

THE READING COMPREHENSION: THE USE OF START SIMPLE STORIES EXTENSIVE READING METHOD AT SMAN 5 PINRANG

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension remains a fundamental skill in English learning because it determines students' ability to obtain information, identify main ideas, and interpret written texts. This study aimed to examine whether the Start Simple Stories Extensive Reading (SSS ER) method could improve the reading comprehension of tenth-grade students at SMAN 5 Pinrang. The study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test model. The sample consisted of 29 students from class X.4 selected through purposive sampling because the class needed instructional support in reading comprehension. Data were collected through multiple-choice reading tests administered before and after the treatment. The findings showed a clear increase in students' achievement. The mean score increased from 45.86 in the pre-test to 82.07 in the post-test, while the standard deviation decreased from 14.52 to 7.74. The t-test value was 14.48, which was higher than the t-table value of 1.701. These results indicate that SSS ER was effective in improving students' reading comprehension. The method also encouraged students to read easier and more interesting texts independently without relying heavily on dictionaries.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Reading Comprehension, Start Simple Stories, Students, Teaching Method

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables learners to access information, construct meaning, and develop academic understanding through written texts. Reading is not merely the activity of pronouncing words or identifying written symbols. It involves the process of connecting textual information with prior knowledge, understanding the author's message, and interpreting ideas in a meaningful way. For students learning English as a foreign language, reading comprehension becomes an important indicator of their ability to engage with texts and use English for academic purposes (Snow, 2002; Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007).

In the context of senior high school learning, reading comprehension is often challenging because students need sufficient vocabulary, contextual understanding, and confidence to interpret English texts. Students may recognize individual words, yet still fail to understand the whole meaning of the text. This condition shows that comprehension requires more than word recognition. It requires students to identify explicit information, infer meaning, recognize main ideas, and relate information across sentences and paragraphs (Duffy, 2009; Klingner et al., 2007).

The preliminary condition observed at SMAN 5 Pinrang showed several problems in students' reading learning. Students had difficulty identifying unfamiliar words, finding main ideas, and understanding reference words in the texts they read. Some students were also less interested in English lessons and lacked confidence when they were asked to read in front of the class. These problems were strengthened by the classroom practice in which reading instruction tended to rely on lecturing and question-answer activities. In such a situation, students tended to search for similar words in the question and the paragraph rather than comprehend the text as a whole.

Previous studies have reported similar problems. Nurjamaliah (2018) found that students' limited vocabulary, monotonous reading activities, and difficulty translating sentences contextually could reduce comprehension. Idawana (2021) also reported that students had difficulties in vocabulary mastery and contextual understanding when reading English texts. These findings suggest that reading instruction needs a method that provides accessible texts, encourages students' interest, and allows students to read with less anxiety.

Start Simple Stories Extensive Reading (SSS ER) is one method that may respond to these problems. The method encourages students to begin reading with simple and interesting stories, avoid excessive dependence on dictionaries, skip difficult words when necessary, and change the text when the text is too difficult or uninteresting. These principles are consistent with extensive reading, which emphasizes easy materials, learner choice, large amounts of reading, and reading for general understanding and enjoyment (Day, 2002). Through this method, students are expected to build reading confidence and develop comprehension gradually.

Based on this background, this study focused on the use of SSS ER in teaching reading comprehension to tenth-grade students at SMAN 5 Pinrang. The research question was: How can the Start Simple Stories Extensive Reading method improve students' reading comprehension? The objective of the study was to find out whether the SSS ER method could improve students' reading comprehension after its implementation in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. The design applied was a one-group pre-test and post-test design, in which students were tested before and after the treatment. This design was selected because it allowed the researcher to compare students' reading comprehension achievement before and after the implementation of the SSS ER method. The design can be represented as O1-X-O2, where O1 refers to the pre-test, X refers to the treatment, and O2 refers to the post-test (Sugiyono, 2015).

The research was conducted at SMAN 5 Pinrang. The population consisted of six tenth-grade classes with 171 students. The sample was selected through purposive sampling based on the teacher's consideration that the class still needed support in reading comprehension. The selected class was X.4, which consisted of 29 students. The research instrument was a multiple-choice reading comprehension test used in both the pre-test and post-test.

The data collection procedure consisted of three stages. First, the researcher administered the pre-test to measure students' initial reading comprehension. Second, the researcher implemented the SSS ER treatment by providing several reading texts, allowing students to choose texts based on their interest, guiding students to set reading purposes, asking students to read without using dictionaries, allowing them to skip difficult words, and permitting them to change the text when it was too difficult or not interesting. Third, the researcher administered the post-test after the treatment to identify students' improvement.

The data were analyzed quantitatively. Students' test scores were calculated by dividing the number of correct answers by the total number of items and multiplying the result by 100. The scores were then classified into five categories: very good, good, fair, poor, and very poor. The mean score, percentage, standard deviation, and t-test were calculated to determine whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings show that students' reading comprehension improved after the implementation of the SSS ER method. The improvement can be seen from the distribution of students' score classifications in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 1. Students' Score Classification in the Pre-test and Post-test

No.	Category	Score	Pre f	Post f	Pre (%)	Post (%)
1	Very Good	86-100	0	8	0	27.59
2	Good	71-85	0	17	0	58.62
3	Fair	56-70	8	4	27.59	13.79
4	Poor	41-55	7	0	24.14	0
5	Very Poor	<40	14	0	48.28	0
	Total		29	29	100	100

Source: Authors' results.

Table 1 indicates that no students were classified as good or very good in the pre-test. The largest proportion of students was in the very poor category, with 14 students or 48.28%. After the treatment, the distribution changed substantially. Eight students or 27.59% reached the very good category, 17 students or 58.62% reached the good category, and no students remained in the poor or very poor categories.

Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Pre-test and Post-test

Test	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	45.86	14.52
Post-test	82.07	7.74

Source: Authors' results.

Table 2 shows that the mean score increased from 45.86 in the pre-test to 82.07 in the post-test. The increase of 36.21 points indicates that students' reading comprehension achievement improved after the implementation of SSS ER. The standard deviation also decreased from 14.52 to 7.74, which indicates that students' post-test scores became more consistent after the treatment.

Table 3. Result of the t-test

Variable	t-test	t-table
Pre-test and Post-test	14.48	1.701

Source: Authors' results.

Table 3 shows that the t-test value was 14.48, while the t-table value was 1.701. Since the t-test value was higher than the t-table value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This result means that there was a significant difference between students' reading comprehension scores before and after the implementation of the SSS ER method.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the SSS ER method was effective in improving the reading comprehension of tenth-grade students at SMAN 5 Pinrang. Before the treatment, students' performance was generally low. Many students had difficulty understanding the main idea, recognizing references, and interpreting information from the text. After the treatment, most students moved into the good and very good categories. This improvement suggests that the

method helped students engage with reading materials in a more accessible and meaningful way.

The improvement can be explained by the characteristics of SSS ER. The method encourages students to read simple texts before moving to more complex texts. This approach reduces the cognitive burden that often appears when students are forced to read texts containing too many unfamiliar words. By reading easier texts, students can focus on understanding meaning rather than translating every word. This condition supports the view that reading comprehension develops when students are able to connect textual information with prior knowledge and maintain attention to meaning (Snow, 2002; Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007).

Another important aspect of the method is learner choice. Students were allowed to choose reading texts based on their interest. This element made the reading activity more personal and less intimidating. When students read texts that they consider interesting, they are more likely to continue reading and make an effort to understand the content. This is consistent with the principle of extensive reading, in which learners choose what they want to read and read for pleasure, information, and general understanding (Day, 2002).

The method also discouraged excessive dependence on dictionaries. Students were asked to skip difficult words when the meaning of the text could still be understood. This procedure helped students develop the habit of inferring meaning from context. It also prevented students from stopping too frequently while reading. As a result, students could maintain reading flow and build confidence in understanding English texts independently.

The present finding is in line with previous studies. Faiz (2010) reported that SSS ER created a pleasant reading atmosphere and improved students' reading habits. Ellyana (2013) also found that students' reading comprehension improved after they were taught using Start Simple Stories activities. Idawana (2021) reported that the method improved students' literal reading comprehension through repeated reading practice and student engagement. The consistency between the present study and earlier studies strengthens the argument that simple, interesting, and accessible reading materials can support students' reading comprehension achievement.

Although the findings were positive, this study had a methodological limitation. The pre-experimental design did not involve a control group. Therefore, the improvement should be interpreted as evidence of progress after treatment, but future studies should use a quasi-experimental or true experimental design to compare SSS ER with other reading methods.

Future researchers may also examine students' reading motivation, vocabulary development, and long-term reading habits after the implementation of SSS ER.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the Start Simple Stories Extensive Reading method was effective in improving students' reading comprehension at SMAN 5 Pinrang. The students' mean score increased from 45.86 in the pre-test to 82.07 in the post-test, and the t-test value of 14.48 was higher than the t-table value of 1.701. These results showed a significant improvement after the treatment. The method helped students read simple and interesting texts, reduce dependence on dictionaries, skip difficult words when necessary, and develop greater confidence in understanding English texts. The practical implication of this study is that English teachers can use SSS ER as an alternative method for reading instruction, especially when students face difficulties with vocabulary, main ideas, and text comprehension. Future research should involve a control group and examine the long-term impact of SSS ER on reading habits and reading motivation.

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