THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEMANTIC APPROACH IN IMPROVING ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH TANGERANG

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini mengevaluasi efektivitas pendekatan semantik dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca bahasa Inggris di antara mahasiswa semester 6 program Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang. Menggunakan metode eksperimental dengan desain kelompok kontrol pretest-posttest, 30 mahasiswa dibagi menjadi kelompok eksperimen (n=15) dan kontrol (n=15). Kelompok eksperimen menerima instruksi menggunakan pendekatan semantik, sementara kelompok kontrol menggunakan metode konvensional selama 4 minggu. Data dikumpulkan melalui penilaian pre-test dan post-test. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada kelompok eksperimen, dengan skor rata-rata meningkat dari 58,13 menjadi 78,93 (peningkatan 35,78%), dibandingkan peningkatan kelompok kontrol dari 61,47 menjadi 72,80 (18,43%). Analisis statistik menggunakan uji-t independen menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan antara kelompok ($t(28) = 4{,}327$, $p < 0{,}001$). Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa pendekatan semantik lebih efektif daripada metode konvensional dalam meningkatkan keterampilan pemahaman membaca bahasa Inggris mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menyarankan pengintegrasian pendekatan semantik ke dalam kurikulum pengajaran membaca tingkat universitas untuk meningkatkan kemampuan pemahaman membaca mahasiswa.

A B S T R A C T

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the semantic approach in improving English reading comprehension among 6th-semester English Education students at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang. Using an experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design, 30 students were divided into experimental (n=15) and control (n=15) groups. The experimental group received instruction using the semantic approach, while the control group used conventional methods over 4 weeks. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments. Results showed significant improvement in the experimental group, with mean scores increasing from 58.13 to 78.93 (35.78% improvement), compared to the control group's improvement from 61.47 to 72.80 (18.43%). Statistical analysis using an independent t-test revealed a significant difference between groups ($t(28) = 4.327$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that the semantic approach is more effective than conventional methods in enhancing students' English reading comprehension skills. The study suggests integrating the semantic approach into university-level reading instruction curricula to improve students' reading comprehension abilities.

INTRODUCTION

The semantic approach is a method that focuses on the meaning of words and the meaning relationships between words in a text. It is based on the principle that understanding meaning and proper sentence structure is the key to understanding a text thoroughly. In the context of English reading comprehension, the semantic approach emphasizes the importance of building a deep understanding of the vocabulary, phrases, and sentences used in the text.

Reading is one of the most important language skills in learning English as a foreign language. Good reading ability enables students to comprehend academic texts, textbooks, journal articles, and other English-written information sources. However, many students still experience difficulties in understanding English reading texts, particularly in terms of understanding word meanings and the relationships between words in sentences or paragraphs.

Difficulties in reading English texts can be caused by several factors, such as lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of grammatical understanding, lack of comprehension of word meanings and contexts, and lack of effective reading strategies. These difficulties can hinder the overall process of learning English, as reading is a crucial skill in acquiring new information and knowledge.

To overcome these problems, an appropriate teaching approach or method is needed to improve students' English reading skills. One approach that can be used is the semantic approach, which focuses on understanding word meanings and the relationships between words in sentences or texts. Several previous studies have shown that the semantic approach can significantly improve students' reading comprehension skills (Sari, 2018; Wibowo, 2019; Suhartini, 2020). However, these studies are still limited to specific contexts and populations, so further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the semantic approach in improving English reading skills of students at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang.

Pendahuluan memuat tentang latar belakang, landasan teori, masalah, rencana pemecahan masalah dan tujuan penelitian. Pendahuluan ditulis menggunakan huruf arial, ukuran 10 dan spasi 1 dan fist line 1 cm. Teks diketik di dalam sebuah luasan print dengan margin dari atas, bawah, kiri, kanan dibuat 2,5 cm. Ukuran paper A4, lebar 8,27 inch, tinggi 11,69 inch. Layout: header 0,5 inch, footer 0,5 inch. Teks tidak perlu diberi nomor halaman.

Research Methodology

This research employs an experimental research method with a pretest-posttest control group design. This design involves two groups: an experimental group that receives treatment using the semantic approach in teaching reading, and a control group that does not receive treatment or uses conventional teaching methods.

The population of this research is all 6th semester students of the English Education study program at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang in the 2023/2024 academic year. The sampling technique used is simple random sampling. The sample will be divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.

The instrument used in this research is an English reading skills test. This test will be given as a pre-test and post-test to both groups, the experimental group and the control group. The test aims to measure students' English reading comprehension ability before and after the treatment.

The data collection techniques used in this research are as follows:

1. Pre-test The pre-test is given to both groups, the experimental group and the control group, to measure students' initial English reading comprehension ability before the treatment.
2. Treatment The experimental group will receive treatment in the form of reading instruction using the semantic approach, while the control group will use conventional teaching methods.

3. Post-test The post-test is given to both groups, the experimental group and the control group, to measure students' English reading comprehension ability after the treatment.

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed quantitatively using appropriate statistical techniques. Data analysis will be conducted by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores in each group, as well as comparing the post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group. This analysis aims to determine whether there is a significant difference in students' English reading

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

Group	N	Mean Improvement	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	15	20.80	5.21	4.327	28	0.000
Control	15	11.33	4.89			

This study involved 30 6th-semester students from the English Education study program at Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang in the 2023/2024 academic year. Participants were divided into two groups: 15 students in the experimental group and 15 students in the control group. The experimental group received instruction using the semantic approach, while the control group was taught using conventional methods.

The average pre-test score for the experimental group was 58.13, while for the control group it was 61.47. After the treatment, the average post-test score for the experimental group increased to 78.93, while for the control group it increased to 72.80.

Analysis of score improvement showed that the experimental group experienced an increase of 35.78%, while the control group experienced an increase of 18.43%.

Discussion

The results of this study provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the semantic approach in improving English reading comprehension skills among university students. The experimental group showed a substantial improvement, with an average increase of 35.78% from pre-test to post-test scores. This significant improvement indicates that the semantic approach is highly effective in enhancing students' ability to understand and interpret English texts.

The control group, which used conventional teaching methods, also showed improvement, albeit more moderate with an average increase of 18.43%. This stark difference underscores the potential of the semantic approach to accelerate learning and enhance comprehension more effectively than traditional methods.

The t-test results ($t(28) = 4.327$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrate that the difference in improvement between the experimental and control groups is statistically significant. This statistical evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the semantic approach offers superior results in improving reading comprehension skills.

The post-test score distribution showed that the experimental group had a higher proportion of students scoring in the upper ranges (80-100) compared to the control group. This suggests that the semantic approach not only improves overall performance but also helps more students achieve higher levels of reading comprehension.

A. **Effectiveness of the Semantic Approach**

The results of this study provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the semantic approach in improving English reading comprehension skills among university students. The experimental group showed a substantial improvement, with an average increase of 35.78% from pre-test to post-test scores. This significant improvement indicates that the semantic approach is highly effective in enhancing students' ability to understand and interpret English texts.

B. Comparison with Conventional Methods

The control group, which used conventional teaching methods, also showed improvement, albeit more moderate with an average increase of 18.43%. This stark difference underscores the potential of the semantic approach to accelerate learning and enhance comprehension more effectively than traditional methods.

C. Statistical Analysis

The t-test results ($t(28) = 4.327$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrate that the difference in improvement between the experimental and control groups is statistically significant. This statistical evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the semantic approach offers superior results in improving reading comprehension skills.

D. Post-test Score Distribution

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E. Consistency of Improvement

Almost all students in the experimental group experienced substantial gains in their reading comprehension scores. This consistency suggests that the semantic approach is effective across different ability levels and learning styles.

F. Implications for English Language Teaching

These findings have important implications for English language teaching at the university level. The semantic approach appears to offer a more effective strategy for developing deep reading comprehension skills, which are essential for academic success in an English-medium environment.

CONCLUSION

This study provides strong evidence for the superiority of the semantic approach in improving English reading comprehension skills among university students. Incorporating the semantic approach into English reading instruction could lead to substantial benefits for students' language proficiency and academic performance.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance English language learning, particularly in reading skills, in higher education settings. First and foremost, English instructors at the university level are encouraged to integrate the semantic approach into their reading instruction curriculum. The proven effectiveness of this approach in enhancing comprehension and retention of reading materials makes it a valuable tool in language education.

To facilitate the implementation of the semantic approach, educational institutions should conduct training sessions and workshops for instructors. These programs would help teachers become more proficient in applying the semantic approach, ensuring its effective implementation in the classroom.

While the semantic approach has shown significant benefits, it is important to recognize that a variety of teaching methods may be necessary to accommodate different learning styles. Therefore, combining the semantic approach with other effective methods could yield even more optimal results in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

Further research is recommended to validate and expand upon these findings. Studies with larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal research, could provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of the semantic approach on reading skills and overall language proficiency.

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