

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The present study reported the use of cooperative learning method in improving students' reading comprehension. The research was conducted to find out whether or not cooperative learning improved students' reading comprehension, and to find out students' responses toward the implementation of cooperative learning methods. The design employed in this research was Classroom Action Research. The study was conducted at XI Grade of Culinary Class which involved thirty one students. Observation checklists, students' questionnaire, evaluation sheet and students' reading test were implemented as instruments to collect the data. The findings of the study showed that cooperative learning methods (STAD and Jigsaw) improved the students' comprehension in reading descriptive text. On the first cycle, there were 13 students (42%) who passed the reading posttest, while in cycle 2, the students who passed the reading posttest were 25 students (86%). The findings also showed that the students gave positive responses since they stated that cooperative learning methods were fun and helped them in understanding descriptive texts and they wanted to know more about it.

Keywords: *Cooperative Learning, reading, descriptive text*

Introduction

As one of the four skills in English, reading plays an important role in enhancing students' English ability. More importantly, reading has a function as a tool to access information worldwide. However, according to McLaughlin (in Celce-Murcia, 1991) reading is the most complex and difficult skill students should master at school. In fact, the students do complex interactive processes in reading.

The purpose of teaching reading in the context of English learning is comprehension. As stated by Kirby (2007) reading comprehension is the process by which we understand the text we read. It is the purpose of reading, why we teach it, and why we care about it.

As stated by Rukmayadi (2011), one of the objectives in teaching reading that should be developed is basic comprehension skills. Therefore, students who have good comprehension skills can read and understand the text easily. Those comprehension skills, according to Brown and Palinscar (in Resnick&Resnick, 1992), consist of the use of background knowledge in processing information, evaluating content skill critically, predicting, interpreting, and concluding skills. It is important to bring those skills to the students through designing appropriate methods and strategies in teaching reading comprehension. It means that reading strategies are important to help the student comprehend the text well.

Many efforts have been made in teaching reading to the students. Thus the researcher proposed an alternative learning strategy called cooperative learning method to make learning reading easier because cooperative learning can trigger the students to help each other.

Slavin (1995) states that cooperative learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic contents. He further elaborates that in cooperative learning, students are expected to help each other, discuss, and argue with one another, assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's understanding. The explanation above shows that cooperative learning involves small groups so that individuals work together to maximize their own and each others' achievement.

Literature Review

Reading is an activity done by people in order to get information out of a text. Some scholars, such as Harris and Sipay (1980) define reading as meaningful understanding printed or written verbal symbols on the text. Byrne (2004) states that reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. It means that reading has an active and interactive process although it is a receptive skill.

The goal of teaching reading is to assist students in improving their reading skills so that they can read English texts efficiently and effectively. During the reading, readers use knowledge, skill, and strategies to understand what the writer is trying to say and give response toward the information on the written text. According to Byrne (2004), there are several characteristics of a good reader: reading extensively, integrating information in the text with existing knowledge, having a flexible reading style, well motivated, relying on different skill interacting and reading for a purpose means that reading serve a function.

- **Descriptive Text**

A descriptive text is considered as the simplest and easiest writing form compared to narrative, recount, or procedure, particularly for the beginning writers (Ellis et. al., 1989). In addition, it allows students to share interesting impressions of a person, a place, or an object surrounding them (Troyka, 1987).

The purpose of a descriptive text is to describe a person, place, or thing in such vivid detail that the reader can easily form a precise mental picture of what is being written about, or can feel that they are part of the experience (KangGuru in the Classroom: Teacher's Guide SMA Package, 2005). Stanley (1988) asserts that the aim of descriptive text is to convey to the reader what something looks like. Furthermore, Johnston & Morrow (1981) state that the purpose of descriptive text is to describe objects or persons in which the writer is interested. Therefore, the writer should know well what he wants to describe, starts by observing the objects carefully to take the significant details and brings clear picture to the readers and avoid ambiguities.

- **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic contents (Slavin,1995). He further elaborates that in cooperative learning students are expected to help each other,

discuss and argue with one another, assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's understanding.

Johnson and Johnson (2000) state that cooperative learning has five elements: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small groups skills, and groups processing. The followings are the elaboration of each element.

There are some cooperative learning methods which have been developed and extensively investigated. There are at least, two kinds of cooperative learning methods which will be explained; Student team achievement division (STAD) and jigsaw.

Student team achievement division is one of the simplest and most extensively researched forms of cooperative learning. It is a good model to begin with for the students who are new to the cooperative model. STAD has five major component as Slavin (1995) defined: class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement score, and team recognition. In STAD, students are assigned to four-member of learning teams that are mixed in heterogeneous teams. The teacher presents the lesson and then students work within their team to make sure that all team members have mastered the lesson. Then, the students take the individual quizzes on the material, at which time they may not help one another.

In jigsaw method, the students in the class work in heterogeneous teams, then students are assigned chapters, shortbook, or other materials to be learnt, and are given "expert sheets" that contain different topics for each team member to focus on when reading. Whenever one has finished reading, student from different teams with the same topic meet an "expert group" to discuss their topic for about thirty minutes. The experts then turn to their teams and take turns teaching their teammates about their topic. Finally there is a quiz or other assesment on the topics. The key to Jigsaw is interdependence; every student depends on his or her teammates to provide the information needed to do well on the assessment (Slavin, 1995).

Methodology

This study was classroom action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) stated that there are four basic steps in the action research. They are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. It was applied since the study was conducted in a vocational school at XI hotel accommodation class. In this case, the cooperative learning method was used as the treatment for the sample. The sample received pre-test and post-test to measure the sample's reading improvement.

In the light of the above literature review and the context of the study, the following research questions were put forward: (1) Does the implementation of cooperative learning method improve students' reading comprehension?, and (2) What are the students' responses toward the cooperative learning method in teaching reading?

There are some instruments used in this research: reading test, observation sheet, questionnaire, and interview.

1. The Reading test consists of two tests, there are pre-test, post-test in cycle 1 and post-test in cycle 2. For the pre-test, it was conducted before the cycles began. It was implemented to measure the prior knowledge of students' reading comprehension before the classroom action research conducted. Whereas, post-tests in cycle 1 and cycle 2 were conducted after each cycle is completed.
2. Observation sheet was used to obtain the data about teacher and students activity during the use of cooperative learning method. The observation form for the teacher was adapted from Brown (2001); Teacher observation form A: Observing other teacher. Meanwhile, the observation form for the student was adapted from Kunandar (2007).
3. Questionnaire was administered to identify the students' responses toward the implementation of cooperative learning method. The questionnaire was given to the students after each cycle.
4. One-on-one interview was conducted to gather the detail information from the respondents. The pre-interview was conducted in preparation step; it was carried out before the cycle began. It consisted of ten questions related to students'

difficulties in reading and also about their opinion toward cooperative learning methods.

The post interview was conducted after all of the cycles ended. It was implemented to get the students' perception toward learning reading through cooperative learning methods. The interview consisted of four questions about students' perception toward the implementation of cooperative learning, advantages and motivation perceived during learning reading through cooperative learning method.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The study was conducted in a vocational school, involving the XI Culinary Class. This setting was chosen because the researcher works here as an English Teacher and a pre-interview that had been conducted by the researcher showed that most students in the XI Culinary Class had difficulties in reading.

Referring to the comparison between students' reading scores in the pre-test, cycle one and cycle two, the researcher concluded that students' scores had improved. It was revealed that students' reading comprehension based on their cognitive skill improved after the implementation of cooperative learning methods (jigsaw and STAD). The comparison of means between the result of students' reading scores in cycle 1 and cycle 2 which improved from 65.32 to 73.22 was considered high enough. The result showed that the students' comprehension increased particularly in reading descriptive texts. In cooperative learning, students are expected to help each other, discuss, and argue with one another, assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's understanding. (Slavin, 1995).

This research discovered how students responded to cooperative learning method. They stated that the method was very useful and the process of teaching and learning as well as reading activities were enjoyable. They believed that the use of cooperative learning method could improve their reading comprehension, especially when they read descriptive text.

Conclusions

This research investigated the use of cooperative learning method in improving students' reading ability. The main problem that have been investigated was to what extent the Cooperative Learning Model can improve student' reading ability and the students' response toward the usage of this method. The findings of the research showed that Cooperative Learning Model could improve the students' reading ability, especially in understanding descriptive text. The result of the last reading test showed that most of students' reading scores achieved the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) which was used as indicator of students' success. Cooperative Learning Model could help students to understand descriptive text since they were able to shared the difficulties to their friends in a group. In addition, the students also had more motivation to do the best because they had to compete with other groups.

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