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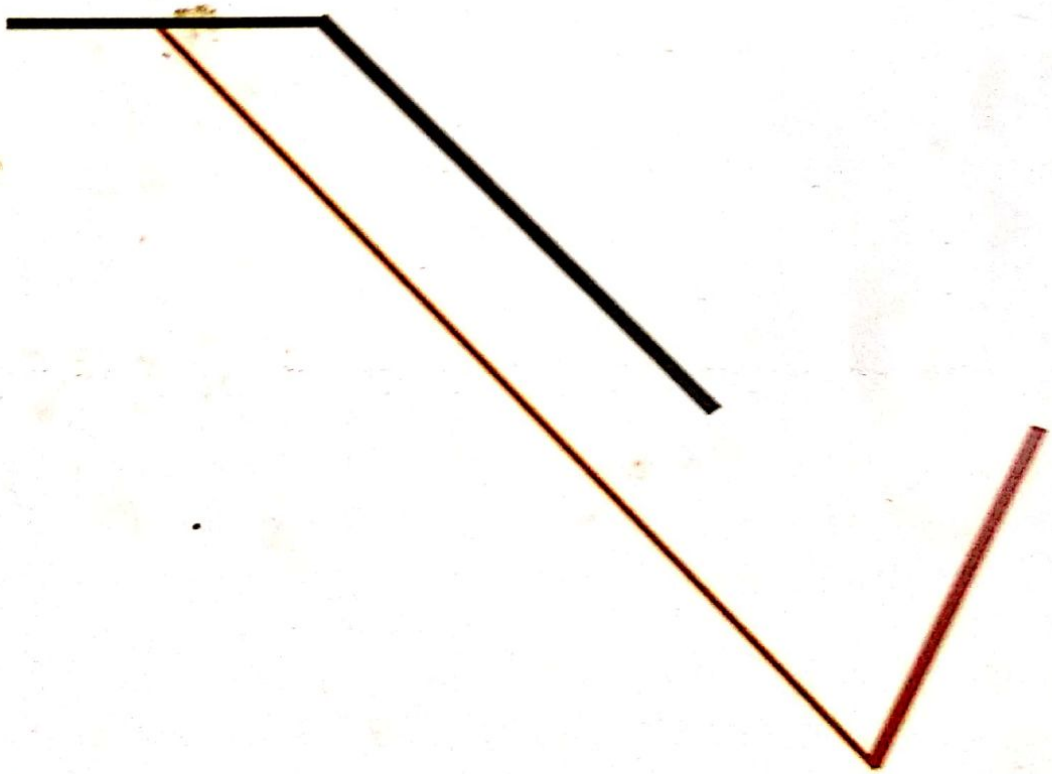

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THE APPLICATION OF SCHEMA THEORY IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION

Oleh Syamsul Rizal*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan data apakah penerapan teori skema berpengaruh terhadap peningkatan pemahaman membaca dalam pengajaran *English Reading Comprehension* pada mahasiswa IV Jurusan Tarbiyah IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Jenis penelitian ini adalah *experimental research*. Pengambilan sample dilakukan dengan menggunakan prosedur *non probability sampling*. Dengan menggunakan rumus statistic t-Test, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan nilai yang signifikan antara kelas experiment dengan kelas kontrol setelah pada kelas experiment diterapkan teori skema dalam pengajaran *english reading comprehension*.

Key words: *schema theory, reading comprehension*

In the modern world, reading is one of the most important skills to acquire knowledge. Most of scientific information has been spread through electronic or printed media, such as: TV, internet, books, and journals. According to Sharon (2002) quoted by Abdillah (2003:1-2), 70%-95% of teaching and learning activities in the classroom depends on written texts like textbooks. This means that learners should be good readers in order to comprehend what they read in the texts. Related to teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), English teachers should motivate their students to read English texts by using appropriate strategies in reading in order that the students can comprehend what they read in the target language. The appropriate strategies in teaching reading comprehension, therefore, should be implemented by the English teachers in teaching and learning processes especially for the EFL learners, because applying good strategies in teaching and learning process may improve students' reading comprehension achievement.

According to Feuerstein (1995:5-9), there are two approaches in teaching reading comprehension, that is, traditional and current approach. Traditional approach sees the product in which the students are expected to understand a text and have the ability to answer the questions provided by a text. In other words, this approach focuses on the students' performance after

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reading. In contrast to the traditional approach, the current approach of teaching reading emphasizes the process of reading rather than the product. This means that the process is viewed as an interactive between the reader and text. In other words, current strategies focus on what the reader actually does while reading. The application of schema theory (the way in which a teacher activates his or her students' prior knowledge before the students read the reading text) in teaching reading comprehension is one of the current strategies.

Schema theory is one of the most important contributions made by cognitive scientists to the understanding of how comprehension works. This theory is based on how people organize and activate their knowledge. According to schema theory, as people learn about the world, they develop a large network of knowledge structures. These schemata grow and change as a person acquires new information through experience and reading.

Referring to the illustration above, based on my observation, schema theory is not widely applied at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) of Raden Fatah Palembang. Therefore, it seems to the writer that English teaching and learning processes at IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang should be modified from traditional to more current ways. Based on the observation the writer conducted most of the second semester of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) department students of the Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang are still poor in reading comprehension. The writer assumes that the weaknesses in reading comprehension may be caused by the method of TEFL, particularly the technique in teaching reading used at the faculty. The traditional techniques used at the faculty are: (1) the teacher directly asks their students to read their reading materials, (2) the teacher sometimes reads the text orally, (3) the teacher asks the students whether they found some difficult words in the reading text, (4) the teacher asks the students one by one to read the reading text loudly paragraph by paragraph and translate it into Bahasa Indonesia, (5) the teacher explains the function of grammar that is found in some sentences of the reading text, and (6) the teacher asks the students to answer the reading comprehension questions.

It seems to the writer that the traditional English teaching strategy is not so effective to improve the students' reading comprehension. Due to the weakness of the traditional technique in reading comprehension, the writer wanted to try to apply the schema theory strategy in teaching reading comprehension. The writer assumed that this strategy would help the students to improve their reading comprehension. Therefore, the writer was interested in conducting a study entitled "Teaching Reading Comprehension through the Application of Schema Theory to the Students of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN

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Raden Fatah Palembang". The writer hopes that this strategy is a good alternative model in teaching English reading comprehension.

The different views on reading comprehension from the past to the present can be observed. In the past, reading was considered a relatively static activity. Meaning was embedded in the text, and the reader's job was to understand what was being transmitted via the words on the page. In current approach, the researchers view reading as a more dynamic process in which the reader "constructs" meaning based on information he/she gathers from the text. In other words, reading is an active process as stated by Anderson (1999:1).

> Reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning. Meaning does not reside on the printed page ... (a) synergy occurs in reading, which combines the words on the printed page with the reader's background knowledge and experiences.

From Anderson's statement, it can be seen that there is an important thing in a reading process, that is, there is an interaction between readers and the text they read. The readers' schemata will help them in comprehending the text. This means that the more they have schemata in relation to the text, the easier the readers will understand it.

College-level reading is much more sophisticated than that of high school, and in doing their academic assignments for any course, students may encounter a lot of literary genres that should be read, understood, and applied in a meaningful way. Comprehending these texts is crucial for academic success. But in many classes, based on the writer's observation at IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, there is little or no attention paid to the reading process or the strategy training which is so important to the learning tasks. Therefore, using a good strategy on reading comprehension towards college students like IAIN's students who are still poor in reading comprehension is very important, for example, teaching reading comprehension through the *application of schema theory (AST) by using the K-W-L approach strategy.*

The term of schema (plural schemata) was first used by Jean Peaget in 1926. He proposed his theory *cognitive accommodation*, that is, one's knowledge is gained from the accommodation of his or her cognitive structures to the environment like animals must accommodate to their environment to maintain their life (Kumanireng, 2003). In 1932 Bartlett (in *Cook, 1997:86) proposed the concept of schema or schemata (plural).* He suggested that memory takes the form of schema, which provides a mental representation or framework for understanding, remembering and applying information. Then, in 1977 schema theory was developed by R. C. Anderson.

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a respected educational psychologist, as cited in Carrell and Eisterhold ((1983:73). This learning theory views organized knowledge as an elaborate of abstract mental structures which represent one's understanding of the world. Rumelhart (1980:35) defines schema as follows.

> A schema theory is basically a theory about... how knowledge is presented and about how that representation facilitates the use of the knowledge in particular ways. According to schema theories, all knowledge is packaged into units... [called] schemata. Embedded in these packets of knowledge is... information about how this knowledge is to be used.

Based on the definition proposed by several experts, it can be concluded that a schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory. Schemata are created through experience with people, objects, and events in the world. Schemata grow and change as new information is acquired. There are schemata representing our knowledge about all concepts: those underlying objects, situation, events, sequences of events, actions and sequences of actions. A schema contains, as part of its specification, the network of interrelations that is believed to normally hold among the constituents of the concept in question.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In conducting this experimental research, the writer used quasi experimental method. The quasi experimental design is a type of experimental design where random assignment to groups is not employed for either ethical or practical reasons, but certain methods of control are employed and the independent variable is manipulated. The writer had some consideration why this quasi experimental method was used in this study. First, using this method would not disturb the process of teaching and learning activities because the subjects could be given the treatment in their regular schedule as usual. Second, the subjects chosen as sample in this study were ready to collaborate with the researcher. Yet, the use of true experimental method was impossible to be done because most of the students had different schedule of the same courses. Due to different schedules, they found that it was very difficult to organize their time in joining the other classes.

In this research, the population was the second semester students of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Department of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang in the academic year of 2005-2006. The total number of all population was 120 students comprising four classes. There were 83 females and 37 males. The distribution of the population is shown in Table 1.

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Table 1
Population of the Study

No	Class	Female	Male	Total
1	Ibnu Batutah 01	18	12	30
2	Ibnu Batutah 02	21	9	30
3	Ibnu Batutah 03	24	6	30
4	Ibnu Batutah 04	20	10	30
Total	4 classes	83	37	120

Source: Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang (2005-2006)

In taking the sample, the writer did not take the sample randomly, but he used the reading comprehension placement test to all of the second semester students of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Department of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang comprising four classes. The placement test taken from internet was used to know the students' reading comprehension level. According to the placement test, there were six levels of the students' reading comprehension. they are 0-5 correct answers (Level 1); 6-8 (Level 2); 9-11 (Level 3); 12-15 (Level 4); 16-18 (Level 5);19-20 (Level 6).

Based on the result of the placement test, it was found that the reading level of the student' in class Ibnu Batutah 01 was 5, the reading level of the students in class Ibnu Batutah 02 was 3, the reading level of the students in class Ibnu Batutah 03 was 4, and the reading level of the students in class Ibnu batutah 04 was 5. Tabel 2 presents the distribution of the reading comprehension level of the population in this research.

Table 2
The Distribution of the Reading Level of the Population

No	Class	Score Range	Level
1	Ibnu Batutah 01	16 – 18	5
2	Ibnu Batutah 02	9 – 11	3
3	Ibnu Batutah 03	12 – 15	4
4	Ibnu Batutah 04	16 – 18	5

Based on the placement test given to four classes, the writer obtained that the students' reading comprehension scores and levels between classes Ibnu Batutah 01 and 04 were almost closest. Therefore, the students of those classes were chosen as sample in this study. The students in Ibnu Batutah 01 were chosen as experimental group that were taught trough the application of

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schema theory and the students in Ibnu Batutah 04 were the control group who were taught by using the traditional technique. The destination of the sample in this study is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
The Sample of the Study

No	Group	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Experimental Group	12	18	30
2	Control Group	10	20	30
	Total Number	22	38	60

The technique of the Application of Schema Theory used by the writer in teaching reading for the experimental group students was K-W-L procedure. According to Ogle (1986:564-570), K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want to Learn, What I Learned) is a teaching model designed to help students learn from nonfiction text in any content area. In this study the writer used the reading comprehension on the Islamic knowledge area. K-W-L (Ogle, 1986:564-570). The K-W-L procedure involves students in activating prior knowledge, asking questions to set purposes for reading, and recording information that answer those questions.

The technique for collecting the data in this study was used reading comprehension test. In conducting this research the writer used two kinds of test namely: pretest and posttest. The pre-test was given before the treatment in order to gain the basic ability of students in reading comprehension. On the other hand, the post-test was given at the end of the treatment to find out whether or not the students' achievement was improved after being taught by using the Application of Schema Theory (AST) technique. The reading comprehension test for the pre-test was the same as for post-test consisting of 40 items in the form of multiple choice. The pre-test and post-test were administrated within 50 minutes. The reading tests included the six aspects of comprehension as suggested by Cooper at al (1988: 32-48) details, main idea, inference, cause and effect, reference, and sequence. The writer also used the tests in relation to vocabulary.

Before giving the test (pretest) to the control and experimental group, the writer tried out the test. This means that 40 items in the form of multiple choice had been tested to the 60 second semester students of Syari'ah (Islamic Law) Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The writer analyzed the result of the try out to find out its validity by using point Biserial Correlation Formula as suggested by Arikunto (2002:252). Based on the

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analysis of the result of the try out, the whole items of the test is valid because *rpbis* (0.403) of the test is higher than r-table (0.254). Out of 40 items which were try out, 2 items (0,05%) were very easy, 3 items (0.075%) were easy, 11 items (0.275%) were desirable. 19 items (0,475%) were difficult, and 5 items (0,125%) were very difficult.

To obtain the reliability of the test, the writer applied K–21 formula as suggested by Arikunto (2002:164). By using the formula, the writer found that the instrument reliability of the test was 0. 4169. The instrument reliability was consulted to the r- Product Moment table, and it was found that the r-Product Moment table for 60 students was 0,254 at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the test or instrument used by the writer is reliable, because the reliability coefficient (0,416) is higher than the r-Product Moment table. Meanwhile, the technique for analyzing the data of the study is used t-test statistical formula.

FINDING AND INTERPRETATION

Findings

The findings of data obtained through the reading comprehension test (pretest and posttest) in this study were analyzed by using t-Test formula. There were three kinds of t-Test formula which were used in this study: (1) Paired Samples Statistics, (2) Paired Samples Test, and (3) Independent Samples Test. To find out the students' reading comprehension achievement in the pretest and posttest of both the experimental and control Group, the writer used Paired Samples Statistics and Paired Samples Test formula. But to find out the mean difference of the reading Comprehension achievement between the students in the experimental group and the control group, the Independent Samples test formula was applied. In other hand, the findings of data obtained through the questionnaire in this study were analyzed by using Percentage Formula.

Statistical Analysis of the Experimental Group

Table 4 shows the paired sample statistics of the students' reading comprehension achievement of experimental group.

Table 4
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRETEST	22.33	30	4.397	.803
	POSTTEST	28.63	30	4.529	.827

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Based on Table 4 above, it can be seen that the mean score of the pretest of the students in experimental group was 22.33 and the mean score of the posttest was 28,63. The standard deviation of the pretest was 4,397 and the standard deviation of the posttest was 4,529. The standard error mean of the pretest was 0.803 and the standard error mean of the posttest was 0.827.

The statistical analysis of paired samples test of the reading comprehension of the students in experimental group is presented in Table 13 below.

Table 5
Paired Samples Test

	Paired differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 PRETEST-POSTTEST	-6.30	2.037	.372	-7.06	-5.54	-16.942	29	.000

Table 5 shows that the students` mean score of the pretest and posttest in the experimental group was 6.30, the standard deviation was 2.037, the standard error mean was .372, the t-obtained was 16.942, and p-output was .000.

Statistical Analysis of the Control group

The paired samples statistics of the control group can be seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRETEST	22.33	30	4.397	.803
	POSTTEST	28.63	30	4.529	.827

Table 6 shows that the mean of the pretest was 22.93 and the mean of the posttest was 24,83. The standard deviation of the pretest was 4,456 and the

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standard deviation of the posttest was 4,457. The standard error mean of the pretest was .814 and the standard error mean of the posttest was .814.

Table 7 below presents the paired sample test of the students in control group.

Table 7
Paired Samples Test

	Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 PRETEST-POSTTEST	-1.90	2.023	.369	-2.66	-1.14	-5.144	29	.000

Table 7 shows that the mean of the pretest and posttest of the students in control group was -1.30, with the standard deviation 2.023, and with the standard error mean was .369, the t-obtained was -5.144, and p-output was .000.

Difference Analyses of the Experimental Group and the Control Group

To examine the significant difference of the students' pretest and posttest in the experimental group and the control group, the statistical analysis of group statistics and independent sample test were used. Table 8 below pesents the group statistics of the mean achievement of the students' pretest and posttest in the experimental and control group.

Table 8
Group Statistics

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PRETEST				
Experimental Grp.	30	22.33	4.397	.803
Control Grp.	30	22.93	4.456	.814
POSTTEST				
Experimental Grp.	30	28.63	4.529	.827
Control Grp.	30	24.83	4.457	.814

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Table 8 shows that the mean of reading comprehension achievement of the students' pretest in experimental group was 22,33 and the mean of the students' pretest in the control group was 22,93. The mean of reading comprehension achievement of the students' posttest in the experimental group was 28,63 and 24, 83 for the reading achievement of the students in control group.

Table 9 below shows the t-obtained by the students of the experimental and the control group after taking the posttest.

Table 9
Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
PRETEST Equal variances assumed	.154	.696	-.525	58	.602	-.60	1.143	-2.888	1.688
Equal variances not assumed			-.525	57.990	.602	-.60	1.143	-2.888	1.688
POSTTEST Equal variances assumed	.177	.676	3.275	58	.002	3.80	1.160	1.478	6.122
Equal variances not assumed			3.275	57.985	.002	3.80	1.160	1.478	6.122

Table 9 above presents the statistical analysis of independent sample test that the t-obtained in the pretest of the students in experimental group and the control group was -525. The t-obtained in posttest of the students in the experimental group and control group was 3.275. The value of two tail significance was .002.

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Interpretation of Statistical Analysis

Out of the finding of this research, it was found that there was score difference in the pretest and posttest between the experimental group and the control group. The mean score of the students in the experimental group in the pretest was 22.33 and the control group was 22.93. In the posttest the mean score of the students in experimental group was 28.63 and the mean score of the students in the control group was 24.83. The pretest and posttest score difference in the experimental group was 6.30 and 1.90 for the control group. Therefore, the students of the experimental group who were taught through the Application of Schema theory had higher reading comprehension achievement than that of those who were taught by using the conventional technique.

Based on the statistical analysis, there are three interpretations that can be seen. Firstly, the Paired Samples Test in the experimental group shows that the value of t-obtained (16.942) is higher than the critical value of t-table that is 2.045 at the significance level $p<0.05$ in two-tailed testing with degree of freedom 29. Since the t-obtained is higher than the t-table (16.942>2.045), the research hypothesis (H?) "There is a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of the students' pretest and posttest in experimental group" is accepted. It means that there is a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement in the students of experimental group before and after they were taught through the Application of Schema Theory (AST) technique.

Secondly, the result of the statistical analysis of Paired Samples Test in the control group also pointed out that the value of t-obtained (5.144) is higher than the critical value of t-table, that is, 2.045 at the significance level $p<0.05$ in two-tailed testing with degree of freedom 29. Since the value of the t-obtained is higher than the value of the t-table (16.942>2.045), it means that the students' reading comprehension achievement in the control group also increased, but it was not as high as the progress of the students in the experimental group.

Finally, the result of statistical analysis of the Independents Samples Test to the students in the experimental group and the control group shows that the value of t-obtained in the posttest 3.275 is higher than the critical value of t-table, that is, 2.021. It can also be seen that the value of two tail significance (0.002) is lower than the significance level $p<0.05$ with degree of freedom 59. Since the t-obtained is higher than the t-table (3.275>2.021) and *the value of two tail significance (0.002) is lower than the value of* significance level ($p<0.05$), the research hypothesis (H?) "There is a significant difference between reading comprehension achievement of the students who were taught through the Application of Schema Theory (AST)

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technique and that of those who were taught by using the conventional technique" is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the study, two conclusions can be drawn that the students who were taught through the Application of Schema Theory had higher reading comprehension achievement than those who were taught using the conventional strategy.

Although the result of this study indicated the positive effect of the Application of Schema Theory on students' reading comprehension achievement at Tarbiayh Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, the finding of this research can not be generalized to all of the students of IAIN Raden Fatah Palemban due to the fact that the researcher still used quasi-design as the research method (non-random) with a very small sample size.

In this section, the writer offers suggestion for: (1) the English teachers, (2) the students of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, and (3) future researchers. Firstly, English teachers should provide as much background knowledge as possible for students, which will help students familiarize themselves with the appropriate schemata that will be utilized in their comprehension. After class, the teachers should try to develop as many useful activities as possible to help students construct, increase and enrich their schemata. In addition, the English teachers and educational specialists should consider both the students' language proficiency and their background knowledge and sequence instruction according to the students' abilities.

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