

# **IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION ON DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING SEMANTIC MAPPING**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to improve students' reading comprehension, especially in getting main idea, supporting detail and vocabulary aspect. This research was conducted to the first grade students of SMK PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2014/2015. In this research, the subject is Teknik Audio Video class that consists of 20 students. The researcher conducted a classroom action research in her research and acted as the teacher during the research period. The data were collected by using direct and measurement technique. The tools of data collecting were observation checklist, field note, and test. Semantic mapping was used as the technique in this research which is conducted the research in two cycles. The research findings showed that the mean score of students' reading comprehension in the first cycle is 69 to 88 in the second cycle which means it successfully passed the KKM. It can be concluded that the students' reading comprehension especially in getting main idea, supporting detail and vocabulary aspect taught by semantic mapping was improved.

**Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Descriptive Text, Semantic Mapping**

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam pemahaman membaca. Penelitian ini telah dilakukan terhadap siswa kelas X TAV SMK PGRI Pontianak pada tahun akademik 2014/2015. Dalam penelitian ini sasaran penelitiannya adalah siswa kelas X TAV yang terdiri dari 20 orang siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian tindakan kelas dan berperan sebagai guru selama masa penelitian berlangsung. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan teknik penilaian dan observasi langsung dengan menggunakan tabel pemeriksaan, catatan lapangan, dan tes. Teknik yang digunakan adalah semantic mapping dan dilaksanakan dalam 2 siklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan skor rata-rata tes siswa pada siklus pertama adalah 69 menjadi 88 pada siklus kedua yang berarti siswa dapat melewati standar KKM. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pemahaman siswa terhadap membaca, khususnya pada ide utama, kalimat pendukung dan kosakata dapat meningkat melalui pengajaran menggunakan semantic mapping.

**Keywords: Pemahaman Membaca, Teks Deskripsi, Pemetaan Semantik**

Reading is a complex process because it includes transferring the message between the writers and readers who have different background knowledge. So in reading, the readers have to construct the meaning of the text. The reader tries to understand ideas that the writer has put in print. Reading may involve decoding and comprehension process. Decoding process refers to the process of saying printed words into a representation similar to oral language either silently or aloud. Comprehension is making a sense out of a text as the result of interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent language and reader's prior knowledge.

Based on the preliminary observation during the teaching - learning process in SMK PGRI Pontianak, the writer found that there are some problems that arise in student's reading comprehension, especially in descriptive text. These problems can be identified from the students' performance in answering questions, particularly in finding main ideas, inferences and in paraphrasing. The students incorrectly interpret the main idea with specific details; they cannot relate between one clue to another, and they fail in determining the key point of a sentence. The students also have a lack of vocabularies. This condition is also supported by the classroom situation. The students are passive during the classroom activity because when the teacher asks their feedback after explaining the material, they just keep silent without any responses. The main point of their problem is that students are reluctant to study English especially reading a text. They are not interested in what they are reading.

Regarding to the students' problems in the classroom, it is necessary to solve the problem and improve the students' achievement in reading comprehension of descriptive text. One thing that must be taken into account is the strategy in teaching reading. The strategy that is used in this research is semantic mapping. Semantic mapping is a strategy to help the student to know the key words or concepts that are related to one another through graphic representation.

Semantic mapping is "visual representation of knowledge, a picture of conceptual relationship" (Antonucci cited in Amoush, 2012: 715); "a graphic arrangement showing major ideas and relationship in text or among word meanings" (Sinatra, Sthal-Gemake, and Berg in Amoush 2012: 717), or "a categorical structuring of information in graphic form" (Johnson, Pittelman, and Heimlich in Amoush, 2012: 719).

According to Zaid cited in Amoush (2012:720), "Semantic mapping (mind mapping, idea mapping, word mapping, etc.) is a term which describes a variety of strategies designed to show how key words or concepts are related to one another through graphic representations". Mapping is an effective technique for teaching reading contextually and textual patterns of organization; and it is also effective for improving note taking and creative thinking skills. During mapping activities students are expected to know the main idea in the text and also supporting detail to develop their understanding in reading especially descriptive text.

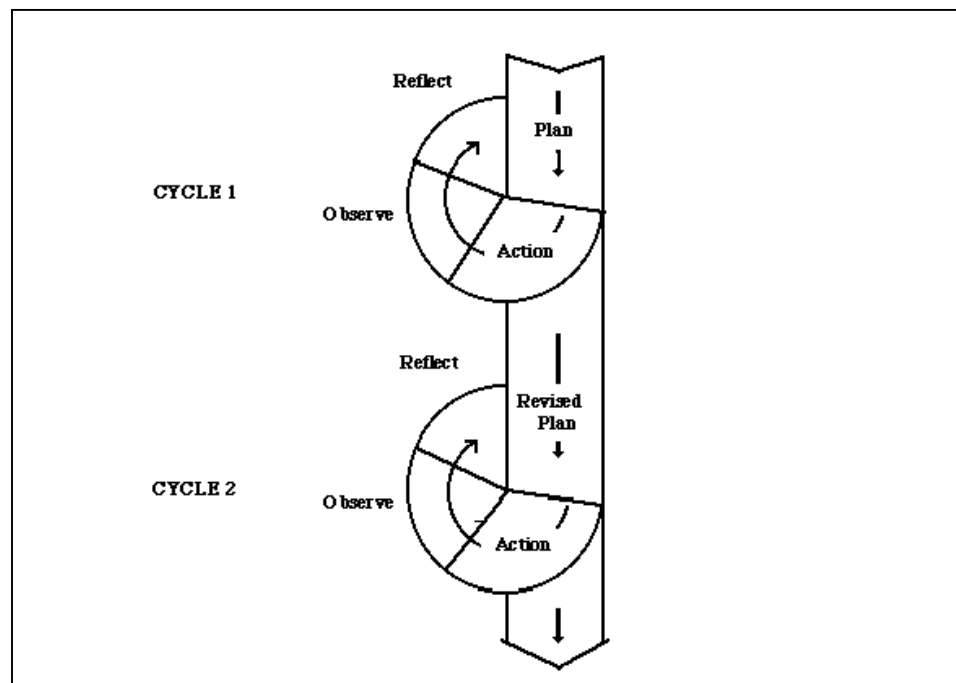
When the students read the text then they will ask themselves what they have read in the text. Semantic mapping can help them analyze the conceptualization of paragraph. This can support the students to overcome the learning problems such as the difficulties in reading text. Semantic mapping might also be powerful technique in English classroom especially in reading text because it can lead the students to understand the ideas of the text through mapping the text based on its part.

The question of this research was how can semantic mapping improve reading comprehension on descriptive text to the first grade students in TAV (Teknik Audio Video)

class of SMK PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2014/2015, especially in getting main idea, supporting detail and vocabulary aspect.

## METHOD

Since the purpose of this research was to improve students' reading comprehension by using semantic mapping technique to the tenth grade students of SMK PGRI Pontianak vocabulary in academic year 2014/2015, the researcher used classroom action research which was appropriate method to be used to solve the problem of this research. Classroom action research is research carried out in the classroom by the teacher of the course, mainly with the purpose of solving a problem or improving the teaching/learning process. Burns (2010:9) stated that classroom action research described classroom action research into 4 steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.



**Scheme. Cycle Action Research model based on Kemmis and McTaggart cited in Burns (2010:20).**

### 1. Planning

In this phase you identify a problem or issue and develop a plan of action in order to bring about improvements in a specific area of the research context. This is a forward-looking phase where you consider:

- What kind of investigation is possible within the realities and constraints of your teaching situation; and
- What potential improvements you think are possible.

The researcher prepares the material that are going to be done in teaching learning process; such as creating lesson plan, observation checklist, field note, preparing supported material, and preparing the instrument for giving a test.

2. Action

The plan is a carefully considered one which involves some deliberate interventions into your teaching situation that you put into action over an agreed period of time. The interventions are 'critically informed' as you question your assumptions about the current situation and plan new and alternative ways of doing things.

The acting stage was the application of the planning stage. Thus, in this stage the researcher who acted as teacher would take the lesson plan, the supported material and teaching aids, as well as the evaluation questions. In any case, the collaborator took the observation checklist and field notes to observe the process.

3. Observation

This phase involves you in observing systematically the effects of the action and documenting the context, actions and opinions of those involved. It is a data collection phase where you use 'open-eyed' and 'open-minded' tools to collect information about what is happening.

4. Reflection

At this point, you reflect on, evaluate and describe the effects of the action in order to make sense of what has happened and to understand the issue you have explored more clearly. You may decide to do further cycles of action research to improve the situation even more, or to share the 'story' of your research with others as part of your ongoing professional development (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, pp. 11–14).

After getting the result of the test, the researcher as a teacher reflected the students' comprehension in form of score. The result of the observation checklist was translated into sentences. It was used as tools to gather the information. Then, the teacher as the researcher combined all the information they had collected from the tools. Finally, the researcher determined whether there was another cycle to improve the result and the process or not.

The participant in this research were the students of SMK PGRI Pontianak. The data were collected from first grade TAV class consisted of 20 students as the subject of the research.

There were two kinds of techniques used by the researcher. They are direct and measurement techniques. Observation checklist and field note were used for the direct technique. As to measure the students' achievement, the researcher used written essay test with 5 questions.

As Burns (2010:67) states "Observation checklist is called structured observation using checklist". Koshy (2005:98) says that "It is important part to collect the data and most used as an instrument in action research and we can make a decisions from the observation. The purpose of recording the observation are to have the clear description of the existing condition and what happening in the classroom during teaching learning process and as sources or reflection for the next action. The writer will determine some indicators for the observation checklist based on the technique use in the classroom.

Field notes are notes made by the collaborator when the teacher applies this technique to the students. The teacher pours in anything that occurs in the class, when the class finishes. Besides that, the teacher also is helped by the collaborator. Burns (2010:67) states that "Observation field notes are used to note descriptions and accounts of what happened in the

classroom". The researcher uses field note as a proof of situation, behavior, students' action during the teacher is implementing the technique which is provided by the researcher.

To know whether semantic mapping can improve students reading comprehension in teaching learning process, the researcher conducted observation checklist and field note in every meeting, and then scored the students' understanding by giving achievement test.

- a. To get students' score from their test, the writer will use formula as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{correct answer}}{\text{number of questions}} \times 100$$

- b. To get students' mean score, the writer will measure it by using the following formula adapted from Singh (2006:286) which is:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

**M** : Mean

**N** : Number

**$\sum X$**  : The amount of students' score

**The result is categorized as follows:**

Range Score	Classification
90-100	Excellent
80-89	Good
70-79	Average
50-69	Poor
0-49	Very Poor

(Heaton, 1988)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In conducting this research, the researcher applied Classroom Action Research. This method of this research was intended to solve the problems found in the classroom. The problem found the first grade students of SMK PGRI Pontianak get difficulty reading comprehension, especially in descriptive text. The implementation of semantic mapping in this research was to improve students' reading comprehension especially in getting main idea, supporting detail and vocabulary aspect.

This research was conducted in two cycles. In every cycle the researcher acted as a teacher and was helped by the collaborator to apply the semantic mapping technique. In the process of teaching learning, the teacher used semantic mapping technique in teaching reading descriptive text.

In the research problem, the researcher divided the problems into two; first was concerning on how the process in the classroom while using Semantic Mapping technique, and second was concerning on the students' achievement in form of their score of answering the test on getting main idea, supporting detail, vocabulary of descriptive text after conducting Semantic Mapping technique. For answering the research problems, the researcher decided to combine the description of the process of teaching learning while using Semantic Mapping technique and the result of the test as implemented on the following explanation.

#### 1. First cycle

The first cycle was conducted in one meeting that was on Thursday, Mei, 21<sup>st</sup> 2015. First, the teacher explained what is the descriptive text, semantic mapping technique and how to use it. When the teacher explained the materials, some students paid attention to the teacher and some of them did not focus what the teacher said. After that, the teacher gave assignment for them to know their understanding of reading descriptive text by using semantic mapping technique. In this part, the teacher divided the students into a group that consist of two persons in one group. When the students did the assignment they still got confused how to use semantic mapping technique and it made them needed more time to do the assignment.

The next step, after each group did the assignment, they were asked by the teacher to present the result of their assignment. Some of students' ideas were not connected with the text because they still got confused to cluster their ideas through semantic mapping technique. Then, students and teacher made the last shape of semantic mapping technique of that descriptive text. During the teaching learning process the problems was not only came from the students but also from the teacher. The teacher did not manage the time well so that the teacher need more time to finish the lesson plan. The teacher also looked confused to manage the classroom situation when the students not focus to the class.

In the last activity of the first cycle, the teacher gave a test that was multiple choices consist of 5 questions. The focuses of the questions were main idea of the text, supporting detail and vocabulary. Then, the result of the test students' individual score described in the appendix VII with the result was:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{1380}{20} = 69$$

So the result of the mean score was 69. Based on the result mean score of the students, it was qualified into "Poor". Based on aspect of reading comprehension of students ability in answering the question, the percentage could be seen in the appendix VIII with the result was described as follows:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Supporting Detail | $= \frac{41}{60} \times 100\% = 68,33 \%$ |
| 2. Main Idea         | $= \frac{15}{20} \times 100\% = 75\%$     |
| 3. Vocabulary        | $= \frac{12}{20} \times 100\% = 60 \%$    |

We could see from the formula that the improvement of the aspect of reading comprehension only happened in main idea aspect that was 75%, while both of supporting detail and vocabulary aspects still needed more improvement, they were 68,33% for supporting detail and 60% for vocabulary. Based on observation checklist, field note and students' test score, the researcher concluded that the result in all of the aspects were not satisfying and still needed much effort to accomplish the goal of technique applied. In hence, the researcher decided to conduct the next cycle to improve their reading comprehension on descriptive text by using semantic mapping technique.

## 2. Second cycle

The second cycle was conducted in one meeting that was on Monday, Mei, 25<sup>th</sup> 2015. Based on the problems in the first cycle, the researcher decided to conduct the second cycle. The planning stage of this cycle was included the reflection of the previous cycle. In teaching learning process the teacher reviewed about descriptive text briefly because the material had been explained in the first cycle.

In this cycle, the researcher focused on the explanation what was semantic mapping and how to use it because, in the first cycle the students still got confused of semantic mapping technique. By giving an example of descriptive text, students were asked to make the semantic mapping of the text and it was corrected by the teacher. This activity was stopped until the students already understanding well.

In this meeting students gave more attention to the class so it caused students gave more respond what teacher explained about the materials. The teacher also had a better class management because when the students did not focus to the lesson, the teacher directly asked them to repeat what the teacher had explained. After that, the teacher gave them assignment to be done with their desk mate like in the first cycle. They are asked to make semantic mapping based on the descriptive text. In this activity, the students had more understanding how to apply this technique. The students were more excited to do the task and to present the result with their desk mate. In clustering the ideas, most of the group had same ideas. In hence, it was easier for students and teacher to make a final shape of semantic mapping on that descriptive text.

In the last activity, the teacher gave multiple test that consist of 5 questions. The focuses of the questions were main idea of the text, supporting detail and vocabulary. Then, the result of the test students' individual score described in the appendix IX with the result was:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{1760}{20} = 88$$

So the result of the mean score was 88. Based on the result mean score of the students, it was qualified into "Good". Based on aspect of reading comprehension of students ability in answering the question, the percentage could be seen in the appendix X with the result was described as follows:

$$1. \text{ Supporting Detail} = \frac{54}{20} \times 100\% = 90\%$$

$$2. \text{ Main Idea} \quad = \frac{18}{20} \times 100\% = 90\%$$

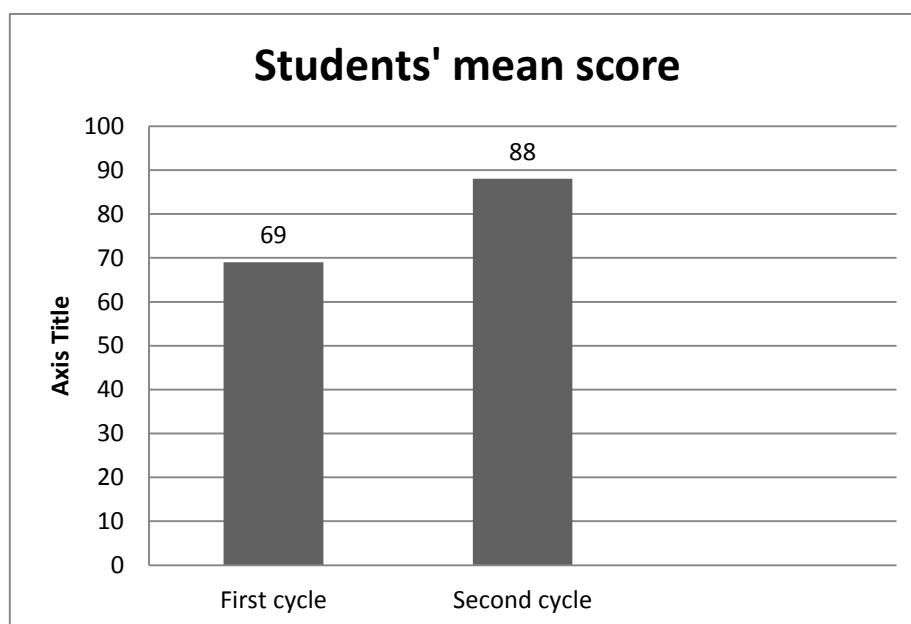
$$3. \text{ Vocabulary} \quad = \frac{16}{20} \times 100\% = 80\%$$

We could see from the formula that the improvement already happened in the all of aspect reading comprehension. The result of main idea aspect was 90%, supporting detail aspect was 90% and vocabulary aspect was 80 %.

Based on the on observation checklist, field note and students' test score, the researcher concluded that the second cycle had been successful. It could be concluded that implementing of classroom action research by using semantic mapping technique had showed it's improvement for students' reading comprehension on descriptive text and the cycle was stopped.

From the result of this research, the researcher summarizes the research findings as described below:

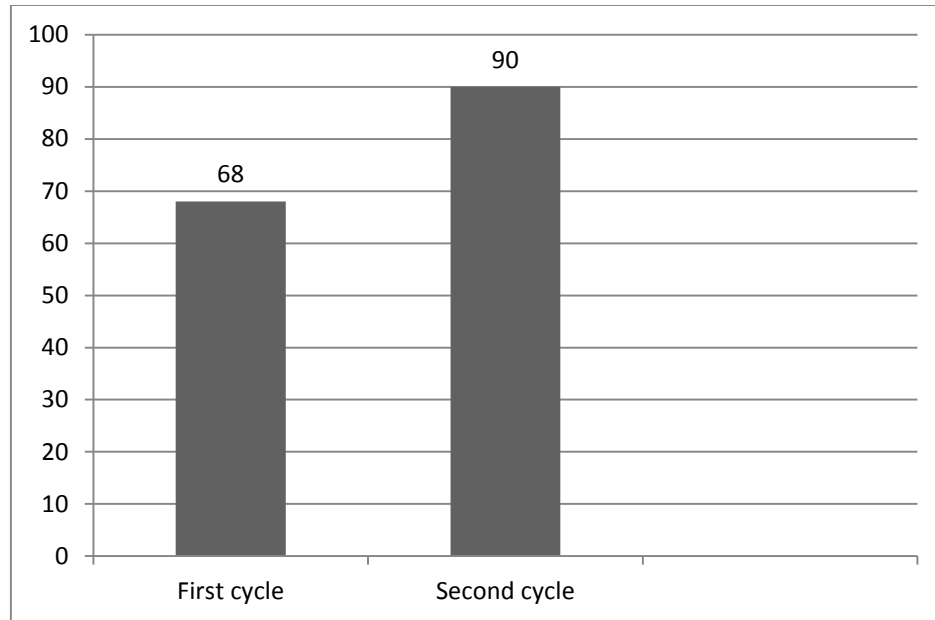
The improvement of students' reading comprehension through Semantic Mapping Technique from the first cycle to the last cycle is presented in the following chart:



**Diagram 1. Students' Mean Score**

The improvement of students' achievement of supporting detail aspect by using Semantic Mapping Technique from the first cycle to the last cycle is presented in the following chart:

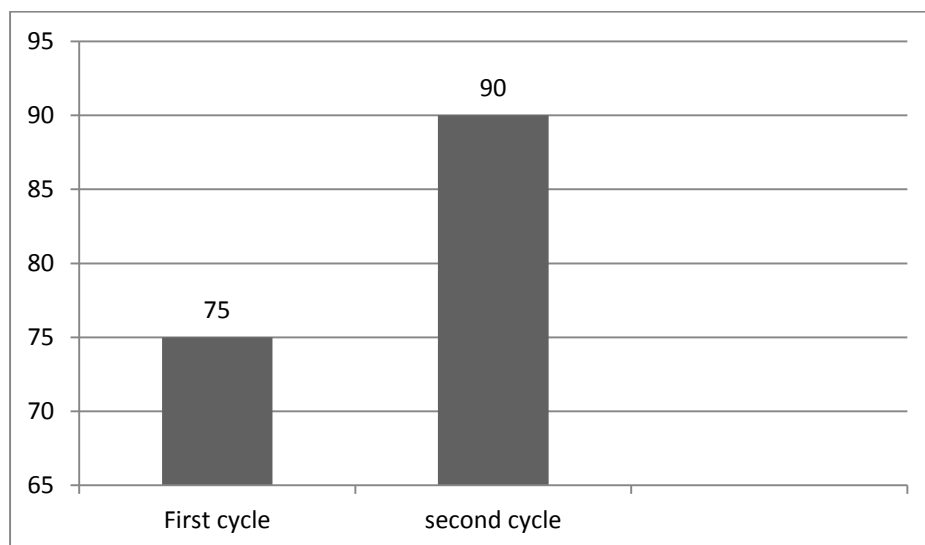




**Diagram 2. Supporting Detail Aspect**

The chart above discussed the improvement of students' achievement of supporting detail aspect when conducting the classroom action research in teaching reading comprehension. In the first cycle the average of students achievement of supporting detail aspect was 63.33. After giving some treatment, in the second cycle the average of students' achievement of supporting detail had an improvement to 76.66.

The improvement of students' achievement of main idea aspect by using semantic Mapping Technique from the first cycle to the last cycle is presented in the following chart:

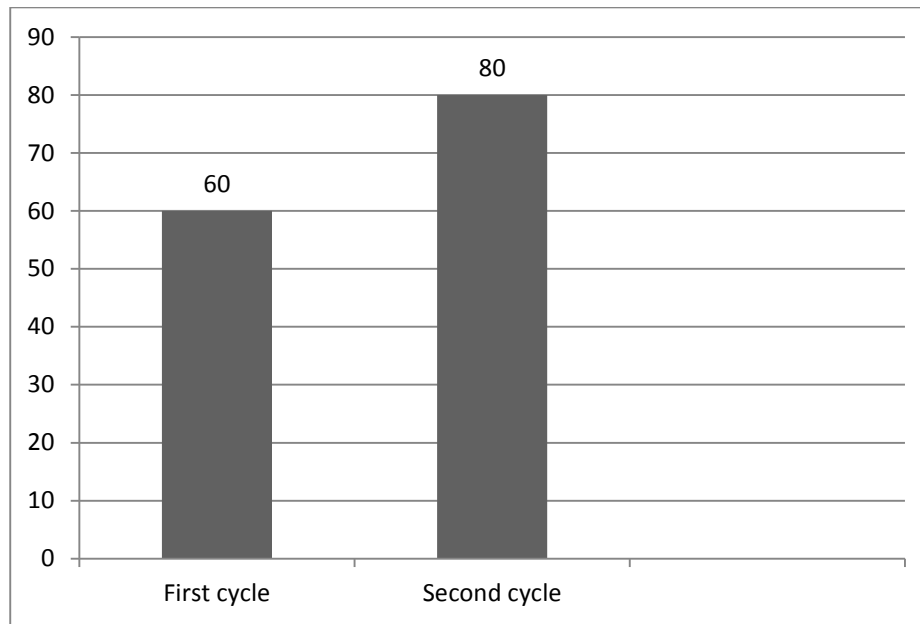


**Diagram 3. Main Idea Aspect**

The chart above discussed the improvement of students' achievement of main idea aspect when conducting the classroom action research in teaching reading

comprehension. In the first cycle the average of students' achievement of main idea aspect was 75. After giving some treatment, in the second cycle the average of students' achievement of main idea aspect had an improvement to 90.

The improvement of students' achievement of vocabulary aspect by using semantic Mapping Technique from the first cycle to the last cycle is presented in the following chart:



**Diagram 4.Vocabulary Aspect**

The chart above discussed the improvement of students' achievement of vocabulary aspect when conducting the classroom action research in teaching reading comprehension. In the first cycle the average of students' achievement of vocabulary aspect was 60. After giving some treatment, in the second cycle the average of students' achievement of vocabulary aspect had an improvement to 80.

In the percentage of reading aspect in the first cycle improved to the second cycle. In the first cycle, the percentages in all aspects of reading were not passed. Every aspect of reading comprehension was only 75 % for getting main idea, 68,33% for supporting detail and 60% for vocabulary. While in the second cycle, the percentage in every aspect of reading comprehension improved to 90% for getting main idea, 90% for supporting detail and 80% for vocabulary aspect.

In conclusion, the researcher determined that this research was satisfactory. Through Semantic Mapping technique, the student's reading comprehension on the descriptive text increased. Therefore, the researcher concluded the action hypothesis which states "The students' reading comprehension on descriptive by using semantic mapping technique can improve".

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

From the findings of Classroom Action research (CAR) which has been held in X TAV class of SMK PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2014/2015, the activities based on the observation checklist and field note and the result of the test students reading comprehension on descriptive text of the first cycle and the second cycle have improved. The researcher concludes as follows: 1. The use of semantic mapping technique gives significant result to improve the students' reading comprehension achievement, particularly how to find out the main ideas and supporting ideas of the text. 2. The use of semantic mapping technique can be applied to teach reading comprehension to the level of Senior High School or Vocational High School, particularly for the first grade.

### Suggestions

The researcher provides some suggestions in this research, those are: 1. Semantic Mapping technique is recommended for the teacher as the alternative to improve the students' reading comprehension on descriptive text especially in getting main idea, supporting detail and vocabulary aspects. 2. Teacher should be more active in motivating the students to speak English, especially in the discussion; because the important thing in Semantic Mapping technique is the discussion. In the discussion, the students will share their ideas for mapping the ideas of descriptive text by interacting in the group. 3. Teacher must have well management class because in the discussion activity some students are busy with their business and do not focus to do the task. In discussion, they need to think harder to cluster the ideas of descriptive text.

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