

# IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF GRADE VII STUDENTS AT SMP SATU ATAP NEGERI 2 PARIGI SELATAN THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Ni Ketut Yeni Priskila<sup>1</sup>, Konder Manurung dan Sudarkam Mertosono<sup>2</sup>

*priskilaketutyeni@rocketmail.com*

<sup>1</sup> (Mahasiswa Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Pascasarjana Universitas Tadulako)

<sup>2</sup> (Dosen Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Pascasarjana Universitas Tadulako)

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi perbaikan pemahaman bacaan bagi siswa kelas VII SMP Satu Atap Negeri 2 Parigi Selatan melalui Pembelajaran Kooperatif. Subyeknya adalah siswa kelas VII yang terdiri dari 17 orang. Ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilakukan dalam dua siklus. Setiap siklus terdiri dari perencanaan, pelaksanaan, observasi, dan refleksi. Datanya dikumpulkan melalui tes, lembar observasi dan catatan lapangan. Temuannya menunjukkan bahwa siswa sangat termotivasi dan aktif berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan kelas, sehingga pembelajaran Kooperatif itu efektif diterapkan dalam memperbaiki pemahaman bacaan siswa. Pada siklus pertama, 10 dari 17 siswa dengan presentase 58,82% berhasil mencapai kriteria ketuntasan. Pada siklus kedua, 14 dari 17 siswa dengan presentase 82,35% berhasil mencapai kriteria ketuntasan. Ini berarti bahwa pencapaian kelas adalah 82,35% berdasarkan pada jumlah siswa yang memperoleh nilai minimal 65 sebagai kriteria ketuntasan. Pencapaian kelas dan pencapaian individu keduanya sudah memenuhi kriteria ketuntasan. Penelitian ini dihentikan pada siklus kedua. Dengan demikian dapat disimpulkan bahwa aplikasi Pembelajaran Kooperatif efektif untuk memperbaiki pemahaman bacaan siswa.*

**Kata kunci:** *Pembelajaran Kooperatif, Pemahaman Bacaan, Memperbaiki*

Reading is one of the four skills in learning English. Although reading is categorized as receptive skill, it plays important role for the learners to master English. Furthermore, in Indonesia, English as foreign language become the one of the compulsory subjects that the students have to learn for it is included in the national examination. For Junior high school students, the type of the final test is reading comprehension by multiple choice questions. It gives chance for the students to guess the answers. Consequently, they might fail or succeed.

To pass the English final examination, there is certain standard set by the government. For example, there are five types of reading text that must be answered including the descriptive reading text. The criteria of the questions are, finding the detail of information, finding explicit information,

finding the implicit information, finding word meaning (can be synonym or antonym), finding message, or finding the reference word. The descriptive text can be describing certain place, person or thing.

My preliminary observation indicated that it was difficult for Grade VII of SMP Satu Atap Negeri 2 Parigi Selatan to comprehend reading text. Although they are already in grade seven, they have never learned English at the elementary level. It means that they are at beginner level. Most of the students are not able to finish their homeworks and tasks if they are given essay questions. Whenever they get multiple choice questions, they answer by guessing. Automatically, this affect the achievement of the students.

From January to March 2014 I observed some interesting facts. There were 16 students of grade seven, six boys and ten

girls. Unfortunately, there were two boys and three girls who have big problem in reading. They are not good at reading even for Indonesian text, which decelerate the reading process in class. Every time they are given assignment on essay questions based on the reading passage, they fail to do. I also observed the students in the academic year of 2014/2015 to compare to the previous Graders. I found out that they have the same problem as the beginner level.

Based on the preliminary study, the difficulties faced by the students to comprehend reading text are caused by some factors. One of them is reading habit. Reading text book is not an interesting thing to do for the students. Besides, reading is not their hobbies. Without those two major reasons none of them will have the ability to comprehend a reading text. Moreover, Playing games in their cellphone seems more attractive for students to do.

The teacher recognized that teaching reading comprehension to beginner students are difficult. However, students ability to comprehend reading text must be improved. As a teacher I try new strategy, Cooperative learning strategy. By the implementation of this new strategy I will know whether it can improve reading comprehension of grade VII students of SMP Satu Atap Parigi Selatan effectively or not.

### **Nature of Reading Comprehension**

In learning English, students must learn two major terms of skills, Productive and receptive skill. Productive refers to active skills which consist of speaking and writing while receptive refers to passive skills which consist of reading and listening. In productive skills, students should use all and any language at their disposal to achieve a communicative purpose rather than be restricted to specific practice points (Harmer, 2003:249). In other words, to master productive skills (speaking and writing), the students must be active to use the texts.

Receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from discourse they see and hear (Harmer, 2003: 199). It means that the students are expected to be able to recognize and understand texts of target language.

As one of the receptive skills, reading comprehension is the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text. The text that can be read with comprehension must be connected text. Connected text is any written material involving multiple words that forms coherent thoughts. Phrases, sentences, paragraphs and so on are examples of connected text, Royer (2004-2006). Further more, he stated that skilled reading comprehension involves the use of a number of cognitive skills. At the lowest cognitive level skilled readers automatically recognize letters and words. They also automatically activate the meaning of words when they read them. It also involves higher level cognitive processes such as relating what is being read to what is already known. Then it creating inferential bridges to span between things that are written and things that your experience tells you must be true.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning gives more positive effect on teaching and learning process. As (Felder and Brent, 2007) convince that it is an approach to groupwork that minimizes the occurrence of unpleasant situations and maximizes the learning and satisfaction that result from working on a high-performance team. Some research has been conducted to proof the effectiveness of cooperative learning related to higher education achievement, greater persistence through graduation, better high-level reasoning and critical thinking skills. Moreover, it encourages the learner to have deeper understanding of learned material for they have greater time on task and motivated class condition. Therefore, it has lower levels of anxiety and stress but greater intrinsic

motivation to learn and achieve. It also gives greater ability to view situations from other's perspective, having positive and good relationship with peers. Even more Cooperative learning motivated the learners to have positive attitude toward subject areas, and higher self-esteem. Compared to cooperative learning, students doing the task individually will find more difficulties especially when they get stuck. Therefore they need friends in group to exchange ideas, discussing, correcting and supporting one another.

Based on the previous perspective of Felder and Brent, what is Cooperative Learning actually? According to Johnson & Johnson (1998) model, cooperative learning is instruction that involves students working in teams to accomplish a common goal, under conditions that include the following elements :

1. **Positive interdependence.** Team members are obliged to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part, everyone suffers consequences.
2. **Individual accountability.** All students in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastery of all of the material to be learned.
3. **Face-to-face promotive interaction.** Although some of the group work may be parcelled out and done individually, some must be done interactively, with group members providing one another with feedback, challenging reasoning and conclusions, and perhaps most importantly, teaching and encouraging one another.
4. **Appropriate use of collaborative skills.** Students are encouraged and helped to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication, and conflict management skills.
5. **Group processing.** Team members set group goals, periodically assess what they

are doing well as a team, and identify changes they will make to function more effectively in the future.

Futhermore, Cooperative Learning become a very well known strategy for teaching and learning. Gillies and Boyle (2009) state that Cooperative learning is a pedagogical practice that has attracted much attention over the last three decades. Large number of research on this strategy indicates students gain both academically and socially benefits when they have opportunities to interact with others to accomplish shared goals. For Issues with implementing cooperative learning, there is no denying that social interaction plays a major role in how children learn (Gillies, 2003), yet, in many classrooms, students are often the passive recipients of knowledge rather than being active in its creation.

#### **Technique in cooperative learning: Learning Together**

Learning Together models of cooperative learning was developed by Johnson and Johnson (1998). Five elements of cooperative learning, positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small group skills and group processing are covered in this model. Through learning together students working on assignments sheet in four-to-five member of heterogeneous groups. Nevertheless, they only hand in a single sheet. They also receive praise or rewards based on the group product. Before the students begin to work with their group, they must have team building activities. Besides, they have regular discussion within groups about how well they are working together (Li and Lam, 2013). Therefore those activities must be done completely to get maximum result.

### **Teaching Reading comprehension through Cooperative Learning**

Teaching reading comprehension to the students through cooperative Learning strategy will give fresh atmosphere in classroom. Cooperative Learning encourages every student to take part in all process of group discussion. This strategy avoids passive student in teaching and learning process. It also teaches the students to be functional part of a group in order to have grouped responsibilities as well as individual responsibilities. Therefore, the five main elements proposed by Johnson and Johnson will be applied through 'Learning Together'.

Learning Together which is chosen in this research gives comfortable circumstances for students during the learning process. Through Learning Together, students will learn together in a noncompetitive atmosphere. They have to rely on one another, help each other, build social skill and communication skill. If any group members fail to do their part, everyone suffers consequences. As a conclusion, this type is proper to the beginner level to learn reading comprehension.

### **METHOD**

The researcher applied a classroom action research in cycle steps as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The classroom action research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach. It involves planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting the action of using Cooperative Learning Strategy to improve the student ability in reading comprehension of descriptive text. The research focused on one class only. It made the application of cooperative learning effectively and easily be controlled.

This research was conducted at SMP Satu Atap Negeri 2 Parigi Selatan consisting of 17 students, ten boys and seven girls. The class has heterogeneous students. This class is

chosen as the setting of the research because they have a problem in reading comprehension. This research was carried out on April-May during 2014/2015 academic year.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

In this research, the data were collected by observation, field notes and essay test during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. The teaching and learning process consisted of three activities, pre-activity, while activity and post activity. The observation format was used to observe the teacher's performance during the teaching and learning process in using cooperative learning following the 2 x 40 minute time estimation. Field note was used to record the students' activities during the working in group process. Essay test will be used to obtain data about the students' ability in reading comprehension on descriptive text by implementing the cooperative learning strategy.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

As a classroom action research, it followed four steps which were called planning, implementing of the action, observing, and reflecting. During each process, the researcher was working with her collaborator teacher. The data in cycle 1 were taken from observation sheets, field notes in the three meetings and the students' achievements in test in the fourth meeting by implementing Cooperative Learning strategy.

In planning phase, the researcher and her collaborator made some necessary preparation as guidance during the process of the research. For the researcher was dealing with the implementation of cooperative learning, the researcher and her collaborator design the groups member. This is very important because the groups member must consist of various criteria equally. Then they prepared Lesson plan contained time allocation, standard competence and basic

competence, indicators, instructional objectives, teaching materials, teaching method, teaching procedures, teaching resources, and evaluation.

In the action phase, there were two cycles, cycle one and cycle two. In the first cycle, there were three meetings for teaching and learning process and one meeting for students' achievement test. Each meeting consisted 80 minutes. Teaching and learning process was conducted in three activities, pre-activity, while activity and post activity. Those activities were done based on the lesson plan. Cycle 1 was carried out on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

During the action phase, the researcher and her collaborator observed the implementation of cooperative learning in teaching and learning reading comprehension. They use observation sheets and field notes. The researcher also assigned the students with test. The test used to measure their progress in reading comprehension after three meeting of cooperative learning implementation.

As the last phase, the researcher and collaborator teacher used the data they collected from observation checklist, field notes, and essay test to make reflection towards the teaching and learning process. They analysed the findings of observation, field note, and the students' achievement through cooperative learning. Then they compared to their plan and target that they made on the preparation time.

To know whether the research target was achieved or not, it must reach the criteria of success. This research met the criteria of success if the students' individual achievement at least 65 and 75% of students who passed the individual achievement for classical successful criteria. Based on the analysis, the researcher and her collaborator concluded that the implementation of cooperative learning in teaching reading comprehension in cycle 1 did not meet the criteria of success yet. This could be known from the students individual achievement at

least 65 were less than 75% of students in the class. Moreover, the students were not fully motivated and active during the teaching and learning process. However, the teacher performance in teaching showed that she had done all the requirements but not yet optimal. For Example, managing the time need improvement dealing with setting the time proportionally. As conclusion, the technique that was applied in this action research needed improvement. Firstly, The teacher needs to set the time proportionally for each of the activities done. Secondly, dealing with group arrangement, the teacher must ensure that the students has managed their own group for sharing the job equally. Finally, explaining more detail how to give correct answer for complete answer by using more Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding and continual guidance as well.

Since this study was classroom action research, whenever the result in the first cycle did not meet the criteria of success meant that the research must be continued to cycle II. The procedures of second cycle were the same as the first cycle. It followed four main stages: planning, revising the plans, acting/implementing, observing, and reflecting based on the reflection findings. For classroom action research emphasized more on process, the success of the students was affected by the process of how cooperative learning was implemented in teaching and learning reading comprehension.

Considering the reflection in cycle I, the researcher emphasized activities on three major points. The researcher set the time proportionally for each activities like pre-activity 5%, while activity 80%, and post-activity 20%. Then the teacher must ensure that the students has managed their own group for sharing the job equally. While the last was explaining more detail how to give correct answer for complete answer by using more Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding and continual guidance as well.

The action in the second cycle was carried out on Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015. There were three meetings in the second cycle. Two meetings for teaching and learning and one meeting for measuring the students' individual achievement by essay test. Beside that, the observation checklist and field notes were used to gather data from the teacher and the students performance and participation during the main activities.

The analysis toward evaluation on cycle II indicated significant development on students' reading comprehension. Through the test on this second cycle, it was found that there were fourteen students who got at least 65 for individual criteria of success. In relation to criteria of success, class percentage employed formula  $14 \times 100\% : 17 = 82.35\%$ . 14 is the number of students who got success qualification, 17 is the number of all students in the class and 100 is the deviation scale. Since the number of students who got "success" qualification more than 75% of the total number of students in class, it is concluded that the evaluation of the second cycle has met the criteria of success. In other words, when the criteria of success was achieved, the students problems in reading comprehension was solved by the implementation of cooperative learning strategy in teaching and learning process.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

The students' reading comprehension is improved successfully through the implementation of cooperative learning strategy. This strategy motivates the students to be better since they had learning experiences with their teammates in sharing their ideas, comments, mutual support, and help one another in doing their tasks. Working with mix group gives positive influence toward the students self confidence, care for others, respect for others, responsible and communicate with others.

The students felt comfortable working with their teammates since all members must participate and responsible for the success of their own group. The students are able to answer the comprehension questions on their reading text since the teaching and learning activities focused in finding the the detail information explicitly. Another significant influence of cooperative learning of learning together is the atmosphere in the class encouraged the students to be active during the class activities by sharing ideas in group or team practice. Finally, the students became interested inreading text book since the have friend for sharing and discussing the text in small groups.

### **Suggestions**

The teacher should be more patient to always motivate the students to try harder and practice more including memorizing words to maximize result of the implementation of Cooperative Learning for beginner.

The English teacher should apply cooperative learning as an alternative solution to organize the teaching and learning activities. The implementation of Cooperative Learning gives two main benefits at once. Firstly, it help the students to improve their individual skill in learning by working with teammates. Secondly, trough cooperative learning tudents' social skills are developed. The interection among the various member in their group enrich the students with experience dealing with social life in the classroom. To give a reward toward the students who got the best mark at the end of semester would be another alternative to attract students interest.

## REFERENCES

- Felder, Richard M, & Brent, Rebecca. 2007. *Cooperative Learning*. N.C. State University.
- Gillies, R. 2003b. *Structuring cooperative group work in classrooms*. International Journal of Educational Research, 39, 35e49.
- Gillies, Robyn M. and Boyle, Michael. 2009. *Teacher's Reflections on Cooperative Learning: Issues of Implementation*. School of Education, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
- Harmer, J. 2003. *The Practice of English Language Teaching (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)*. New York: Longman.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R.T. 1998. *Learning together and alone: Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jones, Karrie A. and Jones Jennifer L. 2008. *Making Cooperative Learning Work in the College Classroom: An Application of the 'Five Pillars' of Cooperative Learning to Post-Secondary Instruction*. Niagara University, New York
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. 1988. *The Action Research Planner*. Third Edition. Victoria: Deakin University.
- Li, M.P., & Lam, B.H. 2013. *The Active Classroom*. The Hongkong Institute of Education. WWW.ied.edu.hk/aiclass/
- Royer, James Mike, Ph.D. 2004-2006. *Reading Success Lab*. University of Massachusetts.
- Webb, N. 1992. *Testing a theoretical model of student interaction and learning in small groups*. In R. Hertz-Lazarowitz, & N. Miller (Eds.), *Interaction in cooperative groups* (pp. 102e119). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.