SHORT STORIES:
THE POWERFUL MEDIA TO FOSTER
STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY IN READING

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Abstract

Vocabulary is very fundamental aspect in language learning. Even, it becomes a key to master a language. The younger people learn the language, the faster they will master it. There are so many materials and media to gain vocabulary. One of them is by reading short story. In fact, it has many advantages when it applies as the media in language learning. This article conveys a study about how the use of short story to foster students' vocabulary mastery in reading and how significant of short story as the media in language learning. This study uses the model of action research which involves thirty-eight students of MTsN 2 Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara as the subject of the research. It consists of three cycles, and each cycle has 4 meetings. The data are populated from tests (pre-test and post-tests). As the result, the use of short stories is able to increase the students' psychological aspect and the classroom climate. The students are become more excited, enthusiastic, and active in the learning process. This then makes the classroom climate more alive, and it is finally able to foster their ability in vocabulary mastery in reading. Moreover, this study shows the significant improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery. At the end of the cycle, the students have met at least the minimum score of 7.00 standard of minimum completeness in the four areas of spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and the use of the words.

Keywords: reading, short story, vocabulary mastery

INTRODUCTION

English is the most widely spoken language in the world. Simons and Fennig (2017) elaborate the data that English is spoken by 106 countries and covers 372 million speakers all over the world. Chan (2016) further states that English is the most powerful language in the world. It covers five opportunities; geography (the ability to travel), economy (the ability to participate in an economy), communication (the ability to engage in dialogue), knowledge and media (the ability to consume knowledge and media) and diplomacy (the ability to engage in international relations). These two statistics describe the crucial role of English as the tools for communication nowadays. Therefore, it is very important to learn the language from the very beginning of the age.

English is started to be taught formally to the students in Indonesia at junior level (13-15 years old). It is become a special subject taught at least twice a week in the school. The subject aims are to introduce the language to the students and it is hoped that, in the end, the students have the proficiency of the language which comprises four areas; listening, reading, writing and speaking.

However, before the students can go further in mastering and practicing the language, the first step is that they should learn as much as vocabularies they can. Vocabulary is the lives of the language. It is energizes the language itself. In Schmitt and McCarthy (1997: 6), Nation and Waring argue that "vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on". Other linguist, Wilkins (in Thornbury, 2003: 13) argues that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". The two opinions emphasize the importance of the vocabulary in the language mastery. Without adequate vocabularies, it is hard for the students to have the proficiency in the language.

There are many medium available to gain the vocabularies needed by the students in the primary stage of the learning. Some popular medium are movies, songs, realia, games, etc. however, the written materials seem to be the best medium to learn the language. Combination between the written materials and

reading activity will foster the students' vocabulary mastery faster than other medium. Day, Omura and Hiramatsu (1991) argue that "foreign language students can learn target vocabulary through reading". Nevertheless, the reading material for the students should be interesting for them and meet their level of the language.

One of the reading materials that can be used to foster the students' vocabulary mastery is short story. Short story is one of literary works which can be used as the teaching media in learning English. The reader can finish reading a short storyonly in few minutes. A short story with its setting, characters and compelling plot, captures and holds the attention of the learners which is an important part of the learning process (Saricoban and Kucukoglu, 2011).Short story offers a great number of vocabularies and enjoyment in it so it can be used as a valuable media or material in learning a language. This research will mainly focus on the use of short story to foster the students' vocabulary mastery in reading.

Erkaya (2005) states that "in addition to four skills, short stories help instructors to teach literary, cultural and higher-order thinking aspects. Rossiter (in Gonzalez, 2010) states that "stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, rememberable, and entertaining. The believability stems from the fact that stories deal with human-like experience that we tend to perceive as an authentic and credible source of knowledge". The statements propose the use of stories since the stories have many positive impacts when it is used as the teaching media in the learning process especially in English subject. The students will get new experience when they learn English through the stories. The best from the use of stories is the entertaining effect which means the students can learn something without any feeling of being forced.

Collie and Slater (1987: 3) propose four main reasons why the use of literature or teaching literature is very interesting and worth piloting in the process of language ability development. Those reasons are: literature provides valuable authentic material, literature can give cultural enrichment, literature can give language enrichment and literature offers personal involvement. When the

students use the stories as the media to learn the language, they will get some important and valuable knowledge about the language which other media might not provide.

Other positive opinion comes from Gonzalez (2010) who says that "stories made the children's learning the foreign language more interesting, amusing and memorable. Students have an amazing ability to absorb language when activities are familiar and enjoyable to them". This statement strengthens the importance of the use of stories in teaching and learning process of the language especially for the students who learn and developing their ability in foreign language. The use of stories promising many positive sides when it is used as the teaching media in learning the language particularly English.

Previous studies show that the use of short story or literary texts makes the teaching and learning process run positively; learner involvement was great, the teacher's role was more a provider of resources and a motivator than an instructor and a happy and enjoyable learning environment was created (Lau, 2002). Literary texts are the good resources for learning/teaching vocabulary, improve all four language skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening), and a doorway to other cultures (Tasneen, 2010). The result of the research shows that the three aspects of vocabulary are improved (spelling, meaning and grammatical behavior). It also shows that the lexical aspect that benefited most is spelling then followed by the knowledge of the article. Extensive reading appears to lead to substantial vocabulary learning, but it is not consistent across all word knowledge types (Pigada and Schmitt, 2006). That incidental vocabulary learning can occur from reading a single authentic novel (Sanchez and Schmitt, 2010).The use of short-stories in ELT classroom has always been recommended by the pundits in the field for developing reading comprehension skill as stories offer infinite linguistic as well as personal, socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional benefits for the language learners (Pathan, 2012).

This research tries to answer two research questions as follows:
1. How is the use of short story to foster students' vocabulary mastery?

2. How significant does short story improve students' vocabulary master in the area of spelling, pronunciation, meaning and words in use

METHOD

The research method used in this study is action research.McNiff and Whitehead (2006: 7) say that action research is "a form of enquiry that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work", while Gall, Gall and Borg(2003: 579) argue that action research is "a form of applied research whose primary purpose is the improvement of an education professional's own practice".

Since using action research, it means that the research will be divided into several cycles. The number of cycles conducted is depends on the targets achieved. The faster the targets achieved the shorter cycles will be conducted. Further, the research uses four essential "moments" from Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns, 1999: 33) namely planning, action, observation and reflection.The activities are repeated in the research process. The first is making an action plan to improve the condition based on the problem found in the classroom. After the plan is decided then the action will follow soon. Next, after the action is implemented, the teacher should observe the effect of the action that he or she has already made in the classroom. The effect could be whether there is an improvement of students' grade or not, whether the improvement is significant or not, etc. The last is reflection. This is to analyze whether the action applied in the classroom was successful or not. If the action is successful, then it could be extended to get maximum result, but if the action is failed to enhance the quality of the teaching learning process, then the action can be changed with another action. These processes continue repeatedly for few cycles until the maximum result is gained.

Before the research conducted, the researcher did a pretest to know the students' prior knowledge about the language. Based on the result of the pretest, the researcher analyzes the problems faced by the students then determines the steps needed to overcome it. The researcher also set the target of the achievement

of the implementation of the short stories as the teaching material to reach 7.00 in average for the mean. Point 7.00 is the point of KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum) or standard of minimum completeness of mastery learning of the school.

The subject of the research is the students at class VIII C of MTs Negeri 2 Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara which consists of 38 students (16 males and 22 females). The decision to choose this class as the subject of the research is purely based on the advice from the teacher in which based on his considerations, the ability of the students in English is average which means the difference of ability between one student to other is not too sharp and the students mostly easy to be controlled and directed compared to other classes.

The data in the research is quantitative data which taken from the students' tests. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher uses Descriptive Statistics (DS) method by checking the students' answer in the tests which held in the last meeting of each cycle.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted in three cycles. This is because the whole indicators just got completed or reached the target in the cycle 3. From four indicators; spelling, pronunciation, meaning and words in use, the first two (spelling and pronunciation) are reached the target on the first cycle. Meaning indicator reached the target in the second cycle. The last indicator, words in use, reached the target in the last cycle.

Each cycle comprises of four meetings, three meetings for delivering the material and one meeting for conducting post-test. In each cycle, as elaborated before, the researcher implementing four essential "moments" from Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns, 1999: 33) that are: planning, action, observation and reflection. The researcher will also apply both intensive and extensive reading which according to Patel and Jain (2008:117) they propose that intensive reading related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance. Intensive reading will provide a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and

for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms. Intensive reading is text reading or passage reading. The learner read the text to get knowledge or analysis. The goal of this reading is to read shorter text while reading aloud also play important role in teaching of English. Teacher should know that the training of reading aloud must be given at primary level because it is the base of words pronunciation.

Before conducting the cycles, the researcher has conducted the pre-test. The result of the pre-test can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. The Average and Mean Score of Pre-Test

No	Indicator	Average	Percentage
1	Spelling	6.18	61.8
2	Pronunciation	24.21	60.5
3	Meaning	6.03	60.3
4	Words in Use	11.39	45.6
	Mean	56.25	

Cycle I:

    a. Planning

The researcher preparing the material needed for the teaching and learning process such as; lesson plan, students' work sheet, narrative text (short stories) etc.

    b. Action

In each meeting, the researcher distributed a copy of short story to the students. Each student gets one copy of the story. After that, the researcher asks the students to read one paragraph in the front of the class. This activity usually based on volunteer. When one student reads the story, the researcher listen carefully to his/her pronunciation. Every time the students mispronounce the word, the researcher would directly make correction and asks the whole class to repeat what the researcher said for few times. In the last session of each meeting, the researcher gives the exercises to the students to deepen their understanding about the material.For the addition, in the first meeting, the researcher explains about three kinds of the texts and the difference among them. Those texts are descriptive, recount and narrative. The researcher also explains about the features, the generic structures and the examples of those texts. For the second and the third meeting, beside read the story, the researcher adds the activity by writing the difficult words found in the story in the white board but in the jumbled form. The students are asked to correct the words formation and find the meaning in Indonesia for each word. In this meeting, the researchers also demonstrate about how to use the dictionary correctly and how to pronounce the words to the students. The researcher also asks the students to compose the sentences using the words written in the white board. The last meeting is for post-test 1.

    c. Observation

The observation done in three ways: observation, interview and test. The purposes of the observation are to know the students' progress in the whole aspects in vocabulary before and after the implementation and their impression using short story in learning English. In the last meeting, the researcher conducts

the post-test which covers four indicators; spelling, pronunciation, meaning and words in use. The result of the post-test 1 is:

Table 2. The Result of the Post-Test 1

No	Indicator	Average	Percentage
1	Spelling	7.08	70.8%
2	Pronunciation	28.18	70.5%
3	Meaning	6.47	64.7%
4	Words in Use	13.39	53.6%
	Mean	64.86	

The results of the observation are that the most significant improvement of vocabulary is pronunciation aspect; the students become more familiar with the narrative text and the students became more passionate to involve in the teaching and learning processes.

d. Reflection

From the indicators of vocabulary, there are two indicators that already reached the target, those are spelling and pronunciation. This can be seen from the students' daily process in learning and also from the students' score in the post-test 1. Two others indicators; meaning and words in use are still below the target and it means that it needs to conduct another cycle to make those indicators reach the target.

Cycle II

a. Planning

The researcher preparing the material needed for the teaching and learning process such as; lesson plan, students' work sheet, narrative text (short stories) etc. Based on the observation and the result of the previous cycle, the main focus of this cycle is to enhance the students' ability in determining the meaning of the words and the ability to use the words in a simple sentence without leaving two others indicators.

b. Action

This cycle is almost the same as the first cycle where the researcher distributes a copy of the story for each student and asks some students to come

forward and read one paragraph from the story. In this cycle, the researcher asks the students which seem not so active in the previous cycle to read. Every time the students mispronounce the word, the researcher directly corrects it and asks the rest of the class to repeat for few times. Another activity is the researcher writes down the mispronounce words before in the white board in jumbled form and asks the students to correct it and also give the meaning of the words. The last is the researcher asks the students to compose the sentence using the words written in the white board with their friend next to them. The addition is in the second and third meeting where the researcher explains about the article and the subject verb agreement and its function when making the sentences and also about noun, verb and adjective.

     c. Observation

The observation in this cycle is the same as the observation in the previous cycle. The purposes of the observation are to know the students' progress in the aspects in vocabulary especially in meaning and words in use between cycle 1 and cycle 2. The researcher also interview some students randomly and unstructured. In the last meeting, the researcher conducts the post-test 2. The result of the post-test 2 is:

Table 3. The Result of the Post-Test 2

No	Indicator	Average	Percentage
1	Spelling	7.24	72.4%
2	Pronunciation	28.82	72.0%
3	Meaning	7.26	72.6%
4	Words in Use	15.05	60.2%
	Mean	68.67	

The results of the observation showed that the most significant improvement of vocabulary aspect is meaning; the students'enthusiasm in the teaching and learning processes is highand the students need much more exercises to enrich their experience in using the words and implementing the rules of the language.

Reflection

After two cycles, there are three indicators that already reached the target; spelling, pronunciation and meaning. The words in use indicator is increase but still below the target that has been set. Based on this condition, it needs to conduct another cycle in order to make this indicator reach the target.

Cycle 3

    a. Planning

The researcher preparing the material needed for the teaching and learning process such as; lesson plan, students' work sheet, narrative text (short stories) etc. Based on the observation and the result of the previous cycle, the main focus of this cycle is to enhance the students' to use the words in a simple sentence without leaving three others indicators.

    b. Action

The action implemented in cycle 3 is almost the same with two previous cycles. The researcher distributes a copy of the story for each student and asks some students to come forward and read one paragraph from the story. In this cycle, the researcher asks the students which seem not so active in the previous cycle to read. Every time the students mispronounce the word, the researcher directly corrects it and asks the rest of the class to repeat for few times. Next, the researcher asks the students to write down the words they consider as difficult words in the white board. After that, the researcher asks other students to write down the meaning of those difficult words beside the words itself. Not all the difficult words find its' meaning. This makes the researcher asks the students to find the meaning of the rest of the words in their dictionary and write it in the white board. Finally, the researcher asks the students to choose five words in the white board and use them in the sentences. This time the students have to work by themselves. In the second meeting, the researcher explains about regular verb, irregular verb and affixes (prefixes and suffixes) while in the third meeting, the researcher gives little explanation about tenses, singular and plural form and the last is some synonyms and antonyms.

c. Observation

The action is complete. The students' ability in the whole indicators; spelling, pronunciation, meaning and words in use increased. The weakness of the implementation of the short stories to increase students' vocabulary mastery in reading in the cycle 3 was the time constraint for the research activity.The result of the post-test 3 is:

Table 4. The Result of the Post-Test 3

No	Indicator	Average	Percentage
1	Spelling	7.42	74.2%
2	Pronunciation	29.71	74.3%
3	Meaning	7.68	76.8%
4	Words in Use	17.58	70.3%
	Mean	68.67	

The results of the observation showed that the indicator left; words in use, is reached the target. So the research is considered as complete and successful and it does not need to conduct another cycle.

d. Reflection

After three cycles, the whole indicators; spelling, pronunciation, meaning and words in use are already reached the target. The progress of the mean score and the percentage from each cycle can be seen in the table below:

Table 5. The Percentage of the Improvement of the Mean Score

Test	Mean Score	Improvement (%)
Pre-test	56.25	-
Post-test 1	64.86	15.31 %
Post-test 2	68.67	5.87 %
Post-test 3	73.41	6.90 %

The results from pre-test, post-test 1, post-test 2 and post-test 3 which show the improvement of the four indicators and the mean score prove that the use of short stories to foster the students' vocabulary mastery is very effective.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Using short stories as a media to foster the students' vocabulary mastery in reading is very promising. Short stories are able to significantly foster the students' vocabulary mastery in reading. Beside those scores result, the use of short stories is able to increase students' psychological aspect and the classroom climate. The students are become more excited, enthusiastic, and active in the learning process. This then makes the classroom climate more alive, and it is finally able to foster their ability in vocabulary mastery in reading.

Short stories also become significant media to improve students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen from the progress made by the students from pre-test until post-test 3. Before conducting the research, the researcher sets the target for every indicator to reach the score of 7.00 as the standard of minimum completeness of mastery learning of the school. The result of the pre-test shown that the mean score is 56.25, and respectively reaches 64.86 in the post-test 1. It keeps improving into 68.67 in the cycle 2 and eventually it accumulates into 73.41 in the post-test 3. Those achievements are based on the indicators spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and words in use.

Based on the above result, the use of short stories in learning language specially to foster students' vocabulary mastery in reading is worth trying. In the further application, it is also interesting to conduct another research about the use of the short stories in different level of education such as Senior High School or higher education.

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