

THE EFFECT OF USING THE PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING STRATEGY TOWARD STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find the effect of using Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) toward students' reading comprehension at SMPN 2 2 X 11 Kayutanam. This experimental research focussed on post-test only control design. The population of this research was all of students grade VIII of SMPN 2 2 X 11 Kayutanam. There were two classes as the sample; VIII.5 as the experimental class which consisted of 20 students and class VIII.4 as the control class which consisted of 21 students. The sample was chosen by using cluster sampling technique. After conducting the treatments, the result showed that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) give positive effect towards students' reading comprehension as proved by statistically calculation. The calculation showed that the mean score of the experiment class was 63.6 with standard deviation 10.61. On the other hand, the mean score of control class was 59.24 with standard deviation 12.3. The result of t-test with degree of freedom 39 and α 0.05 found that $t_{calculate} 8.55 < t_{table} 1.685$.

Key words: Peer-Assisted, Learning Strategy, Reading Comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity that is important to be learnt because reading activity helps students to gap much information. Reading as the four important basic language skills learned by the foreign language students. There are some reasons why it is very necessary; it can help the learners to enhance their knowledge because they can learn many things through reading. Reading can entertain the learners because it is not only for academic purpose, but it can help the learners to refresh their mind. In other words, reading is very crucial for the learners.

Stoller and Grabe (2002) state that reading is the ability to draw the meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. On the same line Carrel (1988) states that reading is a perceptive language process. The text presents letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning.

In the process of reading, the reader interacts with the text when he or she try to understand the meaning and in which various kinds of the text knowledge they have is being used. It means that the reader requires the interactive process to understand the text that they read, so that the reader understands the purpose that will be presented in the text.

Reading can also entertain the learners because it was not only for academic purpose, but it can help the learners to refresh their mind. Understanding a text is similar in ways to understanding a movie. The first thing, we need to know is what the text is about, and then we have to understand each of the sentences and what they are saying. Next, we have to see how the sentences relate to one another. Finally, to understand the main point of the text, we have to consider what all the sentences, taken together.

According to Nunan (2003) reading is a fluent process of reader combining informational from a text and own background knowledge to build meaning. It means that when readers interact with the materials of reading, their prior knowledge will combine with the information and comprehending meaning. The readers try to analyze the materials with their existing knowledge and then create the meaning by their own comprehending.

Besides, Moreilion (2007) also says that a theory of reading as a transaction among the reader, the text, and the intention of the author. The reading process is an interaction between a reader's prior knowledge and information encoded in the text. This means a process that needs ability to understand and know the information provided in the text, students should know how to learn something from reading.

The main purpose of conducting reading activity at school is to gain ideas and information of the students. The students have to comprehend the reading text to achieve the purpose of learning English. Based on curriculum 2013, students are expected to be mastered reading skill to comprehend various kind of texts. On the curriculum, the main purpose of activity in teaching English motivates the students to be more active in learning activity.

Based on condition on the field, there were many students of grade VIII at SMPN 2 2 X 11 Kayutanam still got difficulties to comprehend the text. The data that been gotten from the teacher shows that students' average score were 61.03. The score can be seen in the table below:

Table 1
Students' Average Score of Class VII

NO	Class	Mean
1	VIII.1	60.81
2	VIII.2	60.29
3	VIII.3	61.35
4	VIII.4	60.54
5	VIII.5	61.15
	Total	61.03

(Source: students' final semester score AY 2013/2014)

There were some problems in reading comprehension, the problems faced by student in reading were: first, students did not have motivation to learn English. Second, students had lack of vocabulary. Third, students did not have background knowledge of the material. Next, there was lack of media was used in teaching process. The last one was the new curriculum motivate teacher to find alternative strategy such as using of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy to solve students' reading problem.

Based of the problems above, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) used as one of alternative strategy was to see the effectiveness of the strategy to solve students' problem in reading comprehension. Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy was develop from strategy called Class wide Peer Tutoring that develop at Juniper Garden's Children Project in Kansas in the late 1970's as a technique for improving students' ability by Dough Fuchs, Lynn Fuchs, and colleagues at Vanderbilt University. Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies is one of strategy that can be applied by the teacher in teaching English, especially in teaching reading. Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) also motivate students to work together and learn actively because they can help each other in learning activity.

Henning, et.al (2012) define Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy is the act of process of gaining knowledge, understanding, or skill from students that are either at different or equivalent academic or experiential levels. It means that during the process of PALS, the students are paired together to help each other to gain knowledge. In this process, the high performers of students have good understanding about the materials given.

According to Topping (2009) Peer-assisted learning strategy can be defined as the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions. PALS involve people from similar social grouping. It means, Peer-learning giving a chance to students to learn and help each other in gaining knowledge during

learning activities. Students who have higher understanding can help their friends who get difficulties to understand English, especially in reading comprehension.

Lee (2010) also adds that “Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy as the teaching and learning process through peer interaction and mutual discussion, students can develop communication, presentation, and explanation abilities”. It means that during the process of PALS, the students are paired together to help each other to gain knowledge. In this process, the high performers of students have good understanding about the materials given.

In another study, Tariq (2005) points out that the primary aim of PALS is to raise students’ self confidence. Students are provided with opportunity to practice and discuss with their peers when they encounter problems or difficulties during reading activity. The students also feel free to convey their opinion to the peer without being afraid to make mistake. There are some advantages of PALS, it provides a less formal, and more comfortable and relax environment, while group leaders can ask appropriate questions and provide feedback to their peers directly and they can feel free also to ask questions correctly.

There are some steps that should be prepared by the teacher in order to have success teaching and learning activities through Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) explained by Tariq (2005) such as; (1) introduce to the students about the concept and benefits of PALS. (2) organize the sessions in PALS well, for instance; emphasizing that the students’ willingness to participate in the sessions of PALS are needed because it will influence the success of PALS. (3) Explain the students’ roles in the group.

In the other hand, Kristen (2006) also states that there are some procedures of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS): 1) Partner Reading with retell (students will retell about the reading material). 2).Paragraph shrinking (Tutee reread the text, and after that identifies the indicator then tutor confirms the right answer). 3) Prediction relay (the students make prediction and then confirm or disconfirm them).

On the same study, Fuchs and Fuchs in McNamara (2006) state that during the treatment, the students will be work in pair. The group will be determined by ranked the students’ score from the top to the bottom. Each pair consists by the higher and lower performance. The higher performance will be tutor and the lower performance as tutee. During the tutoring activity, the higher performance reader will read first in order give a model to the low performance.

In the process of PALS, the activities are divided into three parts. The first activity is Partner Reading. Each students read connected text aloud for five minutes that start by the higher performance first and then will be reread by the low performance. After both of them read, the low performance will tell what the sequence of the text. Second, Paragraph Shrinking, in this step students continuing read one paragraph and then stop to identify its main idea. This process will be guided by tutors by asking reader to identify who or what the paragraph is mainly about. The last activity is Prediction Relay. This stage will require students to make prediction. Prediction Relay consists of five steps. The reader makes the prediction about what will be learned on the next half-page; reads the half-page aloud while the tutor correct errors, (dis)confirms the prediction, and summarize the main idea.

The formulation of the problem was “Does Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) gives significant effect toward students’ Reading comprehension at eight class of SMPN 2 2 x 11 Kayutanam?”. The purpose of this research was to find out whether the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) can gave significant effect in reading comprehension at eight class of SMPN 2 2 x 11 Kayutanam.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

This study was conducted based on the experimental research and focussed on post-test only control design. Experimental research can be defined as one of method that used to

find the effect of a treatment toward a controlling condition (Sugiyono, 2009). The purpose of why someone doing experiment based on Creswell (2012) is to test an idea (or practice or procedure) to determine whether it influence an outcome or dependent variable.

There were two classes involved in this research. The first was classified as the experimental (E) and the other one was the control class (C). Both of classes had the same topic, the same length of time but taught by different strategies. The two groups were treated as many as six meetings; where the last meeting treated for post-test. It assumed that five meetings were sufficient in seeing any difference that occurred afterward. There was only one test in this study; it was post-test that occurred after the treatment.

Population on this research was the second year of SMPN 2 X 11 Kayutanam, Kabupaten Padang Pariaman 2013/2014 academic year. The population of the research consisted of five classes. The total population can be classified as follow:

Table 1.2
Population of Class VIII SMPN 2 X 11 Kayutanam
A.Y 2013/2014

No	Class	Total
1	VIII.1	21
2	VIII.2	22
3	VIII.3	20
4	VIII.4	21
5	VIII.5	20
	Total	104

Based on the score of students, sample had been chosen by using cluster sampling. On this research, sample had been chosen by using lottery. It took two classes in this research. They were VIII.5 as the experiment class and VIII.4 as the control class. The data had been collected by using reading test. The test in this research was multiple choices where the item consist of 25 items.

The researcher collected the data through some steps. First, the experimental and control class were chosen by using lottery. Class class VIII.5 had been chosen as the experimental class and VIII.4 as control class. Second, both of classes were taught by using different treatment. Experimental class used PALS and control class without PALS. Next, the last meeting, students got post-test as long as 60 minute with 25 items. The last one, teacher scored the students' answer.

The data analysis of this research was as follows: first, analyzed the instruments (Validity by using content validity, realibility by using Spearman-Brown formula, item difficulty and item descrimination by using Arikunto's formula : 2008, 2010). After that, analyzed the normality of the data by using Lilefors test and homogenity by using F-test by Sudjana's formula. Hypothesis testing was tested by using t-test formula by Sugiyono (2009).

RESEARCH FINDING

Based on the result of the post-test that held at the end of the research, the writer computed and analysed the data and found that there was positive effect in terms of the students' reading comprehension. There were three steps that had been done in analyzing the data. It begins by found the normality both of classes. The calculation found that the mean score of experimental class was 63.6 with standard deviation 10.61. On the other hand, the mean score of the control class was 59.24 with standard deviation 12.3. The calculation of both standard deviation found that $L_{calculate} < L_{table}$. It means both classes had normal distribution.

The analyzing the data continuing by analyze the homogeneity of the data. The calculation found that $F_{\text{calculate}} 1.34 < F_{\text{table}} 2.15$ at degree of freedom 39 and significance 0.05 on F_{table} . So, the conclusion was the variance of both experimental and control classes were homogenous. The last one was doing the testing of the hypothesis by using t-test. The result of $t_{\text{test}} (8.55)$ was bigger than $t_{\text{table}} (1.68)$ at degree of freedom 39 and level of significance 0.05. So, the null hypothesis was rejected. It can be concluded there was positive effect of using Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy toward students' reading comprehension at SMPN 2 2 X 11 Kayutanam.

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) is one of alternative strategy that can be applied in teaching reading. There are many advantages of applying Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS). Lee (2010) define Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) as the teaching and learning process through peer interaction and mutual discussion, students can develop communication presentation and explanation abilities. It means that during the activity of PALS can build students confidence because the steps of activity of PALS motivate the students to interact each other, sharing opinion, and building communication with their partner.

Besides that, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy makes students comfort and enjoy the activity because they work with their friend. It makes they feel brave to deliver their opinion without being afraid if they make a mistake. Also, the activities give the feedback to all of students because they have an opportunity to correct their friend's answer.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this research, it was found that there was positive effect of Peer-Assisted Learning towards students reading comprehension. It can be seen on the students mean score on the post-test. The result of data analysis the data shows that the experimental class got the higher score than the control class.

The calculation of t_{test} shows that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted because the result of $t_{\text{test}} 8.55$ was bigger than $t_{\text{table}} 1.68$. It can be concluded that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy gives positive effect toward students' reading comprehension at SMPN 2 2 X 11 Kayutanam.

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