STUDENTS' READING SKILL BY USING PEER ASSISTED LEARNING (PAL) STRATEGY IN THE VIITH GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract
This study was aimed to know the implementation of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy to improve students' reading skill at seventh grade of SMP N 3 Sungailiat and to find out whether there was or not any significant difference of students' reading comprehension between students who were taught by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy and those who were taught by using non PAL strategy. Experimental research with quasi-experimental design was used in this research. The population of study were consisted of 236 students, 67 students as the sample purposively. This study also limited into some sub skills of reading, they were vocabulary knowledge, finding topics and understanding main ideas. The result of the test was analyzed by using statistical analysis of *Paired sample t-test* and *Independent sample t-test*. The writer used *Pearson Correlation* and *Cronbach Alpha* to know the validity and reliability of the test. Based on the result in research findings, second main point were obtained. First, the implementation of PALS was in *good* and *very good* category for attendance and attention aspects based on the observation sheet result even though in some meetings were in average category and low category because of the student talked each other, made noise and not interested with some topics during meetings. Second, the students who were taught by using PALS had higher score in the post test than the students who were taught by using non PALS. In this case, the alternative hypothesis was accepted as *t-obtained* score for experimental group was 4.141, and it was higher than *critical value of t-table* (2.04). Finally, it could be concluded that there was a significant difference in students' reading comprehension between the experimental and control group and the strategy of PALS. Therefore, the result of this study is expected to contribute in developing reading students' comprehension achievement.

Keywords: *Improving, Reading Comprehension, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English becomes the foreign language and it has been learnt by students since they were still in elementary schools, many students still get confused and did not understand reading text in English. The students need to increase their ability in English especially in reading when they got new vocabulary.

As stated by Milkulecky and Jeffries that reading is one of significance things to improve student language English ability in general. Thus, reading was an important skill in improving English learning. By those thought above, the writer realized how important reading skill for student was and there was no reason for the students to avoid reading as the key of learning process. Supporting statement above, as indicated by Ruddells defined "the most general academic purpose in reading are understanding text, getting the meaning of idea in some appropriate things of the author directly meaning[1]". Therefore, the skill of comprehending the text was very important by students to comprehend a text based on the author's intended meaning as the target of reading.

Based on preliminary research, the writer found many problems faced by students in SMPN 3 Sungailiat. There were three main problems, they were (1) the students had problems in reading comprehension in descriptive text especially based on the observation test which showed that almost students in VIIth grade students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat got score under 75. On the other hand, with that in procedure text, the students of VIIth and VIIIth had good results, (2) The teacher of English still using conventional method in teaching. She asked students to open their book, translated reading text in their textbook and answered the question of the texts. In this study, the term "conventional method" refers to the method that was commonly used by teacher of English in SMPN 3 Sungailiat especially VIIth grade students. Conventional method means a method where the teacher was as the central of learning, (3) the writer had to think about interview result with the teacher explained most of students were interested in learning procedure text but they were not interested in learning descriptive text.

Based on syllabus that there were two kinds of genres in reading materials, they were procedure text and descriptive text[2]. But the writer had limited time in teaching one material and focused on narrative text. One of the strategies was Peer Assessment Learning (PAL) strategy. It was as an active learning process, due to this strategy would allow students to

become more active participants. Peer Assessment Learning (PAL) strategy was believed to be able to give chances for the students to be involved in discussion, to have courage, critical thinking and to make them willing to take responsibility of their own learning. Based on the background and problems of study above, the writer's study title was "**Students' Reading Skill by Using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy in the VIIth Grade Students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat**" to improve students' reading comprehension. The research focused in VIIth grade students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat. The research used the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy especially on vocabulary knowledge, finding topics, and understanding main ideas. This study was limited in simple and short descriptive text about people, place, thing and animal. Based on the discussion above, the writer formulated the problems as follows; 1) How was the implementation of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy in students' reading comprehension in VIIth grade students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat? 2) Was there any significant difference of students in their reading comprehension between those who were taught by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy and those who were not taught by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy? The **objectives of the study are; 1**) to know the implementation of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy in students' reading comprehension in VIIth grade students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat, and 2) to find out whether there was or not any significant difference of students' reading comprehension between the those who were taught by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy and those who were not taught by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy. This research was expected to give conductive atmosphere to make teaching learning more fun and enjoyable in students' reading comprehension. This research was expected as one of effective solutions by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Reading

The practice of using text to create meaning was called reading. It was very important in daily life, so it was very important to learn. Definition of reading by Linse is a group of ability that involves making meaning and creating of meaning from the text. In order to read, we need to be able to decode the text and also understand what we read. Thereby, appropriate approaches are needed in reading to get good comprehension. Sustaining Linse's statement, Hill gave points "reading is the process to build meaning from text and other signs". The following sentence, the writer presents the definitions of reading comprehension. Klinger defined "reading comprehension is the process of building meaning by coordinating a number of complex procesess that include word reading, word and world knowldge, and fluency[3]". On the word Klinger, Hill explains comprehension understanding means what we read from the text, pictures, and design.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy

According to Topping, Peer-assisted Learning could be defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among students who have the same level. It involves the students from the same social group who are not professional for helping each other to learn and learning something by doing as a teacher[4]". Meanwhile, in a study by Liang and Dole about Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy is a multiple strategy program development to improve reading understanding in elementary to middle school level.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Population and Sample

The population of this research was all students in the 7th grade students of SMPN 3 Sungailiat from 7th A to 7th G with total number of the students were 237 students. There were some considerations in choosing the sample of this study: (1) students had the same characteristic; 7th grade Students, (2) number of the students were quite similar; 33 and 34 students, (3) based on their teacher's analysis, their abilities in English lesson were relatively the same. The writer took 7th A grade students as the experimental group and 7th B grade students as the control group. For

both classes have 33 and 34 students. The writer determined the experimental group and the control group by doing preliminary study and interviewed to the teacher of English that 7th A grade students got lower score than 7th B grade students, the number of students of the both classes were quite similar and based on the teacher suggestion.

Technique for Collecting and Analyzing the Data

The first technique of collecting data was observation. This technique of data collection was used to answer the research question number one that asked the implementation of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy. It aims to see how the technique goes along with the situation of class during meetings. The second technique is the test. The writer collected the data by analyzing the test based on the material of decriptive reading text. This research would have two kinds of tests included pre-test and post test. The pre-test would be given before teaching-learning process and post-test would be given after teaching-learning process by the writer. Thus, the test was an instrument that used to know the students' knowledge in reading comprehension. The writer used two classes, experimental group and control group. The writer used multiple-choices test, due to it was the most useful of all objective item types to construct and simple to score and administer. To complete the tests, the participants would choose one of some possibilities answer. The correct answer of the test was score 1 and each wrong answer was score 0. Those tests measured the students' reading comprehension in descriptive text and compared the significant difference between experimental group and control group. Besides data from result of the test, the documentation was needed to help the writer conducted the research. The writer used statistic method in analyzing data. To find out the difference between students' post-test score and their pre-test score the writer used t-test. Therefore, the writer used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 16.0 to calculate test by using t-test. Then, the data of documentation would be analyzed by using non-statistical analysis. The data of documentation used to get the data about teaching instrument that used in implementing Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy.

Validity and Reliability

A test is an instrument of collecting data should be valid and reliable. The writer used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 16.0 to calculate the formula validity of test instrument by using product moment correlation or known as Pearson correlation. To find out the validity of instrument test, the writer gave try-out to other students in the different school with the same level. The try-out was tested in SMPN 1 Pemali with the number of students were 35 of VIIth E grade students. The result of the validity showed among 40 items of multiple-choice test. The writer used Cronbach Alpha as formula to find out the reliability. The writer used the test-retest method to have the reliability of the test. Test-retest method is an obvious way to estimate the reliability of a test is to administer it to the same group of individuals on two occasions and correlate the two sets of scores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Experimental group showed twelve meetings that had been finished. This class consists of 33 students who were cooperative working together with the writer during research. As being explain earlier, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy was applied in students' reading comprehension of descriptive text. This strategy took twelve meetings. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy used script of descriptive text as main material. For Peer Assisted learning (PAL) Strategy, the steps were quite easy to follow by students. This strategy provided big chance to them in their reading comprehension by learning and answering. At first they seemed not too much enthusiastic but after the writer gave example of texts and they got the point, they could enjoy the class. They could understand every single paragraph in text and answered the questions of descriptive text. The challenges were not only answering the questions but also they had to make their friends understand the text of descriptive text each other. They used ten topics, those topics were My Cousin, My Grandma, Hana's Garden, My Father, New Backpack, My Bedroom, My Classmate, Purna Bhakti Pertiwi Museum, New Neighbor and The Birds. Actually most of students like to read but the problem was they were not doing in fun atmosphere and enjoyable activities. The result showed they could comprehend descriptive text after having Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy.

The percentage of students meeting by meeting showed a progress. The students were trained to answer and participate mentally during research. They could increase their reading comprehension due to they had known how to cooperate each other.

The presence of students was very good category during meetings. Based on the observation result, the experimental group showed good result for students' attendance. Only in activeness and cooperation parts, there were four meetings putting the students in average category. The second meeting, the students did not understand how to sequences of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) strategy and it was first time for them to have a class with the writer. The second meeting and third meeting, some students were often went to toilet during teaching learning process and made noise as well. The fifth and the sixth meetings were the students less enthusiastic as the materials were easy because those were too familiar things such as "My Father and My New Backpack" as the topics. But for doing the activities, all meetings were in good category especially their attendance and attention aspects. The eighth and the ninth meetings, the material was not related to their daily lives, the topic was Purna Bhakti Pratiwi Museum and the students not only talked each other but also made noise during meetings "My Classmate", so those meetings were in low category. In the tenth and the twelfth meetings for cooperation and activeness aspects, the students got better in very good category.

All students had gotten their turn to do both pre-test and post-test to see the difference resulted between students who were taught by using Peer Assisted Leaning (PAL) Strategy and Non Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy. Based on the post-test result, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy was able to make students' reading comprehension in experimental group be better than control group one. The students' scores got in post-test were higher than the pre-test result. The result was seen after computing by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 16.0. The *t-obtained* score for post-test between experimental and control group reached 4.141* and it was higher than the *critical value of t-table* which was 2.04. Based on clear result of the tests, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted as there is a significant difference between students who were taught by Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy and those who were not taught by Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) during learning meanwhile the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected here.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

There were two conclusions based on above; namely (1) the implementation of PALS and the observation sheet result during the meetings was increased students' reading comprehension at VIIth grade of SMPN 3 Sungailiat. (2) The *t-obtained* score for experimental group was higher than *critical value of t-table*. Finally, it could be concluded that the using Peer Assisted Learning in students' reading comprehension achievement of descriptive text increased their reading comprehension and there was significant difference between post-test experimental and control group based on statistical analysis. From the conclusions above, the writer suggested some points as follows; 1) peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Strategy was recommended to be applied by the teacher of English in junior high school level to carry on a good reading comprehension. This method gave the students conductive atmosphere to make teaching learning more fun and enjoyable during learning process, 2) the writer hoped there would be more teachers trying to apply other strategies, methods, or techniques in learning English more effective especially in reading comprehension for

SMPN 3 Sungailiat.

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