# GUIDED READING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

**By**
**Iskandar Syahputera[*]**

*University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh*

## ABSTRACT

The Guided Reading Strategy (GRS) was used in a Classroom Action Research (CAR) in order to find out whether it could improve the students reading comprehension or not. This CAR was aimed to study the implementation procedures of GRS trying to improve the reading comprehension of students. The average mean score (AMS) from the initial test of the students was 67. Then after cycle I, the AMS was 71, which was still qualified with score of "C". Following the second cycle, the AMS went up to 81 which meant that there was an improvement of 10 points and brought the AMS up to level "B" which was qualified as "good". This met the criteria set for successful improvement. The activity performance of the students in cycle I averaged 2.43 and went up to 3.01 in cycle II which met the criteria for "good" and for success in the indicator set. The activity performance of the researcher in cycle I averaged 2.39 and rose to 3.10 in cycle II which also met the criteria for "good" and for success. From the questionnaire to measure the response of the students toward the use of the GRS 90 % chose "agree or strongly agree" which was considered as a positive response. This met the criteria for success for improving the reading comprehension abilities of the sample students.

Key Words: *Guided Reading Strategy, Reading Comprehension.*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading has been viewed as a process and a product. Alderson (2000:3) underlined that reading is a process of an interaction between

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[*] Corresponding author: iskandar_mjm@yahoo.com

a reader and the text. During this process many things can be happened. In order to have a clear understanding of the problems, the researcher thought that a test should be done as part of a preliminary study. The preliminary study was done with the students from the English Department of the Teacher Training Faculty who were taking English II as a compulsory subject at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University in Darussalam, Banda Aceh in the academic year 2014-2015. At the start of the semester the new English II students were given a test in order to find out their skill level in reading comprehension. This test actually became the preliminary phase of this research study.

This preliminary phase actually had two basic purposes. First, it was aimed to find out the students current level of proficiency so that the researcher could determine teaching materials that could be suitable with their current level of proficiency. Secondly, it was aimed to measure the baseline level of the reading ability of the students so that the researcher could determine whether there had been any improvement in the abilities of the students after the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy (GRS) or not.

Therefore an initial test needed to administer. The initial test was done on March 3rd 2014. There were 30 students in the class, 12 male and 18 female. From the initial test 2 students got 80 which was the highest score in the class, 4 students got 75, 8 students got 70, 9 got 65, 6 got 60 and only 1 student got the lowest score of 55. Thus the mean score from the initial test was 67 which were still in the "fair" level of score rank for the university which ranges from 60 to 71, and it is classified in score level C. Therefore this level of mean score still needed to be improved through the implementation of some kind of teaching cycles or action research.

Furthermore, only 6 or 20 % of the students got over 71 so that they could be considered good at reading comprehension. The difficulties of the students were mostly due by low ability to identify the key concept, to make inferences, to analyze text structure, word meanings and vocabulary, and to synthesize and make predictions from the reading texts given. These conditions might have been caused due to one or more reasons: (1) by poor instructions from the lecturer and/or (2) by the worksheets for the students being unsuited for the teaching objectives required in the teaching syllabus and/or (3) the teaching strategy requires more steps in the core activities in the teaching-learning process. In consequence, this resulted in the poor reading comprehension abilities of the students.

Therefore, these factors had implications for the ability of the students to provide correct answers to the questions given after reading the texts. In fact, during the previous experience of the researcher whilst teaching English I and English II at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Darussalam, Banda Aceh, he also faced difficulties in identifying an effective teaching strategy and in providing erudite teaching instructions and worksheets to stimulate the students to improve their reading comprehension in English I and in English II.

As a result, the researcher thought that it was important to do some action research to try to find a more effective teaching strategy, with better teaching instructions and to develop better worksheets for the students that would improve the teaching strategy and finally would improve the reading comprehension skills of the students overall.

**Research Questions**
1. How are the Guided Reading Strategy (GRS) procedures to improve the reading comprehension abilities of students implemented?
2. Is it possible to get significantly greater improvement in the reading comprehension ability of students after implementing the Guided Reading Strategy (GRS) technique for teaching-learning reading than with other techniques to improve reading comprehension?
3. How will students respond to the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy technique?

**Research Objectives**
1. To describe the steps for implementation of the GRS processes.
2. To find out whether there will be significantly greater improvement in the reading comprehension ability of students after implementing one of the GRS worksheets than with other techniques of teaching-learning reading comprehension.
3. To find out what the responses of students will be to the implementation of the GRS for teaching-learning reading comprehension.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Guided Reading Strategy (GRS)**
According to Founts and Pennell (1996:8) GRS is small-group reading method following instructions designed to provide differentiated teaching-learning that supports the development of better

reading proficiency amongst the students in the group. The teacher uses a tightly structured framework that allows for the incorporation of several research-based approaches co-ordinated into a whole. For the student, the GRS lesson means reading and talking about and sometimes writing about some interesting and engaging texts chosen from a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts, while for the teachers, GRS means careful text selection for use in an intensive teaching system with strategic activities to develop proficient reading.

In addition, Founts and Pennell (1996:1) said that GRS is small-group reading instruction designed to provide differentiated teaching that supports groups of students in developing reading proficiency. In terms of differentiated teaching instruction models Tyner (2009:15) stated that the small group differentiated reading instruction model brings together many complex reading strategies. It is because the model has been systematically developed that the instructional components carry special tasks.

Furthermore Tyner (2009:15) noted several aspects of this differentiated teaching-learning instruction model that supports its success are as follows:

1. Small-group differentiated instruction provides systematic and comprehensive coverage of strategies required to move students to greater achievement in reading.
2. The teacher ensures that the reading activities are "respectful". Every group of students is given quality reading instructions and tasks that are worthwhile, valuable, and matched to the learning level of the group of students.
3. Assessment is ongoing and directly linked to instruction. Students are regularly assessed on word study levels and what they have learnt from their reading. Teachers gather information from both formal and informal assessments about how the students are progressing in their learning at any given point. Whatever the teacher can glean about the reading readiness of the students helps the teacher plan the next steps in the reading program.
4. Students are constantly evaluated and re-evaluated, shuffled, and re-shuffled in flexible groups to best meet their learning instructional needs.
5. Small-group differentiated reading provides intensive and continually adjusted instructions for fluency, word study, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

6. Differentiated reading instructions take into consideration the individual characteristics of the students, capitalize on their strengths and expand and challenge their abilities.
7. The individual components of the small-group differentiated reading model work interactively, building on and supporting one another each lesson introduces a new book or new piece of text. Comprehension is focused on a text that is read by each group and written responses which can include story vocabulary, phrases, idioms and collocations.

Therefore this model allows for the interactive development of reading, word study, vocabulary and comprehension. However there is still some debate about what is the most effective pattern or format for grouping the students. Iaquinta (2006:414) has stated that the format of grouping of the small groups for GRS is considered to be dynamic or flexible while traditionally grouping format is focused on skills to read in basal texts with static and unchanging groups. This statement is supported by Iaquinta's previous study (2003) in Iaquinta (2006:414) where the following is stated:
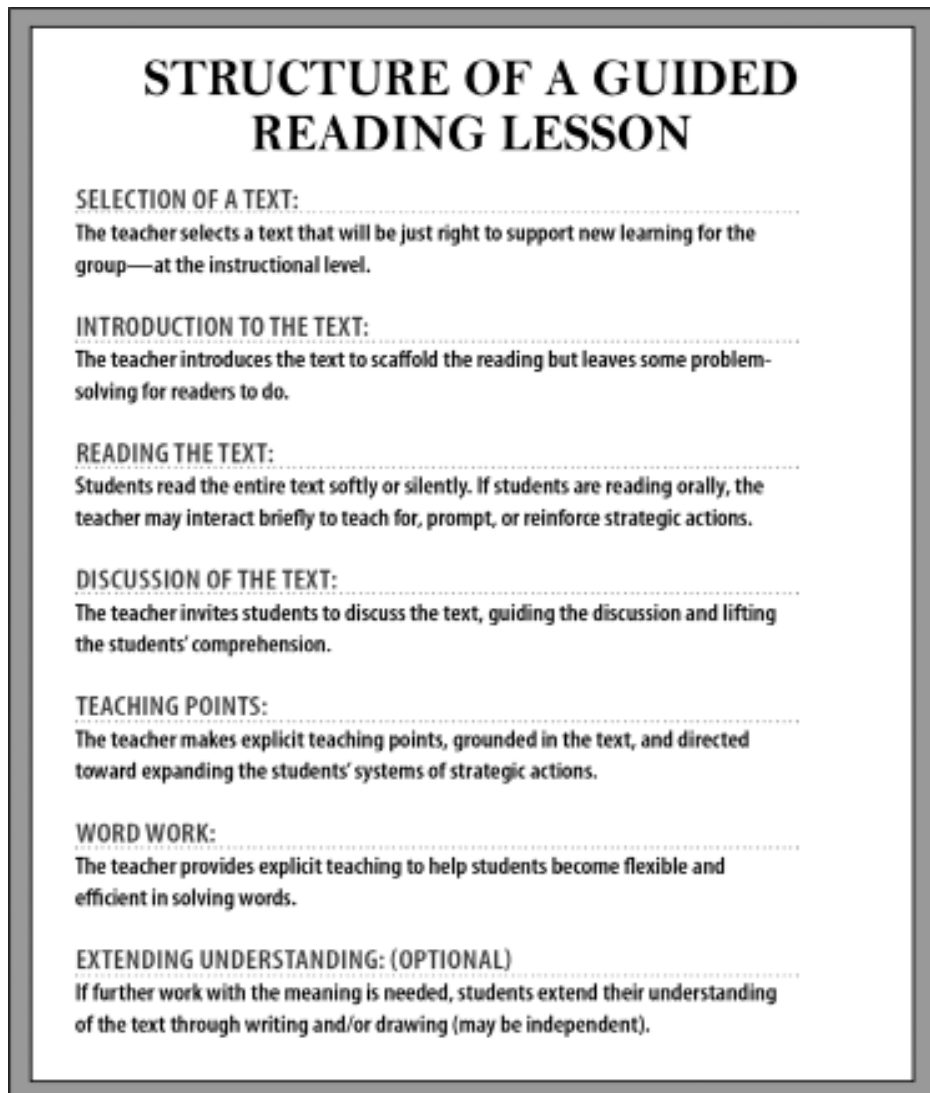
> Guided reading groups are temporary, an importance difference from traditional grouping practice. Groups are expected to change. Dynamic groups avoid the traditional problems of grouping, because teachers change the composition of groups regularly to accommodate the different learning paths of readers. Skilled teaching which begins with observation is the key to successful dynamic grouping. (Iaquinta, 2006:414)

Considering the issue of the small-group reading instructions, Iaquinta (2006:414) added that small group reading instructions are effective because teaching is focused precisely on what the students need to learn at that point in time. Therefore the ability of teachers to select and to provide text materials with language to match the current abilities of the students is essential.

According to Olson, et al. (2007:5) guided reading is a direct method of teaching students a variety of reading strategies through teacher modeling and the students then practice independently using materials supplied for their particular level. The role of teachers is therefore to apply and to encourage the students to use suitable strategies that are suited to the objectives of the teaching-learning process and to the level of skills of the students.

**The Structure of the GRS Procedures**

   In order to teach the GRS it must have clear steps. Thus Fountas and Pinnell (2012:269) have set down 7 (seven) steps that are used as the teaching steps in the GRS. They are selection of a text, introduction to the text, reading the text, discussion of the text, teaching points, word work, and extending understanding. These are shown in Figure 1 which follows overleaf.

## STRUCTURE OF A GUIDED READING LESSON

**SELECTION OF A TEXT:**
The teacher selects a text that will be just right to support new learning for the group—at the instructional level.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT:**
The teacher introduces the text to scaffold the reading but leaves some problem-solving for readers to do.

**READING THE TEXT:**
Students read the entire text softly or silently. If students are reading orally, the teacher may interact briefly to teach for, prompt, or reinforce strategic actions.

**DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT:**
The teacher invites students to discuss the text, guiding the discussion and lifting the students' comprehension.

**TEACHING POINTS:**
The teacher makes explicit teaching points, grounded in the text, and directed toward expanding the students' systems of strategic actions.

**WORD WORK:**
The teacher provides explicit teaching to help students become flexible and efficient in solving words.

**EXTENDING UNDERSTANDING: (OPTIONAL)**
If further work with the meaning is needed, students extend their understanding of the text through writing and/or drawing (may be independent).

**Figure 1.** The Steps in a Guided Reading Structure Lesson (Source: Fountas & Pinnell, 2012:269).

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design
The research design of this study is a collaborative classroom action research. Ferrance (2000:2-3) has described action research as follows:

> Action research is not a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us. It is not problem-solving in the sense of trying to find out what is wrong, but rather a quest for knowledge about how to improve. (Ferrance, 2000:2-3)

This type of research design was determined since it was aimed to improve the researcher's teaching strategy that would finally improve the students' ability in reading comprehension skills.

### Research Setting and Subject of Study
This study was conducted with undergraduate students from the English Department at the Teacher Training Faculty of the National Islamic University Ar-Raniry Darussalam, Banda Aceh in the academic year 2014-15who were taking English II as a compulsory subject. The sample for this study was 30 students, 18 female and 12 male.

### Research Instruments
To do this collaborative classroom action research study, the researcher used a test (the scoring followed these scoring criteria prepared by Depdiknas, 2006), a questionnaire and an observation checklist as research instruments.

### Research Procedure
This research was done in several steps. They were firstly the preliminary study, then planning the actions, followed by implementing the actions, observing the actions, reflecting on the actions, analyzing the data and finally summarizing the results, drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

To study the students' responses toward the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy, a questionnaire was given to the students at the end of the last meeting of cycle II. The questionnaire had 20 questions that were classified under 5 variables: students' motivation, the teaching delivery process, the level of the teaching material, the

method or the strategy applied, and the students' attitude toward the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy applied.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Test Results from Cycle I

From the initial test in the preliminary phase, the average reading comprehension ability of the students was at level "C" or "Fair" with an average mean score of 67. The researcher then ran cycle I of the GRS. At the end of cycle I, the average mean score was 71, which is still level "C".

The change in the final test of cycle I was an increase of only 4 points which was not significant, therefore the researcher had to do a second cycle.

### Test Results from Cycle II

After the second cycle, the average score increased 10 points to 81 which is level "B" and is in the "good" or successful indicator of reading comprehension achievement as it was above 80 %.

### Activity Performance of the Researcher in Cycle I and Cycle II

The average means score of the activity performance of the researcher in cycle I was 2.39 which was equal to "Fair". Since the average mean score did not yet meet the criteria of success, the researcher had to do a second cycle so that the researcher could try to meet the performance criteria for success.

### Performance of the Students in Cycle I and Cycle II

This part of discussion is the discussion on the students' performance of the cycle I and the cycle II. Based on the result of the record of the students' activity performance check list of the cycle I, it was found that the total average score of the students' activity performance from cycle I was 2.43 while the total average mean score of the students' activity performance from cycle II was 3.01. The score from cycle II was in the criteria of "good" and it met the criteria set in the success indicators.

### The Response of the Students to the Implementation of the GRS

In the end the researcher would like to discuss the findings found in the students' response toward the implementation of the Guided

Reading Strategy. This data had been gathered from the questionnaire given to the students at the end of the last meeting of cycle II. The questionnaire had 20 questions that were classified under 5 variables.

The variables were on the students' motivation, the teaching delivery process, the level of the teaching material, the method or the strategy applied, and the students' attitude toward the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy. Analysis of the results from the questionnaire showed that the 5 variables measured achieved the mean score of 4+ which was the equivalent of a score of 4.00. This had the same meaning as "Agree". In fact the frequency of the students' choosing "Agree and Strongly Agree" was 90%.

Thus more than 85% of the students gave a good response to the implementation of the GRS in the action of the cycles. Therefore it had met the criteria set in success indicators in term of the students' response toward the implementation of the GRS. Referring to the whole process of the implementation of the Guided Reading Strategy starting from the first cycle to the second cycle, the researcher thought that the research could be finalized in the second cycle since all of the criteria set in the success indicators had been achieved. Overall, the results that were expected to be reached in the criteria set in the success indicators had been achieved well.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

Following the findings and the discussions from this action research in the previous sections, the researcher has some conclusions and suggestions in order that readers could have a comprehensive understanding of this research. The conclusions are as follows.

Firstly, the average activity performance of the researcher in cycle I was 2.39 while in cycle II it was 3.00 which was equal to "good" score and met the criteria set for success. Also some improvements were made by the researcher in the teaching-learning process. The researcher realized that following the procedures of the GRS such as selection of a text, introduction to the text, reading the text, discussion of the text, making explicit teaching points and directing the students toward strategic actions, word work and extending understanding were the points to be considered in teaching reading to improve the reading comprehension abilities of students. As a result, following this research the researcher made changes in the way he teaches reading

comprehension. These whole processes had answered the first research question regarding with the implementation process of Guided Reading Strategy (GRS)

Secondly, there was a 14 point improvement in the achievement scores from 67 from the final test at the end of cycle I after implementing the "GRS worksheet" to the achievement score of 81 from the final test at the end of cycle II. This latter score of 81 was in the criteria "good". The average mean scores for the activity performance of the students in cycle I was 2.43 while in cycle II it rose 25% to 3.01. So the average mean score of the activity performance of the students in cycle II was in the rank level of "good" and it could be concluded that the activity performance of the students met the criteria for success. This result had answered the second research question.

Thirdly the response of the students toward the implementation of the GRS was 4.18. This score is in the rank of 'Agree and strongly agree" or Positive. Overall, it could be concluded that the students had a positive or good response to the implementation of the GRS applied in this action research by having 90% choose "agree and strongly agree". Thus the implementation of the GRS met the criteria of success based on the response of the students to it. Overall, the result of the students' response toward the implementation of GRS had answered the third research question of this research.

**Suggestions**

Some suggestions and recommendations for other English lecturers or teachers, and other English language teaching researchers.

Firstly, it is suggested that English lecturers and teachers should find teaching materials which are suited to the interests and the level of competency of their students. The selection of teaching materials to match the next level up from the current level of reading competency of their students should be one of the strategies of the GRS to implement.

Secondly, it is suggested to follow all of the procedures set out in the steps of GRS in Figure 1 if they want to get good results teaching reading comprehension.

Thirdly, it is suggested that English lecturers and/or teachers use the GRS Techniques for teaching reading comprehension such as through small group discussions, using student worksheets for teaching strategic actions in processing a reading text and stimulating the background knowledge of students before starting a reading lesson.

Finally, it is suggested that other English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers could try to design more effective time management for classes during the implementation of action research. And in addition, it is also suggested that other researchers should have more than three meetings with students to practice each type of worksheet proposed for use by the students in the implementation of GRS so that the researchers can get a significant improvement of the scores achieved by the students.

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