

The Effect of Cooperative Learning on Intensive Reading of Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study aims to determine the effect of the Cooperative Learning method on students' intensive reading ability in analyzing short story elements at SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selatan. The study addresses the problem of students' low ability to understand and analyze the intrinsic elements of short stories, such as theme, plot, characters, setting, and moral. Using a quantitative approach, the research involved two classes: an experimental class and a control class, each consisting of 30 students. The instrument used was an intensive reading test (pretest and posttest). The results showed a significant improvement in the intensive reading ability of students in the experimental class after applying the Cooperative Learning method. The average pretest score of the experimental class was 65.2, increasing to 82.5 in the posttest. In contrast, the control class's scores increased from 64.8 to 72.1. The t-test results indicated a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, showing a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Cooperative Learning method has a positive and significant effect on students' intensive reading ability. The findings suggest that Cooperative Learning is an effective approach to improving students' analytical skills in reading short stories, as it fosters collaboration and active engagement with the text. Considering these results, educators are encouraged to incorporate Cooperative Learning strategies into their teaching practices, particularly in reading instruction, to enhance students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. Additionally, this research implies that Cooperative Learning can be an effective tool to address the challenges students face in understanding complex texts and can be adapted for various subjects and grade levels.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning; Intensive Reading; Short Stories

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language lessons are essential for developing students' reading and writing skills, with reading being a central aspect of this education. One crucial

form of reading that students must master is intensive reading, which requires not only close attention but also a deep comprehension of the text. Intensive reading plays a significant role in literature lessons, particularly when students analyze the intrinsic elements of short stories, such as themes, plot, characters, settings, and moral lessons. Mastery of these elements allows students to move beyond surface-level understanding, enabling them to explore deeper meanings and messages that authors intend to convey.

However, despite the importance of intensive reading in literature education, students' abilities in this area remain considerably low. Initial observations at SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selatan reveal that many students struggle with identifying and analyzing critical elements of short stories, such as the theme, plot, and moral lessons. When asked to analyze a short story, students often respond with vague or incorrect answers. Some students even admit to guessing or skipping parts of the text without fully reading it. Furthermore, many students report feeling disengaged from reading long texts, instead preferring to spend their free time engaging with digital media, such as social media platforms or short online videos.

This lack of engagement with reading is a multifaceted issue. It can be attributed to the rise of digital media, which competes with traditional reading habits and makes it more challenging for students to focus on texts that require sustained attention. Additionally, the conventional, teacher-centered instructional approach in many classrooms contributes to this issue. In such settings, students often adopt a passive role in the learning process, with teachers dominating the lessons while students mainly listen and take notes. This method does not foster an environment conducive to active engagement or critical thinking, especially in the context of literary analysis. As a result, students are less likely to develop a deep understanding of literary elements and to think critically about the material they are studying.

Addressing this issue is critical, especially as current trends in education increasingly emphasize the need for more interactive and student-centered approaches to learning. In this context, traditional methods that fail to actively involve students in the learning process are being re-examined, with a focus on methods that can improve both student engagement and learning outcomes. The increasing reliance on digital devices among students highlights the urgency of adopting teaching strategies that can compete with the distractions of the digital world and encourage students to engage more actively in learning activities. Research has consistently shown that active learning methods, such as Cooperative Learning, significantly improve student engagement and reading comprehension (Fitriyah, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that collaborative learning environments, where students work together to discuss and analyze texts, enhance their understanding of literary elements, such as theme and character development (Lestari, 2018; Wulandari, 2019). Furthermore, Cooperative Learning has been found to be particularly effective in improving students' intensive reading abilities and their ability to analyze short story elements (Nasution & Purba, 2022).

Given the challenges students face in analyzing short stories and the growing demand for more effective teaching methods, there is an urgent need to explore and implement teaching strategies that promote student participation and foster a deeper understanding of literary texts. This study seeks to investigate whether the Cooperative Learning method can improve students' intensive reading skills, specifically their ability to analyze the elements of short stories. Cooperative Learning was selected as the method for this study because it encourages students to work collaboratively, engage in discussions, and share their understanding of the text. This approach creates an interactive and dynamic learning environment that can increase student motivation and foster critical thinking. The study was conducted with grade X students at SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selatan, where the Cooperative Learning method was applied to examine its effect on students' reading comprehension, particularly regarding the analysis of short story elements. By comparing the performance of students who were taught using the Cooperative Learning method with those who received traditional instruction, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in improving intensive reading skills.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve teaching practices in Indonesian language education. If proven effective, the Cooperative Learning method could be widely implemented in classrooms to enhance students' engagement with texts and foster a deeper understanding of literary works. This approach not only has the potential to make literature lessons more enjoyable and engaging but also to improve students' ability to critically analyze texts. Additionally, the study could serve as a reference for educators seeking innovative strategies to address the challenges of reading comprehension and student engagement in the digital age. Ultimately, this research aims to offer practical solutions that can support educators in creating more interactive, student-centered learning environments that enhance both reading comprehension and critical thinking skills among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading refers to a focused, thorough, and concentrated reading activity aimed at gaining a detailed understanding of the text. This type of reading plays a crucial role in the learning process as it involves critical analysis of the content. According to Siregar (2020), intensive reading is designed to deepen the reader's understanding of both the content and structure of a text. In literary learning, intensive reading is essential for analyzing the elements of a short story, such as its theme, plot, characters, setting, point of view, and moral lessons. Intensive reading skills form the foundation of students' critical thinking and literacy development. Students with strong intensive reading skills are better equipped to interpret and evaluate texts, identifying underlying meanings and messages (Harahap & Setiawan, 2021).

Elements of Short Stories

Short stories as one of the literary works have elements that are called intrinsic elements. These elements include theme, plot, characters and characterization, setting, point of view, style of language, and morals (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). Understanding these elements is very important in learning literature so that students not only enjoy the story in general, but are also able to criticize the structure and content of the short story in depth. Studying the elements of a short story requires insight and the ability to think logically and imaginatively. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that can encourage students to think actively and reflectively about the reading.

Cooperative Learning Method

Cooperative Learning is an instructional method that focuses on collaboration among students in small groups to achieve shared learning objectives. According to Santosa (2019), Cooperative Learning enhances academic achievement, fosters social relationships, and encourages individual responsibility within the group. This method provides opportunities for students to engage in discussions, share understanding, and collaboratively complete tasks. In the context of intensive reading and literary analysis, Cooperative Learning facilitates discussions about short story elements, allowing students to exchange ideas about plot, characters, and moral lessons. By working together, students can help one another clarify difficult concepts, gain different perspectives, and enhance their understanding of the text (Wahyudi, 2020).

The Relationship between Cooperative Learning and Intensive Reading Ability

Several studies have shown that the Cooperative Learning method can improve students' intensive reading skills. Research by (Lestari, R., 2018) showed that the cooperative approach significantly improved students' comprehension in reading literary texts. Likewise, (Nasution, A., & Purba, 2022) stated that this method is effective in improving students' ability to analyze short story elements. This is because through group discussions, students can help each other understand the contents of the text, clarify difficult information, and broaden their perspectives on the story. In other words, Cooperative Learning provides space for active and meaningful learning, which has a positive impact on improving intensive reading skills.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a Nonequivalent Control Group Design (Sugiyono, 2016), a quasi-experimental approach. In this design, two groups—an experimental group and a control group—were assessed using pretests and posttests to measure their intensive reading skills. Only the experimental group received the treatment using the Cooperative Learning method, while the control group was taught using conventional, teacher-centered methods. The experimental group, which received the Cooperative Learning treatment, engaged in group discussions, peer teaching, and collaborative analysis of short story elements, such as theme, plot, characters, and moral. The control group, in contrast, received traditional lectures where the teacher provided the primary explanation of short story elements, followed by individual exercises.

Class X-1 was chosen as the experimental group, while Class X-2 served as the control group. These two classes were selected using purposive sampling due to their similar demographic characteristics and baseline reading abilities, as determined by a preliminary test. The decision to use these specific classes was based on their comparable academic performance in previous literature lessons, ensuring a balanced comparison between the two groups.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary instrument used in this study was an intensive reading ability test. This test consisted of descriptive questions aimed at assessing students' understanding of the key elements of short stories: theme, plot, characters, setting, point of view, and moral message. The test aimed to measure students' ability to identify, analyze, and interpret these components critically.

Data collection involved three primary techniques: tests, observations, and documentation. The pretest was administered before the implementation of the Cooperative Learning method to evaluate students' initial understanding of short story elements. After the treatment period, a posttest was given to assess any improvements in reading ability. Observations were conducted during lessons to monitor students' engagement and participation, particularly in the experimental group, where group discussions were a key part of the treatment. Additionally, documentation included collecting supporting materials such as class rosters, grade records, syllabi, lesson plans, and photographic documentation of the classroom activities throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pretests and posttests were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard

deviation, and score range, were calculated to summarize the performance of each group. To test the hypothesis and evaluate the significance of the difference between the two groups, an independent sample t-test was performed. This statistical analysis was used to determine whether the improvement in the experimental group's intensive reading ability was significantly greater than that of the control group, providing evidence for the effectiveness of the Cooperative Learning method.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the effect of the Cooperative Learning method on intensive reading skills in analyzing short story elements in grade X students of SMA Negeri 2 Rantau Selatan. To measure these abilities, pretests and posttests were conducted on two groups: the experimental group treated with the Cooperative Learning method, and the control group taught with conventional methods.

Pretest Results

Before the treatment was given, a pretest was conducted to determine students' initial ability in reading short stories intensively. The following are the results of the pretest.

Table 1. Pretest Results

Group	Number of Students	The highest score	Lowest Value	Average
Experiment	30	80	52	65.2
Control	30	78	50	64.8

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the average pretest score of students in the experimental class was 65.2, with the highest score of 80 and the lowest score of 52. Meanwhile, the control class had an average score of 64.8, with the highest score of 78 and the lowest score of 50. The average difference between the two groups was only 0.4 points, which indicates that the initial abilities of the two groups were relatively balanced before the treatment was given.

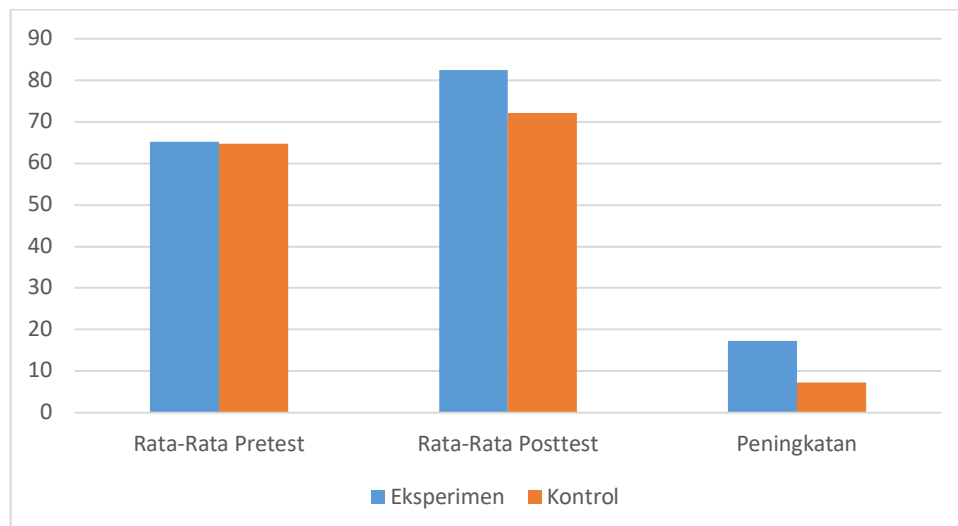
Posttest Results

After the learning process using two different methods, a posttest was conducted to measure the improvement of students' abilities. The following are the results of the Posttest after using the Cooperative Learning method on intensive reading skills.

Table 2. Posttest Results

Group	Number of Students	The highest score	Lowest Value	Average
Experiment	30	92	70	82.5
Control	30	85	60	72.1

From the table above, it is known that the average posttest score of the experimental class students increased to 82.5. The highest score reached 92 and the lowest was 70. Meanwhile, the control class only achieved an average of 72.1 with the highest score of 85 and the lowest of 60. This significant difference in average indicates that the Cooperative Learning method has a positive effect on students' intensive reading ability. Furthermore, an analysis was conducted to determine the extent of the increase in scores from pretest to posttest.

*Figure 1. Results of Improvement from Pretest and Posttest*

From the picture above shows that the average increase in the value in the experimental group was 17.3 points, while in the control group it was only 7.3 points. This confirms that the use of the Cooperative Learning method has a greater influence in improving students' ability in intensive reading and analyzing short story elements compared to conventional learning methods. To find out whether the difference in results between the experimental and control groups is significant, a t-test was conducted.

Table 3. T-test

Group	Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Experiment vs Control	0,000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)

The t-test results show a significance value of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the posttest

scores of the experimental group and the control group. This means that there is a significant difference between the posttest results of the experimental and control groups. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means that the Cooperative Learning method has a significant effect on students' intensive reading ability. Thus, it can be concluded that the Cooperative Learning method has a significant influence on students' intensive reading abilities in examining the elements of short stories.

The findings of this study reveal that the Cooperative Learning (CL) method significantly enhances students' intensive reading abilities, particularly in analyzing the intrinsic elements of short stories such as theme, plot, characters, setting, point of view, and moral value. The notable improvement in the experimental group's posttest scores—averaging 82.5 compared to the control group's 72.1—indicates that the CL method is more effective than conventional instruction. This difference is not only statistically significant, as shown by the t-test result ($p < 0.05$), but also pedagogically meaningful.

One of the key factors contributing to this improvement is the active engagement that CL promotes in the classroom. Students in the experimental group participated in structured small-group discussions, which fostered collaborative dialogue and deeper engagement with the text. This finding aligns with the constructivist theory of learning, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and meaningful activity. Vygotsky's theory, as reinterpreted in contemporary educational frameworks, underscores that learning is optimized when students are engaged in cooperative dialogues within their zone of proximal development (Mutakinati, Anwari, & Kumano, 2018). In this study, such collaborative engagement enabled students to better analyze complex literary elements.

Moreover, peer learning emerged as a central mechanism in the CL process. Through sharing ideas, clarifying difficult concepts, and negotiating meanings in the text, students benefited from their peers' perspectives. This finding is supported by research conducted by Hadiyanti and Suyatno (2020), who found that cooperative strategies in language learning foster cognitive development and enhance interpretative skills, especially in literary analysis. In our study, students in the experimental group were observed not only exchanging interpretations of character motives or thematic messages but also constructing shared understandings that enriched their individual comprehension.

Increased motivation and accountability also contributed to the success of the CL method. Unlike passive learning in conventional settings, CL demands active participation and responsibility from each group member. Students became more accountable for both their own understanding and their group's success. Damayanti, Prasetyo, and Nurhayati (2023) found that cooperative learning increased student motivation and engagement, leading to higher academic performance. This was evident in the present study, where students in the experimental group showed

greater enthusiasm, focus, and discipline during the lessons compared to those in the control group.

The results of this study are consistent with recent research in the field. For instance, Lestari (2019) demonstrated that cooperative learning improves students' analytical reading skills and enhances their ability to identify literary elements. Similarly, Nasution and Purba (2022) concluded that CL is effective in increasing students' comprehension of narrative texts, particularly through discussion-based learning environments. This study further strengthens those findings by applying CL to the specific task of analyzing short stories, demonstrating how structured group work can deepen literary comprehension.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the application of CL to the intensive reading of short story elements among senior high school students in the Indonesian context. While many studies have examined CL in relation to general reading comprehension, this study highlights its impact on more complex, higher-order cognitive tasks such as literary analysis. Furthermore, it contributes new empirical data on the effectiveness of CL in enhancing critical thinking and interpretative skills within a literary framework—an area that has received comparatively less attention in recent years.

The implications of this study are significant for both curriculum designers and classroom practitioners. Incorporating Cooperative Learning strategies into literature instruction can create a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. It not only improves comprehension but also nurtures essential 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Teachers are encouraged to design reading activities that allow students to work together to analyze texts, which in turn may lead to a more meaningful and lasting understanding of literature.

However, this study also has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to two classes at a single school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the duration of the treatment was relatively short, limiting the ability to observe long-term impacts of the CL approach on reading proficiency. Future research should consider expanding the sample across multiple schools and extending the duration of the intervention to examine the sustainability of the observed improvements. Longitudinal studies could also explore how CL influences students' literary appreciation and reading habits over time. In conclusion, the Cooperative Learning method has been proven effective in improving students' intensive reading skills, especially in analyzing literary texts like short stories. Through active engagement, peer learning, and increased motivation, CL enables students to construct deeper, more nuanced understandings of texts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Cooperative Learning method significantly enhances students' intensive reading abilities, particularly in analyzing the intrinsic elements of short stories. Although both the experimental and control groups started with similar levels of ability, students taught through Cooperative Learning showed marked improvement in their ability to understand and interpret literary texts. This suggests that Cooperative Learning not only promotes academic growth but also fosters deeper engagement with reading materials through peer interaction, critical discussion, and collaborative problem-solving. The implication of these results is that teaching methods that emphasize collaboration and active participation can be more effective than traditional, teacher-centered approaches, especially in literature-based learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to implement Cooperative Learning by organizing students into small, diverse groups and assigning structured roles and tasks that require joint analysis of short story elements. For instance, each group member could be responsible for examining one literary element—such as theme, plot, character, or moral—and then sharing their analysis with the group. This strategy not only improves comprehension but also builds communication and critical thinking skills. In conclusion, Cooperative Learning proves to be a powerful instructional method in enhancing students' intensive reading and literary analysis skills. Teachers are advised to adopt this method as part of their regular classroom practices, particularly when teaching literature, to create a more dynamic, reflective, and student-centered learning environment.

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