THE USE OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan teknik pertanyaan terbuka dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa dan menemukan hambatan siswa dalam menggunakan teknik pertanyaan terbuka. Studi dilakukan di SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar dengan melibatkan 16 siswa kelas II (kelas VIII). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan desain penelitian pre-experimental, studi ini mengumpulkan data melalui pre-test, post-test, dan kuesioner. Setelah dilakukan pengolahan data, peneliti mendapatkan nilai rata-rata post-test lebih besar dari nilai rata-rata pre-test yaitu 58,31 > 19,81. Terbukti bahwa penggunaan teknik pertanyaan terbuka dalam pengajaran pemahaman membaca meningkat sebesar 38,5%. Ini berarti bahwa dengan menggunakan teknik pertanyaan terbuka meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Selain itu, berdasarkan respon siswa terhadap angket melalui Google Form, kendala paling umum yang dihadapi siswa dikategorikan dalam memahami kosa kata.

Kata kunci: teknik bertanya terbuka, pemahaman membaca, peningkatan

Abstract

The study aims to find out the use of open-ended questioning techniques in improving students' reading comprehension and found students' obstacles in using open-ended questioning techniques. The study was conducted at SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar and involved 16 students in class II (class VIII). By using a quantitative approach and a pre-experimental research design, this study collected data through pre-test, post-test, and questionnaires. After processing the data, the writer got the post-test average value greater than the pre-test average value, which is 58.31 > 19.81. It was proven that the use of open-ended questioning techniques in teaching reading comprehension improved by 38.5%. This means that using the open-ended questioning technique improved students' reading comprehension. In addition, based on students' responses to the questionnaire via a Google form, the most common obstacles faced by the students were categorized into understanding vocabulary.

***Keywords:** open-ended questioning technique, reading comprehension, improvement*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in English, and it gives us many benefits. It is an important skill as it can improve students' ability to acquire knowledge about the world. Furthermore, it is one of the activities to understand the author's ideas to communicate with the readers and it can expand the student's knowledge of any skill. According to Khoshsima & Pourjam, (2014), the main purpose of language teaching is communication, then improving students' reading comprehension competence becomes an overall goal in language teaching. According to Elleman & Oslund, (2019) reading comprehension is one of the most complex behaviors in which humans engage. Comprehension occurs when new information interacts with old information already stored in your memory. Students will achieve all of these goals as they understand and comprehend the text being read. To make sense of a text, readers are taking part in constructive processes. Therefore, it is necessary to know the existing material through an appropriate technique to guide the students for easier understanding.

According to Kuşdemir, (2020) in the process of reading, questions are the main element to clarify a reader's reading style, level of understanding, speed of reading, and factors affecting understanding. This brings the role of questions to an important point in learning and teaching activities. The use of open-ended questions asked by teachers during reading comprehension instruction can foster deeper understanding (Blything & Cain, 2019). Open-ended questions often start with a question such as *why* and *how* naturally call for detailed explanations which a child can provide more detailed responses using their curiosity, reasoning skills, and creativity. The open-ended questions are essential in engaging children in cognitively challenging conversations and promoting higher-order thinking, but they also offer linguistic advantages for children. They help develop children's vocabulary and cognitive skills (Cakir & Cengiz, 2016). Teachers use open-ended questions to promote students´ higher-order thinking skills that help them create their meanings (Cárdenas, 2021). As Sarah, St., Muhajir., Sulastri. (2023) said in open-ended questions allow the respondent to control his/her state of text comprehension and can also provide good guidance in dealing with lower-order thinking skills. This view implies that any interaction that occurs when the reader answers a question will have a direct impact on the reader's understanding and learning of the text. This effect is determined by the nature of the interaction that occurs as a result of answering the question (Wixson, 1983). Badger & Thomas, (1992), claim that the information that open-ended questions provide justifies their use, and tasks that require students to construct their responses open a window to students' thinking and understanding.

Open-ended questions do not always have the same options as multiple-choice questions. There is not just one right answer to each question. Open-ended questions are a question to which several different answers will be acceptable (Cakir & Cengiz, 2016). The reader is expected to respond based on what he/she remembers and what he/she understands from reading (Kuşdemir, 2020). Zull, (2016), claims that all survey questions that do not include a set of response options are known as open-ended questions. Through open-ended questions, it is easy to observe how students structure their answers, how they manage the process of understanding the text and what they focus on in the text (Teana, Alma., Muhajir., Sulaiman, Rizkariani., 2023). In this way, teaching strategy and activity design can progress more concretely to improve students' reading comprehension skills. The open-ended questions are used to engage with the text and understand what you are reading. Asking open-ended questions is a necessary activity for checking students' understanding and keeping them engaged with the task at hand. Open-ended questions require

respondents to formulate a response in their own words and to express it verbally or in writing (Zull, 2016). Respondents are not steered in a particular direction by predefined response categories. Fordham, 92006), argue "What is important here is to ask questions that can help students understand well rather than asking questions that evaluate students' understanding of the text." Questions that help achieve this goal are the *why* questions. (Wangru, 2016).

A previous study carried out Cakir & Cengiz, (2016) provides evidence that student participation increases in lessons where teachers ask more open-ended questions. Another study shows that open-ended questions can be analyzed to confirm the ultimate differences in the forms and appearances of the answers in the applications conducted on the meaning Tobia et al., (2017), that text type is an important factor affecting comprehension and that primary and middle school students better understand narrative texts (Brandao & Oakhill, 2005). The previous study conducted Kuşdemir, (2020) is to examine the reading comprehension levels of primary school fourth-grade students based on their answers to open-ended questions about a narrative text. This study employing the descriptive survey model was conducted with the participation of 115 primary school fourth-grade students from a city in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey. An inventory consisting of 10 open-ended questions based on a narrative text was used to collect data. The level of reading comprehension of the students participating in the study was found to be in the stage of transition from the difficulty level to the instructional level. Khoshsima & Pourjam, (2014) in their study on The Effects of Close Tests and Open-Ended Questions on Reading Comprehension in Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of cloze tests and open-ended questions on the reading comprehension ability of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners. The writer decided 47 EFL language learners at an intermediate level, all female, from a high school in Chabahar, Iran were selected for this purpose. This study used a control-experimental design to collect research data using pre-test and post-test. The results of this study indicate that open-ended questions are significantly more effective on students' reading comprehension.

The purpose of the current study is to know whether using an open-ended questioning technique improves the student's reading comprehension in the eighth grade at SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar. Furthermore, the writer is also interested to find out the student's obstacles using open-ended questioning techniques in improving students' reading comprehension in the eighth grade at SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar.

METHOD

This study was conducted using a quantitative method with a pre-experimental approach with a one-group pre-test-post-test design (Gay, 2006). The experimental method enabled the writer to estimate an experimental treatment's effect (Ary, 2006). The population in this study were eighth-grade students' of SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar. The sample was taken by total sampling. The writer applied the total sampling technique because according to Sugiyono, (2007), if the total population were less than 100, then the entire population was used as a sample. The sample of this study was eighth-grade students' of SMP Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar. This class consisted of 16 students, with nine females and seven males. The writer used reading tests and questionnaires to collect the data in this study. The reading material consisted of ten open-ended questions administered in pre-test and post-test and a questionnaire was used to find out the student's obstacles using open-ended questioning techniques. According to Ary, (2006), the

questionnaire was an instrument in which respondents provided written responses to questions or marked items that indicated their responses. The data collected in this study were first tabulated and then analyzing it into the main analysis to know the mean score of the students by using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

      This chapter particularly presents the results of the study and its discussion. The results of the study consist of the result data analysis collected through pre-test and post-test. The discussion covers the detail of the results. In these results, the writer presents the data found from the pre-test and post-test also the distribution of the questionnaires via the Google form. During the discussion, the writer discussed the data contained in the pre-test and post-test, also the distribution of the questionnaires using the method from the previous chapter.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Pre-Test Score

Reading Comprehension Score	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	16	8	50	19.81	12.335

      The table 1 shows that the sample size was 16 students. It could be explained from the table above that the maximum score of students was 50 and the minimum score was 8, the average score was 19.81 and the standard deviation score was 12.335.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Post-Test Score

Reading Comprehension Score	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	16	42	100	58.31	13.280

      The table 2 shows that the sample size was 16 students. It could be explained from the table above that the maximum score of students was 100 and the minimum score is 42, the average score was 58.31 and the standard deviation score was 13.280.

Table 3. The Mean Score and Improvement of the Students' Tests

Indicator	Mean Score		Improvement %
	Pre-test	**Post-test**	
Reading Comprehension	19.81	58.31	38.5%

      The table 3 shows an improvement in student scores from the pre-test to the post-test. The score was obtained after assessing the student's reading test after being given treatment. The mean score improved significantly from 19.81 on the pre-test to 58.31 on the post-test. It was proven that the use of open-ended questioning techniques in teaching reading comprehension improved by 38.5%.

Table 4. The Results of the Questionnaire

N		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
	Valid	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4,0625	4,5625	4,7500	3,8750	3,8125	2,9375	2,1875	2,8125

The questionnaire consisted of eight (8) statements in Bahasa Indonesia representing five indicators. From the results of the student's obstacle questionnaire in the table 3.4, it could be said that there are two obstacles faced by students, namely determining the main idea and understanding vocabulary.

The Open-Ended Questioning Technique Improves Students' Reading Comprehension

Based on the result of the data analyses, it showed that the student's reading comprehension ability had improved. The students' score after applying the open-ended questioning technique was better than before the treatment was given to the students. Before giving the treatment, there were 15 students (94%) got very bad scores and there was 1 student (6,25%) got poor scores. While after the writer gave the treatment there were 7 students (44%) got poor scores, 5 students (32%) got fair scores, 3 students (19%) got good scores, and there was 1 student (6,25%) got a very good score. Based on the calculations, the mean score of the pre-test was 19.81 and the post-test was 58.31. It had an improvement from the score of the pre-test to the post-test was 38.5%. This result showed that there was a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension.

The previous study focused on the type of questions teachers asked, remarkably open-ended questions indicated that teachers asked more open-ended questions which resulted in more student participation, thus there was more dialogue in the classrooms (Cakir & Cengiz, 2016). Kuşdemir, (2020) examines the reading comprehension levels of primary school fourth-grade students based on their answers to open-ended questions about a narrative text indicating that a primary school student was at the stage of transition from the level of having difficulty to the instructional level. As cited in Shanahan, (2017) part of the popularity of the instructional level idea was that the teacher does not have to do as much (since the kids started out knowing almost all the words and could read the texts with high comprehension with no teacher support). Khoshsima & Pourjam, (2014), their study investigates the effectiveness of cloze tests and open-ended questions on the reading comprehension ability of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners indicating that open-ended questions were significantly more effective in students' reading comprehension. When the results of the current study were compared with the results of other studies, it could be said that open-ended questions demonstrate the basic competencies expected in reading comprehension.

The Student's Obstacle in Using the Open-Ended Questioning Technique to Improve Reading Comprehension

The results of the questionnaire using Google form showed that in the first statement of the respondents' obstacles questionnaire, the index was 93.8% (agree), and 6.3% (strongly agree), which means agree with the statement "I have difficulty determining the main idea in the reading text". The second statement "I had difficulty understanding the meaning of English vocabulary, so I do not understand what I read" from the results of filling out the respondent's obstacles perception questionnaire, the indexes were 75% (Strongly agree), 18.8% (uncertain), and 6.3% (Agree),

meaning that 80% of students agree with the statement and the third statement was "some words are foreign to me, which made it difficult for me to understand what I read". From the results of filling out the respondent's perception questionnaire, an index of 81.3% (strongly agree), 12.5% (agree), and 6.3% (uncertain).

For the fourth statement, "I'm having trouble finding specific information as asked" from the results of filling out the respondent's obstacles questionnaire, the index is 68.8% (Agree), 12.5% (strongly agree), 12.5% (uncertain), and 6.3% (disagree) which means 80% of students having trouble finding specific information and the fifth statement "It's hard for me to conclude", from the results of the respondents' perception filling, the indexes are 68.8% (Agree), 25% (uncertain), and 6.3% (strongly agree) which means 80% indicates that they have difficulty to conclude.

For the statement, "I don't understand the information in each section, so I don't understand the message the author wants to convey". From the results of filling out the respondent's obstacles questionnaire, the index was 93.8% (Uncertain), 6.3% (disagree), and the seventh statement "I don't like reading and learning English" filling out the respondent obstacles questionnaire, the index 81.3% (Disagree), 12.5% (Strongly disagree), and 6.3% (Agree) which means 85% of students reject or do not agree with the statement and the last statement results of filling out the respondent obstacles questionnaire, the index is 62.5% (Disagree), 12.5% (uncertain), 18.8% (Strongly Agree) and 6.3% (Agree).

From the results of the student's obstacle questionnaire above, it could be said that determining the main idea and understanding vocabulary were the obstacles in using open-ended questions in the reading comprehension tests which were faced by the 8th-grade students of Al-Izhar Cendekia Makassar. Different studies carried out (Ivony, 2017), were conducted to find out the students' difficulty in answering open-ended questions. Tests and questionnaires were used in collecting data. The results of the test showed that students' mean score was poor and the students' responses to the given questionnaire were categorized into lack of motivation or interest, vocabulary mastery, students' background knowledge and students' environment. When the results of the previous study were compared with the results of a recent study, it could be said that the most common obstacle students faced in using open-ended questions in reading comprehension was understanding vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study the writer concluded that the use of the open-ended questioning technique improves students' reading comprehension. This was proved by the average value of the post-test being higher than the pre-test. Based on the calculations, the mean score of the pre-test was 26.25 and the post-test was 89.81. It had an improvement from the score of the pre-test to the post-test was 38.5%. While, according to the results of the questionnaire that had been distributed through Google form, it could be concluded that the most common obstacle students faced in using open-ended questions in reading comprehension was understanding vocabulary.

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