

The Effectiveness of Narrative Approach Strategies in Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRAK

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of narrative approach strategy in English language learning on students' reading ability, as well as the impact and students' responses to the approach. This study used a qualitative research approach. The subjects of this study were students from one of the classes at the MTS A-Irsyad Islamic boarding school, totaling 17 people, consisting of 10 males and 7 females. Data collection in this study was carried out through observation during learning, documentation, and interviews with one of the students and their English teacher. The results of this study indicate that on average students are more interested or like narrative texts compared to other texts because they find it easier to understand with the presence of pictures from the text and also an interesting storyline. By using the narrative approach pedagogical strategy, students' understanding in English reading classes can be improved

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INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is widely used in various countries in the world and is a global communication tool in various fields, such as education, technology, and economics (Noer, Astri and Hairuddin, 2021; Astri, Noer and Wahab, 2022; Astri, Nur and Misnawati, 2022; Wahab and Astri, 2022). Christina Agustin Pertiwi (2024) stated that "In an increasingly connected era of globalization, English language skills facilitate intercultural communication. English is widely used throughout the world as a second or foreign language. By mastering English, one can easily communicate with people from various countries and different cultural backgrounds, thus enabling more effective collaboration in an increasingly connected global context." In Indonesia, although English is categorized as a foreign language, its learning has become an integral part of the national education curriculum from elementary to secondary levels. In learning English, there are four main language skills that students will learn, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as supporting aspects such as grammar and pronunciation. The learning and teaching process are two very important elements, namely teaching methods and learning media. However, based on the results of observations and interviews in the field, it was found that many students had difficulty understanding English reading texts, accompanied by low interest in reading. This is a serious obstacle in the development of foreign language literacy competencies. Therefore, as a teacher, various techniques in teaching English are needed to attract students' interest in learning to take English classes (Astri, 2018; Syamsir *et al.*, 2021; Astri *et al.*, 2023). In the current era of globalization, most students are increasingly lazy to read,

therefore a teacher must be good at determining learning methods(Wahab *et al.*, 2021; Astri *et al.*, 2023).

To overcome these challenges, innovative, fun pedagogical strategies are needed that can arouse students' interest in learning. One approach that is considered effective in improving reading skills is the narrative approach. According to Science L.E.A.F (March 2024) "When we hear a story, parts of the brain such as the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus activate together—integrating language, emotion, and memory. This narrative structure enhances memory and supports conceptual understanding, making storytelling a powerful and natural learning tool". The narrative approach uses media such as short stories, novels, or fairy tales so that it can help students to imagine and more easily understand the contents of the text they read. By being emotionally involved in the story, students can more easily remember the plot, characters, and messages contained in the reading.

With a narrative approach, readers can imagine and feel the situation in a reading, making it easier for them to understand the reading and easier for them to remember the contents of the reading. So that people who read feel as if they are in the situation of the story. Joseph Garcia (2023) said that Storytelling... provides a unique ability to captivate audiences, evoke emotions, and convey complex ideas in an accessible way. It inspires creativity, encourages critical thinking, and fosters empathy by allowing students to explore different perspectives and experiences."

The formulation of the research objectives is (1) To explain the application of the narrative approach in learning to read English at the secondary education level. (2) To analyze the influence of the narrative approach on improving students' reading comprehension. (3) To identify the challenges and advantages of the narrative approach in the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Several theories that are the main foundations in this study include: (1) "Exposure to the target language is essential in language learning. In countries where English is not the primary language, it is important for teachers to create artificial conditions that mimic the use of natural language in classroom activities" (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2021). (2) Reading Skills : Reading is not merely the recognition of words, but a complex cognitive activity involving the ability to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate texts in context (Alyousef, 2020). (3) Narrative Approach : Narrative texts provide meaningful context that allows learners to connect personally with the content, facilitating deeper understanding and memory retention." (Wulandari & Fitriani, 2021). (4) Narrative learning media : "Narrative-based media can effectively enhance students' motivation and linguistic competence by providing engaging and meaningful language exposure." (Sari & Anwar, 2022). (5) Motivation in Reading : Students' emotional engagement with reading materials significantly influences their motivation and comprehension. Story-based approaches are effective in stimulating students' interest and promoting deeper understanding." (Lestari & Kurniawan, 2021).

Based on this background, this article aims to discuss and analyze the effectiveness of the narrative approach in improving students' reading comprehension in learning English as a foreign language.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The subjects of this study were students from one of the Islamic boarding schools in Maros, especially in class XI, as many as 17 people with 10 boys and 7 girls. Data were collected through classroom learning observations and in-depth interviews with one of the students and also an English teacher who teaches at the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research analysis, it can be concluded that the application of the narrative approach strategy in learning English has a positive impact on students' reading skills. One of the key factors supporting this result is the increase in students' interest and involvement in the learning process. The narrative approach allows students to relate their personal experiences to the texts they read, so that the learning process becomes more relevant, meaningful, and enjoyable.

These results answer the formulation of the problem related to the effectiveness of the narrative approach strategy in learning to read English texts. Based on in-depth interviews and classroom observations, it was found that most students found it easier to understand narrative texts than other types of texts. This is because narrative texts usually have interesting and contextual storylines, thus encouraging students' emotional involvement in reading.

As stated by one informant:

"In my opinion, narrative texts help my reading comprehension because I can understand narrative texts faster than other texts."

The student's response shows that the narrative approach not only makes the learning process more enjoyable, but is also effective in improving students' reading comprehension. This research was obtained through direct observation in the classroom and in-depth interviews which were then analyzed using a thematic approach.

The interview results also showed that both teachers and students felt the benefits of this approach. Teachers observed that students who previously had difficulty in understanding the reading were now able to follow the lessons better. In addition, teachers also stated that they found it easier to explain the concepts in the text, and students felt more motivated and connected to the material being taught.

This finding is in line with the research results of Fitria Rosmi & Fadha Adilla (2024) which stated that:

"The application of a contextual approach is effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills. Students showed significant improvement and showed higher motivation and interest in reading in learning to read."

In addition, this result is also reinforced by the findings of Prayogo (2021) which shows the effectiveness of narrative texts in improving writing skills, which in this study were developed for reading skills.

Although the narrative approach has been shown to provide many benefits, this study also revealed several challenges faced during the learning process. Some students still have difficulty understanding the structure of narrative texts, as well as facing obstacles in terms of vocabulary. This was expressed by one of the informants:

"My difficulty is when I get new vocabulary that I don't understand yet."

The findings are reinforced by the research of Nurmaisayah & Ismayanti (2024) which states that:

"Restricted Vocabulary is referred to as the main difficulty in reading narrative texts, along with structure, intonation, and others."

Therefore, it is recommended that teachers provide more practice and guidance in understanding important elements in narrative texts. Teachers also need to adjust learning strategies to students' learning styles and insert motivational elements, such as small games or quizzes that are relevant to the material, to maintain students' enthusiasm for learning.

One approach that is considered effective is the narrative approach strategy applied in learning narrative and procedural texts. This strategy can be applied in a variety of ways and fun so that it not only improves reading comprehension but also builds students' confidence in reading.

This result is also reinforced by the findings of Sulistiowati, Taufiqulloh & Prihatin (2024) which state that:

"The application of the STAD Type Cooperative Learning Model to improve the results and motivation of students' reading comprehension of narrative texts ..."

These findings confirm that collaborative learning structures (such as STAD) can increase learning motivation and help students understand the elements of narrative texts.

In the learning process, the use of appropriate learning media is also an important aspect. For example, the use of an LCD projector allows students to see the text more clearly and helps teachers in delivering material visually and interactively.

These findings indicate that the application of a narrative approach strategy in learning to read English has a positive contribution to improving student understanding, motivation, and engagement. With this approach, students not only find it easier to understand the contents of the text, but also feel more connected to the material being studied. However, this approach still requires additional strategic support to overcome challenges such as limited vocabulary and understanding of text structure, so that learning can take place more optimally and inclusively.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the application of narrative approach strategies in learning to read English has proven effective in increasing students' understanding, interest, and motivation.

Students find it easier to understand the contents of narrative texts because the stories are interesting and relevant to their experiences. Teachers also find it easy to deliver the material. However, challenges remain, especially related to limited vocabulary and understanding of text structure. Therefore, this approach needs to be supported by additional exercises, guidance, and the use of various media and methods for more optimal results.

Suggestion

Advice for educators is to be good at finding and using learning strategies so that students do not easily get bored in learning. The author is also aware that the research is not perfect, therefore the author's suggestion for further research is to involve more informants and also to use quantitative research methods so that we can see data that whether students really tend to have more understanding that increases with the narrative approach.

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