Promoting Reading Comprehension Among English Language Learners: KWLS Technique

Surti Milarisa
Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb. Berau, East Kalimantan, Indonesia
milarisa78@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading is a complex linguistic process in which students have a deeper knowledge of how to interpret reading texts. Teachers need some informative methods to stimulate student motivation in the learning process to improve students reading capabilities. Based on the research purpose, the researcher decided to implement the KWLS technique at STIE Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb East Borneo. This study was Classroom Action Research (CAR) which covered standardized indicators suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart, including planning, observing, implementing, and reflecting. As the results of this research, it indicated that the technique can provide an opportunity for students to develop their reading comprehension and to meet a minimum standard of passing. After conducting the study, the researcher found that the KWLS technique was very successful in increasing students' reading comprehension. The improvements in the student's passing grade have been revealed or no student with a low score in the second cycle.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is viewed as an important aspect of human life. It is regarded as a key component in the learning process as many information sources are written. In this context, it is understood that reading is a way that enables the reader to convey information between the reader and the writer. Reading allows you to make sense from a printed page and to analyze the information correctly (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). While the author puts his ideas or gives information in the written form, the reader then seeks to comprehend the ideas or messages or even information that the writer aims to provide.

In the four English language skills, the skill is considered the most challenging and complicated subject. In this study, the researcher largely focused only on the objective of reading for comprehension. The comprehension claimed by Pang et al (2003), is an act of meaning for the words, phrases, and texts

involved. Readers usually use contextual information, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, text experience, and other techniques to help them comprehend the text. People can have different purposes in the process of reading from one another. Some people may read for fun, while others may read for new information or new knowledge, etc. Fachrurrazy (2012) classifies the objective of the reading strategies in some categories. The reading objective can be comprehension (intensive reading in class), enjoyment (extensive reading outside class), speed reading (skimming and scanning), or accurate pronunciation (reading aloud).

In this case, to prevent misinterpretation, the reader should properly interpret the author's intended information. Landi (2009) states that reading is a complex process, where skills and meaning processing are coordinated on a world level. As Izzah & Hadi (2018) statement that reading a foreign language is not only a matter of word comprehension but also of intercultural communication in all fields. However, it is not easy to interpret the intended meaning or ideas conveyed by the author in the written word. The requirements for reading understanding will increase as students reach higher grades where more complex materials can be understood.

Given that it is a complicated activity, the researcher believes that readers and students should have the strategy to easily understand the reading text, especially if they are willing to study at a higher level. The process can therefore be fun rather than a boring activity for the students. Furthermore, if the learner can comprehend the

challenging text, he or she will succeed in studies, no matter how hard it is to read the texts (Attaprechakul, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Sheehan, 2017). Some critical elements in reading comprehension should be taken into account, as they can lead to students' progress in understanding the text. According to Hudson et al (2012), there are three components of reading comprehension, namely knowledge, vocabulary, and the context of the passage. They then argued that there is substantial evidence to indicate that the correlation between text, reading fluency, and comprehension is reciprocal. Reading rate and accuracy have been described as significant facilitators for reading comprehension.

Based on the above ideas on the elements of reading comprehension and the level of comprehension, the researcher can conclude as follows: the reader (students), the text to be learned and the classroom activities are inseparable elements that will lead readers or, in this case, students to the level of comprehension referred to above. The reader should be very excited and curious to know what the text is all about. The forms, style, length, and degree of vocabulary complexity of the text can contribute to the ability to understand.

Linked to the theory of teaching reading, several methods can be applied to teaching and learning practices, including a bottom-up and a top-down approach. Brown (2007) points out, for example, that in the bottom-up approach, readers must first identify the multiplicity of linguistic signals (letters, morphs, syllables, sentences, phrases, grammatical signals, language markers)

and use their linguistic data processing system to establish certain shortness of order on these signals. Meanwhile, in the top-down approach, we draw on our intelligence and knowledge to comprehend the text. In this way, readers use their context information or previous experience and knowledge to make assumptions on what they would find in the text to understand it.

In other terms, the researcher may imply that, in a top-down approach, readers are trying to activate their prior knowledge of what they already learned about a particular subject and correlate it to the knowledge in the text. Brown (2007) points out that the integration of top-down and bottom-up strategies has been effective in teaching and learning reading since both strategies are significant. Connected to the teaching of reading comprehension, students were usually asked to read a specific text, then discuss or translate difficult words, and then asked to answer questions based on the text. As a consequence, they don't care much about understanding the entire text. They've only been instructed to understand how to answer the questions correctly. As a result, their semester evaluation scores were low.

To overcome the student problem as mentioned above, the researcher applied the KWLS technique as adopted from the basic KWL technique as introduced by Ogle (1986) which consists of three subsections, including the K-W-L section, wherein ('K' refers to know, 'W' refers to want to know, 'L' refer to learned). It is argued that KWL is an instructional reading technique designed to help teachers learn from non-fiction texts in any subject field (Fengjuan, 2010). As highlighted by Hadi & Izzah (2018), this technique is also provided in the enjoyable learning process for students. In this study, the researcher provides another segment, the "S" section, which refers to the summary. It's a practice where the student discusses and creates short sentences about what he or she learned after reading the text. Hornby (2015) defines the summary as a brief statement of the main topics or something else. In this framework, the researcher believes that when students can make a brief statement of the main topics of the text with their own words, which involve who or what the text is, and what the main idea is, it indicates that they have understood the text.

Based on the problems experienced by the students of STIEM Tanjung Redeb, as mentioned above, the researcher may infer that this has occurred due to certain reasons, such as lack of student involvement in teaching and learning activities, a monotonous and teacher-centered way of teaching, and no particular technique used in teaching and learning activities. Applying KWLS, which is student-centered, is one of the solutions to develop students' reading comprehension skills. The steps in the KWLS chart will direct students to easily understand the text step by step.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR) as it emphasized mostly on teaching and learning process in the class. To prevent subjectivity in the data collection process, the researcher assisted one lecturer as an observer to monitor the progress of the class. The observer had always been in the

class during teaching and learning scenes. He/she observed student's engagement or interactions in the implementation of teaching practice.

This study was performed by the researcher from 3 January to 3 February 2019. The sample population included 2nd-semester students of STIE Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb. The researcher applied the CAR methodologies as introduced by Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) which covers certain cycles, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, the researcher formulated a teaching strategy, designed lesson plans, and defined the standards for success. In the implementation phase, the researcher carried out the KWLS technique in two cycles, consisting of three meetings. Due to the implementation of the KWLS technique, the researcher administered a reading comprehension test to see students' background knowledge in comprehending a text. In the observation phase, the researcher and the observer used the techniques to collect data on the performance of the KWLS technique in overcoming problems in the classroom.

The methods used in this study were reading comprehension tests, observation checklists, field notes, and student questionnaires. The reading comprehension test was used to collect data on student reading comprehension scores following the introduction of the KWLS technique. The observation checklist and field notes were used by the observer to trace all information about student involvements and classroom atmospheres during the implementation of the KWLS technique.

Lastly, reflection was given to the last stage of the Classroom Action Research procedures used to examine the data obtained to assess whether or not the KWLS technique was effective in addressing the problems in the classroom. Students' reading comprehension test scores were examined using score rubrics: 1 (one) point for the correct response and 0 (zero) point for the incorrect response 0. The final score of the students was then calculated using the formula: the score gained divided by a maximum score of 100. The students' participation or information collected through the observation checklist were evaluated by calculating the total score obtained divided by a maximum score of 100 times to gain the frequency percentage of students' participation or the Maximum score of students' participation.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research has been performed in two cycles since the finding of Cycle 1 has not yet reached the standards for success. Cycle 1 was administered at three meetings, and Cycle 2 was also conducted at three meetings. As a result of the study, the researcher found that students had some learning comprehension problems, which were taught by the teacher due to the lack of students' learning reading comprehension and motivation.

Cycle I

Based on the minimum passing grade defined by the criteria for success of 70, there were 20 (80 percent) out of 25 students who reached the performance targets. However, 5 (20 percent) out of 25 students did not fulfill the criteria of

success. From the below data, the findings of the students' reading comprehension in Cycle 1 are still inadequate since the criteria for success were not yet reached by five students. The researcher should then proceed in the next cycle. The findings of the student test of Cycle 1 can be seen in the following table:

Statistics Cycle 1		
N	Valid	25
Mean	Missing	0
		75,8400

Cycle 1	freque ncy	perce nt	Valid Percent	Cummulati ve Percent
	68.0	5	20.0	20.0	20.0
	0	15	60.0	60.0	60.0
Vali d	76.0	3	12.0	12.0	12.0
	0	2	8.0	8.0	8.0
	80.0	25	100	100.0	100.0
	0				
	88.0				
	0				
	Tota l				

The results in the observations checklist showed that students were good (89.6 percent) at the activities when KWLS was being implemented during the process of teaching reading comprehension for both meetings. Results indicate that 89.6% of students completely agreed that the KWLS technique will encourage them to comprehend a text and also encourage them to take into account how to build a formulation that can help them to know more about text content. The following data shows in detail:

No	Statements	Number of the Students Giving Responses			
		SA	A	D	SD
1	The K column on KWLS technique can help me to be more critical in understanding the text	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2	The W column on KWLS technique can encourage me to think about what I want to know more about a text provided	22 (88%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	The L column on KWLS technique promote me to be more active in getting some information related to the text	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4	The S Column on KWLS technique motivate me to understand deeply about the content of a text and summarize it	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
5	I feel happy to use this KWLS technique since it can help me comprehending the text easily	22 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	89.6%	10.4%	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The most recent data on student engagement in the teaching and learning process were on the strength, weaknesses, and suggestions made by the observer. Based on the first and second meetings, the strengths reported were (1) students were involved in following the lessons; (2) they were confident enough to develop their ideas by demonstrating curiosity to learn the column; (3) When filling out the summary column, they were courageous enough to express their ideas either verbally or in a written form. However, there have been some weaknesses in the teaching and learning process, among others; (1) most students have not been able to communicate ideas well in English; (2) all students have a limited vocabulary; (3) insufficient time apportioned to the discussion of the text in detail. As a result of these problems, the observer suggested (1) that students

should gradually write their written texts well; (2) that they should try to understand the full text and vocabulary of the text in depth; and (3) that they should provide much chance to discuss the text in detail.

Since the findings of the Cycle 1 reading comprehension test have not yet met the criteria for success, the researcher and her observer have decided that the Cycle 2 research should be decided to continue. There have been some aspects of the teaching and learning process that need to be increased in Cycle 2. These aspects were the lesson plans and the teaching and learning activities. Based on the suggestions made by the observer, the researcher formulated the lesson plans. The teaching and learning aspects of reading activities need improvement by (1) the apportionment of further time to discuss the text in depth after the students have read the text; (2) the classification and discussion in depth of the complex words found in the text; (3) the identification of the main ideas of the paragraphs in the text; and (4) the guidance of students to create their sentences to make their summary.

Cycle 2

In this part, the researcher reports the findings of the implementation of the KWLS technique in Cycle 2, which encompasses the findings of the student's achievements in the reading comprehension test (Test 2) and the student's involvement in the teaching and learning process. It is concluded that the student's lowest reading comprehension test score was 75 and the highest score was 85. Based on the minimum passing grade set out in the criteria of success

(70), 25 (100%) students met the requirements (achieve the criteria of success). The students' reading comprehension test scores for Cycle 2 could be seen on the table below:

Statistics Cycle 2				
N	Valid Missing		25 0	
Mean			79,6800	

Cycle 2		freguency	percent	Valid percent	Cummulative percent
valid	75,00	1	4	4	4
	76,00	1	4	4	4
	77,00	1	4	4	4
	78,00	2	8	8	4
	79,00	2	8	8	8
	80,00	16	64	64	64
	85,00	2	8	8	8
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	100.0

The data provided in the observation checklist reveals that the involvement of students in the teaching and learning process and during the application of the KWLS technique was very good. Almost all students take an active part in activities. The latest information on student involvement during the teaching and learning process was about the strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions made by the observer. From the first to the second meeting, the strengths found were (1) the students were more involved in following the lessons; (2) they were imaginative enough to think, to find answers to the questions and to find some details from the text, including the vocabulary and the key ideas; (3) most of the students were brave enough to communicate their ideas, either orally or in written form, even though

their senses were conveyed. However, there were still some shortcomings in the teaching and learning process, among others: (1) most students still lack vocabulary; (2) some students still have not been able to articulate their ideas well in English.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study can be formulated as follows: there have been some difficulties encountered by students in reading the text. The problems could be caused by students having trouble understanding the story, students feeling bored while learning using traditional teaching methods, students' motivation was poor because the learning process did not interest them before the introduction of the KWLS technique. After conducting this study, the researcher found that the KWLS technique was very successful in growing students' understanding of reading. By the implementation of the KWLS technique, it has shown that students are interested in understanding the entire text.

Based on those findings, it can be summarized that participation of students in the teaching and learning phase in Cycle 2 was higher than in Cycle 1. Students have been more interested in finding knowledge in the texts. It has been shown by the improvement in the student's passing grade in reading. From the first cycle, there were six students with low scores, but after applying the second cycle, the researcher found that there was no student with low scores. From the student reading comprehension data provided in the results of Cycle 2 above, it was known that student reading comprehension scores were increased. 100.00 percent of students passed the minimum requirements for achievement. The researcher and her observer, therefore, refused to continue the analysis and posted the results of the study.

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