OPTIMIZING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH 'LEARNING STYLE' BASED ON BUILDING LEARNING POWER

Kurnia Fitri Arifah

English Education Department, Language and Arts Faculty, Surabaya State University.
Email: wongayusedunia@gmail.com

Rahayu Kuswardani, S.Pd., M.Appl.

English Education Department, Language and Arts Faculty, Surabaya State University.
Email: rahayukuswardani@yahoo.com

Abstrak

Persepsi dan pikiran siswa mempengaruhi salah satu ketrampilan Bahasa Inggris yaitu ketrampilan membaca. Latar belakang pengetahuan mereka membawa mereka untuk memahami sebuah teks yang mereka baca seperti teks eksposisi yang menggabungkan fakta, ide, dan opini. Memiliki pemahaman dalam membaca dibutuhkan untuk dapat mempelajari informasi yang tersedia dalam suatu teks. Pentingnya pemahaman membuat guru harus mengembangkan strategi membaca. Salah satu strategi adalah *'Learning Style'* berdasarkan *Building Learning Power*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi *'Learning Style'* berdasarkan *Building Learning Power* dalam membaca teks eksposisi serta menggambarkan respon siswa terhadap implementasi strategi tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah *observation checklist, field-note, interview,* dan *questionnaire*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi *'Learning Style'* membuat siswa menaruh minatnya pada kegiatan membaca. Siswa dapat memilih topik sendiri dan menentukan teks yang mereka baca. Mereka juga terlibat dalam diskusi kelompok untuk menjawab permasalahan dari topik yang mereka pilih dan membuat presentasi berdasarkan gaya mereka. Siswa merasa santai dan nyaman ketika belajar. Mereka setuju bahwa strategi ini dapat membantu mereka memahami teks.
Kata Kunci: Building Learning Power, 'Learning Style', ketrampilan membaca, teks eksposisi.

Abstract

The students' perception and thought affects to one of English skills that is reading skill. Their background knowledge leads them to comprehend a text they read such as exposition text which combines facts, ideas, and arguments. Having comprehension in reading that text is needed to learn about information provided. Due to the importance of comprehension, teacher should develop reading strategy. One of the strategies is 'Learning Style' based on Building Learning Power. This research aims to describe the implementation of 'Learning Style' based on Building Learning Power in reading exposition text as well as describe the students' responses toward the implementation of this strategy. The research method applied in this research is descriptive qualitative research. The instruments are observation checklist and field-note, interview, and questionnaire. The result shows that the implementation of 'Learning Style' makes the students put their interest in reading activity. The students can choose the topic by themselves and determine what text they want to read. They also engaged in a group discussion to answer the problem of topic they chosen and make a presentation based on their style. From the interview and questionnaire, the students feel enjoy and comfortable while learning. They do agree that this strategy can help them to comprehend exposition texts.
Keywords: Building Learning Power, 'Learning Style', reading skill, exposition text.

INTRODUCTION

Students have their own unique brain which is full of curiosity. They also have their own unique individuality which affects in learning something. Therefore each student may have different way of thinking and understanding a certain event. Three categories of diversity that have been shown to have important implications for teaching and learning are differences in students' learning styles, learning approaches, and intellectual development levels (Felder & Brent, 2005:57).

Furthermore, students are not tape recorder anymore who get everything from the teacher and repeat what they have heard. The teacher cannot just transfer the lesson and ask the students to remember it. Moreover, in this era a teacher is not the only one source to get knowledge. This situation makes the students always depend on their teacher and feel secure as long as they are in the school. However, education does not only emphasize the

students' ability in achieving good grades, but also prepare the students to face real life situation in future. For example, in learning other language especially English. Learning English aims to prepare the students enable to achieve some competence which may be reflected on individual experience and others, enable to express idea and feeling, as well as understanding several types of meaning (Depdiknas, 2003:5). It is implicitly stated that English is beneficial in society in order to recognize cultural differences, make an individual and social decision in a more responsible way, and participate in society who use English actively. By forcing the students to get everything they want to know by themselves, they will learn to be independence. Besides, they will be trained to use their own ability analytically and imaginatively to face problems through learning different language.

From those diversities and needs, a teacher as the creator of educated people has a responsibility to provide learning with a suitable approach. Any other approach that targets only one type of student would probably be more effective, but it would still fail to address the needs of most students (Felder & Brent, 2005:57). Choosing among teaching approaches is not easy because a particular approach has its method that resonates with its own values and fundamental views about teaching and learning. Methods themselves are decontextualized because it describes a certain deal based on certain beliefs (Larsen & Freeman, 2000:181). Sometimes, it does not fit with what learners are trying to achieve and does not appropriate to context of learner. In addition, the approach should be benefit for all types of learners in classroom such as visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners.

SMPN 1 Sidoarjo has a unique approach to cover problems as mentioned above. This school has been developing Building Learning Power (BLP) concept. BLP concept is introduced by Professor Guy Claxton's from England. Claxton, et al. (2011), BLP is an idea to help young people to face difficulty and uncertainty calmly, confidently, and creatively by creating a culture in classrooms. BLP is about helping young people become better learners, developing their portable learning power, and preparing young people for a lifetime of learning (Claxton, 2010). In other words, BLP is one of approaches which develops learning habits both extensive learning and intensive learning. According to Other than that BLP has four aspects which are good for students' learning. They are Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflectiveness, and Reciprocity.

This school adapts BLP concept which is originated from Finland because the school wants to become the best education institution in quality. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011), Finland is stated as successful country in educational system which is proven by the result of Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA). Therefore, this school applies BLP in order to achieve the best education quality and to establish good brand in education field. In order for BLP to work effectively in teaching and learning process, the school has developed a learning ethos which is now called 'Learning Style' and has been implanted throughout school environment.

According Claxton & Murrell (1987), learning style is a concept about personality, information processing, social interaction, and instructional methods that play an important role in improving teaching and learning practices in higher education. Margono (2011) defines 'Learning Style' as a learning strategy which has been developed based on interests and learning styles of students, to be more challenging and engaging students individually, in pairs, or in groups. The objectives of this learning strategy are to increase students 'motivation and to boost the competence of students in real learning experiences toward a particular topic. Because it is developed based on students' interests and learning styles, the activities are challenging and fun.

Furthermore, Margono (2011) explained that 'Learning Style' makes the students become independent learners. The students make list of questions based on the topic given. They are free to choose a question to be answered. They make a group discussion based on the question that they choose. They can look for the answer in any sources such as book, internet, article, and so on. After reading some sources, they make a presentation based on their style preferences. They can use any media such as laptop, posters, realia, or anything to present their discussion. The media chosen are representative from students' learning style. Fleming & Miles (1992) have shown four primary learning styles, there are visual learning, auditory learning, read-write learning, and kinesthetic learning. Therefore in this case visual learners will choose present their result using attractive pictures, auditory learners prefer deliver their result verbally, etc. By doing 'Learning Style', learners will be more independent, more reflective, and better in planning and evaluating their own learning.

In the 'Learning Style', the students learn how to respond to others learning and how to learn from others. The students can choose the way they learn something. In this matter, students are encouraged to take control of their learning by building on their prior knowledge, setting their own goals, questioning, thinking about their thinking (metacognition) and self-reflecting on their own learning (Colcott et al., 2009:4). In this type of learning,

the teacher's roles are as facilitator and motivator. The teacher supports the students to become independent learners, mindful of themselves as individuals, group members and part of community. By providing those environment which is rich in challenges, the students will produce self-motivated by setting up their own goals and reflecting on their own achievements.

In SMPN 1 Sidoarjo, 'Learning Style' based on BLP has been successfully implemented in English classroom. One of successful teachers incorporates BLP in teaching and learning process is Murni Wuryandari, S. Pd., M. Pd. She applied it in teaching reading. Reading is the ability of the student to perceive and understand what is written or printed (Valette & Disick, 1972:161). The reader should have prior knowledge in order to gain information from the text. Furthermore, reader also should able to get and to evaluate some messages from the written text. According to Pang (2003), reading consists of two processes that are word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition is the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. While the comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. According to Aswandi & Abdullah (2010), comprehension is the goal of reading. However, the comprehension is potential problem in creating reading failures. A reader could have syntactic difficulties or fail to generate inferences or to monitor comprehension (Perfetti, 2001: 12801). To help the act of reading comprehension, Anderson (2003) suggests combining the four aspects that are the text, the reader, fluency and strategies. Therefore the teacher should develop reading skills and strategies through the use of authentic texts.

In this case the teacher applies 'Learning Style' as reading strategy in reading exposition text. Exposition text is a piece of text that presents one side of an issue. The purpose of an exposition text is to persuade the reader or listener by presenting one side of an argument, that is, the case for or the case against. Exposition text can be found in scientific books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, academic speech or lectures, research report, etc. According to Doddy, et al (2009), there are two kinds of an exposition text. They are analytical exposition and hortatory exposition. As the result, although the students come from different background knowledge, they can understand a text well. They can optimize their reading habits and comprehend a text easily although the text combines facts, ideas, and arguments such as exposition text. In addition to that, they are always active in the class.

This phenomenon makes the researcher puts her interest in her class. The researcher questions: 1) how is the implementation of 'Learning Style' based on Building Learning Power in teaching reading exposition text?; and 2) how are the students' responses toward the implementation of 'Learning Style' based on Building Learning Power in reading exposition text?

METHOD

This study was qualitative research, especially descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research aims to document in detail the conduct of everyday events and to identify the meanings of the events for those who participate and for those who witness (Frasel et al., 2012). Descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, provides information about, or describes attitudes towards an issue (Cohen et al., 2005).

In the descriptive qualitative design, the researcher describes the situation happening in the process of teaching and learning reading exposition text using 'Learning Style'. 'Learning Style' was done in three meetings in order to sharpen the students' reading comprehension of exposition text. In this study, the researcher did not take part in the process. She just observed, described and reported everything happened during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

The subjects of this study were English teacher and the students of SMPN 1 Sidoarjo. In this study, the researcher observed Mrs. Wuryandari's class that is class VIII-9. There are 20 students in that class which consist of 4 male students and 16 female students. The researcher chose the eighth graders as subject of the study because they have been learning English with 'Learning Style' for two years. In addition, VIII-9 is an acceleration class. Acceleration class has better quality than regular class. The students are very active. They can finish the lesson faster than regular class because they have good intelligent quotient.

This study took a place in SMPN 1 Sidoarjo. It is located at Jl. Raya Gelora Delta No. 1 Sidoarjo. This school is the favorite school so it has the highest grade among Junior High Schools in Sidoarjo. In previous years, this school was Pioneering of International Standard School. Therefore, the facilities are complete and very good. Besides, there is wi-fi that can be used by both the teacher and the students at anytime.

This study applied observation form, interview, and questionnaire as the research instruments. According to Cohen et al. (2005), observation provides opportunity to researcher in gathering live data from live situation. It enables the researcher to understand and discover all the things that might be missed in perception-based data such as interview. Besides observation makes the researcher access personal knowledge.

This study applied observation checklist in the form of "yes" and "no" options. The observation checklist comprised the physical setting in the class, the material, the applied-strategy, the teacher and the students' activities. Observation checklist was considered as the instruments because it contains all data that are needed to complete the analysis including preparation, presentation in the class, and teacher-students interactions. To store any additional important data which cannot be recorded in the checklist items, the researcher made use of field note as a major check. In addition, observation field note supported the result of observation checklist. In this observation, the researcher observed some aspects. They were goals, acts, activities, and events.

In order to know the students' responses in learning process, interview was applied. Cohen et al. (2005) states that interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In this case, the world in which they live means the environment in students' classroom when they learn reading of exposition text. This study used semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview made possibility for the researcher to formulate specific questions to be posed. According to Cohen et al. (2005), semi-structured interview enables the interviewer to ask respondent to extends, elaborate, add to, provide detail for, and clarify or quality their responds. In this type of interview, the topics and open-ended questions which focus on students' emotion or feeling are written but the exact sequence or wording does not have to be followed with each respondent. Besides, it allows the interviewer to get depth information and clear up any misunderstanding.

Beside interview, the researcher applied questionnaire as research instrument. The objective of this research instrument was to cover the students' responds toward the implementation of 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text because some students were not extrovert person in answering question orally. They felt secure in giving opinion through paper. Questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze (Wilson & McLean in Cohen, 1994). To gain the complexity, the researcher chose multiple choice questions, where the range of choices were designed to take range of responses to given statements. The questionnaire included all possible answers of responses and respondents were asked to choose among them. To ease the students in answering the questionnaires and avoid misunderstanding, all items were typed in Indonesian. The questionnaire consists of

10 multiple choice questions. Each of questions has four options. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. Part I (number 1 – 3) is about teaching process in class where 'Learning Style' is implemented. Part II (number 4 – 7) deals with the teaching material which is reading exposition text. Part III (number 8 – 10) deals with the general evaluation of the implementation of 'Learning Style' in learning and teaching reading exposition text.

The researcher observed from the beginning of teaching reading exposition text until the end. The researcher used the observation checklist and took a note in order to record the activities. The process confirmed teacher and students' activities in the classroom during the teaching learning of reading exposition text. In the following day, the researcher interviewed all students one by one. After that, the researcher gave questionnaire to all students. The students were asked to choose an appropriate answers from the options provided based on their own opinion.

The result of observation checklist, field note, interview and questionnaire were analyzed descriptively. The researcher analyzed the activities done by the teacher when she applied 'Learning Style' in each steps during teaching reading exposition text. The researcher synchronized the observed aspects in the observation checklist by checking "yes" or "no". Then, the researcher added more explanation and information about it from field-note. Meanwhile, in analyzing the students' responses toward the 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text, the researcher used the result of interview and questionnaire. The result of interview and questionnaire were gained into a conclusion of each question. Then, the researcher drew general conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section aims to show the data presentation and to analyze the finding based on theories related to this study. The analysis underlies on the research question about the implementation of 'Learning Style' based on Building Learning Power in teaching reading exposition text and the students' responses toward it.

The Implementation of 'Learning Style' Based on Building Learning Power in Reading Comprehension of Exposition Text

Observation data was done in three meetings. Time allocation for each meeting was 2x40 minutes. Based on the observation data, the way of Mrs. Wuryandari conducted teaching and learning process in reading exposition text followed Valette and Disick's reading stages (1972:161).

In the first stage, mechanical skill stage, the teacher did not give the explanation of exposition text in direct

manner. She built the students' knowledge of the text through their power of mind. The students were asked to look for by themselves what exposition text is and what the examples are. When the students had knowledge about it in their mind, the teacher added information to it. The knowledge about it would keep in students' mind because they found it by themselves. After that, they shared it by their friends.

In the second stage, knowledge stage, the students were active to learn the generic structure from their friends. It could be seen from the interaction when the students presented the generic structure of the text. There were some students questioned about it in order to get more explanation.

At the transfer stage, when the students' had understood about exposition text, the students were engaged in group work to read a topic related to exposition text. She encouraged students to discuss the topic of exposition text before going to reading activity. The teacher and the students discussed the topic of exposition that was pollution. She tried to make sure that it was an interesting topic for the students.

She motivated the students to create questions related to the topic. In this case, the teacher role was as motivator for students. She gave challenging question related to the topic to the students. The students answered it by asking the question. They were very enthusiastic in asking question. The teacher made a list of questions from the students and typed it in her laptop. Then, teacher and the students chose essential questions that should be learnt. Together, they eliminated unrelated questions and chose interesting questions. After selecting the questions, there were 4 questions that the students should answer. The questions are: (1) How to clean up oil spilled in the sea?; (2) Is there any advantages of pollution?; (3) What should our government do to reduce the pollution like that in modern country?; (4) Why deforestation can pollute water?. Then, the teacher led the students to choose a question. The students chose the question from the list they made based on their choice. The students automatically became one group with their friends who chose the same question. The teacher began by offering who wants to answer question number 1 and so on while the students just raised their hand and waited until the teacher finished typing their name.

Furthermore, the teacher was a facilitator who led and managed the class in forming group discussions and a set of questions. She helped the students to choose the learning style based on their desire. She asked the students in what style they would present their answer. She also made sure on the facilities provided to help the students in answering the question. She helped the students to choose the learning style to learn and to present the result of their study as well as to give alternative learning resources that can be accessed by students.

In this stage, the students were very busy to look for the answer toward the question. Before presenting the topic to others, every members of the group had understood about it. In order to understand the material, the members read some related articles and discussed text that they found. Reading activity was started when the students looked for material related to topic. The students read some articles because of their curiosity to answer the question based on their interest. Other than that, the students read more than one texts in order to get more arguments in supporting the thesis. It was very good for the students to develop their knowledge toward the topic of exposition text.

In this stage, the students were very noisy because they talked at the same time. However, they talked about the questions, so the teacher did not mind about it. They discussed the question in their group to answer the question they had chosen. Some of them looked for the answer from the book and some of them searched in the website. No one was passive in the classroom. They did good team work. In addition, they seemed to use their time wisely. The teacher walked around and checked the students' work. She also asked the students in each group whether they had some difficulties or not.

In this activity, the students unconsciously practiced the reading strategy from Brown (2004:188). Before searching the text, they identified their purpose in reading a text. The purpose was something they wanted to get from the text. Obviously, it was for getting answer toward the question itself. Then, they skimmed the text for the gist and for main ideas. They also scanned the text for specific information such as names and keyword. When they found difficult words, they determined meaning by guessing because of limited time. Every student used silent reading techniques for rapid processing. After that, they compared their comprehension with their own group. They discussed the text to distinguish between literal and implied meanings. They combined some important sentences to process relationship. Other than that, they made marginal notes or maps for understanding and retaining information which was also a basic for presentations' design.

The teacher confirmed the individual works in the group by walking around the class and giving comment to their work. After that, each group shared to others with their own style. By doing this, the students became creative. In addition, they got material deeper because each group shared different text to answer different question.

When the discussion time was over, the teacher asked the students to present what they had got in their discussion. In presentation stage, the students did peer tutor. Students who did not understand about the text asked it to the group who got turn to present it in front of the class. From the result of presentation, the teacher knew whether the students had understood the text they read or not. It was not only for the teacher but also for other groups. When the students understood the text, sometimes they only wrote the main idea or the point then gave arguments orally. When the students did not understand the text, they just copied all the text in power point then read it aloud without good intonation. However, the teacher conducted assessment of processes and products. So, the students did not worry about their score. Even more, she noted students' name who asked question, gave answer, and gave suggestion while doing presentation. She also provided word awards for students' answers and work such as 'that is good', 'well done', 'very good', etc, so it boosted the students' motivation in learning.

The teacher checked the students' comprehension by reviewing the presentation together with students. She also gave additional information toward the topic. It was done in order to make the students really understood about their friend's presentation. Then, she gave the comment directly after every group did presentation.

The teacher along with the students held conclusion and reflection about the topic. They closed the teaching and learning process by writing the learning log journal for the students while the teacher filled in suggestions form in lesson plan.

The Students' Responses toward the Implementation of 'Learning Style' Based on Building Learning Power in Reading Comprehension of Exposition Text

The students in VIII-9 were enthusiastic on learning English. It could be seen from the observation data. When it was the time to learn English, they were happy and enjoyed it. Besides, it could be seen from the interview and questionnaire results. The researcher interviewed the students one after another in relaxing and joyful atmosphere. There were seven questions investigated by the researcher.

The first thing that the researcher asked to the students was their opinion about English subject. Most of students said that they like English subject because English was fun, easy and interesting while others said that it was so-so. They realized why they had to learn English. It was because English was international language which helped them to communicate with other person in the world.

Based on the interview, half of students had problem in reading a text. Some of them said that their score was bad in reading because they did not understand the text. One of students said that he confused when he read a text with no picture. However, 'Learning Style' helped them in their reading comprehension. They said that their friends will help them to understand the text because they read together with their group and 'Learning Style' helped them to feel comfortable while learning the text they read which is chosen by themselves.

Talking about 'Learning Style', all of students have known about it. Some of students said that 'Learning Style' explained the subject that could be done in many applications which depended on their style such as power point, posters, movie, etc. and it made their study more fun. From the students' statement in interview, it can be concluded that they usually applied 'Learning Style' in their lesson. All the students said that 'Learning Style' was good and helpful. They already knew the advantages of this strategy such as improving their studying, creativeness, and independence. Obviously, by engaging in group work, the students could easily understand the material and by designing material they chose, they could improve their creativity. The students have already known what they should do and should not do. Therefore, the teaching and learning process ran well.

In addition, according to the students, the application of 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text was easy to do. Most of students did not have problem about it. However, a few students doubted because it depended on the task. It means that task or the material also influenced the interest of the students' learning. Other problems occurred when the students could not find the source in the internet and the students could not decide when there were more than one different sources. In this case, the teacher' role was important. The teacher should give suggestion for students in this kind of situation.

Besides interesting material, the students' learning were also influenced by their problem in reading a text. Based on the interview, half of students had problem in comprehending a text. However, 'Learning Style' helped them in their reading comprehension. By 'Learning Style' the students could share what they read and understood more. They also felt comfortable and enjoyed reading the text because it was chosen by them.

After interviewing the students, the researcher gave them questionnaire. It was done to make sure that the students' answer in interview section reliable because some students seemed to show typical of introvert person. Based on the questionnaire result, the researcher found that teaching process using 'Learning Style' was helpful for the students in understanding material. By making questions related to topic, it will help them to learn better.

In addition, the time allocation for 'Learning Style' was enough to help them in learning English in the class.

According to the students, they were very happy with the material. The students were happy learning reading exposition text using 'Learning Style' and they were also happy toward the topic of exposition text. Therefore the students were also happy to answer the question related to the topic. Besides, all the students were happy because they could choose learning sources by themselves.

For the evaluation of applying 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text, the students thought that it was good. All the students understood the teachers' explanation well. It can be concluded that the teacher had succeeded to present L2 in the classroom. She could be a good model for the students because she used English all the time. There were no single words of L1 found when she taught. Her success also supported by good implementation and understanding toward the 'Learning Style' itself. Therefore the students think that their teacher had well understood 'Learning Style'. These two aspects from the teacher will be very helpful for the students. In addition, the peer tutor also showed good result because the students understood very well after their friends' explanation when they were doing presentation. It means the students really pay attention to their friends. They appreciate all their friends' work.

From the instrument data, the researcher concludes that the result of students' response in interview and questionnaire is in line. From the explanation above, the researcher confirms that the students show positive response toward the implementation of 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text because 'Learning Style' has been successfully implemented in the classroom.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
Conclusion

Considering the research findings and the discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of 'Learning Style' based on the Building Learning Power is in line as theory. This strategy is also effective in optimizing students' reading comprehension of exposition text. By applying this strategy, reading activity becomes meaningful because students can choose their own style in learning freely. Besides, this strategy also requires the students to sharp their mind in order to explore the material deeper.

During teaching and learning process, the students give good responses towards the implementation of 'Learning Style' in reading exposition text. This can be seen from their active participation and enthusiastic replies which are recorded in the result of observation, interview, and questionnaire. The students are happy and enjoy reading the text. Besides, they point out that it is very useful to help them in understanding the material.

Suggestions

It is strongly suggested for the teacher to always prepare the learning sources. It can be back up sources when the students cannot find the original sources. The teacher can give suggestion where the students can search it later. Besides, it is recommended for the teacher to allow students go to the library during discussion section so they do not always search the answer through internet.

Other than that, the researcher suggests for the teacher to check the students' work before they present their result. Because of time limitation in discussion and task design, especially for acceleration class, the students may not give their best in presenting the result. It may cause the presentation not to be delivered maximally and as the result, the students do not catch what presenters are trying to say.

The researcher hopes that other researchers are encouraged to develop other researches in Building Learning Power. It is strongly recommended for them to develop other teaching strategy which will be more effective and interesting to teach reading or other skill based on that concept. By doing so, it is expected to achieve better outcomes from the lesson.

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