

**USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN TEACHING  
NARRATIVE TEXT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ABILITY  
IN READING COMPREHENSION**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this study, the writer tried to teach English (reading skill) to the eighth grade students of Junior high school. The reading material that I taught was Narrative text based on the syllabus of English subject at the eighth grade level students. I tried to solve the problem of the eighth grade students of junior high school in reading skill particularly in this case to improve their ability in understanding narrative text. In narrative text, the students should know about generic structure (Orientation, Complication, and Resolution), language features of narrative text (using simple past tense), and also the students can get new vocabulary in learning narrative text. Finally, students are able to answer the questions based on the text correctly.

This study using cooperative learning, means students working together to accomplish shared goals. Within cooperative activities individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other members.

**INTRODUCTION**

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

I use two techniques of cooperative learning, as follow:

1. **Three-minute review**, the steps are:
  - a. Teachers stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said,
  - b. The students ask clarifying questions to the teacher.
  - c. The students answer the questions based on the text given.
2. **Think-Pair-Share**, the steps are:
  - a. The teacher poses a question to the entire class and the students spend a moment thinking alone about their answer.
  - b. The teacher asks the students to pair off with one classmate and discuss their answers with their partner for four to five minutes.
  - c. The teacher asks the pairs to share their answers with the entire class.

## **THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **A. DEFINITION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

Cooperative learning is an approach to organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. Students must work in groups to complete tasks collectively. Unlike individual learning, students learning cooperatively capitalize on one another's resources and skills (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.). Furthermore, the teacher's role changes from giving information to facilitating students' learning. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds.

### **B. DESCRIPTION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

1. Students work cooperatively and provide students with an opportunity to practice skills or learn content presented by the teacher.
2. Team members are responsible for their own individual learning as well as for their teammates learning.
3. Teams are made up of high, medium and low academic achieving students.
4. Teams are heterogeneous in gender, race, culture and socioeconomic status.
5. Team members contribute their knowledge, experience, skills and resources to the group.
6. Team members cooperate and collaborate.
7. Team members benefit from the contributions of the individual team members.
8. Team members acquire new skills and knowledge.

9. Rewards are oriented towards individual and group.
10. Emphasizes team goals and team success only if each individual learns.
11. Conducive for creating successful inclusive experiences with students with disabilities.

### **C. FIVE ELEMENTS of COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

#### **1. Positive Interdependence (sinks or swims together).** The points are:

- Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success
- Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and tasks responsibilities
- Tasks and goals are clearly defined
- Efforts of each team member benefits the individual as well as the group
- Commitment is made to both personal as well as group success.

#### **2. Individual and Group Accountability.** The points are:

- Each team member must contribute to the group as a whole and accountable for helping the group reach its goals
- Consider keeping the size of the group small. The smaller the size of the group, the greater the individual accountability may be.
- Giving an individual test to each student.
- Randomly examining students orally by calling on one student to present his or her group's work to the teacher (in the presence of the group) or to the entire class.
- Observing each group and recording the frequency with which each member contributes to the group's work.
- Assigning one student in each group the role of checker. The checker asks other group members to explain the reasoning and rationale underlying group answers.
- Having students teach what they learned to someone else.

**3. Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills.** Each team member must be motivated, provide effective leadership, able to make decisions, to build trust, to communicate, and to manage conflict.

#### **4. Face to Face Promotive Interaction - Students Centre:**

- Promote one another's success by sharing resources
- Encourage, help, and applaud each other's efforts
- Support one another academically and personally
- Explain how to solve problems
- Teach each other
- Check for one another's understanding
- Discuss concepts being learned
- Connect present with past learning
- Foster the groups mutual goal

**5. Group Processing (Reflection) - Students Centre:**

- Communicate openly, freely, respectfully discussing their concerns
- Maintain effective working relationships
- Describe what member actions are helpful/unhelpful
- Make decisions about behaviors to continue/change/discontinue
- Process status of goal achievement and accomplishments

**D. METHODS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

**1. Student Learning Teams (SLT) (Slavin, 1991)**

1. Team goals are achieved when each member achieves selected academic objectives.
2. Emphasizes: team reward, individual accountability, and equal opportunities for success.
3. Team rewards are earned when a team achieves at or above a predetermined criterion level.

**2. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) (Slavin, 1978, 1986)**

1. Heterogeneous group of four students are assigned to a team.
2. Students work together to ensure all students has mastered the lesson after initial teacher led instruction.
3. Students take individual quizzes without peer assistance.
4. Quiz scores are compared to past averages; points are awarded based on progress from past performance.

**3. Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) (DeVries & Slavin,1978; Slavin,1986)**

1. Same procedures as STAD on initial instruction and heterogeneous groups.

- 2.Quizzes are replaced with weekly tournaments.
- 3.Students can compete with players from another team to earn points.
  4. Students compete at three-member tournament tables with others who have similar skill levels on target skills.

#### **4. Full Option Science System (FOSS) (Britannica, 1991)**

Four students work together and take turns with different roles to complete a particular science activity:

- Reader

- 1.Reads all print instructions.
- 2.Ensures that all students in the group understand the task.
  3. Summarizes the activity for the group.

- Recorder

- 1.Records all data: observations, predictions, and estimations.
  2. Uses chart and graph paper.

- Getter

Responsible for getting all materials and returning all materials after activity is completed

- Starter

- 1.Begins the manipulations of the materials.
- 2.Supervises the assembly of materials.
3. Ensures that all group members participate.
5. Jigsaw - Groups with five students are set up. Each group member is assigned some unique material to learn and then to teach to his group members. Helping in the learning students across the class working on the same sub-section get together to decide what is important and how to teach it. After practice in these "expert" groups the original groups' reform and students teach each other.

#### **Jigsaw 1**

- 1.Students are assigned to 6 member team
- 2.Academic material has been broken down into sections
- 3.Each team member reads his/her section of the material
- 4.Members of different teams who have studied the same sections meet in expert groups to discuss their sections.

5. Students return to their teams and take turns teaching their teammates about their sections

### **Jigsaw 2:**

1. Students work in 4-5 member teams
2. All students read the same common text, such as a book chapter
3. Each student receives a topic on which to become an expert
4. Students with the same topics meet in expert groups to discuss
5. Students return to their teams to teach what they have learned to their teammates
6. Students take individual quizzes, which result in a team score

### **6. Think-Pair-Share**

1. Involves a three step cooperative structure.
2. During the first step individuals think silently about a question posed by the instructor.
3. Individuals pair up during the second step and exchange thoughts.
4. In the third step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group.

### **7. Three-Step Interview**

1. Round Each member of a team chooses another member to be a partner.
2. During the first step individuals interview their partners by asking clarifying questions.
3. During the second step partners reverse the roles.
4. For the final step, members share their partner's response with the team.

### **8. Round Robin Brainstorming**

1. Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder.
2. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers (think time).
3. The members of the team share responses with one another round robin style.
4. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members.
5. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order gives an answer until time is called

### **9. Three-minute review**

Teachers stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said, ask clarifying questions or answer questions.

### **10. Numbered Heads**

1. A team of four is established.
2. Each member is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
3. Questions are asked of the group.
4. Groups work together to answer the question so that all can verbally answer the question.
5. Teacher calls out a number (two) and each two is asked to give the answer.

### **11. Team Pair Solo**

1. Students do problems first as a team, then with a partner, and finally on their own.
2. Students can do more things with help (mediation) than they can do alone.
3. By allowing them to work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone that which at first they could do only with help.

12. **Circle the Sage** - First the teacher polls the class to see which students have a special knowledge to share. For example the teacher may ask who in the class was able to solve a difficult math homework question, who had visited Mexico, who knows the chemical reactions involved in how salting the streets help dissipate snow. Those students (the sages) stand and spread out in the room. The teacher then has the rest of the classmates each surround a sage, with no two members of the same team going to the same sage. The sage explains what they know while the classmates listen, ask questions, and take notes. All students then return to their teams. Each in turn, explains what they learned. Because each one has gone to a different sage, they compare notes. If there is disagreement, they stand up as a team. Finally, the disagreements are aired and resolved.

### **13. Partners**

1. The class is divided into teams of four.
2. Partners move to one side of the room.

3. Half of each team is given an assignment to master to be able to teach the other half.
4. Partners work to learn and can consult with other partners working on the same material.
5. Teams go back together with each set of partners teaching the other set.
6. Partners quiz and tutor teammates.
7. Team reviews how well they learned and taught and how they might improve the process.

### **E. NARRATIVE TEXTS**

Graesser, Golding, and Long (1991) proposed that narratives are expressions of event-based experiences that (a) are either stored in memory or cognitively constructed, (b) are selected by the teller/writer to transmit to the audience/reader, and (c) are organized in knowledge structures that can be anticipated by the audience. The central components of narrative discourse:

- a. Characters: animate beings exhibiting clearly specified goals and motives for their achievement.
- b. Setting: the particular time frame and spatial location where the events are unfolded
- c. Complication: problems or conflicts encountered by main characters
- d. Plots: sequences of events
- e. Affect patterns: elements soliciting emotional intrigue
- f. Value: morals emphasized in text
- g. The author's perspective

Based on perception in time. Narration is the telling of a story; the succession of events is given in chronological order. The basic purpose of narrative is to entertain, to gain and hold a readers' interest. However narratives can also be written to teach or inform, to change attitudes / social opinions e.g. soap operas and television dramas that are used to raise topical issues.

Narratives sequence people/characters in time and place but differ from recounts in that through the sequencing, the stories set up one or more problems, which must eventually find a way to be resolved. The common structure or basic plan of narrative

text is known as the "story grammar." Although there are numerous variations of the story grammar, the typical elements are:

- Setting—when and where the story occurs.
- Characters—the most important people or players in the story.
- Initiating event—an action or occurrence that establishes a problem and/or goal.
- Conflict/goal—the focal point around which the whole story is organized.
- Events—one or more attempts by the main character(s) to achieve the goal or solve the problem.
- Resolution—the outcome of the attempts to achieve the goal or solve the problem.
- Theme—the main idea or moral of the story.

The graphic representation of these story grammar elements is called a story map. The exact form and complexity of a map depends, of course, upon the unique structure of each narrative and the personal preference of the teacher constructing the map.

Social Function of narrative text is to amuse and to entertain the readers.

Generic Structure of narrative text:

- a. Orientation: sets the scene and introduces the participants
- b. Evaluations: a stepping back to evaluate the plight.
- c. Complication: a crisis arises
- d. Resolution: the crisis is resolved
- e. reorientation: optional

Significant lexicon grammatical features: focus in specific participants, use material processes, behavioral processes, and verbal processes. Use temporal conjunctions, and temporal circumstances, use past tense.

## **F. TYPES OF NARRATIVE**

There are many types of narrative. They can be imaginary, factual or a combination of both. They may include fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, horror stories, adventure stories, fables, myths and legends, historical narratives, ballads, slice of life, personal experience. The features are:

1. Characters with defined personalities/identities.
2. Dialogue often included - tense may change to the present or the future.

3. Descriptive language to create images in the reader's mind and enhance the story.

## **G. STRUCTURE OF NARRATIVE TEXT**

In a Traditional Narrative the focus of the text is on a series of actions: Orientation: (introduction) in which the characters, setting and time of the story are established. Usually answers who? When? Where? E.g. Mr. Wolf went out hunting in the forest one dark gloomy night.

1. **Complication or problem:** The complication usually involves the main character(s) (often mirroring the complications in real life).
2. **Resolution:** There needs to be a resolution of the complication. The complication may be resolved for better or worse/happily or unhappily. Sometimes there are a number of complications that have to be resolved. These add and sustain interest and suspense for the reader. Furthermore, when there is plan for writing narrative texts, the focus should be on the following characteristics:
  1. Plot: What is going to happen?
  2. Setting: Where will the story take place? When will the story take place?
  3. Characterization: Who are the main characters? What do they look like?
  4. Structure: How will the story begin? What will be the problem? How is the problem going to be resolved?
  5. Theme: What is the theme / message the writer is attempting to communicate?

## **H. ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES TEXTS**

There are two different approaches are used in ongoing narrative-comprehension studies.

- a. Story grammar. The ultimate purpose is to describe the reader's implicit and explicit knowledge about the structural properties of stories and how such as knowledge guides comprehension of a particular class of narratives such as fairy tales and folklore. Story grammars establish principled means of predicting story comprehension. However, story grammars are incapable of describing or explaining the crucial constructive aspects of discourse comprehension-elaboration, reasoning, inference, and soon.

Mandler's grammar (1987) postulates a set of node categories and rewrite rules:

1. Story -> setting + episode

2. Episode -> beginning + complex reaction + coal path + ending
  3. Complex reaction -> simple reaction + goal
  4. Goal path -> attempt +outcome
  5. Beginning -> an event that initiates the complex reaction
  6. Simple reaction -> a state that a character wants to achieve
  7. Goal -> a state that a character wants to achieve
  8. Attempt -> an intentional action or plan of a character
  9. Outcome -> a consequence of the attempt, specifying whether the goal is achieved
  10. Ending -> a reaction
- b. Causal networks. According to van den Broek (1994), causal-chain statements describe a chain of connected events, actions, and states that are directly relevant to main plot development. Network models incorporate systematic procedures in identifying text causal relations.

## **SAMPLE MATERIALS**

### **Narrative text Entitled:**

#### **Little Brother and Little Sister**

There were little brother and little sister who lived with their wicked step mother and her ugly daughter. One day, they agreed to leave their house together and decided to go to the forest.

After they walked, little brother felt hot and thirsty and they came to the river. They did not know that the ugly daughter followed and made the water stream murmured for three times.

For the first time, the water murmured “Whoever drinks my water will be changed into a panther!” for the second time, it was said that will be changed into a wolf. And for the third time, little brother did not listen to murmured of the water that said “whoever drinks my water will be changed into a fawn” he changed into a handsome little fawn and little sister very sad. They hide inside abandoned house to rescue.

One day, a little fawn heard about a large deer hunt held by the king and he wanted to join. When he returned home and knocked the door, he said “Little sister open the door”!

The next day, the king imitated his voice and little sister opened the door. He was amazed by the beauty of little sister and asked her to marry him and lived in the castle. Little sister agreed and she became a young queen; they were married and moved to the castle with the little fawn. Time passed, they have a beautiful baby.

The wicked step mother knew that little brother and little sister are still alive. She and her ugly daughter wanted to destroy their happiness and came to the castle when the king went out. They prepared bad planning to lock the young queen in the bathroom so that she would die and her ugly daughter pretended to be a young queen.

The king returned home. At midnight, he realized that young queen disappeared with her baby and a little fawn.

On several nights, the ghostly figure of young queen appeared for several times and said to the king “how is my child? How is my little fawn?” and the king knew that only the young queen could say like that.

Finally, the young queen came back to live with her baby and little fawn also changed into little brother. They live happily ever after, while the wicked step mother and her ugly daughter got punishment because of their evil behavior.

**Questions:**

**Answer the questions below based on the text.**

1. Mention and explain generic structure of the text?
2. Who are the main characters of the story and what do you think about them?
3. Who are supporting characters of the story and what do you think about them?
4. Who changed into a little fawn and who changed into a young queen?
5. What is the moral value of the story?

**Answer Key:**

1. The generic structure of the text above is

**Orientation**

There were little brother and little sister who lived with their wicked step mother and her ugly daughter. One day, they agreed to leave their house together and decided to go to the forest.

After they walked, little brother felt hot and thirsty and they came to the river. They did not know that the ugly daughter followed and made the water stream murmured for three times.

### **Complication**

For the first time, the water murmured “Whoever drinks my water will be changed into a panther!” for the second time, it was said that will be changed into a wolf. And for the third time, little brother did not listen to murmured of the water that said “whoever drinks my water will be changed into a fawn” he changed into a handsome little fawn and little sister very sad. They hide inside abandoned house to rescue.

One day, a little fawn heard about a large deer hunt held by the king and he wanted to join. When he returned home and knocked the door, he said “Little sister open the door”!

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The king returned home. At midnight, he realized that young queen disappeared with her baby and a little fawn.

On several nights, the ghostly figure of young queen appeared for several times and said to the king “how is my child? How is my little fawn?” and the king knew that only the young queen could said like that.

### **Resolution**

Finally, the young queen came back to live with her baby and little fawn also changed into little brother. They live happily ever after, while the wicked step mother and her ugly daughter got punishment because of their evil behavior.

2. The main characters of the story are little brother and little sister. The opinions about the characters will be varying based on students answer.
3. The supporting characters of the story are the wicked step mother and her daughter, the king, and the baby. The opinions about the characters will be varying based on students answer.

4. Little brother changed into a little fawn and little sister changed into a young queen.
5. The moral value of the story is that badness will get punishment and if we do goodness, we will get rewards and happiness.(the answers will be varying based on students opinion).

## **TEACHING/LEARNING PROCEDURES**

### **1. PRE READING**

1. Ask students whether they have read fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, horror stories, adventure stories, fables, myths and legends before.
2. Ask students what they have known about fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, horror stories, adventure stories, fables, myths and legends (types of narrative text) that they have read.
3. List their opinions in form of key words and write them on whiteboard.
4. Challenge students whether their opinions listed on the whiteboard are discussed on the text or not.
5. Teach the students about simple past tense both regular and irregular verbs.

### **2. WHILST READING**

1. The teacher describes to students what a narrative text is, based on what have discussed previously among the students including language features (using simple past tense).
2. The teacher explains about the generic structure of narrative text (orientation, complication, and resolution).
3. Show a narrative text about “Little Brother and Little Sister” to students.
4. The teacher asks students to guess the content of the text by looking at the title and illustration.
5. The teacher gives the instruction to the students to read aloud the text.
6. The teacher leads students to discuss about the generic structure in the text.
7. The teacher gives each students five questions to be answered in written form by themselves.

#### **Think-Pair-Share**

8. Individual think silently about five questions posed by the teacher.
9. Individual pairs up and exchange thoughts to discuss about the answers.

10. The pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group in form of discussion.

#### **Three-minute review**

11. Teacher gives teams three minutes to review what has been answered, ask clarifying questions or answer questions.

### **3. POST READING**

1. The teacher asks some of students to conclude the lesson has be explained before.
2. The teacher gives the opportunity to the students for asking about the lesson.
3. The teacher asks students to find a narrative text and analyze the generic structure of the text as homework.
4. The teacher gives the last conclusion of the lesson.
5. The teacher finishes the lesson and says goodbye.

### **CONCLUSION**

There are some conclusions for this study, as follow:

1. As English teachers for Junior High School particularly for the Eighth grade students, they should teach the students about simple past tense first. The teachers introduce students to two kinds of simple past tense, regular and irregular verb.
2. After understanding about simple past tense, students learn about narrative text which is in this type of text, students hoping can use simple past tense correctly in using verb II whether it is regular or irregular one.
3. The teacher should also teach the students about the generic structure of narrative text (orientation, complication, and resolution) by giving the example of narrative text first and after that analyze each of part together.
4. The teacher should pay attention to students' difficulties in differentiating between regular and irregular verb in past tense and also the differences in using simple present tense and past tense in the text.
5. Students also learn about new vocabulary in the narrative text, so that finally they can make narrative text by their own self. For the first task, teacher can ask students to find the example of narrative text in many sources such as text book or internet and then analyze about the generic structure of it.

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