet, interview sheet, and diary notes to describe the situation while teaching was on going process. Observation sheet had function to identify all the condition that happens during the teaching learning process including teachers, students, and the context of situation that was done by the collaborator. Interview sheet was aimed in order to know the students' weaknesses and their problems in reading. Diary notes was used as the personal note of the teacher that was written up daily. In diary notes, the researcher wrote all of the events that happened during the teaching learning process.

The procedure of data collection would be conducted by administrating two cycles. Each cycle had four stages, they are planning, action, observation, and reflection, and it would be done in four meetings in the first cycle and three meetings in the second cycle.

Qualitative and quantitative data were applied in this research. Qualitative data were found by describing the situation during teaching and learning process. It is analyzed from diary notes, observation, and interview sheet. Quantitative data were found by analyzing the score test of the students. By applying these data, it was expected to get the satisfying result of Language Experience Approach in teaching to improve students' reading comprehension.

The mean of the students' scores was computed in every administered

$$\frac{\Sigma \, x}{N}$$

objective test within two cycles in order to see the students' improvement in reading the text. To know the mean of the students' scores in each cycle, the following formula was applied:

$$\overline{X} =$$

Where: $\mathbf{X}$ = the mean of the students' score

$\Sigma \, \mathrm{x}$ = the total score.

$\mathbf{N}$ = the number of the students

Objective test in forms multiple choices was analyzed to measure students' achievement in reading text. It was counted by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \ \mathbf{x} \ 100\%$$

Where: $\mathbf{P}$ = percentage of students who get point 75

$\mathbf{R}$ = number of the students who get the point above 75

$\mathbf{T}$ = the total number of the students

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data

This study applied in quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data were taken from the mean of the students in taking essay test. The qualitative data were taken from observation sheet, interview sheet, and diary note.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data were taken from the reading comprehension multiple choice test. The test were given to students three times as test 1, test 2, and test 3. The result of the test were the mean scores of the students reading comprehension

essay test that can be seen in following table.

Table1. The students' score from the first meeting until the last meeting

No.	Students	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
	Total (Σx)	2596	2872	3108
	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	66.56	73.64	79.69

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were taken from observation sheet, interview sheet, and diary note. The observation sheet was aimed to describe the situation, the response of the students and the teacher attitude during teaching learning process The interview sheet was taken in the first meeting and the last meeting between the researcher, students, and the teacher. It was aimed to know the students opinion about the use of Language Experience Approach in improving students' achievement in reading comprehension in the classroom (see Appendix C). The diary note was aimed to know the writer's personal evaluation about the situation during teaching learning process. It was done in every meeting of teaching (see Appendix D). By using observation sheet, interview sheet, and diary notes, it could be seen whether there were significant improvement both on teacher improvement in teaching reading and on students' achievement in reading comprehension.

Data Analysis

There were some differences between the lowest and the highest of students' reading scores within each test. The differences showed that there was a significant improvement of students' reading. The comparison of students' score in each test can be seen in following bar chart and table 2.
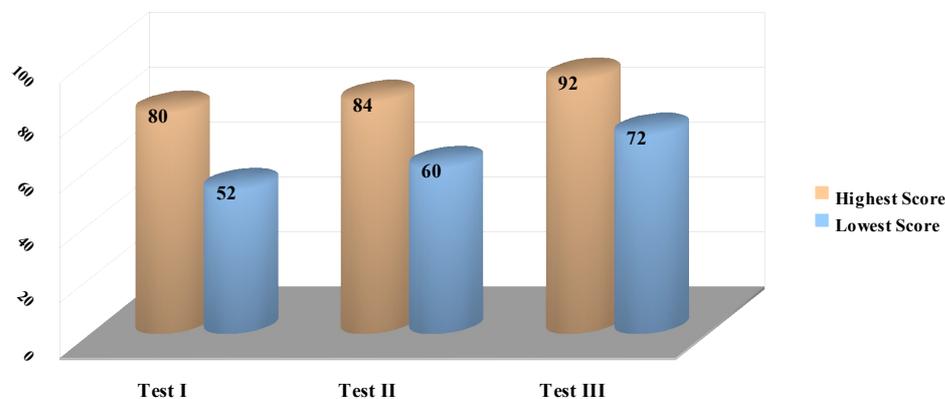
Figure 2. The comparison of Students' Score in Three Reading Tests

Table 2. The Percentage of Students who got score above 75

Reading Test	Percentage
Test I	20.51%
Test II	58.97%
Test III	92.31%

This analysis data showed that students' score had improved in each tests they had done. In conclusion, the use of Language Experience Approach in the classroom work effectively in helping students to improve their reading comprehension.

The improvement of students' reading comprehension in narrative text could be seen in the following table.

Table 3. The Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension in Narrative Text

No	Competences	Test I (in Cycle 1)	Test II (in cycle 1)	Test III (in cycle 2)
1	Total Score	2596	2872	3108
2	Mean	66.56	73.64	79.69
3	Number of Students who got	8	23	36

	score above 75			
4	Percentage Number of Students who got score above 75	20.51%	58.97%	92.31%

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, it was found that the students' score in reading comprehension tests increased from the first meeting until the last meeting. It means that there is an improvement in students' achievement in reading comprehension by applying Language Experience Approach. It can be seen from the improvement of the students' mean score for test I in the first cycle (66.56); test II in cycle I (73.64); and test III in cycle II (79.69). The students' score continuously improved in each test. Therefore, it can be concluded that Language Experience Approach can improve students' achievement in reading comprehension.

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