Improving Reading Comprehension Skills Through a Whole Language Approach in Fifth Grade Elementary School Students

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A B S T R A K

Keterampilan membaca pemahaman tidak selalu mudah dan cepat untuk dikuasai oleh setiap siswa. Masih ditemukan keadaan siswa dan kondisi sekolah yang kurang mendukung aktivitas membaca sehingga keterampilan membaca pemahaman siswa tidak berkembang dengan maksimal. Dengan demikian, dibutuhkan suatu pendekatan dalam pembelajaran yang dapat meningkatkan keterampilan membaca pemahaman siswa. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu untuk menganalisis Pendekatan Whole Language dalam meningkatkan keterampilan membaca pemahaman untuk siswa kelas lima sekolah dasar. Metode penelitian penelitian ini yaitu mengadopsi model penelitian tindakan Kemmis dan McTaggart. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas V sebanyak 30 siswa. Metode pengumpulan data penelitian ini yaitu observasi, wawancara, dan tes. Instrumen pengumpulan data penelitian ini menggunakan lembar kueioner dan soal tes. Teknik analysis data ini menggunakan dua teknik analisis, yaitu analisis data secara kualitatif dan analisis data statik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian yaitu pada awal pretest keterampilan membaca pemahaman tingkat interpretative siswa hanya mencapai 48%. Pada penerapan pendekatan whole language dalam siklus I terjadi peningkatan menjadi 78%. Dan kembali mengalami peningkatan hingga pada siklus III menjadi 83%. Disimpulkan pendekatan whole language merupakan salah satu cara yang dapat digunakan guru untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca pemahaman tingkat interpretatif. Implikasi penelitian ini yaitu penerapan Pendekatan Whole Language dapat membantu siswa dalam belajar.

A B S T R A C T

Reading comprehension skills are not always easy and quick for every student to master. It is still found that students and school conditions do not support reading activities, so students' reading comprehension skills do not develop optimally. Thus, an approach to learning that can improve students' reading comprehension skills is needed. This research aims to analyze the Whole Language Approach in improving reading comprehension skills for fifth-grade elementary school students. The research method for this research is to adopt the Kemmis and McTaggart action research model. The subjects of this research were 30 class V students. The data collection methods for this research are observation, interviews and tests. The data collection instruments for this research used questionnaire sheets and test questions. This data analysis technique uses two techniques: qualitative data analysis and descriptive static data analysis. The research results were that students' interpretative level reading comprehension skills only reached 48% at the beginning of the pretest. When implementing the whole language approach in cycle I, there was an increase of 78%. Moreover, It increased again until in cycle III, it became 83%. It is concluded that the whole language approach is one-way teachers can use to improve reading comprehension skills at the interpretative level. The implication of this research is that applying the Whole Language Approach can help students learn.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language acts as a means of introducing knowledge and subject matter in the world of education. Education in Indonesia uses the official language, namely Indonesian. Indonesian is used to convey subject matter in school textbooks. Thus, language skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing are

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essential to master (Astuti et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2020; Munthe et al., 2023). Language and reading skills will influence students' academic success (Habibah & Muftianti, 2020; Paramita et al., 2022). Mastery of reading skills can facilitate the process of receiving learning material in class (Aydın & Bağcı Ayrancı, 2018; Khotimah et al., 2023; Zijlstra et al., 2021). Subject matter includes information, knowledge, and experience. All learning material is obtained after students go through reading activities. In elementary school, reading skills are divided into two stages, namely the beginning stage and the comprehension stage (Andhini & Sakti, 2021; Azhari et al., 2019; Mubarok & Anggraini, 2020). The initial reading stage starts in class I and continues to class III, where the learning is to recite reading texts (Gustiawati et al., 2020; Oktadiana, 2019). At the initial reading stage, students are trained until they can read fluently (Haryanto, 2014; Sumantri et al., 2017). The final stage of reading comprehension starts from class IV to class VI. Reading comprehension is a learning stage to understand and find information from various increasingly complex texts. At the reading comprehension stage, students are trained until they can infer information from the text to meaningfully understand what they have read (Fauziah & Hidayat, 2022; Havisa et al., 2021; Herlina et al., 2019). Both stages of reading skills in elementary school need to be mastered before students enter the next level of education.

However, the current problem is that many students still need help with reading. Previous research findings also state that many lower-grade elementary school students still need help reading (Rachmawaty, 2017; Widyaningrum et al., 2020; Windrawati et al., 2020). Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted in class V of MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City, several problems were found. The most significant challenge for students is their need for reading ability to understand all the information they read. None of the students needed help estimating the correct conclusion when providing conclusions from a reading text. Students also need to be more careful in answering questions related to the reading text. This indicates that the reading comprehension skills of class V MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City students still need to improve. An indication of the problems in class V students at MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City: if this continues, the student stage will not progress to the reading comprehension stage. Students will continue to carry out reading activities such as "learning for reading" activities, not "reading for learning". In line with research, it is stated that elementary school-age students are at the stage of reading development in reading for learning, namely the development of reading to integrate information and build that information into meaningful knowledge, insight and experience.

Several other important factors that indicate the low level of students' reading comprehension skills include the condition of schools that do not have libraries and the economic background of students' parents. Based on these obstacles, students must be sufficiently facilitated with various reading books at or outside school. Previous research states that the low level of reading development is due to parents' inability to meet the needs and appropriateness of reading books for students at home (Muhammad et al., 2019; Nurhaliza et al., 2022). Other research also states that students' reading development depends on what happens in the classroom (Afrianti & Marlina, 2021; Gay et al., 2021; Oktadiana, 2019; Rahmi & Marnola, 2020). Based on this research, every teacher who faces these obstacles needs to optimize reading learning for their students. Especially to practice reading skills at the comprehension stage.

One way to improve elementary school students' reading skills is by implementing a learning approach. Basically, the learning approach focuses on improving students' skills, behaviour and needs during the learning process (Hidayat et al., 2020; Oftiana & Saefudin, 2017; Widiartana et al., 2015). Based on the results of this research, this research will use an approach to language learning, namely the whole language approach. The whole language approach involves students cognitively and actively (Aydoğan & Akbarov, 2014; Erlina et al., 2016). This can create students' understanding by learning from concrete things to abstract things and mastering them step by step from the whole to the small parts (Beerwinkle et al., 2021; Yarmi, 2014). Applying a whole language approach will build a relevant and appropriate understanding of the development of students at the concrete operational stage (Fauziah, 2016; Waddington, 2020). The whole language approach is also very suitable because it greatly emphasises reading comprehension skills. Experts in the whole language approach state that it is necessary to connect learning with students' daily life experiences to teach reading comprehension skills. Daily learning activities facilitate understanding (Beerwinkle et al., 2021; Fauziah, 2016). In line with previous research, it can be concluded that integrating a whole language approach into learning will be a solution to improve reading comprehension skills.

Previous research findings also stated that initial reading abilities changed before and after implementing treatment as a whole language approach (Fitri & Ummah, 2022; Hidayah, 2014). Other research also states that the whole language approach is suitable for language classes because it can improve students' abilities (Anggraeni, 2019; Ansoriyah & Rahmat, 2018).

The whole language approach in the learning process has eight components that can be implemented into classroom learning activities. The eight components include reading aloud, journal

writing, sustained silent reading, shared reading, guided reading, guided writing, independent reading, and independent writing. The advantage of this approach is that each component in the whole language approach can be integrated according to the learning objectives that have been planned and that the teacher wants to achieve for his students. There has yet to be a study regarding the Whole Language Approach, the novelty of this study focus on implementing Whole Language Approach in improving fifth-grade elementary school students' reading comprehension skills. Based on this, this research aims to analyze the Whole Language Approach in improving reading comprehension skills for fifth-grade elementary school students. Implementing the components of the whole language approach is hoped to improve reading comprehension skills, especially at the interpretative level, for class V students at MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City.

2. METHOD

The research method used is action research model (Kemmis et al., 2014). Classroom action research aims to improve reading comprehension skills at the interpretative comprehension level of class V students at MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City. Model designed an action research model in four stages: the planning stage, the action and observation stage, and the reflection stage. The relationship between the four stages in this system is seen as a cycle. The researcher acts in the form of a whole language approach, and other teachers or collaborators observe the action. After one cycle has been implemented, if the research results have not reached the success criteria, re-planning is made, which is carried out in the form of the next cycle.

This research was carried out at MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City. The subjects of this research were 30 class V students at MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City. The data collection methods for this research are observation, interviews and tests. Two data collection techniques are required in this research: action monitoring and data from assessment evaluation results per student. Data collection using assessment test techniques was carried out to see students' interpretative level reading skills, both before the action was given and after the action was given. Four types of tests willFour be used, namely pre-test, post-test cycle I, cycle II, and post-test cycle III. Meanwhile, observation activities were carried out to collect monitoring data on actions taken using monitoring data on teacher and student activities in the learning process using a whole language approach. The data collection instruments for this research used questionnaire sheets and test questions. The instrument grid is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretative Level Reading Comprehension Skills Assessment Instrument

No.	Component	Indicator
1.	Main Thoughts	Students can explain the main idea in the reading text
2.	Supporting Information	Students can find supporting information related to time in the reading text
		Students can find supporting information related to places in the reading text
		Students can find supporting information related to character values in the reading text
3.	Draw a conclusion	Students can determine the implied message in the reading text
		Students can write journals based on reading results according to the reading text

This data analysis technique uses two techniques: qualitative data analysis and descriptive static data analysis. Qualitative data analysis describes the information used as data during data collection after the data has been collected. If there has been no improvement, the action monitoring data analysis results will be used as material for planning the next cycle. Furthermore, all data obtained from the results of the assessment instrument for all class V students were analyzed in a descriptive static manner, namely grouping the data based on the assessment scores for each indicator of the interpretative level reading comprehension skills aspect and the results of the action monitoring data by percentage. The results of the analysis are presented in tables and graphs. Moreover, if the aspects of the overall indicator include aspects of the main idea with the indicator explaining the main idea in the reading text, the second aspect, supporting information, which consists of finding supporting information related to time, place and character values, The third component, drawing conclusions consisting of integrating implied messages in the reading text and writing a journal from the reading results has increased by a percentage of 80%. The cycle is terminated, and it can be stated that applying the whole language approach to students' interpretative level reading comprehension skills is practical for class students V MI Hayatul Islamiyah Depok City.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The implementation of the pretest on students' interpretative level reading comprehension skills was observed by collaborators and researchers. The observation results showed that the responses from students afterwards varied. Some students work straight away, some friends repeatedly, and others daydream until the teacher reminds them to do it immediately. The time required to carry out this pretest is quite long because students are not used to keeping journals after reading, need clarification, and are unsure whether their actions are right or wrong. Assessment of students' interpretative level reading comprehension skills is seen from three aspects: main ideas, supporting information, and drawing conclusions. Based on the research data, the results obtained by the percentage of students' interpretative level reading comprehension skills from all aspects of main ideas, supporting information and drawing conclusions can be presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Interpretative Level Reading Comprehension Skills at Pretest

Aspect	Indicator	Number of Results	Total Amount	Percentage %
Main Thoughts	Main idea	44	120	37%
Supporting Information	Time Place Character Values	181	360	50%
Draw a conclusion	Implied Message Journal	109	240	45%
Number of Results				**334**
Total Amount				**720**
Percentage				**48%**

First, cycle I. Base on Table 2 the results of learning reading comprehension at the interpretive level using a whole language approach are evaluated after the learning results of the number of class V MI Hayatul Islamiyah students; 29 students were present and can be seen in the table. The assessment is by indicators of the reading comprehension aspect at the interpretative level. The results of the assessment of reading comprehension skills at the interpretative level and monitoring teacher and student activities are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage of Interpretative Level Reading Comprehension Skills in Cycle I

Aspect	Indicator	Number of Results	Total Amount	Percentage %
Main Thoughts	Main idea	91	116	78%
Supporting Information	Time Place Character Values	231	348	66%
Draw a conclusion	Implied Message Journal	157	232	68%
Number of Results				**479**
Total Amount				**696**
Percentage				**69%**

Base on Table 3, from 29 students, data was obtained, namely the leading idea indicator 78%, the supporting information indicator related to time 82%, the supporting information indicator related to place 71%, the supporting information indicator related to character values 56%, the indicator drawing conclusions related to implied messages 53%, and the indicator drawing conclusions journal reading 83%. The percentage of Cycle I Teacher and Student Activities is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Percentage of Teacher and Student Activities in Cycle I

No.	Learning Steps	Number of Results	Total Amount
1.	Preparation phase	3	3
2.	Implementation Stage	21	30
3.	Evaluation Stage	2	2
Total Results			**26**
Total number			**35**
Percentage			**74%**

Based on Table 4 show the data from cycle I, it was concluded that actions did not show maximum results during the learning process of reading comprehension at the interpretive level and whole language approach. Therefore, researchers and collaborators carried out cycle II by using the reflection results from cycle I to improve reading comprehension skills at the reading level. Interpretative to students at the next meeting. Second, cycle II. Assessment of reading comprehension learning at the interpretive level using a whole language approach. The assessment is by the indicators of the reading comprehension aspect at the interpretative level. The results of the interpretative level reading comprehension skills assessment are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Percentage of Interpretative Level Reading Comprehension Skills in Cycle II

Aspect	Indicator	Number of Results	Total Amount	Percentage %
Main Thoughts	Main idea	101	116	87%
Supporting	Time			
Information	Place	274	348	79%
	Character Values			
Draw a conclusion	Implied Message	169	232	73%
	Journal			
Number of Results				**544**
Total Amount				**696**
Percentage				**78%**

Base on Table 5, from 29 students, data was obtained, namely the leading idea indicator 87%, the supporting information indicator related to time 84%, the supporting information indicator related to place 87%, the supporting information indicator related to character values 66%, the indicator drawing conclusions related to implied messages 62%, and the indicator drawing conclusions journal reading 84%. Percentage of Cycle II Teacher and Student Activities in Table 6.

Table 6. Percentage of Teacher and Student Activities in Cycle II

No.	Learning Steps	Number of Results	Total Amount
1.	Preparation phase	3	3
2.	Implementation Stage	26	30
3.	Evaluation Stage	2	2
Total Results			**31**
Total number			**35**
Percentage			**88%**

Based on the results of cycle II data, as show in Table 6 it was concluded that during the learning process of interpretative level reading comprehension and whole language, approach actions had not shown maximum results. Therefore, researchers and collaborators carried out cycle III by using the reflection results from cycle II as a reference to improve comprehension level reading skills. Interpretative to students at the next meeting. Third, cycle III. Assessment of learning to read at an interpretative level using a whole language approach includes several indicators, the interpretative level reading comprehension skills assessment results are in Table 7.

Table 7. Percentage of Interpretative Level Reading Comprehension Skills in Cycle III

Aspect	Indicator	Number of Results	Total Amount	Percentage %
Main Thoughts	Main idea	101	112	87%
Supporting	Time	106	112	84%
Information	Place	109	112	87%
	Character Values	73	112	66%
Draw a conclusion	Implied Message	73	112	62%
	Journal	99	112	84%
Number of Results				**561**
Total Amount				**672**
Percentage				**83%**

Base on Table 7 show that main idea 97%, supporting information related to time 84%, supporting information related to place 98%, supporting information related to character values 76%, drawing conclusions related to implied messages 74%, and draw conclusions journal reading 97%. The percentage of Cycle III Teacher and Student Activities is in Table 8.

Table 8. Percentage of Teacher and Student Activities in Cycle III

No.	Learning Steps	Number of Results	Total Amount
1.	Preparation phase	3	3
2.	Implementation Stage	29	30
3.	Evaluation Stage	2	2
Total Results			**34**
Total number			**35**
Percentage			**94%**

Based on Table 8 show the results of the third cycle data, it can be concluded that learning reading comprehension skills at the interpretive level through the whole language approach has shown maximum results, so the author no longer needs to continue to the next cycle. In each cycle, the percentage of students' Reading Comprehension Skills always increases. This is indicated by the percentage results from Cycle I, namely 69%, cycle II, namely 78%, and cycle III, namely 94%. This proves that the Whole Language approach can improve reading comprehension skills in fifth grade elementary school students.

Discussion

The results of data analysis show that the process of learning interpretative level reading comprehension skills through a whole language approach is very feasible for teachers to apply in learning. Several factors cause this. First, the whole language approach suits teachers because it improves students' reading comprehension skills. Teachers carry out learning steps based on the learning implementation plan to improve reading comprehension skills (Beerwinkle et al., 2021; Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2022). Providing comprehensive reading activities will give students the habit of reading, giving them more experience in reading (Bania & Imran, 2020; Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2022; Rusmono & Alghazali, 2019). The teaching and learning process in cycle II was smoother than in the first cycle. Students carry out reading activities with little intervention from the teacher. Students understand what they must do when the teacher instructs activities from the components of the whole language approach, such as reading aloud, sustained silent reading, shared reading, and journal writing. Previous research findings also state that the whole language approach is a holistic learning process regarding complete and comprehensive language learning by empowering teachers and students (Anggraeni, 2019; Ansoriyah & Rahmat, 2018). Students are getting used to participating in activities, so the teaching and learning process is starting to run well. The results of reflection in cycle III, learning achievement, have reached the set standards. Whole language approaches such as reading aloud, sustained silent reading, shared reading, and journal writing focus students on improving reading comprehension skills at the interpretative level, provide lots of reading practice and even give them lots of reading experience.

Second, the whole language approach is very suitable for teachers because it increases students' enthusiasm for learning. Previous research findings also state that the whole language approach can increase enthusiasm for learning (Ansoriyah & Rahmat, 2018; Fitri & Ummah, 2022). The results of reflection in cycle I were that most students were enthusiastic about the learning activities provided. Using a whole language approach offers the opportunity to practice reading skills to promote the concept of active reading as real language users in the hands of students themselves (R. Fauziah, 2016; Saat et al., 2016). The students have enjoyed reading lessons using a whole language approach. When the teacher announced that the next day would be learning to read at an interpretive level with a whole language approach, the students immediately became enthusiastic about asking about the topic of the reading. Students become more independent. In cycle III, learning activities emphasise students' reading habits. Students enjoy every activity from the whole language approach component without any burden. The advantage of the whole language approach is that it makes students comfortable with reading activities (Ansoriyah & Rahmat, 2018; Fitri & Ummah, 2022; Mohamad Johan, 2018). Students are enthusiastic about using components of the whole language approach, such as reading aloud, sustained silent reading, shared reading, and journal writing. This exercise encourages students to learn to read better. Students can do this exercise inside and outside the classroom (Anggraeni, 2019; Ansoriyah & Rahmat, 2018).

Third, the whole language approach suits teachers because it makes learning enjoyable. In the assessment stage, teachers can do this by evaluating the results of students' interpretative understanding

through students' writing (Fauziah & Hidayat, 2022; Gustiawati et al., 2020; Rahman & Haryanto, 2014). During reading-aloud activities, students are better and calmer when listening to the teacher's text. Moreover, during sustained silent reading activities, students are also used to reading silently without intervention. This can be seen when students carry out evaluations. The results of reflection and test scores also show that implementing action research can improve reading comprehension skills at the interpretative level through a whole language approach. Previous research findings also state that fun learning activities improve students' understanding (Arifah et al., 2019; Khoiriyah & Rachman, 2019; Mahfud & Fahrizqi, 2020). Based on this, this research implies that applying the whole language approach has shown maximum results because it can improve students' reading comprehension skills. The whole language approach provides a learning experience that makes students direct language users in communication, social activities and learning by implementing it into the language context at school. Language learning that is packaged well can improve students' learning experience. The limitation of this research is that this research only examines reading comprehension skills using the Whole Language approach in grade V elementary school students. It is recommended that other research examine other dependent variables in implementing the whole language approach in elementary school students. The implication of this research is that the application of a whole language approach can make it easier for students to learn so that it has an impact on increasing students' reading comprehension skills.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the data analysis show that the whole language approach optimizes all spoken and written language skills in a complete and integrated manner. Apart from that, this approach encourages students to become active language users and collaborate with peers to share their understanding, creating understanding. The whole language approach optimizes all language skills and is integrated into learning to help improve language skills such as reading, listening, speaking and writing. The whole language approach can overcome this because the learning approach is carried out actively by the students as language users so that understanding will be created without coercion because it is enveloped by the users of the language they are exposed to. Thus, teachers must implement the components of the whole language approach in a fun and active language manner so that students' reading comprehension skills can improve.

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