ABSTRACT: This research was aimed to improve students’ grammatical competence in terms of parts of speech for the 2nd semester students of English faculty at UNHASY academic year 2015/2016. The instruments used were observation checklists, field notes and the students’ pretest-posttest. The research was conducted through Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The result of the study shows that: (1) from the data collected from the observation and field notes, the researcher found out that the students participation in discussing and sharing ideas gradually improved during each meeting; (2) The students’ score in posttest was higher than the score in preliminary test. There were more than 75% students met the criteria of the success. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that RallyCoach strategy is effective to improve the students’ grammatical competence in terms of parts of speech and the students’ involvement during the teaching-learning process. Above all, the teacher’s role and the use of appropriate instructional media are very important because those will enhance the students’ motivation in learning English.

Keywords: Rally Coach, Grammatical Competence, Parts of Speech


Kata kunci: Rally Coach, Kemampuan Gramatikal, Parts of Speech.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar which has been and still a subject of hot discussions among investigators, is the core of every language and the system of regular patterns which make up a language. It is this system that allows language learners to create an infinite number of sentences and make sense of what they are learning. Although, tutors fill in their EFL scholars’ tiny heads with a large repertoire of grammar rules and distinct lexical items besides some practice sessions in which they are asked to overcome different activities related to grammar in order to guarantee that their communicative competence is being enhanced. They are still faced time to time hardness in solving the problems previously stated.

In the light of such striking reality, the field of educational psychology strives hard to comprehend the complexity of the educational process by placing its interest first on teachers since they constitute the power of authority in an educational setting. Students’ poor achievements and the failure of an educational system are generally related to the quality of education instructors provide. To reach effective language teaching, tutors must possess a profound knowledge in grammar, skills and the new instructional approaches and methods. By doing so, they will update to the new challenges that face education
nowadays on one hand and discover some practical solutions to the problems faced by EFL learners in the other hand. Accordingly, cooperative learning method has been suggested as an alternative solution to many educational problems in a large number of works.

Although, the implementation of cooperative learning method to classroom teaching finds its roots years ago in some countries involving USA, and it is now applied in almost all school content areas, and increasingly in college and university contexts all over the world (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Kessler, 1992). Cooperative learning is one of the most extensively researched educational innovations of all time. There are approximately one thousand research studies which document its effectiveness on quite a range of outcome variables. More detailed descriptions of studies and more extensive lists of references are found in the most comprehensive research volume, Learning to Cooperate, Cooperating to Learn (Slavin, et.al, 1985).

The advantages of using cooperative learning in teaching learning process have been proved by many researchers. Kezoui (2015) found that by using cooperative learning, it could boost second year EFL students’ Grammatical Competence at Tlemcen University. Some other practitioners also examined the impact of cooperative learning on student achievement. For instance, Magnesio and Davis (2010) implemented the combination of RoundRobin, RallyCoach, and Quiz-Quiz-Trade for 4th-grade classroom at Kennedy Elementary. It proved that cooperative learning could significantly increase positive interactions among students and also decrease disruptive behavior.

Another researcher, Cline (2007) investigated the effects of using Kagan cooperative learning structures in her 5th-grade classes. She used RallyCoach and RoundTable during guided practice in one math class; in a comparison group, she used a more traditional method of instruction (e.g., students working alone). The data collected from pre- and posttests revealed that the experimental group outperformed the comparison group on all measures of math achievement. While Liao (2006) examined the effects of cooperative learning on EFL students in Taiwan using quasi-experimental study. It was found to have large positive effects on motivation and strategy use, and medium-to-large positive effects on grammar achievement. Ghorbani and Nezamoshari’e (2012) proved that Cooperative is a good alternative to the dominant Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in Asia, where learners are believed to be individualistic, passive, and unable to work cooperatively to construct their own knowledge. Liang (2002) implemented cooperative learning to enhance their students’ proficiency in English as well as motivation toward learning English. The major findings of this study suggested that cooperative learning helped significantly to enhance the junior high school learners’ oral communicative competence and their motivation toward learning English.

Belmekki and Kebiri (2014) conducted an action research at second year LMD students of English at Tlemcen University; for the sake of enhancing their grammar competence through cooperative learning. The results have been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, and reflected in a significant manner how influential cooperation was. Assma (2010) found that using cooperative learning motivates second year English students and when used in grammar, well-structured cooperative group/pair work helps second year English students to learn it.

Concerning the implementation of RallyCoach, Murie (2004) conducted a research about how amount of communication affected student learning. The result of the study showed that by implementing RallyCoach strategy, the amount of mutual communication increased and affected student learning and also students’ achievement in mathematics concerning algebra.
All those researches show that grammar always becomes an interesting topic to discuss as one of English competence that students’ should achieve. Many researches around the world have been conducted to find out the most appropriate strategy to teach grammar in class. It shows that grammar is really important and will be useful for students in school and also for people in society.

Each cooperative method has its own characteristics and applicability to distinct curriculum areas. The strategy used in this class action research was chosen for the sake to confirm students’ performance according to the various studies on cooperative learning methods and their pertinence to teaching languages. The strategy used is RallyCoach, in (Kagan, 2004: 68) RallyCoach is part of cooperative learning that means a small group, where each in group of students working together to achieve common goals. Students work together to learn and take responsibility for teaching their teammates as well as their own. RallyCoach has some advantages: students verbalize problems and answers, students receive frequent and immediate feedback, students receive peer help and support, and students are all held accountable for participating.

RallyCoach is ideal for peer tutoring and support during practice time. Students pair up. If students are seated in cooperative teams of four, they pair up within their own team. If not, the teacher may assign students to pairs. The pair receives a worksheet or multi-part task. The problems are typically mastery-oriented practice problems, such as grammar practice. But RallyCoach can also be used with more challenging or creative problems such as written responses. In the pair, one student is the “Solver” and the other the “Coach”. The “Solver” answers the problem, verbalizing the answer before writing. The “Coach” watches and lists. The “Coach” offers help if needed. When the “Solver” solves the problem, the “Coach” offers praise, Great job, partner! Partners switch roles and the “Solver” becomes the “Coach” for the next problem.

Kagan (2009) states that RallyCoach transforms independent work to cooperative work. During practice sessions, two heads are better than one. Partners can pool their knowledge and provide peer help and support when necessary. Partners hold each other accountable to the task. While working together, students also get to practice speaking as they verbalize answers.

The strategy (RallyCoach) is under the umbrella of cooperative learning. By implementing RallyCoach, The students are invited to ask and answer, debate, and contributing in problems’ solving situation rather than passively absorbing the linguistic forms of language. Interacting with others encourages people to restructure their thinking, like summarizing, elaborating, and explaining. The cognitive restructuring enhances higher-level thinking. Besides, disagreement when handled constructively helps clarify thinking and foster cognitive restructuring. In addition, students have more opportunities to witness the thinking strategies of others and to share their own. Besides, lowered anxiety encourages taking risks, trying out new ways of doing things, and creativity. The last, learning the perspective of others, especially in heterogeneous groups promotes the realization that there are multiple points of view.

Concerning this strategy, RallyCoach strategy has some benefits to improve academics and also deliver rich social skills for the students. Laurie and Kagan in Kagan and Kagan (2009) state some benefits of RallyCoach strategy: It can be applied at any level, It is oriented on efficiency, Encouraging students to learn from one another, motivating students naturally, promoting discussion more effectively, and also, students can learn how be independent from the teacher and work together cooperatively.
The implementation of the appropriate strategy in teaching grammar is very important. Besides, the use of media is also as important as the strategy. Conducting this study, the researcher prepared “grammar-focused text”. Grammar-focused text is a sheet contains problem-posing text regarding to the grammar material being studied. In general terms, Ivers and Barron define that media is the component of teaching that support the teaching and learning process. Forms of media may include text, graphics, animation, pictures, video, and sound. When media is used to support our teaching and learning process, perhaps many teachers believe that media encourage students to work in groups, express their knowledge in multiple ways, solve problems, revise their own work, and construct knowledge. Students have the opportunity to learn and apply real-world skills (Ivers and Barron, 2002: 2).

Based on the result of the observation conducted by the researcher, the researcher found that students’ grammar ability was low based on their score in grammar exercise given in the preliminary study. The mean score of their grammar test was 65.3. That’s why the researcher conducted a classroom action research. The researcher applied one of cooperative learning strategy in the teaching and learning process proposed by Kagan (2009), that is “Rally Coach” to improve the students’ achievement on grammatical competence.

This study is delimited specifically to parts of speech in English. The subjects are the 2nd semester students of English faculty at UNHASY academic year 2015/2016. These students were chosen on the basis of the students' previous score in the preliminary study showing that most of the students' score in grammar test hadn’t achieved the criteria of success.

Research Method

Many experts has stated the importance of collaboration or participatory in class action research. Carr and Kemmis (2004) states that some of what passes for action research today fails to meet the requirements so far outlined for action research: it is not concerned with the systematic investigation of a social or educational practice, it is not participatory or collaborative, and it does not employ the spiral of self-reflection. For example, those studies which simply involve educational researchers in field experimentation in which they provide the impetus for setting up the practices to be studied are not properly to be regarded as action research. ‘Applied’ research conducted by academic or service researchers is similarly not action research: these researchers merely co-opt practitioners into gathering data about educational practices for them.

The research design used in this study is collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) administered by the teacher to implement their experiences in overcoming the problems faced in the classroom. Goodnough (2011) explains that collaborative action research can be used to create different types of spaces: problem-posing spaces, problem-solving spaces, meaning-making spaces, and spaces for communicating and disseminating the outcomes of collaborative action research”. In line with Goodnough, Carr and kemmis (2004) states that collaborative relationships in which the ‘outsider’ becomes a ‘critical friend’ helping ‘insiders’ to act more wisely, prudently and critically in the process of transforming education. The success of the work of such ‘critical friends’ is to be measured in the extent to which they can help those involved in the educational process to improve their own educational practices, their own understandings, and the situations and institutions in which they work.

In this research, the CAR design follows Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) which consists of four steps: (1) planning an action, (2) implementing the plan. (3) Observing the action, and (4) analyzing the data obtained during the action and making a reflection on
the result of the observation. The four main steps were preceded by a preliminary study.

In this study, the researcher worked together with a lecturer at UNHASY who was teaching at the same class, as his collaborator. In this study, the researcher acted as the teacher who conducted the activities of teaching learning in the classroom by implementing the RallyCoach strategy, while his collaborator acted as an observer who observed the implementation of the strategy within the instructional process. Therefore, the researcher trained his collaborator the strategy and also trained the way to fill the observation checklist and the field notes. The researcher also gave and explained the outline of this study to his collaborator. The outline included the following points; the introduction of the steps of RallyCoach and the explanation about the steps in teaching-learning process.

A preliminary study was conducted on February 16th 2016 to know the real condition of the students in the classroom in order to design the appropriate action plan to improve the students’ grammatical competence. The preliminary study was conducted by interviewing the students about their difficulties in grammar, it could be concluded that most of them felt grammar was quite difficult subject to master. Besides interviewing, the researcher also gave pre-test to the students, the result showed that most of them still low in their grammatical competence. From the pre-test score, it was known that the students’ grammatical competence was low. The mean score in grammar test was 65.3.

Based on the result of preliminary study, the researcher divided the students’ level into three groups; those are: low, middle, and high. There were 10 students got range score around 50-65 (low level), 3 students gained score around 70-85 (middle level), and there were 3 students scored around 90-100 (high level).

In implementing of the strategy, the researcher acted as the practitioner carrying out the teaching and learning process while his collaborator helped him observe the students' participation during the process of learning. In this stage, the researcher as the teacher implemented the strategy and at the same time the collaborator sat at the back, observed, and gathered the data about the activities in the classroom. The observer used the observation sheets and field notes in observing the classroom activities.

Observing the action is the process of recording and collecting data about any aspect or event referring to the criteria of success that take place in the teaching and learning process. In this case, the researcher collected the data by using the instruments provided before: grammar test, observation checklist, and field notes.

The first data was collected from an observation checklist. The observation checklist was used to observe the students' activities toward the implementation of the RallyCoach strategy to check the students' involvement and performance during the learning process. It was used to obtain the data about the interaction between the students and the students, and the interaction between the students and the teacher. The second data were from field notes. It was used to compile the data beyond the observation sheets to anticipate the possibility of uncovered data during the implementation of the action. The third data were collected from the tests given to the students to identify the extent to which the students made progress during teaching-learning process.

The criteria of success of this research were emphasized on two criteria; the teaching and learning process and the score of the students’ grammar test. For the teaching and learning process, it is considered to be successful if at least 75% students respond positively during the implementation of RallyCoach strategy. For students’ grammatical competence, the criteria of success are divided into 3 categories. The categories are students with high level of competence, students with middle level of competence and students with low level of competence. The categories were determined
based on the result of pretest during the preliminary study. The cycle was considered as successful if at least 75% students can pass the minimum score in grammar test. The reflection stage was conducted by comparing the data collected through observation stage with the criteria of success to see how far the implemented strategy solves the problems.

The next action was drawing the conclusion. When the results indicate that the criteria of success are not accomplished, then the researcher and his collaborator revise or modify the previous lesson plan and went into the next cycle. But when the results have accomplished the criteria of success and the strategy has solved the problem, the research has finished. It does not need the second cycle. Burns (2010) states that to end a cycle in action research depends on whether the researcher has reached a satisfactory level of reflection and knowledge and has seen a logical stopping point.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cycle I was conducted on March 8. In the first cycle, the students’ activities in the classroom were observed by the collaborator teacher. In cycle 1, it was found that during pre-activities, only few students giving responses on the text given, answering the teacher’s guiding questions, and sharing ideas about the topic through brainstorming. But when the teacher explained the objective and the task they should do, they pay more attention. It showed that they had more responsibility in learning.

In whilst-activities, most of the students contributed their ideas in group. They actively involved in discussion, in term of asking and giving their opinion to the material explained by their partner. But when it was the time for presenting the result of their discussion, only few students were brave to be the representative of the group. As recorded in field notes, some students were shy to be the representative, they were not confident enough to present their work.

In Post-activities, most of them were actively giving their opinion when the teacher gave the leading question related to the topic discussed during that meeting. See Appendix 5 for observation checklist.

From the data obtained, it was only 50% students actively involved during the implementation of RallyCoach strategy. Among the 8 indicators of students’ involvement in observation checklist, it’s only 4 indicators categorized as “good”, while other 4 indicators were categorized as fair. So it can be concluded that it did not meet the criteria of success for students’ participation.

The condition of students’ involvement in cycle 1 could be caused by some aspects. In the cycle 1, some students did not fully pay attention to the class in the beginning of the lesson. Then, the teacher began to show the RallyCoach strategy. The students began to pay attention and asked some questions about the RallyCoach. They were excited to ask about RallyCoach as it was something new for them. The students did not understand RallyCoach. The teacher explained the function of RallyCoach and how it would be used in studying grammar. This led to a better involvement in general.

After implementing the strategy, the teacher gave posttest for the students. Based on the result of the posttest in cycle 1, 10 students pass the criteria of success, while the other four failed to meet the required score. Therefore based on the criteria of success it could be concluded that the result had not already reached the criteria of success because only 62.25 % students reached the criteria of success. To avoid the problem above, in cycle II, the researcher gave more explanation about the material. As the cycle I failed to meet the criteria of success, Cycle II was conducted on March 15, 2016.

The observation checklist used in the cycle II was the same as the observation checklists used in the cycle I. The data obtained showed that most students became more actively involved during the teaching-learning process. Almost all indicators showed that the
students’ involvement significantly rose better.

In pre-activities, many students tried to answer the teacher’s guiding questions. Moreover, most of them gained better response in the other three indicators. Most of the students gave good responses on the text given. During the brainstorming, each member of the groups was more active than before. They also paid more attention when the teacher explained the material.

In whilst-activities, the indicator showed excellent for the students activeness in contributing their ideas in group. Their motivation and bravery also increased when the teacher asked them to be the representative of the group in presenting the result of their discussion.

In cycle II, it was shown that the students’ grammatical competence got improved. 14 students could pass the minimum score to obtain, while it was only two of them failed. The mean score of the posttest in cycle 2 also increased from 65.3 in pretest became 76.5 in the last posttest.

Based on the criteria of success that had been set before, the result of the posttest proved that it had met the requirement to end the cycle. Since the minimum percentage is 75% of the students to pass, while it has reached 87.5% students passed the criteria.

From the data obtained during the action of the research, it could be known that there was significant improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2 in term of the students’ participation. The improvement of students’ involvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2 is shown in the Figure 1 below. The point shows the level of students’ involvement during the process of teaching-learning. 1 point means poor, 2 points means fair, 3 points means good, 4 points means excellent.

Based on the observation checklists for those 2 cycles, it can be inferred that there was improvement on the students’ involvement. In cycle 1, it was only 4 indicators gained “good” value. While the other four indicators gained “fair” value. In cycle 2, the students’ involvement increased significantly. Among the 8 indicators, 3 indicators showed “good” value, moreover; other 5 indicators showed “excellent” value. It means there were more students became more active during teaching-learning process. It was the evidence that the RallyCoach strategy is an innovative and effective strategy in teaching grammar.

After implementing RallyCoach strategy, the researcher gave the post-test for each cycle. It was done to measure the improvement of the students’ comprehension quantitatively. The score the students obtained in cycle 1 had not met the criteria of success. That was why the researcher conducted the second cycle with some modification in the teaching-learning process inside. Based on the post-test in the second cycle, the researcher inferred to end the cycle because the students had gained the minimum score to meet criteria of success.

Below is the chart of the students’ improvement in mastering grammar concerning the parts of speech and the use in a sentence. The chart shows the score gained by the students from cycle 1 to cycle 2. From the data, we can know that in the first cycle, only 10 students (62.5%) passed the minimum score of the criteria of success; that is 75%. in the second cycle, the students’ grammatical
competence significantly improved. It was proven from the total students passing the score minimum of the criteria of success. In this cycle, there were 14 students (87.5%) who could meet the criteria of success. That’s why, the researcher concluded to end the cycle.

Figure 2: The Students’ grammar score from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of improving students’ grammatical competence through RallyCoach strategy in this research, the researcher drew some conclusions. The major conclusion of this research is that the implementation of RallyCoach strategy has many advantages to help students improve their grammatical competence and encourage them to be more active in grammar class.

Generally, the implemented RallyCoach strategy begins by dividing the students into some groups. The teacher gives one text for each group. The students break down the text until every member get his/her portion of sentences. The task of each student is to explain to the other partner in his/her group the sentences he/she has got while the other watches, listens, and asks if necessary, and praises. If one student finishes explaining the sentences, the next student takes turn. It continues until the fourth student. If all groups have finished discussing the material, then the representative of each group comes forward and explains some sentences from the text while the other groups watch, ask and give feedback if necessary. The other sentences of the text are completely discussed. During the discussion, the teacher corrects and gives feedback if there is a mistake or difficulty that the students can’t solve.

This strategy can be modified in the next meeting based on the lack in the previous meeting. For example; in the second meeting before implementing the strategy, the teacher can give more explanation about the previous material that students get difficulties.

Implementing an innovative strategy like RallyCoach is one of the examples of innovative strategy in teaching grammar. The use of media in teaching English is also as important as the implementation of the strategy.

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