



Improving English Reading Comprehension Ability through Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) Learning

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Abstract

The present research aimed to increase reading comprehension using Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) to the students of secondary school. This research was based on preliminary findings indicating students have difficulty reading English text due to a lack of comprehension skill. This research was conducted on class X students of Senior High School of Ummulqura Indonesia, Aceh with the number 25 students. This research was designed in the form of classroom action research. This research was done in two cycles. Then the instruments of this research were test field notes, observation check list and interview script. The data analysis used both qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches. The results showed that students' reading comprehension had significantly increased from an average value of 70.32 in the first cycle and 85 in the second cycle. Completeness of classical study in the first cycle is 52% and at the end of the second cycle was 80%. It showed that there was an improvement on the students' reading comprehension after applying the Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) strategy during teaching learning activity.

Keywords: Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs); Reading Comprehension; Action Research

Introduction

Reading is enviably one of the skills that are required for language learners. Reading skills are needed by students to obtain ideas, information and knowledge. Meanwhile, Brown (2007:185) said that reading is a significant skill to be a reference for assessing students' general language skills. Especially in studying the English learning, the students get most of the information in the form of written sources or text. As stated by Marpaung et al., (2019), Most think reading is the most effective way of obtaining information from the text. Thus, in achieving the goal of reading, every student is required to master the reading skill.

Reading comprehension is one of the primary aspects to improve students' reading skills. To be able to interpret and absorb information from reading material, students must have good comprehension skills. Klingner et al., (2015) states that reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning by coordinating several complex processes that include word reading, word, and word knowledge and fluency. Reading activities not only train students in pronouncing word for word in a text, but also make students understand and get information from what they have read. Therefore, having good understanding in reading should help the students get the point or meaning from the text.

Seeing the reality, there are many obstacles to learn reading comprehension. It can be proven based on the observation and experience teaching which was done by the researcher at Ummulqura Indonesia. It may be caused by some factors, including of the strategies of teacher used are still monotone, the motivation of student has low, the media that the students learn are not various, as well as the vocabularies that the students known are lack. These problems are connected to each other in learning reading process and will further influence the students' proficiency in reading skills.

Based on the problems above, a very visible impact on student learning outcomes is that most students are able to read the text well and even fluently, but then they are not able to know the meaning of the text optimally so that all information in the text is not delivered properly to students. The results of learning showed that almost half of the students in the class scored low in reading comprehension. It was known that the minimum completeness criteria for English subjects specified is 75. Meanwhile, out of the 25 students in the class, almost more than half of them had not reached the minimum criteria. In line with this condition, the researcher analyzed that the spearhead of problems could be affect the reading learning was the using strategy of teacher in the classroom where the teacher chooses more conventional strategy to teach the reading comprehension.

Learning strategies are considered as one of the determinants for achieving learning objectives. Even in terms of learning reading comprehension. The method or strategy used must be able to improve students' reading comprehension. In choosing learning strategies, teachers must pay attention to several aspects such as the suitability of themes, indicators and learning objectives and the most important

thing is the role and character of students. So that students can be actively involved and able to improve students' reading comprehension skills optimally.

According to the above view, it is needed to find out the learning strategy that is effectively improved the students' ability in reading comprehension. In this context, the researchers offer Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) as a solution that is expected to make good progress and increase student achievement in reading comprehension. Directed Activity Related to Texts (DARTs) defined as a strategy in processing a text which comprises a wide range of text-based activities that enable students to actively engage with the text (Hammed, 2017). Furthermore, Silitonga (2016) claimed that learning by using Directed Activities Related to Text (DART) had a significant effect to develop the students' reading comprehension. The students are encourages to get the meaning of text. The specified activities are designed to play the students' role in the text. It emphasizes the students to interact themselves with the text in order to make the students easier to get the information from the text. In addition, Ulfianda, F. (2018) could prove this strategy is concerned to help the students to be a critical reader. So that they not only get the information from that text but also they are able to connect their prior knowledge or even they would be able to provide the related text for further information.

The issue of the students' difficulty in reading comprehension is important to be inspected and must be resolved. It deals with the English learning goal in which the students are required to be a good reader in obtaining the information. At school, this issue is challenging for teacher to produce the students with good reading skill by considering its reading strategy. In line with this issue, Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) could be applied in reading activity. It is aimed to give the alternative solution for teacher in creating fun learning and then to help the students in improving their reading comprehension.

Method

Classroom Action Research (CAR) is used in this research to improve the teaching learning process in the classroom. This research design is about taking action research based on the problems in the place. There are four activities in conducting the classroom action research for each cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart as cited Supardi and Suharjo, 2012). They are planning the action, implementing the action, observing to observe the teaching-learning process, analyzing the results and doing the reflection. They all of that an integral part of implementation integration. For this occasion, the researchers conducted two cycles. In addition, in knowing the improvement of students' scores for reading, the tests were held for sometimes, they

are pre-test and test at the end of each cycle of CAR. Then, observation of teaching and learning activities is tried to obtain a reflection, universal or unique, regarding aspects of the approach process developed. The aspects seen include student activities in learning and teacher activities in planning and applying to learn, the last is the documentation of activities. Furthermore, the obtained data were analyzed in both qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches. The data of test were analyzed by quantitative whereas the data from field notes, observation check list and interview script were analyzed by qualitative. The data of test was analyzed by using descriptive statistic, whereas the data of observation and interview were noted, interpreted and concluded dealing the result of the research.

Previously, before the cycles were carried out, the researchers conducted a preliminary study to the subjects. The subjects of this research were 25 students of one class at first grade of Ummulqura Indonesia. It has selected based on non-random sampling, including both male and female with multilevel of reading proficiency. This class was taken as one of the characteristics of action research that it is carried out by practitioners (for our purpose, classroom teacher) rather than outside researcher. It means the researchers conducted the research in their own classroom teaching (Nunan, 2003, p.17).

Results

The focus of the conducted the research was, among other things, to investigate the impact of the Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) on the reading subject as well as to explore their learning on reading skills. In this section, the data gathered by the researchers from students in the 10th grade of the Ummulqura Senior High School with most of them have low level in reading comprehension. They consist of 25 students with 9 males and 16 females.

Regarding the obtained data, the researcher described the data analysis in examining whether the Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) could improve the students' reading comprehension. The data were taken from the test before conducting CAR, cycle 1 and cycle 2 which are involved in the CAR process. The results are presented in the following description.

Prior to the implementation of the action, students were given a pre-test as an effort to determine the students' initial abilities. The initial ability of students before the action is carried out can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The result of Pre-test on student's reading comprehension.

	The total of Students	Complete	Incomplete
Total Score	25 Students 1470	8 Students 613	17 Students 857
Mean Score	58,8		
Percentage		32 %	68 %

As stated in the introduction, the student's learning completeness score in English lessons at this school is 75. The table shows that there are 8 students who scored more than 75, while 17 students had scored less than 70, this means only 32% students who are declared complete while 68% of other students are still incomplete. Thus in pre-test the mean score from the total numbers of students was 58.8 points. It means the students' result of reading comprehension low and it is needed to improve by implementing DARTs to their learning.

Table 2. The Result of Cycle 1

	The total of Students	Complete	Incomplete
	25 Students	13 Students	12 Students
Total Score	1758	932	826
Mean Score	70.32		
Percentage		52 %	48 %

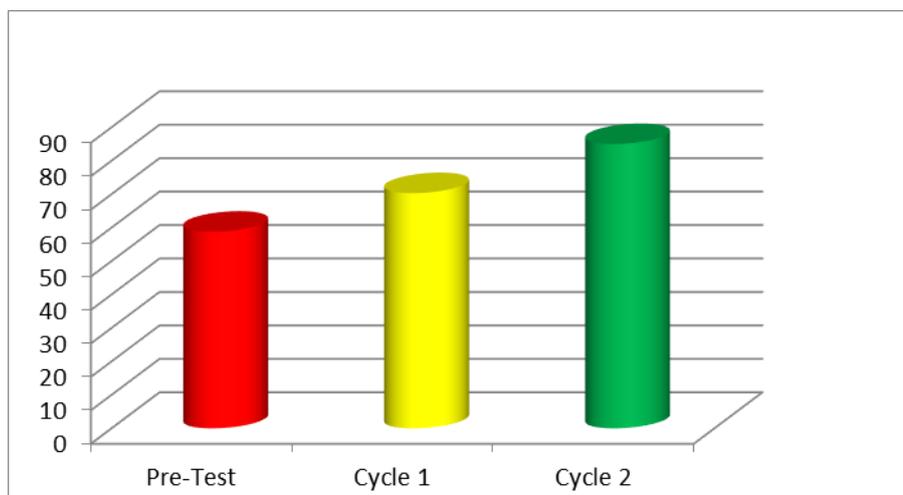
From the result of cycle 1 test, there was an improvement on the average or mean score of the total numbers of students. The mean score in the cycle 1 was at 70.32. There were 13 students or around 52% who completed the KKM score whereas 12 students or about 48% still failed. These results are still unsatisfactory yet to complete the KKM. Furthermore, the next cycle might be conducted to overcome the difficulties on the students' reading learning in cycle 1.

Table 3. The Result of Cycle 2

	The total of Students	Complete	Incomplete
	25 Students	20 Students	5 Students
Total Score	2005	1643	362
Mean Score	85		
Percentage		80 %	20 %

The table shows that the average score of student learning outcomes in cycle 2 is 85 with complete criteria. It was known that the students who had failed had decreased from 12 students in the cycle 1 to 5 students in the cycle 2. This shows that there was an increase in students' ability to understand reading using the DARTs strategy.

The following graph is provided to see the result of students' comprehension after implementing Classroom Action Research that involved three types of categories are pre-test, cycle 1 and cycle 2.



Graph 1. The Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension

The graph 1 illustrates obviously the mean score 58.8 in pre-test, 70.32 in cycle 1 and 85 in cycle 2. This illustration shows there is continuous improvement on students' reading comprehension after they were teaching by using DARTs. Then, the results indicate that DARTs could improve and passed the minimum score of the curriculum (KKM). It can be concluded that there is a significant effect on students' reading comprehension after they were taught by using DARTs.

Discussion

According to the analysis result, it was revealed that the strategy of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) had a positive influence in order to overcome the students' problems to comprehend the text. This progress is couldn't separate from the effectiveness and benefits offered by the strategy implemented in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. A characteristic of this strategy is creating the material with the unique and dynamic form. As stated by Harrison (2004:15), the way to understand the text easier is when the students can interact and involve with the text. The activities in DARTs provide many visual activities and it is interesting for the students to follow the learning activity. It can be seen when the students got the reading text, they quickly looked at the text, and tried to find the topic as well as some famous vocabulary to know what the text is talking about. Students interacted with the text by connecting the information in the text with their prior knowledge or their previous knowledge (Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004:74). It is because the text mostly provided with the form of visual and the following worksheet would be presented by using reconstruction activities and analysis activities (Davies and Green, 1984). Table completion, sequencing the sentences or paragraphs, underlining the key words and labeling the key pictures were some favorite activities to be done by the students. These activities helped the students to know the text, get

some main points, and find the specific term inside the text and finally the students would understand the whole meaning in the text.

One of the advantages of DARTs is enhancing the students' motivation in learning reading. As mentioned by Tambunan & Siregar (2016), motivation is claimed as a valuable part for the students which can be reflected through their learning achievements. Motivation is important for needs in the formation of behavior whose influence will be seen in relationship between academic achievement and performance. In other words, Motivation is a basic component to succeed an action. Most students will begin something when they had to be motivated about it. Efficiency in designing the learning process is very likely to create many conducive, fun learning conditions so that learning activities (instructional activities) can take place effectively and efficiently (Syamsuar and Reflianto, 2018). Based on the observation finding, DARTs activities could motivate the students to learn reading and then it can fulfill the students' need that comprehends the text. Through some activities in the cycle 1 and cycle 2, the students' revealed that they could improve their learning result in the test score. The strategy stimulated the students to be aware with the meaning of each sentence in the text. They should have deeply concentration to comprehend the text which aims to pass every given worksheet.

Then, another benefit of this strategy is engaging the students as the main player of learning. Piaget through the theory of cognitive development which argues that knowledge should not be acquired passively but must be actively through action (Trianto, 2009:29). Overall student activity shows that the DARTs learning model is student-centered; students were actively involved in the learning. The goal of student-centered learning (SCL) is the input to create the active students with aims of producing outputs to improve the quality of students in learning (Wahyuni and Abdillah, 2019). This can be seen from the percentage of student activity during the learning process. Students learned actively to find the concept of a text and gain experience in studying text in the form of paragraph or visually. In SCL, Jacobs, & Power (2016) adds that the students were assisted to be autonomous student. Within a structure set by the teacher, the students were facilitated to explore the teaching materials and discuss the obtained various information, while the teacher actively accompanied them during the process, including encouraging them to carry out the process of searching, discussing, and inferring the results of their discussions. Thus learning by using DARTs provides the widest possible opportunity for students to be actively involved and provides more opportunities for confidence in individual

or group learning.

There were two weaknesses having by the students which were influence the result of research. It is known that vocabulary is the key component to master a language. According to Rouhani & Purgharib (2013) Vocabulary plays a crucial role in mastering English as foreign language; one of them in the learning of reading skill. In fact, the students had low stock of vocabulary in reading activities. It could be seen, more students seemed confused when reading the passage or the simple text provided in visual form. They were not familiar with most provided vocabularies comprehensively even the simple word. All vocabularies in the text are connected each other so as to produce one sentence or text that has meaning. This condition affected the students' improvement in reading comprehension.

Additionally, the second weakness is getting limited sources of learning material. Indeed, the material could serve the following functions, namely: (1) as a source of language, (2) as a learning support, (3) for motivation and stimulation, and (4) for reference (Dudley-Evans & St. John in Richards (2010). The students could not seek various types of reading material which aims to enrich their reading sources except the provided source from the teacher and around their living. It is because the students are living in a boarding school in which the students had dependent interaction that only limited area around the boarding environment. However there is a library which contains some kinds of book, it could not give opportunities for them to get more material as fun as getting by outside's students while considering the digital era. Thus, it would make the students have less interested and concentration in the learning activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion on previous section, the researchers drew the conclusion. Learning to read comprehension by applying the Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) learning model in the second cycle got better results than the initial conditions and the first cycle. In the second cycle there were 20 students or 80% who finished the learning and increased from the first cycle of 15% with the average score of 85. The development of the students' average score in learning outcomes from the initial data to the second cycle is 26% which belongs to the increasing category. By looking at the explanation above, the researchers can conclude that the improvement of students' reading comprehension skills had been quite optimal. The application of the Directed Related to Texts (DARTs) learning strategy is proven to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

It is suggested that the language teachers should considered the strategy of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) to be conducted in their teaching learning process, especially to develop students' comprehension of text in reading skill. It is also suggested the language learners in using the worksheet of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) in order to enrich the knowledge in comprehending the text.

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