

Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Through Mind Mapping

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify whether or not and to what extent the use of Mind Mapping improves the reading comprehension; and (2) to describe the class situation when Mind Mapping is implemented in the reading class of the seventh year students of SMP N 3 Colomadu. The problems faced by the students include the difficulty in identifying the main idea, implicit information, explicit information, referent, and word meaning in the text. The research data were collected by using techniques of observation, interview, field note, photographs, and test (pre-test and post-test). The quantitative and qualitative analyses show that mind mapping can improve both the students' reading comprehension and the class situation. It can be seen by comparing the pre-test and the post-test score. Their mean score of pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 were 57.99, 68.29, and 80.31.

Key Word: *reading comprehension, mind mapping*

Introduction

There are four language skills. They are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Reading is interrelated with the total educational process so that educational success requires successful reading. Experience has taught us that those who fail in school usually have failed first in reading, so reading is very important in teaching and learning process.

There are many definitions of reading by some experts. Aebersold and Field (1997: 15) say that Reading is what happens when people look at the text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text, further, the text and the reader are the two physical entities necessary for the reading process to begin. In line with them, Heilman (1961: 8) says that reading is a process of getting meaning from printed word symbols. It is not merely a process of making conventionalized noises associated with these symbols.

Wallace (1996: 4) adds that reading is interpreting which means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. It means that when someone sees written symbols in a text, there will be something visualized on the reader's mind. Davies defines that reading is a

private activity. It is a mental or cognitive process, which involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a writer, who is in distance space and time (1995: 1).

Based on these definitions above, it can be concluded that reading is a process of getting the meaning of written text and giving reaction of it as the form of communication between the reader and the writer.

Reading cannot be separated from comprehension. That is why there appear a lot of problems dealing with reading comprehension. Many English learners find it difficult to understand the English text. Very often, they get stuck because of some problems, such as unfamiliar words, their inability in understanding the context, being reluctant, and so forth.

Reading is not easy skill to master. According to Nunan (1998: 33), reading needs identification and also interpretation processes which require the reader's knowledge about the language structure used in the text and his knowledge about a given topic. It is the complexity that makes some students less interested in this kind of activity. This

phenomenon happens in almost every language class.

Teaching English, especially teaching reading is not easy, because it requires creativity and motivation in to the students in order to create a good situation and condition when teaching and learning process and to make the students interested in reading, so that the goal of teaching and learning process can be achieved.

After conducting observation in SMP Negeri 3 Colomadu, the researcher found the problems faced by the seventh year students in learning process. They had low reading comprehension. It was supported by the result of pre-test. The mean score of pre-test was 57.99. It was under the KKM of SMP Negeri 3 Colomadu which was 70.

Based on the observation, interview and questionnaire done in pre-research, the writer found that the students have low competence on reading comprehension. It is indicated through the following indicators: (1) Students got difficulties to infer and grasp the meaning of words; (2) Students got difficulties to catch the main idea of the text; (3) Students got difficulties in identifying the implicit information of the text; (4) Students got difficulties in identifying the explicit information of the text; and (5) Students got difficulties to determine references.

Problems in English class that appear during the lesson also happened; (1) Some students made noise in teaching and learning process; (2) Students did improper activities in the class like sleeping, chatting, drawing, doing homework the other lesson, etc; (3) Students became passive in teaching learning process; (4) Students did not respond to the teacher's commands and did not doing the assignments; and (5) Students did not pay attention to the teacher's explanation.

Generally, the problems might be caused by external factors: those are the material and the technique/ method used by the teacher. And the internal factors those are from the interest, behaviour and intelligence of the students themselves.

The first factor is from teacher's side. Some students said that the method used by the teacher was monotonous. The teacher dominates the classroom activities that make

students passive during the teaching and learning process. In the reading class, the teacher presents a subject in the text books and asks students to read whether silently or loudly, and then students have to answer the questions that follow. Consequently, the reading lesson becomes monotonous and boring. The other factor is material. As we know, English is not our native language. And of course, comprehending an English text is more difficult, because it has different system including vocabulary and structure. The student who has poor vocabulary and structures will have some difficulties when they face an English text. This condition is faced by most junior high school students. They have some difficulties in understanding the content of the text and that condition causes the lack of the student's reading interest. Moreover, the teacher usually uses text book or LKS as teaching materials.

The second factor is internal factor. This factor is related to the students themselves. One of the internal factors is the students' interest in reading comprehension. As stated above, the students' interest is still low. It can be seen when they got assessments related to reading activities, only view students read the text and did their assessments. Some of them copied their friend's work or even did not do it. Most of them were passive in reading class.

Based on that situation, it is necessary for the researcher to find a new teaching technique in order to solve the problems above. The researcher uses mind mapping technique to solve the problems and to improve reading comprehension.

Buzan (2007: 103) defines that mind mapping is a creative thinking tool reflecting the brain's way to work. It enables brain to use all its image and association in pattern of radial and brain internally. It is the easiest way to place information which go out from the brain. Mindmapping is way to write creatively and effectively. It will map our ideas literally.

In line with him, Moreover, Murley (2007: 175) states mind mapping as nonlinear visual outline of complex information that can aid creativity, organization, productivity, and memory. Mind maps graphically show ideas in a relational context, with the main topic at the centre of the map, major subtopic on branches

radiating from the main topic, and sub-subtopic around each subtopic, etc.

While, Windura (2008: 16) states that Mind map is a technical graphics that allow us to explore the full potential of our brain for thinking and learning. Edward (2009: 64) says that Mind map is the most effective and efficient way to enter, store, and remove the data from / to the brain. This system works based on the natural working of our brains, so it can optimize all the potential and capacity of the human brain.

Based on the definitions above, the writer can conclude that mind mapping is a nonlinear visual outline that reflects natural work of the brain. It involves writing down a central theme and thinking of new and related ideas which radiate out from the centre. This system works based on the natural working of our brains, so it can optimize all the potential and capacity of the human brain. It will help us to better understand and retain information longer in our brains.

Mind mapping uses concise words, pictures, color, associations and other visual aids to convey the essence of an idea or information. By constant use of mind mapping, learners learn to 'fill in the gaps' and increase their cognitive skills. Mind map thus is a complementary tool that helps their thinking, comprehending and recalling skills. The use of mind mapping is hoped to help the students to comprehend texts easily. It is because the students need a technique that helps them to visualize their imagination and organize the idea they have imagined. In this research, the writer will focus the problem only on the use of mind mapping as alternative technique for teaching English and how to improve reading comprehension among the seventh year students of SMP N 3 Colomadu.

Research Method

The method used in this research is action research method. There are various definitions of action research. Kemmis as quoted by Hopkins (1993: 44) gives the definition of action research as follows:

“Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participators in a social situation (including education) in order to improve the rationality and

justice of (a) their own social or educational practice, (b) their understanding of these practices and (c) the situation in which practices are carried out.”

While, Mills (2000: 6) states that action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in teaching-learning environment to gather information about the ways how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn.

Based on several definitions stated by some experts, the writer concludes that action research is any systematic inquiry undertaken by participators in a social situation (including education) which is directed towards greater understanding and improvement of practices where those practices are carried out.

This action research uses the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (1999: 32). There are four steps in action research: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each step is explained as follows: (1) planning, develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening; (2) action, it is an act to implement the plan; (3) observation, observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs; (4) reflection, it is a step to reflect these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed and so on, through a succession on stages.

In this classroom action research, the researcher collected the data using qualitative and quantitative method. Wallace (1998: 38) defines that quantitative method is broadly used to describe what can be counted or measured and can therefore be considered 'objective', while qualitative is used to describe data which are not amenable to being counted or measured in an objective way, and are therefore 'subjective'. For qualitative data, the researcher used observation, interview, questionnaire, and photograph taking.

In analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher used qualitative technique as suggested by Burns. He says that there are five stages in analyzing the qualitative data. They are assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations,

and reporting the outcomes. Each step is explained as follows: (1) assembling the data, the first step is to assemble the data that the researcher has collected over the period of the research: field notes, questionnaires and so on; (2) coding the data, in this stage, once there has been some overall examination of the data, categories or codes can be developed to identify patterns more specially; (3) comparing the data, all this stage, comparison can be made to see whether themes or pattern are repeated or developed across different data gathering techniques; (4) building interpretations, this is the point where moving beyond describing, categorizing, coding, and comparing to make some sense of the meaning of the data; and (5) reporting the outcomes, the final stage involves presenting an account of the research for others.

The quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test to know the difference before and after the cycle. In analyzing the data in the form of numbers as the result of the test, the researcher count the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test, then, the researcher compared these mean scores. The improvement could be seen from the mean score in post-test which was higher than the mean score in the pre-test.

The mean scores of pre-test and post-test can be calculated by using descriptive statistics.

Finding and Discussion

The researcher conducted pre-observation in class VII E to know the condition of English teaching learning, the problems faced by the students and the teacher, and the students' reading comprehension. In this pre-observation, it was found that the students' reading comprehension was still low. The problems faced by the students in reading are difficulties in identifying the main idea of the text, difficulties in identifying the implicit detail information of the text, difficulties in identifying the explicit detail information of the text, difficulties in identifying the referent of the text, and difficulties in identifying word meaning in the text. It was shown in their low scores in the English lesson especially in reading.

After identifying the problems, the researcher conducted pre-test. The pre-test was

done before implementing the teaching learning process using mind mapping. The test was used to know their reading comprehension competence. The mean of the students' pre-test score was 57.99. Based on the pre-observation and pre-test result, the researcher identified that the students' reading comprehension was still low because it was below the passing grade for English lesson (70), and must be improved by implementing the new teaching technique. Therefore, the researcher used mind mapping as teaching technique to improve the students' reading comprehension.

The implementation of the teaching reading using mind mapping in this action research consisted of two cycles. The first cycle consisted of four meetings; three meetings for delivering the materials, and one meeting for the post-test 1 and the second cycle consisted of three meetings; two meetings for delivering the materials and one meeting for the post-test 2. She tried to implement mind mapping to solve the students' problem.

After analyzing the observation result and the test result in the first cycle, the researcher found the students' progress in reading comprehension and class situation. The result showed that there were some improvements achieved after doing the action. But, there were also some problems which were still found in this cycle.

The score of post-test 1 is better than the score of pre-test. The mean score of the students had improved from the pre-test 57.99 into 68.29 in the post test 1. The improvements were not only of the students' reading comprehension but also the students' attitudes and classroom situation toward reading itself. In the first meeting, the students were still ashamed and awkward to get involved in the activities, but in the next meetings, they began to participate actively by giving their opinion. They also tried to be active in answering the researcher's questions and responding the researcher's instruction. They were also interested and motivated to join and get involved in the teaching learning process because the teacher used new teaching technique.

From the result of the reflection above, it can be concluded that the action in cycle one resulted the improvement, but still found some problems. The problems in class situation are

there were some students who still did improper activities in the class, like chatting and homework other lesson and there were some students did not respond to the teacher commands and did not doing the assignments. While, the problems in reading are: Some students still had difficulties in identifying the main idea of the text and identifying the referent of the text.

Dealing with those problems in the first cycle, the researcher revised her plans. The revised plans were: (1) The researcher should improve the students' ability in identifying the main idea of the text and referent of the text by using more exercises about it and (2) The researcher will give more control to the students' activities to do the exercises in order to make the students did not copy their friend's work or even did not do it.

Having done the second cycle, the researcher found that the use of mind mapping motivated the students in teaching and learning process and the students know well the step of mind mapping. Some students were active in asking some difficulties to the researcher.

After implementing the technique, it seemed the class better than before. It can be seen that: students made less noise in teaching learning process, all of the students focused in doing the task and asked the difficulties they found, the students began to participate actively in discussing the text and the task, the students did their assignment and always responded the teacher commands, and the students actively paid attention to the lesson; they also did the task cooperatively with their group.

This improvement also can be seen from the increase of mean score. The mean score increased from pre-test, post test 1 and post-test 2. It can be showed on the table below:

Table 1: The Improvement in Achievement Mean Score.

Test	The mean score
Pre-test	57.99
Post-test 1	68.29
Post-test 2	80.31

From the table above, the mean score of post-test 1 is better than the score of pre-test. Mind mapping improves the students' reading comprehension in 4 indicators of reading. They are identifying main idea, implicit and explicit

information, referent of the text and word meaning of the text.

The result of the post-test 2 showed that the students' mean score increased from 68.29 in post-test 1 to 80.31 in post-test 2. Teaching reading by using mind mapping made the students easier to understand the text. Mind mapping is an appropriate technique to improve the students' reading comprehension.

Conclusion

The implementations of mind mapping as the teaching technique in teaching learning activity showed that: (1) the use of mind mapping improves the students' reading comprehension; (2) the use of mind mapping improves the English class situation especially in reading class.

The improvement of the students' reading comprehension is shown by the increase of mean scores of pre-test and post-tests, compared to the mean score of pre-test which is 57.99, the mean score of post-test 1 increased up to 68.29. Then, the mean score of post-test 2 increased up to 80.31.

The students' attitude toward English lesson especially in reading class got better. They were interested in active participation and taking part in the lesson. They got actively involved in teaching learning process. Most of them were brave to read the text loudly. They were also brave to answer the questions from the researcher and ask the difficulties they found. They were very enthusiastic in following the teaching and learning process. Their motivation in English lesson also got better. Mind mapping, as new and interesting technique, helped them to have higher motivation and activeness in joining reading class.

Finally, mind mapping can effectively be used as technique in teaching reading. Having some advantages that allows mind mapping facilities the learning process, mind mapping has improved the students' reading comprehension and the class situation in the seventh year students of SMP Negeri 3 Colomadu.

After conducting an action research and based on the research findings, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions for the teachers, the students, and other researchers.

They are: (1) for teachers, reading class commonly seems not so interesting for the students. The teacher should use interesting technique in teaching and learning process. Mind mapping is one of interesting techniques that can be used in teaching reading because it contains many pictures and colors. Teacher also should create a good atmosphere in teaching-learning in order to make students motivated to learn and interested during the teaching-learning process; (2) for students, students should motivate themselves to learn English. They should follow all the activities in teaching and learning process in groups or individually. Students must keep their attitude during the teaching and learning process. They

should not disturb the other friends who pay attention to the teacher. Students also should not be afraid of making mistakes and keeping on trying in making mind mapping. They should have more practices both in school and at home; and (3) for other researchers, this study discusses the use of mind mapping as a teaching technique to improve students' reading comprehension in Junior High School. It is expected that the result of this study can be used as an additional reference in conducting classroom action research for reading comprehension and other skills.

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