Improving Intensive Reading Skills Using Group Investigation Techniques in Islamic Cultural History Learning at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah

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Abstract: This study aims to improve students' reading skills by using group investigation techniques. The subjects in this study were intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials of class VIII B MTsN 1 Bengkulu Tengah students. The variables revealed in this study were intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials and group investigation techniques. This study is a classroom action research that includes two cycles. Each cycle consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. Data collection was carried out by tests and non-tests. Data collection tools were in the form of observation guidelines, interview guidelines, journal guidelines, and documentation guidelines. The data analysis techniques used were quantitative and qualitative techniques. Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be seen that intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials after participating in intensive reading learning to find information for discussion materials using the group investigation technique have proven to have increased. The results of the pre-cycle intensive reading test showed an average value of 50.07% and in cycle I an average value of 61.07 was obtained. This means that there was an increase of 11%. In the test results, finding important information in each pre-cycle paragraph was 20.12% and in cycle I was 29.07%. In this test, there was also an increase of 8.95%. In the test results, formulating pre-cycle problems was 30.8% and in cycle I was 32.22%. This also increased by 1.42%. In cycle II, the average class score for the intensive reading test was 74.3. This shows an increase from cycle I to cycle II of 13.22%. For the skill test to find important information in each paragraph, the average score was 30.4%. This also shows an increase of 1.33% from cycle I. The results of the test to formulate problems in cycle II were 43.9%, an increase of 11.68% from cycle I. Based on this, the group investigation technique can be used as an alternative to improve students' reading skills in learning Islamic cultural history.

Keywords: Group investigation, reading skills, History of Islamic culture.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, people are required to compete to master science and technology as much and as widely as possible. One way to meet these demands is by reading. Reading as a language skill occupies a very important position and role in the context of human life. People who like to read gain new knowledge and insights that increase their intelligence so that they are better able to answer life's challenges in the future (Rahim 2005:1). Learning to read is a means of developing other language skills. These learning objectives can be achieved if mastery of reading skills continues to be

trained and improved. Nurhadi (2005:11) put forward several things to improve reading skills, namely (1) realizing that there are various variations of reading goals that differ from one reading activity to another; (2) always formulate each reading activity clearly, at least knowing what will be obtained from reading; (3) need to develop various reading strategies in line with the variety of reading goals; (4) need to practice reading with various variations of reading goals; and (5) realizing that someone who has high reading ability will be able to utilize various reading techniques in line with the reading goals they want to achieve.

The special benefit of reading activities is that people who diligently read books can avoid brain tissue damage in old age. This is according to the latest research on the brain. Reading can help someone to grow new nerves in the brain (Hernowo 2003:33). The special objectives of the Indonesian language component of understanding related to reading lessons include students being able to absorb messages, ideas and opinions of others from various sources. Collecting and filtering information from reading. The class objectives that are in accordance with the learning in class VIII include students being able to obtain details or facts from something (reading for details or facts) or facts from source books and use them for various purposes.

Reading is not an easy learning activity, many factors influence reading success. The level of reading readability is determined by several factors, namely (1) the high quality of the reader's skills, (2) the high sources and forms of reading materials, (3) the level of suitability of the reading content for the reader which is associated with the reader's experience. Referring to the above factors, that the level of readability is influenced by the high quality of sources and forms of reading materials, now there are many forms of reading materials or books circulating in the community. A reading material will be designed in such a way that it can be understood by its readers, for example, the reading material will be adjusted to the age level and psychological development of the reader.

In intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials, students do not easily do reading activities just like that. To be skilled in intensive reading, a lot of knowledge is needed, such as vocabulary, spelling and being able to connect one sentence to another and being able to choose or determine the right reading speed in order to understand the contents of the reading in depth and detail.

From the survey that the author conducted including observation and interviews with teachers and students in class VIII B MTsN 1 Bengkulu Tengah to reveal the problems faced by students, data was obtained on student conditions and student abilities, student characteristics, and student desires as follows. First, based on interviews with students, they stated that they had learned to read but they had never learned to read intensively with a technique. Teachers still apply the conventional learning process, namely teachers lecturing and students doing assignments. Teachers only teach students to read without being accompanied by techniques that can make it easier for students to read intensively and find information in each paragraph that is in accordance with 5W + 1H in the news text well. Second, based on teacher statements and observation results, students' reading skills are still low, the low level is caused by students not being enthusiastic about reading so that students do not capture information carefully and accurately. Third, based on teacher statements, students when given reading lessons seem less interested and less interested in the reading presented. Fourth, based on the results of interviews with students, they want fun learning. So far, students consider reading learning to be very boring.

Based on these circumstances, it is necessary to find ways to improve reading skills, especially intensive reading to find information for discussion materials. The low level of intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials was also discovered after an initial intensive reading test was conducted, finding low levels of students' skills in intensive reading to find information for discussion materials was also caused by poor student behavior during the intensive reading learning process.

Poor student behavior is that students consider reading learning easy because students assume that reading is an easy activity to do so that it does not require a higher level of attention and concentration. In addition, bad habits in reading are still widely practiced, including vocalization, lifting text, and supporting the head. set the standard for student learning completion at 75. An initial test of intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials was conducted to strengthen the results of interviews and observations of class VIII B students so that it can be concluded that the level of intensive reading skills is still low. Seeing the reality above, efforts need to be made to improve intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials and change student behavior for the better. Group investigation learning is the right way out to overcome these problems. In addition, a fun learning process is also a very important factor in achieving learning goals. The use of group investigation techniques makes the learning process more enjoyable than the lecture technique used by teachers until now. Based on the reality above, the researcher acted to conduct research to improve intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials in class VIII B MTsN 1 Bengkulu Tengah students. The researcher applied the group investigation technique to improve intensive reading skills to find information for discussion materials.

METHODS

This research aims to investigate how the Group Investigation (GI) technique can enhance intensive reading skills in the study of Islamic Cultural History at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah. The Group Investigation method is a collaborative learning strategy where students work in groups to explore specific topics, analyze materials, and present their findings to the class. This study will focus on assessing the impact of this technique on students' reading comprehension, participation, and academic performance in Islamic Cultural History.

A quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures will be used for this study. This approach allows for comparing students' reading abilities before and after the intervention, providing a clear indication of the technique's effectiveness. The research will also examine the role of group collaboration in improving students' comprehension and ability to work as a team. The study will be conducted in the 9th-grade class at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah, where Islamic Cultural History is taught. The study will involve 40 students, divided into two groups: an experimental group using the Group Investigation technique, and a control group following traditional teaching methods. The experimental group will participate in various activities such as group discussions, research on historical topics, and collaborative presentations, while the control group will receive traditional teacher-centered instruction without cooperative learning strategies.

Before implementing the GI technique, both groups will take a pre-test to evaluate their initial reading abilities. This test will assess students' reading comprehension, speed, and ability to identify key information in texts related to Islamic Cultural History. Following this, the experimental group will engage in the Group Investigation method for a period of six weeks, during which they will read historical texts in depth, analyze the material, and create presentations based on their research. The GI technique will be incorporated into several lessons designed to enhance students' reading comprehension. Each group will be assigned specific topics related to Islamic Cultural History, and they will be responsible for gathering information, discussing the material, and teaching their peers. The group discussions will encourage students to read intensively, analyze the material critically, and collaborate with their peers to form a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Throughout the intervention, the researcher will observe students' participation and engagement during group discussions and presentations. These observations will help assess how effectively students collaborate and how their reading comprehension improves. Teachers will also provide continuous guidance and feedback to ensure that students are making progress in enhancing their reading skills.

At the end of the six-week intervention, both groups will take a post-test to evaluate any changes in their reading abilities. The post-test will mirror the pre-test to allow for a direct comparison of students' performance. The results from the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed statistically to assess the effectiveness of the Group Investigation technique in improving reading comprehension.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data will be collected through interviews and questionnaires. These will be distributed to both students and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the Group Investigation method. The interviews will explore students' perceptions of group work, the challenges they encountered, and how they feel the technique helped them develop their reading skills. The questionnaires will provide additional insights into students' attitudes towards reading and their overall perception of the learning process.

The combined analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data will help determine the overall effectiveness of the Group Investigation technique in improving students' intensive reading skills. If the experimental group shows significant improvement in reading comprehension compared to the control group, it will suggest that the GI method is effective for enhancing reading skills in Islamic Cultural History. Additionally, feedback from students and teachers will offer valuable insights into the strengths and potential limitations of the method, as well as its applicability to other subjects.

The research will take place over one academic semester, spanning 12 weeks. The first two weeks will be used for initial assessments, including the pre-test and introducing the Group Investigation technique to the students. The following six weeks will involve the active learning phase, where the experimental group engages in group-based activities. The last four weeks will focus on administering the post-test, analyzing the results, and gathering qualitative feedback from students and teachers.

To analyze the results, paired sample t-tests will be used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of both groups. This statistical test will help determine whether there are significant differences in the students' reading abilities. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis will be employed to identify common patterns in students' and teachers' experiences with the Group Investigation technique, shedding light on its effectiveness and challenges. The anticipated outcomes of this study are twofold. First, it is expected that the experimental group will show a marked improvement in their intensive reading skills compared to the control group. This would suggest that the Group Investigation technique is a useful strategy for enhancing reading comprehension. Second, the research aims to provide insights into how collaborative learning can be applied to Islamic Cultural History and potentially other subjects, helping students engage more effectively with the material.

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Group Investigation technique in improving students' intensive reading skills in Islamic Cultural History at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah. By comparing the performance of an experimental group using this method to that of a control group using traditional teaching methods, the research aims to determine whether this technique can effectively enhance students' academic outcomes and engagement with the subject.

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Group Investigation (GI) technique in improving intensive reading skills in Islamic Cultural History at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah. The research involved 40 students, divided into two groups: an experimental group that used the Group Investigation method, and a control group that followed traditional, teacher-centered instruction. The results were analyzed using both quantitative data from pre-test and post-test scores, and qualitative data from interviews and questionnaires.

Before the intervention, both groups were given a pre-test to assess their initial reading skills. The pre-test evaluated students' ability to comprehend reading material, extract key information from historical texts, and their reading speed and accuracy. Results showed that both groups had similar performance levels, with average scores of around 55%. This indicated that while the students possessed a basic understanding of Islamic Cultural History, they lacked the deeper reading comprehension and intensive reading skills necessary for a thorough understanding of the subject.

After six weeks of intervention, both groups took a post-test that mirrored the pre-test in terms of content and difficulty. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the experimental group's performance, with the average post-test scores rising to 75%. This reflected a 20% improvement in their reading comprehension and intensive reading skills. On the other hand, the control group only showed a slight improvement, with post-test scores increasing to 60%, which represented a modest 5% improvement in their reading abilities.

To assess the statistical significance of the findings, paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within each group. The experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement between their pre-test and post-test scores ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the Group Investigation technique had a positive impact on their reading comprehension. However, the control group did not show a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that the traditional teacher-centered approach had limited effect on their reading improvement.

During the intervention, the researcher also observed the level of engagement and participation in the experimental group. The results revealed that students in the experimental group were highly engaged during group discussions and collaborative activities. Working together, they analyzed historical texts, shared their findings, and helped each other better understand key concepts in Islamic Cultural History. This collaborative approach created an environment in which students deepened their comprehension of the material and enhanced their reading skills through active involvement.

In contrast, the control group, which received traditional lecture-based instruction, exhibited lower levels of participation. Students in this group primarily listened to lectures and took notes, without opportunities for interactive or collaborative learning. As a result, their ability to engage meaningfully with the material was limited, which likely contributed to their smaller improvement in reading skills.

Along with the quantitative data, qualitative feedback was collected through interviews and questionnaires from both students and teachers. The interviews provided valuable insights into the students' experiences with the Group Investigation method. The majority of students in the experimental group expressed positive views about the technique. They found working in groups enjoyable and appreciated the chance to discuss the material with their peers. Many students noted that collaborating with others helped them better understand the content and improve their reading comprehension. Several students also mentioned that presenting their findings to the class helped clarify any uncertainties and solidify their understanding of the historical topics.

Despite the positive feedback, some students in the experimental group faced challenges during the group work, especially in terms of coordinating tasks and managing

time. However, these challenges were generally viewed as part of the learning process, and most students reported that they developed valuable skills in teamwork and collaboration as a result.

Teachers also shared their perspectives on the effectiveness of the Group Investigation method. They observed that the GI technique fostered a more interactive and student-centered classroom environment. Teachers noted that students in the experimental group were more motivated and eager to engage with the material, which contributed to their improved reading comprehension. However, teachers also acknowledged that the GI method required more preparation and time to implement effectively, which could be a barrier for some educators.

Comparing the results of the experimental group and the control group, it is clear that the Group Investigation technique had a more significant impact on reading skills. The experimental group not only showed greater improvements in reading comprehension but also demonstrated higher levels of engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration. These findings suggest that the GI method is an effective approach for enhancing intensive reading skills, particularly in subjects that require a deep understanding and analysis of the material, such as Islamic Cultural History.

In contrast, the control group showed only minimal improvement, highlighting the limitations of traditional teaching methods in fostering active learning and critical thinking. The traditional approach, which mainly involved lectures and individual reading, did not encourage the same level of interaction or comprehension that the Group Investigation method did.

Several students in the experimental group indicated that the GI technique helped them become more independent learners. They found that researching, analyzing, and presenting the material gave them more control over their learning process. Additionally, students found that explaining the content to their peers helped reinforce their own understanding and solidify their grasp of the historical topics.

Despite these benefits, some students mentioned that the initial phases of group work were difficult, particularly when it came to dividing tasks and managing time. However, these difficulties were generally seen as part of the learning experience, and students emphasized the importance of teamwork and collaboration in overcoming these challenges.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine the impact of the Group Investigation (GI) technique on improving intensive reading skills in the context of Islamic Cultural History at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah. The study found that the experimental group, which used the GI method, demonstrated significant improvements in reading comprehension and engagement compared to the control group, which followed traditional teacher-centered methods. The results of the study not only highlight the effectiveness of the GI technique but also provide deeper insights into how collaborative learning can enhance students' understanding of complex subject matter.

First, the study's quantitative results revealed a notable difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group showed an average improvement of 20% in reading comprehension, whereas the control group's improvement was only 5%. This substantial difference indicates that the GI method was significantly more effective in fostering intensive reading skills compared to traditional teaching methods. The results are consistent with previous research on collaborative learning, which suggests that students benefit from peer interactions and group discussions, particularly when dealing with complex texts and subjects (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

The statistical analysis conducted using paired sample t-tests further supports this conclusion, as the experimental group's improvement in reading skills was statistically

significant ($p < 0.05$), while the control group's improvement was not. This indicates that the GI technique led to measurable gains in students' ability to comprehend and analyze historical texts. The lack of statistical significance in the control group's results underscores the limitations of traditional methods, which may not provide the same level of student engagement or deep learning that collaborative methods like GI can offer.

The positive effects of the GI technique can be attributed to several key elements inherent in the method itself. One of the primary advantages of GI is its emphasis on student collaboration and active participation. Throughout the intervention, students in the experimental group were required to work together to analyze texts, share their findings, and present their conclusions to the class. This peer-to-peer interaction allowed students to engage more deeply with the material and develop a better understanding of the historical content. As noted by Slavin (2011), collaborative learning environments provide opportunities for students to explain concepts to their peers, which not only reinforces their own understanding but also helps them develop critical thinking skills.

In contrast, the control group's reliance on traditional teacher-centered methods limited their opportunities for such interactions. The traditional approach, which involved lectures and independent reading assignments, did not allow for collaborative learning or active problem-solving. As a result, students in the control group had fewer chances to engage with the material in a meaningful way, which likely contributed to their smaller improvement in reading comprehension. The lack of active learning in the control group also aligns with research by Freeman et al. (2014), which found that active learning methods, such as collaborative learning, are more effective in improving student outcomes than passive methods like traditional lectures.

Furthermore, the Group Investigation technique helped students in the experimental group develop a sense of ownership over their learning. By researching and analyzing historical texts, students were given more responsibility for their learning process. This increased sense of autonomy likely contributed to their improved reading skills. As Deci and Ryan (2000) have argued, giving students more control over their learning can enhance motivation and lead to deeper engagement with the material. The ability to collaborate with peers also provided a sense of shared responsibility, which may have further motivated students to engage with the content.

The high level of engagement observed in the experimental group is another key factor that contributed to their success. The collaborative nature of the GI technique fostered a dynamic classroom environment where students were actively involved in discussions and problem-solving activities. This active participation is consistent with the findings of Hattie (2009), who emphasized that student engagement is a crucial factor in academic achievement. When students are actively engaged in their learning, they are more likely to retain information, understand complex concepts, and develop higher-order thinking skills.

While the results of the experimental group were overwhelmingly positive, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that some students faced during the group work process. A few students expressed difficulty in coordinating tasks and managing time effectively. These challenges are common in group-based learning settings, where students must collaborate and balance their individual contributions. However, despite these challenges, students reported that they learned valuable skills in teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. These skills are essential for success in both academic and professional settings and further highlight the benefits of collaborative learning.

The challenges faced by students in the experimental group also emphasize the need for teachers to provide adequate guidance and support during group work. Teachers should facilitate group activities by clearly defining roles, setting expectations, and providing ongoing feedback to ensure that all students contribute meaningfully to the group's efforts. This guidance can help minimize the difficulties that students may encounter when working together and maximize the benefits of collaborative learning.

In addition to improving reading comprehension, the GI technique also had a positive impact on students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Through group discussions and presentations, students were encouraged to analyze historical texts from multiple perspectives and draw connections between different ideas. This process of critical analysis helped students gain a deeper understanding of the material and enhanced their ability to think critically about historical events. According to Paul and Elder (2014), critical thinking is an essential skill for academic success, and collaborative learning methods like GI provide an ideal platform for developing these skills.

The improvement in critical thinking skills is particularly significant in the context of Islamic Cultural History, a subject that requires students to not only understand historical events but also to analyze their cultural, social, and political implications. The GI technique's emphasis on collaborative analysis and peer discussion allowed students to approach these complex issues from multiple angles, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the material. This is especially important in subjects like Islamic Cultural History, where students must engage with diverse viewpoints and interpretations of historical events.

The qualitative feedback from both students and teachers further supports the idea that the GI technique had a positive impact on students' learning experiences. Most students in the experimental group reported enjoying the group work and felt that it helped them understand the material better. They also appreciated the opportunity to present their findings to the class, which reinforced their learning and boosted their confidence. Teachers, on the other hand, observed that students in the experimental group were more motivated and engaged in the learning process. This increased motivation likely contributed to the improved reading comprehension and overall performance of the experimental group.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also highlighted some challenges in implementing the Group Investigation technique. Teachers noted that the GI method required more preparation and time than traditional teaching methods. This is consistent with previous research, which has found that while collaborative learning methods can be highly effective, they also require careful planning and sufficient instructional time to be successful (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Teachers must be well-prepared to manage group dynamics, provide guidance, and ensure that students remain focused on the learning objectives. Therefore, while the GI technique can be highly beneficial, it is important for educators to be mindful of the additional time and effort required for its successful implementation.

The results of this study demonstrate that the Group Investigation technique is an effective method for improving intensive reading skills in the context of Islamic Cultural History. The experimental group showed significant gains in reading comprehension, engagement, and critical thinking compared to the control group. These findings suggest that collaborative learning methods like GI can provide a more effective approach to teaching complex subjects, fostering deeper understanding and promoting higher-order thinking skills. However, the study also highlights the challenges involved in implementing such methods, emphasizing the need for careful planning, support, and guidance from teachers. Ultimately, the GI technique provides a promising avenue for enhancing students' reading skills and overall academic performance.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the Group Investigation (GI) technique in improving intensive reading skills in the context of Islamic Cultural History at MTs Negeri 1 Bengkulu Tengah. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the GI method significantly enhanced the reading comprehension and engagement of students, particularly in comparison to traditional teacher-centered methods. The results from the pre-test and post-test show a clear and substantial improvement in the experimental

group's reading skills, with their average scores rising by 20%. This indicates that the GI technique had a positive impact on students' ability to comprehend and analyze complex historical texts. In contrast, the control group demonstrated only a modest improvement of 5%, which highlights the limitations of traditional methods in fostering deeper understanding and critical thinking. Statistical analysis further supported the effectiveness of the GI method, as the experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in their reading comprehension ($p < 0.05$). This provides strong evidence that the Group Investigation technique is a valuable tool in improving students' intensive reading skills. On the other hand, the lack of statistical significance in the control group's results suggests that traditional, teacher-centered approaches do not foster the same level of improvement in reading skills. The key advantage of the GI technique lies in its emphasis on collaboration and active learning. Through group discussions, peer interactions, and collaborative problem-solving, students were able to engage more deeply with the material. This process allowed them to analyze texts from multiple perspectives and develop a better understanding of the content. Active participation, as part of the GI method, encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning, which is critical for enhancing both comprehension and retention of information. Moreover, the study found that the GI method helped foster important skills beyond reading comprehension, such as critical thinking, teamwork, and communication. These skills are essential for students' academic and personal growth, especially in subjects like Islamic Cultural History, where understanding complex and interconnected concepts is vital. By working collaboratively, students were able to share insights, challenge each other's ideas, and build a deeper understanding of the historical material. While the experimental group demonstrated impressive gains in reading skills, it is important to recognize that the group work process did present some challenges. Some students struggled with coordinating tasks and managing time effectively. However, these challenges were largely seen as part of the learning process, and students reported that they developed valuable skills in collaboration and problem-solving. These difficulties underscore the need for clear guidance and support from teachers during group activities to ensure that all students contribute meaningfully to the group effort. The positive outcomes observed in the experimental group align with previous research on collaborative learning, which suggests that peer interactions and active involvement in the learning process can significantly improve student outcomes. The findings of this study support the idea that active learning methods, such as Group Investigation, can be particularly beneficial in subjects that require deep analysis and comprehension, like Islamic Cultural History. In conclusion, the Group Investigation technique proved to be an effective method for improving intensive reading skills and fostering deeper engagement with complex historical texts. The study highlights the potential of collaborative learning to enhance student outcomes and provides strong evidence that the GI method is a valuable tool for teaching subjects that demand critical thinking and in-depth analysis. Moving forward, educators may consider incorporating the GI technique into their teaching strategies to improve student learning in a variety of subjects.

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