

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF EXPOSITORY
TEXTS THROUGH LEARNING TOGETHER STRATEGY**

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan bagaimana peningkatan pemahaman bacaan teks eksposisi jenis 'problem-solution' pada mahasiswa semester tiga jurusan bahasa Inggris STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidimpuan. Disamping itu, penelitian ini juga dimaksudkan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi peningkatan tersebut. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kelas yang melibatkan 34 orang mahasiswa. Penelitian tindakan kelas ini dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing terdiri dari empat kali pertemuan. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi menggunakan lembar observasi dan catatan lapangan. Untuk mendukung data kualitatif sebagai bukti peningkatan pemahaman bacaan mahasiswa, data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui hasil ujian mahasiswa yang diberikan diakhir setiap siklus. Untuk membantu pengumpulan data, peneliti meminta kesediaan salah seorang dosen lain untuk menjadi kolaborator. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa 'LTS' dapat meningkatkan pemahaman bacaan mahasiswa yang disebabkan oleh faktor materi, aktivitas mahasiswa, pengelolaan kelas, dan pendekatan yang digunakan dosen dalam mengajar.

Kata Kunci: reading comprehension, expository text, learning together strategy

A. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the skills that have to be mastered by the students in English department. The skill of reading makes students easy to understand an English text. The students get some advantages from reading. They read the text and try to understand more word by word. Through reading, the students improve their knowledge and information from various sources. They can read English books to support their learning process or they can read some literary works to gain new vocabularies in English. Besides, reading helps students to master other skills in learning process such as speaking and writing because students' knowledge has some contributions to develop

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their ideas. By considering the importance of reading, it can be assumed as one of the skills that can determine the success of students in learning.

However, the students face some problems in their reading subject. They cannot comprehend English text well even though they have learned English for many years. The students cannot activate their background knowledge to the topic discussed to find the new ones from the text. Moreover, their vocabularies are limited and they tend to find out the meaning of word by word from dictionary and translate them into Bahasa Indonesia. This situation makes students' motivation is still low to read, makes them bored to read, and creates passive atmosphere in teaching learning process. In addition, the students' ability in reading English is different. There are some students who had higher ability levels and some others were low. The students who had higher ability surpass the other students. When the clever students have comprehended the reading materials, they should wait for other students and follow the instruction from the lecturer. These problems impact the condition of teaching and learning process in reading.

The students' problems above are caused by both the students themselves and the lecturer. Hence, the lecturer cannot control the class because there are so many students in a class. The materials that are presented by the lecturer make students getting bored and the strategy used cannot improve the students' interest in reading. The lecturer and students cannot build the situation of the class to be enjoyed in learning process.

Therefore, their scores in Reading I were low and not satisfactory. It was only 10% of the students got score 86-100, 25% of the students got score 76-85, and the other students for about 65% got the lower score. The highest score of students was 92 and the lowest score of students 56. The minimum standard criteria of achievement or passing grade were 66. In sum, the students' problems impacted the result of their scores and could achieve the objectives of the subject.

In this research, the writer uses expository problem solution texts as students' materials in reading. Expository problem solution text is the text which contains problems and solutions. As Oka explains "expository text is the straight forward

explanation of something e.g. a process, an object, an idea, or an event".² It means that the expository text expose information and analyzes something by presenting specific information to support the explanation given or topic given. Based on the skills of reading comprehension and problem solution texts from several experts, it can be concluded that there are several indicators that must be understood by the students after they finished their reading class. In short, the indicators are identifying topic, identifying main ideas, identifying reference, identifying details that consist of problems and solutions, and conclusion, and identifying transition. The students are divided into groups to support their cooperation in comprehending the texts. Because of that, the writer chooses Learning Together strategy to solve these students' problems.

There were some theories from many experts that was supported this research. Slavin explains, "learning together which developed by David and Roger Johnson and their colleagues at the University of Minnesota use heterogeneous learning groups and emphasizes positive interdependence and individual accountability".³ However, they also make team building and group self - assessment, and recommend team grades rather than certificates or other recognition.

In addition, Arends and Kilcher explain, "learning together as a strategy that provides principles for organizing cooperative learning lessons, promote cooperative as contrasted to individualistic or competitive goals, structure, and reward".⁴ Learning together strategy is a learning strategy that provides principles in organizing students' cooperative.

Kagan brings the new learning together as one of the strategy supported by structural concept. It is called Kagan structure model that places great emphasis on structures. Kagan states "there are four basic principles or concept of learning together are identified, symbolized by the acronym PIES; Positive interdependence, Individual accountability, Equal participation, and Simultaneously interaction".⁵

² Oka, Djoehana. *Advanced Reading*. (Jakarta: Pusat Penerbitan Ilmu Terbuka, 2004). p.42.

³ Slavin, Robert. *Cooperative Learning Theory, Research, and Practice*. (USA: A Simon & Schuster Company, 1995). p.129.

⁴ Arends, Richard and A. Kilcher. *Teaching for Student Learning*. (New York: Routledge, 2010). p.312.

⁵ Kagan, S. *Kagan Structures and Learning Together. What is the Difference?*. (San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing, 2001). p.4

Positive interdependence means the success of one student is linked to the success of others, Individual accountability means a procedure to check that each participant individually contributes a fair share to a group effort, Equal participation means all students receive the same chances and incentives to be involved in class, and Simultaneous interaction means all students are actively engaged at the same time during the class.

In applying the learning together strategy, the teacher and students should follow some phases on the way to lead students work cooperatively. Arends and Kilcher explain, "there are six phases in cooperative learning, they are clarifying goals, presenting material, organizing teams, teamworking, group presentation, and recognizing team".⁶ Teacher has a great role in every phase.

The first phase is the teacher clarifies goals and motivates students. The teacher explained the students the reasons to study and to use learning together strategy. And then, he/she give some motivation by mentioning the advantages of using the strategy.

The second phase is the teacher presents information and materials. After giving introduction about the strategy, the teacher presents the materials that require students to use learning together strategy.

The third phase is the teacher organizes students into learning teams. As learning together strategy, the teacher should divide students into groups, four or five members in one group. They work together to understand and comprehend the materials given.

The fourth phase is assist with team work and study. The students study with their group member. The fifth phase is a presentation or a test. After they study the materials, they have to perform in front of others group and teacher. After that, the teacher gives them a test to know their limited ability whether they comprehend the materials or not.

The last phase is recognizing achievement. The teacher gives reward for the best group. The teacher's role in this strategy is a facilitator, a coach, and a guide. The teacher prepares materials for students to use, helps them when they need assistance, and ensures both individual and group accountability.

The students' performance in learning together assesses both academic and cooperation learning. The teacher assesses the students' academic result through

⁶ Arends, Richard and A. Kilcher, op. cit., p. 307.

comprehension questions from the text and the students' cooperation through their participated and responded. Everyone should give contribution to their discussion. Actually, this assessment functions to measure the improvement of students about the material given. They assess the features and purposes of the text. They know whether they can reach the achievement or not. It becomes motivation for them to increase their comprehension. Besides that, the lecturer can see the students' progress in order to make plans in the future instruction.

Johnson and Johnson in Arends and Kilcher state, "learning activities can be structured in three ways; competitive, individualistic, and cooperative".⁷ For the first way, the students compete with one another by showing their capability in their learning. The second way, the students have to do their task and assignment individually without asking other friends. And the last way, all the students work together in their discussion task, they cooperate and help each other. Success depends on the success of all group members. Actually, the learning activities can run well if all components of the classroom, teacher and students, have good interaction and cooperation.

Based on the problems above, the questions for this research are formulated as follow:

1) To what extent can learning together strategy improve students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts at the third-A semester of the English Department of STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidimpuan?

2) What are the factors that influence the changes of students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts through learning together strategy at the third-A semester of the English Department of STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Tapanuli Selatan?

B. METHOD

This research is classified into classroom action research. Gay and Airasian explain "classroom action research is a process in which individual or more than one teacher collect evidence and make decision about their own knowledge, performance,

⁷ Ibid., p. 313

beliefs and effect in order to understand and improve them".⁸ It means that action research expanded our teaching skill as a teacher, our students and our classroom. Classroom action research is used as problem solving for problem classroom. It brings some changes and improvements for class.

The participants of this research were 34 students from semester 3A of 2012/2013 academic year at English Department STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidempuan. The instruments that were used to collect the data were qualitative and quantitative data. The instruments to collect quantitative data were task and test while the instrument to collect qualitative data were observation (observation sheet and field notes) and interview.

Qualitative data were analyzed based on the observation and interview that purposed to get all factors that influence students' reading comprehension of problem solution texts through learning together strategy. Besides that, quantitative data were analyzed by giving test for students at the end of cycle that purposed to find out what extend learning together strategy improve students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings during cycle 1 into cycle 2, which consisted of eight meetings, the formulation of this research can be answered.

1. The extent to which learning together strategy improves the students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts.

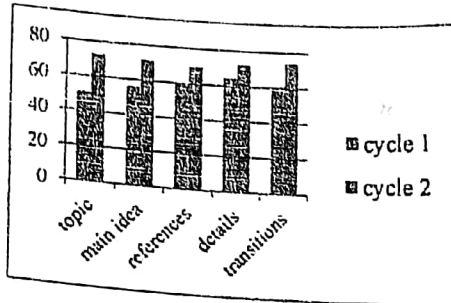
The research was conducted within two cycles. Each cycle had four stages: plan, action, observation, and reflection. The cycle consisted of four meetings. The materials about expository problem solution texts were taught from the first meeting to the third meeting by giving task at the end of each meeting. In the fourth meeting, the students were given test to measure their achievement in reading comprehension texts.

To explain the extent of the students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts through learning together strategy, the researcher presented through diagrams. The first diagram shows the mean scores of students' reading

⁸ Gay, R.L. and Airasian. 2000. *Educational Research*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 18

comprehension of expository problem solution texts in all indicators in each meeting from cycle one until cycle two.

Diagram 1



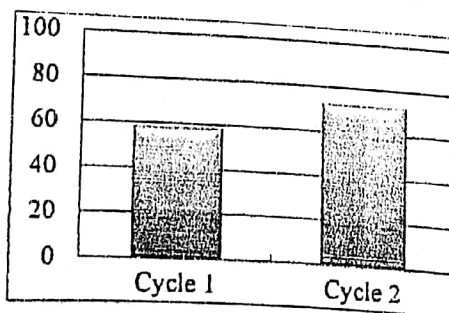
The diagram shows that the average of all indicators from cycle one until cycle two improved significantly. In the first cycle, topic got 51% for the average score in all meetings. It improved 22% to become 73% in cycle two. The second indicator was main idea from 57% in the first cycle improved 15% in the second cycle becoming 72%.

The third indicator was reference got average scores in all meetings for about 59% in the first cycle and it improved 11% to become 70% in the second cycle. For the fourth indicator, the average score of details in the first cycle was for about 65% and it improved in the second cycle for about 8% to become 73% of mean score.

The last indicator was transitions improved from the first cycle into second cycle. The average score in the first cycle was for about 59% and it increased 15% to become 74. It can be seen that the all indicators increased significantly in all meetings from cycle one until cycle two.

The second diagram shows the mean scores of each meeting from cycle one until cycle two. The diagrams of the mean scores are intended to see the improvement from cycle one until cycle two. The diagram can be seen as follow:

Diagram 2



The diagram shows that in the first cycle, the average score of students from meeting one until meeting four was 58%. It improved 14% in the second cycle to become 72%. It can be seen that the improvement of students' comprehension in each meeting improved from cycle one until cycle two.

The third diagram shows the average scores of students' test in cycle one until cycle two. It was in order to the completely of students' scores in test one and test two whether the students could pass the minimum achievement criteria of standard score or not. The diagram below displays the students' improvement:

Diagram 3

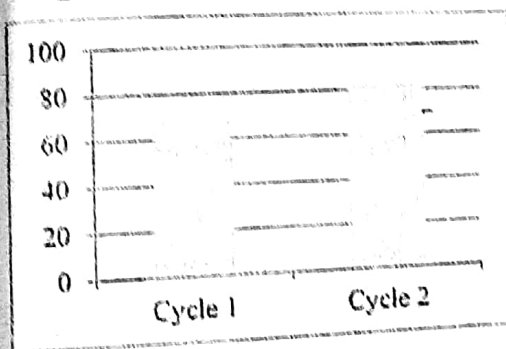


Diagram 3 shows the average scores of students' result in test one of cycle 1 and test two in cycle 2. According to the diagram above, generally the students' comprehensions of expository problem solution texts improved between test one into test two. The students' average score in test 1 for cycle 1 was about 68. It improved 14 score in test 2 for cycle 2 to become 82. All students passed the minimum score of passing grade.

2. The Factors that Influence the Students' Reading Comprehension of Expository Problem Solution Texts through Learning Together.

The factors that influence the students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts through learning together strategy are explained from qualitative data that were gotten from observations, (observation sheet, observation checklist, field notes) and interview. It can be summarized from Yasin, the factors includes the material, the media, classroom activities, classroom management, lecturers' approach,

and lecturers' strategy.⁹ The following are the discussion of findings that indicate the factors that improve students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts.

The first factor was the material. The materials that were given to the students had been selected based on the students' background knowledge and was familiar with them. It can be seen in the result of the interview. The students felt that materials were not too difficult and were easy to understand. The students said that the materials were easy for them and could be understood.

The second factor was media. Based on the opinion of the students in interview, they said that the media used by the lecturer helped them in comprehending the materials. The media could motivate them to read seriously. Actually, the lecturer used some media such as laptop, textbook, in focus, white board and picture within text. All the media used to help lecturer in explaining the materials and helping students to get easy the materials explained.

The third factor was classroom activities. The various classroom activities helped students to think more deeply about the materials content, brought additional energy to the classroom, and helped lecturer to identify students' motivation in learning. Based on the observation sheet, field notes, and interview result, the students enjoyed with the classroom activities. The situation of the classroom supported them in comprehending the materials.

The fourth factor was classroom management. The success of teaching learning process depends on how the lecturer manages the classroom well. The students said that the management of their classroom was good and they liked that. The classroom management that was provided by the lecturer could facilitate the students to comprehend the text.

The fifth factor was lecturers' approach. The quality of lecturer student relationships is affected by the lecturers' approach in the classroom. The students said that the lecturers' approach was good because the lecturer knew about their habitual action. The lecturer approach could motivate them to be confidence and also built their

⁹ Yasin, Anas. *Penelitian Tindakan Kelas: Tuntunan Praktis*. (Padang: Sukabina Press, 2010). p. 82

character in the classroom. The lecturer gave motivation and shared the students' feelings at the end of class. The students felt that the lecturer cared with them.

The last factor was lecturers' strategy. The lecturers' strategy used learning together to direct students worked with their friends. The members of group were divided by the lecturer based on the rules of learning together strategy. The students shared their ideas with their friends. They could change knowledge each other. The student with high ability taught the students with low ability. To conclude, the students preferred learning together with friends then learning alone.

The results showed that the use of learning together strategy facilitated the students at third-A semester in STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidempuan to comprehend the reading of expository problem solution texts well. The students interested when the lecturer introduced the learning together strategy. They analyzed the contents of texts through learning together with friends. They discussed the text to identify topic, main idea, the words refer to, problems and solutions, and signal words/phrases. The students could share their thought with others. They could ask the text to the clever student because the lecturer divided them based on the rules of learning together as Slavin stated that they use heterogeneous learning groups. It means that the members of group were different in reading ability.¹⁰ They were directed to work cooperatively to achieve the goals of learning together.

The use of the strategy made students respect each other. They could increase their self confidence among friends. The students tried to build good communications between their groups because without good communication, they could not achieve cooperation. Learning together made students' relationship better than before. It was deal with Kagan expressed that learning together strategy develop communities between students.¹¹ The students could reduce anxiety by cooperation and increase their self esteem.

Learning together helped students in comprehending their materials. The lecturer gave some materials based on the students' background knowledge. Because the materials were the major things for teacher, she gave the topic that related with some problems in social life that certainly students knew about the issues. It was purposed to

¹⁰ Slavin, Robert, op. cit., p. 129.

¹¹ Kagan, S., op. cit., p. 6

increase students interest in reading and they can comprehend the texts. The materials should build the students wanted to read. It was supported by Richard, the material was the key components for teacher in teaching learning process.¹²

To sum up, the findings of this research proved that learning together strategy improved the students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts.

D. CONCLUSION

After conducting the classroom action research for two cycles, the result showed that learning together strategy has been improved students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts at third-A semester in STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidempuan. The average scores of students' test in cycle one have improved in cycle two and the students can achieve the minimum achievement criteria of the scores.

Besides that, the factors influenced the students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts are the materials, media, classroom activities, classroom management, lecturers' approach and lecturers' strategy.

The material and the texts that are presented by the lecturer are familiar with the students; they have background knowledge about the texts, so it can make them easier in discussing the material. The media that are used by the lecturer can facilitate teaching learning process and motivate students to read seriously.

The classroom activities make students enjoy in the classroom and support them in comprehending the materials. The classroom management helps the students to work together with their friends in the classroom. The lecturers' approach can motivate students to be confidence and also build their characters in the class. Learning together strategy makes students improve in their reading comprehension.

E. SUGGESTION

Based on the result of this research, it can be proposed some suggestions related to the use of learning together strategy to improve students' reading comprehension of expository problem solution texts. First, the used of learning together strategy to comprehend the expository problem solution texts could be as a good alternative strategy in teaching learning English.

¹² Richard, Jack C. *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). p. 251.

Second, the students with low achievement and were shy in express their thought in learning together needed to be the lecturers' focus since the students with high achievement were dominant in discussion.

Third for the other researchers can use learning together strategy on other skills in English such as writing, listening, or speaking and also other types of expository texts such as description, sequence, caution, or comparison contrast.

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