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Lesson study for teaching reading: textual interpretation towards meaningfull reading

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Article Info

Abstract

The purpose of this lesson study is to explore the current state and problems of textual interpretation in the teaching and learning process based on the Textual Interpretation Model. By analyzing a typical children's poetry reading lesson, this study reveals the teaching contents including classroom activities and effects, to unveil the teacher's problems in textual interpretation. The teacher had prepared the lesson plan in cooperation with a group of teachers and carried out the lesson in a class of 12 Year-Two pupils. The data sources included lesson transcriptions, teaching concepts presented by the teacher and feedback forms from an audience. The data is analyzed by a qualitative method where data was coded by categories and constructed into themes which indicated the teacher's textual interpretation and its impact on the lesson. Data showed that the interaction in this lesson is insufficient and unbalanced, the elements of "teacher", "editor" and "environment" were more emphasized than "author", "student" and "objective". These had led to a superficial and vague interpretation, followed by ineffective classroom activities. This study discussed about how textual interpretation should be done to ensure meaningful reading and provides a revised lesson plan for further references and future exploration.

Keyword: Lesson Study, Meaningful Reading, Textual Interpretation, Reading Literacy
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Introduction

Reading literacy as a must to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society (OECD, 2019). In another word, a reading lesson should not be considering merely as a process of reading, and the goal of a reading lesson is not merely understanding the superficial information. An effective reading lesson should lead to meaningful reading and promotes reading literacy.

Background

An open class lesson had been conducted in Institute of Teacher Education Tengku Ampuan Afzan Campus in July 2018. The lesson taught had been regarded as a source of discussion for improvement and the subject for study.

Problem Statement

To help students to achieve meaningful reading, the teacher himself should have a deep understanding of the text before turning it into reading material. Teacher should have accurate text interpretation, and able to discover the value in the text. Failing in doing this, will leads to ineffective reading. There are two types of reading value in a text, i.e., the original value and the teaching value (Fagen,Xue, 2016). Teacher needs to unearth the hidden knowledge and connotation in the text. This involves the abilities to discover the core and essential values for teaching and learning purpose. However, there are several questions, such as "what is the meaning of reading?" "What does it mean by comprehension reading?" "What are the connections between reading literacy and reading methods?", all these questions are yet to be answered (Rongsheng, Wang, 2014). Without full understanding of these prerequisite answers, the teaching of reading in most cases might not be able to be carried out effectively. Vague understanding of these concepts also will lead to stereotype reading or over interpretation which are commonly seen (Weidong, Rong, 2016). To effectively nurture reading literacy and achieve meaningful reading, questions of how teachers should regard a reading lesson, comprehend the reading material, and how to design teaching and learning content must be answered.

Objective

The purpose of this lesson study is to explore the current state and problems of textual interpretation in the teaching and learning process. By analyzing a typical children poetry reading lesson, this study reveals the classroom activities and effects, to unveil the teacher's problems in textual interpretation. This study discussed about how textual interpretation should be done to ensure meaningful reading and provides a revised lesson plan for further references and future exploration.

This study focusses on exploring teacher's behavior and the learning outcome demonstrated by pupils. The reading material studied is children's poetry, taught in an open class of 12 primary Year-Four pupils. Due to the nature of the open class study, the findings of this study demonstrate only the impact of text interpretation on a reading lesson, and thus limited only to indicate further academic research direction and as references for teachers.

Literature Review

The concept of reading involves the purpose of reading, what to read, how to read, and the reading motivation and attitude (Rongsheng, Wang, 2014). Textual interpretation in reading refers to analyzing what a text means, which indicating to critical reading (Kurland's, 2000). Textual interpretation involves examining features running throughout the text to see how the discussion shapes perception of reality. During the process, readers examine how patterns of content and language shape the portrayal of the topic and how relationships between those patterns convey underlying meaning (Fischer, The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation (Review), 1981) .

Effective textual interpretation is prerequisite key to meaningful reading. Regardless of whether the reading is done orally or silently, meaningful reading refers to reader thinking of an experience which is similar to which writer intended to convey. The analysis and recognition of words is learned in relationship with the analysis and recognition of meaning. Mechanical skills such as

ability to pronounce correctly are not the essential factors in meaningful reading but such skill should be closely related to good reading adaptations, which refers to "getting of meanings from print, appreciation of the pleasure to be obtained from reading " (Carr, 1936, p.145). As it is in The Meaningful Learning Model (Ausubel, Novak, & Hanesian, 1978), meaningful reading requires learners to be actively engaged by tasks which promote skills of synergetic, interrelating, interacting and interdependent.

According to the Textual Interpretation Model (Weidong, 2016), there are six elements need to be interrelated in order to attain appropriate textual interpretation (Figure 1). These elements are author, editor, teacher, student, objective and environment. Each one of them has their own point of view. The dotted line indicates that all the elements are having unlimited possibilities of interactions among themselves which had provided a diversity of rich background for textual interpretation. However, the outer-circle showed that there is a relative boundary for the interpretation. Once a text had been chosen to be the reading material in a reading lesson, the common topic among all the six elements would become the teaching content.
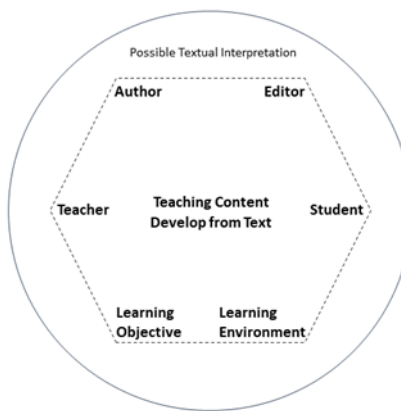

Figure 1. Textual Interpretation Model revised from the frame work of Abrams, M.H.The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic theory and Critical Tradition. London: Oxford University Press, 1953. Source: Weidong, Rong, et al. (2016). Yuwen Wenben Jiedu Shiyong Jiaocheng. Beijing: Beijing University.

Methodology

The teacher had prepared the lesson plan in cooperation with a group of teachers and carried out the lesson in a class of 12 Year-Four pupils. The data sources included lesson transcriptions, teaching concepts presented by the teacher and feedback forms from an audience. The data is analyzed by a qualitative method where data was coded by categories and constructed into themes (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which indicated to teacher's textual interpretation and its impact on the lesson.

Analysis
The lesson study conducted in this study, had displayed the teachers' common situation in textual interpretation and its challenges.

Connection between teacher's teaching concept and textual interpretation of "Nursery Chairs" (Appendix 1)

Analysis of the teacher's teaching concept had showed that his textual interpretation is basically in the right course, but the depth of interpretation is still in the superficial level, based on at- first-glance information only (Table 1).

Table1:
Analysis of connection between teaching concepts and textual interpretation of "Nursery Chairs"
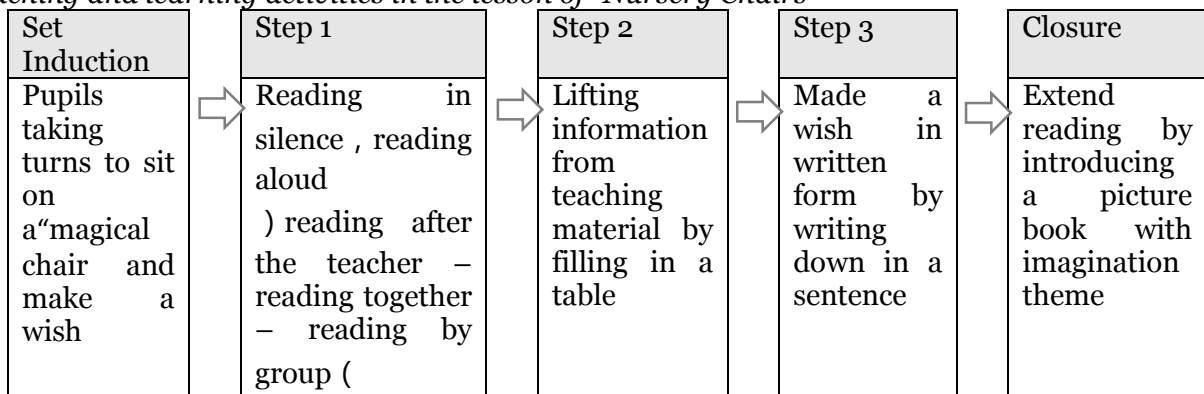
Teacher's Interpretation Scope	Teacher's Interpretation Content	Analysis by Researcher
Genre	Children's Poetry	Common interpretation without discussions of classification and characteristic of poetry
Author	Edited from "Nursery Chair" written by A.A.Milne (England), translated by Weiwei (China)	Background of author and his writing style is not mentioned
Characteristic of text	Childlike fun, Unrestrained imagination, Simple and easy to understand	At-first -glance information, without understanding of language used and the structure of the poetry
Main Value	A toddler imagining the chair that he is sitting on as a ship, a plane etc.	At-first-glance information, without deep interpretation of connotations

Connection between reading aloud and textual interpretation of "Nursery Chairs"

There are five segments in the teaching process, namely induction set, step one, step two, step three and closure (Table 2). The reading activities in this lesson are to read in silence and to read aloud in step one. In step two, the teacher examines pupils' comprehension by asking questions. In step 3, pupils were asked to express their opinions based on their understanding.

Table 2:
Teaching and learning activities in the lesson of "Nursery Chairs"

Set Induction	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Closure
Pupils taking turns to sit on a"magical chair and make a wish	Reading in silence , reading aloud) reading after the teacher – reading together – reading by group (	Lifting information from teaching material by filling in a table	Made a wish in written form by writing down in a sentence	Extend reading by introducing a picture book with imagination theme

The learning objective in this lesson designed by the teacher is "experiencing unrestrained imaginary in the poetry's scenario by reading aloud". This shown that the teacher understands that "imaginary" is the important element in the reading material and intended to make it as the learning outcome. In the text book, the poetry is put under the theme of "Game with Fun". However, "imaginary" and "Fun" are the original value but not the teaching values. In this lesson, the teacher did not manage to interpret the intention of the author and editor. In the poetry

(Appendix 1), the author wrote about a toddler sitting on a chair imagined himself as a captain, a pilot and a tiger. "Imagination" and "Fun" are only the at-one-glance textual interpretation. By focusing on reading aloud, without discovering about the teaching value (where writing strategy lies), pupils were not able to comprehend the fun in the imaginary process. Through reading aloud, pupils may gain primary comprehension only. The teacher's textual interpretation did not connect closely with author, editor and learning objective.

Connection between questioning strategy and textual interpretation of "Nursery Chairs"
Questions raised in each step in "Nursery Chairs" reading lesson (Table 3) also revealed the textual interpretation states of the teacher involved.

Table 3:
Analysis of connection between questioning strategy and textual interpretation of "Nursery Chairs"

Teaching & Learning Segment	Questioning Strategy by the Teacher	Attribute of Questions asked
Step 1	What does the child imagine himself to be? What does the child wanted to do in his imaginary?	Lifting information from the material, attained superficial understanding
Step 2	The child will transform to different kind of things and animals while sitting on a chair, this shown that what kind of child he is?	Superficial, analyzation
Step 3	If there is another magical chair existed , what would you like to transform to?	Stray from the content and author's intention

The questions asked showed that textual interpretation remains in the state of superficial interpretation. The teacher had mistaken "imaginary" as the teaching value. Questions asked only led to minimum learning outcome.

In this open class reading lesson, other than reading aloud, question-and-answer is another main strategy conducted. However, both of these strategies had been strayed from the author's intension and the theme designated by the editor. The most interesting segment is the induction set, using a fancily decorated "magical chair", the teacher had created a conducive learning environment for the childlike fun poem.

Cognitive activities performed by students from the point of view of an audience
The audience which comprises of 38 teachers had given their feedback in written form to describe the performance of the pupils by their observation (Table 4).

Table 4:
Analysis of cognitive activity performed by pupils in the open class of "Nursery Chairs"

Cognitive Activity	Example	Cognitive Level based on Bloom's Taxonomy
Association and Imagination	Relate to pupils' personal life by requesting to share about their wishes	Medium
Information Lifting	Filling up primary content of the poetry in a table	Low
Analyzing	To infer the characteristic of the toddler	Medium

Data shown that the cognitive level demonstrated by pupils are not high. While pupils were asked to make a wish and explained, their cognitive status is only at a medium level. Pupils were not asked to give their answers in detail. This goes the same with analyzing activity in the lesson. Pupils were requested to answer in brief sentences only. The low-level cognitive activity is the information lifting process while pupils filling in table with superficial information from the poetry. The result of the cognitive level analysis is resembled with the analysis result of teacher's text interpretation, which also indicating to a superficial comprehension of the reading material.

Results and Discussion

Data showed that the six-elements stated in the Textual Interpretation Model, i.e., author, editor, teacher, student, objective and environment are yet to be mastered by the teacher. The teacher has only rudimentary understanding of the intention of the author and editor, which leads to a shallow comprehension of the poetry, the reading material. Data also exhibited that the domination of teacher resulted in passive learning in the reading class. Other than reading aloud, pupils rarely expressed deep comprehension and appreciation of the poetry. Regarding the reading environment, data showed that the good use of teaching aids helped in generating a lively atmosphere. To attain a meaningful reading lesson, textual interpretation should be seen as "interaction among the multi-elements" where author, editor, teacher, student, objective and environment link to each other adequately. However, the interaction of all these elements in this lesson is insufficient and unbalanced. The elements of "teacher", "editor" and "environment" were more emphasized than "author", "student" and "objective". Although there is no absolute "right" or "wrong" interpretation from readers' point of view, but still, there is a relative "adequate" or "inadequate" interpretation (Junjing, Jiang, 2017). The lack of sufficient and balance interaction among the interpretation elements had led to a superficial and vague interpretation, followed by ineffective teaching content and classroom activities.

Conclusion

Textual interpretation is the key factor to enhance meaningful reading (Guoxiang, Gan et al., 2014). Without a comprehensive interpretation aligned with the multi-elements, the teacher as reader would not be able to truly interpret the text and would lead to inappropriate teaching strategies and learning activities. Reading for pleasure is fundamental, but this must be aligned with reading literacy. Emphasizing excessively on reading skills which refers to word recognition and reading fluency only will not lead to meaningful reading. A revised lesson plan is recommended in this study (Appendix 2). It was suggested that textual interpretation which emphasized more on critical comprehension would promote meaningful reading. Reading literacy

which includes the ability of integrating and interpreting, reflecting and evaluating also needs to be regarded as essential issues for both teachers and pupils. In this case, word association, word prediction, reading aloud with expression according to the sentiment and comparison of connotation of each stanza are recommended. However, interaction among elements in textual interpretation comprises of unlimited possibilities and leads to a rich and enormously complex nature. Therefore, it is also suggested that, a more-knowledgeable-other should be actively engaged during the process of lesson preparation especially in the early stage where textual interpretation is involved.

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