IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH CONTEXTUAL GUESSING TECHNIQUE (A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AT SEMESTER TWO OF STUDENTS OF BATANGHARI UNIVERSITY IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/2014)

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Abstract

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui penggunaan Contextual Guessing Technique untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca mahasiswa. Masalah pada penelitian ini adalah 'Bagaimana Contextual Guessing Technique meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pada mahasiswa semester empat Universitas Batanghari-Jambi tahun ajaran 2013/2014?'. Subjek dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester II/A yang terdiri dari 30 orang mahasiswa. Penelitian ini adalah Penelitian Tindakan Kelas yang diadakan dalam tiga siklus. Data pada penelitian ini diperoleh dari tes, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Persentase nilai rata-rata siswa tes awal adalah 49.2% dan pada tes akhir adalah 72%. Peningkatan nilai rata-rata siswa dari tes awal ke tes akhir adalah 22.8%. Dengan ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa Contextual Guessing Technique dapat meningkatkan kemampuan membaca mahasiswa semester dua di Universitas Batanghari-Jambi tahun ajaran 2013/2014.

Kata kunci : reading comprehension, contextual guessing technique

INTRODUCTION

In teaching English, there are four important skills that should be taught to the students: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Those skills are taught integrated. In Indonesia, among the four skills, reading gets the most emphasis in the teaching and learning process. The students asked to answer the questions that had given to them. The test's questions are mostly consisted of reading comprehension passages. So, the students have to have a good reading comprehension skill.

One of the main problems that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) confront is how to improve their reading comprehension proficiency. This is actually the concern of both EFL learners and teachers in Iran since it is the major classroom activity in the Indonesia educational system. Reading skill is necessarily required in Batanghari university entrance exam which most high school and pre-university graduates need to pass. Reading is one of the most important activities in language classes Kirby (2007). It enables learners to work at their own pace and to increase their world knowledge. It also helps them consolidate their knowledge of language. Reading is a means of getting information from different sources including scientific and literary books and journals as well as the internet websites in an EFL context.

During the researcher's experience as a lecturer in teacher training and education faculty of Batanghari University especially in English study program, the researcher observed the learning process that happened in the real situation. The researcher found that in a reading activity, the students could not understand the text properly. The students encountered problem in comprehending English text since most of the text consist of unfamiliar words. Then some of the students would be busy to look for the unfamiliar words on their dictionary, while the others would stop doing the activity and just ended up by chatting each other's.

Furthermore, the English learning achievements of semester two of students were low and dissatisfied. It can be seen from their reading achievement at the first semester test. Therefore, the lecturer should find an appropriate technique to improve students' reading comprehension mastery. There are so many kinds of technique to teach reading in the classroom, one of them is contextual guessing technique. The technique of finding the meaning of an unknown word through the use in a sentence or the use of context clues. Contextual guessing is the most important skill used by most readers in attacking new words. It is closely related to comprehension and this is one of the most practical skills for the students to use.

Considering the facts, the researcher assumed that Contextual Guessing Techniques an appropriate technique to overcome the problem of the students of semester two of Batanghari University academic year 2013/2014 in order to improve their reading comprehension. Therefore the researcher formulated the problems into: "How did Contextual Guessing Technique improve reading

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comprehension at semester two of Students of Batanghari University in academic year 2013/2014?

The objective of this research was: To find out how Contextual Guessing Technique improve students' reading comprehension. This research hopefully can be used as a reference for teachers to be more creative to choose an appropriate technique to improve the students' reading comprehension. For the students may use the Contextual Guessing Technique in English reading comprehension. It may also help them to overcome their reading difficulties. For the researcher may apply Contextual Guessing Technique in the process of teaching and learning activity in the classroom.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

1. Reading Skill

Reading may be defined as an interaction between a writer and reader, since in reading activity a reader attempts to figure out the information from written text that intended by a writer. In other words, reading can be defined as a communication process between the reader and the writer. This communication process happened when the writer wants to share a message in mind (it may be an idea, a fact, a feeling, etc.) The writer must first put the idea into words, so that it is available outside the writer's mind as a written text. The text is accessible to the mind of another person who reads it, and who may then get the message it contains. After that, the message enters the mind of the reader and communication is achieved. This process shows that reading means getting out the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it (Nuttal,1996).

Basically, reading is an advantageous activity, although the motivations of people to read are varied. People read to get information, to learn something, or just for fun. There is an opinion which says that the more people read, the more knowledge they learn. Reading can be entertaining as well as informative. It is not an exaggerated statement, for people really take a lot of advantages through reading, no matter what they read (whether they read scientific books or articles or popular ones). By reading people will know and get something to enrich and enlarge their knowledge. People who like reading have the biggest opportunity to improve their career. In today's school, the importance of reading has been emphasized on the students.

2. Teaching Reading

There are some principles for teaching reading. Firstly, if the students are reading on an unfamiliar topic, teachers may need to begin the reading process by building up background knowledge. Background knowledge includes all of the experiences that a reader brings to the text. Secondly, the teachers have to build a strong vocabulary base.

Basic vocabulary should be explicitly taught to the students and the students should be taught to use context to effectively guess the meaning of less frequent vocabulary. Finally, monitoring comprehension is essential to successful reading (Nunan, 2003). In teaching reading, the teachers have to teach the students to make sense of what is being read. In addition, teachers have to choose an appropriate material for their students.

3. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension means understanding something that being read and not just read through (Sofsian, 2006). Whenever the readers read something, there may be instances when they just browse through a paragraph which they are reading.

Reading comprehension strategies are tools that students can use to help determine the meaning of what they read. The strategies presented in Reading Comprehension section are those which enable students to interact with fiction or non-fiction, in order to understand and answer questions about what they have read. Reading comprehension skills increase the pleasure and effectiveness of reading. Strong reading comprehension skills help in all the other subjects and in the personal and professional lives.

4. ContextualGuessing Technique

The technique of finding the meaning of an unknown word through its use in a sentence and then guessing how it is pronounced is known as contextual guessing or context identification, or the use of context clues. Contextual guessing is the most important skill used by most readers in attacking new words. It is closely related to comprehension and this is one of the most practical skills students learn (Yang, 2009).

Contextual Guessing Technique can helps students on their reading comprehension. By contextual guessing students can identify important words in

reading and make semantic predictions about their relationship to one another. As states by Hayati (2009), contextual guessing is using context to discover the meaning of unknown words to comprehend a reading text. Aspatore (1984) cited in Hayati suggested that contextual guessing is asking students to underline unknown words without looking up the meaning in the dictionary. So, the students will not busy on their dictionary in a reading activity and it can make the reading activity more effective.

In addition, there are several clues to use in understanding new words by Contextual Guessing Technique according to Zhong (1993), they are:

A. Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a root is the part of a word that has the main meaning and that its other forms are based on; a word that other words are formed from. Example: 'Walk' is the root of 'Walks', 'Walked', 'Walking', and 'Walker'.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a prefix is syllable, e.g. pre- or un-, placed in front of a word to change its meaning; a word element placed at the beginning of a root.

Suffix is the word element that is attached to the end of a root or word. Both prefixes and suffixes change the meaning of the root and form a new word.

B. Sentence Punctuation

Punctuation marks are sometimes used to set off a word which is being used to identify word. Some of the common punctuation marks are: commas [,], brackets [ ], dashes -, single quotation marks ' ', parentheses ( ), double quotation marks " ".

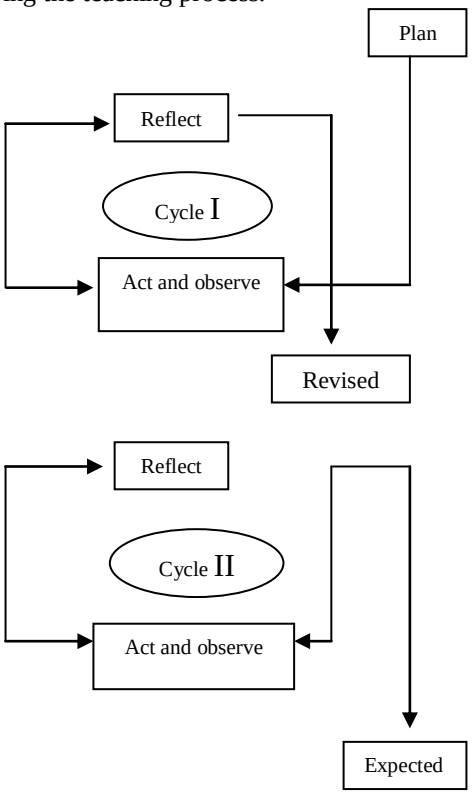
C. Sentence Connecting Words

Some connecting words indicate an opposite or contrasting meaning in the sentence: Although, But, In contrast to, However, Even though.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was a classroom action research. It means that the problem in this research came from the teaching and learning problem in the classroom. Classroom action research was done by the teacher in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning activity in a classroom (Iskandar, 2009). This research was conducted at semester two students of Batanghari University which consist of 3 classes. The subject of this research was the students of semester two of Batanghari University that consisted of 30 students because there was a lack of students' reading comprehension skill. It can be seen from the unsatisfying students' reading scores.

There were some instruments used in this research. They were reading comprehension tests, observation sheets, and a camera for documentation. Reading comprehension test that was used in this research was in the form of multiple-choice which consists of 20 items. It was written based on the source that relevant and material given to the students during the teaching process.



The data in this research was analysed in the following procedures: First, the researcher gave the individual score of students' pre-test and post-test by using the formula:

$$S=\frac{\Sigma X}{\Sigma Y} \times 100\%$$

Where:
S = Score
X = Total of the correct item
Y = Total of item
Adapted from (Nurgianto in Hutri, 2010)

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of the research was presented in this chapter. The result showed that reading comprehension of semester two of the students of Batanghari University in academic year 2013/2014 was improved. It

can be seen from the comparison between the result of Pre-test and Post-test. It was presented in the following section.

Action Research Description

1. Pre-test

At the beginning of the research, the students were given a pre-test. It was done to get the score of reading comprehension before giving the actions. The pre-test was done on March 26th, 2014. The test consisted of 20 questions of multiple choice items. The test was scored based on five interval categories. The result of the pre-test score could be seen on the following table:

Table 1. The Result of the Pre-test

No	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Good	-	-
2	Good	-	-
3	Moderate	8	26.7 %
4	Low	18	60 %
5	Fail	4	13.3 %

The calculation of students' score in Pre-test showed that the highest score was 65 and the lowest score was 25. While the average score of students' reading comprehension before given the action was 49.2 % which was categorized low.

Based on the data, in the next cycle the researcher tried to make the students more active, discuss the material, take a note and do the assignment.

2. The Result of Test in Cycle I

Table 2. The Result of the Test in Cycle I

No	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Good	-	-
2	Good	-	-
3	Moderate	10	33.3 %
4	Low	20	66.7 %
5	Fail	-	-

The calculation of the students' score in Cycle I showed that the highest score was 70 and the lowest score was 40. While the students' reading comprehension in Cycle I was 51 % that was still categorized Low.

3. The Result of the Test in Cycle II

Table 3. The Result of the Test in Cycle II

No	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Good	2	6.7 %
2	Good	4	13.3 %
3	Moderate	15	50 %
4	Low	9	30 %
5	Fail	-	-

The calculation of the students' score in Cycle II showed that the highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 50. While the students' reading comprehension in Cycle II was 62.33 % that was categorized Moderate.

Based on the data, it was good progress and the researcher felt that it was enough to give the treatment.

4. The Result of the Test in Cycle III

Table 4. The Result of the Test in Cycle III

No	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Good	4	13.3 %
2	Good	13	43.3 %
3	Moderate	9	30 %
4	Low	4	13.3 %
5	Fail	-	-

The calculation showed that the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 50. While the students' reading comprehension in Cycle III was 73.66% that was categorized Moderate.

5. Post Tests

The post test was conducted in order to investigate the Contextual Guessing Technique could improve the students' reading comprehension. In this research, the post test was given on June 4th, 2014. The materials used in the post test were the same with the materials in the pre-test. The result of the test could be seen in the following table.46

Table 5. The Result of Post Test

No	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Good	3	10 %
2	Good	10	33.3 %
3	Moderate	15	50 %
4	Low	2	6.7 %
5	Fail	-	-

The calculation showed that the highest score was 95 and the lowest score was 50.While the students' reading comprehension in Post Test was 72 % that was categorized moderate.

The Analysis of the Pre-Test and Post Test

In analysing the pre-test and post test result, the scores were compared to see whether the action had an improvement or not.

Table 4.6. The Analysis of the Percentage of Students' Average Score in Pre-Test and Post Test.

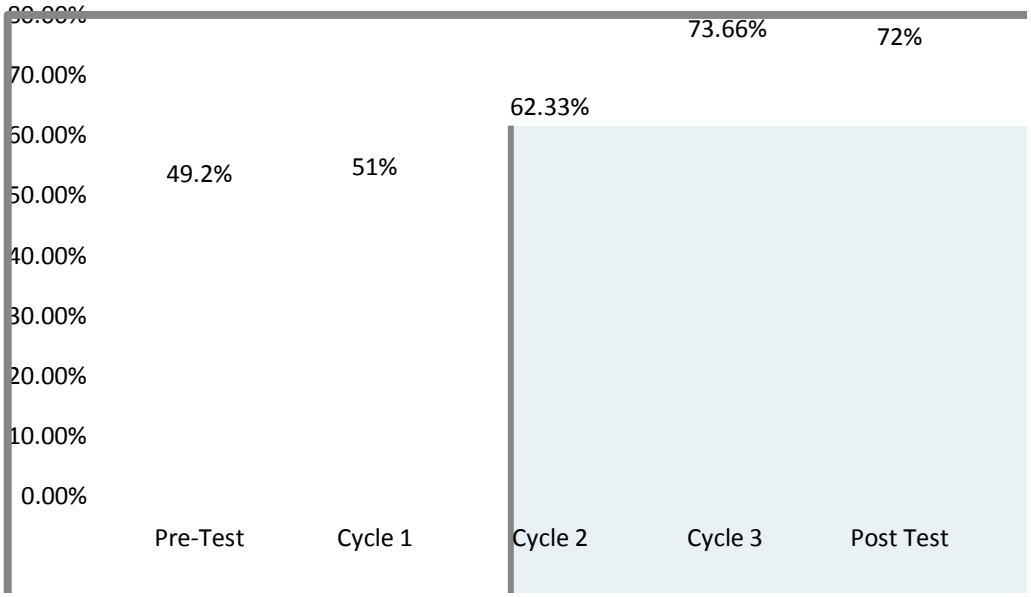
No	Percentage of Students' Average Score		Increasing
1	Pre-Test	Post Test	
2	49.2 %	72 %	22.8

From the table above, the percentage students' average score in pre-test was 49.2% and the post test was 72 %. It could be concluded that the students' average score in pre-test was smaller than post-test.

The increasing of students' average score in pre-test to post test was 22.8 %.

In general, the improvement achieved by the students from pre-test, cycle I, cycle II, cycle III and post-test could be seen in the following chart:

Chart 1. The Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension



From the chart, it also showed that the students' reading comprehension score in Post-test was lower than the students' score in Cycle III. It can be happened because the difference on the amount of questions in each cycle compared with the post cycle. In each cycle there was only one text with 10 questions for the evaluation test, while in pre-test and post-test there were 3 texts with 20 questions. Perhaps the student needed a longer time to do the evaluation test in post-test.

Discussion

The result of this research showed that students' reading comprehension improved after the action was given to the students. The result of this research also indicated that using Contextual Guessing Technique could be useful to improve students' ability in reading comprehension.

The students' reading comprehension in the pre-test before using Contextual Guessing Technique was low. The result of pre-test showed that students' reading ability in reading comprehension consisted of 26.7 % moderate (achieved by 8 students), 60 % low(achieved by 18 students), and 13.3 % fail (achieved by 4 students). The calculation showed that the average score of students' reading comprehension before given the action was 49.2% which was categorized Low.

The result of the first cycle showed that students' reading comprehension was still at the low level. The result of Cycle I showed that students' reading comprehension consisted of 33.3 % Moderate (achieved by 10 students), and 66.7% Low (achieved by 20 students). The calculation showed that students' reading comprehension in Cycle I was 51 % that was49 % still categorized Low. Even though the students' average in Cycle I was at low level, it actually improved from 49.2% to 51%. In this cycle, the researcher also found that students' activity in the classroom was still poor. It can be seen that the students' score in the observation sheet was 7 which categorized as Poor. In this cycle, only some students who paid attention toward the lesson during the class. There few students were active in the classroom and critical toward the material discussed. Only some of students took note during the lesson and done the assignment that are given by the teacher. Finally, the learning situation was very passive.

The result of the second cycle showed that the students' reading comprehension was at the moderate level. The result of Cycle II showed that students' reading comprehension consisted of 6.7 % Very Good (achieved by 2 students), 13.3 % Good (achieved by 4 students), 50 % Moderate (achieved 15 students), and 30 % Low

(achieved by 9 students). The calculation showed that students' reading comprehension in Cycle II was 62.3 %. It means that there were progresses from cycle I to cycle II.

The result of the last cycle showed a good improvement. The students' average score was actually still at moderate level. However, nearly all students in this cycle had got scores up to six. The result of Cycle III showed that students' reading comprehension consisted of 13.3 % Very Good (achieved by 4 students), 43.3 % Good (achieved by 13 students), 30 % Moderate (achieved by 9 students), and 13.3 % Low (achieved by 4 students). The calculation showed that students' reading comprehension in Cycle III was 73.66 % that was categorized Moderate.

The Post test was conducted at the end of the research after applying the actions from Cycle I, Cycle II, and Cycle III. The students' improvements in reading comprehension were generally significant.

The result of Post Test showed that students' reading comprehension consisted of 10% Very Good (achieved by 3 students), 33.3 % Good (achieved by 10 students), 50 % Moderate (achieved by 15 students), and 6.7 % Low (achieved by 2 students). The calculation showed that students' reading comprehension in Post Test was 72 % that was categorized Moderate.

Finally, the calculation showed that the students' reading comprehension score in Post-test was lower than the students' score in Cycle III. It can be happened because the difference on the amount of questions in each cycle compared with the post cycle. In each cycle there was only one text with 10 questions for the evaluation test, while in pre-test and post-test there were 3 texts with 20 questions. Perhaps the students needed a longer time to do the evaluation test in post-test.

Based on the result above, it seemed that Contextual Guessing Technique was an effective technique to improve students' ability in reading comprehension. Contextual Guessing Technique can helps students on their reading comprehension. By contextual guessing students can identify important words in reading and make semantic predictions about their relationship to one another. As states by Hayati (2009), contextual guessing is using context to discover the meaning of unknown words to comprehend a reading text.

This technique helped the students' to guess and find the meaning of unfamiliar words in a written text, so that they could understand the text properly. They also did not have to waste the reading time by looking for the meaning of unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Aspatore (1984) cited in Hayati suggested that contextual guessing is asking students to underline unknown words without looking up the meaning in the dictionary. So, the students will not busy on their dictionary in a reading activity and it can make the reading activity more effective.

From the discussion of the research findings above, the researcher concluded that Contextual Guessing Technique is a good technique to improve students' reading comprehension.

Conclusion

According to the problem of this research "How did Contextual Guessing

Technique improves reading comprehension at semester two of students of Batanghari University in academic year 2013/2014?" The result of this research showed that Contextual Guessing Technique seems to be effective in improving students' ability in reading comprehension; it motivates students' activeness, response, attention, students' discussion on the material and learning situation in the classroom. In addition, this technique helped the students' to guess and find the meaning of unfamiliar words in a written text, so that they could understand the text properly. They also did not have to waste the reading time by looking for the meaning of unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Finally, Contextual Guessing Technique could improve the students' reading comprehension score, so that the students have achieved the minimum standard of passing grade.

In short, the researcher concluded that Contextual Guessing Technique could improve the students' reading comprehension at semester two of students of Batanghari University in Academic Year 2013/2014.

Suggestion

From the all activities and the results of this research, the researcher suggests that:

1. For all of English lecturers who have similar problems with semester two students of Batanghari University, whose students could not understand the reading text properly since they found

unfamiliar words on the text. It is expected to use Contextual Guessing Technique to solve the problems.

2. For further research, it is highly recommended to find more about the implementation of Contextual Guessing Technique by another researcher. It can be how the researcher handle and help the less active students during the learning process. In addition, how if the Contextual Guessing Technique is implemented in different time allocation and also different instrument and test.
3. For another researcher, it is very important to find out and investigate another technique or method to be compared with this technique. So, the teachers can use variety of technique or method in teaching reading class, especially in teaching reading comprehension skill.

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