


OPTIMIZING READING COMPREHENSION SKILL WITH THE STUDENTS' TEAM ACHIEVEMENT DIVISION (STAD) METHOD

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KEYWORDS

Reading Comprehension, STAD Method, Cooperative Learning

ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine whether the use of the Students' Team Achievement Division (STAD) method can significantly improve students' reading comprehension skills. This research focused on five indicators of reading comprehension: vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference. The sample of this research was class X Computer and Network Engineering at SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo, consisting of 25 students. This research used a quantitative method, specifically a pre-experimental design with pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The instrument used was a multiple-choice objective test. The results showed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension skills after the implementation of the STAD method. This is evidenced by the difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test and further supported by hypothesis testing, in which H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. Based on the Paired Sample T-Test, if the Sig. (2-tailed) If the value is less than 0.05, it indicates that the STAD method has a significant effect. In this study, the Sig. (2-tailed) The value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus proving that the STAD method effectively improves students' reading comprehension skills.

KATA KUNCI

Pemahaman Membaca, Metode STAD, Pembelajaran Kooperatif

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan apakah penggunaan metode Students' Team Achievement Division (STAD) dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan keterampilan pemahaman membaca siswa. Penelitian ini berfokus pada lima indikator pemahaman membaca: kosakata, ide utama, informasi spesifik, referensi, dan inferensi. Sampel penelitian ini adalah kelas X Teknik Komputer dan Jaringan di SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo, yang terdiri dari 25 siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif, khususnya desain pra-experimental dengan pre-test, perlakuan, dan post-test. Alat yang digunakan adalah tes objektif pilihan ganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam keterampilan pemahaman membaca siswa setelah penerapan metode STAD. Hal ini dibuktikan dengan perbedaan skor antara pre-test dan post-test serta didukung lebih lanjut oleh pengujian hipotesis, di mana H_a diterima dan H_o ditolak. Berdasarkan Paired Sample T-Test, jika Sig. (2 arah) Jika nilai kurang dari 0,05, ini menunjukkan bahwa metode STAD memiliki efek yang signifikan. Dalam penelitian ini, nilai Sig. (2 arah) adalah 0,000, yang kurang dari 0,05, sehingga membuktikan bahwa metode STAD secara efektif meningkatkan keterampilan pemahaman bacaan siswa.

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Introduction

Reading is a vital skill that serves as the cornerstone of academic success, especially in language learning. It empowers students to acquire knowledge, understand content across disciplines, and think critically. According to Tarigan (1998), reading is a process used by a reader to interpret and understand the author's message through written symbols. In line with this, Jariah et al. (2023) emphasize that strong reading skills help learners not only absorb information but also develop cognitive capabilities necessary for academic growth. However, Indonesian students continue to face challenges in mastering reading comprehension. The 2018 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) data revealed that the reading proficiency of Indonesian students remains below the international average (Nugrahanto & Zuchdi, 2019). As Wuryanto (2022) further notes, about 27% of Indonesian students perform at level 1b in reading, indicating limited ability to process simple texts or make inferences. This finding underscores the urgent need for innovative teaching strategies to enhance reading comprehension skills, especially in vocational high schools where practical knowledge must be coupled with academic literacy. Reading comprehension itself involves several critical aspects. Nuttal (1985, as cited in Agi, 2022) identifies five essential elements: identifying factual information, determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary in context, identifying referents, and making inferences. These aspects demand more than just surface reading they require analytical thinking and active engagement with texts. Ikhtiyorovna (2023) further argues that reading comprehension not only supports language development but also enhances a student's ability to engage meaningfully with complex ideas and texts.

Unfortunately, many students at vocational high schools show limited enthusiasm for reading. Classroom observations at SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo revealed students often disengaged from reading tasks either by chatting with peers, ignoring teacher instructions, or passively looking at the text without attempting comprehension. This lack of motivation is frequently tied to traditional, monotonous teaching methods that fail to stimulate students' interest (Alghamdy, 2024). Furthermore, when students are rarely involved in collaborative activities, they are less likely to engage in peer learning or build confidence in interpreting texts (Yapp et al., 2023). In response to these challenges, this study proposes the use of Students' Team Achievement Division (STAD) a cooperative learning model developed by Slavin et al. (2010) to optimize reading comprehension. STAD organizes students into heterogeneous groups, encouraging them to support one another in understanding learning materials before taking individual assessments. This method fosters peer collaboration, reinforces accountability, and promotes mutual success (Lutfiyyah, 2020; Ulhaq, 2023). Research by Ramadhani et al. (2022) also confirms that cooperative models like STAD significantly improve students' academic performance by enhancing interaction and reducing learning anxiety. The STAD method offers several pedagogical advantages for reading comprehension. It increases motivation, develops teamwork, and encourages active participation in learning. As Palembang and Pabangke (2023) highlight, STAD not only improves comprehension skills but also helps cultivate social and communication abilities key competencies in both academic and vocational settings.

Prior studies support the efficacy of STAD. Ramadhani (2019) found that students taught with STAD outperformed those under traditional methods. Ferina (2015) also reported that junior high school students demonstrated higher reading comprehension achievement when taught through STAD, recommending its broader implementation. Similarly, Kholifah (2012) documented a significant improvement in comprehension outcomes when using STAD in reading instruction. Given the widespread success of STAD and the persistent reading difficulties among vocational students, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the STAD method in improving reading comprehension skills among first-grade students at SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo. The focus is on five key indicators: vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference within the context of descriptive texts, aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The chosen class, X Computer and Network Engineering, serves as the sample due to its observed struggles with English reading comprehension.

Method

This research adopts a quantitative approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) method in improving students' reading comprehension. Quantitative research is particularly useful when aiming to determine the magnitude of an effect through numerical data and statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2020). The study employs a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pre-test and post-test model. This design includes three essential stages: a pre-test to measure baseline ability, a treatment phase using the STAD method, and a post-test to assess learning outcomes. As described by Fatimah (2021), this design is suitable for determining the influence of an intervention on a single sample group without comparison to a control group.

The research instruments used were multiple-choice objective tests consisting of 25 validated items, each targeting one of the five key indicators of reading comprehension: vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference. The tests were constructed based on the framework from Nuttal (1985, as cited in Agi, 2022), who identified these five indicators as fundamental to effective reading comprehension. The population for this research included 93 first-grade students at SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo, while the sample was selected purposively from class X Computer and Network Engineering, comprising 25 students. The chosen sample exhibited low reading comprehension abilities based on preliminary observations, thus representing an appropriate target for intervention.

The procedures involved three stages. First, students completed a pre-test to determine their initial reading comprehension levels (Effendy, 2016). This was followed by a treatment phase, during which the STAD method was implemented across six sessions. Instruction focused on descriptive texts aligned with the vocational interests of students, and group discussions were facilitated to encourage cooperative learning (Slavin et al., 2010). Finally, students were given a post-test to measure changes in their comprehension skills.

Results

This section presents the results of the research conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Students' Team Achievement Division (STAD) method in improving the reading comprehension skills of first-grade students at SMK Negeri 5 Gorontalo. The findings are derived from both quantitative data analysis and observation, focusing on pre-test and post-test score comparisons, indicator-based performance, and statistical evaluations. The core aim is to determine whether the application of the STAD model significantly enhances comprehension across five indicators: vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference. Before implementing the treatment, students were given a pre-test to assess their initial reading comprehension skills. The results revealed that 70.8% of students scored between 11 and 15, while 29.2% scored between 16 and 20. Notably, no students reached the top score range (21–25), indicating that most learners had only a basic understanding of the text and struggled with deeper comprehension tasks. This reflects similar findings reported by Nugrahanto and Zuchdi (2019), who noted Indonesian students' below-average performance in international literacy assessments like PISA. In particular, difficulties were evident in areas requiring inference and reference recognition, echoing OECD's (as cited in Wuryanto, 2022) observations that students at level 1b proficiency can only solve simple, literal questions.

A closer look at the pre-test performance by reading indicator shows clear variation in student competence. For specific information, students achieved 83% accuracy, the highest among the five indicators, suggesting relative ease in identifying explicitly stated facts. The main idea and reference indicators followed with scores of 64% and 62%, respectively. Vocabulary understanding reached only 54%, while making inferences recorded the lowest score at 46%, highlighting significant difficulty in interpreting implied meanings. These findings align with Ikhtiyorovna (2023), who asserts that making inferences requires higher-order thinking skills not typically fostered through traditional lecture-based instruction. Following the STAD-based treatment, which spanned six structured sessions emphasizing collaborative learning, descriptive texts, and peer interaction, the post-test revealed notable improvement. The majority of students 54.2% scored in the 21–25 range, while 33.3% scored 16–20, and only 12.5% remained in the 11–15 range. These results marked a significant shift from the pre-test distribution, indicating enhanced comprehension. This aligns with the conclusions of Ramadhani (2019), who found that STAD significantly improved students' performance in reading comprehension when compared to traditional methods.

In terms of indicator-based performance, every comprehension aspect showed improvement. Vocabulary mastery increased from 54% to 80%, indicating that group discussions helped students contextualize and internalize new words more effectively. The main idea indicator improved from 64% to 75%, showing that students became more adept at identifying the central point of each paragraph. The highest gains occurred in specific information, which improved to 99%—likely due to the clarity and repetition involved in STAD group tasks. Likewise, the reference indicator rose from 62% to 91%, reflecting students' better understanding of textual cohesion, particularly through peer clarification and group analysis. Inference-making remained the lowest-

performing indicator, though it still increased from 46% to 51%. This suggests that while STAD improved comprehension overall, inferential reasoning requires further scaffolding and practice. As noted by Alghamdy (2024), effective comprehension requires repeated exposure to critical thinking strategies, which may require longer intervention periods than were provided in this study.

To verify the significance of these gains, the researcher conducted a paired sample t-test using SPSS version 25. The results showed a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, which is less than the standard alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted, confirming that the STAD method had a statistically significant effect on improving students' reading comprehension. According to Sugiyono (2020), this outcome validates the intervention's effectiveness and affirms that changes in scores were not due to chance. A visual comparison of pre- and post-test scores further underscores the STAD method's impact. The average score increased from 59.17% to 85.33%, representing a 26.16% improvement. This substantial gain is consistent with previous research by Ferina (2015), who found that students taught with STAD outperformed those taught with lecture-based methods in reading comprehension tasks. Furthermore, research by Palembang and Pabangke (2023) demonstrated that STAD increases student motivation, engagement, and interest in learning factors that were clearly observed during the treatment sessions in this study.

From classroom observations, it was noted that students who previously disengaged or avoided reading tasks began participating actively in group discussions. They asked questions, clarified meanings with peers, and collaborated in decoding unfamiliar vocabulary and sentence structures. These behavioral changes suggest that the cooperative structure of STAD not only supported cognitive development but also fostered positive social interaction a point emphasized by Ramadhani et al. (2022) and Boyadi (2020), who highlight STAD's dual role in academic and social skill development.

Discussion

The results of this study strongly affirm that the implementation of the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) method significantly enhances students' reading comprehension skills. The transition from pre-test to post-test revealed substantial improvements across all five reading indicators vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference. These findings are consistent with prior research (Ramadhani, 2019; Ferina, 2015; Kholifah, 2012), which also demonstrated the STAD method's capacity to elevate learners' understanding and engagement with English texts. This section will critically interpret the outcomes of the current study, situate them within broader scholarly discourse, and discuss both the pedagogical strengths and limitations of the STAD approach. One of the most notable improvements observed was in the specific information indicator, which reached 99% in the post-test—an increase from the already strong 83% in the pre-test. This suggests that students became more adept at identifying details that are explicitly stated in the text. According to Nuttal (1985, as cited in Agi, 2022), specific information refers to the reader's ability to recall or locate factual data from a passage. In the context of STAD, such

improvement is likely due to repeated collaborative exposure to the text. Working in groups allowed students to pool their comprehension and verify answers through discussion, a process Vygotsky describes as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners perform better with the assistance of peers (Alghamdy, 2024).

Similarly, the vocabulary indicator saw a remarkable increase from 54% in the pre-test to 80% in the post-test. This indicates the STAD method's effectiveness in contextual vocabulary development. Vocabulary mastery often acts as a gateway to deeper comprehension, as students must understand word meanings before they can grasp full sentence and paragraph-level meaning. As emphasized by Ikhtiyorovna (2023), comprehension improves when learners encounter vocabulary in meaningful contexts. During STAD-based discussions, students encountered new vocabulary in peer-led explanations, which helped them not only remember word meanings but also apply them accurately in interpreting texts. The main idea indicator rose from 64% to 75%, suggesting that students had become better at discerning the core message of a paragraph or passage. This skill, while fundamental, can be challenging in texts where the main idea is implied rather than stated explicitly. STAD, however, fosters active engagement through group summarization tasks. When learners discuss each paragraph's purpose collectively, they are more likely to uncover and articulate the central idea effectively. This collaborative exploration of content strengthens both comprehension and metacognitive skills, as noted by Fitriani and Nurjamaludin (2020), who assert that peer explanation is a powerful tool for reinforcing understanding.

One of the most impressive outcomes of the study was the growth in the reference indicator, from 62% to 91%. This aspect of comprehension involves tracing pronouns and noun phrases back to their referents, which requires attention to textual cohesion. In traditional, teacher-centered approaches, this subtle linguistic feature often goes unnoticed. However, the group dynamics in STAD where learners explain sentences to peers—seem to naturally emphasize clarity, leading to a better grasp of how references function within texts. As Wulandari (2022) suggests, cooperative learning environments enable students to verbalize their thought processes, making implicit grammatical structures more visible and understandable. The inference indicator, while showing the smallest absolute gain (from 46% to 51%), still demonstrated meaningful progress. Inference-making demands higher-order thinking skills and the ability to derive meaning from context and prior knowledge. According to Yapp et al. (2023), this is one of the most cognitively demanding components of comprehension. The relatively limited progress in this area may be attributed to the short duration of the intervention and the complex nature of inferencing itself, which often requires extended practice. Nevertheless, even modest improvements here reflect the potential of STAD to support inferential reasoning when applied consistently over time.

Beyond quantitative improvements, observational data from the classroom revealed substantial shifts in student behavior and attitudes toward reading. Prior to the intervention, many students were disengaged reluctant to read aloud, uninterested in textual content, and passive in class discussions. However, the structured interaction of the STAD model transformed the classroom environment. As Ramadhani et al. (2022) explain, STAD promotes not just academic development but also social growth, helping students become more confident and cooperative. By assigning group roles and

responsibilities, the method encouraged equal participation, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability for one's learning. Moreover, the STAD method succeeded in creating a more inclusive and student-centered learning atmosphere. Traditional teacher-centered models often fail to consider the diverse abilities and learning styles present in vocational classrooms (Boyadi, 2020). In contrast, STAD allows high-achieving students to reinforce their understanding by teaching their peers, while lower-achieving students benefit from peer scaffolding without the fear of public failure. This mutual support system aligns with Slavin's (2010) core principle that academic success should not be a zero-sum competition but a collective achievement.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge several limitations of the STAD approach as observed in this study. First, time management posed a significant challenge. Collaborative activities, while enriching, often took longer than planned, limiting the depth of exploration for some texts. As noted by Palembang and Pabangke (2023), STAD can be time-consuming and requires careful lesson planning to ensure efficiency. Secondly, group dynamics were not always smooth. Some students initially resisted working with peers they did not know well, and in a few groups, dominant individuals overshadowed quieter ones. These interpersonal challenges highlight the need for consistent teacher monitoring and training in collaborative skills to maximize STAD's benefits. Another observed limitation was the need for teacher adaptability. Not all educators may be comfortable relinquishing control to students or mediating group-based conflicts. As Apriani and Effendi (2023) emphasize, the role of the teacher in STAD is multifaceted requiring them to be facilitators, motivators, and evaluators simultaneously. Instructors must be equipped with both pedagogical and emotional intelligence to navigate this complex role effectively.

Despite these challenges, the overall outcomes affirm the value of the STAD model in fostering meaningful reading comprehension. When implemented with appropriate support, the model not only improves linguistic performance but also cultivates collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills essential for 21st-century learners. Furthermore, the results validate the findings of Resti Ramadhani (2019), whose research concluded that STAD is particularly effective in overcoming the limitations of conventional teaching strategies and enhancing student comprehension through structured interaction.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the application of the Students' Team Achievement Division (STAD) method significantly improves students' reading comprehension skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, particularly in vocational high school contexts. The research findings demonstrate notable progress across all five key indicators of reading comprehension vocabulary, main idea, specific information, reference, and inference. The most substantial improvements were observed in specific information, reference, and vocabulary, indicating that the cooperative and interactive nature of STAD effectively supports both literal and interpretive reading skills. The structured teamwork, peer support, and inclusive learning environment offered by the STAD model enabled students to engage more actively with the reading materials and each other. This not only enhanced comprehension but also encouraged collaboration,

participation, and mutual responsibility among learners. Although challenges remain, particularly in inference-making and time management, the overall results suggest that STAD is a promising and practical strategy for strengthening literacy in EFL classrooms. Ultimately, the STAD method reaffirms the value of student-centered instruction in promoting deeper reading comprehension. It transforms passive learning into an active, engaging process, making it highly relevant for modern educational contexts that demand both academic achievement and social collaboration.

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