

THE EFFECT OF USING SHORT STORIES ON STUDENTS READING COMPREHENSION AT SMP MUHAMMADIYAH-19 PEMATANGSIANTAR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the effect of using short stories on students' reading comprehension at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar. This research used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The population of this research consisted of eighth grade students of SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar, and the samples were two classes: one experimental class (VIII-1) and one control class (VIII-2), each consisting of 25 students. The technique of collecting data was pre-test and post-test, and the data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. The result of the research showed that the post-test score was higher than the pre-test score after the treatment using short stories. Based on the result of hypothesis testing, T_{count} was higher than T_{table} at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, which indicates that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. It means that there was a significant effect of using short stories on students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the researcher concludes that short stories are effective in improving students' reading comprehension because they provide interesting reading materials, increase students' motivation in learning, and help students understand narrative texts more easily.

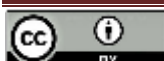
Keywords: *Short Stories, Reading Comprehension, Narrative Text, English Language Teaching, Quasi-Experimental Design*

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of Research

English is widely regarded as an international language that plays an essential role in various fields such as communication, education, science, technology, and international cooperation. In today's global era, English is used extensively in both formal and informal education, as well as in professional and academic contexts. For this reason, English language proficiency is crucial for students, not only for higher education but also for their future careers in an increasingly interconnected world. English learning aims to equip students with the ability to communicate effectively and access various academic resources available in English.

One of the key skills in English language learning is reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is vital as it enables students to understand and extract meaningful information from written texts. Based on the writer's teaching experience during the Teaching Practice Program (PPL) in 2024 at SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar, it was observed



that many students faced difficulties in reading English texts. The students struggled with recognizing vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding sentence structures, which in turn hindered their ability to identify main ideas and comprehend detailed information. This issue significantly affects their motivation and engagement in learning, as students tend to feel bored or frustrated when dealing with complex texts.

To address these challenges, appropriate and engaging teaching materials are needed. One such material is short stories. Short stories are effective in teaching reading comprehension because they use simple language, have a clear narrative structure, and present content that resonates with students' daily lives. Furthermore, short stories stimulate curiosity and engage students, making reading more enjoyable and less monotonous. As such, short stories can be a powerful tool to improve students' reading comprehension and motivate them to actively participate in the learning process.

The Problem of Research

Based on the background of the study, the problem that can be identified is: "How does the use of short stories affect students' reading comprehension at SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar?"

The Objective of Research

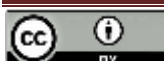
The objective of this study is to investigate whether the use of short stories has a significant effect on students' reading comprehension at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar.

II. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Definition of Reading

Reading is one of the essential skills in learning English. It plays a crucial role in acquiring knowledge, accessing information, and understanding various texts. According to Nunan (2003), reading is not just recognizing words but a fluent process where readers interact with the text, using their background knowledge to construct meaning. This process involves understanding vocabulary, making inferences, identifying the main ideas, and interpreting the message conveyed by the author.

Reading comprehension is vital because it allows readers to understand and process the information presented in the text. In the context of education, reading comprehension helps students enhance their language skills, expand their knowledge, and prepare for more advanced studies. For English language learners, it is particularly important, as reading



comprehension forms the foundation for acquiring new vocabulary and understanding academic texts.

Short Story

A short story is a brief work of fiction that typically focuses on a single incident or character and can be read in one sitting. Short stories are known for their concise nature, presenting a complete narrative with a beginning, middle, and end, often revolving around one theme or conflict. According to Nurhayati (2019), short stories are effective tools in language learning because they use relatively simple language and have clear structures. These characteristics make short stories an ideal material for teaching reading comprehension, as they provide engaging content that is accessible to students.

Short stories are widely used in educational settings because they not only develop language skills but also stimulate students' interest in reading. They are particularly beneficial for teaching reading comprehension because they present a manageable amount of content, encouraging students to read actively and focus on understanding the key ideas. Short stories often involve relatable themes and experiences, which help students connect more easily with the text and improve their engagement with the material.

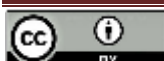
Narrative Text

Narrative text is a type of text that tells a story, usually involving characters, setting, and a sequence of events. Narrative texts are structured in a way that presents a problem or conflict, followed by events leading to a resolution. The main purpose of narrative texts is to entertain, inform, or convey a moral lesson. According to Anderson (2005), narrative texts typically have a clear structure, which includes an orientation (introduction of characters and setting), a complication (the problem or conflict), and a resolution (the conclusion of the story).

In the context of reading comprehension, narrative texts are particularly valuable because they help students develop their skills in identifying plot elements, understanding character development, and analyzing the overall message of the story. Narrative texts are also effective in building students' inferencing skills, as they often require readers to interpret the motives and actions of characters, as well as the meaning behind events in the story.

Teaching Reading Narrative Texts Using the Short Story Strategy

Teaching reading comprehension through the use of short stories is an effective strategy because short stories offer manageable, engaging, and contextually rich texts that can



enhance students' ability to understand narrative structures. According to Hayati et al. (2024), short stories engage students in reading by presenting interesting and accessible plots, which helps students focus on the content while developing their comprehension skills.

In teaching reading comprehension, especially for narrative texts, teachers can use a variety of strategies, such as activating background knowledge, predicting outcomes, making inferences, and identifying the main idea. Short stories are ideal for these activities because they encourage students to actively engage with the text, analyze plot developments, and reflect on the moral or message of the story. The use of short stories in reading instruction also helps students develop critical thinking skills, as they must evaluate characters' motivations, decisions, and the consequences of actions within the narrative.

Moreover, short stories can be used to introduce students to different cultures, ideas, and perspectives, which enriches their understanding and appreciation of literature. By integrating short stories into reading lessons, teachers can provide students with a more interactive and enjoyable way to improve their reading comprehension.

III. THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

The Research Method

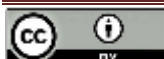
This research used a quantitative research approach, which focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, or trends. Quantitative research aims to quantify variables and produce results that can be generalized. In this study, the researcher applied a quasi-experimental design, which is suitable for examining cause-and-effect relationships without random assignment.

The quasi-experimental design employed in this research was a non-equivalent control group design, where there were two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received treatment using short stories, while the control group received traditional reading materials. This design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to assess the impact of using short stories on students' reading comprehension while working within the existing classroom structure without the possibility of random assignment.

The Technique of Collecting Data

The data collection technique used in this research was the **pre-test and post-test** method. These tests were administered to measure students' reading comprehension ability before and after the treatment with short stories.

- **Pre-test:** The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the study before the treatment. It was designed to assess the students' baseline reading comprehension



skills, specifically their ability to understand narrative texts. The pre-test contained multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and comprehension questions related to a narrative text.

- **Post-test:** The post-test was given after the treatment, which involved reading short stories. The purpose of the post-test was to measure the improvement in students' reading comprehension ability after the treatment. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test also contained multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and comprehension questions based on the narrative text students read during the study.

Both the pre-test and post-test were designed to measure the same skills, ensuring a consistent evaluation of the students' reading comprehension ability before and after the treatment.

The Technique of Analyzing Data

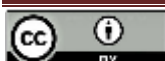
The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0. The first step involved descriptive statistical analysis to calculate the mean, median, and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores. Next, normality tests were conducted to ensure the data were normally distributed, and homogeneity tests were performed to check the equality of variances between groups. Finally, a t-test was used to test for significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores, with a p-value < 0.05 indicating a significant effect of the treatment.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data Analysis

The data presented above show the findings of a study conducted to assess the effect of using short stories on students' reading comprehension. The study involved a sample of 50 students from SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar, with pre-test and post-test assessments conducted to measure the impact of short stories on students' ability to comprehend narrative texts.

In the pre-test, students' reading comprehension was generally low. A significant portion of students (18%) scored below 60. The mean score was 58.40, with the median at 60, and the standard deviation was 12.75. This indicates that many students struggled with identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, and interpreting the text's message. The normality test confirmed that the data were normally distributed, with a significance value of 0.210, which is higher than 0.05.



After the treatment, where students read short stories, a significant improvement was observed in their post-test scores. The majority of students (20%) scored 80 or above. The mean score increased to 72.60, with the median at 75, and the standard deviation was reduced to 8.32. This improvement indicates that students were better able to comprehend narrative texts, including identifying main ideas and making inferences. The normality test also showed that the post-test data were normally distributed, with a significance value of 0.220.

Furthermore, hypothesis testing using a t-test was conducted. The t-counted score was 8.72. Referring to the t-table with degrees of freedom ($df = 49$) and $\alpha = 0.05$, the t-table value was 2.009. Since the t-counted value (8.72) is greater than the t-table value (2.009), the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. This indicates that the use of short stories significantly improved students' reading comprehension.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

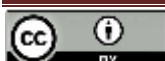
The study aimed to evaluate the effect of using short stories on students' reading comprehension at SMP Muhammadiyah-19 Pematangsiantar. Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the use of short stories significantly improved students' ability to comprehend narrative texts. The pre-test results indicated that students had low reading comprehension skills, with most struggling to identify main ideas and details. However, after the treatment using short stories, there was a notable increase in students' mean scores, suggesting that short stories are an effective tool in enhancing reading comprehension.

The hypothesis testing showed that the t-counted value (8.72) was higher than the t-table value (2.009), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This result supports the conclusion that using short stories significantly affects students' reading comprehension skills, improving their ability to understand and analyze narrative texts.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, the researcher offers the following suggestions:

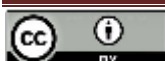
1. For Teachers: Teachers are encouraged to incorporate short stories as a regular part of their reading curriculum. Short stories provide engaging, manageable content that can help students develop their reading comprehension skills, improve vocabulary, and increase interest in reading. Teachers should select stories that align with students' interests and language levels to maximize engagement and learning outcomes.



2. For Students: Students should take an active role in reading and analyzing short stories. Regular practice with narrative texts can help improve comprehension and foster a greater love for reading. It is also suggested that students discuss the themes, characters, and lessons from the stories in groups to deepen their understanding.
3. For Future Research: Future studies can explore the impact of different types of narrative texts (e.g., folktales, contemporary short stories) on various aspects of reading comprehension. Additionally, research could investigate the long-term effects of using short stories on students' overall reading skills and academic performance.

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