

GROUP WORK, STUDENTS' READING ABILITY, AND MOTIVATION

By

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ABSTRACT

Teachers must be able to cooperate with their students in the class to make the teaching and learning activities enjoyable. A good teacher has to use appropriate strategies to make his or her students fluent readers. Teachers also have to make students feel comfortable so that they can achieve the objective of the teaching and learning activities. Responding to the problems and considering the factors causing them, the researcher taught that the best way to improve the students' reading ability is through group work. Group work is a group of students who work together. Students in group can share, compare, and contrast ideas and thoughts. Group work enables students to study more because they learn together in an enjoyable way. Students will be motivated to study because working in group makes them help each other, especially when facing difficulties in reading. Students can get the meaning of some vocabularies and the content of the text easily. This research showed that group work can improve students' reading ability and motivation.

Key words: Group work, reading ability, and motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important skills in learning language. The main purpose of reading is to get information and to comprehend a text. Reading with comprehension means understanding what has been read. The process of understanding reading depends on the reader's comprehension skills and experiences. By learning reading, it is expected that, at least,

the students are able to read and comprehend a text. By comprehending a text, students will be able to answer questions based on the text.

The students find difficulties to learn and understand English because English is different from Indonesian. The differences between them are the differences in spelling and the structure of the sentences. They especially find difficulties in reading. They read a text very slowly, word by word. They

find difficult in understanding a text. They cannot figure out the meaning of words in the text. They find difficulties also in understanding the main idea, the topic, the specific information, and references of the text. Identifying specific information on the text is also the matter which students feel difficult to learn.

Another cause that makes the students have difficulties in reading is the English teacher has not found an effective way to teach English, especially reading. Teachers do not know how to make their students interested in learning reading. They often use a boring text to teach reading, and give many tasks to do without using appropriate strategies. This paper seeks to explore group work as a method to improve the students' reading ability and motivation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents some theories about reading, motivation, and group work.

READING

Reading is one of language skills which is important to people's life. Reading is an activity or communication between people and text. In their life, people need to read, from reading the easiest, wildest, and the more complicated thing. People can read the easy thing from announcement, wild thing from magazine, and complicated thing from books about knowledge, for example.

Reading is an activity or process by means of the eyes to make an effort to comprehend the written language or text. The activities are pronouncing the words and comprehending the text. Pronouncing the

words appropriately in reading comprehension is important. Pronouncing the words inappropriately will result in a different meaning of words.

Reading is related to vocabulary. In the text where vocabulary is not familiar, the teacher can introduce key vocabulary. In www.teachingenglish.org.uk (1999), a teacher can do some activities to introduce vocabularies, such as finding synonyms, antonyms, derivatives, or associated words.

It is clear that reading is a complex process. Reading involves a process of sensory reception—eye movements—and a brain process. Reading is figuring out meaning of the words, getting general understanding or topic of the text, main idea, and specific information. Reading is also an activity in understanding words, meaning, references, synonyms and antonyms.

In reading English text, generally students' ability is very low. Basically, the students have some problems as follows: (1) the students cannot read an English text well. When they are reading, they often make some mistakes in pronouncing the words. They also do not know when they should stop or continue each word in a paragraph so that the listener can catch what they are reading; (2) the students have difficulties in figuring out the meaning of words, including unfamiliar vocabularies; (3) the students have difficulties in understanding the specific information from the text; (4) the students have difficulties in understanding detailed information from the text; (5) the students have difficulties in understanding the topic and the main idea of the text.

MOTIVATION

Each student has the internal conditions which take part in his daily activities. One of the internal conditions is “motivation”. Motivation is the important thing for the students in learning something. The topic of motivation, obviously one of the major concepts of psychology, is a particular significance to the classroom teacher to direct his students toward some goals.

Motivation is one of the factors which play an important role in achieving the goals. In another word, motivation is a reason for doing something. Cherry (2012) in www.psychology.about.com defined motivation as the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. It is important for the students to have a motivation in order to get good achievement. Motivation can make students motivated to learn.

There are three components of motivation according to Cole and Chan (1994: 348-349), they are as follows :

a) Expectancy component

Expectancy component includes students' beliefs about their ability to perform a task.

b) Value component

Value component refers to students' perceptions of the worth of different types of goals for performing a task, for example intrinsic versus extrinsic motivational orientations. Value components concerns with students' preference for particular types of goals; that is students are more likely to direct their energy towards achieving a goal that they consider worthwhile.

c) Emotion component

Emotion component refers to students' affective or emotive reactions to school tasks, such as students' attitude towards school learning and their anxiety about a task. Students are likely to expend the required effort to complete a task if they have positive affect towards participation in the task.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that motivation is one of the factors which play an important role in achieving the goals. It is important for the students to have a motivation in order to get good achievement. Motivation can make students motivated to learn. Motivation is students' beliefs about their ability to perform a task. Motivation refers to students' affective or emotive reactions to school tasks, such as students' attitude towards school learning and their anxiety about a task. Students are likely to expend the required effort to complete a task if they have positive affect towards participation in the task. Motivation is also something which controls the students' behavior from unexpected actions, such as do not do homework or collect homework late, come to the class late, and so many other bad behaviors.

GROUPWORK

Group work is a method of teaching which is able to make the students interested to learn. Group work consists of students who work together in groups to achieve the instructional goal. Davis (2002) in www.gsi.berkeley.edu stated that group work is one of the strategies that promotes participation and interaction among people who work together within a group. Working

with other students in groups can promote a sense of belonging. Working together in groups also gives students the opportunity to learn from and teach each other. Students often learn better from each other than they do from a teacher.

According to Brown (2001: 177):

Group work is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self initiated language. Note that what commonly calls pair work is simply group work in groups of two. It is also important to note that group work usually implies small group work, that is, students in groups perhaps six or fewer. Large groupings defeat one of the major purposes for doing group work; giving students more opportunities to speak.

Brown (1994: 8) in www.tripod.com stated that group work provides a context in which individuals can help each other and enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, organizational, and community problems. The role of group work can be seen as a method which emphasis on sharing thoughts, ideas, problems, and activities. Group size in group work ideally can be four to six people for ten to thirty minutes. Within groups, all the students may work together without specialization, or work can be divided so that each student has specific tasks. Further, Slavin, Madden, and Leavey (1984) in Vernon and Louise (1995: 102) stated that students who are involved in group activities perform higher on standardized tests and also do better on tasks involving higher

level thinking than when they study alone.

In the centre for teaching excellence University of Waterloo in www.cte.uwaterloo.ca.htm group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills. It means that the student who studies alone will be easier to feel tired. There is no friend who gave suggestion or motivation. It is very different if the students discuss in group. The members of group will support and gave motivation each other. The students in group have high motivation in doing the task. The student will be shy if he or she cannot do the task correctly. This condition will support or motivate the students to be success.

Michael (1994: 306) stated that social interaction in group work, when structured effectively, can encourage students to work together to achieve the objective of learning. Group goals help create a team spirit and encourage or motivate students to help each other, which in turn gives them a stake in one another's success. Further, Eggen and Kauchak in Michael (1994: 307) stated that social interaction also allows for the sharing of alternate perspectives, helping students view ideas in different ways. Face-to-face interaction also allows students to co-construct knowledge and building on the ideas of others.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

This research was carried out on Class VIII A students of *SMP Al-Washliyah Sumber Cirebon* in the academic year of 2011/2012.

The class consists of 26 female students and 6 male students. The reason for choosing this class as research subjects is the students have difficulties in learning reading. Their reading ability—both intensive and extensive—are very poor. They could not read fast—only read word by word—, did not know where to stop to make listeners understand what they read, and could not understand the meaning of a text, and even could not interpret the words. They could not find topic of the text, specific information, inferences, and references. They could not find also synonym and antonym of the words. Based on the early observation, it can be concluded that the technique should be changed. So, in this classroom action research, group work is used to solve students' problems in reading and motivation. By using group work, it can increase the students' reading ability and motivation.

PROCEDURES

Action research is used not only to produce a theory but also to solve a problem which is faced by someone. While the meaning of the classroom action research is a research derives from a problem in class faced by teacher which aims to test the assumptions of educational theory in practice or as a means of evaluating and implementing whole school priorities (Hopkins, 1993: 1).

The model of action research is suggested by Elliot. He defines action research as the study of social situation that aims to improve the quality of action within it (1991: 69). Then he divided it into six main steps, namely: identifying initial ideas, reconnaissance, constructing the general plan, implementing general action, monitoring

implementation and effects, and revising the general idea.

1) Identifying initial idea

This activity is done by interviewing the students, doing an observation in the teaching and learning process to find the problem happening in the classroom. In identifying the initial idea, the researcher worked with the collaborator. The collaborator helped the researcher to find out the problems that were faced by the students in class during the process of teaching and learning. The collaborator also gave some opinions and suggestions about the students' condition, achievement, and attendance as a consideration.

In this case, the problems were related to students' reading comprehension. The students' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge were very poor, their educational background was not sufficient to fulfill their need in learning process. Their English achievement was not satisfactory. Their motivation to learn English is low, so, their reading ability was very poor. They had difficulties in reading a text and understanding the meaning of the text. They also had low motivation to study English.

2) Reconnaissance

This activity can be sub-divided into :

a) Describing the facts of the situation

Describing the facts of the situation helped the researcher and the collaborator to clarify the nature of the problem. The collection of this information can provide a basis for classifying the relevant facts.

b) Explaining the facts of the situation

Explanations suggest possibilities for action. In this step, the researcher and the collaborator moved from a description of the facts to a critical analysis of the content in which they arouse.

3) Constructing the general planning

The general plan should contain :

- a. a revising statement of the general idea;
- b. a statement of the factors the researcher is going to change or modify in order to improve the situation;
- c. a statement of negotiations the researchers will conduct;
- d. a statement of the resources one will need in order to undertake the proposed courses of action, such as materials, rooms, equipment, and so many others (Elliot, 1991: 71).

In constructing the general planning, the collaborator helped the researcher to find the best technique or method in order to overcome the problems that were faced by students in the class during the process of teaching and learning. The collaborator also helped the researcher to make lesson plans, syllabus, test items, and many things that were used in implementing the action.

Based on the early findings, the students' reading ability was very poor and motivation was low, and group work was effective to help the students to overcome problems in reading and motivation.

4) Implementing the action

In implementing the action, the researcher and the collaborator carried out a lesson plan in the classroom. They

conducted the teaching activities step by step based on the lesson plan. They applied group work in teaching reading to Class VIII A students, *SMP Al-Washliyah Sumber Cirebon*.

5) Monitoring implementation and effects

Monitoring provides evidence of how well the course of action is being implemented. The researcher observed the students' progress during the teaching and learning process. The researcher used field notes, and interviewed the students. In implementing the action plan, the researcher asked the collaborator to observe and give some inputs and suggestions to make up and revise the plan. The collaborator noted the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of lesson plan in teaching reading.

6) Revising the general idea

Having monitored the actions, the researcher made revision. The revision was aimed to improve the condition that had not been successful in the previous cycle. By revising, the researcher hoped that the rest of the problems can be handled by the researcher and collaborator in the following cycle. If the problems can be overcome, the researcher will stop the research.

THE DATA

This paper uses two kinds of data, namely qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data are all information which are obtained from the action or what happens when group work is implemented. The data are taken from observation, interview,

questionnaire, documentation. The quantitative data, in the form of numbers, are taken from the result of students' reading assessment both taken from a pre- and a post-test.

The researcher used the written test to measure the improvement of the student's ability in understanding text. In this research, there were two kinds of test, pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was given before the students studied reading text using group work. There were 20 questions in pre-test and all of them were multiple choice.

The test must have the characteristics of good English test such as validity and reliability. To measure the validity and reliability of the test, the researcher used the following formula :

a. Validity

$$r_o = \frac{x_o - x_t}{s_t} \sqrt{\frac{p_o}{q_o}}$$

r_o = validity coefficient

x_o = sum of the correct answers within the row divided by sum of correct answers within column

x_t = the average of the total correct answers

p = the total of the correct answers divided by the number of respondents

q = the total of the incorrect answer divided by the number of respondents

s_t = standard deviation of the square root of the total of the squared of each deviation score divided by the number of respondents.

n = the number of students (Ngadiso, 2009: 1)

b. Reliability

$$r_{kk} = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum pq}{s_t^2} \right) \quad s_t^2 = \frac{\sum x_t^2}{n}$$

whether :

r_{kk} = reliability coefficient

p = the subjects who answer the test item correctly

q = the subjects who answer the test item incorrectly

$\sum pq$ = the sum of the multiplication of the average of the correct answers and incorrect answer

k = the number of test items

s_t = standard deviation of the square root of the total of the squared of each deviation score divided by the number of respondents.

n = the number of respondents (Ngadiso, 2009: 1)

While, to measure questionnaire, the researcher uses the following formula :

a. Validity

$$r_{it} = \frac{\sum x_i x_t}{\sqrt{(\sum x_i^2)(\sum x_t^2)}}$$

b. Reliability

$$r_{11} = \left[\frac{k}{(k-1)} \right] \left[1 - \frac{\sum s_i^2}{s_t^2} \right]$$

whether :

r_{11} = reliability instrument/coefficient alpha

k = the number of test questions

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = Mean (the score)

$\sum x$ = The total score

N = Number of students

In calculating the students' score in the test, the researcher used the following formula:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Number of correct answers}}{\text{Number of all items}} \times 100$$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Score of Pre-test; Post-test in Cycle 1; and Post-test in Cycle 2

The following table and graph show the improvement of the students' reading ability :

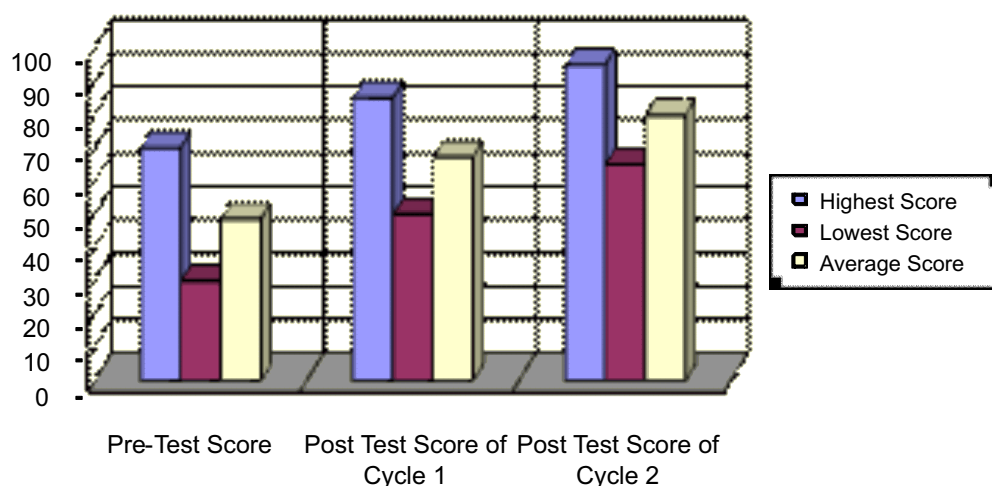
Table 1.

The comparison among students' score in Pre-test, Post-test of Cycle 1 and Post-test of Cycle 2

No.	Explanation	Pre-Test	Post Test of Cycle 1	Post Test of Cycle 2
1.	Highest score	70.00	85.00	95.00
2.	Lowest score	30.00	50.00	65.00
3.	Average score	51.09	67.34	80.62

Graph. 1.

The comparison among students' score in Pre-test, Post test of Cycle 1, and Post-test of Cycle 2



The table above shows that students' reading ability improved. The highest score increased from 70.00 in pre-test to 85.00 in post-test of Cycle 1 and to 95.00 in post-test of Cycle 2. The lowest score increased from 30.00 in pre-test, 50.00 in post-test of Cycle 1 to 65.00 in post-test of Cycle 2. The average score increased from 51.09 in pre-test to 67.34 in post-test of Cycle 1, and to 80.62 in post-test of Cycle 2. It is clear that group work can improve the students' ability in reading text.

The Improvement of the Students' Reading Ability in Pre-test; Post-test of Cycle 1; and Post-Test of Cycle 2

The improvement of the students' reading ability can be shown in following table :

Table 2
The Improvement of the Students' Reading Ability of Each Indicator in Pre-test; Post-test of Cycle 1; and Post-test of Cycle 2

Competency Standard	Skill Measured	Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test of Cycle 1	Post-test of Cycle 2
Identifying information	Specific information and general idea	Answering who, where, and what questions after reading	55 %	70 %	85 %
		Identifying the general idea from the text	50 %	65 %	80 %
Identifying the main idea	Main idea	Identifying the main idea of a paragraph from the text	40 %	40 %	70 %
Vocabulary mastery	Meaning, synonyms, and antonyms of words	Figuring out meaning of the words	40 %	38.5 %	68 %
		Identifying the synonyms and antonyms of certain words found in the text	45 %	65 %	70 %
References	Reference	Finding references from the text	30 %	30 %	65 %

Table above shows that students' reading ability improved. The table shows the percentage of the students' improvement in each indicator in Pre-test, Post test of Cycle 1, and Post test of Cycle 2. The improvement of the students' ability in answering who, where, and what questions was 55% in Pre-test, 70% in Post test of Cycle 1, and 85% in Post test of Cycle 2; identifying the general idea was 50% in Pre-test, 65% in Post test of Cycle 1, and 80 in Post test of Cycle 2; identifying of main idea was 40% in Pre-test, 40% in Post test of Cycle 1, and 65% in Post test of Cycle 2; figuring out meaning of the words was 45% in Pre-test, 65% in Post-test of Cycle 1, and 70% in Post-test of Cycle 2; identifying the synonyms and antonyms was 40% in Pre-test, 38.55% in Post test of Cycle 1, and 68 in Post test of Cycle 2; and finding reference was 30% in Pre-test, 30% in Post-test of Cycle 1, and 65% in Post test of Cycle 2.

Improvement the Students' Motivation

Before doing the research, the researcher found that most of the students in Class VIII A of SMP Al-Washliyah Sumber Cirebon had low motivation in reading. Then the researcher tried to improve the students' motivation by using group work. The result of teaching and learning reading text using group work showed that the students' motivation improved. As in cte.uwaterloo.ca group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills.

The Result of Questionnaire in Pre-Research; Cycle 1; and Cycle 2

The improvement of the students' motivation can be shown in following table and graph :

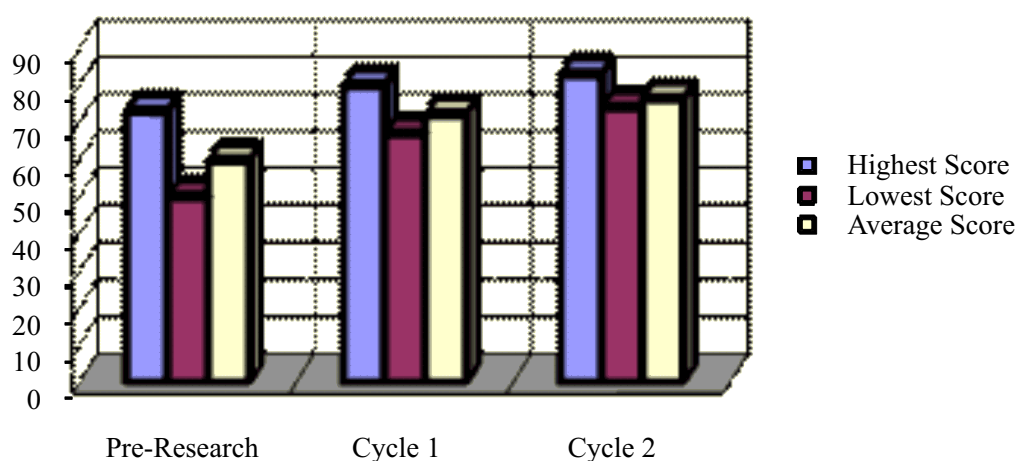
Table 3

The comparison among students' motivation in Pre-research, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2

No.	Kinds of Scores	Pre-Research	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1.	Highest score	73.00	80.00	83.00
2.	Lowest score	50.00	67.00	74.00
3.	Average score	59.78	72.22	76.41

Graph 3

The comparison among students' motivation in pre-research, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2



The table above shows that students' motivation improved. The highest score increased from 79.00 in pre-research to 80.00 in Cycle 1, and to 83.00 in Cycle 2. The lowest score increased from 52.00 in pre-research to 67.00 in Cycle 1 to 74.00 in Cycle 2. The average score increased from 61.88 in pre-research to 72.22 in Cycle 1, and to 76.41 in Cycle 2. It is clear that group work can improve the students' motivation.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion can be drawn from the result of test and questionnaire which showed the improvement of the students' reading ability and motivation. The improvement of students' reading ability can be identified from the improvement of reading achievement and students' ability in answering the questions about : (a) word meaning; (b) synonym and antonym; (c) specific information from the text; (d) general understanding or topic of the text; (e) main idea of paragraph; and (f) reference.

The improvement of students' motivation can be identified from the improvement of students' result in questionnaire of pre-research, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2. Group work motivates students.

Working in group enables students to feel accepted and liked in their class. Group work makes the classroom atmosphere become interesting. Students study enjoyable in group. They feel comfortable and confident and difficulties can be worked out. Students can also study basic leadership and sense of belonging.

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