

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH (LEA) TO TEACH READING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT TO THE SEVENTH GRADERS OF SMP ULUL ALBAB SIDOARJO

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah mendeskripsikan secara mendalam proses pengajaran membaca, kemampuan membaca siswa, dan respon siswa mengenai penerapan Language Experience Approach (LEA) dalam pengajaran membaca teks deskripsi. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan pada penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Oleh karena itu, wawancara, catatan, dan tugas siswa digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Dalam proses pengajaran membaca teks deskripsi, guru menerapkan LEA dalam kelompok kecil yang terdiri dari 5 siswa pada setiap kelompok. Setiap kelompok harus membuat beberapa kalimat berdasarkan gambar dan clue yang telah diberikan. Demikian, teks deskripsi dibuat melalui rangkaian kalimat-kalimat yang telah dibuat oleh siswa. Oleh karena itu, kemampuan membaca siswa semakin baik pada pertemuan pertama hingga pertemuan terakhir sebab mereka lebih memahami teks tersebut. Hasil terakhir penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa siswa memberikan respon yang positif terhadap penerapan LEA. Metode membaca ini memotivasi siswa untuk membaca lebih banyak dan bekerja sama dengan satu sama lain. Selain itu, langkah-langkah pada metode ini mudah untuk diikuti oleh para siswa.

Kata Kunci: Pemahaman Membaca, Teks Deskripsi, Language Experience Approach (LEA)

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe in depth the process of teaching reading, the students' reading ability, and students' responses toward the implementation of Language Experience Approach (LEA) in teaching reading descriptive text. The research design which was used was descriptive qualitative research. Thus, interview, field notes, and students' reading task were employed to gain the data. In the process of teaching reading descriptive text, the teacher implemented LEA in small groups which consists of 5 students for each group. Each group have to make sentences based on the pictures and the clues given. Thus, the descriptive text was made from sentences chain which had already created by each group. Therefore, the students' reading ability was better from the first meeting until the last meeting because they comprehended more the text. The last, the students gave positive responses about the implementation of LEA. This reading method attracted and motivated them to read more. This method trained them to cooperate each other. Beside, the stages of this method were easily to be followed by the students.

Key Words: Reading Comprehension, Descriptive Text, Language Experience Approach (LEA)

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the receptive skills in English that should be comprehended by students to learn language. Written form serves various pedagogical purposes, thus students are better in foreign language because the written form becomes the main source of expanding and strengthening the language (Vaseghi et al, 2012: 405). Alyousef (2005: 144) stated that in reading process the readers interact dynamically with the text as he or she tries to catch the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used linguistic or systemic

knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (through top-down processing).

Comprehension of text is the most important components in reading activity. Comprehension of text can be defined as the integration of text content with reader's prior knowledge to form an illustration or memory about the text (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978: 364). Thus, reading comprehension is absolutely essential because as a medium of communication and a tool of learning (Tinker, 1961). Dechant (2013) also argued that reading comprehension is more than the ability to identify or to pronounce the words on the written form, but it is more concern with the communication of the

meaning in written form. Reading comprehension itself is actually a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance of the reader takes in relationship to the text (Pardo, 2004: 272). Therefore, reading comprehension is important for the students, especially for reaching the goal of the learning.

Based on the curriculum 2013, one of the text genres for English subject that should be mastered by seventh graders is descriptive text. Descriptive text is a kind of text with a purpose to give information about a phenomenon. The context of this kind of text is the description of phenomenon such as particular thing, animal, person, or others. In this case, students should be a good reader so that they can understand the content of descriptive text and get the ideas from the text. Nevertheless, most of students get difficulty in mapping the ideas represented in the descriptive text. Moreover, because of student's lack of vocabularies in describing particular thing, animal, person, and place so that they become struggling reader. The condition become worse since teacher does not build the prior knowledge of the students in pre-reading activity. The teacher only gives a textbook as the students' handout and asks them to read the text, then answer the following question.

Considering the importance of reading comprehension of descriptive text for the seventh graders, the teacher must have a goal to minimize reading difficulties and maximize students' reading comprehension. One of the ways that can guide the students' comprehending in reading text is by using language experience approach (LEA). The language experience approach (LEA) is a method to reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner and works in the classroom (Nessel & Dixon, 2008: p.1-3). In addition, Dorr (2006: 138) argued that language experience approach identifies a students' cultural schema and allows connection of that knowledge base to new knowledge, so making it becomes a good method to use with ELLs. Thus, the central principle of LEA is by using the students' own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences to create reading text. In directly, the LEA also can stimulate students' prior knowledge which is all of the experiences readers have had throughout their lives, including information they have learned elsewhere. This knowledge is used to bring the written word to life and to make it more relevant in the students' mind, so it makes reading an enjoyable and meaningful.

Furthermore, the students will be easier to comprehend the text than grappling with the unfamiliar language and context from published reading program. Henceforth, according to Kulesza & Meyerson (2010: p.32-33), LEA has some powers for teaching struggling readers. It is because LEA provides a meaningful context based on students' knowledge and experience, the use of repeated readings of the same text as well as repetition of high frequency words, a meaning context to examine components of language (words, phonemes, and morphemes), and the modelling of sentence structure by the teacher.

According to Taylor (1992: 3), there are two variants of LEA, they are personal and group experiences. The most basic, and in fact the original, the form of the LEA is the simple transcription of an individual learner's personal experience. The teacher or aide (or in a mixed-ability class, a more proficient learner) sits with the students so that the learner can see what is being written. The session begins with a conversation, which might be prompted by a picture, a topic the learner is interested in, a reading text, or an event the learner has participated in. Then, Groups may also develop language experience stories together. An experience can be set up and carried out by the group, or stories can grow out of experiences and stimuli from any part of the students' personal, work, or classroom lives.

The language experience approach (LEA) is as an integrated method which makes use of the four skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. According to Wanis (2002: 222), there are five main point advantages of the language experience approach (LEA).

- 1) LEA meets the needs of a wide range of the learners
By using LEA in teaching learning process, the text is appropriate for the learners' level since the vocabulary, language pattern, and background comes from the learners' themselves to create the reading text. Thereupon, the text reflects the ideas of the learners from oral into written form.
- 2) LEA fosters rich language development
LEA provides integration among the four skills in English; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is because the learners watch as the teacher write the language they speak. Then, the learners develop understanding of meaning of the language.
- 3) LEA helps the learners learn to read English
In this case, the LEA provides reading material that is predictable and readable because it uses the learners' natural language. Moreover, LEA assists the learners in decoding the reading text because the familiarity of the content.
- 4) LEA is a motivation for the teacher and the learners

The learners' own ideas are encouraged and validated by using LEA, thereby enhancing self-esteem and fostering independence of the learners. On the other hand, the teacher serves as a facilitator in the entire process rather than as an editor of what is produced by the learners.

- 5) LEA promotes rich cognitive (thinking) development
LEA extends the learners' creativity through storytelling, writing, drama, art, etc.

Additionally, there were some studies conducting in applying Language experience approach (LEA). First, Arvin's research entitled *Application of the Language Experience Approach for Secondary Level* (1987). The researcher explained that the use of language experience approach (LEA) can be successful for teaching reading and writing skills. Then, Wurr (2002) entitled *Language Experience Approach Revisited: The Use of Personal Narratives in Adult L2 Literacy Instruction*. In his study, he explained about the Language experience approach takes advantages of the important link between experiences and education by using the student's narrative as a basis of reading instruction because LEA can be adapted to other teaching and learning contexts. Another research has been conducted by Curran (2007) entitled *Using the Language Experience Approach as a Part of Differentiated Literacy Instruction*. The result of this research, LEA is one method that can be used to differentiate literacy instruction as it did in this study through grouping, content, process, and product.

Henceforth, the researcher would like to conduct a study dealing with the implementation of language experience approach (LEA) to teach reading descriptive text to the seventh graders of SMP Ulul Albab Sidoarjo. Finally, according to the background of study above, it can be simplified to discuss between two problems that emerge as a significant concern in teaching reading descriptive text, they are: (1)How does the teacher implement language experience approach (LEA) in teaching reading comprehension of descriptive text?; (2)How is the students' ability in comprehending descriptive text after the implementation of language experience approach (LEA)?; and (3)How are the students' responses toward the implementation of language experience approach (LEA) in teaching reading comprehension of descriptive text?

Therefore, there are 3 objectives of the study , they are: (1)To describe the implementation of language experience approach (LEA) in teaching reading comprehension of descriptive text; (2)To describe the students' ability in comprehending descriptive text after the implementation of language experience approach (LEA); and (3)To describe the students' responses toward

the use language experience approach (LEA) in teaching reading descriptive text.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the research question, the research design that was appropriate with this research was Descriptive Qualitative research. This type of research study focused on deep understanding and meaning through verbal narratives and observations rather than through numbers. Moreover, the purpose of qualitative research was to interpret behaviour and intention of phenomenon, so it reported in written form (Ary, 2010: 29).

This research focused on the process of teaching reading comprehension by using language experience approach (LEA). The researcher only took part in the classroom as an observer to observe the activities during the implementation of LEA which was conducted by the teacher. Moreover, the researcher observed student's responses and student's reading ability toward the implementation of LEA in teaching reading comprehension. The result of this research was in the form of description and explanation of some phenomena which occurred during the observation.

The subject of this research was the VII A of junior high school in SMP Ulul Albab Sidoarjo on the second semester in academic year 2014/2015. There were 25 students; 13 males and 12 females. The researcher chose the seventh grader because in this age, they were the young learners. Thus, they had much experiences which were good to share with their friends.

The data of the study was taken from the observation of teaching learning processes, students' reading task, and students' responses. In answering the first question, the data were the description of teacher's and students activities during teaching learning process towards LEA implementation. In order to get the data, the researcher observed the sources of the data; they were the teacher and the students who were included during the implementation of the method.

In answering second research question, the data were students' answer of open-ended questions in the form of words and sentences. The source data was taken from the students' reading task during the implementation of LEA took a place. The last, in answering the third research question, the data were in the form of transcription of interview which were covered students' opinions, feelings, and ideas through interview after the implementation of LEA. The data were collected from the students as the source of the data.

In this research, the instruments which were used were interview, field notes, and students' reading task.

The type of interview which was used in this research was semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview consists of a few questions as guide lines and could be added when necessary, so the interviewer may modify the format or questions during the interview process. By using semi-structured interview, it could provide insight on participants' perspectives and perhaps information on anticipated issues. Thus, the interviewee of this research was some of the students of VII A, so the result was students' responses toward the use of Language Experience Approach (LEA) in teaching reading descriptive text.

To collect data that was needed for this study the researcher used unstructured field notes. Unstructured field notes were notes which were gotten during the observation. It was organized into descriptive and reflective materials. Descriptive materials were the description of activities in teaching learning process of reading comprehension by using Language Experience Approach (LEA), while reflective materials were the researcher's comment or opinion towards each activities happen in teaching learning process.

In this study, the researcher used a short reading passage with several number of comprehension questions to know the students' reading ability. In analyzing the students' task, the researcher used the guideline of indicators in reading comprehension which was adapted from Brown (2004: 206)

In data collection technique, the researcher used non-participatory observation which was the researcher did not participate in the activity of the subject. The researcher wrote anything during the researcher was observing the teaching learning process, especially all the teacher did during teaching reading comprehension by using language experience approach (LEA). Thus, the researcher observed teaching learning process from the start until the end of the meeting.

The researcher also used students' task to describe the students' ability of reading comprehension. The researcher analyzed the students' reading task by using the guidelines of indicators in reading comprehension. In this case, the researcher use open-ended questions as the type of task.

Moreover, the data gained from interview was used for describing the students' responses towards the use LEA in teaching reading comprehension. The researcher interviewed ten students as the representative of the VII A students to get information needed related to research. The interview was given in the end of the class in the last meeting.

After obtaining the data, the researcher had to do analyze the data. The data was analyzed in three stages;

they are familiarizing and organizing; coding and reducing; interpreting and representing (Ary, 2010: 481).

The first stage in analyzing the data involved familiarization and organization, so that the data could be easily retrieved. Initially, the researcher ought to become familiar with data through reading and rereading notes or transcripts. Then, the researcher familiarizes the data which ones were relevant with teaching learning process and which were not. Then the researcher organized them into good words based on the order of the teaching learning process.

After familiarizing and organizing the data, the researcher had begun the coding and reducing process. In this stage, the researcher read and reread all the data, then sorts them by looking for units of meaning-words, phrases, sentences, and subjects' ways of thinking, behavior patterns, and events that seem to appear regularly and that seem important.

The last stage was interpreting and representing. Interpreting involved reflecting about the words and acts of the study's participants and abstracting important understanding. In this stage, the researcher brought out the meaning, telling the story, providing, an explanation, and developing plausible explanation about teaching learning process of reading comprehension by using language experience approach (LEA).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Language Experience Approach (LEA) to Teach Reading Descriptive Text to the Seventh Graders.

After conducting the observation about the implementation of language experience approach (LEA), the researcher found that LEA could be implemented to teach reading descriptive text. Since the first meeting until the third meeting, the teacher implemented the LEA in a small group. Therefore, there are steps which were followed for implementing LEA in a small group (Colombo, 2012; p. 198).

- 1) Giving a picture to engage the students;
- 2) Preparing "Who, What, When" to guide students construct a story or text;
- 3) Explaining to the class that they will create a story or text;
- 4) Calling on individual volunteers to contribute the information;
- 5) The teacher read aloud the text when the text is completed;
- 6) Guiding the students in a reading aloud of the text;
- 7) Displaying the text prominently;
- 8) Checking the comprehension of students about the text.

Since the teacher implemented the LEA in a small group, the teacher asked the students make a group consist of five randomly. In the first meeting, the teacher did all those steps well. However, there were some lacks which the teacher did. On the first step, the teacher had brought some pictures of Agnes Monica. The teacher distributed one picture for each group to engage the students before starting the learning activity. However, the researcher regretted about the size of the picture because the size was A5 paper. Actually, the picture could not be seen clearly by the students.

On the second step, the teacher had already prepared the clues for the students. The clues had typed by teacher as the appendix of the picture. On this step, the teacher also divided all of the clues for five groups. There were the some clues which were made by the teacher in the first meeting.

1. *Physical appearances*

- a) *How does her skin look like?*
- b) *How does her hair look like?*
- c) *How about with the shape of her face and nose?*

2. *Characteristics*

- a) *Confident*
- b) *Generous*
- c) *Friendly*

Henceforth on the third step, the teacher told the students that they would construct a descriptive text of Agnes Monica. It meant they ought to make sentences based on the clues given in a group. Therefore, they used their chosen vocabulary to make the sentences. It was very useful for them to comprehend the text when the text was complete. As stated by Fisher (2009) that a student understand a word if he or she probably has understanding of the concepts related to the word. For making the sentences, the teacher gave limited time, which was 15 minutes.

For the next step, the teacher called on individual volunteers as the representative from each group to present the group work. In this activity, the student dictated the teacher to write down the sentences on the whiteboard. For calling on individual volunteers, the teacher tended to point out student who was passive or shy in the classroom. It was good to build the students' motivation and confidence.

After the text was complete, the teacher read aloud the text as the next step of the implementation of LEA. Before the teacher read aloud the text, the teacher corrected the text whether there were grammatical errors without changing the content of the text. Then, the teacher read aloud the text with correct pronunciation and intonation.

On the sixth step, the teacher ought to guide the students to read aloud the text. However in the last

meeting, the teacher skipped this step. The teacher did not give the opportunity to them for reading aloud the text. Hopefully, the students read aloud the text for several minutes with the correction from the teacher about the pronunciation and the intonation.

After the sixth step, the teacher displayed the text in order that the students could rewrite the text on the worksheet given. By doing this activity, the students could read the text silently for several times. Thus, it made them understand more about the content of the text.

The last step, the teacher gave the task. It was done by the teacher to check students' comprehension of the text. Although the teacher knew the text at that time, the teacher made the task based on the prediction how the sentences which would be produced by the students. Therefore, the questions of the task were appropriate with the text.

The overall steps also were followed by the teacher in the second until the third meeting. Instead, the teacher corrected the lacks when she was implementing the LEA. The lacks were on the first and fifth steps on the first meeting. On the first step in the first meeting, the teacher saw that the students could not see the picture clearly. Because of that, the teacher used picture with the size of A4 paper for the next meeting for each group. Moreover, the teacher gave 2 pictures for each group so that the students did not take by force each other.

Henceforth, the teacher gave the opportunity to the students for reading aloud for several times in the next meeting. The teacher also corrected the pronunciation and intonation errors which were done by the students. It was good because the teacher skipped this step in the previous meeting. It showed that the teacher wanted to implement the LEA much better than before.

Furthermore, there are three models in reading comprehension. As stated by Curran (2007: 20) that it is important to understand the models of reading comprehension because those can help learners to identify effective instruction. During the implementation of language experience approach (LEA) in class VII A, the students used top-down model. For example on the first meeting, they used their prior knowledge to construct descriptive text. They linked their prior knowledge about the picture from their experiences with the clues given to them. Thus, the students comprehend more the content of descriptive text. Curran (2007: 20) also stated that LEA fits into the top-down reading models because it uses learners' prior knowledge to create a text authentic learners-generated text.

Students' Reading Ability after the Implementation of Language Experience Approach (LEA) in Teaching Reading Descriptive Text.

In describing the students' reading ability, the researcher analyzed the result of students' task firstly. In scoring the students task, the researcher used guidelines indicators which was adapted from Brown (2004). There were five indicators which were used to analyze the students' task, they are:

- 1) Decide the general description of descriptive text.
- 2) Decide certain information or detail information in descriptive text.
- 3) Decide the main idea of the paragraphs in descriptive text.
- 4) Decide the meaning of word/phrase in descriptive text.
- 5) Decide the opinion about the information in the descriptive text.

From the results of students' task in the first until third meeting, the researcher found that most of students could reach all the indicators well. For the first indicator, they could decide the general description of descriptive text, although some of them answered it was not clearly. Thus, it emerged the ambiguity meaning of their answer.

Then the second indicator, the students could get the certain or detail information from the text. They could found the certain information such as the characteristics and the appearances of people which were contained in descriptive text. Next, the third indicator, the students had various answer for deciding the main idea of the paragraphs in descriptive. Nevertheless, their answers were same with the main idea of the paragraphs and generally complete.

Henceforth, for deciding the meaning of word or phrase in descriptive text, they still answered in Indonesian, not in target language. It was because they used bilingual dictionary. However, it was good because they had an effort to look for the meaning of the word or phrase in the text. The last indicators, the students also had various answers to decide the opinion or ideas based on the information which was they got in the text. It was because they had different background knowledge and experience.

From the discussion above, it could be conclude that language experience approach (LEA) was successfully implemented in teaching reading of descriptive text. The students comprehended more about the text and task, thus they could reach all of the indicators although there were one or two minor errors in a grammatically.

Students' Responses toward the Implementation of Language Experience Approach (LEA) in Teaching Reading Descriptive Text.

The interview was given to the students in order to know their responses, opinion, and feelings toward the teaching reading of descriptive text through language experience approach (LEA). There were 10 students as the interviewee and the representative of the VII A students. There are three main of questions which were elaborated into six questions.

The language experience approach (LEA) incorporates a variety of models of using language to express the experiences of children in a variety of genres (Coyne, 2014: 2). Thereof, most of the students gave positive responses toward the implementation of language experience approach (LEA) to teach descriptive text. They agreed that this method was very interesting because they constructed the text by themself. Thereby, the students comprehend well the text and it made them answer easily the task. It was because of student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences to create reading text.

Moreover, the students stated that the steps of language experience approach were easy to be followed. In this case, the role of the teacher was important when implementing this method. Thus, the students were easy to be followed the steps of LEA implementation because the teacher gave clearly instruction to them. Moreover, the teacher may also suggest to students which of their statements to include in the reading text or may help students shape their contributions so that the reading text reflects their best efforts with English, thereby giving them opportunities to develop their skill.

Henceforth, they also stated that language experience approach (LEA) give some advantages to them. This method gives them motivation to read the text increasingly. Therewith, this method also builds their speaking vocabularies and bolsters their confidence. It is because expectations are determined by what the students can do at each stage, not by external standards of performance (Nessel & Dixon, 2008: 14). It makes LEA hold true when students are learning to read a new language. However, some of students had had some difficulties in the stages of LEA implementation. In this case, the students had difficulties about the difficulties vocabularies which would be used to construct the text and spelt the difficult words while they were reading aloud the text. Nevertheless, they could face the problems.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study conducted by the researcher on 17th February 2015, 20th February 2015, and 24th February 2015, the researcher concluded that Language experience approach (LEA) can be used as a method to teach reading descriptive text for the seventh graders. It is an appropriate method in enhancing the students' reading comprehension of text, especially descriptive text. It is because LEA provides the students to construct the text by using their own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences. Therefore, the teacher is a facilitator and planner of experiences and activities that lead the students to develop their own short language text.

After the implementation of language experience approach (LEA), the students' scores got better from the first meeting until the last meeting. It is shown that there was progress in students' reading ability. It could make the students comprehend more about the content of descriptive text. They understand more about the part of identification and description, so that they could find the information of the text easily. Thus, the teacher had already succeeded in implementing Language experience approach in teaching reading of descriptive text.

Students gave positive responses toward the implementation of language experience approach (LEA). Most of the students agreed that this method could make them comprehend more about the content of descriptive text, especially descriptive text about person. They said that this method was amazing and interesting to be used in teaching reading. This method was different with others, so it was not boring for them. Moreover, the stages of LEA were easily to be followed. Furthermore, they also liked the activity to construct the text based on the clues given in a group. They had a reason that it could motivate them to cooperate each other.

Suggestion

Based on the finding, the researcher has some suggestions to the teachers and also the others researcher. For the English teachers, this suggestion below hopefully can be considered by the teachers when they have teaching learning of reading a certain genre of texts.

- a) The teachers should be more creative in teaching English for young learners. They can use other attractive and effective methods that can make teaching reading more interesting by using the language experience approach (LEA).
- b) The teachers should notice pre-reading activity because it is important to build students' prior

knowledge about the text before starting whilst reading.

- c) The teacher can show pictures or use the power point programme to engage the students in the implementation of LEA. It can attract the students and make them enjoy with the material.
- d) The teacher can implement Language experience approach in small/big group and individual to teach reading.

For the other researchers, it is suggested for the further research to apply this method in other level of students. Besides, it is also suggested to conduct another researcher in another skill of writing or perhaps different material. Theoretically, this method can also be implemented in writing skill because this method is integrated skill.

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