

# COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: Tujuan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di (SMP) adalah membantu siswa memiliki kemampuan untuk mengembangkan kompetensi berkomunikasi baik secara lisan maupun dalam bentuk bahasa tulis guna mencapai tingkat literasi fungsional. Siswa dinyatakan mencapai tingkat literasi fungsional apabila mereka, antara lain memiliki kemampuan memahami teks tulis yang direalisasikan dalam ketrampilan membaca pemahaman. Penelitian tindakan kelas ini (PTK) dilakukan guna meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa agar mencapai indicator dari kompetensi dasar membaca pemahaman, mencapai criteria ketuntasan minimal yang ditetapkan sebelumnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai prestasi siswa dalam pembelajaran membaca pemahaman di SMPN 9 Jember dapat mencapai criteria minimal (KKM) yang telah ditetapkan oleh peneliti sebelumnya.

Keyword: Pembelajaran Kooperatif, Membaca Pemahaman

## INTRODUCTION

The main goal of English language instruction has recently focused on the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing instead of language components, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling. Teaching reading becomes very essential for the sake of preparing students with the basic reading skill in order that they are able to acquire some information, to gain knowledge, and if possible to get fun from any reading selections. In reading activity, students are hopefully expected to be able to extract meaning from specific functional, dialogue, and monolog texts: to obtain information, to get fun, and to find out generic structure from the reading text. In short, the teaching of reading is to prepare students how to catch on

the information explicitly and implicitly stated in the selected reading texts.

The purpose of teaching reading comprehension for junior high school is that students have to enable to extract main idea, to understand word meaning or phrase by means of its synonym or antonym and reference word, to make inference about information indirectly implied and explicitly stated, the author's purpose and generic structure of monolog texts: narrative, anecdote, descriptive, and recount Depdiknas (2006:285).

Yet, the mastery of reading comprehension becomes a significant problem in today's schools. Based on his day-to-day teaching experience, the writer found out they have insufficiently achieved the main goals of teaching reading comprehension yet. They seemed difficult to understand both literal and inferential information, such as to find out the main idea of paragraph, implicitly stated information, and the generic structure of monolog texts.

The 'traditional' classroom management had not provided sufficient opportunity for them to get involved in any learning activities. The seat organization did not provide equal opportunity for those who belonged to the lower collaborating with the higher. The latter was not used to sitting together with the clever, and dominated the back row seats.

The approach to form team members in a classroom was self-selected in which the team members composed of those who all had similar good reading skill. The groups were organized on the basis of friendship, acquaintance, gender, familiarity, emotion, and similar ability.

Many kinds of language approaches offered to improve the reading comprehension achievement, for instance, a cooperative learning that has sufficiently provided an equal responsibility to reach learning goals together, and created a enjoyfull learning atmosphere. It seemingly provides them a lot of opportunities to talk within the small groups to obtain input for acquisition

The principle of cooperative learning, on the other hand, is compatible with the basic principles of Broad Based Education adopted by Indonesian national curriculum promoting life skill education, such as social, communication, and collaboration skills (Samani:2007:93).

Based on the above explanation, the research was focused on the following problem: how can a cooperative learning strategy improve the reading comprehension achievement? The study aims at developing a cooperative learning strategy to improve the reading comprehension achievement.

Reading comprehension is said to be an activity of associating or connecting a reader's ideas with what an author has stated in the printed texts. When a reader or student encounters a reading text, he has to try to associate his prior knowledge and what has been purposefully written in the printed texts. If this happens, it can be said that reading conveys comprehension.

Callahan (1977:161) has distinguished three levels of comprehension: (1) reading the lines, (2) reading between the lines, and (3) reading beyond the lines. Reading the lines simply refers to the literal meaning of the reading material that usually tested by questions such as what the writer telling us is, or what the ideas of the sentence, paragraph, or selection is.

The second insists that reader enables to recognize the author's intent and purpose, to interpret the thought, and to pass judgment on his statements, to search for clues, and to distinguish between fact and opinion. The third level involves deriving implications, speculating about consequences, and drawing generalizations not stated by the author. It also deals with reading imaginative literature, especially drama, and poetry.

Williams (1990:13) states that the ultimate aims for reading are 1) the learners should be able to read general texts with comprehension, be able to learn language and contents from reading, and read with some degree of critical awareness, and 2) the learners can learn how to make sense of text, in order to extract the information they need from them and can find out enjoyment through reading.

Meanwhile, a cooperative learning becomes a prominent strategy of teaching practice changing the traditional classroom in order to improve learning and social relation among classmates Bejarano (1987:485). A cooperative learning is more than simply asking students to get in a group and work on an assignment together, but it is a formal instructional model in which teachers carefully design activities and lessons that are suitable for use by

teams Susan (1999:1). These teams are however small, stable, and heterogeneous.

Fundamental principles and operational features of cooperative learning are described below:

1. Information transmitted by the teacher or text: learning sources limited to cards, worksheets, or lecture
2. Tasks emphasized acquisition of information or basic language skills
3. Each individual is interested in the success of group peers in final quiz; results add up to the group score
4. Group members cooperate to achieve the common goal; high group score in order to compete with the other groups
5. Both receptive and productive skills are used simultaneously but in a controlled manner
6. Peer communication within teams primarily unilateral and bilateral; sometimes multilateral
7. Rehearsal of teacher taught material or filling in worksheets and quizzes
8. The use of language freely in connection with the specific material taught
9. Unmediated interaction among members of the small group, usually based on cooperation and mutual help
10. Positive interpersonal relations
11. Teacher's role as major source of knowledge but encourage interpersonal communication, interaction, and mutual help (Bejarano (1987: 502-504)

Action hypothesis of this study is that students are able to improve their reading comprehension achievement if they have enough opportunity to cooperate with the other classroom members based on the principles of a cooperative learning strategy.

The research was conducted in SMPN 9 Jember for 4 months beginning from July up to March October in the 2009/2010 academic year. The respondents consisted of the third -year students in the second semester. The class had 36 students, 20 male and 16 female students.

It focused mainly on the following: 1) choosing the teaching technique, 2) analyzing the syllabus, 3) designing lesson plan, 4) constructing worksheets and media, and 4) determining the criteria of success: individual (55) and classical mastery (75%).

The implementation was done based on the previously-designed lesson plan. The classroom instruction of reading comprehension began from *pre reading*, *while reading*, and *post reading activities*. The instructional process evaluation was conducted as long as the implementation of the classroom instruction. It was done to evaluate whether or not the classroom instruction had run effectively; the classroom members enjoyed the lesson well, and achieved the reading indicators efficiently.

Observing was directly done during conducted while the implementation of the actions. It was actually done at the same time as the teaching reading comprehension process. The observation was focusing on the instructional activity beginning from pre up to post learning activities. The data was collected through observation guide.

The following step was reflecting. It became a vital activity to analyze, to synthesize, to interpret and to explain the collected data. It became the last phase in which the researcher made a conclusion on the obtained data.

The reflection was obviously used as fundamental information to keep the following action. Supposed, the result did achieve the pre-determined criteria of success, the next action became unnecessary: otherwise, if did not fulfill it yet, it would be necessary to have the next cycle.

## RESEARCH RESULT

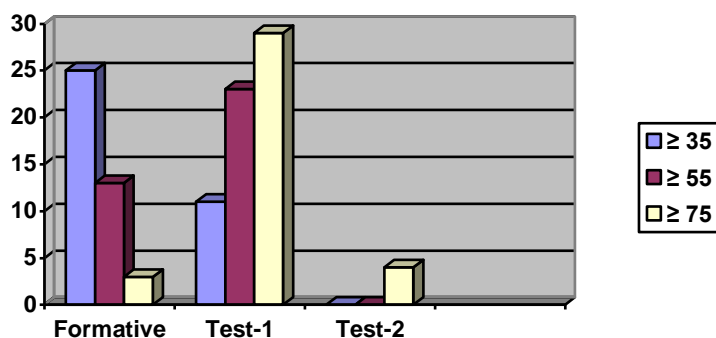
Based on the analysis administered in he first cycle, 23 out of 36 students or 64 % of the respondents had successfully achieved the criteria, while the rest did not. The average score was 57.4, and it had already achieved the pre-determined criteria ( $57.4 > 55$ ). But, the above data showed that the outcomes of teaching reading employing cooperative learning strategies did not meet the criteria of classical mastery ( $64\% < 75\%$ ). Therefore, the next cycle was badly needed to be implemented with better revising in any several aspects.

The observation results showed that the students' participation was classified as poor. The percentage of their involvement was only 55 %. It meant that teaching reading applying cooperative learning strategies had not promoted much better learning interaction, interpersonal communication, or more interactive learning. The students did not fully trust each other as a partner and as a team so that the interdependence, self-accountability, and sharing in teams, interpersonal communication, mutual help, and interaction as the sign of cooperative learning did not fully appear. Then, the students' participation in the second cycle significantly improved and it was classified as fair (69%), continuously increased and categorized as good (89%).

The classroom atmosphere in the second cycle was quietly different from what happened in the first cycle. There was of course a better progress in the attempts to maximize the involvement of all members to work together as partners or as teams.

Moreover, the average score administered at the end of the second cycle was 64.9, and the classical mastery was 80.6 %. It meant that 29 out of 36 respondents had really fulfilled the criteria of success. It was found that the index of reading achievement increased 13.1 points.

**Table: Respondents' Reading Achievement Average**



In brief, the above data showed that students' reading comprehension achievement gradually improved to reach the criteria. The average had increasingly improved from 57.4 in the

first cycle to 64.9 in the second cycle. The class mastery level had also improved from 64% to 80.6%. It is believed that there had to be a positive impact of cooperative learning strategy towards the improvement of reading comprehension achievement. Thus, the strategy had provided a lot of advantages for them like sharing ideas with peers; trusting friends in teams; taking turns; and increasingly motivated them to learn how to read for better comprehension.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the above data analysis, it was concluded that the implementation of the cooperative learning obviously improved the reading comprehension achievement. The indication of the improvement was shown in the average score achieved at the end of each cycle.

The following was briefly important steps to elaborate for structuring a cooperative learning strategy, 1) assigning students to cooperative work organization: a small group-work composing of 2-4 member teams included ability level as determined by formative test scores, 2) providing a series of instructional activities had them to do collaborate assigned tasks consisting of the questions presented from literal to inferential information, 3) monitoring, observing, checking and giving the necessary task assistances to keep the teams getting on the planned tracts, 4) keeping them from being unable to accomplish the assigned tasks, and 5) giving appropriate feedback to reinforce the previous learning experiences.

### **Suggestion**

It is advisable for the English teacher to adopt the result of this research, since it is a fact that the implementation of the cooperative learning helps the students increasingly develop their reading comprehension achievement.

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