



## Improving The Students' Grammatical Competence Through Cooperative Learning

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### Abstract

This research aims at answering the problems "Can Cooperative learning improve the grammatical competence of the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta?, and What effect may appear during the process of applying cooperative learning in class?". Those problems are proposed as the students' competence on grammar is still under what the lecturers expect. The students who got score of 70 or more in the final test of the third semester are 47.05%. Therefore, their competence needs to be improved by cooperative learning method, especially STAD which is believed to be the most appropriate to apply. The source of data is the fourth semester students and their Structure and Grammar lecturer. The data were taken from the results of the final test of the third semester, mid-term test and final test of the fourth semester. Test, observation, questionnaire, interview and document were used to collect data. The technique of analyzing data was descriptive qualitative analysis. The result of research is cooperative learning can improve the grammatical competence of the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta. The improvement is especially on the number of students whose scores are 70 or more becomes 58.82% in mid-term test and 76.47% in the final test. A positive effect in the form of better atmosphere of the class appears during the implementation of cooperative learning. The students are more active in joining the lecture, and they feel appreciated for they are involved in seeking knowledge. They also begin to be confident and brave to ask and give opinion.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of English in globalization has made it the most in demand language to be learned worldwide. However, learning English as a second language is not an easy task since one has made his first language as a comfortable medium to communicate (Ibrahim & Adnan, 2019). In EFL teaching, English skills may be taught as either an integrated point or a discrete point. The way of teaching English skills, somehow, depends on the curriculum applied in the certain educational institutions. In the curriculum, they deal with the aims and objectives of the courses. A curriculum of English in the educational context, therefore, refers to the whole body of English that students should acquire in the educational institution. Nicholls and Nicholls in Richards (2001: 40) view curriculum as an *ends-means* model.

One subject taught to students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta is Structure and Grammar. Descriptive grammar focuses on understanding how language is organized into meaningful, systematic patterns, which are generally below the level of conscious awareness of most speakers. By understanding the patterns of English, ESL/EFL teachers can help their students in learning the language learning process (DeCapua, 2017). One of the most fundamental claims of modern linguistic analysis is that all languages have grammar. Grammar is the way in which words change themselves and group together to make sentences which convey larger meaning (Harmer, 1997), (Ur, 1998), Nelson in (Rivers, 1987).

In language teaching, the role of grammar becomes perhaps one of the most controversial issues. There are some methods and approaches in teaching and learning grammar, such as Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method and the Natural Approach (Langi in (Brown, 1994). He notes that through comprehensible input, as it is found in Natural Approach, communication interactions seem to be guided by the topic of conversation rather than by the structures of the language (Brown, 1994). Related to language as a means of communication, the grammarians argued that if someone knew the grammatical rules of the language, he or she would be able to use them for communication. This concept was strongly challenged in the early 1970s. Knowledge of the grammatical system of language, it was argued, was but one of the many components which underlie the notion of communicative competence.

Deductive teaching of grammar has lately received quite a lot of negative attention. A typical lesson following that approach starts with explaining the rule which is followed by practicing exercises, while inductive teaching of grammar means that the students have no previous knowledge of a rule and they learn it by studying examples of it (Uibu & Liiver, 2015).

Teaching for some lecturers means giving knowledge to the students. This kind of lecturers usually asks the students to sit still listening to their explanation. The lecturers usually feel that they have given all the knowledge. The students are rarely given a chance to seek the knowledge by themselves. They ignore the old adage which says "Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand". By that condition the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta have low competence in Grammar lecture. Therefore, the researchers need to apply the method which involves the students in learning, namely cooperative learning especially STAD in teaching and learning Grammar. The problems proposed are "Can Cooperative learning improve the grammatical competence of the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta?, and What effect may appear during the process of applying cooperative learning in class?" by the hope that the result of this study will contribute the concept that cooperative language learning works best for inactive students to be active through tasks given by the lecturer, and this study can be put as a proof that cooperative learning can be used for teaching grammar as discrete point, so that it will motivate other teachers to adopt this method to teach any other skills.

A method that can be applied in a wide variety of language curriculum orientations is Cooperative Learning where it is often referred to Cooperative Language Learning in second and

foreign language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This method is used in teaching content classes, ESP, the four skills, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. (Richards, 2001) states that Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is a part of a more general instructional approach which is also known as Collaborative Learning (CL). The term *cooperative learning* (CL) refers to students working in teams on an assignment or project under conditions in which certain criteria are satisfied, including that the team members be held individually accountable for the complete content of the assignment or project (Felder, Richard M., and Brent, Rebecca in (Lak, 2022), (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). The research done by (Gillies, 2014) also shows that students have much to gain when they have opportunities to interact with each other, listen to what others have to say, share ideas and information, ask questions, critique others' ideas, and use the information obtained to reason and problem-solve together. In addition, it was reported by (Yusuf, Natsir, Hanum, 2015) that the teacher believed that assigning roles should be entrusted to the students to increase their sense of responsibility towards the accomplishment of the group task.

According to (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), the goals of cooperative learning in language teaching are such as to provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities, to provide teachers with a methodology that enables them to achieve this goal and one that can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings, to enhance learners' motivation and reduce learners' stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate, etc. Whereas, (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) state that CLL may be used in teaching content classes, ESP, the four skills, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. It implies that cooperative learning is free to be adopted in any context of teaching. The researchers believe that the problem on comprehending the materials of Structure and Grammar subject faced by the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta can be overcome by giving the students a chance to discuss the materials together with their own friends in the form of cooperative learning especially STAD which is chosen because it has a kind of close relationship among the members in order to get appraisal at the end of every session.

There are three types of cooperative learning in classroom groups. In simple description, those cooperative learning groups may be used to teach specific content (formal cooperative learning groups), to ensure active cognitive processing of information during a lecture or demonstration (informal cooperative learning groups), and to provide long-term support and assistance for academic progress (cooperative base groups). Any assignments in any curriculum for any students can be done cooperatively.

In formal cooperative learning groups, students work together for one class period to several weeks to achieve shared learning goals and complete jointly specific tasks and assignments (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). In informal cooperative learning group, students work together to achieve a joint learning goal in temporary, ad-hoc groups that last from a few minutes to one class period. Cooperative base groups are long-term, heterogeneous cooperative learning groups with stable membership. The purposes of the base group are to give the support, help, encouragement, and assistance each member who needs to make academic progress (attend class, complete all assignments, learn) and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways.

There are numerous activities that can be applied in cooperative learning classroom. Coelho in (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) presents three major kinds of cooperative learning tasks and their learning focus, each of which has many variations. There are four representative models for cooperative learning, such as Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD), Team-Games-Tournament (TGT), Jigsaw II, Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI). STAD includes: 1) Students are assigned to four member teams, 2) Lessons are presented in a traditional manner, 3) Students work together to ensure that all the team members master the materials, 4) Each individual student's score is compared to his or her past average, 5) Team points are awarded based on the degree to which member exceed their earlier performance.

The research on STAD had been done by (Yuliani, 2019), whose results of the study showed the implementation of the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) learning technique on economic subjects for students of SMA Negeri 7 Malang could improve students' learning outcomes from the cognitive domain. The increasing of cognitive learning outcomes is indicated by an enhancement in the average value and the percentage of mastery learning in classical. The other research was done by (Serjali & Halim, 2020). The findings of their study showed that the STAD model improved students' achievement, understanding and motivation in Principles of Accounting subject. STAD model showed that their levels of understanding and motivation were high. (Wulandari, 2022) also discussed the understanding of the STAD type cooperative learning model, the characteristics of the STAD type cooperative learning model, the steps of the STAD type cooperative learning model, and the stages of the STAD type cooperative learning model.

According to (Slavin, 1978), Student Teams-Achievement Divisions or STAD is one of the simplest of all cooperative learning methods. For that reason, the researchers use it as a starting point of applying cooperative learning in the research. STAD consists of five major components – class presentations, teams, quizzes, individual Improvement Scores, and team recognitions.

Material in STAD is initially introduced in a class presentation. The difference from the usual teaching is that the class presentation in STAD must be clearly focused on the STAD unit so the students should pay attention to this because this will help them to do well in the quizzes and their quiz scores will determine their team scores. Teams in STAD are composed of four or five students. The team members should represent a cross section of the class in terms of academic performance, sex, and race or ethnicity. These teams are used to make sure that all team members are learning especially preparing the members to do well in the quiz. After hearing the presentation of the teacher, each member of the team studies worksheet or other material. The students can discuss problems, compare the answers, or correct any misconceptions if the teammates make mistakes. Teams may earn certificate like Super Team, Great team, or Good Team or other rewards if their average scores exceed a certain criterion. Students' team scores may also be used to determine up to 20 percent of their grade.

Teaching in STAD takes one or two periods. The main idea in teaching is presenting the lesson. The material needed is the lesson plan. Each lesson in STAD begins with a class presentation. It covers opening, development, and guided practice. In the opening, the teacher tells the students what they are about to learn and why it is important. To arouse students' curiosity, the teacher gives a puzzling demonstration, real-life problem and other means. In development, teacher sticks close to the objectives of the lesson by focusing on meaning not on memorization.

Team study can last one or two periods. The main idea is for the students to study in their teams. The material needed is two worksheets and two answer sheets for every team. During team study, the tasks of team members are to master the material and to help the teammates master the material. Because they have worksheets and answer sheets, they can use them to practice the skill being taught and to assess themselves and their teammates. For there are only two worksheets and two answer sheets for each team, they are forced to work together in teams.

Test can last  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 period. The main idea is individual quiz. During the test, students are not allowed to work together. Teachers should have the quiz scores and the team scores figured in time for the next class.

The main idea for team recognition is figuring the individual improvement scores and team scores and awarding certificates or other team rewards. This should be done as soon as possible after each quiz. It is better to announce the team scores in the first period after the quiz to increase the students' motivation to do the best in teams.

## **METHODS**

**The Subject of the Research**

The subject of this research is the students of semester four in academic year of 2021/2022. There are 17 students, 12 females and 5 males.

**Method of Research**

Considering the main purpose of this study, to improve grammatical competence of the students, the researchers had chosen an appropriate method of research to be applied. Due to an improvement, they then took an applied research. It highlights on such teaching practices in a class. Quoting from (Wiersma, 2001), the purpose of applied research is to solve an immediate, practical problem. Following the idea of Wiersma, they decided to conduct an action research held in the classroom.

**The Procedure of Action Research**

It is stated that a model of the action research process is outlined, followed by a list of methods and techniques for gathering and analyzing data (J. Elliott, 1991). A model, then, is useful for structuring the process of research since the action research itself depends not so much on scientific test of truth. Framing this research into a good structured process, the researchers made use a model of action research proposed by Elliot.

Elliot’s model of action research is a revised version of the Lewin’s. Elliot enhances Lewin’s model with a deep analysis of each cycle and flexibility in defining the general idea of the cycle. Here is the procedure of action research used in this research:

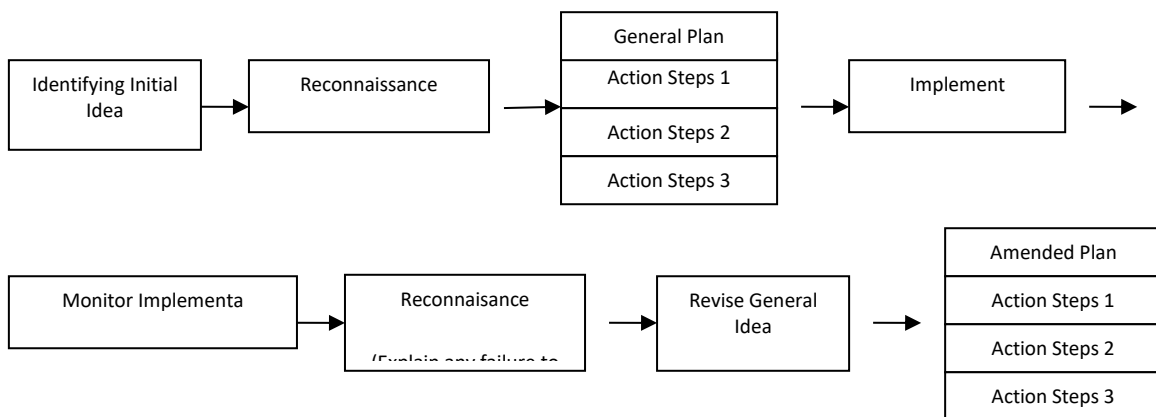


Figure1. The Procedure of Action Research of Lewin’s Model

**Technique of Collecting Data**

Technique of collecting data deals with the source of the data. Some techniques of collecting data in this research were test, observation, questionnaire, interview and document analysis. Observation is done to collect the data from events. This activity is also called pre-observation and the observation done in the process of research or in the process of implementing the lesson plan is called monitoring the implementation and the effects. Media which were used in the research to monitor the implementation of the lesson plans are handy cam, camera, paper and pens.

In this research, the researchers gave questionnaire in the form of twenty questions with four options. They also interviewed some participants of the research or students especially those who have low achievement to get deeper data because the participants of the research could express their feeling directly to them concerning with their social lives in the class, their interest and motivation in learning grammar, their difficulty and their wish concerning the grammatical competence. They

used semi-structured technique, a technique of interview which consists of some triggering questions and free interview because the participants can freely answer and express their feeling.

To collect data of students' grammar competence, the researchers conducted pretest, mid test, and posttest. A test is called valid if the items are able to measure the object of research. There are many kinds of test validity like face validity, logical validity, factorial validity, content validity, and empirical validity. Besides that, it should be reliable or consistent. It can be done by using test-retest technique or split half technique. In this study, the researchers used logical validity, because it is the most appropriate to measure achievements. The items were grouped into certain domain through the use of blueprint.

### Data Triangulation

In improving data validity of this research, the researchers used source, methodological, and theoretical triangulations. According to Patton in (Sutopo, 2006), the technique of source data can also be called data triangulation. In this research, the researchers used various sources of data such as the students, collaborator, and the researchers themselves. As a source of data, the students were asked to answer questionnaire and do quizzes, either pretest or posttest. As sources of data, the lecturer and the collaborator made journals, field notes and logs in every meeting. The researchers used methodological triangulation by digging data using questionnaire, interview, and observation. For theoretical triangulation, the researchers used many references in gaining the theory by comparing and also synthesizing many theories from different references.

### Technique of Analyzing Data

The technique of analyzing data used in this research is descriptive qualitative data analyses. Qualitative research is also said to be heuristic not deductive since few decisions regarding research questions or data are made before the research begins (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). This research is also called descriptive research for some data, especially the scores of the students, are in the form of numeric data which are, then, compared. The comparison can be in the form of percentage or mean.

In analyzing the qualitative data, the researchers used constant comparative method. The data in the form of opinion gotten from questionnaires and behaviors or attitudes gotten from observation were analyzed using cross-case analyses.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To know deeper about the condition of the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta, the researchers did documents analyses by analyzing the score list of the final test of the previous semester or semester III as the base to know the students' improvement in grammar competence. Here is the scores.

Table 1. The students' scores of semester III

No	Codes	Scores	Qualitative Category
1.	01	85	AB
2.	02	55	C
3.	03	37	D
4.	04	60	BC
5.	05	38	D
6.	06	60	BC
7.	07	85	AB
8.	08	85	AB
9.	09	65	BC

10.	010	65	BC
11.	011	68	BC
12.	012	75	B
13.	013	75	B
14.	014	60	BC
15.	015	80	AB
16.	016	80	AB
17.	017	91	A

Based on the table above, the percentage of students' scores can be presented in the following table.

Table 2. The Percentage of students' scores of semester III

No.	Qualitative	Quantitative Category	Number of Students Category	Percentage
1.	A	90 – 100	1	05.88%
2.	AB	80 – 89	5	29.41%
3.	B	70 – 79	2	11.76%
4.	BC	60 – 69	6	35.29%
5.	C	50 – 59	1	05.88%
6.	CD	40 – 49	0	00.00%
7.	D	30 – 39	2	11.76%
8.	E	0 – 29	0	00.00%

Having seen the students' competence that is not satisfying yet, the researchers need to improve theirs by paying attention to their problem. Focusing on the problem faced by the students, the low achievements on Structure and Grammar especially on the use of content words, the researchers made a kind of pretest. What the so-called content words are noun, verb, adjective and adverb. The pretest is in the form of multiple choice test containing 60 questions with four options. Each topic has 15 items questioning the students' ability in identifying certain parts of speech, determining the functions, the grammatical properties, and the derivational forms of them. There were 6 meetings before mid-test and final test. Two of them was used to discuss nouns, two others to discuss verbs, one meeting to discuss adjectives, and one other was used to discuss adverbs. Due to the use of STAD there were quizzes in every meeting, the first was given before the lecture as the pretest and the second was given after implementing STAD as the posttest. The scores of the quizzes were also used to determine the appraisal for each group to get *Super Team* with the highest score (25), *Great Team* with the average score (20) and *Good Team* with the lowest score (15). In applying STAD the researchers determined that there should be one clever student in each group to be the leader. It is line with the opinion that in cooperative learning, reward structures may depend on the performance of the group. In attempt to develop techniques designed for cooperative learning, students should work in small (four-member) groups of mixed ability, including one high achiever, two average achievers, and one low achiever (Slavin in (S. Elliott, 1999). It was also found that positive interaction developed among high-and low-achievers students (Yaduvanshi & Singh, 2019).

In determining the leader and members of the group, they had ranked the students based on their achievement of the pretest. The groups for both mid-test regarded as cycle 1 and final test regarded as cycle 2 are the same. To know the improvement of the students' grammatical competence, the researchers used the final test of the previous semester (semester III academic year 2021/2022) as the base scores and those of the midterm test and the final test of semester IV in academic year 2021/2022. This way was also applied by (Syakur, Junining, & Sabat, 2020) in their

research in the form of a quasi-experimental re-search design with a quantitative approach that uses pre-test, mid-test and post-test. The subjects of this study were 65 students, Department of English Education in English courses at 7th Semester, Brawijaya University of Malang. (Amornsinlaphachai, 2014) gave statements that the research variable studied in this work is a learning model using the STAD technique with a suggestion system to decrease learners' weakness. Here is the result of base scores, mid-test, and final test.

Table 3. The result of students' scores

No	Codes	Groups	Base Scores	Mid Test	Final Test
1.	01	A1	85	87	91
2.	02	A2	55	60	65
3.	03	A3	37	40	50
4.	04	A4	60	66	75
5.	05	B2	38	40	49
6.	06	B3	60	80	91
7.	07	B1	85	86	87
8.	08	C1	85	90	92
9.	09	B4	65	67	78
10.	010	C2	65	68	76
11.	011	C3	68	86	91
12.	012	C4	75	76	85
13.	013	D2	75	80	86
14.	014	D3	60	63	66
15.	015	D4	80	84	86
16.	016	D5	80	83	86
17.	017	D1	91	92	94
Total			1.164	1.248	1.348
Mean			68.47	73.41	79.29

Based on table 3, it can be given the number of the students who get score A, AB, B, BC, C, CD, D, and E in the table below.

Table 4. The Category of Students' Scores

No	Quantitative Category	Qualitative Category	Base Scores	Mid Test	Final Test
1.	90 – 100	A	1	2	5
2.	80 – 89	AB	5	7	5
3.	70 – 79	B	2	1	3
4.	60 – 69	BC	6	5	2
5.	50 – 59	C	1	0	1
6.	40 – 49	CD	0	0	1
7.	30 – 39	D	2	2	0
8.	0 – 29	E	0	0	0

In base scores, there is only 1 student getting A and 2 students getting D. In mid test, there are 2 students getting A and 2 students getting D. In final test, there are 5 students getting A, and there is no student getting D because the 2 students can improve their score into CD. The percentage of the students' scores ranging 70 – 100 can increase, from 8 students (47.05 %) into 10 students (58.82%) in mid-test and 13 students (76.47%) in final test. In general, it can be stated that STAD model can



improve the students' competence on grammar. It is in line with (Dewi, Wibawa, & Agustiana, 2020) finding that the STAD type cooperative model makes students the center of learning through the application of the STAD type cooperative model students are motivated to compete in understanding lessons. (Umar & Astiyandha, 2021) also found that STAD can also be used by teachers as an effective learning technique to support teaching and learning activities.

To know the effect which may appear during the process of applying cooperative learning in class, the researchers did observation and gave questionnaires. It was stated that a satisfaction questionnaire was administered to gain the students' feedback on the STAD strategy (Juntong & Channuan, 2020). Following implementation of STAD model, the researchers distributed questionnaires. Questionnaires given to the students contain 20 questions with 4 options. Among the four subjects, namely Grammar, Reading, Writing, and Conversation. Structure and Grammar subject is not so popular, there are only 5 students or 29.41% who say that this subject is popular. Concerning with the difficulty of the subject, Structure and Grammar subject becomes the most difficult subject among them. 9 students or 52.94% say that this subject is the most difficult. This condition proves that Structure and Grammar becomes the most difficult subject. Concerning with the level of understanding of Structure and Grammar after being explained, most of them 11 students or 64.70% say that they just understand a half. Although most of the students do not understand well, they seldom ask questions to the lecturer. The reasons why they rarely or even never ask questions to the lecturer are they are shy to make questions, they do not take care of the lecture, they do not know the reason, and none says that the explanation is clear. Besides that, the respondents who answer that they prefer asking to their friends reach 70.58% or 12 students. Most of them also say that asking to their own friends can help them understand the lecture better. Based on this situation, the researchers assume that this can be improved by using cooperative learning.

The researchers find that after implementing the action research, even after the first meeting before mid-term test, the class atmosphere begins to change. The students' spirit to absorb knowledge rises. They begin to be brave to ask questions and discuss the materials. In the end, the number of students who pass the test increase so does the mean although far from satisfying. It is in line with statement from (Aranson, 2002), who expresses that improving is the existence of change to be better. (Kupczynski, Mundy, Goswami, & Meling, 2012) report the result of their research that the qualitative data revealed that students in the cooperative learning groups found more learning benefits than the Traditional group.

Concerning with the impact of applying STAD, most of the students accept the spirit of "togetherness" in learning Grammar. It was also found by (Rawung, 2017) that the use of STAD model in teaching and learning English process was effective as seen from the questionnaires given to the students in class VIIIA of SMP Negeri 2 Poso. (Rachmawati, Supriyanto, & Doyin, 2019) also found that learning to write poetry with the STAD model done by the fifth-grade students of elementary school in Kedungjati Subdistrict 2017/2018 Academic Year can effectively improve students' poetry writing skills. (Wyk, 2012) concluded that the adoption of learning goals, the intrinsic valuing of the learning task, increased self-efficacy and increased use of deep processing strategies are all positive indications of the impact STAD, as a cooperative learning experience, can have on student motivation. (Mandagi, Palenkahu, & Posumah, 2022) found that STAD strategy helps them to understand the text. This technique made students become more enjoyable to learn because they solved or answered the question by their group. (Khairunnisa & Aziz, 2019) gave one of the research results that cooperative learning model STAD method is effective for increasing interest and learning outcomes (Critical Thinking) Economic Subjects, Cooperative learning model STAD method is effective for increasing interest and learning outcomes (Critical Thinking) Economic Subjects. (Despita, 2021) concluded that STAD is able to enhance students' motivation in learning English.

## CONCLUSION

Applying cooperative learning is just the same as giving some responsibility to the students to teach their own friends, for most of the students prefer asking their own friend to asking their own lecturer. By applying cooperative learning, a lecturer will feel more relax, for some burdens are given to the clever students to teach their own friends.

STAD as one of the methods of cooperative learning gives close relation among the group members, for the team should get better appraisal than others. STAD works well in the condition like ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta where most of the students are under average.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Cooperative learning can improve the grammatical competence of the students of ABA St. Pignatelli Surakarta. The improvement is especially on the number of students whose scores are 70-100 from 47.05% before applying cooperative learning to 58.82% in midterm test and 76.47% in the final test. A positive effect in the form of better atmosphere of the class appears during the implementation of cooperative learning. The students tend to be more active in joining the lecture. The other positive effect in the form of brighter faces appears during the implementation of cooperative learning, for they know what to do in every meeting. The students feel appreciated for they are involved in seeking knowledge. They also begin to be confident and brave to ask and give opinion in the front of the classroom.

It is recommended that teachers or lecturers do action research. Why action research, because it is problem focused, the daily problems faced by the teachers. By doing action research, a teacher will know the real cause of the problem and after that he or she can overcome the problem. If one attempt doesn't succeed, he or she should do another attempt, of course after some analyses.

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