THE USE OF SHORT STORIES TO INCREASE EIGHTTH-GRADE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION AT SMP NEGERI 1 BOLAANG

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Abstract : Reading comprehension is a part of English language learning in Indonesia since the students, based on the Kurikulum 2013, are required to learn and read many kinds of texts. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the use of short stories in enhancing students' reading comprehension. This study is conducted using the quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design (one group pre-posttests design). The pre-posttests are used to obtain data related to students' reading comprehension. Those tests consist of 10 questions that are generated from two texts prepared by the researchers. 36 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Bolaang are the object of this study. The data is then analyzed using the mean score formula and standard deviation formula. The findings show that the mean score of the pre-test is 4.4, and the standard deviation is 1.5. Meanwhile, the mean score of the post-test is 5.6, and the standard deviation of the post-test is 1.6. It indicates that students' reading performance in the post-test is better than their performance before the treatment (pre-test). So, it is concluded that short stories are an effective technique to be used in increasing students' reading comprehension. Teachers of English at junior high school are recommended to use short stories in teaching reading comprehension to help students understand the reading materials.

Keywords : *Short Stories, Reading Comprehension, English Language Teaching (ELT)*

INTRODUCTION

Language, according to Xue (2014), is the institution through which people connect and communicate with one another using commonly utilized oral-auditory arbitrary symbols. English is one example of a language that is widely used in the world. It even becomes the *lingua franca* at the international level. As a result, many different and significant parts of daily life, including education, business, economics, culture, and others, heavily rely on the use of English. It's crucial for people to learn English if they want to communicate and obtain information, especially in this globalization era.

English is seen as a foreign language in Indonesia and has even become a compulsory subject taught in senior and junior high school. Chang (2011) even emphasizes the important role of English in education. English is also important to be taught as a foreign language, as seen in the Indonesian context, because it serves as the language for international communication. To be able to master English, both as a subject in school and as a foreign language, students must master the 4 language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In the Indonesian context, the learning of English as a subject taught in schools focuses on the various kind of text. It means that students have to have good reading comprehension. Zhang (2013) explains, "reading is an important skill in learning a language besides, listening, speaking and writing." Knowing the

message included in texts written in English is one of the essential goals of any reading activity. Reading has many different definitions since it supports many points of view. Reading, as explained by Sherzod (2023), is one of the most crucial language-learning activities because it broadens one's knowledge and serves as a source of information as well. Many good things can be acquired through reading. Reading is a social activity and a crucial ability for everyday living (Rintaningrum, 2019). It implies that one method of communication used by humans is through reading.

Based on the informal interview about student reading comprehension with students that the writers have from the Teaching Practice Program (PPL) at SMP Negeri 1 Bolaang, there are some problems faced by the students. One of the problems is the students experienced problems in reading and understanding the texts, the students didn't have enough interest to read because of the monotonous materials. They had a very limited vocabulary stock. In addition, the teachers applied monotonous methods during the semester.

To tackle the issue mentioned before, various methods are employed when teaching English, particularly when it comes to reading comprehension (Ali & Razali, 2019). Anders & Evans (2019) argue that using a short narrative is one of them. A short tale is a condensed view of a portion of fictional life with a plot and, most often, conflicting interests. For the students to be able to finish it if they choose to, the story should be at their reading level.

Based on the explanation before, this study is conducted to investigate whether the use of short stories in English language teaching and learning can foster students' reading comprehension or not. This study will be very helpful for the students and teachers since it will improve the teaching

and learning process. All discoveries about short stories are very important to help students, especially in students' reading ability because short stories can develop students' interest to continue reading and with short stories students can know more about new words. This encourages researchers to employ short stories to improve the reading abilities of students at SMP Negeri 1 Bolaang.

Reading, as explained by Gustanti & Ayu (2021), "is the process of obtaining information from the text, either in the form of the text, a picture, a diagram, or a combination of it all." A student who enjoys reading and reads frequently has the skills necessary to write well. Students can expand their vocabulary and write more effectively by reading. On the other hand, a student with poor reading skills will struggle during the learning process. Additionally, the students will experience self-consciousness when adjusting to their educational surroundings. On the other hand, a competent teacher needs to have a stronger command of grammar and vocabulary. Building students' comprehension of the content of reading texts is a key goal of reading instruction.

Reading is a complex activity that involves motivation, word recognition, understanding, and fluency (Cartwright, *et al*., 2020). It discovers how readers combine these elements to interpret printed texts. Although people read for a variety of reasons, it is a beneficial pastime. People read for knowledge, education, or simply enjoyment. There is a common belief that the more we read, the more information we gain. Reading may be both amusing and educational. It is not an exaggeration to say that reading has numerous benefits for us, regardless of what we read (whether they are popular or scholarly books or articles). Reading will help us learn and gain information that will broaden and enrich our understanding.

Reading, according to Dowd & Bartlett (2019), is interrogating written text. It then becomes an issue of getting your queries answered in order to read comprehension. According to Smith, *et al* (2021), in order to understand, a reader must first connect their past knowledge, or schema, with the text. One reading skill that is taught from junior and senior high school through college is reading comprehension. Some teachers expressed frustration that their students frequently struggle to comprehend English language texts that they have already read and occasionally only understand a small portion of the text. If the students struggle to comprehend the text, they become lazy and bored when reading English language texts, the teachers claimed. Nuttal (1982) shows there are five aspects of reading comprehension that the students should understand in comprehending a text well: "Determining main idea, Finding specific information, Making inference, Identifying reference, Understanding the meaning of words."

A short story is a work of prose fiction that is normally read in a single sitting and concentrates on a single event or a string of connected events with the aim of creating a particular feeling or mood (Kiosses, 2021). The short narrative has no more than 1,000 words total. Reading for education, entertainment, or enlightenment as well as to just admire a piece of literature for its own sake are all valid reasons to read both short stories and longer works of fiction. There is always a significant lesson in a short story. Because they are brief and always keep the reader entertained, short stories are read for enjoyment and to hook the reader. The stories teach us valuable lessons about achievement, charity, and other topics.

Children's short stories, among other literary genres, are chosen because of their length and suitability for low-intermediate-level students who are learning a foreign language (Alahmad, 2020). According to Collin and Slater (1991), short stories can be used with EFL students because they are suitable for one or two class sessions in length, are simple for the students to understand, have a variety of options, and can be used with students of all levels (from beginner to advanced) and of all ages (from young learners to adults). It is anticipated that "frustration reading" will be avoided by choosing stories that are appropriate for the kids' proficiency. Additionally, short stories can inspire children because they allow them to experience their emotions via the events of the stories and because they encourage them to read on until the conflict is resolved (Pattiwael, 2019). Teachers, as explained by Hikamah, Rohman & Kurniawan (2021), have a responsibility to support students in acquiring cognitive skills like the capacity to judge, decide, draw conclusions, organize information, evaluate it, forecast results, and apply knowledge.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a one-group pre-posttest design as a pre-experiment. Because there is little to no control over unrelated factors, this design falls under the category of pre-experimental design. Because of this, the authors of this study only used one group in the study and used the pretest and posttest to determine the effects of the treatment. In a one-group Pretest-Posttest design, a single group is measured or observed both before and after being subjected to the same treatment.

This study is conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Bolaang where 36 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Bolaang are the object of this study. To collect the data, the researchers use the following procedure:

- Pretest: The writers provide a pretest to the students before beginning treatment. The authors assign reading

passages that are pertinent to and based on curriculum information for the reading comprehension test.

- Treatment: Four 45-minute meetings later, following the pretest, the writers provide the students with therapy. Reading the descriptive text is step one in the treatment process. Step two involves questioning the students about the elements that relate to the theme. Step three involves teaching reading and asking the students some questions orally, to which they must respond about the theme.

- Posttest: Following treatment, the author administers a posttest to assess the efficacy of the intervention and determine whether the posttest result is superior than the pretest result. The pretest and posttest have the same subject matter.

The pre-test and post-test written essay tests used in this research will be the instrument and method for gathering data. The three meetings will implement the instrument. There are hence 5 meetings in all. There are ten questions, each worth five points, for a total of ten.

The obtained data were analyzed using the mean score formula proposed by Dunning and Hyde (2008) and the standard deviation formula proposed by Andrade (2020). The formulae used are described below:

$$\bar{x} \ (Mean \ Score) = \frac{\Sigma x \ (Total \ Score)}{n \ (Total \ Respondent)}$$

$$Standar \ Deviation = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2}{n} - \overline{x^2}}$$

The $\bar{x}$ represents the mean score, meanwhile the n represents the number of subjects.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Presentation of the Data

In this research, as expressed some time recently, could be a quantitative

research, and a reading test in essay format is utilized to collect the data. The test comprised of 2 texts with 5 WH question items each. The test is utilizing for both the pretest and the posttest, and the result of which are display in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of the Test (Pre and Posttest)

| Students No.	Pretest Result (X)	Posttest Result (Y)
1	3	4
2	3	3
3	4	6
4	6	6
5	5	4
6	3	5
7	4	6
8	4	6
9	5	7
10	5	8
11	2	3
12	4	6
13	6	5
14	4	7
15	4	4
16	3	5
17	7	5
18	5	7
19	5	7
20	3	3
21	4	4
22	3	6
23	7	5
24	5	8
25	4	6
26	2	5
27	6	4
28	2	6
29	4	5
30	6	6
31	2	5
32	6	7
33	7	6
34	4	8
35	6	7

| 36 | 4 | 6 |

The data specified over is measurably analyzed utilizing descriptive statistic. The analysis included calculation of frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of both pretest and posttest data. Based on the specified data above, frequency distributions of pretest scores are calculated. Results of the calculation are showing in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of pretest scores

Score	Tally	Freq	Freq - %	Cum - Prop	Cum - %
7	///	3	8	36	100
6	ℍℍ /	6	17	33	92
5	ℍℍ //	7	19	27	75
4	ℍℍ ℍℍ	10	28	20	56
3	ℍℍ /	6	17	10	28
2	////	4	11	4	11

As shown in Table 2, of 36 participants, 3 (or 8%) get a seven as the highest score; 6 (or 17%) get six; 7 (or 19%) get a five; 10 (or 28%) get a four; 6(or 17%) get a three; and 4 (or 11%) get a two as the lowest score. visually, the distribution of the pretest scores is presenting.
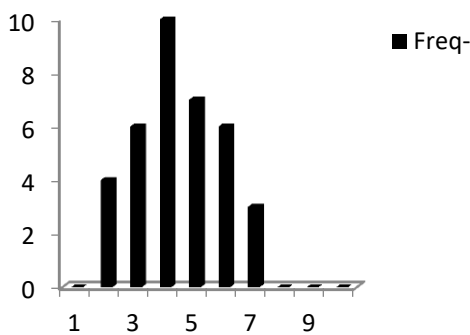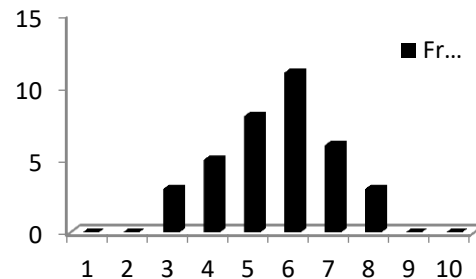

Graphic 1. Frequency distribution of pretest scores

As with that in the pretest, frequency distributions of posttest score are also calculated on the basis of the data. Results of the calculation are presented in Table.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of posttest scores

Score	Tally	Freq	Freq - %	Cum - Prop	Cum - %
8	///	3	8	36	100
7	ℍℍ /	6	17	33	92
6	ℍℍ ℍℍ /	11	31	27	75
5	ℍℍ ///	8	22	16	44
4	ℍℍ	5	14	8	22
3	///	3	8	3	8

As shown in Table 2, of 36 participants take part in the posttest, of these participants, 3 (or 8%) get an eight, the highest in the posttest; 6 (or 17%) get a seven; 11 (or 31 %) get a six; 8 (or 22%) get a five; 5 (or 14%) got a four, and 3 (8%) get a three as a lowest in the test. The frequency distribution is visual shown below.

Graphic 2. Frequency distribution of posttest scores

In order to calculate the mean and standard deviation, it is necessary to first calculate the sums, symbolized as $\sum$, of X, X2, Y and Y2. The calculations yielded results presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Sums of X, X2, Y and Y2

Students No.	Pretest (X)	X^2	Posttest (Y)	Y^2
1	3	9	4	16
2	3	9	3	9
3	4	16	6	36
4	6	36	6	36
5	5	25	4	16

6	3	9	5	25
7	4	16	6	36
8	4	16	6	36
9	5	25	7	49
10	5	25	8	64
11	2	4	3	9
12	4	16	6	36
13	6	36	5	25
14	4	16	7	49
15	4	16	4	16
16	3	9	5	25
17	7	49	5	25
18	5	25	7	49
19	5	25	7	49
20	3	9	3	9
21	4	16	4	16
22	3	9	6	36
23	7	49	5	25
24	5	25	8	64
25	4	16	6	36
26	2	4	5	25
27	6	36	4	16
28	2	4	6	36
29	4	16	5	25
30	6	36	6	36
31	2	4	5	25
32	6	36	7	49
33	7	49	6	36
34	4	16	8	64
35	6	36	7	49
36	4	16	6	36
Σ	157	759	201	1189

Based on the results of calculation of the sums of X and Y, calculation of mean of pretest and posttest data is done using the formula previously mentioned. Thus, with $\sum X = 157$, $\sum Y = 201$ and N = 36, mean of pretest is 4.4, whereas mean of the posttest is 5.6. The calculation indicates that posttest mean (5.6) is bigger than that of the pretest, 4.4. In other words, it means that students reading performance in the posttest is better than their performance before the treatment. This is due to the short story.

Standard deviation, as pointed out earlier, is calculated using raw scoring formula. Thus, with $\sum X^2 = 759$, pretest mean 4.4, and N = 36, the standard deviation of pretest is 1.5; with $\sum Y^2 = 1189$, mean = 5.6, and n = 36, the standard deviation of posttest is 1.6. The result of standard deviation calculation indicates that students reading performance in the pretest or before the treatment is more heterogeneous than their performance after the treatment. The data analysis leads to the following results: (1) In the pretest, the highest score is seven, and the lowest three, whereas In the posttest, the highest score is eight, and the lowest is three, (2) the mean of the posttest, 5.6, is larger than that of the pretest, 4.4, and (3) In other words, it means that students reading performance in the posttest is better than their performance before the treatment. This is due to short stories as a media teaching strategy and Standard deviation calculation indicates that students were reading performance in the pretest or before the treatment is more heterogeneous than their performance after the treatment, the short stories as a media teaching strategy has a significant effect on students' reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

After finishing compiling data and analysis, the writers would like to take some conclusion in the study, the result of data analyzing leads the following results: It was found that Short Story can improve reading comprehension of the student. In terms of enriching their vocabulary, increasing their motivation to read a text and accommodating them to practice their language skill. In the others, results of the analysis and the interpretation of the data as it is described in chapter IV show that: calculation of mean of pretest and posttest data is done using the formula previously mentioned. Thus, with $\sum X = 157$, $\sum Y = 201$ and N = 36, mean of pretest is 4.4, whereas mean of the posttest is 5.6. The calculation indicates that posttest mean (5.6) is bigger than that of the pretest, 4.4. In other words, it means that students

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