THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SMALL GROUP INTERACTION IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION (Mixed Method Study at the Seventh Grade of a Junior High School in Cilacap)

Dwi Puji Astuti

(Dwipuji860@gmail.com)
English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia

Iskhak Said

(iskhakunigal@gmail.com)
English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia

Bambang Ruby Sugiarto

(bambangrubys@gmail.com)
English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the investigation of the significant improvement on students' reading comprehension ability utilizing small group interaction and the students' perceptions on the use of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension. This study used mixed-method research in which case study, as a type of qualitative paradigm, was employed to collect the data from participants consisting of 21 students as the sample. Moreover, pretest, posttest and questionnaire were the instruments in collecting quantitative data. The data obtained from those instruments were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Based on the first research question, it is found that the value of t-observed (1.686) is higher that t-table (1.774) indicating that there is the significant difference. It is assumed that small group interaction was helpful and effective for improving students' reading comprehension. Moreover, the result of second research questions reveal that the students found the use of small group interaction effective in improving students' reading comprehension text. Besides, the use of small group interaction made the students enjoy in learning the material of reading. The students were motivated and got new challenges in improving their reading comprehension

Keywords: *reading comprehension*, *small group interaction, students.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is very important for students to get a lot of information and to improve their critical thinking (Jimenez et al, 2010, p.25) because this ability provides the students thoughts encouraging to think. A good reading skill assist students to get lesson for questioning and analyzing the information supplied in variety of forms. In addition, it enables students to comprehend a text easily, so that they can get information or knowledge from the text well.

Reading which can be categorized into three level (literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension) is one of the most beneficial skills in language and furthers a key to research as it is widely recognized today (Connor, et al., 2011; Nation, et al., 2009; Brown, 1994, p.12) . Meanwhile, Connor, et al., (2011, p. 4) asserts that the skill of reading comprehension pertains to the fluent of interpreting and understanding the written words. Based on the psycholinguistic process, reading is commenced by linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer. It is ended by meaning at which the reader construct it (Brown, 1994, p.12).

In the process of foreign language learning, a significant role is played by classroom interaction concept. In reality, the great interest in the interaction role occurring in the context of learning became a factor which is beneficial for the researchers of this field. Thurmond's (2003, p. 56) definition on interaction mentions the learners engagement involving the content of course, other learners, the teachers and the technological support to produce an exchange of information which is reciprocal. Meanwhile, Malamah-Thomas (1987) depicts the word of Latin roots 'agere' implying 'to do' and 'inter' meaning 'among'. It indicates that interaction takes place if there is an active and social part of a human being who can effects to each. Brown (2001, p. 165) links interaction to communication in that interaction is as the core of communication and what it is all about.

The classroom interaction requires at least two objects and two actions, takes place among objects and events; and they are naturally dependence to each other (Dagarin, 2004, p. 8). Accordingly, as a reciprocal events, classroom interaction provides the classroom community the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills (Dagarin 2004, p. 4). In addition, Kharaghan (2013,p. 859) mentions the classroom interaction occurrence which is between teacher and learners, and among the learners. A number of people composed of more than two people and interacting to each other is called Group (Tubbs, 2004, p. 157).

Previously, there are two studies on related topic conducted by Dagarin (2008) and Maja (2015) on classroom communication concerning interaction. It is unfortunate that the previous studies aforementioned does not focus on the effectiveness of small group classroom interaction on the reading comprehension. To fill this gap, the writer tries to conduct the research entitled which is aimed at finding out the significant improvement on students' ability in reading comprehension by using small group

interaction and the students' perceptions on the use of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension.

METHOD

This study used mixed method to investigate the problem involving a procedure to collect, analyze, mix both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study (Creswell, 2008). In addition, it employed inference technique to obtain a great number of deep understanding and corroboration (Johnson & Aragon, 2003).

To obtain the quantitative data, an experimental research was used because it formulated the hypotheses to figure out the use of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension. The hypotheses was that "Is there any significant improvement on students' reading comprehension ability utilizing small group interaction?"

The type of experimental design selected was based on Burns (2004, p. 175) using the following formulation:

Experimental group	R O1 X O2
Control group	R O1 O2

In this design, there are two groups randomly selected, namely, experimental and control group. The experimental group was treated by using small group interaction and control group was treated by using traditional technique in teaching reading. The written the instructional design and a set of test (pre-test and post-test) were prepared administered to both of the classes. The test was same in qualities and quantities to keep the reliability of the research. The test was given with two purposes: 1) to figure out how effective of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension; 2) to determine the differences between experimental and control groups. Pretest results were better when the value of the experimental groups did not differ significant. Treatment effect is (O2-O1) – (O4-03).

Meanwhile, the writer also wanted to find out the students' perception on the use of small group interaction in improving students' reading comprehension. In this matter, the writer gained the data from the questionnaires, then the writer proceeded and analyzed by following Dornyei (2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, this study had the purposes of revealing the significant improvement on students' reading comprehension ability utilizing small group interaction and the students' perceptions on the use of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension. To answer the first research questions, the data were obtained from the result of students' pre-test and post-test as a quantitative data. Another data were collected from questionnaires as qualitative data to answer the second research question. The result of findings is elaborated in the following organization.

The significant improvement on students' reading comprehension ability utilizing small group interaction

To answer the first research question, the result of analyzed data obtained from Pre-test and Post-test is given in the following Table 1.

Table 1 The score of pre-test and post-test

Group	Method	N	Mean
Experimental Group	small group interaction	21	25
Control Group	traditional technique	21	17.5

The table above showed that the mean of experimental group was 25, while the mean of the control group was 17.25. The degree of freedom was 38, and t-test or t-observed is 1.774. Based on the table of critical value for t-test at df = 38 and the level significance for two tailed tests was 0.05, it can be seen that the critical value was 1.686. In this regard, the t-test or t-observed was 1.686 which means that the t-table was less than t-observed. Therefore, the hypotheses was accepted, i.e., there is a significant improvement on students' reading comprehension ability utilizing small group interaction

In addition, the calculation of t- test indicated that there is a significant differences of mean score obtained by the students in experimental group and control group. It implied that the students' reading comprehension skill outperformed those who are in control group. Also, it was found that the use of small group interaction has good impact on teaching reading comprehension. It was proven that small group interaction could

improve the teacher to teach reading comprehension easily. It might become an evidence that the teacher found new strategy to teach reading comprehension in different way. Thus, there is a reciprocal events resulting in the good benefits accepted both by teachers and students.

Furthermore, his finding is relevant with what has been asserted by Connor, et al., (2011) in that the students became more fluent in reading comprehension which means that they understood and interpret the content of written word fluently. In particular, the students as been equipped by three level of reading comprehension, as proposed by Nation, et al., (2009, p. 21), namely, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension.

The students' perceptions on the use of small group interaction to improve students' reading comprehension

Meanwhile, to answer the second research question on the students' perception of the use of small group interaction to improve reading comprehension, the students perceive it positively in general. Based on the analyzed result of questionnaires, the use of small group interaction is effective in improving students' reading comprehension. They were motivated and they got new challenges in improving their reading comprehension. This findings might become an evidence that they were fluent in understanding and interpreting the written words, as proposed by Connor, et al., (2011).

However, there were only a small part of the students who did not agree toward the questionnaire stating that small group interaction effective in teaching reading comprehension. This findings can assumed that students was still hampered to get a lot of information and students' critical thinking still needs improvement. So, it is contradictive with what has been said by Jimenez et al. (2010, p.25).

Based on the data collected through questionnaires, the writer concluded that the students perceive the activities of small group interaction in learning reading comprehension as the fun activities. It can be assumed that the implication of effective classroom interaction concerns a pleasant atmosphere that has been revealed by Dagarin (2004). In addition, this kind of strategy helped students to 1) improve their motivation, self-confidence and communicative skill; 2) overcome students' difficulties in reading comprehension; and 3) give a great contributions on students' language development in

reading comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been discussed the significant improvement on students' ability in reading comprehension by using small group interaction and the students' perceptions on the use of small group interaction in teaching reading comprehension. The small group interaction provides the students a great improvement on their reading comprehension. In general, students perceive the use of small group interaction positively because the find this kind of strategy effective in improving their skill of reading comprehension.

The present research would have resulted a rich data if it employed various methods such as setting, subject, instruments, etc. So, it is suggested for future research to utilize a broad methodology in order to achieve a contented result.

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