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Group Investigation Technique for Better Reading Comprehension Skill

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of using Group Investigation Technique (GIT) in teaching reading comprehension at the second grade class of a junior high school in Banda Aceh and to identify the most difficult reading comprehension aspect that students at that level faced. An experimental design was used and the data were collected through tests as so for the instruments. There were two tests, namely pre-test, and post-test, applied in the form of multiple-choice questions. The population of this study was all of the second-grade students. Then, two classes were randomly chosen as the samples: experimental class and controlled class. The findings indicated that there was an improvement in students' achievement in the experimental class. The study applied gain-score calculation in which the mean for the experimental class was 0.57, while the controlled class was 0.22. The researchers also used the t-test to prove the hypotheses. The result showed that $t\text{-score} > t\text{-table}$ or $34.76 > 1.68$, which means the H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected. To conclude, the students who were taught reading comprehension by using GIT achieved significant improvement. Besides, after the determination of the mean of the post-test and pre-test scores which were divided into four aspects of reading comprehension: main idea (MI), vocabulary (V), detailed information (DI), and reference (R), the result showed that $MI=25.91$, $V=28.64$, $DI=25.00$, and $R=31.59$. Therefore, it was found that the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension was detailed

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information (DI). Meanwhile, time management becomes a paramount concern in implementing the GIT due to its nature of complexity.

Keywords: Group Investigation Technique, reading comprehension, EFL learners.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the most important skill that must be mastered by students in terms of getting meaning from a series of written symbols. Farrell (2009) reveals that reading can help readers in many aspects such as entertaining, educating, communicating, and informing readers about the past, the present, and the future as well. Reading opens minds and intelligence, and the goals of learners in catching the knowledge and ideas. Success in reading is measured by the ability to comprehend the text. Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is a process of extracting and constructing meaning through dealings and complicity with written words or symbols. As every language has its writing system, i.e. orthography, language learners need to adjust their L1 writing system with the target language. Logically, the closer the distance of the writing system to the target language, the easier to learn; for example, English people use the Roman alphabet, and the Indonesian language learners of English also use the Roman alphabet. However, the struggle of reading with comprehension in the target language does not stop there; learners still need to decode and recode the English words by matching sounds and symbol combinations. These skills are called phonics (Lems et al., 2010). Learners of English should also access their L1 phonics and match it with the English phonics. The word recognition skills could create frustration for less skilful language learners of English.

Speaking of learning English as a foreign language, English is studied in most schools in Indonesia; likewise, in an Islamic junior high school named Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) Meuraxa, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, English is taught four sessions a week. According to the school provision, the minimum mastery criterion of English is 75, and all students are expected to pass this criterion. This school also applies the 2013 Curriculum. This curriculum requires students to be able to think spontaneously and quickly, and students are also required to have a nimble mind in responding to problems Nuriskandar (2015). Based on the above statements, it is undeniable that students should be active and participative in learning English, such as mastering all skills of English, including reading. This is because reading is an active interaction with the text in order to make sense of what is written (Bahri Ys et al., 2018). Hence, students should achieve the ideal score that is stated by the school.

However, the expectations of success in reading were contrary to the real situation. In the learning process, it was difficult for students to comprehend the meaning of the reading text. At first, they were confident when they started to read, but when they bumped into difficult words or a confusing sentence or paragraph, they would dismiss the reading activity and thought that it was too difficult for them to continue. In the end, reading was assumed as a painful and boring part of learning English (Farrell, 2009). As a result of poor learning habit, there was little comprehension involved after students had finished their reading. Students often misunderstood the meaning of a text, which then resulted in the inaccuracy in

answering related questions. Therefore, the teaching-learning activities did not work well in the class and the students' scores were not as expected.

Based on the problem above, it is important to realize the implementation of an appropriate method. Therefore, Cooperative Learning Method is applied, in which students with different ways of thinking and different levels of comprehension work together to achieve their learning goals. Group Investigation is one form of Cooperative Learning that is appropriate to be applied for this class. Group Investigation Technique (GIT) is a technique that enables students to take an active role in small groups. In this technique, after getting a main topic from the teacher, students are given full control and choice to plan what they want to learn and investigate (Huda, 2011). Hence, GIT, in a reading context, generally makes students experience the formation process of a text. Besides, there will be comprehension involved in the students' reading activity. The benefit of conducting GIT has been proven by some previous studies. Herlina (2013) whose research was carried out at Junior High School Number 1 of Belitung, OKU Timur, South Sumatra focused on the effect of GIT towards motivation and reading comprehension. In another place, Asyik and Putri (2016) who conducted their research at Islamic Senior High School Dayah Jeumala Amal, Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya, Aceh, focused on the use GIT on narrative text for reading comprehension. They found out that this technique not only improved students' reading comprehension positively but also boosted students' motivation in learning.

Concerning the text genre, the implementation GIT in this research is focused on reading the descriptive text. Descriptive text is one kind of texts which has to be taught to junior high school students. Thus, this kind of text is included in the 2013 Curriculum for junior high school. The criteria of students who are ready to be taught the descriptive text material are that they must pass a few basic topics which are related to language features of the text. This is the reason why the researchers chose descriptive text as the material which was taught to the second-grade students.

Based on that discussion above, the research question is formulated as follows:

- Is there any significant improvement in students' achievement which has been taught employing Group Investigation Technique (GIT)?
- What aspect of reading comprehension (main idea, detailed information, vocabulary, or reference) is considered as the most difficult one by students?

The following hypotheses are framed based on the first research question:

- H0: There is no significant improvement in students' achievement who are taught with the Group Investigation Technique (GIT).
- H1: There is a significant improvement in students' achievement who are taught with the Group Investigation Technique (GIT).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading as the main focus of this research requires comprehension. Readers will certainly get some difficulties in understanding many subjects if they do not have adequate reading comprehension skills. Therefore, according to Moore (2003), comprehension of reading helps learners to become active and involved in the reading process, and good readers are the ones who gain more benefits. According to Nuttall (2005) as cited in Sulistiana et al. (2015), there are five aspects of reading

comprehension: they are the main idea, detailed information, vocabulary, reference, and inference. However, considering the level of this research target, the researchers decided to eliminate one of the aspects. It aimed to adapt the teaching material and testing material to the students' learning level. As a result, this research examined the four aspects of reading comprehension (main idea, detailed information, vocabulary, and reference).

Group Investigation Technique (GIT) is developed by Sharan and Yael Sharan in 1992 at the University of Tel-Aviv (Herlina, 2013). It is a classroom activity in which students work in small groups using group discussion, and cooperative planning, projects, and exploration. Zingaro (2008) also stated that group investigation is one of the techniques of cooperative learning where the students form interest groups in class, plan and implement an investigation, and combine their results, and conclude it into a group presentation. According to Isjoni (2010), students are divided into groups consisting of 4-5 people in this technique. Students select a sub-topic which they want to learn, where the main topic is already predetermined by the teacher. Students and the teacher plan the steps of the learning process based on the selected sub-topics and materials. Then the students begin studying with a variety of learning resources both inside and outside the school. After finishing the learning process, they analyze and make conclusions to present the results of their study to the class.

Furthermore, in this activity, the teacher acts as a facilitator in the students' group process. The teacher walks around among the groups to see if the students can manage their duties and helps them manage the difficulties they face in group interactions, including the problems of the specific tasks related to learning project (Slavin, 2005).

In terms of the implementation of GIT, Slavin (2005) also suggested six steps of GIT which students have to work through, as follows: identifying the topic and setting students into groups, planning tasks that will be learned, implementing the investigation, preparing the final report, presenting the final report, and evaluation. First, in identifying the topic and setting students into groups, students are expected to find some sources, suggest several sub-topics, and categorize propositions. After deciding what sub-topic will be discussed, the students also gather together in their groups to learn the selected topic. Group composition is based on students' interest and should be heterogenic, which means the group will contain members of different backgrounds, achievements, learning ability levels, genders, and so on. Moreover, the teacher has a role to help students in collecting data or information during the class activity.

Second, students plan what they learn and how they run the learning activity. Students also divide the tasks and formulate the aim of conducting this investigation. Each member in the group will decide to have one role in carrying out the group project, for example, one person will be an expert of the first paragraph, one person will be an expert of the second paragraph, etc. Students are also asked to make sure that the individual task that each student has is on the same level and portion.

Third, students will collect the information or the data which is related to their selected topic. Information can be examples of other descriptive texts, or aspects that an author usually describes in a descriptive text or vocabularies which are usually used in describing people. After that, students investigate and analyze it, and then they choose the important ones to conclude. Each group member should have a contribution to their group, such as discussing, clarifying, and synthesizing the idea.

Fourth, students prepare the final report by determining the essential messages from the group project. The group members also plan the material that will be submitted and plan the report. Then, the representations of each group discuss to coordinate the report plans. Every member is tasked as the responsible party in the process of preparing the report, which means not only one person is burdened with the task in this step.

Fifth, students present their final report by collecting the report to the teacher, and the teacher will share those reports randomly with the other groups. Then, the viewers (other group members) read, analyze, and evaluate the report of a group based on some criteria settled by all class members. The criteria which are evaluated are based on the aspects of reading comprehension.

Finally, sixth, in evaluation, all students give feedback to the other group members about their topic. Then, the teacher and students collaborate in evaluating the students' learning process. They also reveal the effectiveness of their discussing experiences. After giving the report back to the group which made it before, the teacher gives them an evaluation task, and they are asked to work again together in groups based on their comprehension from discussing and evaluating the experience.

3. METHODS

3.1 Design

This research was quantitative in nature and was conducted through experimental teaching. There were two variables in this study, namely GIT and reading comprehension; GIT was as the independent variable, and reading comprehension was as the dependent variable. Group investigation is as a technique of improving students' ability in comprehending language learning. It is defined as a technique used by the English teacher in teaching reading comprehension in which it is engaged in intensive phases of learning in group discussion activities. Moreover, by comprehending a written text material with an effective technique, readers may be more focused on the material. Better comprehension means better understanding and remembering more specific contents.

3.2 Participants

The population of this research was the second-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) Meuraxa, Banda Aceh. There were 78 students, consisting of 29 males and 49 females. Therefore, the samples of this research were taken from this population. Then, after the random sampling technique was carried out, the VIII-1 class was chosen as the experimental class, and VIII-3 was chosen as the control class. Both classes had the same characteristics; they were in the same grade and lacked reading comprehension competency.

3.3 Instrument

The data for both research questions of this study were collected through two instruments of tests - i.e. pre-test and post-test. There were ten questions for each test.

Both tests contained questions based on four aspects of reading comprehension, namely main idea, vocabulary, detailed information, and reference. From the total twenty pre-test and post-test questions, there were five questions of each aspect for both pre-test and post-test. For the pre-test, there were three questions about the main idea, three questions about vocabulary, two questions about detailed information, and two questions about reference. As for the post-test, there were two questions about the main idea, two questions about vocabulary, three questions about detailed information, and three questions about reference. The divisions of the number of questions for reading aspects were conducted to find out the result of the second research question.

3.4 Technique of Data Collection

In collecting data, the pre-test was given before the experiment. This test was conducted to identify the students' scores as preliminary data that would be compared with the post-test outcomes. After treatment, the post-test was applied. This test aimed to measure the ability of students after learning English by using GIT. The obtained data of this test was used to determine whether the treatment would provide a significant result or not. That same obtained data was also processed into a mean calculation to identify the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension for the students.

3.5 Technique of Data Analysis

The collected data for the first research question was processed and analyzed by using several statistic formulas. There is a normalizing gain score by [Hake \(1999\)](#) as cited in [Wiyono \(2013\)](#) to determine the amount of increase of the students' achievement in reading comprehension after the learning activity. There are also mean, variance, standard deviation, combined variance, and hypothesis test by [Sudjana \(2005\)](#) to support the formulation of normality test steps, and normality test by [Sundayana \(2010\)](#) to determine whether the data were normally distributed or not. Besides, for the second research question of this study, the data was processed and analyzed by using the mean score formula.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Improvement in Students' Achievement with GIT

The obtained data were processed to describe the differences of results between two classes: experimental class and controlled class. To determine the amount of increase of the students' achievement in reading comprehension after the learning activity, the analysis process of the normalized Gain-score data was calculated with the Gain-score formula and is presented in Table 1.

The rate of normalized gain-score is grouped into three categories which determine the significant improvement of students' scores, namely High ($\text{Gain} \geq 0.7$), Average ($0.3 \leq \text{Gain} < 0.7$) and Low ($\text{Gain} \leq 0.3$). As a result, the researchers concluded the acquisition of frequency for each category of students' gain scores. There was one student in the low category, 16 students in the average category, and

five students in the high category for the experimental class with a total gain of 12.52. Then, there were 15 students in the low category, seven students in the average category, and no student in the high category for the controlled class with a total gain of 4.86. In conclusion, the GIT significantly improves students' scores in reading the descriptive text. The finding correlates with [Widyatun \(2012\)](#) and [Asyik and Putri \(2016\)](#) that GIT has a positive impact on improving students' achievement.

Table 1. List of normalized gain score.

Stu- dents	Experimental Class (VIII-1)				Stu- dents	Controlled Class (VIII-3)			
	Test		Gain	Category		Test		Gain	Category
	Pre- test	Post- test				Pre- test	Post- test		
AH	40	70	0.50	Average	APW	50	60	0.20	Low
AK	80	100	1.00	High	ARA	50	50	0.00	Low
AMS	40	60	0.33	Average	EP	30	40	0.14	Low
AZ	60	80	0.50	Average	FA	40	60	0.33	Average
FA	50	70	0.40	Average	FAH	50	60	0.20	Low
GM	60	80	0.50	Average	FF	30	60	0.43	Average
HU	30	70	0.57	Average	HNH	50	70	0.40	Average
ID	50	80	0.60	Average	LH	40	50	0.17	Low
KYW	50	90	0.80	High	MA	50	50	0.00	Low
MHA	80	90	0.50	Average	MAB	60	60	0.00	Low
MRJ	30	80	0.71	High	MI	50	70	0.40	Average
MS	20	70	0.63	Average	MRPP	40	50	0.17	Low
MUH	30	70	0.57	Average	NM	40	70	0.50	Average
MUN	30	60	0.43	Average	PSW	50	50	0.00	Low
NR	30	70	0.57	Average	RA	40	80	0.67	Average
NSA	60	80	0.50	Average	RM	20	40	0.25	Low
QA	50	80	0.60	Average	RN	30	30	0.00	Low
SGI	20	80	0.75	High	SAH	50	60	0.20	Low
SRD	70	80	0.33	Average	SAS	70	80	0.33	Average
SZ	50	90	0.80	High	SAY	30	40	0.14	Low
TNB	40	80	0.67	Average	SS	20	30	0.13	Low
VR	60	70	0.25	Low	UT	50	60	0.20	Low
Total			12.52		Total			4.86	

4.2 The Most Difficult Aspect of Reading Comprehension of the Experiment

Succeeding, the researchers elaborated the difficulties that students faced in reading comprehension aspects. The calculation was done based on students' scores in pre-test and post-test. The amount of the pre-test questions was added to the post-test questions, so there were five questions of each aspect of reading comprehension. The total mean scores were calculated to see the differences.

In analyzing the ability of reading comprehension of the students, the researchers assessed the students' scores based on four aspects of reading comprehension, namely main idea (MI), vocabulary (V), detailed information (DI), and reference (R). Table 2 shows the scores of reading comprehension aspects in the experimental class.

Since the total number of questions of each test was ten, in the pre-test, a student would have a perfect score when he/she got 30 points for MI, 30 points for V, 20 points for DI, and 20 points for R. Then, the total number of points which students got in each aspect is calculated to the scores of the controlled class. Table 3 shows the scores of reading comprehension aspects in the controlled class.

Table 2. The scores of reading comprehension aspects in the experimental class.

Stu- dents	Total Score		Pre-test				Post-test				Pre-test + Post-test			
	Pre- test	Post- test	MI	DI	V	R	MI	DI	V	R	MI	DI	V	R
AH	40	70	20	0	0	20	10	20	20	20	30	20	20	40
AK	80	100	30	20	10	20	20	30	20	30	50	50	30	50
AMS	40	60	20	0	10	10	10	10	10	30	30	10	20	40
AZ	60	80	20	10	20	10	10	20	20	30	30	30	40	40
FA	50	70	20	10	20	0	10	10	20	30	30	20	40	30
GM	60	80	20	0	20	20	10	30	20	20	30	30	40	40
HU	30	70	20	0	0	10	10	10	20	30	30	10	20	40
ID	50	80	20	20	10	0	10	30	10	30	30	50	20	30
KY	50	90	20	0	10	20	20	30	20	20	40	30	30	40
MHA	80	90	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	30	40	40	40	50
MRJ	30	80	0	0	10	20	10	20	20	30	10	20	30	50
MS	20	70	0	0	10	10	20	20	10	20	20	20	20	30
MUH	30	70	10	0	20	0	10	30	10	20	20	30	30	20
MUN	30	60	20	0	0	10	0	10	20	30	20	10	20	40
NR	30	70	0	10	10	10	10	20	10	30	10	30	20	40
NSA	60	80	20	10	10	20	20	20	10	30	40	30	20	50
QA	50	80	20	0	20	10	20	20	10	30	40	20	30	40
SGI	20	80	10	0	0	10	10	20	20	30	20	20	20	40
SRD	70	80	30	10	10	20	20	20	10	30	50	30	20	50
SZ	50	90	20	0	10	20	10	30	20	30	30	30	30	50
TNB	40	80	20	0	10	10	10	20	20	30	30	20	30	40
VR	60	70	30	20	0	10	10	30	10	20	40	50	10	30
Total =											670	600	580	880

Table 3. The scores of reading comprehension aspects in the controlled class.

Stu- dents	Total Score		Pre-test				Post-test				Pre-test + Post-test			
	Pre- test	Post- test	MI	DI	V	R	MI	DI	V	R	MI	DI	V	R
APW	50	60	0	10	30	10	10	20	10	20	10	30	40	30
ARA	50	50	20	0	20	10	20	10	10	10	40	10	30	20
EP	30	40	0	10	20	0	0	10	10	20	0	20	30	20
FA	40	60	0	10	30	0	10	20	20	10	10	30	50	10
FAH	50	60	0	10	30	10	10	10	20	20	10	20	50	30
FF	30	60	0	0	20	10	20	20	10	10	20	20	30	20
HNH	50	70	10	20	20	0	10	10	20	30	20	30	40	30
LH	40	50	0	10	20	10	10	0	10	30	10	10	30	40
MA	50	50	30	0	20	0	0	30	10	10	30	30	30	10
MB	60	60	30	10	10	10	20	20	20	0	50	30	30	10
MI	50	70	30	0	20	0	10	20	10	30	40	20	30	30
MRP	40	50	0	10	20	10	20	10	10	10	20	20	30	20
NM	40	70	10	0	10	20	10	30	10	20	20	30	20	40
PSW	50	50	20	0	20	10	0	20	10	20	20	20	30	30
RA	40	80	20	0	10	10	20	30	10	20	40	30	20	30
RM	20	40	0	10	10	0	0	0	10	30	0	10	20	30
RN	30	30	0	0	20	10	10	10	0	10	10	10	20	20
SAH	50	60	0	10	30	10	10	20	20	10	10	30	50	20
SAS	70	80	20	10	30	10	20	20	10	30	40	30	40	40
SAY	30	40	0	10	20	0	20	10	0	10	20	20	20	10
SS	20	30	20	0	0	0	10	20	0	0	30	20	0	0
UT	50	60	0	10	30	10	20	20	10	10	20	30	40	20
Total =											470	500	680	510

On the contrary, in the post-test, a student would have a perfect score when he/she got 20 points for MI, 20 points for V, 30 points for DI, and 30 points for R.

Based on the data in both tables, by calculating the mean score of each aspect from both classes, the result can be seen as follows:

$$\bar{x}_{MI} = \frac{MI1+MI2}{n1+n2} = \frac{670+470}{44} = 25.91$$

$$\bar{x}_{DI} = \frac{DI1+DI2}{n1+n2} = \frac{600+500}{44} = 25.00$$

$$\bar{x}_V = \frac{V1+V2}{n1+n2} = \frac{580+680}{44} = 28.64$$

$$\bar{x}_R = \frac{R1+R2}{n1+n2} = \frac{880+510}{44} = 31.59$$

The researchers sorted the mean scores of reading comprehension aspects from the highest to the lowest; R = 31.59, V = 28.64, MI = 25.91, DI = 25.00. As the detailed information aspect is the lowest one (DI = 25.00), therefore the researchers identified that detailed information is the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension in this second grade of junior high school students in Banda Aceh. This finding is relevant to the previous study about reading comprehension conducted by Saputra (2015) who found that detailed information is the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The first result of this study showed that GIT significantly improves the students' achievement in reading comprehension. After the GIT was applied, the result of the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental class showed that the students' scores in the post-test are higher than in the pre-test. It was proven by the finding that the total gain score in the experimental class was 12.52, while the total gain score in the controlled class was 4.86. As the t_{score} is higher than t_{table} ($34.7571 > 1.68$), so it can be concluded that the H_0 is rejected and the H_1 is accepted.

Besides, the second result of this study showed that the detailed information aspect was indicated as the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension. It can be proven by comparing the amount of the mean calculation of students' reading comprehension scores which have been divided into several aspects. The mean score for reference was 31.59, that for vocabulary 28.64, that for main idea 25.91, and that for detailed information only 25.00.

Time management becomes a paramount concern in implementing the GIT as its nature of complexity. It also requires a large amount of time. Further researchers are expected to be wise with the time so that every step of GIT is effectively executed. It is also suggested to explore more about the use of GIT in reading comprehension and to conduct similar research in a wider population or at different levels.

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