

Literacy Learning through Big Book in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: Big book is an approach in improving reading skill especially for children at elementary school age. This study aims to determine the activity and level of reading ability of children, especially in the early classes by using the big book approach. The research method used is classroom action research, which is done as many as three cycles. The results showed that students' interest in reading learning through big book increased, especially reading ability of students in comprehending reading text, distinguishing punctuation, and concluding reading text that experienced improvement in each cycle. So the use of big book can be recommended to be used as a learning approach in improving reading ability.

1 INTRODUCTION

Big book is an approach that can be used by teachers in teaching reading skills at the age of children, especially elementary school age. Big book has a certain size, such as A3, A4, A5 or the size of a newspaper. The size is conditional based on the consideration of the student's view of an object within a class (USAID, 2015: 42). Big book can also be said as a visual media in reading learning that has certain characteristics. The big book has colorful images, great text, clear readings and clear storylines. In modeling through reading a big book there is a process of reading together between teachers and students, as well as how to understand the contents of reading by predicting, understanding difficult words, recognizing punctuation and concluding the content of reading. Nambiar (1991: 1) explains that the big book has advantages over ordinary books, which emphasize focusing on certain parts of the text, facilitating children to think hard, build awareness of language, and draw attention to reading because of their large size. Even a big book can enrich the oral language of children through positive learning modeling (Lync, 1986: 1).

Teaching reading ability of elementary school-aged children should pay attention to their characteristics and development, so teaching practice using big book approach should be adjusted to the age of students. Students from the first grade to third grade are categorized as early readers. Mueller (2007: 15) explains that the expected reading ability

of this age is that students can read, recite, recite, develop vocabulary, and recognize punctuation. While students in grade four to grade six are categorized as advanced readers, and the expected reading ability would be higher level. The big book content will be very different for both categories, especially in the plot and text presented. For example, storyline in the beginning classes is simpler and text consists of only one to three sentences.

Mwoma's (2017: 360) study conducted on primary school-aged children in Kenya shows that reading ability of boys and girls is far from the expected average because the children are not well prepared in pre-reading skills for students in the early classes (first and second grade), and it turns out that reading material has an important role in reading ability. Hargrave and Senechal (2000: 75) also revealed that the effect of reading storybooks in a dialogical way to children with limited vocabulary, such as in pre-school level, has greatly affected the vocabulary.

Picture storybooks also have a great role in the ability and interest in children reading (Roslina, 2017: 213). Wasik and Bond (2001: 243) explain that the effect of interactive book reading techniques used by teachers through reading stories with concrete objects and interacting openly with involving children can build language skills and literacy. In this case, the use of big book can certainly have a big influence on the ability to read because in this approach there is a process of interaction between teachers and students using

pictorial and colourful books that contain interesting stories and plots.

Yacoob's study (2008: 1) suggests that the use of the big book in language learning fosters students' interest and participation. They contribute to the discussion and spontaneously comment on the content of the story. Images in the big book are very interesting, and the language is easy to read. These features have increased students' interest and motivation for reading. As this study of using big book is limited in the Indonesian context, this paper aims to see how far the ability of students in reading, especially the ability to recite reading, knowing difficult words, knowing punctuation, understanding and summarizing the readings are poured in the form of writing. Thus, this study illustrates the deeper reading ability as seen in the learning process of each cycle.

2 METHODS

The methodology used in this research is Action Research, which is doing an action and studying the action (Coghlan and Shani, 2005; Bargal, 2008). Because the research is done in the classroom, the objective is to improve the learning process. This method is applied considering the reading ability of the first grade students in MI Al-Ikhwan is low, where most of the students are able to read text only. Not all students are able to understand the contents of reading, the use of punctuation and vocabulary. There are even six students who have not been able to read clearly. Therefore, the big book approach is expected to improve students' reading ability. The subjects of this study are third grade students of MI Al-Ikhwan Bandung-Indonesia regency. There were 17 students consisting of 10 men and 7 women from various socio-economic background involved in this study.

Observations and tests were conducted to collect data. Observations were performed during the learning process of reading by using a big book, and the focus of observation is the activity of teachers and students. The activity is then scored. Tests were performed orally and in writing. Oral tests were done in the form of performance, and the focus of assessment is the pronunciation, fluency and understanding of the text. Meanwhile, the writing test was done by answering some questions in the form of essay. The test focused on grammar, vocabulary, understanding and concluding text.

The research procedure is carried out in a cyclical form. This design used a model known as

the self-reflection spiral system that begins with the plan, action, observation, reflection and re-planning is the basis for a solution to the problem-solving (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, Berg; 2004).

The design of the research on cycles 1 to 3 begins with planning stage. This stage included preparing material and big book media to be used at the time of action and the lesson plan to be used at the time of learning. Besides, this stage prepared observation instruments in the form of observation observation sheet, and made evaluation tools, such as writing test and oral test. Students were tested individually to see improvement of students reading skill after applying big book.

The second stage was implementation. The actions set in the lesson plan have been prepared at the planning stage, and teaching is done by the teacher in accordance with the steps in the RPP. The third stage is observation, which was conducted during the process of actions. Observations were used to collect data on teacher and student activities during the learning process. Observations were made by colleagues at the school. The fourth stage is reflection. At this stage the researcher analyzes all the information recorded in the learning process through observation and test format.

These four designs continued until three cycles because in the cycles the reading ability is expected to be achieved. Data analysis was performed by calculating the observed activities and counted in percentage. Each activity item contained in the observation sheet was scored 1 for the activity that has been done and 0 for the activity that has not been done, and the overall result was then averaged. For the analysis of test data the researcher used the technique of mastery analysis of individual learning and classical learning completeness. Individual learning completeness was meant to measure the level of each student's ability while the completeness of classical learning was to know the overall mastery of student learning.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The results of cycle 1 show that at the planning stage the lesson plan was made based on learning indicators that focused on how students can predict the story, recognize difficult words, understand the story content, and summarize the story content. The media used was a big book with the theme "a week with grandpa". At the observation stage all the

activities of teachers and students were observed and scored using the observation sheet. Based on the results, more than half of the students (55%) actively involved in the learning, while the rest of the students were not actively involved in the learning. This could be due to unfamiliar use of the big book approach in reading class.

At the stage of implementation, students followed the learning stage quite well although not all students could follow because the students were still adapting to the approach. They could predict the content of the story, expressed the experience of the story, predicted the difficult words, recognized punctuation, practiced the conversations of the characters in the story in front of the class, discussed the contents of the story with friends, summarized the story and read aloud. At the end of the learning the teacher made evaluation to find out how far students could predict the story, knew the difficult words, understood the story content, and summarized the story content. The results of the evaluation can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1: Learning Results in Cycle 1.

| Student Level of Completeness | Student Level of Incompleteness | Average |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 35% | 65% | 62% |

Table 1 shows that the result of individual completeness was 35% equivalent to 6 students were able to read after using big book. The ability to read in this cycle was using correct pronunciation, fluent in reading, correct grammar, vocabulary diverse, can understand and summarize the reading. Meanwhile, the rest of 65% or equivalent to 11 students has not been able to read in accordance with expectations. The average score was 62% indicating that some students were quite able to read. In this cycle students still adapted to the big book approach, and they never got such reading teaching so there were many students who had not understood the flow of this approach. In the reflection phase, students who were still adaptable and were not serious in learning should be prioritized for consideration in the next cycle.

The planning process in cycle 2 remains the same as cycle 1, and the theme given was also still "A week with grandpa". But, the content is slightly changed from the previous cycle. In this stage the teacher prepared the learning well and really mastered every step of learning with big book. The results of observation in cycle 2 showed that more students actively involved in learning (68%) as

students became familiar with the teaching approach using big book and students seemed to have more interest.

At the stage of implementation, similar findings as cycle 1 were found. There were some students who needed treatments in reading. The results of the evaluation can be seen in the table below:

Table 2: Learning Results in Cycle 2.

| Student Level of Completeness | Student Level of Incompleteness | Average |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 82% | 18% | 79% |

Table 2 shows an individual completeness of 82% or equivalent to 14 students who were able to read and only remaining 18% or 3 students who had not been able to read with correct pronunciation, fluent in reading, correct grammar, vocabulary diverse, able to understand and summarize the reading. The average percentage for all students in cycle 2 was 79%, which meant that most students could answer the tests correctly. The reflection is that teachers should refocus learning on the three students who have not been able to read.

In cycle 3, the planning process remains the same as before. The theme given was still "A week with grandpa", but the content was slightly different from the previous cycle. In this case the teacher prepares the learning as before. The results show a significant increase where 89% of the students participated actively in the learning activities. They were enthusiastic in learning. Meanwhile, 11% of them were not actively involved and required treatment.

The individual level of completeness was also improved as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Learning Results in Cycle 3.

| Student Level of Completeness | Student Level of Incompleteness | Average |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 94% | 6% | 90% |

Table 3 shows that 94% or as many as 16 students were able to read and 6% was equivalent to one student is not able to read, due to dyslexia, so another way to overcome them was required. The average achievement was 90% indicating that students' reading ability was very high after using the big book approach.

The comparison of reading achievement in each cycle was shown in Figure 1.

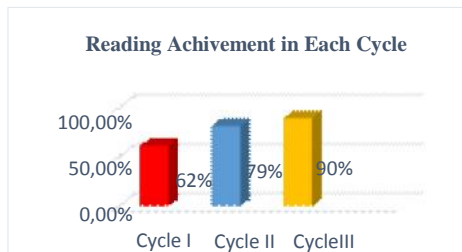


Figure 1: Reading achievement in each cycle.

Figure 1 shows that there was a significant increase in each cycle. In cycle 1, the ability to read was at a score of 62% meaning that students were able to read. In cycle 2, the increase was quite high with 79% and 90% in cycle 3 indicating that almost all students are able to read well through learning big book.

3.2 Discussion

This research reveals that in cycle 1 students reading ability by using big book had not increased significantly. Only 35% or 6 people out of 17 students were able to read with correct pronunciation, various vocabulary, understand and conclude readings. The number had a correlation with the activities of the students when learning to read with a big book, where only 55% who follow every step of learning with enthusiasm. This happens because students have not adapted to the big book approach. They have never learned with this approach before. In the second cycle students' reading ability increased sharply, by 79% or 14 people from 17 students who are able to read correctly. And this is in line with the activity that began to increase that was equal to 68% of active students and enthusiastic with learning to read through the big book approach. The highest achievement was in cycle 3, where 90% or 16 people from 17 students had been able to master reading ability deeply through big book.

According to Combs (Loughrey, 2001:92), good readers and poor readers approach the task of reading very differently. She claims that good readers view reading as a process of "...interacting with a text to construct meaning". Furthermore, Loughrey (2001:92) explains that to help all children do what good readers do naturally, the teacher should begin the reading session by helping children consider what they know about the topic and drawing from them predictions and theories about the story content. The interaction between teachers

and students can be seen in every stage of learning big book, almost every step of learning occurs the process of interaction between teachers and students. Just as at the time the teacher provoked the students to predict the big book title, and when the teacher instructed the students to share experiences related to the big book title, Cassady (1988: 20) says that "...the constant predicting/confirming mental act that improves memory of the text and provides for an understanding or appreciation of the author's intent".

In the next steps, there is a process in which students should read aloud the text or called reading aloud, it can enhance children's enjoyment and understanding of literature, develops their oral vocabulary, receptive as well as expressive (Coombs, 1987; Cassady, 1988), fosters the concept of what reading is and what reading is for, develops prereading skills such as left-to-right progression and the noting of story details, fosters an understanding of the conventions and jargon of print (e.g., "word," "line," "sentence," "top of the page") in a natural setting, gives children a sense of "book language," while seeing the text and hearing it read, as well as discussion of the story elements during and after the reading (Cassady, 1988:23), develops visual discrimination as well as letter and word recognition (Holdaway, 1979; Cassady, 1988), provides for activities that aid critical and creative thinking skills.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, big book approach is very influential on students' ability in reading. The reading process along with the big book approach needs to be supported by guided reading. Usually guided reading is done on a small group of 4 - 5 students. The form of the book is small and the content is the same as the contents of the big book. In this small group of teachers can explore more in the ability of students so that the results will be more leverage. In addition, this study found students who have dyslexia so it needs a certain approach for students with such needs. The rest of this approach can be recommended as an approach to improving literacy at the primary school level.

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