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Active Reconnecting Learning Strategies to Increase Student Interest and Active Learning

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ABSTRACT

In the last few decades, the main issue of education is the efforts and solutions in improving the quality of teaching and learning. In this case, the teacher's steps are to conduct classroom action research, which is a form of a bottom-up approach in improving the quality of education. This action research introduces active reconnecting learning strategies for increasing student interest and learning activities. The results showed that this strategy was proven to improve student learning outcomes, interests, and activeness. Student learning interest increased from 59.35 to 65.5 in cycle 1 and 80.5 in cycle 2. Likewise, students' learning activeness observations increased with the highest percentage on one indicator from 25% (pre-cycle) to 80% and 90% (cycles 1 and 2). Student learning outcomes have also increased from 60 in the pre-cycle phase to 74.25 (cycle 1). Furthermore, it rose again to 80 in cycle 2.

Keywords: *Active Reconnecting; Classroom Action Research; Student Interest; Learning Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the main focus of education throughout the world is how to improve the quality of education. There is a lot of emphasis from power holders/policymakers about the quality, standards, and performance of efficient and effective students at all educational institutions (Khan, 2018). The emphasis is increasingly apparent when several world institutions regularly release the level of education ranking of countries, one of which is the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). This situation causes countries to improve and improve their education quality to be the best at the world level.

Furthermore, improving teaching and learning quality is one of the most popular agendas in every educational institution. However, it must be realized that it is challenging to identify the determinants of the quality of learning because it deals with various aspects that cannot be separated (Helaluddin, 2018; Tefbana et al., 2021). Many aspects must be involved to improve the quality of learning, including educators, government policies, and students as the main subjects in education (Herwandi & Kaharuddin, 2020). Entering the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 and society 5.0, students, as the main subject of education, need to receive special treatment, especially the Z generation and the alpha generation, which have different characteristics from the previous generation (Tafonao et al., 2020; Helaluddin et al., 2020).

Nowadays, improving the quality of learning has to start with various approaches, one recommended by experts in the bottom-up approach (Kember, 2000). This approach is student-centered and is focused on developing teacher professionalism. The change in attitude aims to strengthen the responsibility to commit to learning for teachers and student participation in the classroom (Day, 1999). One example of the bottom-up approach is Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is one form of research that is another form of qualitative research (Creswell, 2015). This type of analysis provides opportunities and flexibility for teachers to overcome various problems that occur in the classroom. Through CAR, teachers can innovate to use multiple methods and ways to improve their learning (Helaluddin & Wijaya, 2019). Thus, CAR plays an essential role in helping teachers and students achieve the expected learning goals.

On the other hand, one way to improve learning in the classroom is to arouse students' interest in learning material. An interesting indicator is a driving force for individuals involved in drawing attention to the object they like (Bayoe, Kouwagam & Tanyit, 2019; Febriyona, Supartini & Pangemanan, 2019; Sukendar, Endroyo & Sudarman, 2018). Mangal (2007) also stated the same thing, which calls interest the main force that drives the whole machine from the learning process. In other words, someone interested will tend to be more focused and more comfortable understanding the teacher's learning material. With great interest will affect student activities, especially their interest in learning (Saswandi, 2014).

The interest contains two aspects: cognitive and emotional (Meke, Jailani, Wutsqa & Alfi, 2019). Cognitive issues include the knowledge and response of information about a particular object or activity as a form of caring for someone. Emotional aspects consist of events in participating and one's experiences that are accompanied by certain feelings. The particular taste in question is a sense of pleasure that leads to contributions with high ability and desire to carry out a learning activity (Fathurrohman & Sulistirini, 2012). Interest will arise based on responses where students are aware of their interest in an object or event. Next, students begin to find out and want to be actively involved in certain activities (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2010). In the field of learning, students' interest in learning can be seen in students' tendency to pay attention, be interested, and actively participate in the learning (Elliot, 2000; Ormrod, 2003).

Interest factor has a vital role in education (Asgari, Ketabi & Amirian, 2019). It is shown by some research on student interests that are focused on two types, namely situational interests and individual interests (Hidi & Baird, 1988; Renninger, 2000; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). Some studies examine the relationship between interest and performance, which states that interest is correlated with student academic performance (Hidi & Berndorff, 2002; Harackiewicz, Judith, & Hulleman, 2010). Furthermore, several studies also identified that interest influences intrinsic motivation (Weber, 2003), extrinsic motivation (Sahiu & Wijaya, 2017), learning level (Harackiewicz, Barron, Taver, Carter & Elliot, 2000), and academic achievement (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

In addition to students' interests, the aspect that determines learning success is the factor of student activity in class. Student activity is an essential indicator that learning has attracted students' attention and feel comfortable during the learning process (Turyanto, 2020). In generating interest and activeness, the teacher must be able to choose an appropriate learning strategy. In this situation, a teacher must avoid using conventional learning methods such as the lecture method and taking notes from the beginning to the end of class time. Thus, teachers can choose to use active reconnecting learning strategies. Active learning with reconnecting strategies is a learning model that makes students active from the start through activities that build group work and make them think about the subject matter. Reconnecting is used to return students' attention after not doing these activities (Maryanti, 2011).

The reconnecting strategy is one type of active learning strategy. This strategy is a learning strategy that aims to help students recall their memory about the subject matter before the learning session ends (Dzulfikri & Joko 2013). Another definition states that active learning

reconnecting is a learning strategy that utilizes the seconds of learning to remember the material that has been taught (Silberman, 2014). In this strategy, the teacher invites students to form groups and try not to forget the material that has been delivered quickly.

Silbermen (2014) gives many steps for implementing the reconnecting active learning strategy. The teacher 1) provides a list of topics that have been discussed; explains to students that the teacher wants to know what has been forgotten from the material; tries to keep the atmosphere relaxed so that students don't feel threatened by the activity; 2) asks students to remember things about the topics discussed and things that are still remembered; asks questions such as a) what does this topic refer to?; b) why is this topic important?; c) who can give an example of what is learned in this topic?; d) what values do you get from this topic?; e) what learning experiences did each topic bring?; 3) continues to ask questions chronologically until all the material has been discussed (or done for sufficient time); 4) makes concluding statements desired by the teacher, which can serve as keyword reminders for students when discussing the content.

In this strategy, the teacher tries to redirect students' attention to the subject matter after not doing these activities for a while using various methods or learning media (Hanum, 2009; Zaini, 2007). Hooker (2019) uses stories with images from the internet, which can reconnect students' memories with previous learning material. This strategy is considered to have advantages as follows: 1) students are easier to remember and understand the material again, 2) hone student intelligence through teacher guidance, and 3) create an active learning atmosphere and arouse enthusiasm for learning (Sholikhah, 2017). There are several stages in this strategy, namely: a) conveying learning objectives and providing motivation, b) presenting information, c) organizing students into groups, d) guiding student groups to work and study, e) evaluation, and f) give awards (Trianto, 2009; Wijaya & Arismunandar, 2018).

Based on this description, the application of active reconnecting learning strategies in the subject of Religious Education is essential to learn and apply. The lack of references and literature reviews of this strategy's use is the primary basis for researchers to carry out this research. This condition certainly creates a gap between the willingness of teachers to innovate and the limited available references. Based on this background, the problem formulation: 1) How can reconnecting learning strategies increase students' interest and active learning? 2) Does the active reconnecting learning strategy support the achievement of maximum learning outcomes for students?.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted phenomenology as a research design. The purpose of research studies based on phenomenology was to depict participants' experiences regarding a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This design was chosen as the research aimed at revealing the classroom teachers' problems in classrooms where students are coming from different cultural backgrounds.

This research is classroom action research (CAR). Many studies use this design, especially in education and learning (Jefferson, 2014; Marrow, 1977). This research focuses on existing problems and becomes a challenge for teachers to solve in the classroom (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In other words, the purpose of CAR is to find solutions to problems in the classroom in the learning process for teachers and students (Creswell, 2015; Hendricks, 2009). Besides, CAR aims to explore the effects of specific changes in the design of learning activities in the classroom and improve the quality of learning (Fernandez, 2017; Hine, 2013; Udeani, Atagana & Esiobu, 2016).

Study Group

This study was conducted at GKLB1 Elementary School in Luwuk, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The number of participants in this study was 20 people (12 women and 8 men) who took Christianity in class V. The number of participants was not too much because some students at the elementary school were of different faiths. Some considerations that became the basis for researchers choosing research locations include student learning outcomes in religious education subjects at the school are still low, lack of interest and student activity in the class, and institutions researchers have a close cooperative relationship in education.

Data Collection

This study uses several data collection techniques, namely, observation, questionnaire, and test results. Some researchers also widely use these techniques as one of the primary sources of CAR that they do (Kumaraswamy, 2019; Supriyadi et al., 2020; Supriyadi & Julia, 2019; Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014). Researchers and teachers worked together to design learning using the active reconnecting learning strategy based on the pre-cycle stage results. Also, the researchers conducted an analysis and concluded the results in this pre-cycle phase. Thus, it was decided that the researcher should continue the learning treatment to cycle 1.

Observation

One of the techniques used in this research is the observation technique using an instrument in an observation sheet. Observation sheets are used and developed to process data about student participation/activeness in the learning process. Observation sheets were designed containing various factors that represent student involvement and interaction (Kasa, 2016). There are three aspects observed in this observation sheet: student activities in learning (taking notes or paying attention to lessons), interactions with classmates, and interactions with teachers. This observation sheet was developed from several observation sheets used by several researchers (Kasa, 2016; Kumaraswamy, 2019; Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014). This observation sheet consists of four value choices: good, medium, low, and no values.

Questionnaire

At the end of the first and second cycles, researchers and teachers also gave questionnaires to students about their perceptions of the learning process that has taken place. The questionnaire contained 20 questions designed to solicit information about their interest in learning Religious Education. After being validated, this questionnaire was given to 20 students in the first cycle and second cycles. The questionnaire was used to gather data about students' interest in learning Christian Religious Education subjects. This questionnaire consists of 20 questions with indicators about student interests that include aspects of student attention, feelings of pleasure, and student activities in learning (Blanco & Garrote, 2007; Meke et al., 2019; Woolfolk, 2007).

Test

This test aimed to determine student learning outcomes, and researchers used a test technique with multiple-choice questions. The questions were designed by class teachers in collaboration with researchers based on Christian religious education subject matter with the theme of learning “The Meaning of Salvation” and “Jesus the Savior.” Researchers conduct three tests to measure student achievement. Test 1 was given to students after completing the pre-cyle stage, test 2 at the end of cycle 1 (posttest 1), and test 3 at the end of cycle 2 (posttest 2). The three tests were carried out for 60 minutes with a similar pattern of questions as many as 20 item questions. Before use, this multiple-choice test is tested to determine its reliability

value. This test's reliability is 0.92, which consists of two parts of the test: ten questions for the material on the meaning of salvation and ten questions for the material on Jesus, the Savior.

Data Analysis

In this research, the data collected was then analyzed quantitatively & qualitatively. Quantitative analysis is used to analyze data from questionnaires, learning outcomes tests, and observation sheets of the phases of the pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2. Furthermore, qualitative analysis is used in the pre-cycle step from data collected by direct observation.

The observation technique used here is observation using a checklist sheet. For example, if students actively ask questions, a checkmark is given. The total number of checklists is calculated as a percentage using this numeric formula. Data from the observations (using a checklist) that have been collected were then analyzed quantitatively using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{Proportion\ of\ Students\ Who\ Make\ Sure\ Options}{Total\ Students} \text{ x } 100\%$$

Also, the data from the questionnaire that had been collected were analyzed quantitatively. This average score is used to determine the questionnaire results (5 Likert scales), whether it is categorized as very low, low, moderate, high, or very high. The details of this formula have been described in the research results section. The following are the formulas used in measuring student learning interest in each research cycle (Pasaribu et al., 2017).

$$\text{Interval Distance (i)} = \frac{Highest\ score - Lowest\ score}{Number\ of\ Interval\ Classes}$$

$$\text{Average score} = \frac{Total\ \ Score}{Total\ \ Students} \text{ x } 100\%$$

The level of student interest in learning is then classified into the assessor level from calculating the mean score. With the results obtained, the level of interest in learning can determine whether the entry criteria are high, moderate, low, and very low. These categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Result Category of Students' Interest

No	Score	Category
1	0%-19.99%	Very low
2	20%-39.99%	Low
3	40%-59.99%	Moderate
4	60%-79.99%	High
5	80%-100%	Very high

Finally, data on learning outcomes through the pretest in the pre-cycle phase and posttest in the cycle-1 and cycle-2 phase were also analyzed quantitatively using the following formula (Sinaga, 2016):

$$\text{Average value} = \frac{Total\ \ Student\ \ Test\ Scores}{Total\ \ Number\ of\ Students}$$

As for the criteria used in determining student learning success, researchers use a range of values listed in Table 2 (Munandar, 2009).

Table 2. Five-Point Benchmark Reference Assessment

No	Percentage	Criteria
1	91%-100%	Very high
2	71%-90%	High
3	51%-70%	Moderate
4	31%-50%	Low
5	10%-30%	Very Low

Research Procedure

Pre-Cycle

Before carrying out classroom action research, researchers first conducted a preliminary study called a pre-cycle study. This stage aims to identify the problems that occur in the learning process in class. The pre-cycle class was held for 180 minutes with two meetings, each meeting held for 90 minutes. Researchers and teachers provided two materials on Christian religious education subjects using conventional methods. In this phase, researchers used questionnaires to measure perceptions of interest, checklist observation sheets to measure student activity, and test 1 to measure student learning outcomes. The pre-cycle phase is carried out to obtain an overview of the problems that occur in the classroom. In other words, researchers make observations to identify existing problems and then formulate solutions that will be done.

Cycle 1

Like the pre-cycle stage, cycle one is also carried out for 180 minutes in two meetings. At this stage, the teacher implements Christian religious education learning by using the reconnecting active learning strategy. During learning activities, the researcher observes (observes) the level of interaction or student participation.

Cycles 2

The Planning Stage: At the end of cycle 1, it was seen that there was an increase in students' learning activeness and interest in learning Christian Religious Education subjects. However, there were still some students who were not active and showed their interest in cycle 1. For this reason, researchers and classroom teachers work together to prepare cycle 2.

FINDINGS

Presentation of the main findings in this study, which included observations at the pre-cycle stage, measurement of student interest and activity, and analysis of learning outcomes, is presented systematically.

Pre-Cycle Stage

Observation

At this stage, the researcher found several facts in class V of Luwuk GKLB 1 Elementary School that did not respond (not active) on Christian Religious Education subjects. These results were obtained through direct observation by researchers during the learning process in the pre-cycle phase. Some indications that support this statement are 1) some students look bored and sleepy, 2) some students are more interested in talking/chatting with their friends, 3) students' attention and focus are more on other objects, 4) no one gives feedback during learning (asking or answering teacher questions) and others, 5) the following are the results of observations using the observation checklist that was done in the pre-cycle phase. It is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Results of Observations of Student Activity Pre-Cycle Stage

No	Rating Indicator	Activity Level (Percentage)	Category
1	Students are actively involved in learning (taking notes & paying attention to the material)	20%	Very Low
2	Students interact with colleagues (discuss content)	25%	Very Low
3	Students interact with the teacher (asking and answering questions)	10%	Very Low

Based on Table 3, information is obtained that the level of student learning interest in the three main criteria is still classified as very low. In the first criterion, only 20% or four students are active in learning, such as taking notes and paying attention to the material. Likewise, in the second and third criteria, 25% of students (5 students) actively interact with peers, and only 10% (2 students) actively ask teachers about the material delivered in class. The calculations in table 3 are obtained through the number of students divided by the total students.

Questionnaire

Another problem found in the pre-cycle phase is the lack of student interest in the subject. Based on the questionnaire results distributed to students, the results obtained indicate that their interest was still minimal in classroom learning. The questionnaire analysis results at the pre-cycle stage showed a total of 1.187 with 20 student participants. The total score of 1.187 was based on the formula for calculating the "average score." Thus, the average value for student interest in learning at this stage is 59.35% and belongs to the moderate category. The percentage value is 59.35% based on table 4, "Result Category of Students' Interest."

Table 4. The results of the student interest & activeness questionnaire in the pre-cycle phase

Fase	Average score	Category
Pre-cycle	59.35%	Moderate

Responses to reviewer comments: the percentage in the questionnaire is obtained using the formula that has been included in the research methods section, namely the total score/number of students X 100%.

Test

In addition to giving questionnaires about interests and observing student learning activities, researchers and teachers also provide preliminary tests at the end of pre-cycle learning. Of the 20 students, only 4 met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (MCC), while 16 other students scored below the MCC. From the pre-cycle research stage results, it was stated that the majority of students in class V Elementary School 1 GKLB Luwuk were still relatively low with an average grade of 60 (look Tab. 5). Thus, the average value was still below The Minimum Completeness Criteria (MCC) of 65.

Table 5. The results of the pre-cycle phase learning test

Criteria	Score	Total students	%	Average
Didn't reach MCC	0-64	16	80%	60
Reach MCC	65-100	4	20%	

Cycle 1 and 2

Observation

Table 6. Results of Observations of Learning Activeness in Cycles 1 and 2

Rating Indicator	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Students are actively involved in learning (taking notes & paying attention to the material)	75%	85%
Students interact with colleagues (discuss content)	80%	90%
Students interact with the teacher (asking and answering questions)	70%	80%

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that there is an increase in student activity in learning in Cycle 1 towards Cycle 2. Teacher evaluation in Cycle 1 is that the teacher as a facilitator

motivates active students by providing opportunities for students to discuss in groups and ask questions to the teacher. The teacher also asks students who have never asked questions. The teacher gives positive appreciation to students who ask and answer questions. Learning activities are not dominated only by teachers but also directed at the student center learning approach.

Questionnaire

Table 7. Results of the Interest Questionnaire in Cycles 1 and 2

Cycle	Average Score	Category
Cycle 1	65.5	High
Cycle 2	80.5	Very high

As seen from the questionnaire analysis results in Table 7, student interest in learning has increased compared to the questionnaire results in the pre-cycle phase. In cycle 1, the total value on the student questionnaire was 1,310, with the number of students 20 people so that the average value of the survey was 65.5. For the next cycle, the questionnaire's total score is 1,610 and is averaged to 80.5 (very high category). It reflected that learning with an active reconnecting learning strategy has increased student interest and active learning.

Test

At the end of cycles 1 and 2, the teacher also performs learning outcomes using a multiple-choice test type. This test is intended to obtain information about their abilities during the learning process. It is shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Learning Test Results in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Cycle	Criteria	Score	Total students	%	Average
Cycle 1	Didn't Reach MCC	0-64	3	15%	74.25
	Reached MCC	65-100	17	85%	
Cycle 2	Didn't Reach MCC	0-64	-	0%	80
	Reached MCC	65-100	20	100%	

In cycle 1 that shown in Table 8, it was obtained that three students only achieved scores below 65, and 17 other students managed to achieve grades 65 and above. That is, 15% of students who have not yet completed MCC (Minimum completeness criteria) grades and 85% of students should exceed categories above MCC. Thus, the class's average value in cycle 1 is 74.25 and has passed the MCC value set at 65. In conclusion, there has been a significant increase in cycle one from the previous pre-cycle phase, so that it can be said that cycle one has succeeded well. The description of the value of learning outcomes in cycle 2 can be seen in Table 10.

Table 8 shown improved learning outcomes also occurred in the second cycle of research and classroom action. None of the fifth-grade students of Elementary School GKLB received a grade below the MCC from the learning test results. That is, all students have scored 65 and above. Thus, the average value of the class in cycle 2 is 80. Compared to the previous cycle, there has been an increase in the average amount of 5.75 points.

DISCUSSION

Teachers generally carry out classroom action research as class managers who aim to provide solutions to existing problems in the field. In other words, the teacher offers special treatment using strategies, methods, or learning techniques appropriate to the material being

taught. This research seeks to increase students' interest and active learning through active reconnecting learning strategies. There have been several previous studies relating to teacher efforts to increase interest, activity, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and academic achievement or influence among these aspects (Hidi & Baird, 1988; Renninger, 2000; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011; Sahiu & Wijaya, 2017; Schraw & Lehman, 2001).

In addition to student learning, activeness, interest, and learning outcomes are still relatively low. The average value of learning interest of 59.35 is already classified into medium but does not meet the desired standard. Likewise, with learning outcomes, the grade average grade of 60 is still below the MCC (Minimum Completeness Criteria). It proves that the selection and use of inappropriate learning strategies impact student learning outcomes (Helaluddin, 2016). The level of interest and active learning also significantly influence student learning outcomes (Lee, Chao & Chen, 2011).

Furthermore, in cycles 1 and 2 phases, there have been significant changes in the Christian Religious Education subjects' learning process. This learning activity has been packaged with actions that can generate reciprocal responses between students and their peers. Also, students and their teachers. Several researchers have also conducted studies on active reconnecting learning strategies. This strategy can positively influence learning outcomes (Dzulfikri & Joko, 2013; Maryanti, 2011).

One of the advantages of actively reconnecting learning strategies is the learning conditions created with fun activities. Fun learning is a condition that must be created by the teacher so that students feel comfortable and do not feel burdened during the learning process. Fun learning can be applied by inserting interesting stories, educating humor, and providing motivation. Fun learning can also be done by presenting the material with the help of attractive visual media. Researchers give engaging optical media as one of the learning strategies following the character of the digital natives (students of this age) (Bilgic, Dogan & Seferoglu, 2016; Uygarer, Uzunboylu & Ozdamli, 2016). Some of these activities aim to break the learning atmosphere to increase interest and active learning for students (Sriprakash, 2009; Wei, Hug, Lee & Chen, 2011).

This study has limitations in processing data that does not use statistical data analysis. The study sample was limited to two cycles and one research site, the Luwuk GKLB Elementary School. Further research can review the application of active reconnecting learning strategies to improve learning achievement in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains or on the effectiveness of learning to see from the other side.

CONCLUSION

This class action research was carried out to increase students' interest and active learning in Christian Religious Education subjects by implementing a proactive reconnecting learning strategy. The increase in student interest and learning activity was higher in the second cycle phase based on observations, questionnaires, and student test results.

This study indicates that the active reconnecting learning strategy can improve learning outcomes, namely asking, activeness, and student learning outcomes. Based on a learning design that prioritizes classroom activities that are more attractive, fun and provide space for students to dialogue and discuss with their peers. This study's results can be recommended to teachers and educators to implement active reconnecting learning strategies in the classroom.

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