TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH READER RESPONSE APPROACH TO THE FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PGRI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of conducting this study was to see whether or not there was any significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students before and after being taught by using *Reader Response Approach*. For this purpose, the experimental research was used. The samples of this study were the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education PGRI University in the academic year of 2007/2008. The primary data were obtained by means of test. The result shows that there was a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students' pre-test and post-test after being taught by using *Reader Response Approach*. It was found that the t-obtained (7,25) was higher than the t-table (2,145). It was also found that mean score of the students' post-test was (7,71) while the mean score of the students' pre-test was (6,26). In other words, teaching reading by using Reader Response Appeoach was effective.

Keywords: Reader response approach, reading comprehension achievement

INTRODUCTION

The National adult Literacy Survey (U.S Department of Education) found 26.000 adults between 21% and 23% of the U.S population read at the lowest level on the survey. This survey was also supported by the research done by Greenberg et al. (2002) that 40% of the students were not ready to move to the higher level of the reading program after being taught by using a program designed to teach low reading adults.

Nowadays, people can get the information easily from all over the world. They can get the information from internet, newspaper, journal, and various types of reports. To get the information they must read the text and comprehend them. Reading is very important because by reading people can understand the information sent or read from the printed pages. This statement is in line with the purpose of reading as McCracken and Walcut (1990:20) and Pakenham (1986:66) who state that the purpose of reading is to understand the information of some sort from the printed page. So the readers can interact with and understand the information. Successful people engaged in business or professional occupations spent a great deal of time reading various types of reports.

Since reading is not an easy skill to master, the teaching reading must be programmed in such a way in order to help the students understand the reading material well. For example, by giving them the reading techniques such as skimming and scanning techniques, the students can consequently reduce time spent in reading by one half times (Betty & Ross, 1990:249). Because more and more teachers of English think that it is necessary to concentrate on the teaching of comprehension to meet the specific needs of the students, the teachers of English could apply certain strategies that should be useful in adding variety and brightness to the comprehension lesson.

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Dealing with the teaching and learning, Long and Richards (1987:73) say that the strategy is one of the important components in education and instruction. It means that the strategy used by the teachers may influence the result of learning and determine the success or failure of the process of teaching and learning activities. According to Strevens (1987:11), strategy has usually seemed to be most obviously central elements within the main component of the total process. Based on the explanation above, it is clearly understood that the reading strategies used by the teachers may greatly influence the students' reading comprehension achievement.

The importance of reading strategy is elaborated by Killen (1998:3) as follows "Reading strategies play an important role in understanding the reading materials'. They facilitate the comprehension of the students who want to read effectively. A student who has determined what he or she expects to gain from his or her reading should select a reading strategy which best suits a particular purpose. If he or she is reading a novel or magazine for pleasure, he or she would obviously not use the same kind of reading strategy to use in studying science books, linguistics, mathematics, and other subjects.

Reader Response Approach gives students such possibility to study and comprehend reading material systematically by the help of the efficient strategy. Macgowan-Gilhooly (1991 cited in Song, 1995:173) said that a *Reader Response Approach* is an approach to enhance students' overall fluency in English by requiring them to read a large mount of English and use the language to express their own opinion about what they read.Based on the background above, the problem of the study was formulated in the following question: Was there any significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students before and after being taught by using *Reader Response Approach?* There were two variables in this research. The first variable was the effectiveness of *Reader Response Approach* (independent variable), and the second was the students' reading comprehension achievement (dependent variable). In relation to the objectives of this study, the researcher formulated two research hypotheses. They are as follows:

H (1) : There is a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students before and after being taught by using *Reader Response Approach.*

H (2) : There is no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students before and after being taught by using *Reader Response Approach*

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The Importance of Reading Comprehension

The ability to comprehend the reading text is very important. Reading is the dominant skill in learning any subjects, because the ability to read is not only the performance to pronounce the passage, but also the comprehension of the written message. Therefore, comprehension refers to understanding, i.e. understanding the thought of the writer (Rubin, 1993:130). The readers understand more or less about what they read according to what they already know.

The achievement in reading comprehension is very important. Students need to understand what they are reading because reading occurs when a reader is able to attach meaning to the words. One has the ability to comprehend what he or she is reading if he or she has the ability to bring the meaning to the printed page. In summary, reading and comprehension cannot be separated because the main purpose of reading is comprehension.

Brown (1987:32) discusses four important elements of reading comprehension. They mainly deal with vocabulary, specific information, main idea, and ability to infer or imply or the ability to gain meanings that are not explicitly stated in the text of reading materials. Since the major goal of reading instructions is to foster in each student the competence to understand the printed language, the ability to read for information requires the application of fundamental comprehension skills. In addition, the content of what is read also makes some demands upon the comprehension.

Reader Response Approach

Macgowan-Gilhooly (1991) cited in (Song, 1995:173) says that a *Reader Response Approach* is an approach to enhance students' overall fluency in English by requiring them to read a large mount of English and to use the language to express their own opinion about what they read.

The Procedures of Reader Response Approach in Teaching Reading

MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) cited in (Song, 1995:172) proposes the procedures of Reader Response Approach, as follows:

1) The teacher asks the students to read books in English; the teaching materials have been prepared by the teacher.
2) The teacher assigns the students to read at home and asks them to record any kinds of reactions to, associations with, or personal reflections on the text being read.
3) The students are also required to write down questions to which they expect answer from other students as well as that they think will evoke heated discussion in class.
4) In class time, they discuss what they read, ask, and answer questions, write about themes and topics that appear in their reading, share ideas and responses, explore interpretations and predict the development of the texts.

The Advantages of Reader Response Approach

There are some advantages of a *Reader Response Approach*, as follow:

1) As the approach requires the students to read a lot for each class and emphasizes overall understanding, they find that they cannot afford the time and do not need to read word for word and concern themselves with accurate analyses of sentence structures; instead they have to read fast and extract meaning and information from the text as efficiently as possible. Such reading experience directs students' attention from vocabulary and sentence structures to overall comprehension of the text.
2) Writing about what they read in the form of an informal reading is a new kind of experience for the students. It helps them think about reading really means and recognize the nature of the reading process. Given the chance to write about their responses to their reading, they discover that reading is an active and exploratory process that involves the making of meaning by a reader.
3) Through questioning a text and its author, they also learn to think for themselves and understand that a text usually represents a single point of view.
4) The teacher can capitalize on their learning styles, visual, individualized for many if we allow the students to process the reading material by themselves. When these students approach the reading in an individualized and informal way they are more relaxed. Therefore, they can concentrate on the reading material, resulting in a better understanding of the text.

Teaching Materials

According to Song (1980:32) Reader Response Approach may use narrative selections or informational material. She provides a rule of chums to use in deciding appropriate length. For college students, allow fifteen minutes or approximately 2000 words. In this research, the researcher used twelve narrative texts as suggested by Song (1995).

The Readability Levels of the Reading Materials

There were twelve reading materials that had been measured to get their readability levels. The readability of the reading materials used in this research had been analyzed using Flesch formula. The scores were obtained through the calculation of the average of the sentence, syllables in the-100 words in terms of the grade level of the students. Table 1 shows the scores acquired by the Flesch calculation. The scores showed the relative difficulty of the reading materials.

Based on the readability calculation, it was found that the 12 reading materials score between 26.5 to 44.5. If the scores refer to Flesch reading ease interpretation, a text which scores a

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least 26.5 to 30 is representative to be given to college students. A score of 40 to 44.5 is representative to be given to high school students. From table 2 it was found that there were eight reading materials which were suitable for college students.

Table 1: The Readability Levels of the Reading Materials that have been measured by Flesch Reading Ease Formula

No	Titles	Score	Level
1	Wolfert's roost	41	Difficult
2	The Senior Assistant	44.5	Difficult
3	The Ancient Strength	26.5	Very Difficult
4	No Rosetta Stone	41	Difficult
5	Caviar Remembered	40	Difficult
6	The Door in the Wall	30	Very Difficult
7	The Creation of John Manderville	28.7	Very Difficult
8	Rip Van Winkle	25	Very Difficult
9	A Tour on the Prairies	30	Very Difficult
10	Young Man Axelbrod	26	Very Difficult
11	The Broken Wheel	29.5	Very Difficult
12	Footfalls	29.1	Very Difficult

Table 2: The Distribution of the Readability Levels of the Reading Materials

Score	Amount	School Grade Completed
0 - 30	8	College
31 - 50	4	High School
51 - 60	-	Some High School
61 - 70	-	7^{th} or 8^{th}
71 - 80	-	6^{th}
81 - 90	-	5^{th}
91 - 100	-	4^{th}

Source: G.A Miller. 1969. Psycholinguistics: An Introduction to the Study of Speech and Personality, Page 190

METHODOLOGY

Method of Research

In this study, the writer used the weak experimental method with the one pre-test and post-test design, because he was not able to control and manipulate of the relevant variables that might influence the data. Dealing with it, Frankel and Wallen (1993:246) write that "In the one-group pre-test and post-test design, a simple group is measured or observed not only after being exposed to a treatment of some sort, but also before." The design can be diagrammed as follows:

O_1 X O_2

Where:
O_1 : pre-test
X : treatment
O_2 : post-test

Population

Richards, et al., (1992:282) state that "Population is any set items, individuals, etc, which share some common and observable characteristics from which a sample can be taken." Thus, one can speak of comparing test across a sample of population of students. The population of this study was all the fourth semester students of English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, PGRI University in the academic year of 2007/2008 with 520 students as the total

number. There are two reasons why the researcher chose the fourth semester students of English Department, faculty of Teacher Training and Education, PGRI University, firstly, they were university students, according to Song (1995: 21) Reader response approach is appropriate for university students. Secondly, students' scores in reading were still insufficient because 60% of them get C.

Sample

Arikunto (1998:20) states that sample is part of or whole population of investigation. To get accurate data, the writer used a cluster random sampling. The writer grouped the sample. The writer took the sample from the fourth semester students, English Department. The cluster is properly selected randomly for the large population cluster. It is done by writing the name of thirteen classes on paper then put them in a glass and after that took one of them randomly. The subject which was taken as sample in this research consisted of 40 students for semester IVc.

The Technique for Collecting the Data

In collecting the data, the researcher gave the students reading comprehension test. There were twenty six questions in the form of the multiple-choice (after omitting invalid questions,). The aim of the text was to know the result of teaching reading by using *Reader Response Approach*. The subjects were given the pre-test at the beginning of the program. The same test was given at the end of the program in order to know the effect of *Reader Response Approach*.

This test had been tried out for its validity and the reliability. In this case, the fifty questions in the form multiple choice were tested to 132 students of the English Department from Muhammadiyah University, and Bina Darma University. The researcher analyzed the results of the test by using Space Saver method in order to measure the validity and the reliability of the test. The total number of the cases were 132 and the degree of freedom was (df) = 130 (132 – 2 = 130). And the r-table was 0.127. If the r-output is higher than r-table, the item was valid. But if the r-output is less than r-table, the test was invalid. It was found that there were 26 items lower than 0.127 and there were 24 items higher than 0.127. This means that there were 24 questions were valid. Therefore they were taken for the measure in this study. It was also found that the reliability of the test was 0.7251.

Technique for Analyzing the Data

In this study the writer used matched t-test to analyze the data. This matched t-test was used to know whether *Reader Response Approach* is effective to teach reading comprehension. According to Hatch and Farhady (1983:144), the destination of match t-test is to find out the differences result before treatment (pre-test) and after treatment (post-test).

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Findings

From this study it was found that teaching reading comprehension by using *Reader Response Approach* to the fourth semester students of English Department was effective to the students. It was evidenced in the average of students; scores in pre-test have increased in the post test. The students, average score in pre-test was 6.26 and the post-test the students' average score was 7.71. After the scores were tabulated, the writer found that the highest score was 8.33 that were reached by three students and the lowest score was 3.75 that were reached by four students. The contains of the test in post-test was exactly the same as those in the pre-test, the difference between them only in the post-test after the writer had already presented the treatment about teaching reading comprehension by using *Reader Response Approach*. Their average score in the post test was better than in the pre-test. In the post-test, the average score that the students got was 7.71. This average score was much higher than average score in the pre-test 6.26 that were reached by two students.

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Data Analysis

After gaining the result of the pre-test and post-test, the writer began to analyze them by using the matched t-test formula.Before finding the t-obtained, the writer calculated SD (Standard Deviation) and $\overline{SD}$ (Standard Error of Difference between two Means) of the data first. After then, the result of SD was applied with the matched t-test formula. Based on the calculation, the t-obtained was 7.25. According to Hatch and Farhady (1982:272). If the t-obtained is higher than the critical value of t-table the Ha will be accepted and Ho will be rejected. If the value of t-obtained is lower than critical value of t-table the Ho will be accepted and Ha will be rejected. Because the value of t-obtained was 7.25 higher than the value of t-table, so Ha was accepted and Ho was rejected.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and the result of data analysis, the writer could draw some conclusions. First, the writer concludes that there was a significant difference between the students' scores in the pre-test (before being taught using *Reader Response Approach*) and their scores in the post-test. It was shown by differences between the students' mean scores of the pre-test and post-test (6.26 and 7.71). Second, the result of matched t-test computation showed that t-obtained was 7.25 and it was higher than the critical value 1.684 with the degree of freedom 39 (40-1) and level of significance 0.05% with one tailed test. It means, the null hypothesis (HO) was rejected consequently the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted. Third, teaching reading comprehension by using *Reader Response Approach* to the fourth semester, students of English Department was effective.

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