

THE IMPACT PEER-LED SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LITERAL READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that supports students' comprehension of written texts and overall English language development. Although collaborative learning has been widely studied, research on the implementation of Peer-Led Small Group Learning to improve high school students' literal reading comprehension is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of Peer-Led Small Group Learning on students' literal reading comprehension. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design was used. Participants consisted of 72 10th-grade students at SMAN 2 Kota Serang in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 36 students in the experimental class and 36 students in the control class. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests using multiple-choice questions based on narrative texts and analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, and the Mann-Whitney U Test. The results showed that students taught through Peer-Led Small Group Learning experienced greater improvement than students who received conventional instruction. The mean score of the experimental class increased from 55.33 to 83.33, while the mean score of the control class increased from 54.00 to 68.67. Both statistical tests yielded a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between the groups. These findings indicate that Peer-Led Small Group Learning effectively improves students' literal reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Peer-Led Small Group Instruction, Literal Reading Comprehension, EFL Classroom.

ABSTRAK

Pemahaman membaca adalah keterampilan mendasar yang mendukung pemahaman siswa terhadap teks tertulis dan pengembangan bahasa Inggris secara keseluruhan. Meskipun pembelajaran kolaboratif telah banyak dipelajari, penelitian tentang implementasi Pembelajaran Kelompok Kecil yang Dipimpin Teman Sebaya untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca literal siswa SMA masih terbatas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengaruh Pembelajaran Kelompok Kecil yang Dipimpin Teman Sebaya terhadap pemahaman membaca literal siswa. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain kelompok kontrol non-ekuivalen kuasi-eksperimental digunakan. Partisipan terdiri dari 72 siswa kelas 10 di SMAN 2 Kota Serang pada tahun ajaran 2025/2026, terdiri dari 36 siswa di kelas eksperimen dan 36 siswa di kelas kontrol. Data dikumpulkan melalui pre-test dan post-test menggunakan soal pilihan ganda berdasarkan teks naratif dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, Uji Peringkat Bertanda

Wilcoxon, dan Uji Mann-Whitney U. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang diajar melalui Pembelajaran Kelompok Kecil yang Dipimpin Teman Sebaya mengalami peningkatan yang lebih besar daripada siswa yang menerima pengajaran konvensional. Nilai rata-rata kelas eksperimen meningkat dari 55,33 menjadi 83,33, sedangkan nilai rata-rata kelas kontrol meningkat dari 54,00 menjadi 68,67. Kedua uji statistik menghasilkan nilai signifikansi 0,000 ($p < 0,05$), yang menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan antara kelompok. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa Pembelajaran Kelompok Kecil yang Dipimpin Teman Sebaya secara efektif meningkatkan pemahaman bacaan literal siswa di kelas EFL.

Kata Kunci: Instruksi Kelompok Kecil yang Dipimpin oleh Rekan Sebaya, Pemahaman Membaca Literal, Kelas EFL.

A. Introduction

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning because it enables students to acquire information, develop academic knowledge, and participate effectively in learning activities. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading serves not only as a source of linguistic input but also as a medium through which students develop vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and critical literacy. Because most classroom learning materials are presented in written form, students are expected to accurately comprehend texts before they can engage in higher-order thinking activities. Consequently, reading comprehension is a prerequisite for successful English learning, particularly at the secondary school level.

Among the various levels of reading comprehension, literal reading comprehension is the most basic yet indispensable foundation. Literal comprehension refers to students' ability to identify explicitly stated information, including main ideas, supporting details, factual information, vocabulary meanings, and the sequence of events presented in a text. Mastery of these components allows learners to build an accurate understanding of written information before moving on to inferential, evaluative, and critical comprehension. Without adequate literal comprehension, students often struggle to interpret texts, draw conclusions, or critically evaluate information.

Despite its importance, many Indonesian EFL learners continue to struggle with English reading comprehension. Limited vocabulary,

inadequate reading practice, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and teacher-centered teaching practices often reduce students' opportunities to actively engage with texts. In many classrooms, reading instruction remains dominated by explanations, translations, and individual practice, resulting in a passive learning environment where students have limited opportunities to discuss ideas, clarify misunderstandings, and collaboratively construct meaning. This often impacts students' achievement in identifying explicit information contained in narrative texts.

One teaching approach that has the potential to address these challenges is Peer-Led Small Group Instruction. This strategy emphasizes collaborative learning through structured small group discussions facilitated by trained peer leaders. Rather than serving as substitute teachers, peer leaders encourage interaction, guide discussions, stimulate questions, and help group members collectively construct understanding. This strategy is consistent with social constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge develops through

interactions with more capable peers. Through collaborative discussions, students receive direct feedback, exchange ideas, and actively participate in solving learning problems, creating a more supportive environment for developing reading comprehension.

Previous studies have reported the positive contribution of collaborative learning to student reading achievement and classroom engagement. However, most existing studies have examined collaborative learning in general, reading habits, or reading comprehension outcomes broadly. Research specifically investigating the implementation of Peer-Led Small Group Instruction to improve literal reading comprehension among high school students is limited. This suggests that empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of this learning strategy in strengthening students' ability to identify explicitly stated information is still lacking, particularly in Indonesian EFL classrooms. The identified gaps point to the need for further research in authentic classroom settings.

This study was conducted at SMAN 2 Kota Serang, where initial classroom observations indicated that

many tenth-grade students had difficulty identifying main ideas, finding supporting details, understanding vocabulary in context, and accurately answering literal comprehension questions during reading activities. These findings suggest that students need a more interactive learning strategy that can increase participation while improving their comprehension of explicit textual information. Therefore, Peer-Led Small Group Instruction was chosen because it combines structured peer interaction with teacher supervision, allowing students to learn collaboratively while maintaining learning effectiveness.

Therefore, this study aims to examine whether the implementation of Peer-Led Small Group Learning significantly improves students' literal reading comprehension for English teachers seeking a more interactive and student-centered approach to reading instruction.

B. Research Method

This research used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design and a non-equivalent control group design. The study was conducted at SMAN 2 Kota

Serang in the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants were 72 10th-grade students, consisting of 36 students from grades X-10 as the experimental group and 36 students from grades X-9 as the control group.

The research instrument was a multiple-choice reading comprehension test based on narrative texts, administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure students' literal reading comprehension, including identifying main ideas, supporting details, vocabulary meanings, and explicitly stated information. The instrument was validated and tested for reliability prior to data collection.

The experimental group was taught using Peer-Led Small Group Instruction (PGL), where students learn collaboratively under the guidance of a peer leader during reading activities. Meanwhile, the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests with IBM SPSS Statistics. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to examine the improvement of students in each group, while the Mann–Whitney U

Test was used to compare the post-test results between the experimental and control groups at a significance level of 0.05.

C. Results and Discussion

This study examines the effect of Peer-Led Small Group Learning on students' literal reading comprehension. Findings were obtained from pre-test and post-test scores of 72 10th-grade students at SMAN 2 Kota Serang, consisting of 36 students in the experimental class and 36 students in the control class. The experimental class received instruction through Peer-Led Small Group Learning, while the control class was taught using conventional instruction. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, and the Mann–Whitney U Test to determine student improvement and the effectiveness of the teaching strategy.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental Class	36	55.33	6.590
Experimental Class	36	83.33	6.590
Control Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control Class	36	54.00	6.234
Control Class	36	68.67	5.105

Table 1 shows that both groups improved after the learning process. However, the improvement achieved by the experimental class was significantly greater than that of the control class. The experimental class's average score increased from 55.33 on the pre-test to 83.33 on the post-test, representing an increase of 28.00 points. In comparison, the control class's score increased from 54.00 to 68.67, representing an increase of 14.67 points. These findings indicate that students who learned through Peer-Led Small Group Learning showed greater improvement in literal reading comprehension than those who received conventional learning.

To determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, the data were further analyzed using the Wilcoxon

Signed-Rank Test and the Mann–Whitney U Test.

Table 2. Summary of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Mann–Whitney U

Test	
Statistical Test	Result
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test (Experimental Class)	Asymp. Sig. = 0.000
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test (Control Class)	Asymp. Sig. = 0.000
Mann–Whitney U Z	52.500 -6.761
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test revealed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) for both groups, indicating a significant improvement in students' literal reading comprehension after instruction. However, the magnitude of improvement was significantly greater in the experimental class. Furthermore, a Mann–Whitney U test yielded an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, confirming a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The experimental class also achieved a higher Mean Rank (53.04) than the control class (19.96), indicating that students participating in Peer-Led Small Group Instruction performed better than those learning through conventional

instruction. These findings indicate that Peer-Led Small Group Instruction has a significant positive effect on students' literal reading comprehension.

These findings suggest that Peer-Led Small Group Instruction provides a more effective learning environment for developing students' literal reading comprehension than conventional teacher-centered instruction. Through structured group discussions, students actively exchange ideas, clarify explicit information, and support each other in identifying main ideas, specific information, sequences of events, and cause-and-effect relationships in narrative texts. This collaborative interaction encourages students to be more engaged in the learning process and facilitates a deeper understanding of the reading material.

These findings are consistent with the principles of Peer-Led Team Learning, which emphasizes collaborative knowledge construction through peer interaction, and with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which argues that learning is enhanced through social interactions with more capable peers. In small group discussions, students can ask

questions, receive direct feedback, and negotiate shared meaning, enabling them to comprehend explicit information more effectively than through individual learning.

The results also support previous studies reporting that collaborative learning strategies improve student reading achievement and classroom engagement. Similar to previous findings, the implementation of Peer-Led Small Group Instruction in this study encouraged active participation and fostered meaningful interactions among students, leading to improved performance in literal reading comprehension. Therefore, these findings provide empirical evidence that Peer-Led Small Group Learning is an effective learning strategy for improving students' literal reading comprehension in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

D. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of Peer-Led Small Group Learning on the literal reading comprehension of tenth-grade students at SMAN 2 Kota Serang. The results showed that students who learned through Peer-Led Small Group Learning achieved significantly higher gains than

students who received conventional learning. The experimental class showed a greater increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test, and statistical analysis confirmed this increase was significant. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test indicated a significant learning increase in the experimental group, while the Mann-Whitney U test showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment. These findings indicate that Peer-Led Small Group Learning is more effective than conventional learning in improving students' literal reading comprehension.

These findings suggest that collaborative learning through peer-led discussions provides students with greater opportunities to exchange ideas, clarify explicit information, and actively engage in the reading process. As a result, students are better able to identify main ideas, specific information, sequences of events, and cause-and-effect relationships in narrative texts. Therefore, Peer-Led Small Group Learning can be considered an effective teaching strategy for improving literal reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.

This study was conducted with two classes in a single high school and within a limited teaching period. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples, extend the duration of the intervention, and examine the effectiveness of Peer-Led Small Group Learning in developing other aspects of reading comprehension, such as inferential, critical, or evaluative comprehension, as well as its implementation in different educational contexts.

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