The Application of Comic Strips in Teaching Vocabulary

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Abstract

This quantitative study was conducted with the aims to find out students’ vocabulary mastery before and after the application of Comic Strips at reading. The samples were 21 eight-grade students of junior high school. Vocabulary test was given before and after Comic Strips has been applied for four meetings. The findings showed that there was significant improvement of students’ vocabulary mastery in reading. It was found on the students’ pre-test score with level significance degree (α) = 0.05 resulted in t\text{score} = 13.23 > t\text{table} t_{(20,0.05)} = 2.086. Since t\text{count} was higher than t\text{table} (t\text{count} > t\text{table}), thus H₀ was refused or H₁ was accepted. It indicates that students’ vocabulary has been increased or improved after the application of teaching reading by using Comic Strips. Based on the findings, the teachers should consider using this technique as an alternative one in reading classroom and activities. The writer also recommends that the other researchers should conduct an analysis study concerning on the students’ point of view regarding to the use of Comic Strips.

Key Words : Comic strips, vocabulary, reading

1. INTRODUCTION

Nam (2010) claimed that vocabulary has essential function in EFL classroom. However, even though vocabulary is one of vital aspects for learners’ language development, this skill is still being neglected in the classroom by teachers (Sonnenschein, et al. 2006). Rokhayani & Utari (2014) asserted that teachers assume of all English aspects, the four English skills are more important. It means that vocabulary is not taught independently in the classroom. This phenomenon led to the teachers’ lack of focus in vocabulary. Some of teachers do not pay adequate attention toward vocabulary since it is not stated as one of four skills in English subject. This decision impacts on the less frequency and opportunity for students to obtain activities which enhances their vocabulary area as well as reduces their difficulties in learning.
To help learners’ solve the existed problems in reading, the writer then decided that it is better for them to be assisted in developing their vocabulary. Related to this fact, the writer discovered that Comic Strips as authentic reading materials help learners to improve their vocabulary. A study was conducted by Khoiriyah (2010) revealed that Comic Strips facilitates learners in vocabulary growth through visual media (pictures). The story of Comic Strips made learners understand the information of the story line easily and efficiently. Furthermore, one of the characteristics of Comic Strips story is built an enjoyable and comfortable learning environment (Ravelo, 2013).

Considering the research background stated the researcher was intrigued in conducting a study about the application of Comic Strips in teaching learners vocabulary. This teaching media perhaps can be used as an alternative teaching tool that teachers should attach in teaching reading to the students. Furthermore, this study want to find out how is the students’ vocabulary mastery before and after the application of Comic Strips at reading.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary is one of the language micro skills. Words are sign or symbol for ideas. The more words are learn, the more ideas he or she should have so that she or he can communicate the ideas effectively. Vocabulary contains words. It can defines as the total number of word which make up of language, it is clear that vocabulary is very important in foreign language acquisition. Others can still understand ungrammatical formulation sentence in the occasional of conveying ideas, but the wrong use of vocabulary leads miscommunication and misinterpretation. The acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language learning, because without an extensive vocabulary we are unable to use the structure and function we may learn for comprehensive communication.

There have been studies and theories of the vocabulary knowledge either in reading comprehension or language learning. Apparently, those proved that awareness of word meanings is essential for language development such as for the learning and comprehending texts.

In attempt at discovering the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, Sidek and Rahim (2015) studied ten Malaysian students’ reading performance who enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in public school. The significant finding of this study appointed that vocabulary knowledge, in fact, takes part in L2 reading comprehension. The students were involved in the small scale study of reading comprehension. They were given vocabulary tests and comprehension tests. The result showed that knowledge of word meanings is a fundamental aspect for the success in reading comprehension. Likewise, the lack of awareness of vocabulary brought about the inability of students in processing the information from the texts they read. Clearly, based on Sidek and Rahim’s study, vocabulary knowledge influenced the performance of students to understand the whole texts.

Additionally, a correlational study has been undertaken by Senand and Kuleli (2015) through testing 361 university students in Antalya, Turkey about their vocabulary test score and depth reading performance. The study revealed three sections results from the data analysis regarding the relationship between size of
vocabulary and depth of vocabulary, the relationship between vocabulary size and reading performance, the relationship between vocabulary depth and reading performance besides the predictor value of size of vocabulary and depth of vocabulary in reading performance of students in an EFL context. The relationship between vocabulary size and reading performance, and the relationship between vocabulary depth and reading performance were analyzed through Pearson correlation in isolation first (Fata, et al. 2016). It was obtained that there was a significant relationship between each of those independent variables and the dependent variable, which is reading performance.

Moreover, a review about the relationship of vocabulary knowledge importance with reading comprehension performance has been written by Moghadam et al. (2012). They stated that the learners’ difficulty in processing text is mainly due to they did not know word meanings. Meanwhile, the knowledge of vocabulary is needed in reading comprehension performance because of some reasons.

The first is vocabulary apparently has been used as the appropriate aspect to indicate one’s language ability. Moghadam et al.(2012) said that this is due to learners more likely open dictionary rather than a grammar book. Second, to be competent or to master foreign language, language learners have to have a good knowledge of vocabulary and vocabulary itself. From these reasons, it can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge determines to what extent the learners learn in a foreign language.

2.2 Vocabulary in Language Learning

According to Proctor et al. (2011), vocabulary enhances language learners’ learning through awareness of linguistics aspects. Those views were described as knowledge of morphology enables children to generalize the meaning of root words to their morphological derivations and apply them across syntactic contexts. Knowledge of how words conceptually relate to one another characterizes semantics. Theoretically, having greater semantic awareness facilitates comprehension by making it easier to determine the meaning of unknown words through context and to understand how related words convey meaning. And like morphology, the relationship between semantic awareness and reading comprehension appears to be developmentally bound.

Knowledge of the structure of language is important for children to appropriately develop degrees of vocabulary depth. As children broaden their knowledge of particular words they learn the syntactic constructions in which these words typically and appropriately appear.

2.3 Comic Strips

Comic Strips has characteristic in which it consists of pictures series. These pictures enable students to gain the ideas easily through the chronological order of the story. The purpose of using Comic Strips in teaching reading especially vocabulary is to bring fun and joy into the classroom which lessens students’ fear (Csabay, 2006). The students are also able to practice grammatical rules through this media by changing direct speech in the words balloon into indirect speech.

As printed materials for the teaching and learning processes in the classroom, Comic Strips is considered as teaching media. Teachers use Comic Strips as both
materials and media. Comic consists of a story which describes concrete things about the environment at school. The utterances uttered by the characters can be imitated by the students to make their English well spoken. Teacher can be the main key to maintain the pronunciation.

As a guide on teaching students using this technique, Edmund (2014) described the procedures of teaching using Comic Strips. Firstly is before reading. Here the teachers distribute the copies of comic so that the entire class can see it. Then they allow a few minutes for students to look through the comic without reading the text. After that, the teachers ask students to predict what they think the comic will be about and who the characters are. The teachers also should remind them that in comics, information comes from pictures as well as words (and the way they work together). The students have to make predictions based on visual cues. The students have to generate a few questions about the comic and record them for the class to answer later. Secondly is during reading. The teachers and students read through the story together and discuss using the information and questions available. The students were asked questions that is related their knowledge and experience to the reading topics. In this section, the questions also focus on vocabulary found in the Comic Strips in which the students should know and understand well the meanings. Thirdly is after reading. In this phase, the teachers revisit the questions that students posed before reading and answer them as a class. Next, the teachers distribute worksheet and have students complete it individually or in groups. Finally, the teachers review the worksheet and discuss the students’ answers.

3. METHODS

The research method applied in this study was quantitative. Arends (2004) defined quantitative research as an approach to objective reality which is done in objective way. Since the writer intended to determine which hypothesis is accepted after the implementation of Comic Strips, this study was designed experimentally. The data analyzed by using statistical method.

In this study, the writer gave treatment to one class that is experimental group for 4 times. The group was given pre-test and post-test as well as treatment by teaching using Comic Strips. The population of this research was second-grade students of SMPN 8 Banda Aceh. There were 21 students chosen as the sample through purposive sampling technique that is based on students’ intelligence. The instrument used for undertaking this research is pre-test and post-test consisted of 10 items in the form of fill in the blank, respectively. After the result of pre-test and post-test collected, the writer analyzed the data through some statistical formulas to obtain interval score and mean score. After determining the interval class and the mean, the writer examined the hypothesis to prove whether hypothesis is accepted or rejected. Every hypothesis could be true and could be false.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

After teaching vocabulary to students by using Comic Strips, it was found that the students have improvement. This conclusion was drawn based on the gain between pre-test and post-test score. The standard score of SMP 8 Banda Aceh is 70. In the pre-test score, there were no students whom achieved such standard. This means
that students have low competency in vocabulary area. On the contrary, students post-test showed that from 21 students, there were 19 students whom obtained the standard score set by the school.

Therefore, in this section, the writer provided the data analysis and descriptions to determine which hypothesis would be accepted after the application of Small Group Discussion in teaching reading comprehension. In other word, the data analysis was presented in order to figure out whether the students’ vocabulary improves or not after such technique being implemented. Additionally, the findings showed which hypothesis accepted or refused to the application of Comic Strips toward students’ vocabulary competency.

To find out which hypothesis is accepted, the data was analyzed statistically. There are two ways in determining the result of this study. Firstly, the data was calculated based on the formula as suggested by the expert (written in chapter 3). Another was through the use of SPSS software. The former was done to estimate Range of Class, Amount of Interval Class, Length of interval Class, and Mean, whereas, the later has been used to obtain the normality of data distribution as well as the t-test. The finding of this study revealed that students’ post-test score has improved. By means, the use of Comic Strips in teaching reading to enhance students’ vocabulary has showed improvement on students’ competency in such area. The development was detected by comparing the result of pre-test and post-test of the group. It also showed that null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected. Through quantitative analysis, it was found that both of sample groups’ data (pre-test and post-test) distributed normally. This has been done by measuring the normality of data using Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test.

To examine whether the use of Comic Strips has an improvement in teaching vocabulary or not, there are several statistical processes which had been done such as calculated Range of Class, Amount of Interval Class, Length of interval Class, Mean, Normality Test, and T-test. On the following parts, the writer provided the analysis of the research findings.Before the students were given treatment, they had to answer ten questions in the form of fill in the blank. From all of those questions and answers, the students obtained different scores. The scores are presented as on the following table.

**Table 1. The Distribution Frequency of Pre-test Score.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Interval (Students Score)</th>
<th>Frequency (Students)</th>
<th>Percentage of Student (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (85 – 100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ (75 – 84)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (65 – 74)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ (55 – 64)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (45 – 54)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (35 – 44)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (&lt; 35)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen on table 1 that total of students are 21 (100%). All of 21 students, 14 of them (66.67%) got E or their score were under 35. Moreover, 5 students (23.80%) obtained between the range 35 to 44 (D). Lastly, there are only 2 students (9.53%) who received C with the average score were 45 to 54. Therefore,
The students’ competency in vocabulary area can be concluded poor as there is no one who has score above the standard scores set by the school.

As the students have no particular knowledge and skills at vocabulary, the results of students’ pre-test presented poor score of students. This means the students’ competency at vocabulary is poor. Thus, the students were given treatment further.

After the students in the class have been given treatment for four times, at the end of the meetings, the writer did a post-test. This is done to measure the gain that the students have before and after the learning process using Comic Strips. There are ten questions which are similar to the pre-test one. The questions were given into pictures in which some parts of the conversation left blank to be filled in by the students. On table 2, the students’ score of post-test were presented.

Table 2. The Distribution Frequency of Post-test Score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Interval (Students Score)</th>
<th>Frequency (Students)</th>
<th>Percentage of Student (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (85 – 100)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ (75 – 84)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (65 – 74)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ (55 – 64)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (45 – 54)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (35 – 44)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (&lt; 35)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students has been noted having improvements from the post-test results. 10 of students (47.62%) obtained score A with the range from 85 to 100. From 21 students, 6 of them (28.45%) got B+ (75-84). 3 students (14.29%) received B score or 65 to 74 points. As for the rest, each of students had C+ and E.

It can be concluded that 16 of the students (76.19%) have been achieved the criteria score which set by the school. Additionally, 5 students (23.81) did not pass the standard scores. However, the post-test score showed significance improvement compare to the pre-test.

The mean of the $X_1$ as Pre-test and $X_2$ as Post-test on the following:

a. The mean of Pre-test:

$$X_1 = \frac{\sum fx}{N} = \frac{609.5}{21} = 29.02$$

Counting the mean used the above formula. It was showed that total of $f_i$ (609.5) divided by total of students (21). Then, it was obtained that the mean of pre-test was 29.02.

b. The mean of Post-test:

$$X_2 = \frac{\sum fx}{N} = \frac{1676.5}{21} = 79.83$$

To determine the mean of post-test, the same formula as the former one was used. The difference was the numbers of total $f_i$ which was 1676.5. It was divided by the
total of students (21), and then resulted in 79.83. From the data analysis, the statistical result showed that the averages between pre-test and post-test has significance differences. The score of pre-test was 29.02 while the Post-test score was 79.85. Therefore, it can be concluded that students’ post-test score was higher than pre-test.

**Figure 1.** Comparison Between Pre-Test and Post-Test Score.

The figure showed that the highest score was 50 and two students got it. Of 21 students, 5 students had 40, 6 students got 30, 4 obtained score 20. It also can be found that 4 of them received score 10. This histogram revealed that students’ score of pre-test were below the expectation. By means, students’ vocabulary knowledge was low. The figure showed that the highest score was 100. They are three students obtained such score. Meanwhile, seven students got score 90. From 21 students, 6 of them received 80. Three students have score 70. As for score 50 and 30, there is only one student who gain it for each score. Thus, it can be concluded that students’ score increase from the pre-test to the post-test.

On the figure of comparison between pre-test and post-test score, it can be inferred that students’ score of vocabulary knowledge more likely increase. In the pre-test, the lowest score was 10, meanwhile after treatment of Comic Strips, the students lowest score was 30. Likewise, the highest score of students’ pre-test was 50, whereas in the post-test was 100. Thus, students’ score can be seen as having improvement from their score before and after the application of Comic Strips in learning vocabulary.

In order to find out the level significance, the calculation was made and presented bellow.

\[
df = N - 1
\]

\[
df = 21 - 1
\]

\[
df = 20
\]

It was said on the \( t \) table data distribution that \( t_{table} = t_{(20, 0.05)} = 2.086 \). Meanwhile, \( t_{score} = 13.23 \). Since \( t_{score} \) was higher than \( t_{table} \) (\( t_{score} > t_{table} \)), thus \( H_0 \) was refused or \( H_1 \) was accepted.

### 4.2 Discussion

The results of students’ reading comprehension after being taught by using Comic Strips showed that the students were having improvement. It can be seen on
the results of this study through independent t-test, it was obtained that students’
pre-test score with level significance degree ($\alpha$) = 0.05 resulted in $t_{\text{score}} = 13.23 > t_{\text{table}} (t_{(20,0.05)} = 2.086$. In other words, null hypothesis was rejected. Those statistical
numbers indicated that there was a significance improvement between students’
pre-test and post-test score after being treated by Comic Strips.

This finding is in accordance with an experimental study conducted by Campbell
(1977) in Dallas, Texas to the fourth grade students of Albert Sidney Johnston
Elementary School revealed that students’ had improvement in the vocabulary
mastery. The experimental group has significance improvement (6.08) compare to
the control group (4.11) after being taught using Comic Strips.

Furthermore, Rokhayani & Utari (2014) did an action research in which they
taught 30 students of second grade of SMP 2 Bae Kudus by using Comic Strips. Their
research focused on students’ vocabulary improvement after the implementation of
Comic Strips as the teaching materials. From their study, it was showed that junior
high school students’ of second grade Bae Kudus had improvement in the
vocabulary area. It also revealed that students’ were interested in learning reading
when the Comic Strips materials were applied.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It is obvious from the results that Comic Strips improved learners’ vocabulary
competency in learning reading. It gives positive influence which resulted on the
better of their achievement in vocabulary. By means, students’ vocabulary has been
better after the application of teaching reading by using Comic Strips.

The writer suggests the teachers to provide the students with new vocabulary
each meeting in the classroom by applying Comic Strips. In this way, the students
get the knowledge of the meaning before they read the texts in which the words
used. The researcher also acknowledges that she could not explore the student’
point of view regarding the use of this technique in teaching students the
vocabulary. Thus, the writer hopes the further researchers to study this part in
future.

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