

**Improving Students' Reading Comprehension
For Grade XI MIA 5 at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta
through *Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)*
In the Academic Year of 2015/2016**

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Abstract: This research was aimed at improving students' reading comprehension for grade XI MIA 5 students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta through Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) in the academic year of 2015/2016. This research was categorized as classroom action research which consists of four steps: planning, action, observation and reflection. The actions were conducted in two cycles. The data of this research were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected through classroom observation and interviews. The quantitative data were collected through reading comprehension tests (a pre-test and a post-tests). The validity of the data was established by fulfilling the democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity. The research findings show that there are some positive changes in students' attitude and behavior towards reading lesson, students' participation in the class discussion, and students' attempts in achieving reading goals. In addition, there is an improvement on students' reading comprehension after STAD was implemented in the teaching and learning process. It was supported by the increase of mean scores of the students' pre-test and post-test results (74.13 to 79.65).

Keywords: reading comprehension, Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)

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Introduction

Reading is one of the four basic skills which should be mastered by the students. Reading is a process of getting information from written words. Reading is an important skill in our daily life because it can give many advantages for us. Through reading, we can obtain plenty of information which can expand our knowledge. Heilman, Blair, & Rupley (1981: 2) argue that the reading can be defined as a thinking process and it can be a communicative skill. They also define the reading is an interacting process with the language in the printed page. By reading, students also learned much of what they need to know for their different school subject. Reading helps the students to develop their critical thinking and finally it influences the success of their academic achievement. The success of

teaching and learning process in the classroom or outside the classroom is influenced by reading habit.

Many efforts have been done by the expert in education field to improve the way in teaching reading and the students' ability in reading comprehension. For example, by proposing and applying many kinds of reading techniques, selecting authentic materials used in reading comprehension. Unfortunately, poor reading comprehension still occurs for a large number of the students. As the result, students' ability in reading comprehension still needs improvement. This problem also happens to be the case among students in grade XI MIA 5 students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta. Most of the students find difficulties to comprehend an English text.

Problems in reading comprehension were caused by several factors. Firstly, the students lacked knowledge of vocabulary. Secondly, the students were less motivated in learning activities of reading. Thirdly, the teacher has not yet taught the students a particular reading strategy.

Based on the problems stated above, the teacher needs to apply an appropriate strategy that can solve the problems. Brown (2001:7) states that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting condition for learning.

The Student Teams-Achievement Divisions is chosen to be one of the methods to improve students' reading comprehension. This method is firstly developed by Robert Slavin. It is one of the simplest of all cooperative learning methods. In STAD students are assigned to four member learning teams that are mixed in performance level, gender and ethnicity (Rusman, 2011: 213). STAD consists of five major components: class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition.

STAD method is chosen based on its advantages. STAD motivates students to encourage and help each other master skills presented by the teacher (Slavin, 2009: 9). Using STAD teaching technique, students are involved in discussing problem together, sharing the difficulty in reading passages and providing them with knowledge.

Research Method

This research was categorized as classroom action research. The subjects of this study were 29 students of grade XI MIA 5 students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta. The research was carried out in the first semester of 2015/2016 academic year. In this research design, the data were qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were obtained

through classroom observation, interviews, field-notes, and photographs, while the quantitative data were obtained through reading comprehension tests (a pre-test and a post-tests). The qualitative data were analyzed using several steps; collecting data, reducing data, presenting data, and making conclusion. As to analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used descriptive statistic to find the mean and percentage scores of the reading comprehension tests scores. The validity of the data was established by fulfilling the democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity, and the reliability of the data was obtained by applying time triangulation and investigator triangulation. Finally, the research procedures consisted of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Burn, 2010).

Research Findings and Discussions

The research findings show that reading comprehension of the grade XI MIA 5 students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta improved through the implementation of The Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) method.

This research was carried out in two cycles. During the implementation of the actions, the researcher also used accompanying activities and supporting teaching aids such as pictures, multimedia, games, quizzes, and reward which motivated and interacted students in reading activities. They indeed played an important role in succeeding the process of the implementation of the actions. As the result, the implementation of STAD method was not only effective in improving the students' reading comprehension, but also the students' motivation in learning reading.

In implementing the actions from cycle I to cycle 2, the teacher found that STAD method improved the students' behavior and also motivation towards teaching reading as well as the students' ability in comprehending texts. The research findings in further discussion were presented as follows.

Firstly, STAD is able to improve the students' participation and motivation towards reading lesson. Various steps of the method encouraged them to think and share their opinion related to the topic. It gave the students chances to participate and have interaction with the teacher as well as the other students. The students seemed to accept the material easily because they cooperative in mastering the material and they are competitive to get the reward from the teacher. Students also actively participate within their group. Furthermore, when they were given individual quiz by the teacher, they did it individually without cheating one

another and they do the best for their improvement teams. Shortly, most of students seemed quite active in the classroom and in doing reading exercises and students enjoy study.

Secondly, STAD is able to improve students' skill in using background knowledge. This method can help students to activate background knowledge to draw meaning of a text that is useful for text comprehension. During the learning process, the students had got sufficient practice in sharing their experience and background knowledge as a bridge to connect their knowledge with the content of the text. Experience phase enabled the students to think more actively and critically before they read the text.

Furthermore, STAD is able to enhance students' knowledge of vocabulary. Previously, the students depended too much on dictionary. When they found unfamiliar words in a text, they just looked in the dictionary to find the meaning. However, it was not effective because the students would only know the meaning of the words at that time but they would easily forget it in the future as they did not intend to understand the meaning of the words. By using STAD method, the students were directed to understand the meaning based on the context by looking at surrounding sentences. The students were given chances to make use of their background knowledge related to the text to guess the meaning.

Lastly, STAD is able to improve the students' reading ability. Previously, the students faced some problems in comprehending a text, but STAD method enabled them activating their background knowledge in which it led them to have a prior prediction related to the text that they were going to discussed. As the result, the students found it easier to understand the content of the text and to obtain specific information from the text. It also enabled them to compare and contrast the result of the text with their prior prediction which led them to summary and make conclusion. The improvement of the students' reading comprehension was also supported by the result of reading test scores. The pre-test mean score was 74.13, while the post-test mean score was 79,65. The mean score increases 5.52 points which means that there is significant improvement in the students' reading comprehension ability.

Conclusions

The implementation of STAD method aimed to improve students' reading comprehension through activating students behavior and motivation. The actions were carried out in two cycles by applying five phases of STAD method in reading. The activities included class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition. The actions were also supported by the use of pictures, multimedia, games, quizzes, and group discussion.

After conducting the STAD method, the reading comprehension of grade XI MIA 5 students improved. The improvement was also supported by the result of reading comprehension tests that show the students' mean score increased from 74.13 to 79.65. In addition to the improvement in reading comprehension, there were some aspects that also changed after the implementation of the actions: 1) there were positive changes on the students' motivation towards reading lesson; 2) the students' participation in the class discussion increased; 3) the students' behavior in reading class to overcome their reading problems;

Considering the benefits and the results of the implementation of the STAD method, it is suggested that English teachers could implement this method in their teaching and learning process to improve students' reading comprehension ability.

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