

## **The Improvement of reading skills through the use of *word square* method to eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara**

Anita Candra Dewi<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Sawerigading University Makassar  
Corresponding author: Anita Candra Dewi

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**ABSTRACT:** The type of this research is classroom action research (CAR). This study aims to improve the learning outcomes of Indonesian reading skills by applying the *word square* type of cooperative learning model to eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara, Galesong Utara District, Regency of Takalar. To answer the questions, the data were analyzed and described. This research was held at SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara, Galesong Utara District, Takalar Regency. There were 31 subjects in this study and they were all eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara Galesong Utara District, Regency of Takalar. The techniques of data collection used in this study are observation and test techniques. The observation technique is used to observe all teaching and learning activities, while the test technique is used to collect data on the mark of learning outcomes or the percentage of Indonesian learning in the reading. The results of this study indicate an increase in learning outcomes of this reading skill as shown in the first cycle. The average mark of student learning outcomes was 75.32 and increased in the second cycle became 84.67, there was an increase of 9.35. Likewise, the results of observations of reading skills showed an increase in the aspects that relevant to learning, this was shown in the first cycle, the average mark of student observations was 70.9% and in the second cycle increased to 80.4%, means that there was an increase of 9.5 %. There is a decline for the aspects that are less relevant to learning, this is shown in the first cycle, the average mark of student observations was 15.9% and 1.2% in the second cycle means that there was 14.7 % decrease in student activity that is less relevant to the learning.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Teacher's challenges in teaching will be increasingly complex. Students today tend to expect their teachers to teach in more relaxed and exciting ways. Teachers often lack of understanding of the forms of learning methods that can be used in the teaching process. That misunderstanding makes many teachers practically only use conventional methods so that many students feel saturated, bored, and lazy to join the lessons. (Rusna, 2010: 1)

Humans as social beings need language which is one of the vital tools in the formation of the society. It is clear that society cannot exist without language. In fact, language is the one that signifies humans as intelligent beings. Thus, language knowledge is needed for the students success in life, in society and the process of maturity. Education is the first and foremost vehicle for children to learn about the social environment educatively. (Norma, 2010: 2)

Indonesian subjects at the first high school level are basically directed so that the students have the mastery of concepts about good and right language. Language learning should be able to make the students actively follow the teaching and learning process in the classroom because students are given the greatest opportunity to find the concepts of subject matter in the community. Having seeing these conditions, the use of the right learning method becomes the main support for teachers as an effort to actively create student learning atmosphere.

Based on the results of observations and analysis so far that in junior high schools in the period of the 2010-2011 school year showed fluctuations in the student absorption in Indonesian language subjects. One of the schools that experienced this is SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara, Galesong Utara District, Takalar Regency. Likewise with the level of inadequacy of learning material that is inadequate, such as a textbook that is lacking with the prohibition from the government to hold books in schools. Thus, it allows students to learn without using a textbook so that the teacher takes the initiative to learn by recording (writing) the learning material from the board.

In good teaching and learning activities, of course, expect a teaching goal or a national education goal. Therefore, it is needed teaching methods that are able to be chosen to teach towards achieving these goals, in

achieving the goals the teacher must not forget the interests and talents of students. With the aim of achieving both cognitive and psychomotor abilities, it gives the teachers ideas for material, methods, sources, media, tools, and evaluation. (Rusna, 2010: 3)

This is where a teacher is demanded by thorough and careful use of learning models and methods, and the implementation of the *word square* learning model in order to improve the reading skills of the Indonesian language, therefore the use of the *word square* learning method is appropriate in having togetherness. In the real field there are still many educators who use conventional methods monotonically in learning activities in the classroom so that the learning atmosphere seems rigid and dominated by the teachers.

The main reason for choosing this *word square* learning method is because at the end of the lesson, the students are given a *word square* worksheet (we can say it is a kind of crossword puzzle), from the instructions, students look for random letters that will be formed into one particular sentence. Sentences that have been compiled perfectly are the answers to the questions raised in the *word square* worksheet. Interestingly, the way to form letters to form sentences can be horizontal, diagonal, vertical, from left to right, right to left, top to bottom or from bottom to top.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a type of classroom action research. According to Taggart in Aqib (2009: 30) mentioned the main characteristics of CAR are actions carried out in the cycle of cycles, consisting of four stages: 1) planning, 2) implementation of actions, 3) observation, and 4) reflection. The research was taken from SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara District Galesong Utara Regency of Takalar. The subjects in this study were all eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 North Galesong Utara, Galesong Utara District, Takalar Regency, totaling 31 people.

To obtain the results and conclusions of the study, a data collection tool is needed. The technique used to collect the data is related to research conducted through observation techniques and test techniques. According to Riyanto (2001: 96) observation is "making direct surveillance (without tools) of the symptoms of the subject being investigated, whether the observations were carried out in actual situations or carried out in special artificial situations held"

Data from the observations of student learning activities were analyzed using simple descriptive analysis by calculating the percentage of students' reading skills improvement in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Marks are expressed using symbols or statements or score ranges or categories, namely very high, high, medium, low, and very low

Furthermore, the success indicators of *word square* learning are considered successful if the range or category of scores achieved by students is at a score of 70-79 (moderate). While the score below 59 is very low, and need to be revised.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS

Activities carried out in the first cycle, namely planning with activities to study the curriculum of students to find out the suitability of time between the subject matter and the research plan. The curriculum study conducted by researchers is directed to examine the relevance of graduate competency standards (GCS) and the scope of the material with basic competencies (BC) and competency standards (CS) as outlined in the practice of learning student reading skills. Prepare a plan for implementing learning. Make an observation sheet to observe the conditions of learning in the classroom when the action takes place. Observation sheets are directed to observe students during learning process. Determine the timing of the action.

Design evaluation tools in the form of score categories through student performance tests with an assessment rubric based on the format that has been made for students with 90-100 skill level categorization categorized as very high, 80-89 skill level categorized as high, 70-79 skill level categorized as moderate, level 60-69 skills are categorized as low, skill level 0-59 categorized as very low.

The implementation of learning skills in reading skills using the *word square* method for four meetings was carried out by following the learning plan that had been made. Observations carried out by documenting the effect of actions given during the learning process of reading skills through the *word square* method, it is the observation of the conditions during the implementation of the actions take place, both individual activities carried out by students and activities that occur when students are grouped.

**Table 1.** Student Observation Results Data Relevant to Learning during Following the first Cycle Learning

No.	Aspects observed	Meeting				Amount	(%)
		I	II	III	IV		
1	A	27	29	30	T	87	93,6
2	B	22	26	31	E	78	83,9

3	C	8	6	5	S T I	19	20,4
4	D	24	27	29		80	86,0
Amount						283,9	
Average						70,9	

There were were 27 students who attended the first meeting, 29 students for the second meeting, and 30 students on the third meeting. It means, there is an increase in student attendance at each meeting with a percentage of 93.6% for three meetings. There were 22 students who paid attention to the material at the first meeting, the second meeting 26 students, and 31 students on the third meeting. It means that an increase in the number of students who pay attention to the material from the first meeting to the third meeting when at the third meeting all students pay attention to the material taught by the teacher with a percentage of 83.9%. Students who asked questions about subject matter that had not been understood at the time of the teaching and learning process decreased each meeting, at the first meeting there were 8 students, 6 students at the second meeting, and only 5 students at the third meeting with the percentage of three meetings is 20.4 %. That is, every meeting more and more students quickly understand the material being taught. Whereas for the students who are actively working on the given exercise questions, they also experience improvement in each meeting. At the first meeting there were 24 students, the second meeting there were 27 students, and 29 students at the third meeting with a percentage of 86.0% for three meetings. This shows that the results of observations of students relevant to learning during the first learning cycle experienced an increase for aspects A, B, and D from the first meeting to the third meeting. And for aspect C it has decreased with the number of percentages for the four aspects observed as much as 283.9% and an average of 70.9%.

**Table 2.** Student Observation Results Data that Is Less Relevant to Learning During Following the first Learning Cycle

No.	Aspects observed	Meeting				Amount	(%)
		I	II	III	IV		
1	A	11	7	5	T E S I	23	24,8
2	B	6	3	2		11	11,9
3	C	4	4	2		10	10,8
Amount						47,5	
Average						15,9	

The Students who still need guidance in doing the tasks given at the first meeting were 11 students, the second meeting there were 6 students, and at the third meeting only 5 students. Means that there is a decrease in the number of students who still need guidance in doing tasks with a percentage of 24.8%. Students who do other activities in class during the teaching and learning process take place at the first meeting as many as 6 students, the second meeting is 3 students, and the third meeting is 2 students. Means that there was a decrease in the number of students working on other activities in the classroom during the teaching and learning process from the first meeting to the third meeting with a percentage of 11.9%. Students enter and leave of class at the first meeting were 4 students, 4 students at the second meeting, 2 students at the third meeting with a percentage of three meetings as much as 10.8%. This shows that the results of observations of students who are less relevant to learning during the first cycle of learning have increased for aspects A, B, and C since the first meeting to the third meeting decreased by 47.5% for the three aspects observed and on average 15.9%. After the implementation of the action took place for four meetings, the data from the observation sheet and score category based on the test assessment were collected and interpreted. Before the data is interpreted, the researcher invites the subject teachers to discuss the new activities. After holding a discussion, the researcher analyzed the results of the score category based on the results of observations on students' reading and listening skills and the results of the performance tests that students had done, and finally analyzed the results.

**Table 3.** Data on Learning Outcomes of Reading Skills in the first Cycle.

No.	Students Activities	Frequency (student)	Category Scale
1	Very High	2	90-100
2	High	9	80 – 89
3	Middle	14	70 – 79
4	Low	6	60 – 69
5	Very Low	-	0 – 59
31			

Student activity in learning reading skills in the first cycle shows that from 31 students, 2 students had a very high level of reading and listening skills or 6.5%, 9 students in the high category or 29%, 14 students in the moderate category or 45.1 %, and 6 other studentse or 19.4% are still low. The score category refers to the results of the performance assessment on the ability of students to find answers in the *word square* worksheet after attending reading and listening lessons where the worksheets are given individually. Based on the results of the analysis of the score category combined with the results of observations and discussions with the supervisor / class teacher. The researcher draws a temporary conclusion about the implementation of the first cycle that students' reading and listening skills through the use of the *word square* method still need to be improved, so there is still a need to repeat the process of activities both in improving the quality of the questions on the *word square* worksheet and improving the way of submitting the material to student. The results obtained must still be increased in accordance with the completion of the expected results of reading and listening learning.

The second cycle is the result of reflection from the first cycle. Therefore, the steps taken are relatively the same as the first cycle by carrying out some improvements in accordance with the facts that have been found in the field. Observations carried out by documenting the effect of actions given during the learning process of receptive field language skills (reading and listening) through the *word square* method, it is the observation of the conditions during the implementation of the action, both individual activities carried out by students and activities that occur when students are grouped. During the implementation of the action the researcher is assisted by the subject teacher to check the observation sheets that have been provided previously. The researcher also recorded everything that happened in the process of implementing the action for four meetings. This can be seen in table 4.

**Table 4.** Student Observation Result Data Relevant to Learning During Following the second Learning Cycle

No.	Aspects observed	Meeting				Amount	(%)
		I	II	III	IV		
1	A	29	31	31	T	91	97,9
2	B	28	28	31	E	87	93,5
3	C	14	8	7	S	29	31,2
4	D	30	31	31	II	92	98,9
Amount						321,5	
Average						80,37	

Tehere were 22 students attended the first meeting, 31 students at the second meeting, and 31 students at the third meeting. Means that there was an increase in student attendance where at the second and third meetings all students attended the teaching and learning process with a percentage of 97.6% for three meetings. Students who pay attention to the material at the first meeting were 28 people, 28 people at the second meeting, and 31 people at the third meeting. So that, an increase in the number of students who pay attention to the material from the first meeting to the third meeting where at the third meeting all students pay attention to the material taught by the teacher with a percentage of 93.5% for three meetings. Students who asked questions about subject matter that were not understood at the time of the teaching and learning process took place decreased each meeting, at the first meeting as many as 14 Students, 8 students at the second meeting and the third meeting with a percentage of three meetings as many as 31.2 %. It means every meeting more and more students quickly understand the material being taught. Whereas for students who are actively working on the given exercise questions, they also experience the improvement in each meeting. At the first meeting there were 30 students, 31 students at the second meeting and the third meeting with a percentage of 98.9% for three meetings. This shows that the results of observations of students relevant to learning during the learning cycle have increased for aspects A, B, and D from the first meeting to the third meeting. And for aspect C it has

decreased with the number of percentages for the four aspects observed as much as 321.5% and an average of 80.37%.

**Table5.** Student Observation Results Data that Is Less Relevant to Learning During Following Cycle II Learning

No.	Aspects Observed	Meeting				Amount	(%)
		I	II	III	IV		
1	A	-	-	-	T	-	-
2	B	1	-	-	E S	1	1,8
3	C	1	-	-	T II	1	1,8
Amount						3,6	
Average						1,2	

There are no more students who still need guidance in doing the assignments given. Therefore, there is a very significant increase compared to the first cycle. Students who do other activities in class during the teaching and learning process take place at the first meeting only 1 student, while for the second and third meetings there are no more students who did other activities in the class during the process of teaching and learning with a percentage of 1.8% for three meetings. Students who enter in and leave the class at the first meeting only 1 student, there are no more students who enter and leave the class at the second and the third meeting with a percentage of three meetings as much as 1.8%. This shows that the results of observations of students who are less relevant to learning during the learning cycle have increased for aspects A, B, and C since the first meeting until the third meeting decreased with the number of percentages for the three observed aspects as much as 3.6% and an average of 1.2%. After the implementation of the action took place for four meetings, the data from the observation sheet and score category based on the test assessment were collected and interpreted. Before the data is interpreted, the researcher invites the subject teacher to discuss the new activities. After holding a discussion, the researcher analyzed the results of the score category based on the results of observations on students' reading and listening skills and the results of the performance tests that students had done, and finally analyzed the results.

**Table 6.** Data of Learning Reading Skills Results in the second Cycle

No.	Students Activities	Frequency (student)	Category Scale
1	Very high	9	90-100
2	High	14	80 – 89
3	Middle	7	70 – 79
4	Low	1	60 – 69
5	Very low	-	0 – 59
		31	

Student activity in learning reading skills after the second cycle shows that out of 31 students, 9 students have a very high level of reading and listening skills or 29%, 14 students are in the high category or 45.2%, 7 students are in the middle category or 22.6%, and there is still 1 person in the low category or 3.2%. This shows that the level of students' reading skills after the implementation of the second action has increased. Based on the results of the score category in accordance with the aspect of assessment, it was known that there was an increase in reading skills after the second cycle of eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Galesong Utara District of Galesong Utara, Takalar Regency. Based on the results of the analysis of the score category combined with the results of observations and discussions with the supervisor / class teacher. The researcher draws conclusions that the implementation of the second cycle shows the reading skills through the word square method increase. The results obtained have increased in the implementation of the first action in the previous cycle.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The implementation of the action on the use of the *word square* method in improving students' reading skills showed significant results marked by an increase in the number of students who had very high and high score categories as well as a decrease in the level of medium and low student categories. The following is a table and graph of the distribution of the number of students and the percentage of observations during learning cycle I and cycle II, as well as tables and graphs of comparison of the comparison of frequency and percentage scores of reading skills learning outcomes through the use of word square method in cycle I, and cycle II.

The average percentage of observational data of students relevant to learning is 70.9% in cycle I and 80.4% in cycle II. That is, there was an increase of 9.5%. The results of observations of students in cycle I and cycle II in learning in general have increased, but there is no denying that there are some students who show activities that are not relevant in the learning process. There are three indicators of student activity that are not relevant to learning, namely students who still need guidance in doing the tasks given, students who do other activities in the classroom, during the learning process takes place, and students who go in and out of class. The average decrease in student activity that is less relevant to learning is 15.9% in cycle I and 1.2% in cycle II, meaning that there was a decrease of 14.7% as seen in graph 4.

Based on the research data above, it is known that the student activity that is irrelevant to learning has decreased and there is an increase in student activities that are relevant to learning, this is due to students being active and effective in learning which makes the students happier with the learning model conducted by the teacher. Data on student learning outcomes in quantitative form is obtained through tests conducted at the end of each meeting. The value of student learning outcomes is averaged from 4 meetings so that only one score is obtained for each student in the first cycle and the second cycle. Student learning outcomes with a value of "very high" category as much as 2 students or 6.5% in cycle I and 9 students or 29% in cycle II, category "high" as many as 9 students or 29% in cycle I and 14 students or 45, 2% cycle II, category "medium" as many as 14 students or 45.1% in cycle I and 7 students or 22.6% in cycle II, category "low" as many as 6 students or 19.4% in cycle I and 1 student or 3.2% in cycle II, and no students in the category of "very low" both in the first cycle and in the second cycle. There is a shift in the value of student learning outcomes from the first cycle to the second cycle. There was an increase in the value of the medium to high category followed by a decrease in the low category value so that the value at the peak shifts to the high category.

There was an increase in student learning outcomes, both on average 75.32 in the first cycle and in the second cycle to 84.67. For the highest score in the first cycle is 90 and 100 in the second cycle, and the lowest value of 60 in the first cycle to 65 in the second cycle. Compared to the second cycle average. Based on the research data, it is known that the learning outcomes of students reading skills have increased each cycle, it means that in the first cycle the average student learning outcomes is 75.32 increased in cycle II to 84.67 which means that from cycle I to cycle II there was an increase in learning outcomes as much as 9.35.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been achieved, it can be concluded that the results of learning reading skills through the use of the *word square* method in each cycle has increased, namely the average cycle of student learning outcomes of 75.32 and 84.67 in cycle II, this means 9.35 increase. From the results of observations of student learning activities that are relevant to learning shows an increase in student activity that is relevant to learning in cycle I by 70.9% increased to 80.4% in cycle II, this means an increase of 9.5%. Student activity that is less relevant to learning has decreased from an average of 15.9% in the first cycle to 1.2% in the second cycle, which means it decreased by 14.7%. From the results of observations and tests above means learning through the use of the word square method can help teachers in improving reading skills.

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