

EXPLORING ENGLISH READING PROFICIENCY: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF THEME-BASED MODEL IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Asti Veto Mortini¹⁾
Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
astiveto@students.unnes.ac.id

Sri Wuli Fitriati²⁾
Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
wulifit@yahoo.co.id

Rahayu Puji Haryanti³⁾
Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
rahayu_ph@mail.unnes.ac.id

Sri Wahyuni⁴⁾
Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
sriwahyunifbs@gmail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of utilizing the Theme-Based model in enhancing the reading proficiencies of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. It discussed Theme-Based Model as a learning model to enhance English reading proficiency and importance of engaging and enjoyable exercises to motivate students in learning English effectively. The study employed a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to systematically explore and understand the impact of the Theme-Based model on students' English reading proficiency. Data collection techniques included observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis conducted at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang to gather insights on the cooperative learning management model and integrated reading and composition techniques. The findings of the research aimed to provide insights into the English lesson planning practices implemented by teacher using the Theme-Based model to enhance the reading proficiencies of tenth-grade students. Through observations, interviews, and documentation analysis, the study aimed to identify challenges faced by students in English language classes, factors influencing English language acquisition, and the role of the Theme-Based model in improving students' reading skills. The study also highlighted the importance of student dedication, supportive learning environments, and effective teaching strategies in fostering English language proficiency among students.

Keywords: Theme-Based model, English Reading Proficiency, Lesson Plan

Introduction

In the realm of English language education, numerous teachers express concerns regarding the limited proficiency of students in applying English principles. This deficiency is evident in the errors students commit when responding to English queries. These errors can range from incorrect word usage and grammar mistakes to poor sentence structure and pronunciation issues. As a result, teachers often find it challenging to effectively communicate with their students and help them improve their English skills.

One common issue is the students' struggle with vocabulary. Many students have a limited understanding of English words and their proper usage. This leads to difficulties in expressing their thoughts and ideas accurately, resulting in misunderstandings and ineffective communication. Another area where students struggle is grammar. English grammar can be complex, with numerous rules and exceptions. Students often make mistakes in verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence construction. These errors can make their writing or speaking confusing and difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, students often have difficulty

with pronunciation. English pronunciation can be challenging, especially for non-native speakers. Consequently, students may mispronounce words, making it harder for others to understand them.

The limited proficiency of students in applying English principles also affects their overall language fluency. Many students struggle to speak fluently and confidently in English, often relying on memorized phrases or struggling to find the right words to express themselves. Addressing the limited proficiency of students in applying English principles requires a comprehensive approach that targets vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, including critical thinking. With the right guidance and support, students can gradually overcome these challenges and improve their English language proficiency.

Hence, it becomes imperative for teacher to devise engaging and enjoyable exercises or tasks to instill motivation and enthusiasm among students towards learning English. Within the framework of lesson planning, teachers, in their role as managers, are tasked with implementing management strategies through various learning models to evaluate the attainments within students'

grasp. This necessitates teachers to possess the capacity to execute tasks efficiently by planning meticulously and possessing comprehensive knowledge and insight into the discipline of learning management.

Undeniably, learning activities constitute the cornerstone of the educational process, with teachers serving as pivotal executors who significantly influence the accomplishment of educational objectives. In a similar vein, teachers wield a profound impact on endeavors aimed at enhancing students' motivation levels. The effectiveness of educational initiatives through the teaching and learning procedures in formal educational settings is greatly advantageous, contingent on several factors such as students, curriculum, educational personnel, expenses, amenities, infrastructure, and environmental elements. Fulfilling these criteria undoubtedly streamlines the teaching-learning continuum, thereby fostering optimal learning outcomes and ultimately elevating the standard of education.

A meticulously crafted lesson plan is indispensable in the educational landscape within schools. The triumph of learning endeavors predominantly hinges on the readiness of both teachers and students to strategize, coordinate, execute, and assess or

supervise the learning trajectory. As Dick, Carey and Carey (1978, p. 121-122), the execution of the plan in learning management essentially involves: a) delineating the tasks to be undertaken by the teacher, along with the timing and methodology for their execution in the learning process; b) setting objectives grounded in specific instructional goals and formulating measures to achieve optimal outcomes through objective-setting; c) devising alternative approaches through learning strategies; d) gathering and scrutinizing crucial data to bolster learning activities; and e) formulating and disseminating plans and decisions pertinent to learning to stakeholders. The teacher assumes the dual role of an educator and facilitator in the lesson planning realm. Throughout the learning journey, activities must imbue motivations and perceptions pertaining to the subject matter being taught.

Moreover, the dissemination of knowledge should be coherent, structured, and conducive to fostering a harmonious classroom ambiance characterized by robust teacher-student relationships. This is imperative for fostering an effective learning milieu. Teachers are tasked with furnishing learning resources that facilitate students'

comprehension and enhance their capacity to harness their innate potential.

The implementation of the English lesson plan at the senior high school level is crucial for the students' language development. Graduates from this level should possess the necessary skills to communicate effectively in both spoken and written English. The primary aim of this plan is to enable students to comprehend and convey information, thoughts, feelings, as well as to enhance their understanding of knowledge, technology, and culture through the use of the English language. It is expected that the English lesson plan will significantly enhance the learning outcomes of the students. Additionally, English is a mandatory subject in the National Examination, highlighting its importance as an international language that serves as a key tool for communication in various aspects of life, especially in terms of reading skills.

Reading, being one of the fundamental language skills, holds significant influence in society. Par (2020) claims through reading, individuals can articulate their thoughts and ideas to accomplish specific objectives. Despite the importance of English proficiency, there is still a considerable reluctance among

various groups such as professionals, students, children, adults, and parents towards learning the language. Mastering English, particularly in reading, becomes less challenging when approached with dedication towards reading and writing. Moreover, the adoption of effective learning models can enhance English language acquisition, as emphasized in the educational process.

The significance of reading in acquiring knowledge cannot be overstated. Books serve as valuable sources of information, providing readers with the opportunity to access a wide range of content. Without the practice of reading, the effectiveness of the learning and educational processes would be greatly compromised. Reading enables individuals to extract information from texts, thereby facilitating an understanding of the author's message, which can then be applied in communication with others (Par, 2020). Those who engage in extensive reading tend to acquire more knowledge compared to those who do not prioritize reading in their routine. This knowledge equips individuals with the ability to communicate effectively through both verbal and written means, ultimately enhancing their overall communication skills. According to Nurwanti. (2019),

Despite the benefits of reading, the learning environment in schools often presents challenges that hinder students' reading interests. The lack of enthusiasm for reading among students is a clear indication of this obstacle, affecting their ability to comprehend English discourse effectively.

According to the study conducted by Sari, Rostini, Fajarianto, and Safitri (2020), the act of reading involves not just scanning words but capturing and comprehending ideas presented in written form. The expression of one's innermost thoughts and emotions through reading reflects the reader's engagement in interpreting the text. This is why reading is often metaphorically referred to as the window to the world, as it enables individuals to gain insights into various aspects of life. Through reading, individuals can witness events and developments taking place globally. Moreover, reading serves as a means to enhance one's knowledge, reading speed, and vocabulary.

Consequently, individuals who do not have a penchant for reading may find themselves lacking in information and awareness, as highlighted by Sirait, Hutaaruk, and Herman (2020). Reading, being an integral part of language skills, holds significant importance for all

individuals, particularly students. It plays a crucial role in expanding one's understanding, enhancing language proficiency, and broadening perspectives through the assimilation of information from reading materials. Therefore, reading stands out as a fundamental and advantageous activity that contributes to an individual's overall growth by fostering a broadened perspective and knowledge base.

Moreover, reading is a deliberate process employed by readers to extract messages conveyed by authors through written language. Reading goes beyond mere pronunciation of written symbols to encompass a deeper understanding of the words or sentences articulated. Nonetheless, any form of engagement with written text can be categorized as reading. It is essential to acknowledge that reading instruction is a fundamental aspect of early education, especially in the initial grades of schooling. Teachers are tasked with identifying effective strategies to enhance students' reading abilities and encourage active participation in English lessons. Drawing from Brown's (2001, p.320) recommendations, teachers are advised to assume the role of facilitators who inspire students and create an engaging learning environment. Therefore, teachers must

exhibit creativity and discernment in selecting appropriate models and resources that can enhance learning experiences within the classroom setting. It is imperative for teachers to make informed decisions regarding the most suitable instructional models and materials that align with the students' needs.

Among the various instructional models in English language learning, the Theme-Based model of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) stands out as a choice. Theme-Based model allows for the integration of language and content learning, making it a more comprehensive approach to language instruction. As Yugandar (2016) claims the objective of theme-based CBI model is to advance students' language skills regardless of the institutional settings and language proficiency level of the students. It provides students with opportunities to develop their language skills in authentic, meaningful contexts, as they engage with content-related materials and tasks.

Theme-Based model promotes student motivation and engagement, as students are able to connect their language learning to real-world topics and themes that are relevant to their lives. This model encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students are challenged to

apply their language knowledge in different contexts (Yugandar, 2016). This model also supports the development of language proficiency across all skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as these skills are integrated and practiced in a purposeful and meaningful way. Students have the chance to develop their language skills holistically, rather than focusing on isolated grammar or vocabulary exercises. Theme-Based model offers a flexible, student-centered approach to language instruction that can be adapted to different institutional settings and student proficiency levels. It promotes the integration of language and content learning, motivates and engages students, and supports the development of language proficiency across all skill areas.

According to Crandall (2003, p.58), language instructional models should be considered with several features, namely: appropriateness, flexibility, communicative approach, learner-centeredness, authenticity, integration of skills, assessment and feedback, teachers' role, cultural sensitivity. By considering these features, language instructional models can be better designed and implemented to enhance the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. Theme-Based model also enhances

advanced students' language ability by providing coherence and continuity across skill areas and curricula. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003) claim the Theme-Based model is a method of teaching both topic and language with language learning objectives. Teachers should address the following six concerns when implementing topic-theme-based instruction to increase their students' subject content and communicative abilities (Crandal, 2003, p. 98). They are:

1. Integration of language skills: The teacher should take into consideration how different language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, can be integrated into the content-theme-based instruction. This helps in developing the students' overall communicative capabilities.
2. Authentic and meaningful content: The content chosen for instruction should be authentic and meaningful to the students. By using real-life materials and situations, the teacher can engage the students and make the learning experience more relevant and interesting.
3. Culturally sensitive materials: The teacher should consider the cultural background of the students and choose materials that are sensitive to their cultural beliefs and values. This helps in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.
4. Collaborative learning: The teacher should encourage collaborative learning among students. Group activities and discussions promote interaction and communication, allowing students to learn from each other and develop their communicative capabilities.
5. Language development through content: The focus of content-theme-based instruction should be on developing language skills while simultaneously improving subject content knowledge. The teacher should design activities and tasks that allow students to practice using language in meaningful ways related to the subject matter.
6. Assessment and feedback: The teacher should provide regular assessment and feedback to students to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement. This helps in adjusting instruction and ensuring that students' subject content and communicative capabilities are effectively developed.

By considering these six issues, teachers can effectively use Content-theme-based instruction to enhance their students' subject content and communicative capabilities.

The Six T-s approach proposed by Stoller and Grabe (1997) can be applied to create coherence in content-based instruction in a theme-based model. 1). Themes serve as the main ideas around which the instructional units are organized. These themes should be determined by considering students' interests, needs, likes, and the relevance and appropriateness within the institutional context. 2). Within each theme, there are subunits called topics. Topics are organized in a synchronized manner, building upon one another. This sequential arrangement helps students to develop a deeper understanding of the content. 3). Language in the classroom should be presented through meaningful texts. The choice of texts should consider students' interest, relevance, instructional appropriateness, length, coherence, connection to other materials, accessibility, availability, and cost. The use of texts helps to engage students and make the language learning more authentic. 4). Tasks play an important role in content-based instruction as they provide opportunities for students to develop valuable study skills. Tasks such as note-taking, summarizing, and extracting key information from texts help students to enhance their comprehension skills. Additionally, tasks can also promote critical

thinking, problem-solving, and synthesizing skills. 5). Transitions are essential to provide curricular coherence. They link the topics and tasks smoothly, ensuring that students can follow the logical progression of content. Transitions help to maintain the continuity of instruction and avoid disjointed or fragmented learning experiences. 6). Threads are another aspect of curricular coherence in content-based instruction. They are defined by natural linkages across themes. Threads enable students to connect previously learned content with new topics, recycle and consolidate their knowledge, use learning strategies effectively, and synthesize information.

By employing the Six T-s approach, teachers can effectively structure and organize their content-based instruction in a theme-based model. This approach ensures that both academic concepts and language skills are addressed simultaneously, enhancing students' learning experience and promoting a deeper understanding of the content.

Students' ability to succeed in acquiring the English language will be contingent upon their own efforts and dedication to the learning process. The level of seriousness exhibited by the students in their pursuit of English proficiency plays a

crucial role in determining their success in mastering the language. The challenges faced by many students in the process of learning English may stem from various factors such as the limited time allocated for English instruction in the classroom, the complexity of learning materials, insufficient educational facilities, unsupportive learning environments, and lack of familial encouragement, among others. Consequently, the researcher aims to delve into the aforementioned issues within the framework of the study titled 'Lesson Plan with theme-based model in improving English Reading proficiency, focusing particularly on the tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. This research endeavor seeks to provide insights into the English lesson planning practices implemented by educators utilizing the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model to enhance the reading proficiencies of ninth-grade students.

Methodology

A methodology has a crucial role in the realm of research due to its ability to facilitate the attainment of set objectives. Utilizing a method can streamline the process of achieving goals effectively. The research methodology employed in this

particular study was the descriptive method coupled with a qualitative approach. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2017, p. 147), qualitative research involves a systematic exploration aimed at understanding individual and group behaviors while elucidating social or human issues. Hence, the researcher chose this method to delve into analyzing and engaging directly with the subjects under scrutiny at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. The population in this research were the Tenth Grade English teachers at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. The quality of the research is influenced by two main factors: the research instrument and the data collection methods. Techniques for data collection are important as they determine how research data is gathered. To ensure the accuracy and quality of the data, it is imperative to employ data collection techniques that align with the research objectives. The primary aim of any research endeavor is to procure data at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang, data collection techniques involved observation, interviews, and adhering to documentation guidelines.

In this particular investigation, observations were conducted to gather insights on Theme-based model aimed at enhancing the English reading proficiencies of Grade X students at SMA Negeri 16

Palembang. The observation activities entailed visiting the educational institution in question during the learning sessions. These observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner, allowing the researcher to observe the teaching process without interfering.

The interviews conducted within the scope of this research were classified as in-depth interviews due to the study's specific aim of comprehensively and clearly exploring information from the participants. The primary goal of these interviews was to gather insights into the informants' knowledge regarding the Theme-Based model of learning management designed to enhance the English reading proficiency of grade X students at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. By engaging in two-way communication during the interviews, the researcher could effectively grasp the responses and information sought, depending on the interviewer's spontaneity in posing relevant questions. The teacher will incorporate theme-based instruction in English classroom in some activities, such as choosing a specific theme, selecting reading materials, pre-reading activities, reading comprehension strategies, guided reading, vocabulary development,

discussion and analysis, extension activities, reflection.

Finding and Discussion

Based on the interview, the teacher was concern about the formulation of model and learning steps. The teacher expressed their concern about formulating effective methods, models, and techniques for teaching. They recognized the importance of encouraging active participation from the students and emphasized the need to develop their writing and reading habits. The teacher also showed a caring attitude towards individual differences among the students and expressed a willingness to help them overcome any difficulties they may face during the learning process. The teacher highlighted the importance of providing solutions to address the students' challenges and offering follow-up support for further learning. This suggests that they are committed to not only providing instruction but also ensuring that the students have the necessary resources and guidance to continue their education beyond the classroom. Overall, the teacher's concerns reflect their dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for their students.

The teacher must complete some preparations before implementing Theme-Based model to enhance the English reading proficiency of the students in class X of SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. The purpose of this planning is to guide learning so that it proceeds as intended to meet the objectives. Without planning, instruction would be disorganized, diffuse, and difficult for students to understand, making it impossible to meet the learning objectives.

Based on the findings of interviews with English teachers at SMA N 16 Palembang, before beginning the learning process, teachers must prepare plans in the form of an Annual Program, Semester Program, Syllabus, and lesson plan (RPP), which are done to facilitate the learning process. Without planning, learning would be undirected and spread out everywhere, making it difficult for pupils to understand, and the learning objectives would not be met effectively. The yearly program was a framework for determining one-year learning plans to attain preset goals. The Semester Program outlines the activities that will be carried out and completed within one semester.

The yearly program was a framework for determining one-year learning plans to attain preset goals. The

Semester Program outlines the activities that will be carried out and completed within one semester. The Semester Program is a translation of the Annual Program. A syllabus is a lesson plan for a certain subject/theme or group that contains competency standards (CS), basic competencies (BC), learning materials, learning activities, indicators of competency accomplishment, assessment, time management, and learning resources.

The study's findings indicated that, in general, the class X English teachers at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang created a lesson plan (RPP). The lesson plan included an identification with the school's name, topic, class, semester, type of material being taught, skills to be accomplished, and time required to work on the skills. The lesson plan should also incorporate Standards Basic Competencies and Competencies, the development of Learning Indicators, and the achievement of Goals when students have completed the learning process.

During a recent interview, a teacher expressed concerns regarding the formulation of effective teaching methodologies, models, and techniques to foster active student participation, cultivate reading and writing habits, address individual variances, mitigate learning

challenges, offer viable solutions, and ensure ongoing support for continued learning. This preparatory phase is crucial for steering the learning process towards its intended objectives, as a lack of structured planning can lead to unfocused teaching practices that impede student comprehension and hinder the achievement of educational goals.

The outcomes of this planning underscore the significance of the learning plan as a systematic approach to organize educational materials, employ suitable teaching methodologies and resources, and allocate time effectively to attain predetermined learning objectives. Learning is depicted as a series of coordinated activities between teachers and students within the framework of established educational programs. These activities encompass detailed plans outlining core competencies, theoretical foundations, time allocations, performance indicators, and sequential learning steps for each subject area.

Conclusions

The teacher's activities in designing Theme-Based model to enhance the reading proficiency of grade X students at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang included several steps.

Firstly, they created an annual program by carefully reviewing the educational calendar. The teacher developed semester programs by outlining competency standards, basic competencies, study materials, and determining meeting schedules. They meticulously prepared a syllabus encompassing competency standards, basic competencies, learning materials, activities, assessment criteria, time management, educational resources, and ethical values. The teacher formulated lesson plans (RPP) containing essential details such as school information, subjects, grade levels, academic years, competency standards, basic competencies, thematic focuses, time distribution, learning objectives, expected student demeanor, content, teaching methodologies, activity sequences comprising introductory, main, and concluding tasks, educational materials, and evaluation methods. The educational planning procedures for Theme-Based model conducted by the English teacher in question adhere closely to the regulations and directives stipulated by either the government/education office. These practices are anticipated to fulfill the specified competency standards and enhance English reading proficiency. Apart from the English teacher, the school principal plays a

pivotal role in fostering teacher professionalism through their guidance and support.

The conclusion of teaching reading using a theme-based model by an English teacher at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang is that it is an effective and engaging approach. Theme-based model allows students to connect their reading materials to real-life situations and topics that are relevant to them. This model helps students develop a deeper understanding of the texts they are reading and enhances their critical thinking skills. It also encourages students to explore different perspectives and encourages active participation in discussions and group activities. Teaching reading using a theme-based model is a successful and beneficial method for SMA Negeri 16 Palembang students to improve their reading comprehension and overall language proficiency

References

- Brinton, D. Snow, M. A. & Wesche, M. B (2003). Content-based second language instruction. New York: University of Michigan Press
- Brown, H. D. (2001). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. Pearson Education
- Crandall, J. A. (1992). Content-centered instruction in the United States. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 111-126.
- Creswell, J. W & Poth, C.N (2017). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. 4th Ed. SAGE Publications.
- Dick, W., Carey, L. & Carey, J. O. (1978). The systematic design of Instruction. Pearson Education
- Nurwanti. (2019). Student uninterest in learning reading comprehension of expository text toward mind mapping technique. *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2(3), 490–500.
- Par, L. (2020). The Relationship between Reading Strategies and Reading Achievement of the EFL Students. *International Journal of Instruction*. 13(2), 223-239.
- Sari, P. K., Rostini, D., Fajarianto, O., & Safitri, Y. (2020). The effect of social media on reading intensity of fifth grade elementary school students. *Advances in social science, Education and Humanities Research*, 429 (Icasseth 2019), 215–218.
- Sirait, M. F., Hutaauruk, B. S., & Herman. (2020). The effect of using speed Reading Technique to the Students' ability in comprehending a Text. *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(3), 485–498.
- Soller, F. L & Grabe, W. (2017). Content-Based Instruction in higher education settings: "Six T's approach to content-based instruction". TESOL

Yugandar, K. (2016). Content-Theme-Based instruction to increase the quality of EFL class. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 4(8), 86-90