

IMPLEMENTING COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

As many students of SMAN 3 Padang Panjang have problems in comprehending English texts, some strategies, methods or techniques have been applied for years. In fact, Collaborative Strategic Reading has become one of the best practices among others. This strategy helps the students to guess the meaning of words/phrases/sentences based on context, get the general idea, find explicit and implicit information, summarize the text, get the gist, cope with the questions which require the students' higher order thinking and retell or summarize the content of the text. Although the students needed to adapt with the strategy at the first time they did it, they could finally achieve better reading comprehension as the writer analyzed the problems faced by the students and improved the implementation of this strategy for the next meeting. This strategy helped most students to minimize the difficulties in guessing the meaning of words/phrases/sentences based on context, getting the general idea, finding explicit and implicit informations, summarizing the text, getting the gist and coping with the questions which require the students' higher order thinking skills as well as retelling or summarizing the content of the text. This best practice report is aimed at exposing and sharing the experience about how Collaborative Strategic Reading strategy was implemented and how this technique can help the students to improve and overcome the problems found in reading comprehension classes of grade XII in 2018/2019 academic year.

Key words: Collaborative Strategic Reading, improve, students' reading comprehension

A. Introduction

Reading has become a very important skill that enable the students to absorb various information they really need to gain the knowledge. This activity involves the brain process as when people read, they do not only pronounce word by word and sentence by sentence, but they certainly also think about the meaning of the words and the sentences they read. Mayer (2003: 26) and Grabe and Stoller (2002:9) in Hutabarat (2012:2) point out that reading comprehension is an ability and a technique for improving students' success in extracting useful knowledge from text. In order to gather the knowledge, the readers have to do many efforts to understand the message that the writer really wants to convey through the whole sentences they read otherwise reading will become an aimless and useless activity.

The good reading comprehension will certainly enable the students to understand different kinds of knowledge. When the students' reading comprehension reaches the maximum level, they will be easier to absorb the information from the text and use it to analyze every problems, cases, phenomena or creative works; evaluate the symptoms, causes, problems or certain cases and provide the solution, suggest the ideas or add some more relevant resources to solve the problems. Brophy (1992:23) states that students with such deeper conceptual knowledge are able to access information and use it in different context as it is easily transferable to learn more knowledge either in English or in different subjects.

Moreover, the students will not only be able to obtain the stated information but also the unstated information if they have good reading comprehension. In other words, they do not only 'read on the lines' but also 'read between the lines'. They will always try to use any single clue in the text they read to guess the meaning of certain words and infer the hidden information or 'message' the writer wants to communicate through the text.

Also, they will not only be encouraged to read intensively but also extensively. Intensive reading focuses on the linguistic and semantic aspects of the text chosen by the teacher whereas extensive reading deal with the general understanding on the long text they chose to read (Brown, 2001:312). This is supported by Nation (2009: 25 &49) who stated that intensive reading has been defined as a means of increasing learner's knowledge of language features and their control of reading strategies and extensive reading is a form of learning from meaning focused input as during extensive reading, learners should be interested in what they are reading. They will love reading very much and this is good for their learning success.

However, as far as the writer is concerned, many students in grade XII of SMAN 3 Padang Panjang do not have good reading comprehension skills in English. They lack of adequate abilities to understand and get the gists from the text they read. They have great difficulties in guessing meaning of words from context, getting the main ideas, and finding implicit information, as well as summarizing the topic and theme. Obviously, many students have not applied their higher order thinking skills: analyzing, evaluating and creating. They might be able to answer concrete questions or recall stated details as they could usually name characters, things or places but they find it difficult to get the gist of the

text, comparing one ideas to another, and using new information to get new conclusion. Thus, making inference, identifying the big picture and rewriting the main points of the text will be a hard task for them.

The condition above lead to the students' failure in getting the meaning and message from what they read and the new information they really have to absorb. They are having problems in relating and expressing their ideas to support the facts, opinions or arguments they find in the text. This is showed by the score they achieved in daily test. The averarage score was only 67,56 in their daily test while in mid semester test, the students got even worse worse scores (56,76). That condition shows that students , are having problems in reading comprehension and need a treatment to improve, otherwise they will fail in reading and this will restrict them to improve their knowledge in broader area. Casey (2002: 3) states that failing to learn to read and write in the early years will result in more special education placement, retention, and poor self-esteem for the learners than any other cause.

Therefore, some methods and techniques were applied to overcome the problems faced by the students in reading comprehension. As Martha (1982:4) claimed that reading is such a complex process that it is important to be taught intentionally at schools, thus teaching the students some techniques and methods to read will certainly ease them in reading. One of the techniques applied has become one of the best techniques to minimize the students' difficulties and improve their reading comprehension. This technique is called Collaborative Strategic Reading. In applying this technique, the students are encouraged to do 4 activities (*preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap up*) in three phases: before reading, whilst reading, and after reading (Klingner, J. K., & Vaughn, S:1996).

B. The Problems and The strategy of problem Solving

1. The Problems

Based on the background of the problem introduced, the problems are formulated as follows:

- 1) How is the Collaborative Strategic Reading applied in reading comprehension classes of grade XII social science 1 of SMAN 3 Padang Panjang?
- 2) How does the Collaborative Strategic Reading implementation improve the students' reading comprehension of grade XII social science 1 of SMAN 3 Padang Panjang?

2. The strategy of problem Solving

a. The Description of Problem Solving Strategy

Based on the problems identified, the writer decided to apply Collaborative Strategic Reading. This is a strategy which enable the students to work together in groups to understand the unfamiliar words, get the gists of the text and to sum up the whole content of the text . Klingner and Vaughn (1998:32) state that this strategy is an excellent technique for teaching students reading comprehension and building vocabulary and also working together cooperatively.

This strategy includes a set of activities: *Preview, Clicks and Clunks, Get the Gist, and Wrap-up* in three phases of reading comprehension classes: *before reading, whilst reading and after reading*. *Previewing* is done in the phase of before reading; *Clicks and Clunks* together with *Get the Gist* are done in the phase of whilst reading; and *Wrap up* is included in the phase of after reading.

In *previewing*, the students are required to brainstorm what they have already known about the topic and predict what will be discussed in the text. *Click and clunk* includes the activities of fixing the unfamiliar words, *get the gist* is the activity to find the important ideas related to the important person, place and things in the text and *wrap up* is the activity which requires the students to sum up and question the text to get the summary of the text.

b. The Implementation of the Strategy

The Collaborative Strategic Reading was implemented in two stages. The first stage was for the students to do this strategy individually and in the next stage, the students applied this strategy in groups of 5 students:

1) Individual Work

Before reading

a) Preview

- *Brainstorm*

Students were encouraged to preview the headings and subheadings, bold-typed and underlined words, charts, pictures or graphs and relating them with their background knowledge by

answering the question: “ Have I known something about this? What does it mean to me?”

- *Predict*

The students were also led to predict about “what will they read or learn in the text?”. This activity activates their thinking to guess what the reading text will discuss about. They were also encouraged to start reading from the current position of their understanding. This made them aware of the new information they would find in the text.

Whilst reading

b) Clicks and clunks

Clicks are all the words, phrases, sentences that the readers have already known while ‘clunks’ are all unfamiliar words, phrases, sentences. In this stage, the students were encouraged to guess the unfamiliar words, phrases and sentences (**clunks**) by the help of the familiar words, phrases and sentences (**clicks**) and do the fix-up strategies to get the meaning of them. The strategies include:

- Rereading the sentence without the clunks and find out what make sense;
- Rereading the sentence with the clunks as well as the sentences before and after it to get the clue from the context formed by the words around;
- Analyzing the form of the words based on the prefix and suffix added to them to get the understanding;
- Finding the smallest part of the word (without prefix and suffix) to get the meaning;

These activities made the students learn that they could guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words from the context formed by the words around, rather than checking their dictionaries all the time.

c) Getting the gist

The students were encouraged to get the gist by identifying the important person, place, or thing and the ideas that go along with them in each paragraph. This was done by prompting them: “what is the important idea found in the text?” “Who has become the important person in this paragraph?” “Where did this process

happen?” “What does the writer say in this paragraph?” Then, the students were required to write the gist from each paragraph by using simple sentence. Finding the gists also helped the students to find the main idea of each paragraph. Klingner and Vaughn (1998: 33) suggest teaching students to provide the gist in as few words as possible while conveying the most meaning, leaving out details. Students were taught to do this by writing the main points (person, place, thing) and the important ideas about them next to the paragraph or they were required to complete the following table:

Table 1: Get the gist

No.	Important parts	Ideas
Parag-raph I	Person:	
	Place:	
	Thing:	

When the students have completed their table with the gists they got from the text, then the teacher asked the students to swap their tables and give comments to each other. This activity encouraged the students to activate their critical thinking when they analyzed the gist and when they wrote it in their own words.

After Reading Phase

d) Wrap Up

In this phase, they were encouraged to question what they have understood from the text. They were taught to write the questions which need both lower order thinking and higher order thinking skills. The questions which need lower order thinking skills are about the details, the facts and the information which is explicitly written in the text and can be easily identified. Thus, writing this type of questions are not really hard for them. The questions which need higher order thinking skills are supported by providing the stems. Klingner and Vaughn (1998:35) provided the example of the stems of higher level questions below:

- How were ___ and ___ the same? Different? What do you think would happen if ___?

- What do you think caused ___ to happen?
- What other solution can you think of for the problem of ___?
- What might have prevented the problem of ___ from happening?
- What are the strengths (or weaknesses) of ___?

Dalton and Smith (1986:36) proposed the types of questions the teacher can offer in the effort to activate the students higher order thinking in checking their comprehension. The extract of them are shown in the forms of the following tables:

Analyze

Useful Verbs	Sample Question Stems
analyze	Which events could have happened...?
distinguish	If ... happened, what might the ending have been?
examine	How was this similar to...?
compare	What was the underlying theme of...?
contrast	What do you see as other possible outcomes?
investigate	Why did ... changes occur?
categorize	Can you compare your ... with that presented in...?
identify	How is ... similar to ...?
explain	What are some of the problems of...?
separate	Can you distinguish between... and ..?
advertise	What were some of the motives behind...?

Evaluation

Useful Verbs	Sample Question Stems
judge	What are the strengths and weaknesses of...
select	Judge the value of...
choose	Do you think ... is a good or a bad thing?
decide	What changes to ... would you recommend?
verify	Are you a ... person?
recommend	How would you feel if...?
assess	How effective are...?
determine	What do you think about...?

Create

Useful Verbs	Sample Question Stems
create	Can you design a ... to ...?
invent	Why not compose a song about...?
compose	Can you see a possible solution to...?
predict	If you had access to all resources how would you deal with...?
plan	Why don't you devise your own way to deal with...?
construct	What would happen if...?
design	How many ways can you...?
imagine	Can you create new and unusual uses for...?
propose	Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish?
devise	

Some of the stems above were chosen to help the students to explore their knowledge on getting the implicit information from the text, analyzing the structure of the text, comparing the ideas in the text,

evaluating the ideas in the text, retelling the content of the text, generating and offering other solutions for the problems found in the text etc. When the students can ask some questions about the content of the text, it means that the students have gotten the content of the text, therefore teachers are required to develop the effective reading activities in the classroom (Harmer, 1998:68). Also, their creative and critical thinking are absolutely improved. It is the teacher's role to facilitate them to use the stems of questions. The teacher is suggested to model and teach this activity before asking the students to do it by themselves.

To review the students understanding on the whole content of the text, they were required to reflect and rewrite briefly what they have learned. The following chart was used to begin the reflection:

<p><i>Today I learn about</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____ . <i>The lesson taught by the text</i></p> <p><i>is</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

2) Group Work

After doing the individual activities of Collaborative Strategic Reading, then the students were led to do the group activity. The students were grouped consists of 5 students. The members of the group were given roles:

- a) The leader

The leader who led the members to do the strategies in the Collaborative Strategic Reading by saying what to read next and which strategy to apply.

- b) The announcer and Reporter

The announcer who called on different members to read or to state their ideas. She/he would make sure only one person to talk at a time. During the Wrap Up session, this student was also responsible

for reporting the main ideas the group learned at the most and shared the most important question that the group has generated to the class

c) The clunk expert

This student used the clunk cards to remind the members what strategy could be used to fix the clunks

d) The gist experts (2 students)

The students wrote down the important person, place or things and the ideas that go along with them. These students with the support from the other members tried to get the main points of each paragraph.

To do the activities, each group used a learning log, clunk cards (the strategies to fix the clunks), and the worksheet to answer the questions in the ‘*get the gist*’ and ‘*wrap up*’ session. The followings are the forms needed to implement the Collaborative Strategic Reading :

a) Learning Log

Collaborative Strategic Reading LEARNING LOG		
Before Reading Preview	During Reading	After Reading Wrap up
Knowledge. What do you know about the topic?	Clunks : Make a list!	Questions and discussions: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Prediction. What will you learn?	The gist: Write down the gist for each section	Review: What did you learn?
	Section A	
	Section B	
	Section C	
	Section D	

b) Clunk Cards

1	Reread the sentence without the words and think about what would make sense	2	Reread the sentence with the clunks and the sentence before and after the clunks to get the clues
3	Analyze the prefix or suffix of the words that might help to get the clues	4	Break the words to find the smallest part of the word that you know

c) Get the gist worksheet

Table 1: The important person, place and things

No.	Important parts	Ideas
Parag-raph I	Person:	
	Place:	
	Thing:	
Parag-raph 2	Person:	
	Place:	
	Thing:	

Table 2. Get the Gist

The gist of each paragraph	
Paragraph 1	
Paragraph 2	
Paragraph 3	
Paragraph 4	
Paragraph 5	

d) Wrap Up worksheet

No.	Write the questions that can be scanned in the text, you may start with QW: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How! (Tulislah pertanyaan yang jawabannya dapat langsung ditemukan di dalam teks, awali pertanyaanmu dengan Who, What, When, Where, Why and How!)
1.	
2.	

3.	
4.	
5.	
No.	Answers
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

No.	Try to write the questions to show that we understand the implicit information that need HOTS!	
	Berikut panduan untuk menulis pertanyaan yang bisa digunakan :	
1.	• How were ____ and ____ the same? Different? (to compare=membandingkan)	
2.		
3.	• What do you think would happen if _____? (menganalisa akibat)	
4.	• What do you think caused ___ to happen? (menganalisa penyebab)	
5.	• What other solution can you think of for the problem of _____? (mengajukan solusi)	
6.	• What might have prevented the problem of _____ from happening? (mengajukan pendapat)	
7.		
8.	• What are the strengths (or weaknesses) of _____? (mengevaluasi)	
9.	• How do you evaluate about _____? (mengevaluasi)	
	• What can we infer about the main characteristics of _____? (menangkap informasi tersirat)	
	• How do you distinguish ___ from _____? (membedakan 1 dari sekumpulan hal/benda)	
No.	Write your HOTS QUESTIONS :	Answer
1.		1.
2.		2.
3.		3.
4.		4.
5.		5.

C. The Result and Discussion

1. The Result

The implementation of Collaborative Strategic Reading has resulted some improvements. First, as they were given the chance to preview the whole text in only 2 – 3 minutes, students were encouraged to think more critically since the very beginning as they were required to brainstorm anything that they have already known about the topic and predict what information they would get from the text before reading carefully each section of text. They looked at

the headings, bold-typed or underlined words, charts, pictures, tables, graphs to help them previewing. All the students of grade XII IS1 completed the worksheet or learning log very carefully and shared their best ideas to each other in the group in a 1 or 2 minutes. They really expected the reading comprehension activity to prove their prediction. They were also ready to read and relate their background knowledge to the information they will find in the text.

Next, By implementing this strategy, the students were eager to struggle to get the clues from context or the words and sentences that might help them to guess the meaning of the clunks (unfamiliar words). They learned that those words could be understood by analysing the context and they need to reread the sentence without the word to think what word would make sense to be placed there or they might get the clues from the sentences before or after the sentence with the clunk. They also realized that the prefix and suffix could give them the clues to guess the meaning of the words or they can find the smallest part of the word they might know. Those improvements are still shown by students until now. Thus, this activity has engaged the students to read and has minimized the students' reluctance in reading activity due to the vocabulary problems.

Another good progress is that the students are getting better in getting the main points from each paragraph they read. Now, they want to share what they think to be the most important place, person or things in each paragraph and the important ideas about them with their own words. They also improve their ability in finding the stated or unstated information or main ideas as they practice a lot to do it through 'get the gist' activity.

The last improvement lies on the students progress on summing up and retelling what they understand and learn from the text. They practiced these a lot through questioning activity in 'wrap up' session. The questions include those which activate their low order thinking and high order thinking. They develop their ability in retelling the information they get from the text by asking the question by using who, how, where, when and why and they begin asking critical questions by using the stems given. Step by step, they can compare the informations in different paragraphs, make an inference about the facts given, identify the components of the text based on the structure or analyze causes and effects. The students can also be guided to provide other

solution to overcome the problem found in the text. The students chose 5 best questions to write in the learning log and write the answers. Then, they could exchange the questions to the other groups. Once they could do this process very well, they would be able to sum up the whole content of the text.

As the whole package, the students have improved the way they process the text. They have changed the way they perceive the text and the way they read. By implementing the collaborative strategic reading, the students are engaged in reading and they are not reluctant to continue reading although they found some difficult words. They work quite hard to get the gist of each paragraph. Thus, when they were given the reading comprehension test, they could do it better and this can be seen through the result they get. Before the implementation of the strategy, the students average score was 67,56 for their daily exam and 56,76 in their mid semester test. But after applying this strategy, the students can achieve the average score of 77,19 in their reading comprehension test and the writer is sure that they can do even better in the next reading tests.

2. The obstacles

In applying this strategy, the writer needs to cope with the following obstacles:

a. The students' self confidence

Some students were not self confident in implementing the strategy by themselves and still need the writer's guidance otherwise they would disturb other students by asking and cheating. When the writer modelled the strategy and involved the students, all of them could do the whole strategy and they said that they do not find difficulties. But when they did it individually then they were not self confident to do those steps and they asked the writer or other students for more guidance. To cope with this problem, the students were given more guidance after the class in order to improve their understanding on the strategy and this certainly would also improve their self confidence.

b. Students' Commitment

Another thing which need the improvement was the commitment to do each stage of the strategy based on the time allocation provided. Some students did not strict to the time and the activity needed more time

to finish. For example, it was said that in previewing, they were given 2 minutes to read the headings, bold typed or underlined words, charts, pictures etc but then they did it slower. In another time, they were given chance to fix the clunks for about 10 minutes and get the gist from each section (paragraph) for about 15 minutes. But then some of the students did another things and did not focus on the activities they were doing. As the result, the students could not finish the task on time. Therefore, the students' commitment and discipline needed to be improved to ensure their success.

c. Monitoring tool

The writer prepared the monitoring tools only for the group works as for individual works, the writer did the monitoring by walking around the class to give some helps when needed and made sure that the students really did their activities. However, sometimes there were a few students in the class who did not follow the whole instructions given in their worksheet. If the writer only reminded them, then they would focus for a while but then they would do it again. On the other hand, when the students joined the group activity, they worked seriously based on the roles that have been determined for them. They focused on the steps they had to do in applying the strategy and they collaborated quite well. This might because they had been aware of the activities that they had to do as they had got the experience when the teacher taught and modelled the strategy for the first time followed by two meetings for their individual exercises on different texts. Another cause could be the fact that the group activities are monitored by using teacher and peer observation checklists. Thus, the writer decided to use an observation checklist for individual works next time.

3. The Supporting Factors

a. Students

Most of the students of grade XII Social Science 1 like the challenges. They considered the activities like previewing, fixing the clunks, getting the gist, and wrapping up the whole information in the text as the challenges for them. In individual activity, they began to enjoy the experience when they could guess the unfamiliar words earlier

than other students or when they could be the first person to say the most important part of the paragraph/section they read. These also happened in applying the group activity. The students were competing in getting the important information in the text and providing the best questions to exchange with each other among the groups. Although this activity was hard to do for the first time, but once they understood one step, they were eager to do it several times. This ensured the writer to use this strategy for reading comprehension activity.

b. Teacher

Teacher is the director and facilitator of the whole classroom learning activities. The teacher set the plans and she implemented all she has planned. The teacher had to prepare plan A and plan B before she comes to the classroom. Whenever unexpected problems happened, then changes and improvements on the plan/scenario had to be done. The implementation of the Collaborative Strategic Reading required the teacher to be creative and well-prepared.

c. Material and Resources

Engaging the students in reading comprehension activities based on the Collaborative Strategic Reading strategy in reading comprehension class of grade XII IPS1 was not an easy task if it was not supported by appropriate learning materials and resources. When the students were engaged in individual activity, they needed to work on the worksheet provided, otherwise they will not do the whole activities well. In group works, the materials like learning logs, clunks cards, get the gist worksheet and wrap up worksheet helped the implementation of the strategy very much.

4. Alternative Improvement

Regarding the importance of the reading comprehension skills for students, the teacher is always challenged to develop more interesting reading activities. Collaborative Strategic Reading has become one of the best strategies to be implemented in reading comprehension classes. However, it still needs these following improvements :

a. Extra guidance for slow learners and the students who have learning difficulties

For the students who were slow learners or those who had learning difficulties, the teacher need to provide extra time to guide them to be able to do the whole activities included in the Collaborative Strategic Reading. When the students understand what to do and they are able to do the activities by themselves then they will have good self confidence.

b. Using Alarm Timer for reminding the students on the time limit of each activity

Using this type of timer can promote the competition climate among the students and this can absolutely encourage them to commit with the time allocation determined for each stages in the strategy applied. This will help them to improve their discipline to do the activities properly.

c. Providing observation checklist for monitoring individual activity

This observation checklist will help the teacher to monitor the students activity so that the teacher can make sure that every student are doing the activities seriously based on the worksheet given

d. Socializing the Collaborative Strategic Reading

As an alternative solution in coping with the reading comprehension problems, Collaborative Strategic Reading need to be shared in English Teachers Association of Padang Panjang and of West Sumatera. By sharing this strategy, it is expected that more teachers can apply it in their classrooms and it will broaden the impact of the strategy.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the discussion on the previous sections, it is concluded that collaborative Strategic Reading was implemented in two stages: individual work and group work. Each stage includes 4 (four) activities namely preview, click and clunk, get the gist and wrap up. In individual work, the students do all of the 4 (four) activities by themselves, but in group work, each member of each group will get the role to participate actively in the group in applying those 4 (four) activity.

Based on the test result and the progress that students make, this strategy has helped the students to improve their reading comprehension. The class average score has improved from 67, 56 into 77,19. The improvement also lies on the students' ways to process the text. They are ready to connect their background knowledge to what they read in the text. They also begin to engage in reading although they found the unfamiliar words while reading. They will fix the clunks and they do not stop reading. Although it was very hard for them to find the gist and sum up the whole text by questioning themselves, they kept doing it. This enabled them to find the explicit and implicit information and coping with the questions that need higher order thinking. However some students still need more guidance to be aware of the activity and build their self confidence. Some other needs to build stronger commitment to work on the activities based on the time allocation given. Finally some improvement in the monitoring tools.

Regarding the improvements and the positive impact achieved by the students, the writer suggests that this strategy need to be applied for teaching reading comprehension of different genres of text during the semester for better result.

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