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The Implementation of Kagan's Cooperative (Co-Op) Technique to Improve Reading Comprehension of Junior High Students

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Abstract: This study aimed at investigating how Co-op technique can be implemented to improve reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of MTsN Ngawi who faced the problems in reading that the students did not comprehend the text and the score was low. The average score of reading test in preliminary study was 67 whereas the average score of student' success based on the minimum standard of students' score is seventy (70). The design of this study was classroom action research. The technique applied in the research was Co-op technique. The result showed that the students reading average score improved. In two cycle study, in the first test the students reading average score was 69.54, in the second test the students reading score was 76.15. It could be concluded that predetermined criteria of success had been achieved.

Keywords: co-op technique and reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a dominant aspect before we learn to connect ideas and meanings with words through speaking or writing, we must learn to identify them through reading first. Many definitions of reading have been proposed. The followings are the definitions of reading proposed by some experts. According to Jeremy (1992) reading is an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. The eyes receive messages and the brain then has to work out the significance of these messages.

Alderson (2000) states that reading is the interaction between a reader and the text. During that process it would appear that many things are happening. The reader is looking at print, deciphering the symbols on the page, deciding what they “mean” and how they relate to each other.

Tarigan & Guntur (1990) explains the purposes of reading as follows: 1) Reading for details of facts, 2) Reading for main ideas, 3) Reading for sequence or organization, 4) Reading for inference, 5) Reading to classify, 6) Reading to evaluate, 7) Reading to compare or contrast.

The problem found by many teachers in Indonesia is how the best way to teach students to read in English as well as in their own language. It is understood that the reading population is made up of people who are not only proficient readers in their native language, but who have also mastered the fundamentals of vocabulary, grammar rules, and syntax of the foreign language. Of course, it is well known that many readers have difficulties with comprehension, even if the reading material is written in their native language.

From a short conversation with some of the students who had done the test, it was found and can be assumed that they were not interested in reading English text. They felt that reading was boring. It spent a lot of time to read its sentences and they had to understand or, at least, predict the meanings of unfamiliar words put in text.

According to Johnson et al. (1998) there are two causes of low learning English reading achievement. They come from external and internal factors.

Motivation is one of the internal factors that is very important in teaching and learning process. External factors which cause low learning of English reading can be classified into two groups: social and non-social factors.

Based on the theory above the researcher found some problems with both factors above. The students motivation to read is very low, it can showed from the students' interest on reading. They almost never go to the library to read. Besides the students motivation, the

other problems are social factors that almost all students come from the society with low reading interest. The most serious problem, almost the students score in the preliminary study are average low compared with KKM. The average score for the preliminary study is 67. In this cases the researcher interest to give problem-solving.

The teacher is supposed to be imaginative and creative in developing the teaching technique to create a good atmosphere, improve the students' reading competence and make English lesson more exciting. The teacher has right in using the technique in the teaching process as long as it can achieve the instructional goal. The teacher should be aware of choosing the teaching technique in order to make progress in students learning and to teach reading effectively. Moreover, there are many choices of a teaching strategy that can be used by the teacher.

Cooperative learning is one of technique that claimed as a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, uses a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit. Children learn a foreign language by being exposed to it, by making associations between words and sentence patterns, putting them into clear context, exploring, experimenting, making mistakes, checking their understanding, observing, copying, watching, doing things, listening, repeating. There is poor learning if the child is feeling uncomfortable, under pressure, confused by abstract concepts of grammar rules and their application which he/she cannot understand, distracted or bored, or finds it hard to concentrate while doing some longer activities (Shipton, 2006).

In line with this, co-operative learning is viewed as one of effective learning technique for language classrooms. It helps learners actively participate in every task at the same time and learners can compare, share, and discuss their answers.

Individualized and competitive learning situations are common in children's school experiences; co-operative learning is less about that. Research shows that co-operative learning has significant advantages for both intellectual and social development over individualized and competitive learning environments (Hill & Hill, 1996).

Spencer (1992) defines cooperative learning as group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between

learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.

Co-op is intended to provide a collaborative experience that completely lacks the element of competition. Slavin (1995) states that Co-op allows students to work together in small groups, first to advance their understanding of themselves and the world, and then to provide them with opportunity to share that new understanding with their peers.

Co-op provides for students to cooperate in teams and to share the products of this collaboration with their classmates. Students work in groups to produce a particular group product to share with the whole class; each student makes a particular contribution to the group. The students take either their own time, or class time to research, discuss, and learn the material. They create a presentation for their classmates to teach the assigned aspect of the topic to their classmates. The teacher has a right to include additional information or clarify at the end of the presentation. All students in the class will be held accountable for key information given in the presentations. Co-op places faith in the curiosity, intelligence, and expressiveness of students rather than in extrinsic points and competitive motives.

It provides for students to cooperate in teams and to share the products of this collaboration with their classmates. Students work in groups to produce a particular group product to share with the whole class; each student makes a particular contribution to the group. Beside that, Co-op is very interesting strategy. Research has shown that cooperative learning techniques: (1) Promote student learning and academic achievement, (2) Increase student retention, (3) Enhance student satisfaction with their learning experience, (4) Help students develop skills in oral communication, (5) Develop students' social skills, (6) Promote student self-esteem. The other reason is Co-op gives the students experience on their study so they can understand the material deeply (<http://www.kaganonline.com/>).

The advantages of Co-op, Spencer (1995) Co-op can provide an environment in which personal development, social development, and academic learning are mutually supportive. By respecting the intelligence, the interests, and the expressive capacities of students, Co-op allows students to “enjoy a sharing and community effort” and, in the process, to “become aware of the facilities within themselves.

The disadvantages of Co-op, Spencer (1995) says that Co-op will not be successful for students who are not actively interested in a topic related to the unit and who are not motivated to learn more about the subtopic they are to research on.

The leadership issue arises if one group member attempts to be too dominant. This situation can lead to an important although painful learning experience for the student who is not aware of the adverse effects of his or her dominance, the Co-op groups provide a very real experience of democracy.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to improve the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students through Co-op technique. Base on this purpose, the design was chosen for this research is classroom action research that collaborated with the teacher at this school. This classroom action research was begun from the preliminary study. The researcher designed planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

Planning

The researcher applies Co-op technique in teaching learning process collaborated with the teacher at this school. Meanwhile, the problem is how to improve the students' reading comprehension and how to be able to comprehend the content of a reading text. The researcher also gives the category and frequency score for reading comprehension to know the students' ability in reading comprehension and to determine whether they are a success or failed. At the planning stage, the researcher would divide the materials into two part in the two meetings. The first meeting would discuss the structure of the narrative text and the second meeting would discuss identifying main idea, word meaning, explicit and implicit information based on the text. The researcher would do the Co-op technique steps as follow: (1) Student-Centred Class Discussion, (2) Selection of Student Learning Teams, (3) Team building and Cooperative skill development, (4) Topic Selection, (5) Mini topic Selection, (6) Mini-topic Preparation, (7) Mini topic presentation, (8) Preparation of Team Whole-Class Presentations, (9) Team Whole-Class Presentations, and (10) Reflection and Evaluation.

Preparing Lesson Plan

The researcher and the collaborator designed lesson plan with the purpose of equipping the teacher with a guideline of the teaching and learning activities. In designing the lesson plan, the researcher and collaborator had considered the following items: (a) standard competence, (b) basic competence, (c) learning indicator, (d) learning objective, (e) teaching and learning instruction, (f) material and media, (g) worksheets, (h) evaluation.

Determining the Criteria for Success

The criteria of success are vital to know whether the implementation of Co-op technique is successfully conducted or not. In line with the problems in the preliminary study, the criteria of success were determined as follow:

- a) Based on the minimum criteria of students' success (KKM), the average reading score of learning success is seventy (70). It means that the individual student is regarded to reach the criteria of learning success if their reading score is 70 for each student.
- b) Suppose the targeted minimal score of reading comprehension does not reach seventy (70), the next action became important to conduct in the following cycle.

Action

In this research, the researcher applied Co-op technique. Based on this technique there are ten steps that must be done. From the planning, the researcher applied all the steps in the classroom. In doing the research the researcher was assisted by a collaborator who helps in teaching and observed the teaching and learning process by filled the checklist.

Observation

In this research, the researcher and collaborator used the instrument of reading test for getting the data by collecting the students score in every test. The students did the test individually then they submit their work for correcting. To monitor the process of teaching-learning, the researcher made a checklist in every meeting.

Reflection

In this research, the researcher used data analysis and observation. The data analysis was gotten from the sum of students score divided by the number of students. The data of observation was gotten from the report of teaching learning process in the form of a checklist. During teaching learning process, the researcher found some problems. Researcher solved the problems by given series of changing step. At the last meeting, the researcher gave the test to the students for evaluating. The result of the test used by the researcher as basic to continue the research to the next cycle and revised the step in that technique.

FINDINGS

This is the presentation of research findings obtained from the classroom action research at the eighth grade of MTsN Kabupaten Ngawi. The preparation for implementing Co-op technique in reading was done to choose the theme to be studied based on the reading

curriculum and the duration of the action. The theme was about the Narrative reading text. The subject chosen were the eighth-grade students of MTsN Ngawi which consist of four students. They all did a preliminary study before the technique was done. There were two cycles consist of four meetings. Co-op technique would be implemented at every meeting and the students would do the test after they had finished implementing Co-op technique. These findings presented the description of activities during the research in each meeting.

Findings in the Cycle One

The cycling one was consist of two meetings. In these meetings, the researcher applied ten steps in the Co-op technique. In the first meeting discussed the structure of the narrative text and the second meeting the researcher discussed how to find the main idea, word meaning based on the context, explicitly stated information, and implicitly stated information. From the teaching-learning process in the first meeting and second meeting, it can be observed that the students had not much attention to the explanation. Some of them were talking each other. The discussion was not good enough, There were some students did not active in the group and did not provide a beneficial atmosphere that supported the improvement of students reading comprehension achievement. In the first and second meeting the result of the observation was discussed as followed:

1. The students had not much attention to the teacher when the teacher explained about narrative text
2. Not all of the students, for about 40% or 16 students showed their enthusiasm when the discussion in the first and second meeting was conducted
3. There were almost half of students in that class who didn't bring the dictionary so they got difficulties in cooperate with their group to find the difficult words
4. The smart students dominated the discussion whether the low students were not active enough;
5. There were some students who confused with the material so it made debate in the group discussion
6. Some students (9 students) were false in answering the question because they didn't understand the text.
7. The average score of test one was better than preliminary study. It was 71.54 compared with preliminary study score was 67.

From the observation above the researcher concluded that the main problem was actually placed in the first step. Because the students did not have much attention to the teacher's explanation so its impacts to the fifth, sixth and seventh step. To solved this problem the researcher explained again the material to each group when guided the discussion. For another problem, the researcher solved by giving motivation to the students in order to follow the discussion seriously.

At the last, because the average score is still lower than criteria of students' success, so the researcher continued to the next cycle and revised the step of the technique.

Findings in the Cycle two

This cycle consists of two meetings. The researcher wanted to improve the students score better than the first cycle. The researcher did the steps of the technique but he changed the first step to the third step. This action was taken because the researcher thought that before explaining the material, it better that the students had gathered in a group because the friend in the teammate could help the students who got difficulties in understanding the material. The steps run well in the first and second meeting. In the second cycle the result of observation was discussed as followed:

1. All of the students paid attention to the teacher's explanation;
2. They felt enjoy to cooperate with their group;
3. They got enthusiasm to give point for their group in discussion;
4. There were no students who confused in understanding material and there was no debate in the group;
5. The students felt happy and they could do the work faster than before because they had good cooperation to their teammate;
6. The average score of test two was increased than test one and only five students could not pass the minimum standard of students' score.

In this cycle, the researcher just found one problem. The problem was how to motivate and made the students active in the discussion. The researcher solved the problem by giving active guidance and made punishment to the group. The form of punishment, if one of member group did not do the work or discussion well, example: one of member group just talking with their friend but did not discuss the topic, the group would got punishment. The score of the group would be decreased.

Analysis of Students' Paper Works

From the result of test one in the first cycle, there were 29 students or 72.5 % students could pass the test well while 11 students or 23.5 % failed. They got score under 70 as the minimum standard of students' score. The average score was 69.54. In the preliminary study, there were only 17 or 42.5 % students who could success and 23 students or 57.5 % were failed. The average score was 67. By comparing with the result in the preliminary study, it could be seen that there was an improvement of average score 2.54.

From the result of test two, there were 34 students or 85 % could pass the test successfully. They got score same or more than 70 as the minimum standard of students' score. The average score was 76.15. In test one, there were 29 students or 72.5 % could success and 11 or 23.5 % students failed. The average score was 69.54. By comparing with the result of test one, it could be seen that there was an improvement of average score 6.61.

Reflected the result of students' score from the first test until the second test, it could be known that the Co-op technique success is implemented to improve the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of MTsN Ngawi. There was an improvement of average score in every test. When the technique completed being implemented, the result of the test in the second test showed that 34 of eighth-grade students could pass the minimum criteria of students' score and 6 students still failed. It could be concluded that predetermined criteria of success had been achieved. The study would be stopped in cycle two.

DISCUSSION

This part will discuss the summary of the finding from the study and discussion of the finding.

The Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension

By observing the students reading skill from a preliminary study, improving their reading skill in three meeting study of one cycle, there was a significance development in the students' reading score. In the preliminary study, there were only 17 or 42.5 % students who could success and 23 students or 57.5 % were failed. It means that only 42.5 % students were able to comprehend the test. After implementing Co-op technique which in two cycles were divided into four meetings, there was an improvement of students' score in every test given. The average score of preliminary study was 67 rise up to 69.54 in the test one. The students who success in doing test also raised up from 17 students or 42.5 % to be 29 students or 72.5 %. In the second cycle, the result of the study showed there was 34 students success in doing the test while 6 students were failed. The average score raised up from 69.54 in test one to be

76.15 in test two. It means that after implementing Co-op technique, the students' score was raised up in every test.

Discussion of the Research Findings

The research finding was the use of co-op had a significant effect on students achievement. Based on the result of the test in every test, the researcher assumed that development of students' score because the students could accept and comprehend Co-op technique in teaching and learning process. However, in implementing Co-op in the first cycle, the students still faced some problems.

Jentz & Murphy (2005) on his journal article states that co-operative learning can be implemented in a structured or an unstructured way. Structured when students are thought specific strategies as to how to interact. Unstructured co-op occurs when children are guided but not taught specific interaction strategies.

The problems at the first cycle were the weakness that researcher found. According to Slavin (1995) states that Co-op allows students to work together in small groups, first to advance their understanding of themselves and the world, and then to provide them with opportunity to share that new understanding with their peers. Co-op provides for students to cooperate in teams and to share the products of this collaboration with their classmates.

From the experience in the first cycle, the researcher changed the steps for the second cycle. After the researcher changed the steps, the students paid attention to the teacher's explanation, they felt enjoy to cooperate with their group, they got enthusiasm to give a point for their group in discussion. There were no students who confused in understanding material and there was no debate in the group. The students felt happy and they could do the work faster than before because they had good cooperation with their teammate. The result of the test two was 76.15 compared with test one 69.54 it means that the average score improved.

The findings confirm I. B. et al. (1987) assertion that cooperative learning strategy was ranked first in teaching approaches that promote greater higher- order thinking and achievement. Supporting this was Winarti (2012) who showed after co-op learning the students were able to retain 80% to 90% of the material. These findings showed that there were the strength of Co-op techniques: (1) Promote student learning and academic achievement, (2) Increase student retention, (3) Enhance student satisfaction with their learning experience, (4) Help students develop skills in oral communication, (5) Develop students' social skills, (6) Promote student self-esteem. The other reason is Co-op gives the

students experience on their study so they can understand the material deeply (<http://www.kaganonline.com/>).

CONCLUSION

Based on the students' score in the preliminary study, it was known that the students' reading comprehension needed to be improved since their scores were low. There were only ten among twenty-nine students who passed the reading test in their preliminary study. To improve the students' reading comprehension and their motivation to understand the passages, the researcher choose Co-op technique to be implemented in the class. The study conducted in four meetings divided into two cycles. In every meeting teacher as researcher guided the students to discuss the material in the group. There were the developments of students' average score began from preliminary test to the second tests during the implementation of Co-op technique.

Below were the steps which can implemented by the teacher in order to improve the reading comprehension: (1) Selection of Student Learning Teams, (2) Team building and Cooperative skill development, (3) Student-Centred Class Discussion, (4) Topic Selection, (5) Mini topic Selection, (6) Mini-topic Preparation, (7) Mini topic presentation, (8) Preparation of Team Whole-Class Presentations, (9) Team Whole-Class Presentations, and (10) Reflection and Evaluation.

The students more enthusiastic in paid attention to the teacher's explanation, they felt enjoyed to cooperate with their group, they got enthusiastic to give a point for their group in discussion. There were no students who confused in understanding material and there was no debate in the group. The students felt happy and they could do the work faster than before because they had good cooperation with their teammate. The average score improved in every test. So, it was clearly seen that Co-op technique was successful to help students in improving their ability in reading comprehension.

The result of the classroom action research is expected to give more effective technique to the teacher in the teaching process and give information dealing with strategies of reading comprehension through Co-op technique. Due to the fact that Co-op technique gives positive impacts to the students' ability in reading comprehension and students' motivation and participation in the instructional process, the researcher suggests the English teacher who has a similar problem to implement Co-op technique in the class. But one thing that must be more serious attention to implementing Co-op technique, that this technique will

success to help the student's problem if the teacher applied all the steps in the technique and must give guidance in every step. The teacher must give motivation to the students to follow the discussion seriously.

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