



Available online at JECE (Journal of Early Childhood Education)
Website: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jece>
Permalink/DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15408/jece.v3i2.23644>
JECE, 3 (2), Desember 2021, 90-104

TEACHING READING FOR YOUNG STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN CIPUTAT, SOUTH TANGERANG

Umami Kultsum¹, Ratna Sari Dewi¹, Nadrah²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

² University of Canberra, Australia

Corresponding e-mail: ummikultsum@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

The objective of this study is to find that reading a story is more effective to develop student's reading comprehension. This research was held in an English course at IC Multi Ciputat with 20 children's participants. The sample was divided into experiment groups consist of 10 participants and a control class with 10 participants. The experimental study conducted as a research design. The data collected from the pre-test and post-test of the two groups showed the mean of student's achievement in experiment class was 72.8 on pre-test and 92.9 on post-test. Meanwhile, the mean score of students score in the control class was 73.6 on the pre-test and 87.6 on the post-test. These data indicated a small impact for children to develop their reading comprehension through a storybook.

Keywords : teaching reading, reading comprehension, story texts, young students, experimental study

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan bahwa membaca cerita lebih efektif untuk mengembangkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dalam kursus bahasa inggris di IC multi Ciputat dengan jumlah peserta 20 anak. Sampel dibagi dengan membagi 10 anak untuk kelas eksperimen dan 10 anak untuk kelas kontrol. Penelitian eksperimen dilakukan sebagai desain penelitian. Data yang dikumpulkan dari pre-tes dan post-tes menunjukkan bahwa prestasi belajar siswa di kelas eksperimen adalah 72,8 pada pre-test dan 92,9 pada post-test. Sedangkan nilai rata-rata siswa pada kelas kontrol adalah 73,6 pada pre-test dan 87,6 pada post-test. Data ini menunjukkan dampak kecil bagi anak-anak untuk mengembangkan pemahaman membaca mereka melalui buku cerita.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran membaca, Pemahaman Bacaan, Teks Cerita, Pelajar anak-anak, dan studi eksperimen

Introduction

Some essential elements need to be developed in teaching English as a foreign language for children. One of them is developing reading skills as an effective medium for teachers in introducing vocabulary for children. In reading, the practice involves some important processes, including mechanical eye movement, intellectual comprehension, such as imagining, reasoning, evaluating, problem-solving, grammar, and phonetics (Wibowo et al., 2020). These might create a distinctive challenge for children to go with the process.

In fact, teaching reading in most formal schools focused on how students can translate the texts and measure their comprehension through questions (Hastuti et al., 2020). Besides, Dickinson et al. (2019) stressed that teaching reading should focus on an in-depth understanding of words form, use, and meaning. This statement clearly describes that teaching reading material should meet an appropriate material to support teachers' instruction.

The instruction strategy is a general type of teacher-student action in building their activity in the teaching-learning process (Dickinson et al., 2019). In teaching reading, for instance, a teacher needs to develop any methodology that suits the needs of the learners, including their age, level of understanding, and reading ability. In the case of children learners, the teacher should choose a reading learning strategy by selecting reading texts for children's level.

On the one hand, a textbook refers to the theories about the importance of teaching materials that consist of important teaching materials to fulfil the purpose of reading programs. The textbook provides teaching sources, structured, and design an adequate language to meet the syllabus program (Del Campo and Miranda, 2016). This explains that learning through storybooks might lead students to comprehend English vocabularies and fulfil their learning tasks based on the program's target.

On the other hand, story text provides an experience of learning English in a different atmosphere and develop an enjoyable reading practice for students. Moreover, reading through a story book would invite students' interest to pick up the words and understand the context of the content of the literature (Brumfit, 1992). It clearly defines that teaching reading through storybook focuses on inviting learners' imagination and desire to cope with the text. To prove it, the researchers explore whether a story text would develop children's reading learning development. Can the story texts build students' motivation and achievement in reading?

As one of the language skills, reading is significant in many instances around the globe. We may argue that reading is the most important foreign language skill, particularly when students have to read English material for their specialist subject but may never actually speak the language (Paige et al., 2021; McDonough and Shaw, 2012). Reading as an activity that involves comprehension and interpretation has

many challenges. For many learners, reading English as a foreign language consists of learning an entirely new set of written symbols. As well as for teachers, some preliminary decision needs to be made about how to teach them (Nuttall, 2017).

The problem is not that nobody reads the foreign language for an authentic reason, but it is about motivation. This becomes a significant challenge for teachers to cope with young students' interest in reading a text. Therefore, teachers should develop their motivation by creating a fun atmosphere in reading a text. A good strategy will guide children to comprehend the text easily. However, a good teaching strategy also needs to be supported by good material in order to fit students' needs (Nuttall, 2017; Nunan and David, 1992; Nzwala, 2020).

Aebersold and Field (1998) stressed that the reading part is strongly bottom-up driven, while the comprehension part is intensely interactive, top-down driven. Grabe (2004) and (Nzwala, 2020) explain in more detail that bottom-up theory constructs the text from smallest units, i.e., letter to words, to phrases, to sentences, and so on. Nunan and David (1992) stated that the bottom-up model assumes that the reader first identifies each letter in a text as it is encountered. These letters are blended and mentally sounded out to enable the reader to identify the words they make up; words are chained together to form sentences, sentences are linked together into paragraphs, and paragraphs are tied together to form complex texts.

Meanwhile, top-down theory develops readers' great deal of knowledge, expectation, assumption, and text questions and provides a basic understanding of vocabulary range. This means readers will continue reading as the text confirms their expectations (Abraham, 2002; Nzwala, 2020). The top-down theory needs readers' knowledge background before starting the reading process to check back if new or unexpected information appears (Grabe, 2004; Nzwala, 2020). These theories explain that both bottom-up theory and top-down theory are chosen depending on the type of the text and the readers' background of knowledge, language proficiency level, motivation, strategy, and culturally belief in the text (Khalifa et al., 2020).

In teaching reading, the bottom-up and top-down approaches are used to facilitate readers in comprehending the text. For children who start learning English reading, this approach is suitable for guiding children to recognize reading in a text (Henretty and McEneaney, 2020). It is easy to develop a reading skill for adult learners since they have the ability to recognize based on their knowledge. However, it becomes a challenge for the teacher to establish the visual of text to children. Therefore, it is necessary to invite children imagination before and while the reading process (Brumfit, 1992). Henretty and McEneaney (2020) stressed that the interaction between readers and text is crucial to develop the moment of understanding to expand views in literacy learning. In other words, the stronger interaction between readers and text better the reader comprehend the text.

Reading a story can build children motivation in understanding English text (Dickinson et al., 2019). This motivation refers to the combination of student's efforts to reach the goal of learning the language. The young learners are motivated to read interesting materials that might lead them to have a clear purpose to find out information in the text. Moreover, this will minimise students to struggle in practising linguistic exercises as well as broaden the understanding of the meaning and context of the reading (Mercer and Kostoulas, 2018). Reading a story also develops children's sensitivity to understand the moral messages contained in the text. Thus, the learner's feelings will be simulated effectively.

To do this, Lazar (1996) suggested teachers help students facing the challenges in reading a story. First, provide students with an understanding of the plot of the story. This will help students living up to the storyline with their imagination. Second, help students to understand the language in which the story is written. Finally, guide students to understand how the type of narrator who tells the story can shape and influence how the story is told (Lazar, 1996). Further, before reading a story, the readers also need to pay attention to the genre, plot characters, theme, language, and setting. Those may appear to complicate the reading process (Aebersold and Field, 1998). Therefore, teachers must elaborate the text in three steps, pre, while, and post-reading activities. In pre-reading activities, teachers help learners with a cultural background that might exist in a story. This might stimulate students' interest in the story. Teachers also being suggested to bold and introduce pre-teaching vocabularies in order to stimulate students' critical thinking. In while-reading activities, teachers guide students to understand the plot, characters, and language style. This is important to lead students to stay on the storyline while understanding the story. Then, in post-reading activities, teachers can help students interpret the text and understand the narrative point of view (Lazar, 1996).

From all the literature review above, the framework of the study focuses on the use of storybook/text in teaching reading for young learners is assumed to be successful. Reading through the story will invite young students' interest and motivation and a story that leads children sensitive to understand the moral message of the life event.

Methods

Experimental research is a method of research which referred to a hypothesis testing or a deductive research method, as the researcher collects data and results will either support or reject the hypothesis. Completed in a controlled environment, this method includes a hypothesis, a variable that can be manipulated by the researcher, and variables that can be measured, calculated and compared (Singh, 2021).

The purpose of experimental research is to determine a relationship between two (2) variables—the dependent variable and the independent variable. After completing an experimental research study, a correlation between a specific aspect of an entity and the variable being studied is either supported or rejected.

In experimental research, data must be able to be measured such as time, weigh, humidity. However, the entity should be carefully observed qualitatively, or described using words and photographs. How does the entity look, smell, sound, feel, and taste (when appropriate)? These types of observations help supplement the measurements taken throughout the experiment.

All experimental studies look to determine how one thing affects another. Thus, this type of experiment is considered experimental research project. In educational experiment, the example is a research on the e-Learning instructional design model based on Cognitive Flexibility Theory (Cao et al., 2012). In this research, the experiment was made to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of the model in promoting the learning quality in ill-structured domain.

This study used experimental research as the way to investigate the current issues. The experimental research was utilized in this study to determine how reading a story text affects students' reading comprehension. Completed in a controlled environment, experimental research includes a hypothesis, a variable that is manipulated by the researcher, and variables that are measured, calculated and compared (Singh, 2021). This research strategy is employed because it refers to a hypothesis testing or a deductive research method, as the researcher collects data and results will either support or reject the hypothesis.

A pre-test and a post-test are the main instruments of this research. Meanwhile, observation was done as secondary data to triangulate the findings of the primary data set (Creswell, 2009). The researchers selected 20 students at elementary school who took English courses in Ciputat, South Tangerang. The population was divided into two groups, experiment and control class. Ten students were selected in each group. A pre-test was done before the learning process was done in cycle one. After that, the teacher provided a lesson plan using a storybook as the primary medium of reading text. The post-test would be given after four meetings of the lesson. This study was conducted in two months with 16 meetings: one meeting for pre-test, 14 meetings for the learning process, and another meeting for post-test.

To validate data gained from classroom tests, the researcher carried out class observations as Maxwell (1996) stressed that through observation, the researcher would get some data that cannot be acquired through a questionnaire or interview, such as participants' tacit understanding and how theory-in-use. Classroom observation aims to see the actual process of assessment carried by participants. The researcher used field notes to observe the class since the students' attention was

distracted when they were videotaped. The classes were observed until the researcher gained a vivid picture of the implementation of the textbook in the class. The researcher was also present during the process of the mid-semester test and final test. During the observation, some assessment tools applied by teachers were collected.

Data analysis is interpreting and making sense of the collected materials (Boglan and Biklen 1992). The research questions guided data analysis. In this research, data gathered from pre-test and post-test for both experiment and control class and observations. The statistic calculating was used to analyse the pre-and post-test using t-test with a significant degree as follows (Creswell, 2009):

$$t_0 = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SM_1 - M_2}$$

M1 = the average of score/ the result of students' achievement in experiment class

M2 = the average score/ the result of students' achievement in control class

SM₁ = standard error of variable X (experiment class)

SM₂ = standard error of variable Y (control class)

The observation data were coded and classified based on research questions. Each classification was analysed and interpreted. The interpretation was limited to the data findings to triangulate the study's primary data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). In the current research, the observation was done in two classes between June and July 2018. The reading materials were chosen as follows: *Where is Rose?* Written by Judy West and *English Step 1*, written by Yusuf C.M. These two materials focused on prepositions of place and time.

Results and Discussion

Before starting the CAR, the teacher gave a pre-test to all participants and recorded their results. A few days after the pre-test, the teacher divided the class into two groups: experiment and control. Each group consisted of 10 children. Most of them are 10-11 years old. Each group consisted of six female and four male children. This arrangement indicated to manage the group equally to get the result more objective (DeFeo, 2013).

Reading a story

In the experiment class, the teacher started the class by inviting children to predict the story. The excitement could be seen in this part. A most student tried their best to mention and share their idea related to the story. The teacher recorded their predictions on the board. Moreover, the teacher sometimes shows some pictures of the story to stimuli children imagination on predicting the story.

In the reading process, the teacher listed some new words and translated those into Bahasa Indonesia. Then, the teacher started to read the story together with the children. Children were allowed to ask any questions regarding the storylines,

characters, and setting of the story. The teacher would pause the reading if needed when the children start feeling confused to understand the story and continue reading it when they ready were ready.

After reading, the teacher started providing a quiz related to the storyline. At this stage, most children were excited and competitive with their friends to answer the quiz. The teacher recorded the answers and analysed them along with the children. Children seemed so pleased to find their answers were correct.

Reading a textbook

In the control class, the situation was a little bit different from the experiment class. Before the reading activity, children started screening the text and recognise the words. The teacher assisted them by listing the difficult word on the board and explaining each word's meaning. Some students made a note to help them understand the language.

In the reading process, the teacher asked one of the children to read the text loudly. Some pronunciations were corrected if necessary. Then, the teacher explained each sentence for the meaning and grammar. Most children focus on understanding the meaning of each word. Further, they write those words in their notebook.

After reading, the teacher gave the quiz in the written task. When children did not understand the questions, they were allowed to ask the teacher if needed. Children looked serious and tense when facing the task. At the end of the quiz, some children finished on time; some still needed more time to finish it.

The data description

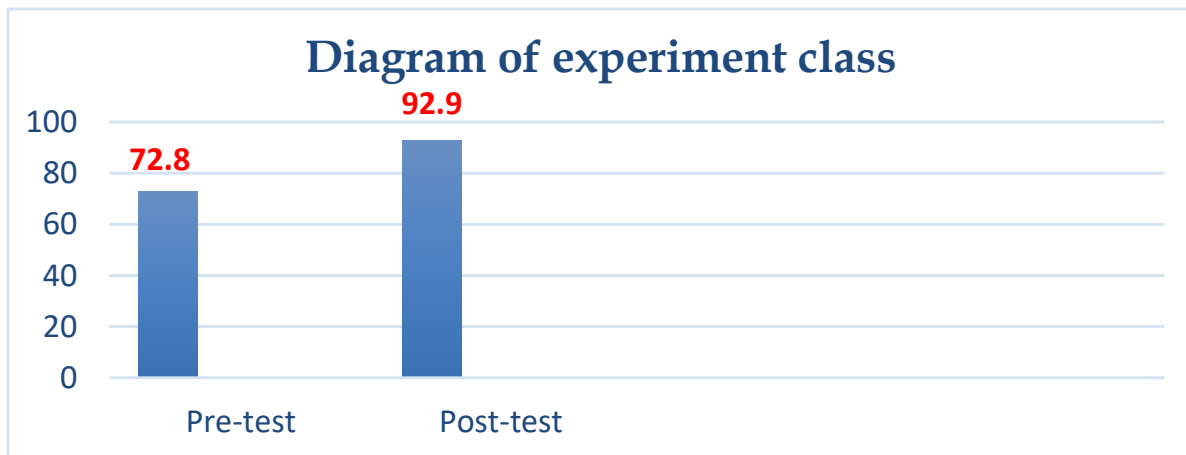
The following table describes the score of children pre-test and post-test score in control class.

Table 1. The result of experiment class

Students	Pre-test score	Post-test score
1	80	97
2	80	93
3	88	97
4	56	95
5	76	97
6	88	79
7	88	96
8	88	98
9	36	87
10	48	90
$\sum X = 728$ $M_x \text{ or } M_1 = 72,8$		$\sum X = 929$ $M_x \text{ or } M_1 = 92,9$

The table describes children in the experiment group who got mean score of 72.8 for pre-test and gained 20.1 points or 92.9 for post-test. The result indicated, there is an escalation of children score after getting treatment. The table also recorded dynamic changes for some children who got a lower score in the pre-test, such as children 4 (56 points), 9 (36 points), and 10 (48 points). These children, however, gain a significant point on the post-test. Child 4 got a significant score from 56 to 95 point, which means they could increase 39 points after the treatment. For participant number 9 had gained 36 points on the pre-test score. This participant was able to increase around 51 points or score 87 after the treatment. Finally, child number 10 could increase significant score or approximately 42 points from score 48 in the pre-test to become 90 on post-test. The different means from both tests could be figured clearly in the diagram below.

Figure 1. A Diagram of pre-test and post-test in experiment class



The diagram describes that the post-test result indicated higher than the pre-test score. Some children tended to gain more grad after the treatment. The following table 2 describes the score of children pre-test and post-test scores in the control class.

Table 2. The result of control class

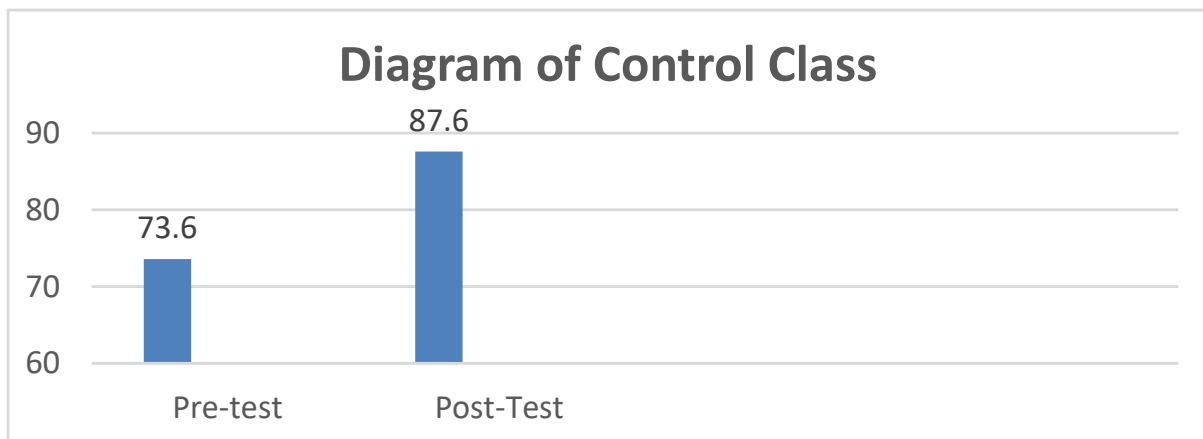
Students	Pre-test score	Post-test score
1	56	92
2	80	92
3	100	96
4	88	88
5	52	81
6	76	94
7	88	91
8	88	82
9	64	81
10	44	79

$\sum X = 736$ $M_x \text{ or } M_1 = 73,6$	$\sum X = 876$ $M_x \text{ or } M_1 = 87,6$
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Table 2 shows children reading achievement on pre-test and post-test in the control class. Compared to the experiment group, the score variations in the control group seemed more dynamic. It describes those children who afford to gain 14 points on their English score. This indicated that a textbook helps children to achieve their reading comprehension. Some children significantly increased their scores after the treatment. Children 1 and 10 had succeeded to move their score from 56 to 92 points or 36 points for student 1 and score 44 to 79 or 35 points for child 10. Meanwhile, children 5 and 9 had slightly high in gaining their scores. Child 5 gain 29 points from score 52 to 81, and child 9 had gained 17 points from score 64 to 81. Further, the dropping score also happened in this group. It showed that child 3 decreased his/her score 4 points from 100 to 96. It might indicate that reading through textbook influenced children to comprehend the text.

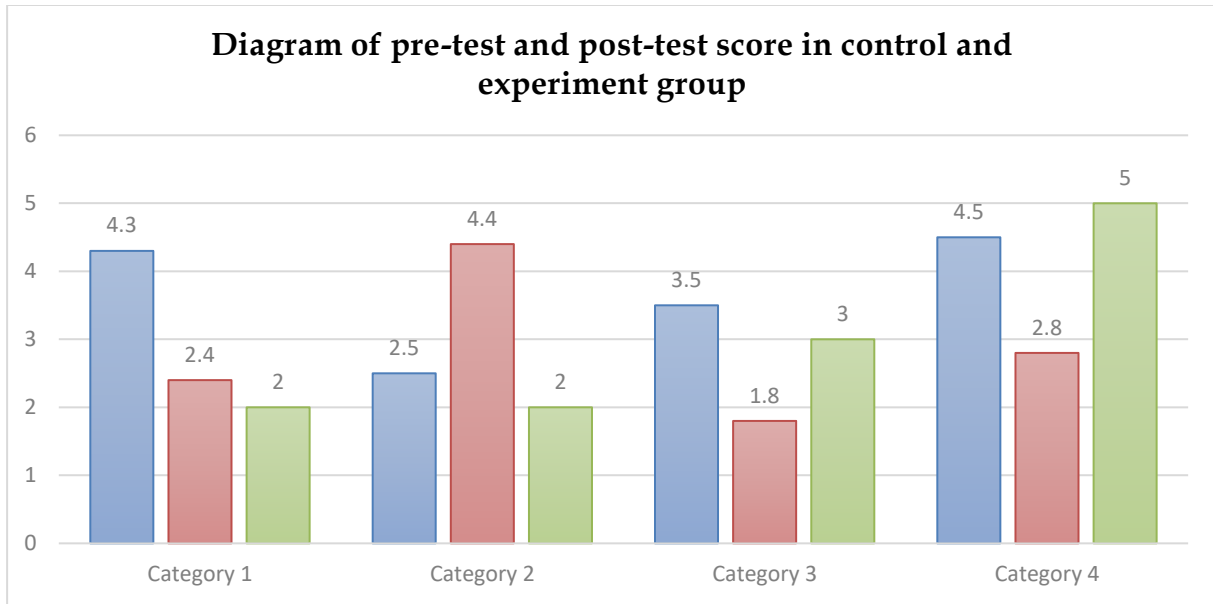
The different means from both tests are shown as follow.

Figure 2. AD diagram of pre-test and post-test in control class



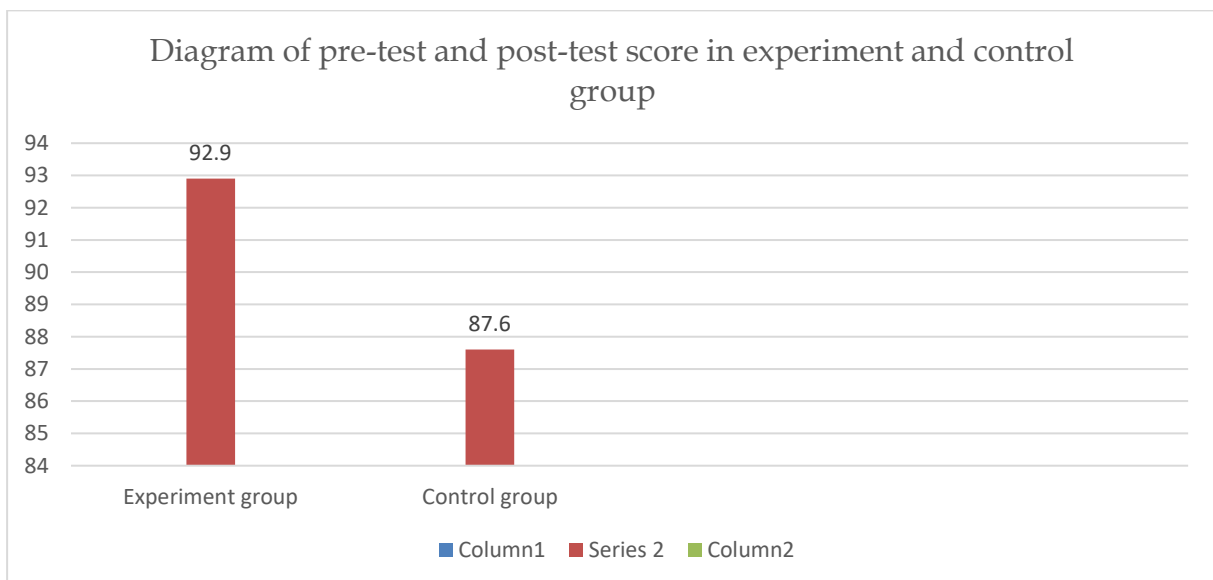
The diagram describes a dynamic changing of pre-test and post-test in control group. Although the different between pre-test and post-test score is not too high (14 points), children in control class still increased their score. The following figure 3 shows the comparison score of pre-test and post-test in experiment and control class.

Figure 3. Diagram of pre-test and post-test score in control and experiment class.



The data were collected from the experiment and control class. It shows the students' achievement in the experiment group was 72.8 on pre-test and 92.9 on post-test. Meanwhile, the mean score of the pre-test in the control class was 73.6, and the post-test was 87.6. The following figure 4 describes a mean of post-test in experiment and control class.

Figure 4. A mean of post-test in experiment and control class



The following table 3 describes the post test scores from the two groups. The researchers used t-test formula in calculate them.

Table 3. Standard deviation from post-test scores

1	Y	x	Y	x ²	y ²
97	92	4.1	4.4	16.81	19.36
93	92	0.1	4.4	0.01	19.36
97	96	4.1	8.4	16.81	70.56
95	88	2.1	0.4	4.41	0.16
97	81	4.1	-6.6	16.61	43.56
79	94	-13.9	6.4	193.21	40.96
96	91	3.1	3.4	9.61	11.56
98	82	5.1	-5.6	26.01	31.36
87	81	-5.9	-6.6	34.81	43.56
90	79	-2.8	8.4	8.41	73.96
$\sum X = 929$	$\sum Y = 876$	$\sum x = 0$	$\sum y = 0$	$\sum x^2 = 326,9$	$\sum y^2 = 354,4$

Based on the table, there is $\sum X = 929$ by adding all scores in variable X. further, there is $\sum Y = 876$ of variable Y. The t-test formulation is used to calculate the data as follows:

$$M_x \text{ or } M_1 = \frac{\sum X}{N_1} = \frac{929}{10} = 92.9$$

$$M_y \text{ or } M_2 = \frac{\sum Y}{N_2} = \frac{876}{10} = 87.6$$

$$SD_x \text{ or } SD_1 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum X^2}{N} - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{N^2}} = \sqrt{\frac{326,9}{10} - \frac{929^2}{100}} = \sqrt{32,69} = 5.717$$

$$SD_y \text{ or } SD_2 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum Y^2}{N} - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{N^2}} = \sqrt{\frac{354,4}{10} - \frac{876^2}{100}} = \sqrt{35,44} = 5.953$$

$$SEM_x \text{ or } SEM_1 = \frac{SD_1}{\sqrt{N_1 - 1}} = \frac{5,717}{\sqrt{10 - 1}} = \frac{5,717}{\sqrt{9}} = \frac{5,717}{3} = 1.906$$

$$SEM_y \text{ or } SEM_2 = \frac{SD_2}{\sqrt{N_1 - 1}} = \frac{5,953}{\sqrt{10 - 1}} = \frac{5,953}{\sqrt{9}} = \frac{5,953}{3} = 1.984$$

$$SEM_1 - M_2 = \sqrt{SEM_1^2 + SEM_2^2} = \sqrt{1,906^2 + 1,984^2} = \sqrt{3,633 + 3,936} = \sqrt{7,569} = 2.751$$

$$t_0 = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SEM_1 - SEM_2} = \frac{92,9 - 87,6}{2,751} = \frac{5,3}{2,751} = 1.926$$

When t_0 was obtained, the degrees of freedom form data as follows:

$$df = (N_1 + N_2) - 2; \text{ therefore } df = (10 + 10) - 2 = 18$$

The consult of t_0 to t_t in significant degree is 5% and 1% from df 18, that are:

Significant degree 5% t_0 , is = 2.10

Significant degree 1% t_t , is = 2.88

The comparison between t_0 to t_t that if $t_0 > t_t$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. However, if $t_0 < t_t$ then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected. In this current study, $t_0 : t_t = 1.925 < 2.10$ in degree of significance 5% and $t_0 : t_t = 1.926 < 2.88$ in degree of significance 1%.

To prove the hypothesis, the data obtained from the experiment and control group are calculated by using t-test formula with assumptions as follow:

If $t_0 > t_t$ the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It means there are significant differences in achievement obtained by students in the experiment group and those in the control group. However, if $t_0 < t_t$ the alternative hypothesis is rejected. It means there are no significant differences in achievement obtained by students in the experiment group and those in the control group.

The calculation above was explicit that it was 1.910, and the degree of freedom [df] was 18. In this report, the researchers used the degree of significance of 5% and 1%. The degree of significance of 5% was 2.10 and 2.88 for 1%. Then, it was compared to t_t where $t_0 : t_t = 1.926 < 2.10$ in degree of significance 5%. In degree of significance 1% the result showed that $t_0 : t_t = 1.926 < 2.88$.

In conclusion, that H_a of this research is rejected and is accepted. It means that there is no significant difference in students' achievement in the experiment and control class. Teaching reading through the textbook in the current setting was not better than teaching reading through the textbook.

However, based on the observation, the researchers found some factors that might influence teaching reading through story text. For instance, teachers and children spend more time figuring out the plot and characters before starting the activity. In the learning process, the teacher divided children into two groups. A participant-lead a group in a discussion. However, it was found that the discussion was chaotic and unproductive. Moreover, the teacher took more time to deliver the interaction among children. This strategy was proven ineffective since children needed extra control from the teacher (Dougherty Stahl, 2009)

Although it took more time, reading a story still positively impacts children to comprehend the text. It can be seen in table 1 where children can improve their score by 20.1 points after the treatment. However, other control groups can only increase 14 points, or 6 points lower after the treatment. In other words, if children in experiment class get more time in reading the story, they might increase more scores on the post-test.

Another strategy to develop reading stories effectively is by providing more chances for children to listen to the story from the teachers. A study conducted by Over et al. (2018) indicated that children could deliver a positive response when listening to the story and provide a lack of understanding when reading it. This is because children will lose their focus easier in reading, impacting the text bias information(Over et al., 2018). Children with unique characteristics are not merely

passive recipients. They could promote any positive information they gained through the story they listened (Dunham et al., 2011). This is related to the current observation that most children in experiment class tended to bold many positive vocabularies and phrases, such as *well done*, *don't worry*, *please to help you*, *wonderful*, and many more.

Finally, the highest strategy in teaching reading through the story encourages students to provide questions and answers from the teacher. Raphael et al. (2006) generated a conclusion that questions and answers in teaching reading would develop at least three student's comprehension strategies, including locating information, determining text structures and how they convey information, and determining when an inference is required. By using the Question Generating and Question Answering strategy, the students may be stimulated to think critically. Furthermore, these strategies could help students recognize a possible answer (Wibowo et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study focuses on teaching reading for children through a storybook. To compare their achievement, researchers divided the class into two groups: experiment and control group. Children in experiment class learn reading using story text; meanwhile, children in the control group used the textbook as the material.

The finding indicated that the two groups were succeeded to improve children reading comprehension after the treatment. The post-test result in the experiment class increased 20.1 points, which some children gained significantly. The result of the post-test in the control class was also improving, even though only 14 points. This implied that teaching reading through stories and textbooks did not significantly impact children in the current setting.

However, the observation recorded those children in the experiment class tended to have a higher motivation than children in the control class. The time management and limited interaction between teacher and students, and students become other challenges for the teaching process. As if they have more time and effective discussion and interaction, the reading process may run well. Thus, it can be concluded teaching reading through the story develops students' motivation, critical thinking, and positive characters.

Therefore, in the future study, the writers suggested improving the teaching strategies by adding more time, managing better interaction and communication. Providing more time in the teaching process will support students to take their chances in understanding the material. Furthermore, time addition may help the teacher to arrange a discussion and provide more questions and answers for the students. Finally, effective interaction is essentials to be developed by teachers to improve students critical thinking and ideas.

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