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Improving Pupils' Reading Comprehension by Using Shared Reading

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Abstract:

This action research aims to investigate the effectiveness of shared reading to improve Year 5 pupils' reading comprehension. The focus of this study is to implement shared reading strategy and improve the pupils' reading comprehension skill. In the preliminary investigation, a diagnostic test was conducted. The result shows that most of the pupils did not manage to answer reading comprehension questions correctly as they cannot locate the answers from the text since they did not understand the text. Pre and post-tests, formative assessments, field notes and unstructured interview are used as data collection methods. The marks from pre and post tests were tabulated to make comparison on the achievement of the pupils before and after intervention. Formative assessments were carried out during the intervention sessions in order to evaluate the pupils' performance during the intervention session. Field notes were used to record the pupils' behaviour during the intervention sessions. Unstructured interview was used to gain the responses from the pupils about the implementation of shared reading. From the data collection methods, it was proved that scaffolding using shared reading helped to improve the pupils' reading comprehension as the pupils showed improvements from pre-test Cycle 1 to post-test Cycle 2. Suggestion for further research is by doing some improvisation of scaffolding such as prepare focus questions and pre-teach vocabulary before start the lesson, introduce the characters list, provide visual aids to accompany the reading session and read aloud the text by using right pronunciation and intonation.

Keywords: Scaffold, shared reading, reading comprehension

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is the act to understand the text by reading it, processing it and understanding its meaning. It is a process when people have to engage the reading text and able to draw conclusion on what they need (Waters, 2014). So, it is very important to master reading comprehension in order to provide the reader with information. I was conducting this research for Year 5 pupils in order for me to know their mastery in reading comprehension as they will sit for UPSR examination next year. This research is to focus on how pupils equip with reading comprehension skill. During one of the reading lessons, I found that only a few of them can read and understand the text. Meanwhile, most of them were unable to comprehend the text. After several practices that I had done with them, I discovered that they were not able to link the words in the sentences and correlate one sentence to another. There were 3 methods that I had done during preliminary investigation. Firstly, I did document analysis by studying their previous tasks in the exercise books. This is to help me to know their level in mastering reading skill. After that, I interviewed their English teacher. According to the teacher, the pupils have lack of interest to read book or any reading resources as they could not comprehend the text well. The last method was a diagnostic test. The results of the diagnostic tests showed there were pupils that teachers should really have to give attention.

Based on the problem, I decided to implement the shared reading strategy to the respective pupils. This is because, through shared reading strategy, pupils would feel encouraged to interact to each other by sharing their opinions, asking and answering questions and retelling the story. This is based on Constructivism theory by Vygotsky which is social interaction can be the fundamental role in the development of pupils' cognition and social interaction can also play role as 'making meaning' to the pupils (Aubrey & Riley, 2015). Besides, during the implementation of shared reading activity, I would guide them as a facilitator if there were anything that they could not understand. Guidance and support have to give to the pupils because they are not able to finish the task independently and need help from the teacher to do the task. This step can be related to one of the theories by Vygotsky which is Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In ZPD, Vygotsky believed that when a person is assisted by teacher or peers who are higher in skill, the learning occurred will be more meaningful (Aubrey & Riley, 2015).

I have selected Kemmis and McTaggart's model (1988) for my research. This model developed a concept for action research. It proposed a spiral model containing four steps which are plan, action, observe and reflect. Refer to Figure 1 below.

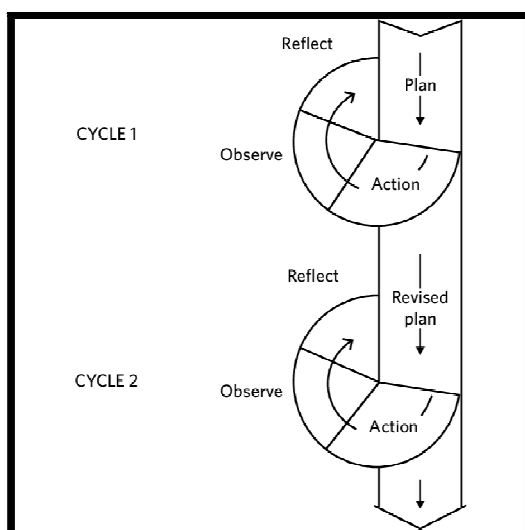


Figure 1: Kemmis and McTaggart's Research Model

According to Kemmis and McTaggart, action research is all about what happened in the classroom and teachers are encouraged to be the researchers to investigate what happened in their classroom (Reason & Bradbury, 2015). Basically, this model is an approach to improve teachers' teaching practice. After teacher identified the problem, teacher would go through the phases (plan, action, observe, reflect), called as Action Research Cycle to systematically tackle the problem found. For my research, at plan stage, I gathered all information about the pupils' problem by conducting preliminary investigation. First, I did a document analysis by studying their performance level based on their previous reading comprehension tasks in the exercise books. Then, I carried out an unstructured interview with their English teacher to ask about their performance during reading lesson. After that, I conducted a diagnostic test to confirm the problem statement. The test was focused on reading comprehension. Based on the results found, I planned a suitable intervention which is shared reading strategy to overcome their problem. Shared reading was chosen because in this strategy, it would help the teacher to engage the pupils with the reading text through scaffolding (Tzu & Chen, 2017). In addition, I chose shared reading strategy as my intervention because the scaffolding that occurred in this activity can be related to Lee Vygotsky's theory which is Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that comes under Constructivism Theory.

The second stage is action. I conducted the intervention into three sessions. The time allocation for each session was 30 minutes. The intervention sessions were conducted at the library as it is one of the quiet places at school. Before the intervention sessions were conducted, I carried out a pre-test for 30 minutes. I used narrative text and it contained 5 multiple choice questions. After that, I carried out intervention sessions and I remained the usage of narrative texts. I introduced the text to the pupils by using slides show so that all the pupils can see the text clearer. During Cycle 1, I did not put any pictures in the slides except for the first part when I introduced the title and the author. But in another slides, there were no pictures provided. As I did not put any pictures in the slide shows, I divided the paragraph into several smaller parts so that the pupils would be more understand about the text. By making the text into chunks, it would be easier for the pupils to read and comprehend the text and it would help me to conduct the research smoother.

During third stage which is observe, I gathered all the information and analysed the result of pre and post-tests and formative assessment. The data was tabulated in the tables. I used the data to reflect and improve my data collection methods in Cycle 2. I found several points that can be improved in the next cycle. In Cycle 1, I did not put any pictures in the slides. The pupils did not really show interest during the session because the slides were just plain. So, I planned to put pictures in Cycle 2 so that the pupils can look at the pictures while reading the text. As I added the pictures in second cycle, the pupils showed better responses as they seemed to be more interested during the intervention sessions. Not only that, I also decided to add more qualitative data in Cycle 2 which are field notes and unstructured interview. I used field notes to help to record their participation and interaction that happened during the intervention sessions. From my observation about their participation and interaction, I strengthen the points collected by conducting unstructured interview with them. From the answers of the interview, I got more solid reasons on their respected behaviour during the intervention sessions.

Lastly is the reflect stage. Based on the data collection analysis, I made some reflection and improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. The reflection helped me to improve my research in Cycle 2 such as I added some pictures in every slide, used different texts in every intervention session, observed and jotted down the pupils' behaviour during intervention sessions and conducted an unstructured interview with them after all the sessions had done. Furthermore, I also did a reflection based on my second cycle in order for me to do improvement in the next research. I have learnt the better ways to improve the scaffolding skill to be done with the pupils.

2. Research Focus

The focus of this research is reading comprehension. This research was workable to do with the pupils as reading lesson can be conducted during school hours. The significance of this research is to help the pupils to improve their reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is also significance to do with Year 5 pupils because it was stated in DSKP Year 4 that the pupils should already master reading and able to understand phrases and sentences from linear texts (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2011). In term of practicality, as reading skill is part of the English language teaching in classroom, I can conduct my research during reading lesson in line with my research focus which is reading comprehension. The time allocation given for me was good enough for me to use to conduct the research.

2.1. Research Objectives

- To improve reading comprehension among Year 5 pupils through scaffolding by using shared reading.
- To find out how scaffolding using shared reading can improve reading comprehension among year 5 pupils.

2.2. Research Questions

- Does scaffolding using shared reading improve Year 5 pupils in reading comprehension?
- How does scaffolding using shared reading improve Year 5 pupils in reading comprehension?

2.3. Research Participants

There were 5 pupils involved in this research which are 2 female and 3 male pupils.

Research Participants	Gender	Diagnostic test result (x/8)
P1	Female	2
P2	Male	3
P3	Female	4
P4	Male	5
P5	Male	5

Table 1: Details of research participants

Based on the preliminary investigation's data, I found that they were the suitable participants for this research as they have problems in reading comprehension. The research participants were chosen based on their performance levels in classroom. They need to overcome the problem that they faced. In addition, the factor of choosing them as the participants were because they were suggested by their English teacher as they were most noticeable pupils who did not manage to understand the reading text during reading lesson.

3. Implementation of Action

3.1. Cycle 1's Action

Throughout the research, I conducted the intervention session at the library. This is because; library is one of the quiet places at school so I think pupils would feel more comfortable to participate in the sessions. I made the pupils sit around me so that the pupils can give their focus on me while I was conducting the intervention. The time allocation for each session was 30 minutes. I started my session with a pre-test. In line with my research focus, I gave those 5 multiple choice questions to the pupils based on the reading texts. The texts used were narrative text and they were about 250 – 300 words.

The next session was the first intervention session. Throughout all these three sessions, I used the same narrative text entitled 'Mahsuri'. However, in the first session, I gave out only the first 2 paragraphs from the whole text because I planned to introduce the story to them little by little. As I introduced the story to them by paragraphs, I did not put any pictures in the slides except for the first part when I introduced the title and the author. But in another slides, there were no pictures provided. The texts were introduced to them by dividing them into chunks. In addition, instead of using big book, I introduced the story by using slide show so that all the pupils can see the text clearly. After I had done intervention session with them, I gave them formative assessment to see their performance.

The next session was the second intervention session. I still used the same story with addition of one more paragraph. I started the session by recalling the previous paragraphs and asked them some questions related to the text. By asking questions to them, I can encourage the interaction among them. I continued my session with the new paragraph. I used the slide show to explain the text to them. Then, I conducted my intervention by giving scaffolding to them through shared reading. At the end of the session, I gave them formative assessment to see their progression from before.

Next is the last session of intervention session. This time I introduced the whole text of 'Mahsuri' with addition of another two paragraphs from previous session. Then, I started the session by asking the pupils about previous paragraphs and asked them some questions to help them recall about the text in previous sessions. This was to encourage the pupils to interact more so that they can generate the information better. I continued the session by implementing the shared reading strategy and they had to answer formative assessment after the intervention session. Finally, is the post-test session. In this session, I gave them same set of questions as pre-test. This is because; I wanted to see whether there were any improvements from the pupils after intervention was conducted. The results from the post-test were recorded and tabulated.

3.2. Cycle 2's Action

In Cycle 2, I still conducted the sessions at library. I started my session with a pre-test. Same like in Cycle 1, I gave them a set of questions based on reading comprehension. I remained the usage of narrative text about 250 – 300 words and it had 5 multiple choice questions. The time allocation for each session was 30 minutes.

The next session was the first intervention session. I made some differences from Cycle 1 which previously, I introduced the story to the pupils by paragraphs. However, in second cycle, I used 3 different narrative texts and used one whole text for each session. In addition, I also added some pictures in the text to help them understand the text better as this time; the number of paragraphs in one session had increased compared to previous cycle. I used slide show to introduce the story to the pupils. Throughout the session, I jotted down some notes in my field notes based on their interaction with teacher and peers. I also jotted down their behaviour while they were responding to the questions given. After the shared reading session, I gave them formative assessment based on the text used in this session.

After that is the second intervention session. In this session, a different text was introduced to them but with the same amount of words. I also added some pictures in the text. The slide show was used to introduce the story to them and scaffold them by asking questions that related to the text. All their behaviour and engagement throughout the session were recorded in my field notes. After the shared reading session, I gave them a formative assessment. Next is the last session of intervention session. I introduced another text to them with the same amount of words which is 250 – 300 words. I continued my session by giving scaffolding to them through shared reading strategy. All their interaction and engagement with teacher and peers were recorded in the field notes. Then, they answered the formative assessment in order for me to identify their progression throughout the research.

Lastly is the post-test session. I gave them the same set of questions as pre-test. This is because; I wanted to see the improvement made by the pupils after they had gone through the intervention session. The questions had 5 multiple choice questions. After they had finished the text, I conducted an unstructured interview with them because I wanted to gather more information about the reading strategy that had been implemented. Not only that, the response from the interview also can help me to strengthen the result of formative assessment recorded. The results were recorded and tabulated in tables.

4. Research Findings

In this section, the result of the findings will be discussed to show how using shared reading can improve pupils' reading comprehension.

4.1. Pre and Post-Tests

The result of the pre-test Cycle 1 and post-test Cycle 2 were tabulated in the table.

Sample	Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Difference between pre-test Cycle 1 and post-test Cycle 2 (b-a)	
	Pre-test (x/5) (marks) (a)	Percentage (%)	Post-test (x/5) (marks) (b)	Percentage (%)	Marks	%
P1	2	40	5	100	+3	60
P2	3	60	5	100	+2	40
P3	3	60	5	100	+2	40
P4	2	40	5	100	+3	60
P5	1	20	5	100	+4	80

Table 2: Comparison of Pupils' Pre-Test Cycle 1 and Post-Test Cycle 2

The results showed the comparison of the results from pre-test Cycle 1 and post-tests in Cycle 2. This table shows that all the pupils showed good progression as the percentage scored by them in post-test Cycle 2 were 100%. As we can see from the table, these pupils were scored quite low in pre-test Cycle 1 and they keep upgrading their performance and, in the end, they were able to score higher in the post test Cycle 2.

4.2. Formative Assessment

The results from the formative tests were tabulated to show the performance of the pupils during each of the session.

Pupils	Cycle 1			Cycle 3		
	Session1 (%)	Session 2 (%)	Session 3 (%)	Session 1 (%)	Session 2 (%)	Session 3 (%)
P1	40	40	60	40	40	60
P2	60	80	80	40	60	60
P3	80	80	100	60	80	80
P4	60	60	80	40	60	80
P5	40	40	60	40	40	60

Table 3: Result of Formative Assessment in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

The table displays the number of pupils who had completed reading comprehension questions correctly in each session and the comparison between both cycles. The results indicated that the pupils showed improvement in answering reading comprehension questions. All the pupils showed improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. From the results, we can see that shared reading strategy helped the pupils to improve their reading comprehension skill as they able to show positive improvement from time to time.

4.3. Field Notes

There are 4 themes that I used to identify the emerging issues. They are *engagement with pictures*, *interaction with teacher* and *retelling the stories heard*. Through *engagement with pictures*, all the pupils managed to interact with the pictures in the slide show and able to relate the pictures with the storyline. They able to guess what happened next in the story by looking at the pictures. The second theme which is *interaction with teacher*, most of them actively participated in questions and answers session. However, the pupils who did not able to give response to teacher were because they are lack of vocabulary to use in answering the questions given. Lastly is the *retelling the stories heard* theme. The pupils were able to retell the stories that they had learnt by using simple sentences although they made grammar mistakes. Then, they were able to elaborate the story more by the help of their peers.

4.4. Semi-structured Interview

Based on the responses received from the pupils, there are five factors that had contributed to the pupils' performance through shared reading strategy which are *the pupils understood the text*, *the pupils enjoyed the reading lesson*, *the pupils able to complete the worksheets*, *the pupils found the worksheets were easy* and *the pupils found the worksheets were difficult*. For factors like *the pupils understood the text*, *the pupils enjoyed the reading lesson* and *the pupils able to complete the worksheets*, they have the highest frequency as they were stated 5 times which is 25% for each factor during the interview. This shows these factors were the main reasons for the improvement of the pupils' performance as the pupils can understand the reading text, enjoyed the reading lesson and able to complete the worksheets given. Next, the factor *the pupils found the worksheets were easy* is the second highest frequency which it was stated 3 times in the interview and carried a percentage by 15%. This factor is also the reason for the improvement of the pupils' performance in pre and post tests and formative assessments. Lastly is the factor *the pupils found the worksheets were difficult* is the lowest percentage which is 10% as it was stated 2 times in the interview. Two of the pupils found that the questions were a bit hard for them but with the help of teacher and peers, they able to complete the worksheet given.

5. Discussion

5.1. Does Scaffolding Using Shared Reading Improve Pupils In Reading Comprehension?

Based on the findings from the result of pre-test Cycle 1 and the result of post-test in Cycle 2, there were improvements from the pupils (Refer Table 2). The results made by P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 between pre-test Cycle 1 and post-test Cycle 2 were compared and they showed improvement by 60%, 40%, 40%, 60% and 80%. The result in Table 2 showed the effectiveness of shared reading strategy in improving their reading comprehension skill. The reason all the pupils were able to perform in post-test because they already went through all the six intervention sessions and got ample scaffolding from teacher before answering the post-test questions. Therefore, they were able to make improvement at the end of the research. This can be related to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, when the pupils who are within ZPD area, they can do better if they got guidance from more skilful teacher or peers (Aubrey & Riley, 2015). In addition, to strengthen the validity of pre-test and post-test data, the result of formative assessments from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 (Refer Table 3) were also indicated the improvements of the pupils in reading comprehension. The formative assessments were conducted after every intervention session had finished and the results showed good performance. This can be the proof that by the end of each session, pupils able to understand the text and can answer the questions given correctly.

5.2. How Does Scaffolding Using Shared Reading Improve Pupils in Reading Comprehension?

This research proved that the pupils' reading comprehension skill improved by using shared reading strategy. At the beginning of the research, the pupils had problem in reading comprehension as they made mistakes during their previous tasks in exercise book and diagnostic test. But at the end of the research, they were able to show improvement in reading comprehension as shown in the post-test results. Their achievements were also influenced by their engagement and participation during the intervention sessions. Based on the data from field notes, the pupils showed good behaviours during the session as they engaged with the reading, interacted well with teacher and peers and able to retell the story by

using their own words. Although there were some minor mistakes made by them, they still showed their confidence and understanding about the lesson during answering the questions. In ZPD theory by Vygotsky, if the pupils were provided an appropriate guidance, it can help the pupils to get a boost to achieve the task given. (Aubrey & Riley, 2015). In addition, to strengthen the data from the field notes, the pupils' response in the interview conducted also showed positive feedback. Based on their feedback, they felt enjoy during the intervention session, they understood the text and they found the questions in formative assessment were comprehensible as there were many interactions and guidance happened during the sessions.

6. Reflection

From this research, I found out that this research was successful because the intervention that I used in this research which is shared reading strategy was helpful to the pupils. This can be seen from the results that I had gained from quantitative and qualitative data which are pre and post-tests, formative assessments, field notes and unstructured interview. In addition, during the intervention sessions, the pupils did their best when they were able to retell the story. I still felt satisfied as they looked more confident compared to their condition at the beginning of the research. According to Vygotsky in his theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), he believed that when a person is assisted by teacher or peers who are higher in skill, the learning occurred will be more meaningful (Aubrey & Riley, 2015).

7. Suggestion for Further Research

To improve this research in the future, I should give more focus on the concept of scaffolding in the shared reading so that the activity will become more meaningful to the pupils. Scaffolding is very important because it will help the pupils to gain the information about the text more than just read normally (Tzu & Chen, 2017). There are some ways of improvisation of scaffolding that can be improved. Firstly, is to prepare focus questions so that teacher able to guide the pupils to know the exact direction and focus of the lesson. Secondly, teacher can introduce the vocabulary first before start the session so that the pupils will get the idea about the story. Thirdly, teacher can provide the pupils with the characters list and lead them to get know more about the characters. After that, teacher can also provide visual aids to accompany the reading like video clips, a montage of images or even the real images. Lastly, teacher can show how to demonstrate by reading aloud the text and use the right pronunciation and intonation while reading it.

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