MAXIMIZING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Reading is one of the language skills that needs to be mastered by the students in language learning to enable students to communicate in English effectively. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to implement appropriate teaching methods to ensure that the learning activities become effective in reading comprehension classes. This study used classroom action research to build up the students' reading comprehension through collaborative learning. Data from the study were collected through pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire. The results showed that the student's reading comprehension of the seventh-grade students could be improved through collaborative learning. Therefore, collaborative learning is considered very effective for teaching reading comprehension. This study implies that teachers should consider using collaborative learning to enhance students' reading comprehension.
Keywords: Effective, learning, strategy, language, skill

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, teachers should teach four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Those skills are essential to communicate with others daily (Amin et al., 2022). The four language skills become the main requirements for each to support the others. Reading is essential because it is assumed to be the central means of getting new information (Handayani et al., 2022). Reading enables us to connect what has been known and what is needed to know. In reading, students need to read a text or paragraph to know and understand the meaning (Mantra et al., 2020); then, students can catch the point and get a lot of information from what we have read.

Through reading, students can expand their knowledge more and more (Handayani et al., 2019). Reading is an excellent source of language learning; language can be acquired from reading instead of studying directly. Many benefits can be found through reading (Mantra et al., 2022). Student can get new knowledge; it can improve their knowledge, and if we read more often, we will get the latest information. Reading is one of the basic skills in English, which is not simply translated word by word; one needs to know the passage of the text (Astawa et al., 2019). Therefore, when the students learn to read, they should be able to comprehend the text during the process of reading (Sari & Prasetyo, 2021).

In reading comprehension, students should comprehend the main idea of the reading material because comprehending reading text will make it easier to understand what they have and what the writer means in the text. They can find new information from the text they read (Pal et al., 2023). In addition, reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity involving perception and thought(Khalilova, 2023). Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language.

In reading comprehension, comprehension is making sense of words, sentences, and connected text. Johnson (2008:3) states that reading is the practice of using text to create meaning; therefore, if no meaning is created, reading has no role. Reading is a constantly developing skill; reading skills will be improved if the students do more practice. In this study, reading comprehension is a complex thing to be achieved. It must be accomplished in more than one day or month, as people often see in the advertisements for many English courses. It is more complex than more complex than students needing to practice a lot to improve their reading comprehension(Solari, 2014).

Based on the observation, it was found that the seventh-grade students of the junior high school where this study was conducted still faced difficulties in achieving reading comprehension. The students commonly encountered a lot of problems. Several factors influenced the students' lack of ability to read English. First, students needed help comprehending a text, particularly in finding the specific information and word meaning and classifying the generic structure of the text. Second, the students needed help finding the main idea of the text they read, as we know that the main idea is one of the essential aspects of a text. Third, the students also need help to answer the comprehension question about the content of the text.

The teacher needed help finding the correct method or technique to provide materials for students to learn and quickly understand the material presented (Mantra et al., 2023). The teacher still used traditional techniques, and the teacher used teacher centers to teach reading in the class. It influences the students' achievement if we do not give different styles or methods in teaching the learning process. As a result, the teacher should change their teaching style by applying motivated learning processes such as

collaborative learning (Widiastuti et al., 2022).

Collaborative learning is a part of the collaborative learning strategy that can build students' motivation and, at the same time, help them understand the deep meaning (Yusuf et al., 2019). This technique is effective for reviewing material and checking for knowledge and comprehension, and it develops the team-building skills of the students (Arthur, 2023). This technique promotes discussion and both individual and group accountability. As a result, the group supports each member and provides opportunities to practice and discuss the material's content (Tamimy et al., 2023).

In this study, the researcher used collaborative learning to improve reading comprehension. In this technique, students are placed in groups, and each person works collaboratively. It allows the students to learn from each other. Therefore, based on the facts above, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study by applying collaborative learning to improve the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students in junior high school.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was classroom action research (CAR). It consists of a cyclical process; in addition, in every cycle, there are four interconnected activities: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The purpose of the research is to determine the methodology and design of the study. With this design, the researcher can do the research step by step. The research design is the conceptual structure within the research that is conducted. Action research begins with communication and agreement between people who want to change something together (Ary et al., 2018). It explains that there must be an agreement between the researcher and the participants to solve a particular problem within the community.

Regarding classroom action research, the problem to be investigated should be gaps faced by the student and the teacher in the teaching-learning process. Based on the explanation above, classroom action research was used in the present study. The teaching and learning process was divided into two cycles. Each cycle consists of two sessions, each of four interconnected activities (Cohen et al., 2018). The four interlinked activities are planning, action, observation, and reflection. The results of reflection and observation from cycle one were used to revise the planning for cycle 2. There are three kinds of instruments that the researcher used to gather the data for this

classroom action study: pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire.

The data required to answer the research questions were gathered through pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire administered to seventh-grade junior high school students. The pre-test was given before teaching was carried out. The score of pre-tests was used to know the subjects' pre-existing ability in the reading activity. Then, after the student was given treatment that dealt with using collaborative learning, a post-test was conducted to find out the result of the action. The questionnaire was administered in the last cycle to know how they perceived reading, their opinion, and feelings after teaching through collaborative learning.

The data obtained for the present classroom action study were analyzed descriptively to reveal the extent of the subjects' progress or increasing ability in reading comprehension. The most critical data required to answer the research question was collected by administering pre-tests and post-tests. Moreover, additional supporting data were gathered by administering a questionnaire to the subjects under study at the end of the last cycle.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-cycle was the first step in collecting the data. The researcher made an initial reflection in which the researcher interviewed the English teacher who taught the seventh-grade students of junior high school to know the problems faced by the subjects. The initial reflection showed that the study subjects had low reading comprehension abilities. Moreover, to support the data gathered by interviewing the teacher, the researcher administered a pre-test to ensure that the problems occurred in this study. In the pre-test, the researcher asked the subjects to answer 15 items identifying specific information, general information, textual reference, and textual meaning in the text in multiple-choice tests and short answer task.

The subjects did a pre-test in 30 minutes. The mean score of the pre-test followed by 23 subjects was 45. In addition, only two subjects of the study could achieve the minimum standard passing grade of the seventh-grade students of junior high school. Most subjects needed help with specific information, general information, textual references, and textual meaning of the reading passage. These results indicated that their reading comprehension urgently required further improvement.

The mean score of post-test 1 was 78. The result showed an improvement

from the result of the pre-test. The data also showed that in post-test 1, 14 Subjects could achieve the minimum standard passing grade of the eighth-grade students of the seventh-grade students of junior high school, which was 75. However, since session 2 was the last session of the cycle I and the success indicator still needed to be reached in this cycle, cycle II was conducted to get better improvement.

After the preparation was complete, the action was conducted. Cycle II was carried out as planned in the lesson plan. The teaching-learning process in Cycle II was the same as in Cycle I. Here, the primary duty of the researcher was to do all the planning that had been made before and treat the subjects by using collaborative learning. To explore the subjects' knowledge about the topic, the researcher showed some pictures related to the topic. The mean score of the post-test two students was 85. This means more than 80% of students pass the minimum passing grade.

From the data questionnaire, it was found that 42% of the subjects strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 18% entirely agreed, and none disagreed with implementing collaborative learning. In addition, it also clearly indicated the subjects' positive response in improving subjects' reading

comprehension through the application of collaborative learning.

The present study was intended to improve reading comprehension through collaborative learning of the eighth-grade and seventh-grade students of junior high school. Based on the result of the post-test in the two cycles, the research question is, can reading comprehension of the seventh-grade students of junior high school be improved through collaborative learning? It can be confidently answered that collaborative learning could significantly improve the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students in junior high school.

In the pre-cycle, the researcher administered a pre-test. The subjects were asked to answer ten multiple-choice tests and five short-answer tasks to determine their reading comprehension abilities. The mean score obtained by the subjects under study in reading comprehension pointed out the mean figure of 45, in which only two subjects could get the standard passing grade of the seventh-grade students of junior high school. Most subjects needed to understand the reading passage, which indicated a lack of vocabulary and grammar.

This mean figure clearly showed that the ability of the subjects under study was relatively low in reading and

comprehending a descriptive text. The low score obtained on the pre-test was also based on the problem shown through the observation, which proved that the students had difficulty comprehending a text, particularly in finding the specific information and word meaning and classifying the generic structure of the text. Moreover, the teacher needed help finding the correct method or technique to provide materials for students to learn and quickly understand the material presented. This problem required an immediate solution.

In cycle I, the researcher taught the subjects through collaborative learning. In session 1, some subjects made noise during the teaching-learning process because they were unfamiliar with the technique applied. In session 2, the subjects were more active than in the previous session. After treating the subjects using collaborative learning, the post-test was conducted at the end of the cycle. The post-test result showed an increasing figure of 78, of which nine subjects could reach the standard passing grade. The mean figure of the post-test scores obtained by the subjects under study was higher than the mean figure of the pre-test.

In post-test 1, the mean score increased because the students already had anxiety about reading a text. Some students could find the text's generic structure, but most still needed to find the specific information. Therefore, they proved their reading comprehension ability by achieving a better post-test score than the pre-test. This mean figure convincingly revealed the apparent improvement of the subjects' ability in reading comprehension through collaborative learning. Furthermore, this research was not regarded as successful since the criterion mentioned on the success indicator still needed to be achieved.

In cycle II, the subjects were treated using the same technique as in cycle I, collaborative learning. The subjects were active, and they enjoyed the teaching-learning process. In this cycle, the researcher reinforced the students' comprehension of reading passages by giving them more exercises. In cycle II, the mean progress figure is 85. This means there was a significant increase from the first cycle to the second cycle. The considerable difference in the mean figure suggested that teaching reading comprehension in cycle II through collaborative learning could be more effective than cycle I, as the teaching scenarios in cycle II were accordingly revised by considering the weaknesses found in cycle I. This was shown by the increase in the total subjects who could

obtain the standard passing grade, which was 20 subjects.

In this cycle, most students could find the generic structure, textual meaning, textual reference, and general text information. However, they still needed to find the specific information. Collaborative learning techniques cannot improve students' ability to find specific information. This research could be ended because the success indicator had been decided. Furthermore, this research was regarded as successful based on the criterion that 80% of total subjects can achieve the minimum passing grade. In conclusion, since the target of passing grade scores was already achieved and accomplished, this present study was finished until cycle II and regarded as successful.

The proportional percentage figures of total responses to the questionnaire for items A, B, C, and D were 42%, 40%, 18%, and 0%. The comparative percentage of questionnaires obtained for the present classroom action study revealed that the subjects under study responded positively; their attitude and motivation changed after they had been taught reading comprehension through collaborative learning. This figure showed that 42% of the subjects strongly agreed with the use of collaborative

learning, 40% of the subjects agreed, 18% of the subjects entirely agreed, and 0% of the subjects disagreed.

The positive response was based on the percentage of 42% of the strongly agreed items and 40% of the agreed items; it could be seen those items have the same rate, which means half of the subjects under study found that the activity was quite fun during the teaching-learning process through collaborative learning. Moreover, according to some criteria in the questionnaire, the students were taught that the technique also motivated them to improve their reading comprehension. They taught that the method also enhanced their creativity in reading comprehension.

Besides, according to the questionnaire, 18% of the subjects agreed. That was proved by some students who found that the technique needed to be more fun. It could not improve their creativity in reading comprehension. The method could not give them motivation. They were taught that the technique was tedious and that they disliked reading. Besides, most of the students strongly agreed with the use of collaborative learning. This result showed that the subjects responded positively to implementing collaborative learning in teaching reading.

Based on the previous data, improving reading comprehension through

collaborative learning was acceptable and effective. In other words, both scores of post-tests in cycle I and cycle II proved that teaching reading comprehension through collaborative learning to seventh-grade junior high school students could be improved significantly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, collaborative learning could improve students' reading comprehension. The primary data for the present classroom action study were gathered by administering pre-tests and post-tests of the subjects under study. At the end of cycle II, it was administered to determine the students' changing learning behavior after being taught reading comprehension through collaborative learning. The questionnaire was administered at the end of cycle II to establish the students' interest, motivation, and attitude toward learning through collaborative learning. The result of the questionnaire was that the students were interested in learning through collaborative learning.

The mean of the post-test score for cycle 1 was 78, and for cycle II was 85. The findings of the present classroom action study convincingly proved that teaching reading comprehension through collaborative learning could effectively

improve the low ability in reading comprehension of seventh-grade students of junior high school. Moreover, based on the questionnaire clearly showed the comparative figures for each item. Item A was positively responded to by 42% of students, item B by 40%, and item C by 18%; instead, no one of the subjects chose item D. Based on the result of the questionnaire, it could be seen that the subjects under study gave positive response toward the application of collaborative learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that it could be concluded that collaborative learning could improve reading comprehension

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