

STORY GRAMMAR STRATEGY: AN APPROACH TO TEACH READING NARRATIVE TEXT

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Abstract:

Teaching English as Foreign Language emphasizes on teaching discourse in the classroom. This paper is presented focusing on conceptual paper in teaching reading. Specifically, this study focuses on written discourse discussing on the use of narrative text to teach students' reading skill. In foreign language teaching, teaching reading is one of important goal that students want to achieve. This paper focuses on one of English text type that is narrative text. It covers the theoretical basis dealing with the method of teaching reading, the use of narrative text that applies the text discourse analysis and the use of story grammar strategy. Furthermore, it also covers the teaching procedure (pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, post-teaching), reflection, and conclusion. Finally, it presents the reflection and conclusion of this analysis. The result shows that students' comprehension can be enhance through story grammar in the teaching of reading narrative text along with appropriate assessment for them.

Key words;

Discourse, Narrative Text, Story Grammar

Introduction

One of language skill that students need to achieve is reading. Reading is an important skill which has an important contribution to the success of learning language. The students can get knowledge from the text they read. Reading is an activity that essentially concerned with the transfer of meaning from mind to mind, a message from a writer to a reader. Reading needs comprehension to understand the context and get the new information of

the texts. Therefore, the readers must be able to identify the message from the text, know the meaning of the words and be able to combine units of meaning into a coherent message. In line with the description above, in comprehending the text, proposed that the students need to be aware with the micro and macro-skills for reading comprehension.¹ For example, in micro-skills, the students

¹ H. D. Brown. *Teaching by Principles. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc, 2007).

need to recognize the grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization) patterns. While, in macro-skills for reading, the students need to recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

In foreign language teaching, teaching reading is one of important goal that students need to achieve. Reading receives a special focus that is in EFL situation, the ability to read in a foreign language is all that students ever want to acquire.² However, there are some students who fail in understanding the English text. Most students fail to learn to read adequately in English. It may be caused by their ability in understanding the text in which they do not have sufficient background knowledge³. As the teacher, in order to solve this problem, we have to convince the students to be interested in reading such as giving motivation, providing appropriate media, selecting the text appropriately. The teachers have to arrange a suitable and interesting strategy related to students' condition. It can help students to increase their motivation in learning as well as the

² Jack C. Richards and Willy A Renandya, *Methodology in Language Teaching. an Anthology of Current Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³ J. C. Anderson. *Assessing Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

learners' condition. In employing the strategy, the teachers need to think whether the strategy is appropriate or not for their students. In this case, the strategy for teaching reading is expected to motivate in lesson and comprehend in reading.

In this paper, the writer provides an appropriate strategy to develop students' reading comprehension better that is through story grammar which considered as one way of reading comprehension strategies toward narrative text. In term of discourse studies, in comprehending the written text, the readers have to know the context and the content within a text. Others, the readers may recognize the discourse markers used in the text as the signal. In addition, the students are also supported to use their background knowledge while they are reading. It can help them in understanding the text. The role of background knowledge in the reader's ability to make sense of the text. It means that when the students are reading, then they get new knowledge⁴. It can only be processed coherently in relation to existing knowledge frameworks. These frameworks are not only knowledge about the world but also about texts, how texts are typically structured and organised.

⁴ M. McCarthy, M. (2000). *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

To comprehend the content of the text, students should not only have good mastery of English but also reading strategy. Therefore, in this research, the writer is interested to provide a solution to help the students improve their reading comprehension, especially on narrative text. Story grammar is proposed to help students in comprehending the text by using graphic organizer covering the major elements of the story. In this case, the writer proposes the use of narrative text to be reading material for the students. It will be appropriate with the use of story grammar because the narrative text consist of various components that included in the story grammar.

The use of narrative text can help the students to comprehend a text. Narrative texts appear to induce visualization in readers as part of the reading process. In other words, it can help the readers to understand texts easier, and they can feel motivated. Furthermore, one purpose of narrative texts is to entertain. Readers enjoy reading texts and are excited to know what will happen next. In this way, narrative texts can help increase students' motivation. Moreover, using narrative text may help teachers to teach moral value from the text. Students have benefits from reading narrative texts.⁵

⁵ David Pearson and Linda Fielding. *Comprehension Instruction. Handbook of Reading Research* (New York: Longman, 1991), 815-860.

Therefore, reading instructors can use narratives to teach moral lessons. For the generic structure of narrative text, the main elements are orientation (establishing time- place and characters), complicating actions (the main events that make *the story* happen), resolution (how the story reaches its end), and evaluation.⁶

Related to the description above, the story grammar is similar to sentence grammar in that it attempts to explain the various components in a story and how they function. The story grammar includes characters, a setting, events, and a conclusion. Story grammars provide teachers with an organizational framework to enhance children's interactions with stories.⁷ Hence, the story grammar is very helpful because it provides an overall structure for teaching narrative text. Moreover, some previous research found the use of story grammar has proven effective to improve the students reading comprehension. It is an effective strategy to build students' ability in reading comprehension. The students are guided to find out the important information by using organizational framework of story grammar. They can use the framework

⁶ M. McCarthy. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁷ M.C Schmitt and D.G. O'Brien. "Story grammars: Some Cautions about the Translation of Research into Practice." *Reading Research and Instruction*, (1986), 26, 1-8.

as a foundation to answer the questions related to the story. Hence, the writer assumes that this strategy would effectively work to solve students' difficulty in comprehending the text.

Theoretical Basis

1. Narrative Text for Discourse Analysis

The practice of the use of narrative text for the teaching of reading may relate to the discourse analysis. In the reading class, the students need to comprehend the text while they are reading. In addition, the teachers who want to train learners in narrative skills would do well to think of listeners as well as tellers, and activity design should take a positive role for the listener into account.⁸ It means the teachers may have students' activity in story telling the narrative text. In short, to see students' comprehension, the teacher may construct the classroom activities by involving them to be a story teller and the others students can be active listeners. In addition, classroom activities involving joint telling are also possible in which the students can be a teller or active listeners.⁹ In telling the story, they may use Some common openers to spoken stories and jokes in English include: I'll always remember the time....,

Did I ever tell you about ..., Then there was the time we ..., I must tell you about..., Have you heard the one about...., You'll never guess what happened yesterday...., I heard a good one the other day, I had a funny experience last week. There are also regularly occurring markers for complicating events such as And then, suddenlyl...., Next thing we knew...., and as if that ..., then guess what happened...¹⁰

In this paper, the writer proposed that in the teaching of reading, we need to consider the influence of discourse analysis on the teaching of reading. In fact, we cannot explain discourse patterning at the macro-skill for reading comprehension without paying the role of grammar and lexis. As mentioned above, in macro-skills for reading, the students need to recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.¹¹ The teacher cannot foster good reading without considering global and local reading skills simultaneously. Therefore, the teachers may determine an appropriate reading material for their students. Best reading materials will encourage an engagement with larger textual forms but not neglect the role of individual words,

⁸ McCarthy. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*

⁹ Ibid.

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¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Brown, *Teaching by Principles. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy.*

phrases and grammatical devices in guiding the reader around the text.¹²

2. Cooperative Learning

For the teaching practice, the teaching of reading skill using narrative text applies the use of cooperative learning and applying discourse analysis of narrative text dealing with the linguistics choices such as syntax, grammar, occurring markers for complicating events such as and then, next, then. Comprehending the text is one of the reading's goals. Teaching reading can be mainly used to facilitate students' performance by providing many opportunities for them to practice. The teachers may use reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning and reading recovery.¹³

In this paper, the writer proposes the use of cooperative learning in the teaching of reading.

The term *cooperative learning* (CL) refers to students working in teams on an assignment or project. Cooperative Learning is particularly beneficial for any student learning a second language. Cooperative Learning activities promote peer interaction, which helps the development of language and the learning of concepts and content. Cooperative learning is an approach to group work that minimizes the

occurrence of those unpleasant situations and maximizes the learning and satisfaction that result from working on a high-performance team. In addition, cooperative learning has its greatest effects on student learning when groups are recognized or rewarded based on the individual learning of their group members.

There are kinds of cooperative learning such as peer editing, jigsaw and think pair share. In this case of teaching reading, the writer proposes the use of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition proposed by Steven & Slavin.¹⁴ In cooperative integrated reading and composition, there are four steps to this method. First, the teacher makes some group discussion containing 4 students. Second, the teacher gives a text such as narrative text. Second, the students are asked to discuss the text with their group members. Next, the teacher asks them to presents their result of discussion in front of the class. Then, the other groups may give command or suggestion related to the topic that has been discussed. Research on CIRC and similar approaches has found positive effects on measures of reading

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Richards and Renandya, *Methodology in Language Teaching*.

¹⁴ R.E. Slavin and N.A. Madden. *Two Million Children: Success for All*, Thousand Oaks, (CA: Corwin, 2009).

performance in upper-elementary and middle schools.¹⁵

3. Story Grammar Strategy

Story grammar strategy is one of reading comprehension strategies of graphic organizer to comprehend narrative texts. Story grammar strategy is a framework to help the students in analyzing the main characters, setting, problems, events, solution, and assist students to outline a story.¹⁶ Story grammar has often also been referred to as story schema or story structure which is how it is used in the structure of stories. Story mapping can be meant as the visual representation of story grammar that can be as simple as an outline or as detailed as a complex picture or visual organizer. By employing story grammar strategy, the students are helped to read the text meaningfully. Story grammar allows the students to comprehend the story easier. The story grammar strategy is a reading comprehension strategy in improving the students' interactions to find out the

important information of the story by using an organizational framework.¹⁷

By using story grammar, the important information can be comprehended. The elements of story grammar include information about the main and supporting characters and the theme of the story.¹⁸ By knowing those elements, the readers are able to comprehend the text well. The other advantage of story grammar is helping students understand the structure of a literary text. At an early elementary level, a story grammar may include such as the characters, setting, and a beginning, middle, and end. Then, the other benefits of the Story Grammar strategy. This strategy is not only can improve reading comprehension, but also can enhance students' vocabulary, writing, and imagination. Then, it can motivate students to be proud with their work. It is appropriate to be used for students who work individually, pair, group or the whole class discussion¹⁹.

In the teaching practice, story grammar can be used in the class for such kind of this activity. First, the teacher provides the text such as narrative text. Then, the teacher

¹⁵R.J. Stevens and S. Durkin. *Using Student Team Reading and Student Team Writing in Middle Schools: Two Evaluations*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Centre for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students. 1992. Report No. 36.

¹⁶J. Dimino, R. Gersten, D. Carnine, and G. Blake, "Story grammar: An approach for Promoting at-Risk Secondary Students' Comprehension of Literature." *The Elementary School Journal*, 1990. 91(1), 19-32.

¹⁷ Schmitt and O'Brien. "Story Grammars: Some Cautions about the Translation of Research into Practice."

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Y. Alberti, "*Improving Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Texts by Using Story Grammar Strategy at Grade VIIID of SMPN 1 Pondok Kelapa Bengkulu Tengah*." Unpublished Thesis: Bengkulu University. 2014.

distributes a story grammar and asks them to complete it. Besides, the teacher may encourage them to think about the elements of the story by asking questions such as: "who were the main characters in the story?" "where did the story take place?" "what happened in the beginning" and "what happened in the end". While, for older students, more complex elements, such as problems, events, resolution, and theme, may also be included. In conclusion, the teacher can develop the teaching learning activities and media based on his/her creativity. So, the strategy will give motivation the students to learn reading a text better. Moreover, it can impact for the students' achievement regarding the strategy used by their teachers.

4. Teaching Strategies

For the practice of teaching reading, the writer assumes that the teachers need to define the classroom activities into three steps. Reading instructors should employ to help students improve reading abilities by having three steps of activities that are pre-reading, whilst-reading and post-reading.²⁰

In the pre-reading, the teacher can start to develop and activate background knowledge of the students

by showing a picture related the story and asking some questions related the topic. In the beginning of reading, the teacher reminds the students on what they know about a topic and supplies them with new information. It can increase students' vocabulary that students will meet in the story they read. The purpose of pre-reading stage is to build the students' knowledge of the text and to motivate the students to read. It is needed to focus the students' attention. To focus the students' attention, can be done by using a picture, asking some questions and analyzing word association. Then, the teacher could motivate the students by providing interesting texts. In addition, the teachers also explain the narrative text dealing with the generic structure, language features, etc. Then, the teacher divides the students into some groups.

In whilst reading stage, after defining the groups, the teacher may distribute the text and give them the outline of story grammar. The teacher can ask students some questions such as who were the main characters in the story?" "where did the story take place?" "what will happen next", etc. Then, the teacher explains the using of story grammar strategy to the students, explains how this strategy can help them in their reading comprehension. Next, the students read the text and try to understand both literal and implied

²⁰ M. Richek, J. Caldwell, J. Jennings, and J. Lerner. *Reading Problems: Assessment and Teaching Strategies* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

meaning of the text. This activity can include identifying the main idea, finding details message in a text, following a sequence, inferring from the text, recognizing the writer's purpose and attitude, recognizing discourse features. The students' identification is absolutely related to the story grammar given by the teacher. Then, the teacher's role is to help both individual learners with their particular difficulties and the whole group.

In post-reading, after students read narrative texts, instructors can integrate listening, speaking, and writing with the reading of narrative texts. Integrating these skills with the reading of texts give students the opportunity to interpret text through individual cultural perspectives and compare these perspectives with those of their classmates and the authors.²¹ Activities after reading can take a variety of forms such as questioning, discussion, writing, drama, and artistic and nonverbal activities. The purpose of post reading is intended to review the content of the text. The activities of this stage, for example the teacher asks some questions for evaluation, ask the students to retell the essence of the text. The teachers control the discussion and explain more about narrative text, generic structure and feature language.

²¹ Richard Day. *New Ways in Teaching Reading*. (Illinois: Pantagraph Printing, 1993), 201.

Then, the students answer the questions related the story using the information in story grammar. Last, the teacher evaluates the student's success through assessing increases in achievement.

Reflection

From the description above, using the narrative text as the media of teaching reading lead the students to be interested in reading. The teachers can use the story grammar in teaching reading of narrative text. By employing this strategy, the students can figure out the story based on the graphic organizer of the text. This strategy can be used in any levels of students in which the teachers have to serve the text material appropriately with their level. Hence, the students will understand the element of narrative text by using this story grammar. Besides, in comprehending the text, they also need to understand the context of the sentences. Moreover, the use of this technique could encourage the students to learn easily. It also provides clear organization of the text.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, the teachers are suggested to use story grammar for students' comprehension. In the teaching of reading, the teachers should build up the background knowledge of the students before they are asked to read a text. Then, the

teacher need to choose appropriate material related to the students' background knowledge. The teachers are also required to use appropriate strategies in teaching reading for their students. Hence, the students will have better reading comprehension with effective and efficient strategies. Finally, the teacher can also make appropriate assessment and evaluation toward the students' comprehension.

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