



Efforts to Improve Critical Thinking Skills Through a Whole Language Approach in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with the aim of describing: (1) learning in material conveying fairy tale content developed using a whole language approach for elementary school (SD) students (2) changes in elementary school students' attitudes after receiving material conveying fairy tale content using a whole language approach, and (3) elementary school students' learning achievement after receiving material to convey the contents of fairy tales using a whole language approach. This research includes case study research. The subjects of this research were second grade elementary school students. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews and tests. Test the validity of the data in this research by triangulating data sources, triangulating methods, and informant reviews. The results of the research show (1) the application of the whole language approach in conveying fairy tale content is carried out through the enjoyment stage, appreciation stage, and understanding stage, (2) the attitude changes that occur include (a) increasing critical thinking skills, (b) understanding the correlation between images in words, c) activeness when watching videos and discussing, (d) embedding cooperation and respect between students, and (e) increasing speaking skills, (3) all students experienced an increase in learning achievement with a score of 77-95 through three domains, namely cognitive domain, affective domain, and psychomotor domain.

Keywords : Whole Language, Critical Thinking

Introduction

Education is a place where students seek knowledge through the instruction they receive. As primary educators in education, teachers are responsible for providing direct instruction to students to change their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. A very significant aspect according to Hamdayama (2016) is the significance of the role and function of teachers. Both in formal and informal education, as well as in non-formal education, teachers play an important role in learning activities. One of the important competencies of a teacher is the ability to plan, control and carry out learning evaluations. In order to continue using the 2013 curriculum which encourages students to actively participate in learning activities, educators are required to be creative and innovative in guiding and directing students to encourage their interest in learning activities. An efficient and effective learning process, supported by media, teaching materials and the surrounding environment, shows the quality of education. Student independence is very necessary for the development of an effective and efficient learning process to create competent students (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Critical thinking skills are very necessary for students in the course of learning activities. By thinking critically, students are not only oriented towards results, but also towards the course of the learning process. According to Lilisari (2013), explains that critical thinking is one component of a high-level thinking process, using the basis of analyzing opinions and generating knowledge about each meaning to develop cohesive and logical reasoning patterns, so that it can encourage students to play an active and creative role in the

course of learning activities. So, to maximize students' ability to think critically, researchers need efforts to increase students' mastery of the concepts contained in Indonesian language subjects which develop students' critical thinking skills and improve Indonesian language learning outcomes. Education is a conscious effort made by someone to develop their abilities or potential in a better direction (Muskania & Zulela MS, 2021; Triyani et al., 2020). The educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) makes a contribution, namely that education is based on the four pillars of education, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be so that students are required to participate in education actively (Prasetyono & Trisnawati, 2018; Priscilla & Yudhyarta, 2021). In line with this, in the independent curriculum the aim of education is to have a balance between hard skills and soft skills to cover main competencies which are grouped into three things, namely knowledge, attitudes and skills (Untari, 2017). Based on this, teachers have a very important role in implementing learning in order to achieve the goals of education. In the learning process, teachers have the task of designing learning that is in accordance with the objectives of the 2013 curriculum. In learning that is in accordance with the 2013 curriculum, it is a learning process that requires students to play an active role in the learning process (Gunawan et al., 2017; Syarifudin, 2020). One way that can be done to activate students in the learning process is to increase students' critical thinking power (Sofyan, 2019). Critical thinking is a framework of reason that is used to analyze the process of considering or determining something in accordance with logic (Agnafia, 2019; Ayçiçek, 2021). Based on this, teachers need to make modifications in learning design that can improve students' critical thinking skills. Learning design can be done by selecting learning components, for example learning implementation plans (RPP), learning media, books and student worksheets as well as other supporting facilities and infrastructure that can improve students' critical thinking abilities (Khairunnisa, 2020; RH Lestari et al., 2020). By designing good learning, learning will be effective and enjoyable for students and can achieve well-determined learning goals.

However, in reality this cannot be implemented properly. In the learning process that teachers carry out, much of it is teacher-centered, making students less active in participating in learning (Jainuddin, 2019; Maemanah et al., 2019). This is in accordance with the results of observations that have been made. During the observation, it was discovered that in the learning process the teacher still only adhered to the handbook and explained it directly by the teacher. With this, it will make students less active in participating in learning and can reduce students' critical thinking abilities (Ilham & Hardiyanti, 2020; Tias, 2017). Apart from these problems, other problems encountered by teachers in implementing learning are difficulties in designing learning that can make students active in learning and enable students to improve students' thinking abilities (Kusumaningtyas et al., 2020). These problems include difficulties in choosing the right learning media or learning resources. This is in accordance with the results of observations made where in teaching teachers do not use learning media because teachers find it difficult to determine and design appropriate learning media. This problem has an impact on students who are less motivated in participating in learning, making students tend to be passive in participating in learning (Babys, 2017; Fatdha & Alamsyah, 2020). Based on this, there is a need for a solution to overcome problems where teacher-centered learning and difficulties in designing learning make students passive in participating in learning and prevent students' critical thinking abilities from developing. Language is very important in life because language can convey a person's desires, opinions and feelings. Language lessons that were supposed to be fun and exciting turned out to be far from expectations. This is because in schools, languages are taught separately. In general, teachers teach language skills and language components separately. Reading is taught at different times to writing. Likewise lessons about language structure, vocabulary or literature. By teaching languages separately, it is very difficult to motivate students to learn languages because students see what they are learning as having nothing to do with their lives. Therefore, an appropriate learning approach is needed so that students are motivated to learn the language. Approach is a way of starting something. An approach to language learning is a set of assumptions about the nature of language, language teaching, and the language learning process. The approaches in language learning are the goal approach, structure approach, process skills approach, whole language approach (Hidayah: 2014: 293-295) To improve language teaching in several countries such as England, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Canada are starting to implement whole language approach around the 80s. Whole language is a language learning approach that presents language teaching as a whole and not separately. Whole language experts believe that language is a whole that cannot be separated. Teaching of language skills and language components, such as grammar and vocabulary, is presented completely, meaningfully, and in real or authentic situations.

Edelsky, et al in Santosa (2011 : 2.3) stated that the Whole Language approach is a language teaching approach that presents language teaching as a whole, meaningful and in real or authentic situations. Roberts in Santosa (2011: 2.4) the Whole Language approach is based on constructivism which states that children/students form their own knowledge through their active role in learning as a whole (whole) and integrated (integrated), starting with cultivating an environment where language is taught as a whole and Language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught in an integrated manner. The teacher's function in the Whole Language class changes from being a decimator of information to being a facilitator (Lamme & Hysmith in Santosa, 2011: 2.4). Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the whole language approach is an approach to

teaching language that is presented in a meaningful way in a real or authentic situation, where students participate in constructing language to communicate, forming their own knowledge through their active role in learning as a whole by developing listening and speaking skills, reading and writing. According to Routman in Santosa (2015: 5.5) there are eight components of Whole Language:

- a) Reading Aloud (reading aloud)
- b) Journal Writing or journal writing, students express their feelings about anything using language in written form
- c) SSR (Sustained Silent Reading): the activity of reading silently
- d) Shared Reading: a joint reading activity between the teacher and students, where each person has a book that they are reading
- e) Guided Reading: guided reading, the teacher becomes an observer and facilitator
- f) Guided writing: guided writing, where students find what they want to write clearly, systematically and interestingly
- g) Independent Reading: free reading; give students the opportunity to determine for themselves the material they want to read
- h) Independent writing or free writing aims to improve writing skills, writing habits and critical thinking skills.

Santosa, et al (2011: 2.11) explain the characteristics of the Whole Language class: 1) full of printed materials, posters of student work adorning the walls and bulletin boards, doors and furniture. One corner of the classroom is converted into a library equipped with various types of books (not only textbooks), 2) students learn through models or examples, 3) students work and learn according to their level of ability, 4) the teacher's role is more as a facilitator, 5) students actively involved in learning in small group activities or individual activities, 6) students dare to take risks and experiment. 7) students receive positive feedback, both from teachers and friends. This can inspire self-confidence. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Whole Language approach should have a place in learning Indonesian language and literature in elementary schools, where the learning materials and processes are arranged in a complete and integrated manner, moreover this approach is not only specifically aimed at learning Indonesian, but It is possible to apply it in learning other lessons. Assessments are given during the learning process; all student activities when writing, listening, discussing in groups or class discussions. When students and teachers hold conferences, teachers use assessment tools, such as observation formats and anecdote notes (Santosa, 2011:2.13). The whole language approach is based on constructivism which states that children or students form their own knowledge through their active role in whole and integrated learning. Whole language is a way to unite views about language, about learning and about the people involved in learning. In this case the people in question are teachers and students. Whole language begins by cultivating an environment that teaches language as a whole and language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught in an integrated manner. With a whole language approach, it is hoped that students' critical thinking skills can improve. Therefore, the aim of this research is to describe "Efforts to Improve Critical Thinking Skills Through a Whole Language Approach in Elementary Schools".

Research Methodology

This type of research is case study research carried out in elementary schools. Data collection carried out included observations, interviews and tests. The subjects in this research were second grade elementary school students with a total of 16 students. The validity of the data used in this research included: data source triangulation, method triangulation, and informant review. The success of this research is known through indicators of improving the quality of the learning process in conveying fairy tale content with a KKM value of 75 in the aspect of language skills. The analytical technique used to analyze the data that has been collected is using comparative descriptive techniques and critical analysis techniques.

Results and Discussion

Application of the Whole Language Approach in Material for Conveying Fairy Tale Content to Class II Elementary School Students

Implementation of learning the content of fairy tales is carried out through the enjoyment stage, appreciation stage and understanding stage. *The enjoyment stage* is carried out by showing a fairy tale video taken from YouTube. Students will be conditioned to be ready to listen to the video that will be shown. The teacher will provide an explanation of the material to be studied and the actions that students must take. The fairy tale shown is the frog and the ox. At this stage, it will stimulate students' active vision and hearing which will be stored in brain memory regarding the results of listening. *The second stage*, appreciation is carried out by asking students to hold discussions with their classmates. The teacher prepares pictures of the characters in the fairy tales that the students have listened to. Apart from that, words, phrases and sentences containing various characters are also prepared. The next instruction, students are directed to match the pictures with the appropriate character traits on the drawing paper that

has been provided. This activity aims to improve critical thinking skills, discussing and solving problems with colleagues. *The third stage*, understanding. The realization of this stage is that each group of students conveys the results of their discussion in front of the teacher and peers. Furthermore, at the understanding stage the teacher has a role in exploring students' speaking abilities by asking and answering what is conveyed. Questions can be directed such as why students chose that answer, the causes and effects that occurred to one of the characters, and so on. The achievement of this interaction will have an impact on the realization of increased understanding and delivery using students' language that is appropriate to the context.

The Influence of Class II Elementary School Students' Attitudes After Receiving Material for Conveying the Content of Fairy Tales Using the Whole Language Approach

Previously, storytelling learning was carried out by teachers using storytelling techniques through story books. The problem is that the pictures in storybooks cannot be seen by some students due to their small size. Apart from that, the teacher has not created a storytelling position according to the type. Therefore, only students sitting at the front can listen well, while other students are chatting with friends sitting next to them or there are students walking forward towards the teacher. This is certainly not effective, so improvements are needed in the next learning process. Corrective action is carried out by applying a whole language approach. Based on the results of observations, it is known that all students listened very well when the video was shown. The attitude shown was also different from before, all students paid attention to the broadcast even though some students made comments as a form of interest in the video, but conditions remained conducive. Furthermore, students also experienced an increase in courage and speaking in expressing opinions at the discussion or presentation stage. Furthermore, the attitude assessment carried out was identified through individual attitude assessment and group attitude assessment as proposed by Mulyana, et al. (2016: 370). Assessment of individual attitudes is assessed from the aspects of (a) religious, (b) discipline, (c) honesty, (d) responsibility, (e) tolerance, (f) mutual cooperation, (g) politeness, and (h) trust self. The assessment of group attitudes is assessed from the aspects of (a) discipline, (b) tolerance, (c) responsibility, (d) curiosity, (e) self-confidence, and (f) mutual cooperation. Each aspect is carried out through an assessment with a score of 1 to 4.

Learning Achievement of Class II Elementary School Students After Receiving Material for Conveying the Content of Fairy Tales Using a Whole Language Approach

In order to determine students' learning achievements after receiving material, they convey the contents of fairy tales using a whole language approach which is measured through tests. Sudjana (2005: 22) states that learning achievement consists of 3 domains. *First*, the cognitive domain concerns intellectual learning outcomes which consist of six aspects, namely knowledge or memory, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. *Second*, the affective domain, concerns value attitudes which consist of five aspects, namely acceptance, answers and reactions, assessment, organization, internalization. Measuring the effective domain cannot be done all the time because changes in student behavior can change at any time. *Third*, the psychomotor domain relates to the results of learning skills and the ability to act. Psychomotor domain measurements are carried out on learning outcomes in the form of appearance. Furthermore, the assessment of student learning achievement is known through the three domains mentioned above. Previous student learning achievements were known when 4 students got scores between 75-78 and 13 students got scores 50-69. Learning with a whole language approach also has an impact on increasing student learning achievement. It is proven that all students obtained scores above the KKM, namely between 77-95. The stages of literature learning in elementary school include the enjoyment stage, appreciation stage, understanding stage, appreciation stage, and implication stage. Because this research was carried out in lower grades, literature learning was only carried out at the enjoyment stage, appreciation stage and appreciation stage. The enjoyment stage is implemented through selecting fairy tales. It is hoped that through learning fairy tales, students will be able to name and determine the character of each character and the purpose of the fairy tale, so that characters are embedded in students who should be emulated and avoided. The fairy tale with the title the frog and the ox was chosen with the value of character education in order to avoid arrogance, love each other, and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of oneself or others. There are no special fairy tales available for elementary school level, so they can be obtained via YouTube. Fairy tales are very attached to children and create interest because they are presented in audiovisual form. Compared to before, the teacher presents fairy tales with direct speaking presentations.

The presentation of direct storytelling will be just as interesting if the storyteller can prepare and present it well and interestingly. The results of the observations showed that when the teacher told the story, the students had not yet created a sitting formation which was conditioned to listen to the teacher carefully, for example the position of sitting on the floor or the students' chairs were attached. When the teacher tells a story, the students sit in their respective chairs, so that only the students sitting in the first and second rows from the front row can see the fairy tale book brought by the teacher. After using storytelling broadcasts through audiovisual media, learning becomes more effective. All students can see the broadcast well from their respective seats. Students also have a positive attitude because no one chats with their peers or walks up to the teacher to see pictures like before. In this activity, students

will be accustomed to improving their memory skills and understanding of what they witness, such as characters, stories, etc. through storytelling video shows, this is the implementation of the understanding stage. Next, the appreciation stage. This stage is realized through question and answer activities related to the results of the understanding stage carried out by students. The process at this stage is that the teacher gives instructions to students to match the figure drawing with the character's character and then stick it on the sheet of drawing paper that has been provided. Students will complete the tasks assigned to them with their peers, each group is divided into two students. It is hoped that this action will create a sense of self-confidence, exchange information and resolve problems. After these activities have been completed by students, the next stage is implication, namely conveying the results of the discussion and confirming answers in front of the teacher and other groups. The teacher's role is very important at this stage because they must be able to generate motivation and provide direction for students to convey the results of their discussions. When the teacher implemented a learning model by telling stories using a fairy tale book, some students just kept quiet and spoke when their names were called by the teacher. In contrast to the direct delivery model, all students have the courage to speak, although some students still need to be provoked by asking and answering. The whole language approach in lower grades is directed so that students can develop their language skills. Therefore, the discussion is carried out in the form of cooperation in solving problems through created questions. Furthermore, the presentation was carried out to find out understanding regarding the answers to questions related to the content of the fairy tale and students' personal abilities, especially in language, which were developed by reciprocally asking questions which would indirectly improve speaking skills through the answers. In line with research conducted by Fauziah (2017) with the title *Implementing Whole Language to Improve Elementary School Students' Reading Comprehension Skills*, it is known that whole language is an approach to developing language teaching that is implemented holistically by prioritizing multimedia, the environment and children's learning experiences. Apart from that, appreciation or appreciation for students must be done continuously, such as by saying or having the attitude "You are great, the answer is correct or good, giving applause, smiling, and so on". This treatment can lead to the formation and change of attitudes in students. Based on the application of the whole language approach in the material conveying the content of fairy tales, positive attitude changes occurred in elementary school students.

The attitude changes that occur include (1) increasing critical thinking skills, (2) understanding the correlation between images and words, (3) being active when listening to videos and discussing, (4) embedding cooperation and respect between students, and (5) increasing abilities. speak. Changes in attitudes also experience changes through the reflection of values (a) religious, (b) discipline, (c) honesty, (d) responsibility, (e) tolerance, (f) mutual cooperation, (g) politeness, (h) self-confidence, and (i) curiosity. *First*, religious, where all students understand praiseworthy and despicable actions. This indicates that the instillation of religious values has been imprinted in the child. *Second*, discipline increased from 7 students to 16 students. *Third*, honestly experiencing the decision, all students have shown this attitude. *Fourth*, responsibility is marked by an increase from 7 students to 16 students. This was because at first some students liked to joke. The *five* tolerances increased from 9 students to 16 students. Tolerance is shown by students by appearing to understand the division of tasks in groups and discussions in resolving the questions asked. Fifth, mutual cooperation will be embedded in students when discussion activities are carried out, of course indirectly between group members will help each other in solving problems. The *six* mutual cooperation will be embedded in students when discussion activities are carried out, of course indirectly between group members will help each other in solving problems. *Seventh*, politeness, is realized at the stage of the learning process. Therefore, not only students will be accustomed to behaving and speaking politely, but also teachers have a role in setting an example. If during the process there are students who commit violations, the teacher needs to act immediately by providing an explanation that what the student did was not good. Will indirectly arise in students when all students are given the same role, especially when each group will present the results of their discussion. *Ninth*, curiosity is explored by students by overcoming curiosity in finding answers to the questions asked. By showing videos of fairy tales, students will train their memory such as who the characters are, the events that occur, the ending of the story, and so on. In this process students are in the stage of thinking from curiosity. Followed by a collaborative process in the form of a group discussion, in this process students will share knowledge, understanding, and ultimately determine the answer. Ends with the implementation of the discussion results and giving responses. Furthermore, the realization of a positive attitude in students has an impact on learning achievement which is observed and evaluated through three domains, namely the cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. In the cognitive domain, students are observed in knowledge or memory, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Knowledge and memory have increased from 5 students to 16 students, although 2 students sometimes still need help to remember by providing keywords.

The application stage has increased from 7 students to 16 students. In the analysis stage, there was an increase from 5 students to 16 students. There was an increase in the synthesis stage from 5 students to 16 students and in the evaluation stage in providing assessments regarding the videos shown from 8 students to 16 students. The affective domain is assessed from five aspects, namely acceptance, answers and reactions, assessment, organization,

internalization. Acceptance was observed from students' readiness and attitudes shown when the whole language approach was implemented, which increased from 9 students to 16 students. Improvement also occurs when all students or 16 students can provide good and correct answers and reactions in completing questions asked by the teacher. Previously only 10 students reacted appropriately, while 6 students were just silent, running around and talking to their colleagues. In the assessment, 10 students increased to 16 students who were able to understand and convey answers correctly to the questions asked. The organizational stage has increased from 7 students to 16 students who are able to work together in groups. The internalization process has increased from 9 students to 16 students. Internalization is a form of accepting good or bad grades which is followed by appreciation and then it will be imprinted in students through the habitual stage. Internationalization requires a continuous process, so at this stage it is still limited to providing an understanding of students' personality values. Apart from that, in the psychomotor domain, it is related to student learning outcomes in carrying out matching assignments between pictures of figures and character traits on prepared drawing paper, which all students can carry out very well.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the explanation above, three conclusions can be drawn. First, the application of a whole language approach in the material conveying fairy tale content needs to pay attention to the intrinsic and extrinsic elements through the enjoyment stage, appreciation stage and understanding stage. Fables are very appropriate for lower elementary school (SD) classes. Second, changes in attitudes that occurred in second grade elementary school students after receiving material to convey the content of fairy tales using a whole language approach included (1) increased critical thinking skills, (2) understanding the correlation between pictures and words, (3) activeness when listening to videos and discussing, (4) embedding cooperation and respect between students, and (5) improving speaking skills. Third, all students or 100% experienced an increase in learning achievement with a score of 77-95 after receiving material to convey the content of fairy tales using a whole language approach through three domains, namely the cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. In the cognitive domain, students are observed in knowledge or memory, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The affective domain is assessed from five aspects, namely acceptance, answers and reactions, assessment, organization, internalization. The psychomotor domain is related to student learning outcomes through performance. Therefore, it can be stated that the whole language approach in the material conveying the content of fairy tales is correlated with improving the attitudes and learning achievements of second grade elementary school students.

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