

## **IMPROVING THE READING ABILITY OF THE SECOND GRADE STUDENTS OF MTs WACHID HASYIM BLITAR THROUGH STORY MAPPING**

**Lailatul Nikmah**

*STAIN Tulungagung, East Java*

**Abstract:** Although English has been taught in schools starting from elementary to junior high school levels, the fact shows that many student still difficult to read English texts. They may read fast but get nothing or they need a very long time to understand the texts. It means that they are not effective readers. It can be assumed that their comprehension skill is not good. Dealing with these phenomena, the teacher be given another technique to make their student to be effective readers. Because of that the teacher uses story mapping to solve the students' problem. So we expect that this technique helps students to deepen their reading comprehension and ability to apply story mapping teaching strategies.

**Keywords:** Reading, Story Mapping

The most important activity in any language class is reading (Rivers 1981:259). Reading is not only a source of information and pleasurable activity, but also a means of consolidating one's knowledge of a language. In other words, reading activities can bring many benefits for students such as to get information, pleasure and knowledge

The teaching reading in Indonesia is intended to enable the students to use English for communication (Saukah,2000). This statement is parallel with the objective of teaching English in Indonesia as stated in decree of the Minister of Education No. 22 2006 which stated that; 1) developing the students oral and written communication competence, 2) making the students' have awareness toward the nature and importance of English to the nation competitiveness in the global society, 3) improving students understanding about the relationship between language and culture.

In spite of its importance, reading is considered as complex skill and assumed as the most difficult to master. When students read the reading text they often encounter problems in comprehending the text, related to vocabulary items, complex sentences, or even the text as whole.

It means that they need to understand not only the meaning but also the function of the language.

Theoretically, the reasons why junior high school students can hardly comprehend reading texts even in the simple text are because in comprehending the text students must focus attention in some aspects; (1) recognizing words and phrases of similar and opposite meaning, (2) identifying or locating information, (3) discriminating elements or features within text, (4) interpreting complex ideas, action, events, and relationship, (5) inferring, deriving and predicting the continuation, (6) synthesizing, and (7) evaluating (Alderson and Lukman (1989) in Cohen 1994: 225). The aspects above influence the students' mastery on the reading text especially in answering the literal and inferential questions even though the text provided in simple one. So, in doing their task they sometimes answer the questions using incomplete sentences or simply guessing the answer.

## **THE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION AT SMP/MTS LEVEL**

Reading is one of the four English skills that should be taught at Junior High schools including *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* or Islamic Junior High Schools. The reading instruction in the academic year of 2011/2012 is based on the so called School based Curriculum 2006 or it is more popularly called KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*) for Indonesia. The curriculum emphasizes on the achievement of predetermined competences that means discourse competencies referring to the students' performance to communicate in English either orally or in written form dealing with certain topic. The competence that should be achieved of graduate competence, standard competence, and basic competence. Graduate competence is competence that should be achieved after the students complete a three year education at attain Junior High school. Standard competence is the competence that should achieved after the students complete a certain grade. Meanwhile, basic competence which should be achieved after completing a certain period of time. In its implementation, the basic competence can be measured by a set of indicators formulated in teaching learning process.

## **NARRATIVE TEXTS**

Narrative (story like) selection generally consists of narrative paragraph that present the unfolding of a plot. They have a number of elements (setting, plot, characters, theme and so on) that have been described in story grammar (some call it story structure). (Burns 1996: 222). Generally they are arranged in chronological order, but paragraph may be flashbacks, or narration of events from an earlier time to provide

the readers with the background information they need to understand the current situation.

A text structure that is common to most narrative stories is story grammar (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Stein & Trabasso, 1982; Thorndyke, 1977), in which a character encounters a problem, attempt solutions, and eventually resolves a problem. In addition, story grammar can include a character's reactions to events and a theme (in Gardill and Jitendra, 1999).

The Curriculum 2004 for SMP and MTS elaborated narrative text in table 2.1

Table 2.1 The characteristics of the narrative text

Genre	Social Function	Generic Structure	Significant Lexico - Grammatical features
Narrative	To amuse, entertain and to deal with actual or vicarious experiences in different ways; Narratives deal with problematic events which lead to a crisis or turning point some kind which in turn finds a resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation: sets the scene and introduces the participants.</li> <li>• Evaluation: a stepping back to evaluate the plight.</li> <li>• Complication: a crisis arises</li> <li>• Resolution: the crisis resolved, for better or worse.</li> <li>• Reorientation: optional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on specific and usually individual participants</li> <li>• Use of material, behavioural, verbal process</li> <li>• Use of material, behaviour, verbal processes</li> <li>• Use of relational processes and mental processes</li> <li>• Use of temporal conjunctions and temporal circumstances</li> <li>• Use of past tense</li> </ul>

Below is the example of narrative text and its characteristics

#### Cinderella

Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Cinderella. She was pretty, loving and clever. But she was very poor. She lived with her step mother and step sister. They were very mean. They hated Cinderella very much. Fortunately, she met a prince. He fell in love with her. Then, Cinderella became a princess

- Specific Participant : Cinderella, step mother, step sister, a prince
- Past tense : was, were,
- Temporal conjunction : once upon a time, then
- Material verbal process : called, lived, became
- Mental process : fell in love, hate

Table 2.2 The Generic Structure of a Narrative Text

<b>GENERIC STRUCTURE</b>	
Orientation	One upon a time, there was a little girl called Cinderella.
Evaluation	She was pretty, loving and clever.
Complication	But she was very poor. She lived with her stepmother and stepsisters. They were very mean.
Resolution	Fortunately, met a prince. He fell in love with her.
Reorientation	The Cinderella became a princess.

The English teachers should teach the language skills in integrated ways. The teaching of reading, for example, requires the students to read a text either reading aloud or silent reading, then the students should comprehend the text and finally the students can improve the reading ability by writing the answers on the reading questions or write a summary of the text they have read. The teaching of reading is based on genres which consist of narrative, descriptive, procedure etc.

### **STORY MAPPING**

Story mapping is a graphic representation of all parts elements of a story and the relationship between them (Davis and McPherson 1989 in Burns 1999). So when we talk about story map we will talk also about story elements and story grammar because the essence of the map is the organizations of that elements. As it is indicate in its name, story mapping is a map of a story. It is a template that provide students a concrete frame work for identifying the elements of narratives stories (Florida Department of Education, 2004). The basic elements of story map are : Setting, Character, Problems, Events, Resolution/Solution/Conclusion, Theme.

By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solutions, students read carefully to learn the details Story mapping belongs to graphic organizers. Graphic organizer is diagram or illustration of a written or oral statement (Alogozlu.n.d., retrieved July15,2010). It is also known by different names, such as maps, webs, graphics, charts, frames, or Story mapping belongs to graphic organizers. Graphic organizer is diagram or illustration of a writting. Story mapping belongs to graphic organizers. Graphic organizer is diagram or illustration

of a written or oral statement (Alogozlu.n.d., retrieved July15,2010). It is also known by different names, such as maps, webs, graphics, charts, frames, or cluster (Adler, 2004). Graphic organizers are pictorial or graphical ways to organize information and thoughts for understanding, remembering, or writing about. They are powerful tools that can be used to enhance learning and create a foundation for learning. There a number of graphic organizer such as 1) Venn Diagram, 2) Story Board Chain/Chains of Events, 3) Story Map, 4) Cause/Effect,etc.

It is also known by different names, such as maps, webs, graphics, charts, frames, or cluster (Adler, 2004). Graphic organizers are pictorial or graphical ways to organize information and thoughts for understanding, remembering, or writing about. They are powerful tools that can be used to enhance learning and create a foundation for learning. There a number of graphic organizer such as 1) Venn Diagram, 2) Story Board Chain/Chains of Events, 3) Story Map, 4) Cause/Effect,etc.

Mapping itself is defined as diagram that illustrates the ideas visually to find connections and to branch out and make new ideas and connection. Among those graphic organizers there are four kinds of mapping i.e, semantic mapping, concept mapping, mind mapping and story mapping. Though basically the four kinds of mapping mentioned above has similar purpose, which is to find connection among ideas in the shape of diagram, the focus of each map is different.

Among all those techniques and graphic organizers, story mapping is the most appropriate and the best techniques for teaching narratives texts since the focus of story mapping is to relate story events in the narratives texts and because it suits the type of text (narratives) discussed in the semester in which this research conducted.

Almasi (2003:134) said that story mapping as graphic organizer should be employed *before* reading to enhance students' ability to predict and set purpose for reading, *while* reading as cognitive tool that focuses attention and enhances ability to monitor incoming information and compare it to earlier predictions and *after* reading to enhances comprehension and recall narrative text.

## **METHOD**

Based on the focus of the research, this research intends to the students reading skill using story mapping strategy. Therefore the design of this research is Classroom Action Reseach (CAR). The researcher designed planning,implementing, observing and reflecting.

### **Planning**

In this step, the researcher and the collaborator prepared the teaching strategy, designing lesson plan, preparing instructional material, preparing instrument, the criteria of success.

### **Implementation**

In this study the researcher worked collaboratively with the teacher who implemented the proposed strategy to ensure that the planned action is well done. The implementation of the research was carried out through three reading phases: Pre reading, whilst reading, post reading. Each cycle was done in two meetings. In cycle 1, meeting 1 covered the pre reading and whilst reading and second meeting was for post reading and reading comprehension tests. In cycle II, meeting 1 and 2 were the reading activities (pre, whilst, post reading activities) and meeting 3 was for the test.

### **Observing the Action**

In this stage the researcher worked collaboratively with the teacher to collect the data and the result of implementation in order to know whether the implementation meets the criteria of success or not. Data gathering was carried out by using some instruments such as observation checklist and the result of students' comprehension test.

The observation checklist was used to obtain information about the students' involvement and performance during the implementation of story mapping strategy. While the reading test results were used to know whether the students make progress in reading comprehension or not. The quizzes were made by the teacher based on the topic and what the students learned. The reading quizzes were given at the end of each cycle. The result of observation was analyzed for further revision and planning for the next cycle.

### **Reflection**

Reflection was conducted to determine whether the implementation of the strategy had been successful or not. During reflecting, the researcher and the collaborative teacher discussed together the implementation and observation of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. From the result of observation the researcher and the collaborator analyzed the students' improvement in the previous action. In reflection the researcher made two kinds of conclusions; the conclusion of each cycle and the final one.

The reflection done in each cycle was intended to measure the success or failure of the action both in previous and during the action. From the conclusion obtained, the researcher and the collaborator analyzed, interpreted, and explained the information got from the action.

If one or more indicators of success were not achieved yet, the researcher would perform the next cycle by revising the next planning. Conversely, if the collected data and scores in a cycle revealed that the success criterion had been fulfilled, there would not be further necessary cycle to conduct.

### **Data Collection**

In this study the data were collected using some techniques as follows:

#### ***Observation***

In this research, the observation was done during the process of implementation of story mapping in teaching reading. The observation gave some information about classroom events and interaction in the classroom. The researcher also asked her collaborator to observe, evaluate and give suggestion about the implementation of story mapping in the class

#### ***Test***

In this research conducted written test, the purpose gave the test to know whether the reading comprehension in this class improved or not.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The finding of the study showed that the mean score of the cycle 1 was 70.58. It means that the action had not achieved the criteria of success, which was the mean of 75. In cycle II, the mean score was 74.87 (which could be rounded up 75). It showed that the students' reading ability improved and the target of this research was achieved. It also revealed that there are some activities that had to be showed in teaching using Story mapping strategy: In *pre-reading activity* the teacher: (1) explains the objectives, (2) stimulates the prior knowledge of a story and its elements by asking leading questions (give a model of story map for the first meeting), (3) divides the class into teams or four students, including a range of skill level in each group, (4) hands out the worksheet and explain the instruction in the worksheet. In *whilst reading activities* the teacher: (1) has the students read the story of (let them listen while following along the text), (2) ask 2-3 students to reread the text, (3) discuss unfamiliar words impression found in the text, (4) ask the students to study the text by answering comprehension questions based on the text in groups, (5) facilitate the group discussion. And in *post reading activities* the teacher; (1) asks the students to complete their story map in pairs based on the information they got in group discussion, (2) gives feedback on the students' works to improve their understanding about the story map.

To be more specific, the advantages of the implementation of story mapping strategy in three stages of reading activities namely *pre reading*, *whilst reading* and *post reading* will be discussed as follows: In *pre reading* activity, story map is beneficial to : 1) provide a frameworks that direct interrelated information such as setting, characters, problem, goal, action and outcome (Rathvon), 2) enhance the students' ability to predict and set purpose for reading (Alamasi, 2003: 134). In *whilst reading*, it is possible to: 1) provide students a concrete frameworks for identifying the elements of narrative stories, 2) be tools that focus attention and enhance the students's ability to monitor incoming information and compare it to earlier prediction, 3) enable the story elements to be easily recognized and demonstrated (Alagozlu), 4) lead the students to better comprehension so they become more involved and take greater interest in the details of the story (classroom-resources, on line), 5) immerse students into thinking because each details of the story can be easily visualized, 6) leads students to focus on distinctive features of a story, 7) explore the reading process into component part and making the students aware of the way that these part combine (Margaret Foley), 8) help students to recognize information and ideas . While in *post reading* story mapping can 1) enhance comprehension and recall of narrative text, 2) give guidance for students to retell or summarize the story.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings from the teaching learning process using story mapping which was done in two cycles, it is concluded that this strategy can improve of progress students' reading comprehension of the eight graders/second year students of MTs Wachid Hasyim Blitar. It also increased the students' participation especially as they worked in group and in pairs. Their opinion toward story mapping strategy was also positive.

In accordance with the discussion in previous chapter, it can be summarized that story mapping is an effective way to increase the students' reading ability especially in comprehending narrative text. It might be useful as a pre reading, reading activity is the most advantageous for the students. Story mapping strategy will be give more benefits if it is applied in cooperative learning. By considering the result that the use of story mapping can improve the students' reading achievement, some suggestions are given to the English teachers, to the students and further researchers.

## **SUGGESTION**

### **For English Teachers**



Based on the effectiveness of the implementation of story mapping especially in post reading activity, it is suggested that English teachers use this strategy as an alternative strategy in reading instruction in addition to other strategies.

### **For the Students**

The students are suggested to be accustomed to story mapping strategy it can enhance and promote their reading achievement. Once they are accustomed to story mapping, the students can benefit more by using it as a model to compose an outline that will help them in reading their own story later. (Cox 1999:340) states that reading gives children ideas for writing, and writing can clarify children's understanding of what they read.

### **For Further Researcher**

The further researcher or English teachers who encounter similar problem in the teaching of reading are suggested to use this research result to conduct researches with the same research design to improve the students' ability especially in reading narrative text. It is also suggested that they carry out classroom action research which implement this strategy in other school level and other language skill.

### **REFERENCES**

- Agrikaltarini. Galuh Dwiretno Niken. (2008). *Using Story Mapping Through Cooperative Learning to Improve the Eight Graders Reading Ability of SMP Negeri 4 Malang*. Unpublished Thesis. Malang: Faculty of Letters. State University of Malang.
- Alamasi, Jenice, 2003. *Teaching Strategic Processes Writing*. New York. The Guilford Press.
- Amer, Aly. 1992. *The Effect of Story Grammar Instruction on the EFL Students' Comprehension of Narrative Text*. *Reading in Foreign Language* 8(2). Online. (<http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rlf/Pastssues/rlf82amer.pdf>, retrieved on January 7, 2012)
- Depdiknas. 2006. *Kurikulum 2006. Standar Kompetensi Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Menengah Pertama dan Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional
- Fadmiwati, Anik. 2011 *Improving the Reading Ability of the Second Grade Students of SMP 1 Paiton Probolinggo Through the Implementation Mapping*. Unpublished Thesis. Malang: Graduate Program Islamic University of Malang.
- Fadhilah, Effi. 2009. *Improving the Reading Comprehension Ability of the Eleventh Grade Students of MAN Tambakberas Jombang Through Concept Mapping Strategy*. Unpublished Thesis. Malang: Graduate Program of State University of Malang

- Hudson, Thomas. 2007. *Teaching Second Language Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mendiola, Rafael. *Reading Strategy: Story Map*. (Online), (<http://www.google.com/>, retrieved August 8, 2011)
- Martin, Donald. 1991. *How to Improve Reading Comprehension*. (Online), (<http://www.martin.edu/~don/Study/7read.html>, retrieved June 15, 2011)
- Moats, 2004. *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science*. Washington: American Federation of Teacher. Retrieved September 11, 2004 from [www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/rocketsci.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/rocketsci.pdf)
- Nuttal, Christine. 1982. *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford: Heinemann International
- Roe, Betty D., Barbara D. Stoodt, and Paul C. Burns. *Secondary Reading Instruction: The content Area (5th Ed)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company
- Vacca, Richard.T and Jo Anne Vacca. 2005. *Content Area Reading (8th Ed)*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc
- Winch, Gordon et al. 2006. *Literacy (3rd Ed)*. Victoria: Oxford University Press
- Zuhairi, Alfian. 2003. *The Effectiveness of Text Mapping in Improving Students' Reading Skill*. Unpublished Thesis. Malang: Graduate Program of State University of Malang