SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TOWARD STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION: EFFECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not small group discussion was effective in increasing students' reading comprehension. Quantitative method was applied in this research by using quasi experimental design with two independent samples. The population taken in this research was the eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Takengon which was 221 students in total, while the samples were class VIII-2 and VIII-3 which were opted by applying random sampling. To collect the data, test was carried out to see the influence of applying SGD in the experimental class. From the data analysis, it can be seen that the mean score for experimental class before and after treatment were 46 and 66,5, while the mean score for control class were 45 and 53. The result of t-test showed that t-score (5,25) is higher than t-table (1,9) indicating that alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted and null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. It signifies that small group discussion was effective in increasing students' reading comprehension. It is suggested that the teachers apply this technique in teaching and learning.

Keyword: *small group discussion*, *reading comprehension, reading skill*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of four skills in English which should be mastered by the EFL learners. It is the significant skill to conquer since it provides a lot of information, knowledge, etc. By reading, students are able to grab the information and knowledge from various sources such as newspaper, books, internet, and others. Reading skill involves a complicated activity which are affected by many aspects either in or out the person (internal and external) (Sangia, 2014). It is not an innate capability, it can be learned from the environment. This skill can be built by making ourselves get used to being involved in reading activities.

Several meanings of reading were defined by the experts. It is the activity that make learners react to the text and link their comprehension with their background knowledge to construct the meaning of the text being read (Spratt, Pulverness, and William: 2005:21) in (Marlina &

Rokhayati, 2019). This definition suggests that to build the meaning or to comprehend a text, the readers are required to be active, they need to use their brain/to think logically to create the correct meaning. Furthermore, Woolley (2011:15) defined reading comprehension the process of making meaning from text in (Silalahi, 2017). It suggest that the readers/learners need to build the meaning of the text they read (written form). This meaning construction involves active participation of the readers. The existence of prior knowledge about the assigned text (certain topic) can help the readers to construct the meaning. Another expert stated that reading comprehension is the activity of meaning construction in reading which involves some processes: word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency Klingner (2007:2) in (Marlina & Rokhayati, 2019).

That is the goal of reading, to comprehend what is delivered by the writer. In other words,

reading can lead the students to be successful, to be a knowledgeable person. As Marriane (2001:187) in (Siswanti et al., 2014) stated that reading is regarded as the primary tool in gaining new information. Therefore, leaners needs sufficient reading skill in order to understand the text.

However, students of SMPN 2 Takengon faced some difficulties in comprehending the text in English lesson. They were found to be unenthusiastic in teaching learning process since the teacher merely ask them to read the text without confirming whether the students comprehend what is delivered in the passages or not. It was then strongly proved when they were hard to answer some questions asking about the certain passages assigned by the teacher. It can be concluded that the students need improvement in reading skill.

One of ways to make students actively involved in teaching and learning is by grouping them into smaller group, which is called small group discussion. This technique allows students to be able to know their peers' thought and responses to the text (Serravallo, 2010:5) in (Silalahi, 2017). The way of working in small group discussion consisting of 3-6 students is that they work together in doing the activity assigned by the teacher and there is one spokesman who will report the result of their discussion to the teacher. This nuance can be uplifting which encourages the students' participation in their group since the reading lesson itself seems enjoyable (Silalahi, 2017). In addition, small group discussion also can make students focus and serious thus creates comfortable circumstance in learning (Rahmat, 2017), feel harmonious, create social climate, and be active in learning (Al Jawad, Abosnan, 2020), increase their participation in learning and be more intimate with their peers (Lestari, 2019).

Many of researches had been conducted pertaining to small group discussion, yet a little bit had been studied in reading area to the best knowledge of authors, most of the research of SGD were investigated in speaking skill. Therefore, this study was done to see the effect of using this technique in reading comprehension. It was expected that this technique can give positive contribution in improving students' reading skill.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study applied quantitative approach by using quasi-experimental design with two independent samples. The hypotheses was tested by using t-test. The hypothesis proposed in this study were:

Ha: The use of small group discussion is effective in increasing students' reading comprehension

Ho: The use of small group discussion is not effective in increasing students' reading comprehension

Population and Sample

The population of this study was the second year students (eight grade) of SMPN 2 Takengon totalling 221 students who were grouped into 7 classes. From those class, VIII-2 (experimental) and VIII-3 (control) were selected as the samples by applying random sampling. Both of classes consist of 20 students with the details as follow: 11 males, 9 females in experimental class and 8 males, 12 females in control class.

Teaching and Treatment

The second author became the teacher in this research that come to class for 7 meetings for each. The first and the last meeting were used to distribute the pre and post test to see the ability of the students in both class before and after the treatment. While the other five meetings in between were used to apply treatment: teaching by applying small group discussion in experimental class and not applying the technique in control class.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique used in this study was test. Here, a set of questions were developed by the author based on the text excerpted from the textbook. The questions in pre-test were also applied to the post-test. Those questions had been tested its validity and reliability and they were valid and reliable thus qualified to be used in this research.

While the assessment of reading itself, this study refers to Nuttal (1982:30) who stated five aspects in assessing reading comprehension, i.e. main idea, specific information, vocabulary, inference, and reference. Main idea states the primary topic to be discussed in a text, all sentences discuss about one thing/topic. Next, specific information indicates the details in a text/passage which is developed to explain or prove the main idea. Then, vocabulary is meant to test the students' understanding about the certain words/phrase which are found in the text. While inference is to predict/assume about something unstated in the text yet could be guesses based the facts or information found in the text. Last, reference is used to avoid using the same words/phrase in multiple times, it is used either before or after the words/phrases to refer. So, the questions developed in the test cover these five elements.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data, the student answer sheets were examined and the result was shown in the table below

Table 1.1 The result of Pre Test And Post Test in Experimental Class

No	Student Name	Pre-test	Post test	Deviation	Square Deviation
1	A	50	70	20	400
2	B	40	70	30	900
3	C	50	70	20	400
4	D	40	70	30	900
5	E	50	70	20	400
6	F	60	70	10	100
7	G	50	70	20	400
8	H	50	80	30	900
9	I	50	70	20	400
10	J	40	70	30	900
11	K	40	70	30	900
12	L	50	60	10	100
13	M	50	60	10	100
14	N	50	70	20	400
15	O	60	70	10	100
16	P	40	60	20	400
17	Q	70	70	0	0
18	R	20	60	40	1600
19	S	40	40	0	0
20	T	20	60	40	1600
	Total	920	1330	410	10,900
	Average	46	66,5		
	Min	20	40		
	Max	70	80		

From the table above, it can be seen the different score of pre-test and post-test in experimental class, i.e. the total score of pre-test is 920 and post-test is 1330, then the mean score of pre-test and post-test are 46 and 66,5, successively .

The score of pre-test and post-test of control class was served in the following table:

Table 1.2 The Result of Pre Test And Post Test in Control Class

No	Students Name	Pre-test (x)	Post test (x^2)	Deviation	Square deviation (D^2)
1	A1	60	70	10	100
2	B2	40	40	0	0
3	C3	60	70	10	100
4	D4	50	40	10	100
5	E5	50	60	10	100
6	F6	60	60	0	0
7	G7	50	60	10	100
8	H8	50	50	0	0
9	I9	40	50	10	100
10	J10	40	40	0	0
11	K11	40	50	10	100
12	L12	50	50	0	0
13	M13	40	50	10	100
14	N14	30	50	20	400
15	O15	50	60	10	100
16	P16	40	40	0	0
17	Q17	20	50	30	900
18	R18	10	40	30	900
19	S19	50	50	0	0
20	T20	70	80	10	100
	Total	900	1060	180	3200
	Average	45	53		
	Min	10	40		
	Max	70	80		

Based on the information in the table above, the result of pre-test is 900 and post-test is 1060 while the mean score of pre-test and post-test is 45 and 53, consecutively.

After seeing both tables (score of experimental class and control class), it is obtained that mean score of pre-test and post-test from the experimental class was 46 and 66,5. While the mean score for control class was 45 and 53. Both of classes increased the score but different in number. Experimental class was able to increase their score as much as 22,5, while the control class increased their performance in reading only 8 points. It can be assumed that the students in experimental class performed better on reading comprehension after treated with small group discussion than those in control class.

The information from the two tables above was then used to test hypothesis, i.e. by calculating t-score using t-test.

Testing Hypothesis

Testing hypothesis should be done in order to know whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The basic theory that the researcher used was the alternative hypothesis is accepted if

tscore > ttable.

With criteria of assessment:

If tscore $\geq$ table, then Ha is accepted with α = 0.05 If tscore $\leq$ ttable, then H0 is accepted with α = 0.05

After calculating using t-test, it is obtained that t-score is 5,25.

To find the degree of freedom (df) as follows:

$$Df = n_1 + n_2 - 2$$

$$= 20 + 20 - 2$$

$$= 38$$

$$T_{table} = (ax)(n1 + n2 - 2)$$

$$= (0,05)(38) = 1,9$$

Where :

Df   = Degree of freedom
Nx   = The sample of experimental classNy
          = The sample of control class
From the result above, we can know:Tscore
          = 5,25
Ttable = 1,9

From the statistical analysis above, it can be seen that tscore is higher that ttable (5,25 > 1,9). In this case, t-score was higher than t-table indicating that Ha was accepted and Ho was rejected. As such, the use of small group discussion is effective in increasing students' reading comprehension at VIII grade in SMPN 2 Takengon.

As explained previously that reading is an active action that involves several process in the interaction between the reader and the text. The readers use their prior knowledge and link it to the message delivered in the text. It means that in reading activity, the learners are not passive instead they have to use their brain to think about the idea in the text in order to construct the correct meaning. Thus, small group discussion technique which facilitate the learners to be active in teaching and learning supports in a great way to the students' success in reading

activity. It can be seen after implementing this strategy to the students, it shows some improvement in students' performance in reading activity: most of them paid much attention to the teacher and they were able to accomplish their task well. Therefore, the students of experimental class performed better in reading comprehension than those of control class.

This finding was supported with the study finding of Silalahi that there is a significant effect in using small group discussion on students' reading comprehension (Silalahi, 2017). Siswanti's research result also came to a conclusion that the use of small group discussion could improve students' reading comprehension (Siswanti et al., 2014). Our finding was also in line with the finding of other researchers' work. Fauzi concluded that the use of small group discussion can improve students speaking ability, specifically it helps reduce students' anxiety to speak up in front of the class, enhance the students' motivation in joining the class, improve the students' motivation by discussing the task in group, make them feel comfortable to do the task with their group instead of working individually, and make them feel more relax to express their ideas (Fauzi, 2017). Other studies also discovered that the use of small group discussion in speaking is effective (Bohari, 2019) and better improved students' speaking skill (Antoni, 2014).

Besides speaking and reading, the technique of small group discussion had also been conducted in the area of writing and the finding was that small group discussion benefited in many ways: easy to implement, can be understood well, effective to teach types of text, increase participation, and make student be more intimate with their peers (Lestari, 2019). However, there was a slightly different result of a research study discovering that the intervention (small group discussion) did not statistically increase English communication oral self-efficacy (Tan et al., 2020).

Based on the findings above, it can be said that small group discussion technique is an appropriate technique to use and benefits almost in all areas and therefore, it is recommended that

the teachers apply this technique in English teaching learning activity.

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