IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF NARRATIVE TEXT USING PICTURE BOOKS AS THE MEDIA

A RESEARCH ARTICLE

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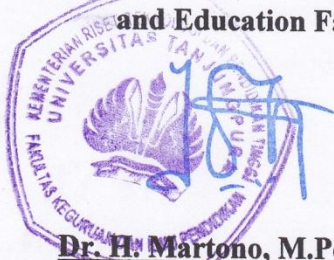
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Abstract
This research aimed to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative text using picture book, especially to improve students' ability in identifying details of story elements, and recognizing words meaning. The writer applied classroom action research with three cycles of meetings. The subject was the eighth grade students, in MTs Ika PGA Pontianak, academic year 2016/2017. There were 20 students participated in the whole processes. The data from observation checklist and field notes revealed that using picture book improved students' reading comprehension of narrative text. Picture books improved students in recognizing words meaning through pre teaching the words from the story prior reading, and the use of picture-text relationship in contextual clues activity. Picture books also improved students in identifying story elements through the use of picture sequences discussion in picture walk activity and story mapping activity. Discussing picture books also promoted students' interest in reading. The scores showed students' improvement in recognizing words meaning and story elements. From the research, the writer concluded that the use of picture book improved students' ability to recognize words meaning, identify details of story elements and improved students' interest in reading comprehension of narrative text through shared reading with picture walk, contextual clues, and story mapping.

Keywords: Picture books, Narrative text, Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Improving reading comprehension is important as an effort to achieve the goal of English reading skill at junior high school level. Based on text type or genre in the standard competence, the eighth grade students learn about responding meaning in a narrative text.

During the process of teaching and learning narrative text in the to the eighth grade students of Mts Ika PGA Pontianak, the writer found many students were difficult to comprehend narrative text or the story.. Students got difficult in recognizing the meaning of unknown words, and identifying specific story elements as the details based on the structures of narrative text (orientation, complication, resolution), namely characters, setting, problem, solution, and morals of the story. Students got easily bored, looked uninterested, tended to be passive, and reluctant to respond. Regarding the students' difficulties above, the writer had offered picture books as the media in teaching reading comprehension. Picture book is a book that contains pictures or illustrations as the important parts that support students in comprehending story through verbal and visual representation.

Reading comprehension is considered as the receptive skill in which the readers receive the information from what they read, but they need an effort and interest to in order to construct the meaning or message contain from the text. Snow (2002) defined reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing

meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. As the purpose of reading, Cain (2007) stated that comprehension is the ultimate aim of reading which enables readers to acquire information and to achieve academic success. According to Guthrie (2004), reading comprehension consists of the processes of constructing knowledge from a text through cognitive interaction and motivational involvement such as having interest with the topic. In addition, Byrnes & Wasik (2009) stated that interest in reading involves cognitive processes (i.e., attention) and emotional processes (i.e., feelings of pleasure and enjoyment). In other words, students as the readers who are interested to engage in reading comprehension activities tend to comprehend the text better.

Teaching reading comprehension of narrative text require carefully consideration and preparation in implementing the teaching steps. According to Schumm (2006) narrative reading comprehension lessons have three sessions; 1) pre reading to activate students' background knowledge by pre teaching the knowledge of vocabulary and predicting the content, 2) during reading as the main activity to encourage students to read, and 3) post reading activity to review and summarize what they have read and assess their comprehension. The steps of teaching and learning activities need to be well-prepared for enhancing students' comprehension skills in narrative text.

To improve students' knowledge of comprehension and interest in reading, the writer used picture books as the visual media. The purpose of using media is to facilitate communication and learning. Meanwhile, Lado (2014) stated that picture books communicate meaning through direct experiences with text and visual media.

Picture book is a book that contains pictures or illustrations that play important part and work supportively with the text to convey the meaning of the story. Matulka (2008, p. 11) defined picture book as "the book which text and pictures work together to tell a story or a book that depends on illustrations to help relate the story in which the amount of text is equal to or less than the number of illustrations".

While according to Nespeca & Reeve (2003), picture book contains both text and illustrations that complement each other and work together as a whole unit. Matulka (2008) explained that the way an illustration develops can also have an effect on the story, requiring an adjustment to verbal narrative. Picture sequence is an important element of the picture–text relationship.

Picture books support students in comprehending story through verbal and visual representation as in the principle of Dual-Coding Theory by Paivio and Sadoski. According to Paivio (2001, p. 34), "the main concept of DCT is that the cognition in reading and writing consists of two separate coding systems of mental representation that support each other; one system specialized for language and one system specialized for dealing with nonverbal objects and events". In other words, the verbal and nonverbal representation are working differently but both mental representations get connected to support meaning making or comprehension.

Reading comprehension of narrative text are categorized into some aspects of comprehension based on the genre of narrative text. According to Christie (2005), narrative tesxt is the text like story created to entertain readers, in which the story contains a sequence of events about characters, and offers the opportunity to reflect on moral values. Knapp and Watkins (2005), also stated that narrative text is typically organized in the structural pattern, including orientation, complication, and resolution. In the content of narrative text, it contains several elements called story grammar or story elements. Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman (2007) explained that story grammar refers to the different elements the reader can expect to be found in a story such as the characters, setting, plot (including a problem that needs to be solved), and a resolution to the problem. According to Byrnes & Wasik (2009), the knowledge aspects of reading comprehension include the knowledge of the specific genre (schema), and also other important factor such as vocabulary. Schema for story elements in narrative text which also known as story elements or story grammar include; (a) *characters* who have goals and

motives for performing actions, (b) temporal and spatial placements in which the story takes place known as *setting*, (c) *complications* and major goals of main characters, (d) *plots and resolutions* of complications , and (e) points, morals, and themes as the main idea in narrative text. meanwhile, another important aspect is the knowledge of vocabulary, which is more specific about recognizing meaning of unfamiliar words from nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

For students in junior high school level, the picture books had been used as the media in learning to comprehend narrative text or story. According to Moreillon (2007), teachers can take full advantage from the richness and sophistication of illustration in picture books by focusing on the visual information and aesthetic experiences provided inside.In using picture book, shared reading technique is highly recommended to to explore the contect of picture book in interactive ways. White (2005) stated that shared reading is very useful in introducing and reinforcing various reading strategies as well as exploring the meaning of the text. Picture books are very useful for struggling readers especially if picture books are integrated into activities that involve the entire class. Dorn & Soffos (2005) proposed shared reading session in a predictable context and includes some interrelated steps that allow for adapting additional reading activities. The steps in shared reading are: 1) Introduction to a new story from picture book through picture walk activity for predicting story and pre teaches some keywords, 2) Shared reading the story using contextual clues to find the meaning of an unknown word and using story mapping, 3) Follow up discussion and teaching point to discuss the theme of the story as moral lesson through depth understanding of characters' actions, defining words, predicting and identifying the events, and connecting picture-text relationship.

METHOD

The writer conducted the research in classroom action research design in order to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative text using picture books as the media. The form of the research was using the method of classroom action research. According to Burns (2010) action research is a form of study conducted in educational setting based on reflective practice with the purpose of solving the problem to improve teaching learning process. The study involved students and teacher participants. The study was conducted to 20 students of the eighth grade. Meanwhile, the teacher participant was their own English teacher of junior high school in Mts Ika PGA Pontianak, an Islamic private school. This research aimed for improving students' reading comprehension on narrative text especially in recognizing words meaning, identifying story elements, and also ecouraging students to be more interested and curious on reading narrative text. According to Kemmis and McTaggart cited in Burns (2010), classroom action research was implemented into the procedures include planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

Planning

In this stage the writer planned to investigate students problem in learning narrative text especially in recognizing words meaning and identifying story elements. The writer prepared the possible solution or change to improve students' learning that was using picture book as the media. The material used in teaching was about narrative text based on the basic competence of reading in syllabus of KTSP. The writer and the teacher also prepared the lesson plan, observation checklist, field note, and reading comprehension assessment.

Acting

In this phase, the teacher taught the students using the picture book as the media. The teaching processes had been implemented into three stages; pre-activity, whilst activity, and post-activity. In pre-activity, teacher greeted student, encouraged motivations, and prepared the teaching media and tools. In whilst activity, there were three stages include exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. In exploration stage, teacher introduced the materials about narrative text, and had students to explore the generic structure and language

feature of narrative text. In elaboration stage, teacher and students discussed about narrative text (a story) using picture book. Teacher used shared reading as the techniques that worked well with some activities for exploring picture book; picture walk, contextual clues, and story mapping. Teacher also encouraged students to use the picture to help students learned some vocabularies from the story. Then teacher used story mapping to help students to identify important information from the story elements. In the confirmation stage, teacher and students discuss the students' work and the feedback. Teacher also discussed students' difficulties and gives clarification. At the post-activity, students were given the comprehension questions as the assessment, then teacher and students concluded the lesson and close the activity.

Observing

In this phase, the writer as the observer worked with teacher in observing systematically the effects of the action and documenting the context, actions and opinions of those involved. In this stage, the collaborator observed the teacher action, the students' behaviour, and the teaching and learning process and collected the data using field note and observation checklist.

Reflecting

At this point, the writer as the researcher reflected on, evaluated, and described the effects of the action in order to make sense of what had happened and to understand the issue and explored it more clearly. The writer and the teacher might decide to do further cycles of action research to improve the situation even more based on the reflection of analysis.

Techniques and Tools of Data Collection

The data had been collected from filed notes, observation checklist, test, and interview. The writer used observation and interview technique to collect qualitative data, and measurement technique to collect quantitative data. The writer used observation technique to observe the process, teacher acts, and students' behaviour in responding to teaching and learning process by using observation checklist and field notes that had been structured based on the lesson plan. Interview is the technique of data collection to collect qualilative data. According to Cresswell (2012), interview is used by researchers to collect data from participants' response, by asking one or more participants with open-ended questions and record their answers. The researcher then transcribes and types the data for analysis. Measurements technique was used to measure students' scores improvement in reading comprehension through assessments after learning through picture books.

Table 1. Specification for Assessing Aspects of Reading Comprehension (modified)

Aspects of reading comprehension	Aspect of reading comprehension in accordance with Narrative text.	Number of item(s)	Scoring Calculation
Part I Identifying details of story elements	Characters and setting	1,2	Score: =Right answers X 10 Maximum score = 100
	Problems and the sequences	3,4,5,6,7	
	Solution and ending /moral lesson	8,9,10	

Part II Recognizing word meaning	Vocabulary	1-10	Score: =Right answer X 10 Maximum score =100
Total Scores		$\dfrac{\textbf{Score part I + Scores part II}}{\textbf{2}}$	

The points for each number of questions was 10 points for the correct answer. To compute the score of reading comprehension and, the writer used formula as follows:

$$M=\frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

M= the student's average score
Σx= the sum of student's score
N= the number of student being observed

Table 2. The Criteria of the Mean Score

Range	Qualification
80 - 100	Good
75 – 79	Average to good
60 – 69	Poor to average
0 - 59	Poor

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

As stated in chapter one, the problems raised in this research were about narrative reading comprehension particularly in recognizing words meaning, and identifying story elements or details based on the generic structure of narrative story. The writer had identified those problems based on the result from informal observation and interview with the English teacher of the eighth grade students in Mts Ika PGA Pontianak. According to the teacher, students got diffuclties in learning the meaning of new vocabulary, and identifying the detail of story elements. Beside that, students also showed low interest during the lesson. Therefore, the writer had initiated to offer the solution and solve those problems.The writer applied classroom action research to the eighth grade students of MTs Ika PGA Pontianak in order to solve their problems in reading comprehension of narrative text. The writer had conducted three cycles to implement the use of picture book in teaching reading comprehension of narrative text. Based on the result interpreted from the classroom observation using observation checklists, fieldnotes, interview, and the measurement of reading comprehension scores, using picture book improved students' reading comprehension in recognizing words meaning, identifying story elements, and promote students' interest in reading comprehension. Therefore, the finding for general research question was the use of picture books improved students reading comprehension of narrative text. The use of picture book improved students recognition of words meaning through activities of shared reading, particularly in pre teaching keywords and contextual clues. The picture-text relationshionship allowed students to make meaning from visual clues in contextual clues activity. While in identifying story elments, students used picture books in picture walk activity and story mapping. The picture sequences also helped students to understand the details in the story of narrative. These activities also promoted students' interest in reading comprehension. They became more focused in doing the tasks, more attentive to teacher explanation, more corious on the story, and also showed possitive involvement. For

more specific explanation, the writer provided the specific research findings as follows:

1. **Introducing and Shared Reading the Picture Books for Improving Students' Comprehension in Recognizing Words Meaning of Narrative Story.**

In teaching words meaning, some activities were implemented through the use of pictures and text in picture book such as: a) preteaching several keywords before reading picture book, b) using contextual clues from picture and other words assoociation as the clues. The picture-text relationship as the feature of picture book provided rich visual and verbal clues for words meaning making. Therefore, all the activities of understanding words meaning relied on the illustration which accompanied the text.

2. **Shared Reading and Follow Up Discussion of Picture Books for Improving Students' Reading Comprehension in Identifying Story Elements of Narrative Story.**

The feature of *picture sequences* in picture book revealed the plot clearly from the beginning to the ending, so students could follow the story elements. Reading and discussing the picture sequence with text in the picture book were done in the procedures; a) picture walk activity by predicting sequences of pictures in the picture book to trigger students to be courious to read, and b) story mapping activity to identify the story elements such as characters in the story, when and where the story happened, the problems and how the characters solve it, and also the story ending with moral lesson.

3. **Discussing Picture Books in Group for Improving Students' Interest in Reading Comprehension of Narrative Story.**

Picture books discussion in group setting also stimulated students to be more interested in reading the picture book, so it enhanced students reading comprehension. The procedures were implemented as follows; a) discussing picture-text relationship in the picture books to seek for meaning of unknown

words, and b) responding to some questions about story elements in story mapping activity to identify story elements with illustration supports.

Discussion

This research was conducted in three cycles with one meeting for each cycle. Each cycle consisted of four stages which were planning, acting, observing and reflecting.. The teacher cooperated with the writer as the collaborator to observe and to monitor the activity which was happening in the classroom through the use of observation checklist and field notes. While at the end of all cycles, the writer interviewed the teacher and some representative of students to collect more data based on their perspective.

In the first cycle, most students still got some problems in identifying the story elements like the characters' conflict, how the characters solve the conflict, the actions, the ending and identifying the moral lesson as the reflection of main idea or theme of the story. In the second cycle, the teacher taught vocabulary by asking the students to learn words meaning through pictures as the visual clues and using contextual clues from other familiar words that relates the target words. Students were encouraged to use the illustration for identifying the details of story elements. Many students were enthusiastic to predict and confirm the story through examining the pictures and read the text. In the second cycles, there were increasement of students' ability in reading comprehension as seen from the obervation of the teaching and learning process and the mean scores which was increased from 68,5 to 72,5. Although many student still achieved under the minimum scores at least 65, the scores showed the changes of improvement. There were 10 students passed the minimum standard (KKM). In the third cycle, students were became enthusiastic and enjoyed reading the picture book in activities of picture walk, interactive reading in group, and story mapping.They became more active and aware of using pictures as the visual aids and using contextual clues for recognizing word meaning. At the end after the assessment,

the result showed that students' ability in reading comprehension of narrative text were improved, by the mean score increasement to be 78,5, and about 75% students passed the minimum scores although some of them got the score still below the standard (70). After implementing all the cycles, the findings of this research indicated that students' ability in reading comprehension got improved overtime. Besides that, students also got improvement on their interest in reading comprehension using picture books.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conclusions
Based on the findings of this research, it was found that students' reading comprehension skills in recognizing words meaning, identifying story elements, and students' attitude of interest were improved through the use of picture books as the media. The picture books were used in the classroom teaching and learning along with the implementation of shared reading procedures includes picture walk, contextual clues, and story mapping. From the research, the writer concluded that the use of picture books improved students' reading comprehension of narrative text.

Suggestions
After conducting classroom action research with the main focus on using picture books as the media to improve students reading comprehension of narrative text, the writer realized some weaknesses in implementing the process. In using picture books interestingly and appropriately, the writer provided some suggestion; 1)Teachers in rural area without internet can create self-created picture books from photographs pictured by digital camera or phone, and also use painting or drawing made by skillful teachers or students. 2) The authors can adopt the story from local culture to enrich the content and also to introduce local story from local culture. 3) teacher can provide more exposure to use context clues in the picture,

such as using matching picture-words activity with translation.

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