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The effectiveness of pre-reading strategies on Reading Comprehension of EFL students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of background knowledge or schema in reading comprehension of the EFL students. Based on schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Therefore, to understand the text better, the reader should has enough background knowledge. This present research focuses on three pre-reading strategies, namely: pre-teaching new vocabularies, pictorial context, and pre-reading questioning. Participants were 46 students in two groups: experimental and control class. During the treatment, experimental group received pre-reading strategies before reading the text, but control group did not. In analysing the data, independent t-test was used. The result indicated that the reading achievement of students who are exposed to pre-reading strategies showed significantly different than those who did not receive any treatment.

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1. Introduction

Reading is essentially a form of communication between writers and readers through a written text that the writer put the message into it (Nuttal, 1982). It means that reading is an interaction in the form of written languages, and readers recreate message which is expressed by the writers. Thus, the objective of communication can be achieved.

ter Beek et al., (2019) contends that reading comprehension is the predictor of academic success. Furthermore, reading is the most important activity where it functions both as a source of information and a process of understanding a reading text. That statement refers when the teacher holds a reading comprehension class activity, the teacher has to make sure that the students are comprehending the writer's ideas written in the text. By doing so, reading comprehension activity will be carried out effectively in the teaching and learning process.

Considering the importance of reading for students in the daily teaching and learning process, the teacher usually gives students lots of reading materials. Since reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class deals with the ability to comprehend reading text in second language (L2), pre-reading strategies can help students to achieve the goals of reading (Kuhi, Asl & Yavari 2013).

Reading is not only about combining a certain information taken from the text with a reader's background knowledge, but also about the kind of information that reader retains (Frankel, Becker, Rowe, & Pearson, 2016). Sometimes, EFL students find it difficult to comprehend English text the first time they read it. This difficulty may occur because students only have little knowledge about the text. Many researchers suggest that the gap that often exists between the readers' knowledge and knowledge in the text can be bridged by providing the readers with some pre-reading activities, such as the use of pictures, discussions of the text topic, vocabulary pre-teaching, previewing and pre-questioning new vocabulary to provide appropriate background knowledge (Mihara, 2011; Al Rasheed, 2014).

In this research, there were three activities provided. They were: pre-teaching new vocabularies, using pictorial context and pre-reading questioning. Pre-teaching new vocabularies deals with encouraging students to guess the meaning of a word they are not familiar with based on the context (Brown, 2004). Furthermore, unfamiliar words can interfere students' comprehension because of the lack of vocabulary knowledge. Thus, pre-teaching new vocabulary may help address this vocabulary problem (Mihara, 2011). In this activity, the researcher used a series of specific words that were typed and presented on a slide. These words were contextualized in the framework in a form of some sample sentences. Pictorial context involves the presentation of one or more pictures about passage content before reading a text. Pictorial context was employed in this research because pictures can increase the readers' enjoyment and interest of reading. Besides, it also intended to deliver concept that attribute in the text, illustrate the main idea, and provide information of the text. Some researchers believe that based on schema and dual coding theory, the use of pictures might increase the awareness in reading comprehension (Hudson, 1982; Nuttal, 1982).

Some studies have been done in this issue. Mihara (2011) analyzed the effect of vocabulary pre-teaching and comprehension question presentation, and also the relationship between students' English proficiency and their reading comprehension ability of Japanese students. The result revealed that comprehension question presentation is more effective than vocabulary pre-teaching activity. Hence, Al Rasheed (2014) investigated the use of pre-reading strategies in a form of vocabulary pre-teaching and pre-questioning on Saudi EFL students through quasi-experimental design. The researcher distributed the 46 subjects in two classes. Then asked the first group to apply vocabulary pre-teaching, while the second group used pre-questioning before read the text, and answer the comprehension questions followed. Based on the result, there is no significantly difference between the two groups.

However, in this study, students were distributed in two classrooms: experimental and control class. In experimental class, the students were asked to look at some pictures, and discussed what they expected to find in the passage. And then, pre-reading questioning dealt with an activity that prepared the students to answer some comprehension questions before reading the text. This activity was intended to help EFL students to overcome the problems that may disturb reading comprehension such as lacking the conceptual knowledge. In this activity students were allowed to use the internet. Meanwhile, in the control class, students had no pre-reading strategy.

2. Method

2.1 Design

The present study employed quasi-experimental design since the researchers have no access to randomize the classes. There were two instruments used in this study. The instruments were reading comprehension test in the form of pre-test and post-test. The reading comprehension pre-test was used as a means to find out the homogeneity of the two groups before the treatment, in other words, the aims of pre-test is to know for sure that the experiment and control group had no significant differences in their level of ability in reading comprehension.

2.2 Participant

This study involved 46 sophomore EFL students enrolled in two classes A (23 students randomly selected as experimental class) and B (23 students randomly selected as control group). All were studying in the Faculty of Humanities in a state university in Malang, Indonesia. All the participants' native language is Indonesian and their ages ranged from 18 to 21.

2.3 Data analysis

Regarding with the data analysis in this research, the data gained from the post-test were organized and summarized by using descriptive statistics. And then, the data were statistically computed using inferential statistics to test the hypothesis. To determine the statistical analysis used, the underlying assumptions of normality and homogeneity statistics should be fulfilled.

2.3.1 The result of statistical assumption: normality

Table 1. Kolmogorov-smirnov test for normality assumption

	Pre-test CG	Post-test CG	Pre-test EG	Post-test EG
Kolmogorov-smirnov Z	.519	.702	.639	.765
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	.950	.708	.809	.603

Based on the data presented in Table 1, all variables Z value was smaller than 1.96 of Z table and the significance value was bigger than the alpha (.05). In other words, the data followed normal dispersion and normality assumption was fulfilled.

2.3.2 The result of statistical assumption: homogeneity

Table 2. Lavene’s test for homogeneity of variance

Lavene’s statistics	f	Df1	Df2	Sig.
.001	.003	1	44	.973

Lavene’s test for homogeneity of variance in Table 2 showed that the significance level for the Lavene’s test is .973. Since the significance level that the researchers used is .05 (95% confidence), thus the observed significance level for the Lavene’s test is greater than the level of confidence used in this study. It can be said that both groups’ variances are equal, and the homogeneity assumption was fulfilled.

Based on the result of test assumption, the researcher used independent t-test to analyse the data. The result of test analysis will be used as an evidence to reject or not the null hypothesis that was formulated as follows: “there is no significant difference in students’ reading comprehension between students who are taught using pre-reading strategies and those who are taught without pre-reading strategies (conventional strategy)”.

3. Results and discussion (This part is excluded for the non-research articles)

3.1. Result

Do Indonesian EFL students exposed to pre-reading strategy (pre-teaching new vocabularies, pictorial context and pre-reading questioning) achieve higher in reading comprehension than those who are taught using conventional reading strategy? To answer this question, descriptive statistics for the post-test result were calculated as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the post-test scores

	Experimental group	Control group
Number of students	23	23
Highest score	88	76
Frequency of the highest score	2	1
Lowest score	48	36
Frequency of the lowest score	1	1
Mean score	70.26	57.57
Standard deviation	9.483	10.565

The result of comparison of the means of the two groups indicated that the performance of the experimental group is better than the control group. Thus, to clarify whether there is or not significant difference between the two groups, independent t-test of two samples was used. Table 4 shows the result of the independent t-test.

Table 4. The result of the independent t-test of students' post-test result in Experimental and Control group

Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
						Lower	Upper
.17	4.339	44	.000	14.261	3.287	7.637	20.885
2	4.339	40.882	.000	14.261	3.287	7.622	20.899

According to the results of the post-test illustrated in the Table 4, the P value is .000 which is less than .05. The result implies that awareness raising activities have positive effect on the L2 learners in reading comprehension. The result clearly shows that the treatment was effective to make a significant difference between the experimental and control group.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the research findings, it was found that there was a significant difference between the mean score in the experimental group. It means that using pre-reading activities in teaching reading comprehension was more effective than using conventional teaching strategies in reading. The difference between the two group's performances in reading comprehension suggested a strong possibility that the students who received pre-reading strategies before reading the text were more successful in comprehension rather than those who did not get any pre-reading strategy.

In relation to the research finding, this research supported the similar studies that pre-reading activities is effective in improving students' in reaching their comprehension score. This may be caused several reasons. First, pre-reading activities help learners to uncover gaps in their knowledge. Kuhl, et al. (2013) stated that some words and expression have signification in a particular cultural context and without doing pre-reading activities to make the meaning of those expression clear, the learner might misunderstanding. Second, these activities can help the students to construct their background knowledge or schemata. There are three activities that can be provided in pre-reading stage, they are: pre-teaching new vocabularies, pictorial context, and pre-reading questioning. Those activities are aimed at increasing students' background knowledge. Recently, studies have shown that the background knowledge of readers plays an important role in the process of reading. In addition, the schema theory of the research shows that the greater the background knowledge reader has of the text content area, the better the reader will comprehend that text. The implication of this phenomenon is that some EFL students' reading problem when trying to comprehend a written text is due to lack of the background knowledge or schema. Thus, pre-reading activities are provided in teaching learning process.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In accordance with the research problem and the result of data analysis, it can be concluded that: reading comprehension achievement of students who are taught using pre-reading activities is significantly higher than those who are taught using conventional teaching strategy.

The result of this study gives practical contribution to English teachers and other researchers who want to conduct research on the same area in the future. For the English

teachers, since the result showed positive result, the finding of this research can be used as one of the considerations to utilize pre-reading strategies, especially pre-teaching new vocabularies, using pictorial context and pre-reading questioning, in teaching reading comprehension. The second suggestion is addressed to the other researchers, especially for those who want to conduct further research in the relation with current research's findings. Since this study was limited on expository text, future researchers are expected to conduct the research with another text type. The future researchers are also expected to conduct the same research in different level of education. Therefore, it can broaden the idea that pre-reading strategies is effective for any level of education. In relation to the weaknesses of this study, the future researchers had better not apply the three activities in the pre-reading stage to minimize the time.

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