

ENHANCING 5TH GRADE READING SKILL IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT YP HKBP 1 PEMATANGSIANTAR THROUGH GENRE-BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRAK

Pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca teks deskriptif siswa kelas V menggunakan Pendekatan Berbasis Genre (GBA). Permasalahan utama yang diatasi adalah rendahnya kemampuan membaca siswa dalam mengenali struktur teks, kosakata, dan informasi rinci pada teks deskriptif. Program ini menerapkan model pembelajaran sistematis yang terdiri dari fase persiapan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi. Sebanyak sembilan belas siswa dari SD YP HKBP 1 Pematangsiantar berpartisipasi. Data dikumpulkan melalui pre-test, post-test, observasi kelas, dan wawancara. Studi ini menegaskan efektivitas GBA sebagai metode berkelanjutan dalam pengembangan literasi dini di pendidikan dasar.

Kata Kunci : Teks Deskriptif; Pendidikan Dasar; Pendekatan Berbasis Genre; Pengembangan Literasi; Keterampilan Membaca.

ABSTRACT

This community service aimed to enhance fifth-grade students' reading comprehension in descriptive texts using the Genre-Based Approach (GBA). The issue addressed was students' limited reading proficiency in recognizing text structure, vocabulary, and detailed information in descriptive texts. The program applied a systematic instructional model consisting of preparation, implementation, and evaluation phases. Nineteen students from SD YP HKBP 1 Pematangsiantar participated. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and interviews. This study confirmed the effectiveness of GBA as a sustainable method for early literacy development in elementary education.

Keywords: Descriptive Text; Elementary Education; Genre-Based Approach; Literacy Development; Reading Skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a cornerstone of academic success, particularly in early language learning. For fifth-grade students, descriptive texts serve as an important genre for developing observation and vocabulary. However, many elementary learners encounter

significant difficulties in comprehending descriptive texts due to insufficient vocabulary, unfamiliarity with text structures, and limited exposure to systematic reading strategies.

Descriptive text typically consist of two major elements: identification and description. Effective comprehension requires mastery of adjectives, and specific vocabulary that provide vivid portrayals of subjects. Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in facilitating comprehension and fostering deeper engagement with texts (Rahayu et al., 2023; Lin, 2023). Inability to recognize linguistic patterns and structures often leads to surface level reading and misunderstanding.

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA), rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics, emphasizes explicit instruction on genre structures and language features. Research has repeatedly supported GBA's effectiveness in promoting literacy in diverse EFL contexts (Widodo, 2019; Harahap, 2020).

This program aimed to implement the Genre-Based Approach for improving reading comprehension of descriptive texts among fifth-grade students at SD YP HKBP 1 Pematangsiantar, focusing on enhancing both vocabulary mastery and structural awareness.

METHOD

s. Each stage was systematically designed to ensure the teaching process was effective, focused, and sustainable, providing direct impact on students' reading skill development.



Figure 1. Stages of Method Implementation

Participants

The participants of this activity were 19 fifth-grade students from SD YP HKBP 1 Pematangsiantar, consisting of 11 boys and 8 girls. The students came from diverse academic backgrounds, with most of them from lower middle income families. These participant characteristics were considered in the design of learning materials and methods. The English teacher from the school also actively participated throughout the program, assisting with classroom management and providing input on the instructional methods and outcomes.

Phase 1: Preparation

At this initial stage, the implementation team established communication and coordination with the school, particularly the principal and English teacher. The purpose was to align on the goals of the program, determine the schedule, and ensure the readiness of learning facilities. The school provided full support, including time, classroom space, and equipment such as an LCD projector and whiteboard.

a) Initial Coordination with School Authorities

The research team conducted initial discussions with the school principal and English teachers to explain the objectives and implementation plan of the program. Full support was received from the school, and the class schedule was arranged accordingly.

b) Identifying Students' Reading Comprehension Level

Before starting the intervention, a pre-test was administered to measure the students' initial reading comprehension skills, especially in understanding descriptive texts. The

test results provided baseline data to evaluate students' progress after the implementation.

c) Preparing Lesson Materials Based on the Genre-Based Approach

The teaching team developed learning materials, including PowerPoint slides, descriptive texts (such as “My Friend, Frans” and “My Cute Cat, Coco”), worksheets, and additional reading tasks.

Phase 2: Implementation

The implementation phase was conducted over several classroom sessions. Each session began with greetings and prayers, followed by warm up questions aimed at activating students' prior knowledge about reading and descriptive texts. The teacher explained the learning objectives and motivated students to participate.

The core learning activities focused on reading selected descriptive texts. The teacher guided students in reading both individually and together while discussing new vocabulary, the use of adjectives, and identifying the structure of the text namely the identification and description parts. The teacher also explained how to understand the overall content of the text and how to draw conclusions from the available information.

The exercises continued with comprehension tasks where students answered questions orally. Students were invited to write their answers on the board so their classmates could see and discuss them. The teacher provided guidance in composing correct sentences and expanding students' vocabulary.

Before closing each session, students were asked to reflect on what they had learned and how they felt during the learning process. The teacher gave positive feedback and praised their participation.

Phase 3: Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program. Instruments included a post-test, direct classroom observations, and interviews with students and the teacher. The post test was used to measure improvements in reading comprehension after participating in the program. Observations focused on student engagement during the learning process, such as enthusiasm, willingness to ask questions, and ability to read independently.

Interviews with selected students and the English teacher were conducted to gather direct feedback. The results showed that students felt more confident in reading and writing descriptive texts and were more enthusiastic about learning English. The teacher also expressed that the learning approach helped students better understand reading materials and enriched their vocabulary.

RESULTS

The application of the Genre-Based Approach led to notable advancements in students' comprehension of descriptive texts. The explicit teaching of genre structures enabled students to differentiate between identification and description sections accurately. Vocabulary acquisition was significantly enhanced as students actively engaged with adjectives, action verbs, and details embedded in texts.

Phase 1: Preparation

An initial assessment was then conducted through a pre-test to measure students' basic abilities in understanding descriptive texts. The pre-test covered aspects such as

recognizing text structure, vocabulary, and overall comprehension. Results showed that the majority of students struggled to identify parts of the text and had limited understanding of common vocabulary used in descriptive texts. Based on these findings, the team developed appropriate and engaging teaching materials such as simplified texts, vocabulary lists, and reading comprehension exercises. The materials were designed to be relevant to students' real life experiences and easy to understand.

Phase 2: Implementation

The activities were carried out directly in the classroom across several learning sessions. Each session was designed not only to deliver material but also to foster interaction, active discussion, and emotional engagement with the lesson. The detailed steps implemented during this stage were as follows:

a) Introduction and Delivery of Objectives

The teacher began the session with a warm greeting and invited the students to pray together. Then, the purpose of the activity was explained that it was a training session on reading English texts, specifically descriptive texts, aimed at improving comprehension, expanding vocabulary, and building confidence in reading.



Figure 2. Giving Explanation of Reading and Descriptive Text

b) Explanation of Reading and Its Purpose

The teacher interactively explained what reading is, why it is important, and its benefits both in daily life and in learning. Students were encouraged to share their reading habits, such as reading storybooks or even game instructions. This discussion helped students see reading as a fun and beneficial activity.

c) Understanding Descriptive Texts

Next, the teacher provided a detailed explanation of what descriptive texts are, their types (people, animals), and their main purpose to describe something in detail so the reader can clearly imagine it. The teacher also introduced the structure of the texts, consisting of an identification and a description section, and the linguistic features such as adjectives, verbs, and simple sentences. To strengthen understanding, the teacher gave two example texts: *“My Friend, Frans”* and *“My Cute Cat, Coco.”* These were selected for their relatable content and ease of comprehension.

d) Reading the Texts by Students

The teacher selected two students to take turns reading the texts aloud in front of the class. One student read “*My Friend, Frans,*” and the other student continue reading “*My Cute Cat, Coco.*” This activity helped train pronunciation and intonation in reading English texts. After the reading, the teacher and students discussed the content and related it to the structure and vocabulary previously taught.

“My friend, Frans”

Identity: *Let me introduce you, my friend. His name is Frans. He is my classmate in college. He is twenty years old.*

Description: *Frans is very handsome. His face is oval, his eyes are round, his nose is sharp, and his hair is short and black. His skin color is white. His body is also slim and quite tall. He is 170 centimeters tall. Frans really likes singing and playing music. He is smart and friendly. He often helps me with my homework and always respects his elders. Everyone likes him.*

Figure 3.1 Example Text of Descriptive Text

“My Cute Cat, Coco”

I have a cat. Her name is Coco. Coco is white and gray. She has blue eyes and a long tail. Coco likes to eat fish and sleep on my bed. Coco is very friendly. She likes to play with me every afternoon. I love my cat very much. One day, Coco was not in my bed. I looked for her in the kitchen, but she wasn't there. Then I checked the garden. Coco was playing with a butterfly! She was jumping and running around the flowers. Suddenly, she climbed a small tree. She looked very happy. I laughed and called her name, "Coco!" She got down and ran to me. I picked her up and gave her some fish. Coco is not only cute, she is also smart and playful.

Figure 3.2 Example Text of Descriptive Text

e) Group Work on Tasks

Students were divided into small random groups. Each group received reading comprehension questions, such as identifying characters, vocabulary meanings, and rearranging sentences. Group discussions encouraged mutual support and collaboration. The teacher moved from group to group to provide guidance. This activity fostered teamwork and enthusiasm, while also developing opinion expression and logical thinking. Students were visibly excited, actively engaged, and encouraged each other in completing the tasks.

Phase 3: Evaluation

The evaluation stage aimed to assess the overall effectiveness of the program. It was conducted through three main aspects: material delivery, students' reading results, and reflection on challenges and progress made during the activity.

a) Evaluation of Material Delivery

The materials were considered successful as they were presented simply and communicatively. Visual media, such as text illustrations can significantly helped

students grasp the context. The teacher also used repetition and open ended questions to ensure understanding of each part of the lesson.

b) Evaluation of Reading Results

Based on the post-test, there was a significant improvement in students' reading skills. There was a noticeable improvement in the average reading scores and students were able to answer questions more accurately. Moreover, students became more confident in reading texts aloud. The teacher reported that even students who were previously passive began to actively participate in discussions and read with a clear voice.

c) Reflection on Challenges and Progress

Several key challenges were identified throughout the activity, which served as reflections for improving the program in the future. These challenges not only posed obstacles but also opportunities for growth.

First, there were differences in reading abilities among students. Some could follow the material quickly, while others required repeated explanations. This demanded that teachers apply flexible and inclusive teaching strategies, such as providing additional tasks or remedial sessions for those who needed extra help.

Second, limited time for implementation was a major challenge. The amount of material was quite extensive, yet the duration was limited. As a result, some activities could not be explored deeply, such as in depth group discussions or individual descriptive writing exercises.

Third, a lack of reading habits outside of school was observed. Many students were not accustomed to reading at home or outside class hours, making them less prepared when encountering English texts. To overcome this, home-based literacy programs could be developed, such as light reading assignments involving parental support.

DISCUSSION

The step by step scaffolding of GBA allowed learners to progress confidently through each stage, transitioning from teacher guided activities to independent text analysis. Group tasks fostered collaborative learning, while independent work validated individual mastery. These findings align with studies emphasizing the efficacy of GBA for developing literacy in EFL settings (Widodo, 2019; Harahap, 2020).

Furthermore, integrating familiar themes and interactive activities successfully reduced reading anxiety, increased motivation, and encouraged active classroom participation (Amanda et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2021). The success of this intervention offers valuable insights for teachers seeking sustainable, student-centered reading instruction models.

Challenges in Implementing

Implementing a literacy development program in elementary schools, particularly one focused on descriptive text reading skills, is not without its challenges. These challenges vary in terms of pedagogy, classroom dynamics, student motivation, resource availability, and time management. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is critical to the program's long term success.

a) Diverse learning abilities one of the major challenges observed was the wide range of students' reading abilities. Some students could quickly understand the text structure and

vocabulary, while others needed repeated explanation and additional support. This diversity demanded a more personalized approach from the teacher.

- b) Limited reading culture many students lacked the habit of reading outside the classroom. Their limited exposure to reading materials at home made it difficult to build advanced comprehension skills. This issue is often rooted in environmental and socio economic factors, where reading is not considered a routine part of children's daily lives.
- c) Classroom management during group activities managing multiple groups simultaneously posed another challenge. Ensuring each student remained focused and engaged during group work required continuous monitoring and support from the teacher.
- d) Limited technological integration despite the availability of some digital tools, not all students had equal access to technology, especially for homework or enrichment tasks outside school. This hindered the adoption of blended or flipped classroom models.

Steps to Overcome the Challenges

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of similar programs in the future, a range of strategies must be implemented both preventive and corrective. Below are comprehensive steps designed to overcome the challenges mentioned:

- a) Differentiated instruction teachers should apply differentiated instruction techniques by providing materials at varying levels of difficulty. This ensures that each student receives tasks appropriate to their level. For instance, simplified worksheets can be given to students who struggle, while more analytical tasks can be provided to advanced learners. This approach promotes inclusivity without compromising the learning pace.
- b) Reading habit reinforcement to cultivate a reading culture, schools can launch reading programs such as "Reading Day," where students bring their favorite books to class. Teachers can assign home reading tasks involving parents, encouraging them to read together with their children for at least 10-15 minutes a day. Book corners in classrooms, storytelling sessions, and library visits can also boost reading enthusiasm.
- c) Structured group roles and rotation to improve group work effectiveness, teachers can assign within each group and rotate them regularly. This not only distributes responsibility but also allows each student to practice different interpersonal.
- d) Blended learning with accessible tools while advanced technology might not be available to all students, teachers can use low bandwidth tools like WhatsApp groups for assignments or audio recordings. Schools can also consider loaning tablets or printed modules for home use. In class sessions can be supported with printed visuals, flashcards, or short video clips.

By implementing these steps thoughtfully and consistently, the challenges faced during program implementation can be transformed into opportunities for growth and innovation. Ultimately, the goal is to build a classroom environment where every child feels capable, supported, and inspired to become a confident reader and communicator.

CONCLUSSION

The implementation of this program demonstrated that the genre-based approach is highly effective in improving elementary students' reading skills, especially in comprehending descriptive texts. Through a structured and systematic process, students were able to recognize text structure, expand vocabulary, enhance critical thinking, and develop self confidence in reading .

This program also proved that, with the right teaching method and support, students could make significant progress even within a limited time. Supporting factors such as the

availability of learning media, communicative teaching approach, and active student participation were key to the success of the activities.

SUGGESTIONS

In addition, challenges encountered during the implementation such as varied student abilities, limited instructional time, and a lack of reading habits outside school can be addressed through adaptive and collaborative strategies. Moving forward, it is essential that all stakeholders schools or even communities work together to foster a learning environment that promotes literacy from an early age. Based on the outcomes and reflections of the program, the following suggestions are proposed:

a) For Schools

Provide professional development for teachers in genre-based teaching and early literacy strategies. Improve supporting facilities such as reading corners, access to libraries, and age appropriate reading materials. Allocate daily literacy time (e.g., 15 minutes before lessons) as a school wide reading habit.

b) For Future Program Implementers or Researchers

Develop similar training models adjusted to different school contexts. Conduct broader research to measure the long-term impact of genre-based approaches on students' literacy skills.

With the achievements and findings gained from this program, it is expected that the genre-based approach will not only serve as an alternative strategy but become an integral part of English language education in elementary schools. Literacy is the foundation of all learning processes, and efforts to nurture it must begin early through engaging, structured, and meaningful methods.



Figure 4.1 Taking photo with all students

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