

IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SMALL GROUP WORK TECHNIQUE AT THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP ROSA JAYA

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Abstract

The objective of this research entitled Improving Students' Reading Comprehension through Small Group Work Technique at the Seventh Grade Students of SMP ROSA JAYA on academic year 2016/2017 was to find out whether or not the technique was effective to improve the students' reading comprehension. In this research, the method that the writer used was one group pretest-posttest design and quantitative research method. The instruments of the research were pretest and posttest which contained five questions which should be answered based on a text they read. The pretest was given to find out the comprehension of the students at the beginning before the treatment, and the posttest was given to find out the ability of the students after they were given treatment. The research population was the students of the seventh grade of SMP ROSA JAYA which consisted of three classrooms, and the sample of the research was 30 students selected using random sampling technique. The data of this research were collected by giving the students pretest and posttest. The collected data were analyzed by using *t-test* formula. The result of this research showed that: the mean score of pretest was 59.67. The mean score of posttest was 77.83. The *t*-observed was 4.812. The *t*-table critical value was 2.9 and significance level at 0.05 was 2.045. Based on the data analysis, the writer concluded that the alternative hypothesis was accepted because the t_{obs} was higher than the t_{table} ($4.812 > 2.045$). It also meant that Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Through Small Group Work Technique at the Seventh Grade Students of SMP ROSA JAYA on Academic Year 2016/2017 has significantly showed that the technique could improve the students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension and Small Group Work Technique*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity which give much benefit for the reader. Through reading, reader can get any kinds of information, for example: to know about foreign country, we can read the books, we do not have to physically visit the country. Another example: to know an electronic device works, we can read the manual. So, reading is an activity each is very important, furthermore for the students where it becomes media to train their skill, strategies, knowledge. It is exactly like what Afflerbach (2007) stated "reading is a dynamic and complex process that involves skills, strategies, and prior knowledge."

Reading is one of the four basic language skills that should be developed, it becomes compulsory for anyone to do, moreover, for the students. Reading skill is learned at schools: start from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and university. Learning the reading skill could be easy or difficult, it depends on how far the students' skill and how much vocabulary the students have. The more students have vocabulary the more students could understand what is being read.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Principles of teaching reading

Reading is an incredibly active occupation. To do it successfully, we have to understand what the words mean, see the pictures the words are painting, understand the arguments, and work out if we agree with them. If we do not do these things-and if the students do not do these things-then we only just scratch the surface of the text and we quickly forget it. As with everything else in lesson, students who are not engaged with the reading text – not actively interested in what they are doing – are less likely to benefit from it. When they are really fired up by the topic or the task, they get much more from what is in front of them.

a. Students should be encouraged to respond to the content of a reading text, not just to the language.

It is important to study reading text for the way they use language, the number of paragraphs they contain and how many time they use relative clauses. But the meaning, the message of the text, is just as important and we must give students a chance to respond to that message in some way. It is especially important that they should be allowed to express their feeling about the topic – thus provoking personal engagement with it and the language.

b. Prediction is a major factor in reading

When we read text in our own language, we frequently have a good idea of the content before we actually read. Book covers give us a hint of what's in the book, photographs and headlines hint at what articles are about and reports look like reports before we read a single word.

c. Match the task to the topic

Once a decision has been taken about what reading text the students are going to read, we need to choose good reading tasks – the right kind of questions, engaging and useful puzzles etc. The most interesting text can be undermined by asking boring and inappropriate questions, the most commonplace passage can be made really exciting with imaginative and challenging tasks.

d. Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full

Any reading text is full of sentence, word, ideas, descriptions, etc. it doesn't make sense just to get students to read it and then drop it to move on to something else. Good teachers integrate the reading text into interesting class sequences, using the topic for discussion and further tasks, using the language for study and later activation.

Small Group Work Technique

Steps in the classroom

(1) Select the activity

An activity that is best suited for group work may meet the following criteria:

- The activity has multiple tasks that can be shared among group members or a single task, such as generating ideas, that benefit from the participation of all individuals within a group
- The activity involves problem solving and discussion

Examples of activities that may be suited for group work are investigations of materials (newspaper, scientific specimens) and development of ideas or arguments.

(2) Preparation of materials

The teacher will need to personally collect, or organize students to collect, physical specimens for investigation. For example, if the teacher anticipates doing a lesson on the role of the media, she or he might ask the students to bring into class examples of newspaper and magazines. There should be materials sufficient for each group.

(3) Size and selection of group

Group size normally ranges between 3-5 students. Group size can sometimes go larger, although groups larger than 8 do not ensure that everyone will participate. Since group often report their work back to the whole class, teachers also take into account the total number of groups within the class.

Group membership can be determined in different ways. A *random selection* might be done by “counting off” with students (go around the room systematically having students count 1, 2, 3, etc., with each numbers representing a group) or selecting groups on the basis of birth date.

In a *nonrandom selection*, groups will be selected based on the teachers’ prior knowledge. Usually, groups are selected to maximize diversity within the group, since diversity enhances learning. Such groups often have a balance of girls and boys, and students with differing ability levels. Teachers can also use their best judgment about personality mixes that would enhance the work of the group.

Sometimes group are organized only for one activity. Other times, teachers use the same small groups for a series of activities, so that students get used to working with one another. If the tables and chairs cannot be moved for group work, then students can form groups by turning around in seats to face the children behind.

(4) Organize students within the group

A *laissez-faire approach* to group work would be that the teacher give a general assignment to the group – like organize a research project on ‘qualities of good leaders’ – and the students are left to organize themselves.

A *highly structured approach* would be that the teacher assigns a specific role to each group member. Depending upon the task, the roles might include ‘materials handler’, ‘scribe’, ‘reporter to the large group’ and so on. A *semi-structured approach* might be that the teacher recommend certain roles, but leaves it to the group to assign role.

A more structured approach, with rotation of tasks within a group, is often used with younger children. A less structured approach can be used with students with experience in group work or for simple tasks that do not require that students take on different roles

(5) Time the group work

The teacher should anticipate student questions about timing, the task result, sharing with the whole group, and so on. After giving clear instructions to the students, the teacher should be available to answer questions, but not interfere with the groups’ activities.

It is common in many classrooms that a small group activity constitutes 20 minutes of a 40 minute-period, with 10 minutes allowed for sharing small group work with the whole class.

(6) Share small group work with the whole class

Usually the results of the small group work are shared with the class. This sharing can be oral (reporting out), visual (written or graphic representation), or both.

METHOD

Research Method

The writer used quantitative method in this research. This method “emphasizes a priori category to collect data in the form of numbers. The goal is to provide statistical descriptions, relationships, and explanations.” (Mc Millian & Schumacher, 2000), another definition stated that quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics), (Aliaga and Gunderson in Muijs, 2011).

Population and Sample

Population

According to McMillan &Schumacher (2000) “A population is group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research.”. based on the definition, the writer took the students of SMP PGRI 1 Cianjur, there were three classrooms with the total number 90 students.

Sample

Wiersma (1991) stated that a sample is a subject of the population to which the researcher intends generalize the result. Based on the definition, the writer took one of the four classrooms, it was the seventh grade students in VII-A which contains 30 students.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The most important thing in the finding is data which are needed for an analysis. The data have been collected through a sequence of process which was conducted based on the following schedule. Each of activity was conducted well based on the schedule. During the process of the activities, the writer could give the pretest, treatment, and posttest as had planned before. The followings are findings during each of the activity:

Pretest and Posttest Result

The followings are result taken from pretest and posttest. Those result are presented in a table which will then be analyzed to find the final result and interpreted whether the teaching technique work well.

The Comparison of the Test Result

No	Name	Score		D	D ²
		Pretest	Posttest		
1	Respondent 1	70	90	20	400
2	Respondent 2	80	95	15	225
3	Respondent 3	50	90	40	1600
4	Respondent 4	40	70	30	900

5	Respondent 5	55	80	25	625
6	Respondent 6	60	75	15	225
7	Respondent 7	55	75	20	400
8	Respondent 8	40	65	25	625
9	Respondent 9	45	75	30	900
10	Respondent 10	50	75	25	625
11	Respondent 11	60	85	25	625
12	Respondent 12	55	80	25	625
13	Respondent 13	45	70	25	625
14	Respondent 14	55	80	25	625
15	Respondent 15	90	95	5	25
16	Respondent 16	65	85	20	400
17	Respondent 17	50	65	15	225
18	Respondent 18	65	90	25	625
19	Respondent 19	45	65	20	400
20	Respondent 20	65	80	15	225
21	Respondent 21	75	95	20	400
22	Respondent 22	65	80	15	225
23	Respondent 23	85	90	5	25
24	Respondent 24	60	60	0	0
25	Respondent 25	40	40	0	0
26	Respondent 26	65	80	15	225
27	Respondent 27	95	100	5	25
28	Respondent 28	60	85	25	625
29	Respondent 29	65	80	15	225
30	Respondent 30	40	40	0	0
Total		1790	2335	545	12675
Total		59.67	77.83	18.17	422.50

Based on the data in the table 4.5, the writer found:

$$\Sigma D = 545$$

$$\Sigma D^2 = 12.675$$

First thing to do in the analysis is to find the standard deviation. “This is the most important measure of dispersal. It is often symbolized “SD”. It reflects the amount of spread that the scores exhibit around some central tendency measure, usually the mean” (Burns, 1994). The formula of obtaining the standard deviation is:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2 - \left(\frac{\Sigma x}{n}\right)^2}{n-1}}$$

Remark:

S = the standard deviation of the difference in scoring of the pretest-posttest

X = the difference in scoring of the pretest-posttest

X² = the mean of the difference in scoring of the pretest-posttest

n = the total number of the student.

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2 - \left(\frac{\Sigma x}{n}\right)^2}{n-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{12.675 - \left(\frac{545}{30}\right)^2}{30-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{12.675 - 324}{29}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{12.351}{29}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{426}$$

$$S = 20.63$$

The second thing to is to find the mean score of the pretest and posttest. “The mean is simply the arithmetic average of all the scores. It is calculated by summing all the scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2000). The formula for obtaining the mean is:

$$X = \frac{\sum x^2}{n}$$

Remark:

X = the mean of the difference in scoring of the pretest-posttest

X = the difference in scoring of the pretest-posttest.

n = the total number of students.

Based on the formula above, then so sum the mean is as follow:

$$X = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

$$x = \frac{545}{30}$$

$$x = 18$$

The last one is determining the result of t_{obs} (t_o):

$$t = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}$$

Remarks:

D = the mean difference between the two sets of scores.

Σ = summation (sum up)

D = the difference between the scores of one person (or matched pair)

D² = the squared difference between the scores of one person (or matched pair)

ΣD^2 = square each difference and sum the squares.

$(\Sigma D)^2$ = sum the difference and square the sum.

N = the number of differences.

Based on the formula above, then to sum the t-test is:

$$t = \frac{18}{\sqrt{\frac{12.675 - \left(\frac{545}{30}\right)^2}{30(30-1)}}$$

$$t = \frac{18}{\sqrt{\frac{12.675 - 324}{870}}}$$

$$t = \frac{18}{\sqrt{\frac{12.351}{870}}}$$

$$t = \frac{18}{\sqrt{14}}$$

$$t = \frac{18}{3.74}$$

$$t = 4.812$$

The *t-test* result is 4.812. It indicates that there is a difference. To complete the result of the research, the writer found out the degree of freedom (df) with the following formula:

$$df = N - 1$$

$$df = 30 - 1$$

$$df = 29$$

$df = 29$ (see table of 't' value at the degree of significance of 5% and 1%).

At the degree of significance 0,05 = 2,045

At the degree of significance 0,01 = 2,756

The result is $2,045 < 4.812 > 2,756$

The result of analyzing the data by using the above formula shows that the coefficient is 4.812. It means that there is a significance increase after the Small Group Work Technique applied in teaching reading. The t_{obs} is higher the t_{table} ($2,045 < 4.812 > 2,756$).

Discussion

The finding of the research shows that small group work technique makes the classroom's atmosphere become enjoyable, interesting, and more relaxing. The students in small group work technique can work together, share their experiences, ideas, opinion and help each other to do the task and understanding the text with their friend. This condition makes students interested and enjoy following the lesson. Harmer (1991:245) states that working in a group is potentially more relaxing than working in pairs, for the latter put greater demand on the students' ability to cooperative closely with other person.

The above statement shows that small group work technique makes the classroom atmosphere become comfortable, interesting, and more relaxing. It gives a chance to share and exchange information for students in the class. The finding of research shows that small group work technique gives a chance to share and exchange information for every student in the class. When they discuss, every member of group must give opinion for their group. They could share with each other what they think in comprehending text. Alexander (1957: 56) states that group discussion provide meaningful learning. In group situation where questions and comments are encouraged, learners have the opportunity to ask about what they do not understand, to get other's ideas, to attack meaning to what might otherwise be meaningless. Harmer (1991: 245) adds that when all the students in a group are working together to produce an advertisement, for example, they will be communicating with each other and more importantly co-operating among themselves.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, small group work technique can be used to improve the reading comprehension of the seventh grade students of SMP Rosa Jaya. The result of the research

shows that the use of small group work technique improves students' reading comprehension skills. The proof of students' reading comprehension improvement can be found from the computation of the test scores. It shows a significant increase. In addition, small group work technique can be used to improve the class situation of the seventh grade students of SMP Rosa Jaya. The class situation changes after the implementation of small group work technique, the students become more active than the previous condition. The students become actively involved in the teaching and learning process. The class atmosphere becomes more alive when the teaching and learning process occur. By discussing the text and doing the task in group, the students are interested engaging themselves in improving reading comprehension. They understand more main idea, detail information, reference, vocabulary, and social function/generic structure of text by participating in all activities conducted by the researcher. The students' interest and curiosity support them in learning reading comprehension.

When students have chance to be active in the teaching and learning process of reading, they have better reading comprehension. Furthermore, they can improve their confidence and motivation in joining the reading class. From those reasons, it is found that small group work technique can improve the students' participation in learning reading and the students' reading comprehension.

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