

Using the Syntax Surgery in Teaching Reading a Narrative Text to Junior High School Students

Ria Adrian¹, Rusdi Noor Rosa, S.S., M.Hum.²

English Department
FBS State University of Padang
email: yaya4845@yahoo.co.id

Abstrak

Tujuan penulisan makalah ini adalah untuk menjelaskan mengenai penerapan strategi *Syntax Surgery (bedah kalimat)* guna mengatasi kesulitan siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) dalam membaca dan memahami susunan kalimat dalam Bahasa Inggris. Melalui makalah ini diharapkan akan memberikan hal yang bermanfaat bagi para guru dalam mengajarkan siswa untuk membaca. Selanjutnya, dengan menggunakan strategy *Syntax Surgery (bedah kalimat)* ini diharapkan mampu menjadi alternatif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). *Syntax Surgery* ini ampuh dalam menanggulangi masalah membaca pada anak karena siswa dapat menyaksikan secara visual hubungan antara klausa dalam kalimat kompleks. Proses ini akan membuat siswa lebih memahami dan mengingat aturan kalimat bahasa inggris. Selain itu, manfaat lain ialah siswa bisa lebih percaya diri dalam menggunakan Bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: *Syntax Surgery*, Reading, Narrative Text, Junior High School

A. Introduction

As one of the most popular language in the world, English skill has become one of the requirements in many job fields. English also play a great role in many aspects in our life for instance education, economic, government, and also technology. It is used in many crucial subject such as promoting tourism object, international business, scientific and technical research, politics, world peace, and even entertainment. This condition forces people to acquire English language in order to compete in globalization era. Many company or job field pursuit us to become bilingual or even multilingual person.

One of the effective ways to access and to learn English is through reading. By reading, people have enough exposure with English. Reading provides a good model for English; it provides the opportunity to study vocabulary, grammar, and also punctuations. Besides as a tool to gain the general knowledge, reading is also important for academic purposes. For the high school students, English tests are often provided in the form of reading including the test

¹ The writer of paper from English Department for graduation period September 2012.

² Advisor, the lecturer of FBS State University of Padang.

in National Final Examination. Therefore, the ability to understand the information from the text is very precious.

According to 2006 curriculum for the junior high school, the purpose of teaching reading is the students have to understand functional text and monolog text so that they are able to use English to fulfil daily needs and solve problems in their daily life, for example reading newspaper, short stories, manual, or instruction.

As for the junior high school students, the purpose of teaching reading especially narrative still cannot be obtained because the students have difficulty in understanding English sentences. The students confuse the word order and miss altogether the subjects and predicates of key sentences especially if the sentences are complex or compound sentences. As the result, most of the students who struggle in reading often give up when they face the difficulty in reading a text, they often stop reading the text (Beers (2003:2)).

To solve this problem, the teachers have used various strategies in teaching reading in the classroom. Some strategies are used by the teacher such as brainstorming activity and also show the students to use their background knowledge.

However, the strategies that teachers use are not effective yet. The reading instruction in the class room did not help the readers to comprehend the text. Mostly the teachers only ask the students to read the text aloud, translate it, discuss it, and answer the following question. Goodman & Smith in Suharmanto (2000:15) suggest that in reading, readers do not read word by word, but use their background knowledge about the topic, the language and various reading strategies. The teachers did not provide any strategy that the readers could apply to solve their problem in understanding English text. As the result, the readers will not have any skill to read the text therefore they face more difficulty to comprehend the text.

To solve this problem, we can use the syntax surgery strategy in reading instruction. According to Herrel (1998:278) syntax surgery is a strategy that allows students to see the relationship of elements within a sentence that may be confusing to understand. So by using this strategy, students will be able to build their comprehension in reading English text. If they have succeeded in reading comprehension, their language acquisition will also increase.

Reading is often known as a passive skill in learning English because the learners do not produce any product like writing and speaking. However this theory is not true because when we read the text, we activate many skills in order to build our understanding of the text. Nuttal (1982) stated that reading is the meaningful interpretation of written and verbal symbol. The written and verbal symbol must be understood by the reader to get understanding of the text.

Quiet similar with the definition above, Mackay (in Gloria (1988)) reading involves an interaction between thought and language. So, the skills involve in reading is not only language skill but also the skill to interpret the meaning of the text such as the reader intellectual, background knowledge, and also readers knowledge about the language of the text. So, in order to understand the message

communicated in the text, the reader must have a skill that can be used to connect their background knowledge with the language written in the text.

Another definition is stated by Kolker (in Alexander (1988:3)). She said that reading is a communication process between the writer and the reader, utilizing written language.

Grabe and Stoller (1995:9) stated that reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. This definition means that reading related to comprehension, how the readers understand what intended in the text.

Alderson (2000:3) stated that as a process reading is the interaction between a reader and the text. During the process, many things could happen. The reader not only read what is printed on the page, deciding what the sentences mean and how they related to each other. The readers also think about what they read, what it means to them, and how it relates to things they have read, to things they know.

Moreover, Grabe also stated that a good L1 reader will read almost all text at rates between 200 to 300 words per minute. Nevertheless, we can't say that someone have a fluent reading ability if they cannot comprehend the message in the text. So someone have a good reading ability if they can read between 200 to 300 words per minute and comprehend the meaning behind the text.

In conclusion, reading is a complex process involves the reader, the text and the active interaction between them to understand the text meaning by using the readers' intellectual and prior knowledge about the language use and topic of the text.

Narrative text is included in one of the genre that is taught in Junior High School. It is suitable with the purpose of 2007 curriculum which states that junior high school students have to understand functional text and monolog text. There are five monolog texts that are learnt by the junior high school students: procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative and report.

According to Derewianka (1990:41), the social function of narrative text is to entertain and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways. The basic purpose of a narrative is to entertain also to gain and hold the reader's interest in a story. The stories are often fiction, the stories that are not exist in real life or just imagination.

In addition, Gerot and Wignell (1994:204) said that naratives deal with problematic events which lead to a crisis or turning point of some kind, which in turn finds a resolution. This is different with a recount text which only states a sequence of events that happened in someone's life. Gerot and Wignell (1994:204) also set a generic structure of a narrative text. There are five elements that build a narrative text: orientation, evaluation, complication, resolution, and re-orientation.

Narrative is highlighted with some language feature such as the action verb, conjunction, sequence of events, and also the use of specific participants. Narratives usually use action verb in the form of past tense because it tells the story that had been happened, also the use of conjunction in complex sentence.

B. Discussion

Reading is a skill that not every people can learn; therefore teaching reading is more difficult than teaching other skills in English. Teaching reading is difficult because there are no exact way to teach the students how to read. Reading is an individual process, so that as a teacher we can only teach them how to use strategies on their reading to help them overcome obstacle in reading. So that, teaching reading requires more time than teaching another skill.

Curriculum that is applied in Indonesia is *Kurikulum 2006 (KTSP)*. KTSP is based on genre based approach where the approach of teaching is based on certain genre. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994:18) a genre can be defined as a culturally specific text-type which results from using language (written and spoken) to (help) accomplish something. It can be said that genre is a classification of the texts based on their purposes. From the different genre of a text, the students can learn the generic structure and the language feature of a text.

Genres that are learned in high school level are descriptive, narrative, report, recount, etc and for narrative, it would be taught in the second semester of third year.

To achieve the functional literacy, teaching reading to junior high school using three phase technique. There are three basic stages in this cycles that is pre teaching, whilst teaching, and post teaching. In whilst, the teachers will give the model of the text that will be learnt. Then, the students and teachers analyze the generic structure and content of the text.

According to Herrel (1998:279) syntax surgery is a strategy that allows students to see the relationship of elements within a sentence that may be confusing to understand. Because English syntax often differs from the word order found in students own language, English learner sometimes found difficulty in comprehending sentences they read or confuse word order in reading.

In addition Baltra (in Herrel (1998:280)) stated that syntax surgery means creating a visual to illustrate parts of a sentence to allows the English learner to see the connections and gives students opportunities to clarify meaning, as well. This means syntax surgery is a strategy that can be used to help students understand what intended in the text by visualizing the sentence of the text.

According to Beers (2003:1) The main goal of using "Syntax Surgery" is to allow students the opportunity to examine a text closely and critically. This strategy provides the opportunity for the students to see the connection of elements in a sentence that may be confusing to understand. Syntax surgery involves writing a sentence on a sentence strip and then cutting the sentence apart to rearrange it into more understandable pieces. This strategy makes English syntax more visible to the students.

In teaching the students to use strategy, modelling by the teacher is very important thing to do first. Most students do not use any strategy on the reading process; therefore modelling is the first step in raising the students' awareness of the strategy.

Willhem (in Herrel) proposed the step of using new strategy in the classroom. First is model by teacher. In this step the teacher talk about the strategy and model it in front of the students, the teacher stressed why, what, and when the

strategy used. Second step is practice the strategy together with students. Third step is scaffolding the strategy use and talk about the strategy with the students. Students will practice the strategy and teacher observes them. The fourth step is independent use.

According to Herrel (1998:279) the steps of implementing syntax surgery are the following:

1. Identify a problematic sentence.
Identify a sentence that causing difficulty. It may be a sentence that the students has spoken where the home language word order conflicts with English word order, or it may be a complex sentence in reading that is causing confusion.
2. Write the sentence and initiate the surgery.
Write the sentence in sentence strip and reread the sentence aloud with the students, then cut the sentence apart in the place or places difficulty. In complex sentence, the teacher can cut the clause of the sentence.
3. Rearrange the words.
Rearrange the words in the correct English sequence. Reaffirm the students' knowledge of the home language by rebuilding the sentence in the original order in home language and tell students we say it this way in Bahasa Indonesia.
4. Practice with more sentences with the same pattern.
Write a few more sentences with the same word pattern on sentence strips and have the students initiate the surgery for additional practice.
5. Time the lesson.
Be careful not to use this lesson in a way that interrupts communication with the students.

To be concluded, syntax surgery can be used to help students in building their comprehension of the text. The steps that can be used is identifying the problematic sentence, write the sentence and initiate the surgery, rearrange the words into more understandable form, practice and time the lesson. In addition models by teacher is very important to raise students awarness on the use of strategy.

a. Preparation

Before doing syntax surgery, there are some preparations that teacher must do. First, teacher should prepare reading material that usually used in teaching reading such as, the media that will be used in brainstorming activity, explanation about generic structure and language feature of the text. Next, preparation about the syntax surgery strategy is two narrative texts to demonstrate syntax surgery, one is used in the modelling and another one in independent construction. Then, prepare sentence strip and scissors to initiate the surgery. The last one is material or explanation of syntax surgery such as definition and advantages of the strategy.

b. Implementation

Like general reading instruction, to apply syntax surgery reading instruction in classroom is also divided into three stages.

1. Pre teaching

Pre teaching in syntax surgery has similar activity with activity in another strategy. As usual, begin the lesson with greeting the students and checking the attendance. Another activity that also important in pre teaching is brainstorming. In brainstorming teacher can build the students background knowledge of the text or topic that will discussed in this case the narrative text. Beside that, teachers can start introducing syntax surgery by asking the students a couple of questions about their difficulty in understanding the structure of the text. Another question that could be asked is whether the students have particular strategy to overcome their difficulty in understanding the sentence structure.

2. Whilst teaching

Like another reading instructions, in whilst teaching after teacher and students read the text together the teacher will explain the generic structure of the text to the students. Not only explain the generic structure, teachers also explain the language feature of the text that he/she teach. In narrative text the language feature that teacher explain focus on its grammatical structure that is past tense, in this stage, teachers can explain the students about the use of syntax surgery.

First, syntax surgery is introduced to the students. After asking the students a couple of questions about their difficulty in understanding the structure of the text. Another question that could be asked is whether the students have particular strategy to overcome their difficulty in understanding the sentence structure. Then, teachers can continue with introducing the syntax surgery strategy to the students and tell the students the advantages of using this strategy.

Second, the teachers model the use of syntax surgery. From the interview with the students above teachers can see how many students are familiar with using strategies while they read. If there are many students are not familiar to use any strategy while reading, it is important for the teacher to model the strategy in the class room.

Next, components or steps of Syntax Surgery are given to the students. The first thing to do in syntax surgery in classroom is identifying the problematic sentence. In this stage teacher together with the students identify a sentence that is causing difficulty. It may be a sentence where the home language word order conflicts or different with English word order, or it may be a complex sentence encountered in reading that is causing confusion. For example if the sentence says,

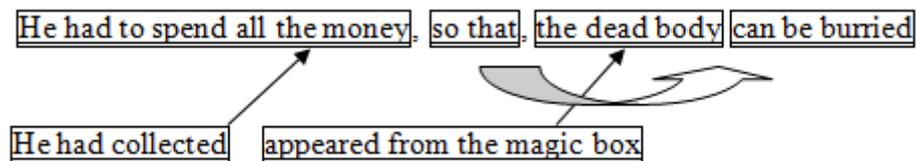
“He had to spend all the money he had collected so that the dead body appeared from the magic box can be buried.”

Next, teacher writes the sentence on the sentence strip and initiates the surgery. Teacher writes the sentence on a sentence strip and reread the sentence aloud with the students involved in reading activity. Then, take a pair of scissors and cut the sentence apart in the place or places of difficulty. For example on the sentence, “He had to spend all the money he had collected so that the dead body appeared from the magic box can be buried” would be cut into:

- | |
|---------------------------------|
| - He had to spend all the money |
| - He had collected |

- So that
- The dead body
- appeared from the magic box
- Can be burried

Then, teacher rearranges the words into more understandable pattern. Teacher can do this while explaining the correct rule of word order in English. To explain the previous sentence, teacher can rewrite “ He had to spend all the money so that the dead body can be burried”. Teacher can explain the clause “he had collected” explains the word “money” and draw an arrow to that word. Next, the phrase “ appeared from the magic box” explains “ the dead body”. In addition, teacher also can draw an arrow from the word “so that” to “can be burried” and explain the conjunction is used to indicate the impact of the author previous action.



Teacher also can compare word order in English and the students native language by saying “ we say it this way in Indonesia but in English we say this way” while rebuilding the word order for example the simple phrase like green sweater. In this stages, students’ role is only to listen and observe the teacher’s modelling.

Next, students and teacher practice the surgery with more sentences, for additional practice, write a few more sentences with the same word pattern on sentence strip and have the students read them along with the teacher. Teacher together with students do the syntax surgery together in front of the class.

Finally, time the lesson, teacher asks students to do syntax surgery strategy while they read. In this stages, students do the syntax surgery independently and teacher’s role is to be observant of the students while they do syntax surgery. Be careful not to use this lesson in a way that interrupts communication with the students. If the message the student was conveying was clear, respond to it modelling the correct English syntax. Write the students sentence down and return at a later time to use the syntax surgery strategy to support the refinement of the students English. Be observant of other students who might benefit from the explanation and use the opportunity to give instruction to several students at a time.

3. Post Teaching

In post teaching, it is also similar with the post teaching done in another strategy, usually students do the independent construction, teacher give task that the students do independently to check their understanding and the use of strategy.

C. Advantages of Using Syntax Surgery

Although in the beginning it has been stated that syntax surgery helps the students to understand English structure so that students will be able to comprehend the text, but there are some more advantages of using the syntax surgery strategy. Not only in reading skill, syntax surgery also has some advantages to the other skill.

In syntax surgery, cut the sentence and rearrange it into more understandable part so that the students witnessed the pieces of the sentence being moved. That process will make the students more likely to understand and remember the English syntax rules when called on to use them in future.

Second advantage is this strategy helps the students to be more confident in their use of English. Because they have known the rules of English syntax, they can apply it in their speaking or writing and avoid the elements that make their speaking or writing difficult for others to understand.

Other advantages are students understanding and memories are supported by using several avenues to reinforce the English syntax. Students can both see and hear the differences of the word order in English or separate the thoughts within complex sentences.

D. Conclusions and suggestions

Based on what have discussed in the paper, there are several point that can be concluded. First, reading skill is very important to be mastered because it is often used in many crucial subject that related to our daily life. Second, in reading classroom students have difficulty in understanding sentence structure in English. Next, syntax surgery can be used to overcome the difficulty in understanding the structure of English sentence because syntax surgery provide the opportunity for the students to see inside part of English sentence by cutting it into more understandable part.

To use this strategy first is preparation of reading media and material and also the explanation of syntax surgery. Next, the introduction and models the syntax surgery skill by the teacher. After that, teachers give the component of syntax surgery to the students and identifying the problematic sentences. Next, initiate the surgery, write the sentence in sentence strip and cut in the place of difficulty. Finally, rearrange the words into more understandable pattern.

However, before using this strategy, there are several things that should be carefully prepared to get students understanding of the text. There are several things that can be suggested before using strategy in the classroom. First, before use this strategy teacher should carefully choose material that suitable with the students needs. Second, besides material, tolls and property to teach students this strategy also important to be prepared. The last is be careful when using this strategy, use this strategy in the way that not interrupted the communication with the students.

Note: This article is written based on the writer's paper whose advisor is Rusdi Noor Rosa, S.S., M.Hum.

References

- Alderson, Charles. 2000. *Assesing reading*. New york: Cambridge University Press.
- Alexander, Estill. 1988. *Teaching reading*. London: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Anderson, K. & Anderson, M. 1995. *Text Types in English*. Australia: Macmillan Education.
- Beers, Kylene. 2003. *When Kids can't Read: What The Teacher Can do*. Retrieved from http://www.themainidea.net/tmi_pdfs/THE%20MAIN%20IDEA%20--%20When%20Kids%20Can%27t%20Read%20--%2011-09.pdf on Wednesday, november 02 2011
- Calderon, Margarita Espino & liliana Minaya- Rowe.2003. *Designing and Implementing Two-Way Bilingual Program*. California: Corwin Press,INC.
- Christine, nuttal. 1982. *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Oxford. Henemann.
- Cohen, Andrew D. 1998. *Strategiess in Learning and Using a Second Language*. England: longman.
- Derewianka, beverly. 1990. *Exploring how text work*. Australia. Primary english teaching association.
- Gerot, L & Peter Wignell.1994. *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Sydney: Antipodean Educational Enterprises.
- Gloria, edithia.1988. *Developing reading skills for each foreign students*. Jakarta. Depdikbud.
- Grabe, William, 2009. *Reading in a second language: moving from theory to practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grabe, william & frederica stoller. 2002. *Teaching and researching reading*. England. Pearson education.
- Herrel, Adrienne L & Michael jordan.1998. *50 Strategies Teaching English Language Learner*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Knapp, peter & megan Watkins. 2005. *Genre, Text, Grammar*. Australia: A UNSW Press book.

Krashen, Stephen D. 1981. *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. California: Pergemon Press, INC.

Suharmanto, A. 2000. *Reading Strategy in Indonesia and in English: A comparative study*. Unpublished dissertation. Universitas Negeri Malang

