

Think Aloud in Collaborative Discussion on Reading Comprehension of EFL Students

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Abstract: Think Aloud in Collaborative Discussion on Reading Comprehension of EFL Students

This research was intended to describe the process and students' perception of using think aloud in collaborative discussion on EFL students' reading comprehension, and also to find out whether there was a difference on the students' reading achievement. The research was conducted at SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung to the eleventh grade students. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The result shows that think aloud in collaborative discussion helped the students comprehend the texts. Furthermore, the result of reading test indicated that there was a significant difference of students' reading achievement between those who are taught using think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method. It can be concluded that think aloud in collaborative discussion is a good strategy to help the students comprehend reading texts.

Keywords: *think aloud, collaborative learning, reading comprehension*

Abstrak: Think Aloud dalam Diskusi Kolaboratif terhadap Pemahaman Membaca Siswa EFL

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mendeskripsikan proses dan persepsi siswa mengenai penggunaan think aloud dalam diskusi kolaboratif terhadap pemahaman membaca siswa EFL, dan juga untuk mengetahui apakah ada perbedaan yang signifikan terhadap hasil peningkatan pemahaman membaca siswa. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung terhadap siswa kelas sebelas. Data dalam penelitian ini dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan think aloud dalam diskusi kolaboratif membantu siswa memahami teks bacaan. Selain itu, hasil tes membaca menunjukkan terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan terhadap peningkatan membaca siswa antara siswa yang diajarkan menggunakan think aloud dalam diskusi kolaboratif dan siswa yang diajarkan menggunakan metode konvensional. Ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa think aloud dalam diskusi kolaboratif adalah strategi yang baik untuk membantu siswa memahami teks bacaan.

Kata kunci: think aloud, pembelajaran kooperatif, pemahaman membaca

INTRODUCTION

Think-aloud is a technique in which students verbalize their thoughts as they read and thus bring into the open strategies they are using to understand a text (Baumann, Jones and Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Phritchard and O'Hara, 2006; Oster, 2001). Readers' thoughts might include commenting on or questioning the text, bringing their prior knowledge to bear, or making inferences or predictions. Additionally, thinking aloud helps students to learn, think, and reflect upon the reading process. That is, students not only make sense about what they read but also move beyond literal decoding to comprehending (Wilhelm, 2001). Through the use of think aloud, students may be more able to comprehend what they read.

Researches on learning styles are mostly organized to investigate the use of think aloud. McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) conducted the research by dividing the students into three levels to see whether or not any significant difference on their reading comprehension by using think aloud. However, from three levels they found there were no significant differences. It revealed that while English learners successfully use metacognitive strategies such as think-aloud, the efficacy of the strategies depends on the unique needs of each particular level of proficiency as they approach the text. Similarly, Liaw (1995) in Taiwan also found there was no significant effect between the control and experimental group, but there were significant differences between the mean scores of the first and second reading comprehension test. He argued that significant difference between the control and experimental group was influenced by the length of time in using think aloud.

Related to think aloud researches on reading comprehension, Seng (2007) conducted his think aloud research on reading comprehension by combining the collaborative discussion. The research

subject was Malaysian university students, who use English as their second language. They were second semester (first year) Bachelor in Education of English, who were considered proficient in English. He aimed his study at exploring the use of think aloud in a collaborative environment in helping ESL students improve their reading achievement. The result showed that the students in the experimental group obtained higher reading comprehension scores than their counterparts in the comparison group after the instruction of using think aloud in small group. It seemed collaborative learning also played a role on their reading comprehension.

It is supported by Vygotsky, as quoted by Seng (2007:31), social interaction is the mechanism for individual development, since in the presence of a more capable participant, the novice is drawn into, and operates within, the space of the expert's strategic processes for problem solving. The purpose of learning collaboratively is to acquire common knowledge and use this knowledge to solve a problem. It creates a positive social atmosphere and facilitates perception.

Those previous studies above inspired the researcher to combine think aloud and collaborative discussion in promoting the students reading comprehension. The researcher assumes that it is also important to know how the secondary level students' perceptions towards the implementation of think aloud strategy in collaborative discussion on their reading comprehension. The reason is students' perception and the process of think aloud in collaborative discussion would strengthen the data whether or not this strategy is recommended to be applied to promote students' reading comprehension achievement.

According to Hodgson and McConnell in Marjanovic (1999), collaborative learning, especially in the face-to-face mode, has an important social dimension as it gives rise to other positive outcomes which are not usually considered

academic such as self assurance and personal insight. In this process, the purpose is to unite students with similar proficiency levels and enable them to learn. Furthermore, Demirel in Istifci and Kaya (2011) states that group members help each other by teaching one another or every member completes one part of the task. In other words, everybody in the group is responsible for the others' learning.

Based on the statement above, the researcher formulated the research questions as follows: (1) How is the process of students' reading comprehension by using think aloud in collaborative discussion? (2) How is students' perception about think aloud in collaborative discussion on their reading comprehension? (3) Is there any significant difference of students' reading achievement between those who are taught using think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method?

METHOD

The population was the eleventh grade students of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung. This research used quantitative and qualitative method in order to know the significant difference of using think aloud strategy in collaborative discussion towards students' reading achievement and to describe the process of it on students' reading comprehension. The researcher took two classes as sample of this research consisting of an experimental class and a control class. The experimental class was taught using think aloud strategy in collaborative discussion and another class was taught using the strategy based on conventional method that is applied by the English teacher in teaching-learning process.

As explained previously, the data in the present research were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The researcher used four instruments to analyze the data. Those are observation,

questionnaire, interview, and reading test. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program version 16 for windows. The data obtained from test were compared before and after treatment. The researcher compared the score between control class and experimental class. All the comparisons of the test above were analyzed by using independent t-test to know the differences before and after the treatment given.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Process of Think Aloud in Collaborative Discussion

From the process of using think aloud in collaborative discussion, it was found that there were six strategies used by the students in doing think aloud in collaborative discussion. The following table presents those reading strategies.

Table 1. The Findings of the Reading Strategies Used by the Students in Doing Think Aloud in Collaborative Discussion

No	Reading Strategies	Frequ-ency	Percentage
1	Making Predictions	45	17.93%
2	Asking Questions	96	38.25%
3	Clarifying Something	5	1.99%
4	Making Judgment	76	30.28%
5	Making Connection	27	10.75%
6	Rereading the Text	2	0.80%
Total		251	100%

Another finding that the researcher found was collaborative learning also influenced the students for doing think aloud. It got them active when they were in reading process. In collaborative discussion, they not only verbalized their thoughts, but also they help other group members to understand the text with the

strategies that had been taught by the researcher before. The leader of each group gave some stimulating questions to the members in order to make the group members active in verbalizing their thoughts. Therefore, each student had responsibility to help his friends comprehend the text by sharing the strategies he had.

The data above were in line with Dooly (2008:21), collaborative learning is aimed at getting the students to take almost full responsibility for working together, building knowledge together, changing and evolving together and of course, improving together. Collaborative learning requires working together toward a common goal. When they do think aloud individually, they only have comprehension that they may conclude themselves. However, when they collaborate with their friends in order to comprehend the text, they will have some comprehension that they can relate to theirs. This strategy is useful to compare what the reader have noticed or done that another did not. Group members can teach one another's strategies in comprehending a reading text.

It is also supported by Demirel in Istifci and Kaya (2011), students who have different abilities, different body developments and different learning backgrounds go towards a common aim and establish better friendship in group works. It is supported by Vygotsky, as quoted by Seng (2007:31), social interaction is the mechanism for individual development, since in the presence of a more capable participant, the novice is drawn into, and operates within, the space of the expert's strategic processes for problem solving. The purpose of learning collaboratively is to acquire common knowledge and use this knowledge to solve a problem.

From the explanation above, it can be interpreted that collaborative discussion took a part in the students' reading comprehension process. By doing think

aloud in collaborative discussion, the students shared one another's strategy in order to comprehend the text. For example, the students exchanged their knowledge to others in order to have similar perception of what the text tells about. Their interaction facilitated their perceptions to comprehend the text together.

Students' Perception about Think Aloud in Collaborative Discussion on Students' Reading Comprehension.

To describe the students' perception about think aloud in collaborative discussion, the researcher used three data collecting techniques to answer the second research question. Those were observation, questionnaire, and interview. The indicators of the students' perception about using think aloud in collaborative discussion on their reading comprehension, that the researcher used based on related to the strategy of think aloud in comprehending the text, interaction, think aloud in collaborative discussion in comprehending the text, and learners' satisfaction.

From the observation, it can be seen that the students used some reading strategies (making predictions, asking questions, clarifying something, making judgments, making connections, and rereading the text) to help them comprehend the text. As stated before, the researcher found that collaborative learning also influenced the students for doing think aloud. It got them active when they were in reading process. In collaborative discussion, they not only verbalized their thoughts, but also they help other group members to understand the text with the strategies that had been taught by the researcher before. The leader of each group gave some stimulating questions to the members in order to make the group members active in verbalizing their thoughts. Therefore, each student had responsibility to help his friends comprehend the text by sharing the strategies he had.

In line with observation data, data of questionnaire and interview also showed that the students enjoyed using think aloud in collaborative discussion on their reading comprehension. Based on the answers given by the students through interview about students' perception toward the implementation of think aloud in collaborative discussion, the students told that this strategy were useful for them to comprehend the text. Moreover, their group members also helped them not only comprehend the text, but also share some strategies to comprehend a text.

From the explanation above, it can be stated that think-aloud in collaborative discussion unite students with similar proficiency levels and enable them to comprehend the text together. Furthermore, Demirel in Istifci and Kaya (2011) states that group members help each other by teaching one another or every member completes one part of the task. In other words, everybody in the group is responsible for the others' learning. It can be seen the students have good positive perspectives about think aloud, interaction, think aloud in collaborative discussion, and their satisfaction.

Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement

Mean difference between score in control and experimental class was calculated to determine the significant difference of the treatment. In determining the significant difference of the mean score in control and experimental class, quantitative data collected through the pretest and the posttest was examined through statistical analyses. For the purpose of examining the effect of the experimental treatment, a research hypothesis corresponding to the research question was proposed. The hypothesis is as follow:

H_0 : There is no significant difference of students' reading achievement between those who are taught using

think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method.

H_a : There is a significant difference of students' reading achievement between those who are taught using think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method.

From the results of the data analysis, it was found that there was a significant difference of students' reading achievement between those who are taught using think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method. It could be seen from the table below.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Students' Reading Achievement

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
GAIN SCORE	Equal variances assumed	2.067	.155	8.703	70	.000	7.611	.875	5.867	9.355	
	Equal variances not assumed			8.703	64.487	.000	7.611	.875	5.864	9.358	

In Table 2, the Independent T-Test revealed that P value is less than α level (0.05), then H_0 that the variability of the test score is equal can be rejected, implying that variances are equal. It was shown in the data analysis $P = 0.000$. According to this assumption, it is considered $\alpha = 0.005$, $P < 0.05$. Based on the analysis of the data and testing hypothesis, the result of the calculation was found that null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

Results of statistical analysis pointed to statistically significant difference between the performance in reading comprehension measures of scores in control class and experimental class.

Hence, the instructional procedure had contributed to the improvement of the EFL students' reading comprehension. Besides, the think aloud strategy can improve students' reading comprehension including identifying the main idea, making predictions, interpreting the problems, understanding vocabulary, and making a generalization

This finding supports the use of think-aloud in reading instruction as advocated by reading researchers (Baumann, Jones, and Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Phritchard and O'Hara, 2006; Oster, 2001). It is also supported by Seng (2007), discussion in collaborative situation was another prominent feature in the reading comprehension. Generally, the students were asked to discuss (based on their think aloud) what they did, the problem they had, and the strategies they used. The think aloud strategy in collaborative discussion gives a clear insight in how students reach the solution.

In addition, Hodgson and McConnell in Marjanovic (1999) argue collaborative learning, especially in the face-to-face mode, has an important social dimension as it gives rise to other positive outcomes which are not usually considered academic such as self assurance and personal insight. It can be accepted as a process in which students work in small groups and help each other to learn. In this process, the purpose is to unite students with similar proficiency levels and enable them to learn.

This research also proves that this strategy can also be applied on EFL context. As stated before, this kind of research had already been conducted by Seng (2007). However, his research subject was Malaysian university students who took Bachelor of Education in English Department, who were considered proficient in English. The result showed that the students in the experimental group obtained higher reading comprehension scores than their counterparts in the

comparison group after the instruction of using think aloud in small group. It seemed collaborative learning also played a role on their reading comprehension.

From the explanation above, it can be interpreted that the think aloud in collaborative discussion is good strategy to improve students' reading comprehension achievement. It can be said that think aloud in collaborative discussion was also able to enhance not only ESL students, that was done by Seng (2007), but also on EFL students' reading achievement. Through this strategy, the students can share their thoughts in collaborative discussion that helped them to comprehend the text better.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In line with the results of the data analysis and discussion which have been elaborated in the previous section, the researcher draws the following conclusions. Those are (1) in the process of think aloud in collaborative discussion, the students verbalized their thoughts related to the text. The researcher also found reading strategies used by the students (making prediction, asking questions, clarifying something in the text, making judgment, making connection, and re-reading the text) to help them verbalize their thought; (2) the students' perception about the implementation of think aloud in collaborative discussion was positive. From four indicators - think aloud, interaction, think aloud in collaborative discussion, and learners' satisfaction, those had good positive perspective from the students; (3) there is a significant difference on students' reading achievement between those who are taught using think aloud in collaborative discussion and those who are taught using conventional method. It can be concluded that think aloud in collaborative discussion enhances the EFL students' reading comprehension achievement.

By considering the conclusions above, the researcher proposes suggestions which are

divided into two sections as follows (1) the teacher should use this strategy in reading process because it was really effective to be applied. It can be seen from the improvement of the students' reading comprehension achievement after the treatments. However, the teachers should introduce reading strategies that the students can use when they verbalize their thoughts; (2) for further research, it is suggested using different types of text to measure students' reading comprehension. On the other hand, think aloud strategy may also be used to measure other skills, such as writing performance. With combining think aloud and collaborative discussion, it may improve the students' writing performance.

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