USING A CONCEPTUALLY RELATED TEXT IN PRE-READING STAGE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

Reading skill is very important for learners to support their need in developing their knowledge. However, there are still many problems which are faced by the learners in the reading process. A lot of reading materials use unfamiliar concepts and new information which create burden for the learners to grab the information. Moreover, the lack of vocabulary which is used is also become the problem. Those difficulties that may be encountered by the learners may affect their motivation to read and their achievement in the reading classroom. Teaching activity in pre-reading stage plays important roles for the learners to comprehend texts that will be read. If the teachers cannot optimize the benefits that can be taken in this stage, it may result in students non-comprehension of reading. Carrel (1988) states that the reader's failure to activate an appropriate schema in reading may result in various degrees of non-comprehension (as cited in Navarro, 2008). Not only activating background knowledge, pre-reading activities are also beneficial in developing learners vocabulary and building their motivation (Colorado, 2008). Using a conceptually related text is an activity that teacher can use in pre-reading stage. According to Crafton (1983) as cited in Vacca and Vacca (1989), by reading a text with same concept, the learners will be familiar with the concept and they will have better understanding on the next reading. This paper aims to share a conceptually related text that can be used by teacher in pre-reading stage. The discussion begins with a brief theoretical review of reading, and followed by theoretical review of stages in teaching reading especially pre-reading stage. Finally, in the end of this paper, there is a discussion on the implementation of "A Conceptually Related Text" in reading classroom.

Key words: conceptually related text, pre-reading

I.   Introduction

Reading skill is very important for learners to support their need in developing their knowledge. The learners will come to many supporting learning materials in reading forms**.** However, there are still many problems which are faced by the learners in the reading process. A lot of reading materials use unfamiliar concepts and new information which create burden for the learners to grab the information. Moreover, the lack of vocabulary which is used is also become the problem, especially for English Foreign Language Learners. Those difficulties that may be encountered by the learners may also affect their

motivation to read. Those obstacles will affect the learners' achievement in the reading classroom.

The reading classroom is created to give the learners the reading strategies which make them improve their reading ability. Later, they will become independent learners who improve themselves through reading. In a reading classroom, a teacher provides techniques used in every step of reading process to help the learners achieve their reading comprehension as the goals of reading activity. The teaching strategy which is used by the teacher becomes one of the factors affecting students ability to achieve their reading comprehension.

In teaching reading, there is a crucial stage of teaching that is usually out of the teachers' main concern. Teaching activity in pre-reading stage plays important roles for the learners to comprehend texts that will be read. If the teachers cannot optimize the benefits that can be taken in this stage, it may result in students non-comprehension of reading. For instance, activating students background is one of main purpose in pre-reading stage which will help the students achieve their reading comprehension.

Carrel (1988) states that the reader's failure to activate an appropriate schema in reading may result in various degrees of non-comprehension (as cited in Navarro, 2008). Through pre-reading activities, the teachers can prepare the students before they start to read. "Pre-reading activities are especially important, as they prepare students to read a selection." (Armbruster& Osborn, 2002:85). Not only activating background knowledge, pre-reading activities are also beneficial in developing learners vocabulary and building their motivation(Colorado,2008). Motivation is important for the successful learning. Marinak and Gambrell (2009:1) state, "Research confirms that student motivation is a key factor in successful reading" . The activities will help the students achieve the goals of the reading process. Therefore, preparing the students before they start to read will create an effective reading classroom.

Learners may encounter problems in reading process while they are not familiar with the content of their reading. It will affect their reading comprehension. The learners will not comprehend the text well. Using a conceptually related text is one of the activity that teacher can use in pre-reading stage. A conceptually related text also makes the learners familiar with the concept in the text that will be read. According to Crafton (1983) as cited in Vacca and Vacca (1989), by reading a text with same concept, the learners will be familiar with the concept and they will have better understanding on the next reading.

This paper aims to share a conceptually related text that can be used by teacher in pre-reading stage. It can be used as an alternative by those who wish to optimize their reading classroom. A conceptually related text, which means texts that have the same concept with the main reading, can be applied in pre-reading activity. The discussion begins with a brief theoretical review of reading, and followed by theoretical review of stages in teaching reading especially pre-reading stage. Finally, in the end of this paper, there is a discussion on the implementation of "A Conceptually Related Text" in reading classroom.

II.   Reading

The process to get information which is written in a text is reading. In the process of reading, there is a transfer information that is provided in a reading text to the readers. The readers should be able to understand the meaning of a text and interpret the information well(Stoller &Grabe, 2002). Although it is receptive skill, reading is considered as an active process.While readers construct meaning and build their understanding, there is a process of making relations between the new information, the knowledge that readers already have, and the context situation of the reading (Anthony et. al. as cited in Farrel, 2009:20).

A. Models of Reading Process

There are three approaches used by the readers to understand a written text. They are bottom up processing, top-down processing, and interactive processing.

1.   Bottom-up processing

Bottom-up processing is considered as a lower-level reading process. This process emphasizes that the readers build their reading comprehension from the detailed structures of the text. Stoller and Grabe (2002:32) stated that the readers who use this kind of processing will create a piece by piece mental translation of the information in the text. There will be little interference from the reader's own background knowledge.

2.   Top-down processing

Top-down processing emphasizes the importance of the reader's background knowledge in the process of achieving their reading comprehension. Alderson (2000) states that top-down processing focus on the importance of the readers' background knowledge and the readers will have contribution by carrying over their previous knowledge to the text. It means that the readers will involve their prior knowledge while they are in the process of comprehending the text. Moreover, Stoller and Grabe (2002:32) state, "Top-down models assume that reading is primarily directed by reader goals and expectations".Therefore, in top-down processing, besides bringing the previous knowledge, the readers also have purposes and expectations of the information they will find in the text.

3. Interactive Processing

Interactive processing is the process of reading which combines the models of bottom-up processing and top-down processing. Nunan (2003) states that in interactive processing model, the elements of both bottom-up and top-down models are combined. Stoller and Grabe (2002:33) note, "The simple idea behind this view is that one can take useful ideas from bottom-up perspective and combine them with key ideas from a top-down view". In other words, the interactive processing was used while the readersc combine the bottom-up ideas and top-down ideas. From the explanation of both previous processing, it can be concluded that in the interactive processing, the readers not only approach the reading text by understanding the detailed structure or construction of the sentences of the text. However, they also bring their background knowledge to the text

which they want to read. The readers see how their prior knowledge and experiences fit into the text.

B. Levels of Comprehension

1. Literal Comprehension

This level of comprehension is considered as the the lowest understanding level. It is a prerequisite for higher level of understanding. the practice of literal comprehension still dominates while people are in the elemmentary grades. It involves acquiring information that is directly stated in a text. According to Burns, et al. (1984:177) main ideas, causes, effects, and sequences, is the basis of literal comprehension.

2. Interpretive Comprehension

At this level of comprehension, the readers involves making inferences in reading. This king of comprehension concern with process of supplying meaning that are implied rather than directly stated. Burns, et al. (1984) include skills for interpretive comprehension as inferring main ideas or passages in which the main ideas are not clearly stated, inferring cause and effect relationship even they are not directly stated. Moreover, they are inferring referents of pronuns, inferring referents of adverbs, inferring omitted words, detecting mood, detecting author's purpose in writing, and drawing conclusion

3. Critical comprehension

At this level, the readers are able to evaluate the information in written material. They compare the ideas discovered in the material with standard ideas. They are also able to draw conclusions about the accuracy, truthfullness, and timeliness. From, these activities, the critical reader must be an active reader who questions, searches for facts (Burns, et.al, 1984).

4. Creative Comprehension

This level of comprehension requires the reader to be involved beyond the material presented by the author and requires them to use their imaginations. Creative comprehension is concerned with problems solving, making value judgements regarding the action of characters , producing new creation, improving story presentation, predicting outcomes, visualization, and cause effect.

C. Factors affecting comprehension

Tompkins (2014) classified factors affecting comprehension into two aspects :

1. Reader

a. Background Knowledge : Whether the students are able activate their previous experience and literary knowledge in order to link what they know to what they're reading.

b. Vocabulary : Students recognize the meaning of familiar words and apply strategies to understand what they're reading.

c. Fluency : Students have adequate cognitive resources available to understand what they're reading when they read fluently.

d. Comprehension Strategies: Students actively direct their reading, monitor their understanding, and troubleshoot problems when they occur.

e. Comprehension Skills: Students automatically note details that support main ideas, sequence ideas, and use other skills.

f. Motivation: Motivated students are more engaged in reading, more confident, and more likely to comprehend successfully.

2. **Text**

   a. Genres: Genres have unique characteristics, and students' knowledge of them provides a scaffold for comprehension.

   b. Text Structures : Students recognize the important ideas more easily when they understand the patterns that authors use to organiz e text.

   c. Text Features: Students apply their knowledge of the conventions and literary devices used in texts to deepen their understanding.

III.   Teaching Reading Stages

According to Wallace (2003), there are three main types in the reading activity, those which come before the presentation of the text, those which go with the text, and those which follow it. Those are pre-, while-, and post- reading stages. The focus of this paper is the pre-reading stage, therefore the section of pre-reading activity will be discussed more than the other stages of teaching reading.

A. Pre-reading Stage

1. Definition

Vacca and Vacca (1989) state that pre-reading activities involve the activities and discussions before reading which reduce the uncertainty that the students bring to the texts. Moreover, pre-reading activities are considered important because they can prepare the students before reading (Armbruster& Osborn, 2002). Therefore, pre-reading activities are the activities which take place before students read a text and are important to prepare the students before reading.

Moreover, pre-reading activities are able to activate the students' background knowledge. Nunan (2003) states that all experiences which are accumulated and brought to the reading texts belong to the readers' background knowledge. Background knowledge includes all of the experiences that a reader brings to a text such as life experiences and educational experiences. Moreover, knowledge of how texts can be organized rhetorically, knowledge of how one's first language works, knowledge of how the second language works, and cultural background knowledge also belongs to background knowledge. Pre-reading activities help the students to relate their background knowledge and the new information which they find in the text. Wallace (2003) states that prereading activities may remind the readers of what they already know and activate their existing schematic knowledge. Meanwhile, Ajideh (2006:6) states, "Prereading strategies have been developed to help students relate new information in written discourse to their existing knowledge". Pre-reading activities are able to activate the students' background knowledge and relate it to the new information which they will find in the texts.

2. Teacher's Roles in Pre-reading Activities

The teachers have the important roles to provide effective instructions in the pre-reading stage of the reading classroom.There are many activities which can be conducted by the teacher.The purpose of pre-reading activities are to activate the students' background knowledge and to motivate and interest them in doing the reading with one or more definite purposes in mind (Durkin, 1987). According to Vacca and Vacca (1989:70), during the pre-reading phase of instruction, a teacher often emphasize one or more of the following purposes: (1) motivating readers, (2) building and activating background knowledge, (3) introducing key ocabulary and concepts, and (4) developing awareness of the task demands of the assignment and the strategies necessary for effective learning.

In pre-reading activities, the teachers have to develop the students' motivation to follow a reading class. Vacca and Vacca (1989) state that the key factor to motivate students is by getting the students interested in the text reading. In activating students' background knowledge, the teacher should make the students realize what they already know about the text they want to read. First, the teachers need to make the students curious toward the text. Vacca and Vacca (1989) state that arousing curiosity will lead the students to anticipate and to have purposes in reading. Therefore, the students have the chances to consider what they already know about the material to be read.

Moreover, helping the students to make predictions about the information which they will find in the text will also help them to activate their background knowledge. Vacca and Vacca (1989) state that prediction is a sure aid for achieving the reading comprehension. They state that strategies and materials for prediction activate thought about the content before reading. However, if the students do not possess any background knowledge related to the information in the text, the teachers need to build the background knowledge in the pre-reading stage. Nunan (2003) mentions if the topic of the text is unfamiliar for the students, the teachers may need to build up the background knowledge in the beginning of the reading process.

Furthermore, in the pre-reading stage, the teachers can introducea key vocabulary and concept of the reading materials to the students. Vacca and Vacca (1989) state in the pre-reading stage, the teachers can help the students to analyze the reading tasks they will face.

B. Whilst-reading Stage

While-reading activities are also usually called during-reading activities. The purpose of while-reading activities is preventing the students as passive readers. The purposes of while-reading activities are to encourage learners to be flexible, active, and reflective readers (Wallace,2003). Hedge (2000) also states that the general aim of while-reading activities is to encourage the learners to be active as they read. Therefore, while-reading activities are used to encourage the students to be active in the process of reading.

The activities provided in whilst-reading have to be able to assist the students in the process of achieving their reading comprehension. According to Hedge (2000), there are many kinds of while-reading activities that the teachers can provide to the students. Students can be given activities which require them to do any of the following: follow the

order ideas in a text; react to the opinions expressed; understand the information it contains; ask themselves question; makenotes; confirm expectations or prior knowledge, or predict the next part of the text from various clues.

C. Post-reading Stage

Hedge (2000) states that we can apply many variations of post-reading activities as long as they have relations to the reading purpose. Therefore, the students can check and discuss the activities in the while-reading and get the benefits from what they have read, for instance, debate, role-play, reading of contrasting texts, or focusing on its language. Moreover, Armbruster and Osborn (2002) also mention some post-reading activities such as further questioning, discussion, writing, drama, art, music, and dance. Those are the activities that can be applied in the post-reading stage.

IV.   A Conceptually Related Text as A Pre-reading Activity

A. The nature of A conceptually Related Text

Reading about a topic can drammatically improve comprehension of related reading on the same topic. This statement is proven by Crafton (1983) as cited by Vacca and Vacca (1989: 126), Crafton found that when high school students read two different articles on the same subject, the students' comprehension of the second article improved and they read more actively. Vacca and Vacca (1989) propose that a conceptually related text can be used in pre-reading stage. The act of reading the conceptually related text can generate background knowledge and build a frame of reference that can be used to comprehend other discourse.

This strategy can be applied in an intermediate or advance reading classroom because it will be beneficial for teaching reading with long and heavy materials. The conceptually related text used should be in a same topic with the main reading. It is not quite appropriate for teaching very short text to the learners. The length of the main texts also becomes our consideration whether this techniques is applicable or not.
The advantage of the use of more than one text is that the students can expand their understanding on a particular concept from different perspective and different styles. It is beneficial to generate background knowledge and build a frame of reference that can be used to comprehend the other text.

Moreover, using the conceptually related text will provide vocabulary that are related and will be used in the main activity. The students will be familiar with vocabulary that may be used in the main text. The conceptually related text which is used can be taken from other sources or created by the teacher. To optimize the vocabulary building in the pre-reading stage, the teacher can create their own conceptually related text before teaching reading. There is an importance for teachers to make the students familiar with the words related to the text before reading. It will help the students to achieve their understanding of the text well(Mihara, 2011).

The conceptually related text must be less difficult than the main text to keep students' motivation in following the reading activity. Giving more difficult text will

reduce their motivation. According to Marinak and Gambrell (2009) motivation is a key factor for the successful reading.

B.   The Implementation of A Conceptually Related Text in the Pre-reading Activity.

There are four main stages in the implementation of a conceptually related text. In the first stage, the learners will be given a time to "read the conceptually related text". Later, they will find a topic of the reading that will be used in the main reading. The second is "initial association with the concept". According to Langer (1981) as cited in Vacca and Vacca (1993) during the initial association with the concept phase, the students have their opportunity to find association between the key concept and their prior knowledge. Langer stated that the teacher can says, "*Tell anything that come to mind when reading the text.*"

The third stage is "reflections on initial associations". This stage shows one of the benefits of the conceptually related text while the students can build their concept based on the context provided in the text. The conceptually related text brings another point of view related to the topic. For instance, while teaching expository text entitled, " Using Mobile Phone in School should be banned or not?" the teacher can use conceptually ralated text entitled "How to take selfie in classroom without being caught?". In this reflection stage, the teacher can ask the students to think by asking "*Have you ever done that in classroom?*" Langer (1981) as cited in Vacca and Vacca (1993) stated that this phase helps the students to develop the awareness of their network of associations. They may relate it with their own experience.

In the fourth stage, the teachers help students to "set prediction on the information which the students may find from main reading". Vacca and Vacca (1989:142) state, "Prediction is a sure aid to reading comprehension. For one thing, strategies and materials for prediction activate thought about the content before reading".

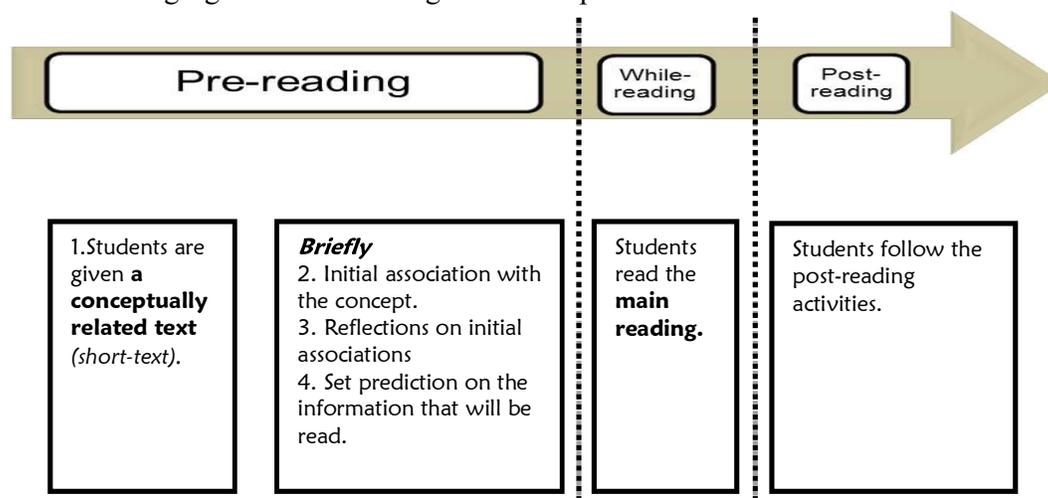The following figure shows the stages of the implementation:

**Figure 1. The Implementation of A conceptually related text
in the pre-reading stage of reading classroom**

V. Conclusion

A reading teacher needs to help learners to get along with the text since the beginning of the reading process. If the teacher can optimize the benefits the learners can get in the pre-reading stage, they will have better reading comprehension of the readings. In a pre-reading stage, a teacher can use a conceptually related text to prepare students before they read. It is beneficial for the students to generate their background knowledge and to have better understanding on the text they will read. This strategy can be used to solve students problem with unfamiliar concept of the reading texts. Therefore, the learners will achieve better reading comprehension.

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