Optimizing Literature- Based Learning to Enhance Student's Reading Comprehension: A Case Study at SMPN 1 Lore Timur

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of literature-based learning in improving students' reading comprehension at SMPN 1 Lore Timur. This research uses mixed methods. Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure the improvement of students' reading comprehension after the implementation. The instruments used included reading tests, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Quantitative data were analyzed using a t-test with SPSS to compare the pre-test and post-test results between the experimental and control groups. Qualitative data from questionnaires, observations, and interviews were analyzed by identifying key themes that reflected the students' experiences and engagement in literature-based learning. The results indicated a significant improvement in reading comprehension among students in the experimental group. Students demonstrated progress in identifying main ideas, making inferences, understanding vocabulary, analyzing text structure, and interpreting the overall meaning of texts. The reader-response approach motivated students to engage actively with the material, connect it to their experiences, and develop critical thinking skills. In addition, students positively perceived literature-based learning, feeling increased motivation and engagement in the learning process.

Keywords: Literature-based learning, reading comprehension, reader response, mixed methods.

1. Introduction

In Indonesian national curriculum, English is imposed as one of core components and as a foreign language throughout Indonesia. Students ought to learn four skills in English: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Reading is one of the four language skills students should learn since it simplifies receiving information, knowledge, and science. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002;9), reading is the process of obtaining information from a piece of paper and interpreting it effectively. The students will extract information from the text in the most effective way possible.

According to the EF EPI 2023 – EF English Proficiency Index, Indonesia is still ranked 79th in Asia, with a geographic score of 448th in the Sulawesi region. This data demonstrates that Indonesia ranks lowest in English proficiency and needs to improve. In Indonesia, the government places English is a required subject in junior high and senior

high school. However, in practice, students may not be efficient. In the 23rd century of learning, the ability to read fluently is vital, especially in English education. Indonesia scored 68th in the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, which were announced on December 5, 2023, with a reading score of 371. These findings indicate a decrease in Indonesian students reading abilities over the last four years (2018-2022). This reduction implies that Indonesia's education system deserves examination and reform, particularly in terms of learning methodologies for improving students reading skills.

Reading is an important ability for developing students' literacy. Good literacy enables students to comprehend and analyze information, as well as build critical thinking abilities for everyday life. Because written text conveys so much information, good reading abilities are also essential for academic achievement in many other courses. The PISA 2022 and EF EPI 2023 results suggest that many students in Indonesia do not have adequate text comprehension. This can have an impact on their capacity to learn properly in class and master the material. Furthermore, not sufficient literacy can prevent students from accessing crucial information necessary for sound decision-making and full participation in society. Therefore, improving students' reading skills should be a top priority in the education system. Reading comprehension is an active thinking process, not just an understanding of what has been read, according to Tarigan (1994). It requires active thinking, not just comprehension skills. It involves evaluating students' prior knowledge, and vocabulary, and learning word-concept relationships, which involves judgment and evaluation. In an educational setting, students must have comprehension skills to quickly collect knowledge, such as capturing what they are being taught in order to achieve the goal of the learning process. Reading comprehension is an essential skill for academic and professional success, allowing people to effectively engage with a wide range of written materials and extract significant insights.

Proficient reading comprehension is required in all subject domains, as students are expected to read, comprehend, and analyze more complex texts as they proceed through their education. Agustin et.al (2023) stated that Reading comprehension is important in the reading process because the reader builds an understanding of the text. Readers organize the logic of their thinking with the collection of letters, words, and phrases in the text. Self-contained comprehension reading is an activity that creates an understanding of the meaning of the text, which can then be translated into one's language. In addition, this understanding makes reading meaningful to oneself and others

Reading is a form of communication between reader and writer that necessitates expertise in order to understand the aim of the writer. Reading is receptive, in which readers decode meanings based on the writer's thoughts. Carrell et al. (1988) stated that reading is defined as the process of decoding, which consists of reconstructing created letters and words and building the text from the smallest textual unit at the "bottom" (letter and word) to larger and larger units at the "top" (phrases, clauses, and

intersectional linkages). In other words, readers are expected to engage with the material beyond simply reading it. They must recognize the printed elements and obtain the meaning in understanding the text.

Choosing the right materials is the first step in teaching English in the EFL classroom. Language teachers want to encourage students to ask questions, seek answers, and read widely. Instead of being a burden, education is intended to provide students with the tools they need to maximize their potential and contribute to society. English teachers recognize this goal. To create a welcoming environment for English learners, resources have been carefully selected to benefit both students and society. Most of these materials have been taken from books, Hussain et al. (2011) showed that teachers can identify what materials students need according to their learning level after knowing the results of students' pre-test and evaluation.

By preparing teaching materials in accordance with student learning needs, teachers can automatically formulate the goals and objectives of these materials (Anas, 2019). To help students develop their vocabulary, teachers can also assign pleasurable reading, such as magazines or literary works (poetry, prose, and play scripts) that are appropriate for their comprehension. Comprehensive reading of literary works can greatly enhance vocabulary acquisition, claim Deepa & Ilankumaran (2018).

Teaching using literature can promote students' social, psychological, emotional and intellectual development. Reading literature pushes students' intellectual limits by requiring them to understand multiple points of view, evaluate complex stories, and think critically. Students who interact with literary characters and narratives can relate to situations and emotions different from their own, which develops empathy and emotional intelligence. Through literature, students can investigate their personal identity and beliefs, cultivating mental fortitude and self-awareness. As students express and respect different points of view, classroom literary discussions foster cooperation, communication and awareness of cultural diversity.

Literature- based Learning has great potential to improve students' reading comprehension skills. By engaging students deeply in literary texts, encouraging them to think critically, and expanding their vocabulary and language structures, this approach can help students achieve a deeper understanding of the texts they read. Various studies have shown that this approach is effective in improving various aspects of reading skills, making it a valuable strategy in SMPN 1 Lore Timur. This method, which is based on Louise Rosenblatt's Reader-Response theory, encourages active interaction between the reader and the text to produce a work.

The Reader-Response approach focuses on the role of the reader and the approach focuses on the process of reading literature. It supports activities that encourage students to use their personal experiences, opinions and feelings when reading literature. Rosenblatt's (1978) theory of literary reading explains the important relationship between the reader and the text. This theory describes the transactional relationship between the reader and the poem. In literary works, certain events occur at a particular time and

place. Different readers respond to these events in different ways based on their own interests and experiences. The related interaction between the text and the reader is emphasized by this viewpoint.

Based on the observation at SMPN 1 Lore Timur, students face several challenges in their English reading skills. One of the main problems is their limited vocabulary which hinders their understanding of texts, especially those using complex sentences. In addition, students are also not used to reading long texts, so they easily lose focus and have difficulty understanding the content of the text as a whole. Reading practice in class is still limited, focusing more on theory without intensive practice that actively involves students, so they have difficulty identifying important information in the text. Motivation to read also tends to be low because the texts used are not interesting or relevant to their lives, so reading is often considered a boring task. Exposure to English reading materials outside the classroom is also minimal due to the lack of learning resources such as reading books. In addition, the fear of making mistakes, both in pronunciation and comprehension, often discourages students from trying to read in front of the class. To overcome these obstacles, an approach such as Literature-based Learning is an effective solution, as it engages students in a more enjoyable and meaningful reading experience.

Therefore, based on the comments above, the aim of this research is to evaluate how effective Literature- based Learning is and how it can improve language skills in particular student reading skills by focusing on reading and analyzing literary materials, Literature- based Learning provides students with the opportunity to engage more closely with texts and gain deeper understanding. This research uses the Reader-Response technique to examine how students respond to and interpret literary works based on their own experiences and how these interpretations can impact the development of reading comprehension skills. This research specifically tries to determine how much Literature- based Learning is used in existing classroom settings and to create techniques that can maximize its use to improve students' reading comprehension

2. Literature Review (if applicable)

- Reading Comprehension

According to Feuerstein and Schcolnik (1995), contemporary reading comprehension approaches emphasize the process of reading rather than the product after reading. Moreover, reading comprehension is a complex strategic and automatic cognitive process that enables readers to make mental representations of the text (Van den Broek & Espin 2012). Grellet (1981) stated that reading comprehension means extracting the required information from the text as much as possible, so that the reader can know and understand the content of the text as a whole. Similarly, Koda (2005 cited in Grabe 2009) argues that comprehension occurs when the reader can take and put together various information from the text and combine it with what is already known. Thus, when someone tries to comprehend a text, it means that he combines his prior knowledge with the latest information he gets in the reading text, to get the purpose of his reading,

because one of the purposes of reading comprehension is to get the information needed or available in the reading text. "Readers comprehend by actively constructing meaning internally from interactions with the material they read" according to Anderson (2000). Students' ability to decode words in print and their level of word knowledge both have a significant impact on their reading comprehension. This indicates that reading comprehension is influenced by the ability. The capacity to understand a material after it has been read is known as reading comprehension. The comprehension makes reference to the capacity. The capacity to read and understand the context and meaning of the text being read is known as reading comprehension (Kelner & Flynn, 2006). One way to find the main concepts and other information from the text is to get the implicit information. Therefore, students must have reading comprehension skills so that they can understand the content of the text. Reading comprehension is very important for students because they need to know more about what they are learning

- Literature-based Learning

Literature- based Learning is a practical example that shows that language and literature are one in the same. Literary works are made up of language; more precisely, literary works are sources that demonstrate the use of language (Violetta-Irene, 2015). Therefore, this method is widely used in language classes to teach not only language skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking, but also aspects of language such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Spack (1985) states that the teaching of literature in the language classroom has been considered beneficial for language, cultural, academic, and intellectual learning. According to Widdowson (1975), the study of literature is essentially the study of language because it creates "a keen awareness of the communicative resources of the language being studied" and the two cannot be separated. Others also emphasize this fact, saying that the teaching of literature teaches students many subtle and complex idioms, literary knowledge, and vocabulary enrichment.

Literature is considered a promising tool for teaching language. Experts in this field have outlined the many advantages and disadvantages of using literature in the classroom, as well as the problems that using literature in the classroom may cause. (1) Strength : Literature is inherently authentic and provides authentic input for language learning (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008), b. Literary texts are highly motivating because they are original and have a meaningful context (Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009), c. According to Van (2009), literature contributes to increasing intercultural and cultural awareness, especially in the age of globalization (Tayebipour, 2009), f.   Maley (1989a) states that literature is related to various types of potpourri and varieties of language, ranging from slang to formal language, and a variety of topics, g.   Literature can help language learners improve their critical thinking skills (Gajdusek & van Dommelen, 1993, Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009).

(2) Weakness : a.   According to McKay (1982) and Savvidou (2004), literary texts have complex structures and are sometimes far from the conventions of Standard English, which can pose problems for language learning purposes, Robson (1989) states that literature can do "little or nothing to help students become competent users of the target language" because of its syntactic and lexical problems, e.   non-conformity to certain literary conventions and genres can cause certain problems (Maley, 1989a), c.   Some practitioners argue that the literature is full of examples of deviations from normal phonetic and phonological systems; some words undergo minor or significant changes, which can lead to misunderstandings.

- Reader Response

Rosenblatt (1995) says that reading literature is a kind of exploration in which the reader constructs meaning by utilizing emotions and history. According to him, meaning is created by the interaction between the reader and the text, which takes place during the interaction. Learners use their prior knowledge and dispositions to fix differences in the text (Iser, 1972a) and through their interpretation of the text (Fish, 1980).

 The theory of the reader response approach is based on the idea that when readers decipher literary works and relate them to their own experiences, a reciprocal relationship occurs between them and the text. The emotional reactions that result from this mutual bond can reinforce learning in the classroom (Bleich, 1975). According to Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional perspective, the reader creates the experience, and the text is the activating impulse and serves as a guide, organizer, blueprint, and route of interpretation.

In terms of teaching literature for literature itself, rather than for the purpose of language development, Reader Response is based on this premise. The method proposed by Maley (1989a) is similar to the critical literary approach. This approach is rooted in constructivism, according to Ali (1994), in which everyone makes their own reality when they encounter a text. In other words, each person responds to the text in a different way. Therefore, we can have multiple interpretations of the text, not just one correct one. There are several ways to apply Reader Response in literature classes, according to Amer (2003): Reading Logs, Response Journal. Self-Questioning, Critical Questioning and Writing, Role-play, Drama and Letter-writing, and Rewriting Narratives from Another Character's Point of View.

3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of Literature-based Learning in the classroom. Researchers conducted interviews with students to gather their opinions on literature's role in enhancing learning. This design allowed for measuring changes in both experimental and control groups, as well as understanding students' perceptions of the learning techniques used.

This study was conducted in one of the SMPN 1 Lore Timur in SMPN 1 Lore Timur. Twenty six students in the experimental class will receive Literature-based Learning through the Reader-Response method, while Twenty six students in the control class will receive conventional learning

A quantitative analysis was conducted using a t-test to evaluate the difference in reading comprehension between experimental and control groups. Pre-test and post-test data were analyzed to assess the impact of the Literature-based Learning intervention. The t-test was suitable for comparing the means of the two independent groups. Data were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), allowing for the entry of pre-test and post-test scores as separate variables. SPSS facilitated the creation of graphs and tables to present the results clearly, ensuring systematic and accurate data analysis for reliable conclusions.

The study analyzes qualitative data on the effectiveness of Literature-based Learning. It focuses on how students' interactions with literature influence their reading comprehension. By examining responses from open-ended questionnaires, observation notes, and interviews, the analysis identifies recurring themes related to students' subjective experiences. It highlights how their emotional and cognitive responses, along with prior knowledge, impact their understanding and engagement.

4. Results
1. Pretest and Posttest Results in Experimental and Control Groups
the pretest and posttest results of the experimental and control groups to assess changes in students' reading comprehension after the intervention. It includes mean, standard deviation, median, and range of values for both groups, along with statistical analysis to evaluate the significance of the differences.

Group	Mean Pretest	SD Pretest	Median Pretest	Mean Post-test	SD Post-test	Median Posttest	Nilai p
Experiment	59,23	8,45	60,00	74,62	6,47	70,00	0,000
Control	48,46	10,08	50,00	59,62	8,71	60,00	0,000
Delta	15,38	10,29	15,00	11,15	10,33	10,00	0,161

Based on the data above the experimental group had an mean pretest score of 59.23 with an SD of 8.45 and a median of 60.00. The mean number of posttest scores obtained after the Literature-based Learning intervention was 74.62, SD 6.47, and median 70.00. There is a significant positive change in improvement with a value of p=0.000, meaning that the intervention plays a role in contributing two-way in improving students' reading comprehension. Meanwhile, the control group showed an average pretest score of 48.46 with an SD of 10.08 and a median of 50.00. The mean posttest score after regular learning without special intervention increased to 59.62 with an SD of 8.71 and a median of 60.00. There was a significant improvement change with p=0.000. The experimental group

showed a delta between posttest and pretest results of 15.38 points while the control group was 11.15 points. Both test groups showed an increase in reading comprehension scores between the pretest and posttest. However, the experimental group had a better improvement than the control group. This shows that Literature Based Learning is more effective in improving reading comprehension than regular learning, but it is not statistically significant.

2. **Evaluating the Role of Literature Based Learning in Improving Reading Comprehension**

Literature-Based Learning includes several approaches that can enhance students' understanding and engagement. Based on interviews with students, the two most effective methods are journal response and role-play. These approaches not only promote a deeper comprehension of the text but also foster an interactive and meaningful learning experience. Students have expressed that activities such as writing response journals and role-playing characters from the story significantly improve their ability to analyze characters, themes, and messages within the text. The respondent stated the following:

Student 1

"Yes, while reading the short story, Literature based Learning helped me understand the deeper meaning of the story. Through the activity of writing a response journal, I was able to analyze the characters and themes of the story, which were previously difficult for me to understand."

Student 2

"Through the response journal, I can write my own opinion about the story, so I understand the message better.

Student 3

"Through the response journal, I can understand the characters better."

The statement shows that writing a response journal allows students to reflect deeply on the content of the reading, encouraging them to analyze the characters, themes, and messages in the text. By putting their thoughts into writing, students can build a more structured and critical understanding of the literary works they read. In addition, role-play is also considered an effective method in literature-based learning. A student expressed:

Student 1

"I find it easier to understand the characters because I feel what it's like to be them."

Student 2

"Role-play makes me feel like I'm in the story, so I understand the character's feelings better."

Student 3

"Role-play makes me understand the story better because I'm playing the character."

The statement suggests that role-play allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the story by actively portraying characters. By reenacting scenes from the text, students not only enhance their comprehension of the storyline and characters but also develop greater empathy and interpretive skills.

The findings support the idea that interactive methods in literature-based learning, such as response journals and role-play, can boost student engagement and enrich their understanding of literary texts. Therefore, integrating these approaches into reading instruction can be an effective strategy for developing students' critical and analytical thinking skills.

- Challenges in Literature-based Learning

Although Literature-Based Learning offers various benefits in improving reading comprehension, some students face challenges, especially in expressing ideas in writing and understanding new vocabulary. Some students expressed difficulty in organizing written opinions:

Student 1
"I find it difficult to write opinions because it's hard to string words together."
Student 2
"Writing journals is difficult because I have to explain my own opinions."
Student 3
"It's hard to put my thoughts into writing. Sometimes this makes it take me longer to understand what I'm reading."

The statement shows that although LBL encourages critical thinking, some students still need guidance in developing reflective writing skills. This challenge could be due to a lack of experience in writing text analysis or limited academic vocabulary that supports clearer expression of ideas. In addition, understanding new vocabulary is also a barrier for some students. Another respondent stated:

"I ask friends or teachers when I don't understand vocabulary."

This indicates that although students have strategies to overcome vocabulary limitations, they still need additional support, such as more contextualized vocabulary learning techniques or the implementation of more effective reading strategies.

- **The Impact of Literature-based Learning on Reading Comprehension**

Most students reported a significant improvement in their ability to understand the main idea in the text, make more accurate inferences, and connect the reading with their personal experiences. This improvement shows that Literature-Based Learning is effective in developing critical reading skills, where students are not only able to understand the content of the reading more deeply but also able to draw connections

between the text and their context. This indicates that Literature-based learning facilitates a more holistic understanding of the reading material.

Student 1

"I understand the main idea in the text faster."

Student 2

"Yes, I found a lot of new vocabulary when reading short stories."

Student 3

"Yes, reading novels or short stories helps me improve my reading comprehension because I learn to understand the storyline, characters and themes. In addition, I also discover a lot of new vocabulary in an easy-to-understand context."

Student 4

"I like how the Literature based Learning session starts with a discussion before reading, then ends with a reflection. It helps me understand the context before reading and reinforces my understanding afterwards."

Literature-Based Learning appears to help students identify main ideas more effectively, likely because it engages them in deeper and more reflective text analysis. This approach enables students to develop stronger critical reading skills, particularly in grasping the structure and meaning of texts. Exposure to various types of literary works enriches students' vocabulary, allowing them to learn the meanings of new words in a more natural and applicable context. Consequently, Literature-Based Learning not only enhances overall reading comprehension but also supports students' language development, which in turn can strengthen their literacy skills.

5. Discussion

This study was conducted on two classes which were then divided into a control group and an experimental group. Students in the control group learned reading comprehension using traditional teaching methods, while students in the experimental group were taught using Literature-Based Learning. The results of the pretest and post-test showed that students in the experimental group experienced significant improvement in reading comprehension compared to students in the control group. The aspects used to assess reading comprehension improvement were based on a reading comprehension rubric that included five main aspects such a identification of the main idea, inference, vocabulary comprehension, text structure analysis, and interpretation of overall meaning. In addition, the main principles in Reader-Response Theory, such as personal engagement, critical thinking, intertextual connection, and reflective reading, are also an important part of this study.

In the pretest session, most students had difficulties in various aspects of reading comprehension. No student obtained a score that could be categorized as 'fair,' 'good,' or 'excellent.' In the aspect of identifying the main idea, many students struggled to

understand the core message of the text. They also experienced barriers in inference, making it difficult for them to deduce information that was not explicitly mentioned in the text. Vocabulary comprehension is a challenge because many students are not familiar with academic words and contextual meanings in the reading. In addition, their ability to analyze text structure is still low, so they are not able to distinguish text types and understand the organizational pattern of the reading passage. These difficulties eventually impact on the interpretation of the overall meaning, where students tend to read superficially without really understanding the content of the text in depth.

After applying Literature-based Learning as a treatment to the experimental group, the post-test results showed positive results, with significant improvements in students' reading comprehension. By emphasizing literature-based teaching and using various Reader-Response strategies, such as Reading Logs, Response Journals, Role-Playing, Rewriting Narratives, and Critical Questioning, the barriers found in the pretest were significantly reduced.

To enhance students' reading comprehension, Literature-Based Learning is implemented as a teaching approach that emphasizes in-depth interaction with literary texts. This method goes beyond mere reading activities; it encourages students to think critically, connect texts to their experiences, and express their understanding in various ways. Techniques used in Literature-Based Learning, such as Reading Logs, Response Journals, Role-Playing, and Rewriting Narratives, have proven effective in helping students gain a better understanding of the content. Through these techniques, students engage actively rather than passively, allowing them to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on the text.

6. Conclusion

Literature-based learning has a positive impact on students' engagement and comprehension in reading. During the learning process, students showed more active responses to the texts they read. They were more involved in discussions, able to relate the content to their personal experiences, and showed a better understanding of the content. Although there were variations in learning outcomes, most students similarly responded to the method, indicating that this approach can be effectively implemented in the classroom.

The Literature-based Learning intervention was shown to significantly improve students' reading comprehension based on quantitative and qualitative data. Statistical data showed that students in the experimental group experienced a considerable improvement in reading comprehension. However, the difference in improvement between the experimental group and the control group was not strong enough to show significance in the statistical test. This may be due to several factors, such as the limited duration of the intervention, differences in student characteristics, as well as other external factors that may affect the learning outcomes.

Although the statistical difference was minimal, observations and student interviews indicated that the method was helpful for understanding texts. Students in the

experimental group reported enjoying the reading process more, finding the content easier to grasp, and feeling more confident in interpretation. Techniques like Reading Logs, Response Journals, Role-Play, and Self-Questioning foster active learning and enhance critical thinking, leading to improved comprehension. The study concludes that Literature Based Learning effectively enhances students' reading comprehension. While statistical results between the experimental and control groups were not highly significant, student feedback indicated improved engagement and comprehension. Thus, Literature-Based Learning is a valuable approach for teaching reading in secondary schools.

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