THE INFLUENCE OF THEME-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TOWARD INDONESIAN STUDENTS’ READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract
Reading is one of the essential skills in English language learning. In the Indonesian context, reading has been one of the essential subjects to be taught among schools and universities since English is one of the compulsory requirements for graduation. Theme-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a prominent approach used by the teacher and the students to understand the reading. This study aimed at examining the influence of TBLT on the students' reading comprehension. This research used quantitative research with an experimental study. The study selected participants from Madrasah Aliyah (MA) NW Narmada, Indonesia. The study recruited 20 students taken from the second grade of MA NW Narmada. Pre- and post-proficiency tests were used to assemble data of the study. To analyze data, this study employed a T-test to determine the significant result. The result indicated that the pretest score achieved 71.12 and the posttest value reached 89.05. It performed that different values occur on the students' reading comprehension after the TBLT implementation. The significant value (p) also indicated that the output reaches 0.00 < 0.05, which represented the result is under the significant level (0.05). It means that there is a significant influence of the TBLT method on the students' reading comprehension. In other words, TBLT method contributes positive influence on the students' English reading comprehension.

Keywords— Approach, English, Reading Ability, Reading Comprehension, Theme-Based Language Teaching

Introduction
English is a legitimate language adopted by countries over the world. In the Indonesian context, English takes a position as a Foreign Language (FL), which is used as a medium of interaction. It plays essential status as a Foreign Language taught in primary schools up to universities (Minister of National Education (MoNE), as cited in Sulistiyo et al., 2020). Hence, in Indonesia, English as Foreign Language (EFL) status is only used for interactions in international communications and knowledge acquisitions. Kharis et al. (2020) affirm that Indonesia utilizes English as one of the other Foreign Languages, which is required as a tool of cross-cultural communications such as interacting with other countries and attaining science and technology for national advancement.

Moreover, English plays a vital role in the realm of Indonesian education. It presents the gate of science development among Indonesian learners as it is an effective means of acquiring knowledge written in English (Alrajafi, 2021). Similarly, mastering English helps to enrich
learners' insights from various valuable sources. Not only médium of knowledge migratory but English also has been taught in the schools and universities as a compulsory subject among the EFL students. Mutiah et al. (2020) confirm that English is one of the subjects taught among Indonesian secondary up to university students in the formal curriculum. Musiman et al. (2021) add that English is taught as a Foreign Language in Indonesia, which is included in the compulsory subject in high schools after the Ministry of Indonesian National Education and Culture declaration. Thus, teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia is a high priority.

Indeed, under the present system of Indonesian education, teaching English reading is the first concern instead of writing ability since the English language is one of the prominent graduate qualification subjects at schools and universities (Delfi & Yamat, 2017). Reading is the ability to interpret texts to acquire information and language skills. Notably, reading is perceived as a foundation to cover knowledge and enhance other language skills. Significantly, in Indonesia, reading contributes to self-development, professional development, problem-solving, personal branding improvement, self-confidence, language skills, information and knowledge, and school success (Rintaningrum, 2019). Thus, teaching English reading proficiency in Indonesia is increasingly essential.

However, the teachers and the students still encounter numerous issues in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Many proceeding kinds of research discuss various problems perceived by the teachers and the students in the reading activities. A study carried out by Nanda & Azmy (2020) has found several causes, impacts, and suggestions to solve the reading problems. Their study also shows that reading problems happen because the learners lack motivation, poor background knowledge, and inadequate vocabulary mastery to deal with the text. The study also mentions that the impact of these problems can affect the learners' achievement, problem-solving skills, and future careers. In addition to that, the study applied two approaches to untangle the reading problems, in terms of Cooperative Integrated and Reading Composition (CIRC) technique and Metacognitive strategy.

The other study was conducted by Ganie et al. (2019) discuss the reading comprehension of English texts by high school students in Medan. The study shows that the reading problems come from the three primary resources: the teacher, the students, and the environment. The study demonstrates that the students perceive reading problems due to poor English language skills, lack of interest in the subject, and low motivation. Likewise, the research describes that reading problems occur due to an imprecise teaching strategy utilized by the teacher in teaching reading. Also, the study mentions that reading problems happen due to inappropriate materials and inadequate environmental supports. Thus, it is necessary to select appropriate reading strategies to facilitate students dealing with the reading problems and escalate their comprehension skills.

Theme-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an ultimate approach implemented in high schools, language institutions, lower up to advanced levels (Mutiarani & Rahman, 2019). The curriculum 2013 demands adding theme-based teaching as a new approach during learning activities that engage learners in "Highly Contextualized" language and content situations (Tussa’diah & Nurfadillah, 2018). Indeed, TBLT is defined as a learning model of Content-based instruction (CBI) approach that effectively enhances reading comprehension by cohering linguistic skills and contents. Said et al. (2018) state that theme-based instruction (TBI) is remarkably effective to apply in English foreign language context as it is a communicative method to develop English reading ability. This study intends to examine if there is a significant influence of TBLT application on the students' reading comprehension ability.

Several types of related research investigate the use of the TBLT approach to improving students' reading skills. For instance, similar studies examine the implementation of theme-based teaching (TBI) to improve students' reading comprehension (Adhikary, 2020; Amelia, 2019; Rosyita & Faridi, 2017; Said et al., 2018; Sumartana et al., 2019; Tussa’diah & Nurfadillah, 2018). The studies show that using the TBI approach promoted the students' reading comprehension. The proceeding researches investigated the effect of using TBI to
enhance the students' reading comprehension. Indeed, the present study attempts to investigate the influence of the TBLT method on the students' reading comprehension in senior high schools of Lombok, Indonesia. TBLT is one of the most popular approaches used by many teachers in advancing students’ reading comprehension in Indonesia. Nonetheless, no studies try to examine the influence of TBLT on the students' reading comprehension in the Lombok areas. It is essential to examine the influence of TBLT on the students' reading comprehension to know if the approach can significantly influence the students' reading comprehension of High school in Lombok. The English teacher can declare if the approach is sufficient to employ students, especially in Lombok high schools. Therefore, the study can reference the teachers and the students to consider the appropriate teaching methods when they cope with reading comprehension.

**Literature Review**

**Content-Based Instruction Approach (CBI)**

Content-based Instruction (CBI) is an approach in language education which designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language. Typically, CBI is a type of learning process which focuses on content and language aspects. Yaacoub (2017) describes that the CBI approach is generally used to describe approaches to integrate language and content instruction. Meanwhile, Mirizon, et. al (2019) define that CBI as understanding content through context and linguistic skills. The implementation of CBI emphasizes meaning-based context rather than language-based instruction (Sun, 2017). Hence, in reading comprehension, using CBI approach refers to understanding messages of texts based on the context and the language knowledge. In the same way, the process of CBI application in the reading comprehension involves students decoding meanings of texts using the content subject and linguistic skills.

**Types of CBI Approach**

Briton, Snow, and Wesche, as cited in Vanichvasin (2019) classify three models of CBI in terms of Theme-based, Sheltered, and Adjunct models. First, theme-based instruction is the language instruction in which the class is structured around topics or themes, with the topics forming the backbone of the course curriculum (Tseng, 2017). Second, Sheltered instruction is language learning in which content specialist teaches content course in the target language (Aksoy, 2020). Third, Adjunct instruction emphasizes students to enroll concurrently in two linked courses, a language course and a content course (Tseng, 2017). Learners are sheltered in the language course, but integrated in the content course. The present study investigates the use of Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) as one of CBI approach models in developing EFL students’ reading ability. TBI is also considered as Theme-based Language Teaching (TBLT) which is the most frequently adopted to increase English reading comprehension. Thus, this research emphasizes on examining the influence of TBLT method toward the students’ reading comprehension.

**Reading Comprehension**

Reading is an essential skill in second language learning (Khalifa, Ahmed, & Ismael, 2020). It refers to an interpretation process that is an ability to look and comprehend the word meaning from written text or printed matter (Khusniyah & Lustyantie, 2017). Reading is more than recognition of graphic symbols, and the pronunciation of the words, given on the printed papers. It claims inference, weighing the relative importance of ideas and meaning, seeing the relationship among them (Cordeiro, Nunes, Castro, & Limpo, 2021). Otherwise, comprehension is primary purpose of the reading process (Varita, 2017). It is the process of deriving meaning from connected text (Pang, S.E, Muaka A, Bernhardt B.E, & Kamil, 2013). Comprehension process involves word knowledge (vocabulary) as well as thinking and reasoning. Therefore, comprehension is not a passive process but an active one. Hence, reading comprehension means comprehensive and interactive processes between readers and text, in which readers use their
knowledge to build, create and to construct meaning.

Research Method

Research Design

This research administrated an experimental study to examine the influence of TBLT method toward students’ reading comprehension. Experimental design is used to examine the effect of an intervention on an output and control all factors that can influence an output (Creswell, 2009). It is an appropriate research design to employ when the researcher purposes of testing cause and effect relationships among variables (Asenahabi, 2019). This study used the experimental research design to be able to examine causes and effects relationships among variables. Indeed, the research attempts to examine the influence of TBLT on students’ reading comprehension. This study applied pre-experimental research using one group pre-test posttest to compare if there was an improvement between pretest and posttest results. The improvement was determined to declare whether the TBLT method contributed a significant influence on students’ reading comprehension.

Participants

The students of Madrasah Aliyah (MA) NW Putra Narmada were selected as the study’s respondent. MA NW Putra Narmada is a popular senior high school located in Narmada, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The researcher chose this Islamic boarding school to be the research setting because some students studying at the school achieved low reading comprehension based on the researcher's assessment result before the study. The researcher considered that this field of study suited the research objective to test if TBLT method could significantly influence students’ reading comprehension development. Twenty students from MA NW Putra Narmada participated in this study who were determined by using saturated sampling. The participants came from the second class of MA NW Putra Narmada.

Tools and Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis

This study required a test to examine students’ reading comprehension using the TBLT method. The test was used to examine achievement (what participants can do or know), diagnosis (what participants’ strengths and weaknesses are), proficiency, performance, speed, and many others (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Shorty, the test was appropriate step how to test students’ achievement in reading comprehension. Similarly, the test was capable of exploring students’ proficiency in reading skills. Therefore, a test was right option to examine the influence of the TBLT method on the students’ reading comprehension. In this study, the test covered reading proficiency test which were conducted twice, including pre-test and posttest. The questions were elected based on the TOEFL test in reading proficiency which consisted of 20 questions, including maintaining ideas, best word replacements, stated and unstated statements, and etc.

The researcher analyzed the data gathered from pre-and post-proficiency tests to find the research findings. This study used t-test formulas to test the significance of the scores between pretest and posttest. The result of pre-test and posttest were compared to know if there is a difference result of pretest and posttest scores to determine the influence of TBLT method on students’ reading comprehension. This study applied SPSS application to analyze the data of the study. This research formed two types of hypothesis to determine the result of study, including null hypothesis and alternate hypothesis. Null hypothesis (Ho) stated that there is no significant influence of TBLT method on students’ reading comprehension. On the contrary, alternate hypothesis (Ha) mentioned that there is a significant influence of TBLT method on students’ reading comprehension.

Research Procedure

This study was pre-experimental research using a one-group pretest and posttest. In this
research, the researcher arranged the pre-test and posttest questions properly. The researcher began by giving a pre-test to the students to answer the following questions. The data of pretest was analyzed to determine the output before TBLT implementation. An intervention was conducted twice after the pretest to teach students’ reading comprehension using the TBLT method. Posttest was carried out by the students given passed twice the treatments given by the teacher. The posttest was conducted to know students’ reading comprehension after TBLT implementation. The data of posttest was analyzed to maintain the output of students’ reading comprehension scores using the TBLT method. Lastly, the pretest and posttest results were analyzed and compared to see if there is sign-in in TBLT implementation toward students’ reading comprehension. The research procedure could be seen as follows:

![Figure 1: Design of One-Group Pre-test-Post-test](image)

**Results and Discussion**

In this section, the research displayed the research findings resulting from data statistics analysis using a t-test through SPSS program to find out if there is a significant difference between pre- and post-proficiency test scores. Based on the test the result, it was found that students’ reading comprehension scores increased after TBLT method implementation. The result of the research was shown and discussed such as the followings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71.12</td>
<td>89.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Students’ Reading Output*

Based on the table 1, it performed a different result obtained in the pretest and posttest scores. In the pretest, the result showed that the students achieved score of 71.12, while the posttest result indicated that students gained a score of 89.05. It shows that the students’ reading comprehension improved after TBLT implementation. This means that there is an influence of the TBLT method on students’ reading comprehension development. This result is similar to the research conducted by Said et al. (2018), who examined theme-based instruction method implementation toward students’ reading comprehension in Makassar. The study similarly found that the students’ reading comprehension increased after theme-based instruction method implementation. It also revealed that it was about 91.6% that theme-based instruction contributed to the students’ reading comprehension development. The result of both proficiency tests in the present study could be displayed such as the followings:
The significant influence of the TBLT method on the students’ reading comprehension, the data gained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using the SPSS program by determining the T-test. The result of T-test could be displayed such as the followings:

**Table 2: The result of Paired Samples T-test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>-2.094 E1</td>
<td>12.26582</td>
<td>2.88642</td>
<td>-27.09867</td>
<td>-14.6642</td>
<td>-7.261</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The significant influence of the TBLT method on the students’ reading comprehension showed 0.00 < α = 5%. It indicated that TBI contributed a significant effect on the students’ reading comprehension. Besides, the output of data for those taught by CBLT also indicated that the value reached at 0.00. The result of this probability value was lower than the significant level (0.00 > 0.05). It equally revealed that CBLT contributed a significant influence on the students’ reading comprehension.

Based on the output of the data analysis in this study, the result could be categorized into the following significant levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Level</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p &gt; 0.05</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p ≤ 0.05</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p ≤ 0.01</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p ≤ 0.001</td>
<td>Highly Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Significant Categories**
The researcher found that the value of probability was 0.00. It indicated that the significant value was 0.00 ≤ α = 5%, which were declared that the probability value was under the significant level. This result was categorized into “Significant” levels, which represented that using theme-based language teaching significantly influence the students’ reading comprehension. Although, the present study is conducted at senior high school of Lombok through saturated sampling involving all students in the second class as the research participants, it certainly contributes the limitation of the study. TBLT method can be increasingly effective or influential when many researches examine it with larger populations. Therefore, the further researchers are highly suggested to carry out an investigation of using of TBLT method to improve students’ reading proficiency with larger populations that can be implemented in other regions, including Lombok schools and universities.

**Conclusion**

The implementation of theme-based language teaching in teaching reading influences students’ reading comprehension development. It can be seen from the outcome obtained from pre- and post-proficiency tests carried out by the students. The result of pretest reaches value of 71.12, while posttest gains score of 89.05. It shows that there is a different result happened after TBLT implementation on the students’ reading comprehension. Based on the data output analysis using SPSS program, the study finds that the significant value is under the significant level (0.00 < 0.05), which indicates a significant influence of using theme-based language teaching toward the students’ reading comprehension. It means that theme-based language teaching contributes a significant influence on the students’ reading comprehension. This research recommends further researchers to explore the use of TBLT in teaching students’ reading ability. The further researches can examine the implementation of the TBLT method in improving students’ reading comprehension with other types and larger populations.

**References**


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