

Cooperative Integrative and Reading Composition Strategy to Enhance Reading Comprehension

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Abstract:

This article explains Cooperative Integrative Reading and Composition (CIRC) Strategy enhance the students' reading comprehension of first grade at SMKN 2 Malang. This study is classroom action research (CAR). The procedures of the research consist of four major steps: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The use of CIRC strategy is effective to enhance the students' ability in reading comprehension by employing several steps; reading aloud, group responses, short composition, and individual and group presentations.

Keywords: Cooperative Integrative Reading and Composition (CIRC), Reading Comprehension

A. Background

The advanced development of the global world requires students to enrich their knowledge in all fields of science and technology by reading. Reading is also one of receptive skills that gives a significant effect on the ability in other language skills; listening, speaking and writing. In fact, for Indonesian learners, they still face difficulties in reading English sources even in the level of senior high school (Hamra, 2010:27). Therefore, teachers need to improve and evaluate continuously any kind of teaching methods to help students develop their skill in reading.

Cooperative learning is one of innovative learning strategies which offers more than a hundred models of learning structures, such as mind mapping, jigsaw, one stay two stray, think pair share, and so on (Slavin, 2008). However, in fact, there are still many teachers who are stuck to monotonous teaching strategies. It is also stated in several recent studies related to teaching strategies in Indonesia. . As stated by Zahra (in Cahyono, 2009:33) that teachers still need to learn more attractive, creative, interesting and useful teaching strategies. Unattractive teaching strategies may cause students to be unmotivated to learn English.

From the preliminary research, the researcher figured out that those reading problems at SMK 2 particularly in Nursing Department class X can be caused by several factors. First, students still have difficulties in literal comprehension which

includes difficulties in recognizing the main ideas, supporting ideas, supporting details, the meaning of vocabulary, the explicit and implicit ideas, etc. Second, students do not have high motivation because of monotonous teaching strategies employed by the teachers. Teachers monotonously employed teaching strategy which was focus on reading as the process of reading aloud and answering questions from the related vocabulary. Besides, reading tends to be conducted as individual learning task without any further discussion, cooperative activities, and interaction to the other classmate or teacher. Therefore, students did not enjoy reading and tended to feel it as a burden.

Thus, the writer discusses one of Cooperative Learning models called Cooperative Integrative Reading Composition (henceforth CIRC) (Slavin, 2008). This model basically employs cooperative learning strategies in order to help students to be able to comprehend the reading materials in group discussion. It is expected to help students to learn academic materials and many other skills. It also projected to help the students to get many targets and social purposes. Based on the Indonesian classroom atmosphere that consists of heterogeneous students in terms of intelligence, ethnicity, cultures, cooperative learning is appropriate to be implemented in the classroom (Suprijono, 2010). Each of the students will learn by the principle inter-dependence (Richard and Rodgers, 1990). It means they will help each other and share the knowledge from what they have learned. So, simultaneously students will get used to helping their partner and achieve the goal of the learning not individually, but together with their friend. This behavior intentionally is expected to be able to reinforce the students' mental development to become national generations that have strong characters.

Based on the above facts, it is expected that the applying of certain strategies and techniques of reading can help the students overcome the existing problems. The CIRC is chosen since this strategy according to Slavin (2008:200) will lead students to have comfortable learning environment by dividing them into groups consisting of four persons. This condition is aimed to avoid reluctance of actively involved in class with bigger number of people. Then, according to Suprijono (2010:130) each of the members will be given individual tasks that should be reported to the other members' of the group. It will help to make all the students actively involved in determining all the reading comprehension aspects including main ideas, supporting ideas, etc. The other members of the group will have a change to give comments and edit the others members ideas orally and written. The processes will be in the form of reading summary composition before the group derives a conclusion that is going to be reported to the whole class. Therefore, this strategy can help students to practice and recheck their reading comprehension skills and to get along with the other students in

order to solve their problems. In other words, they do not fully count on the teacher's explanation.

The effectiveness of the CIRC strategy has been shown in several previous studies. First, Moreillon (2007) in his study on cooperative learning for teaching reading comprehension states the result of the study on a cooperative learning strategies including CIRC showed that this strategy was easily integrated into classroom-library lesson plans and story time learning objectives of reading. It significantly gave positive impacts on students' development in reading. Second, He (2008) conducted experimental research on an innovative web-based on a cooperative learning model and application structure particularly CIRC. The result of this research shows that the cooperative learning environment could foster students to be cooperative, caring, reflective, critical and creative. These studies focused on the effectiveness of CIRC toward the students' learning behavior in reading and in creating innovative web. Third, Wuragil (2010) conducted a classroom action research for elementary students to enhance the ability of identifying main ideas of paragraphs through CIRC. This study found that the ability of students to identify main ideas of paragraphs can be increased by using CIRC strategy. The set of studies above implies that the CIRC strategy was able enough to overcome the student's problem in reading comprehension. Therefore, the researcher in this chose this strategy to be implemented as the solution of reading comprehension problems.

The statement of the problem in this research can be formulated as how can the Cooperative Integrative Reading and Composition (CIRC) Strategy enhance the students' reading comprehension of class X at *SMKN 2 Malang*? Therefore, the significance of this study is to enhance students' reading comprehension at *SMKN 2 Malang*. The result of this research is expected to give contribution practically to the following parties. The first is for teachers who face the same problem in reading. The result of this study is expected to answer teachers' need by adopting the steps of teaching reading through CIRC that is offered by the result of this research. The second is for the future researchers. The result of this research can be used as one of primary resources to conduct any further research related to reading strategy employing Cooperative Integrative Reading Composition (CIRC).

B. Research Methodology

This study is designed to improve the quality of teaching learning process in English subject, particularly in reading skills at *SMKN 2 Malang*. The purpose of this study is expected to enhance the students' reading comprehension by using Cooperative Integrative Reading Composition (CIRC) strategy. In conducting this

study which is related to the purpose of the research itself, the researcher employs classroom action research.

Reason and Bradbury (in Koshy, 2005:9) outline the purpose of action research as the production of practical knowledge that is useful to people in everyday context of life. In action research, there are several procedures or steps must be involved by the researcher. Related to this, the researcher concludes, CAR is a research method which means a process in which researcher herself conducts the teaching to improve the students' learning and recover the students' problems and difficulties in the process of reading comprehension.

This design was chosen since it deals with problems emanating during the teaching learning process in the classroom setting. The study is also aimed to enhance students' reading comprehension in that particular class in order to give another alternative of solution to the classroom problems in the teaching of reading. The processes consist of reading aloud, group responses, short composition, and individual and group presentations. In this study, the researcher acts as the one who implements the strategy.

In this study the researcher was helped by a collaborator. The collaborator acted as the one who observed the students' activities during the teaching learning process. The collaborator who was equipped with, field notes and camera, observed the researcher and students in the teaching and learning activities during the implementation of the strategy. To cope with the classroom problems in teaching of reading, researcher applies Cooperative Integrative Reading and Composition Strategy (CIRC).

Moreover, the researcher adapts the Kemmis and McTaggart research design model (cited in Hopkins, 1993:48) through a cyclical process by adding a preliminary study before setting up the planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting in a cycle.

C. Discussion

The reflection of the implementation was done by using quantitative analysis from the score of the test and the score of the questionnaires. First, the result of students' reading comprehension which was taken from the reading comprehension test showed that the criteria of success were already passed except for one student. After checking the students' attendance, it was known that this student obviously did not join four teaching and learning meetings. From four meetings she only joined three meetings. Moreover, her score in reading comprehension report in the

preliminary research also still did not achieve the passing grade of *KTSP* curriculum 7.00. She got 3.95 in reading comprehension. Based on this consideration, the researcher considers that this is included into a special case. However, there is still an improvement toward this student score 1.05 points which started from 3.95 to 5.00 after learning through the CIRC Strategy. It is concluded in general that from each student who followed the teaching learning process 100% or fully five meetings included test, each of them has already fulfilled the criteria of success 7.50 in reading comprehension.

Figure 1 shows the detailed distribution of students' reading comprehension test result.

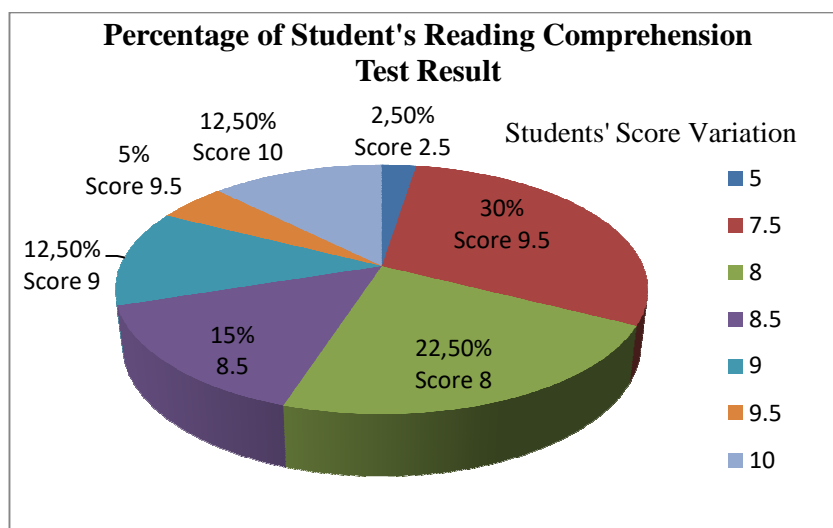


Figure 1 Students' Reading Comprehension Result

The figure above shows that, from 40 students 12.5% or 5 students got 10 in reading comprehension test. 5% or 2 students got 9.50. 12.5% or 5 students got 9. 15% or 6 students got 8.5. 22.5% or 9 students got 8.00, and 30% or 12 students got 7.5.

Out of 40 students who took reading comprehension test, 2 students did not follow the whole meetings which were totally four meetings for teaching and learning process. As a matter of fact, one of them did not pass the criteria of success. As mentioned in the previous explanation, this student had to be included into special case which was not considered as the failure of the study. Therefore, the implementation of the CIRC Strategy had already passed the criterion of success required that each student of the class get at least 7.5 in reading comprehension test. In other words, this study did not need to be continued to the next cycle.

Furthermore, the result of the teaching learning process which was obtained from the questionnaire showed that the criterion of success has already been achieved. As set before, from ten questions in the questionnaires, each student in the class answers “Yes/Agree” to 5 or more questions, then it will be considered successful. The use of questionnaire is to find out the students’ response toward the implementation of the CIRC Strategy in teaching learning. Therefore, it related to the whole process of teaching and learning reading by using this strategy.

Out of 40 students in who were involved in filling the questionnaires, the result showed that 100% of the students answer “Yes/Agree” for 5 or more questions. There was no one answer “Yes/Agree” less than 5 questions. It is concluded that the criteria of success which requires each student answered “Yes/Agree” at least 5 or more questions have already been fulfilled. It means the second criteria of success in this study have also been achieved. In other words, the researcher does not need to continue to the next cycles.

Based on the analysis of the findings of this research, it was found that the CIRC strategy was very effective to increase students’ achievement in reading comprehension. It was also attractive and gave interactive learning atmosphere which avoid students to become bored and felt uncomfortable during the learning process.

The CIRC strategy provided students to follow the conception of reading comprehension. This strategy effectively improved the students ability in reading comprehension can be seen from several explanations. The first is the role of the CIRC strategy which required teacher to have clear and exact plan before teaching. In this case teacher has to develop students’ work sheets and also group work sheets to guide students besides the teacher’s oral explanations. This is in line with theory proposed by Nuttall (1982:148) that states one of the responsibilities of the teacher in conducting reading lesson is preparing the class to undertake the tasks. The functions of worksheets in the learning process are essential. In the CIRC teacher’s preparation in form of good oral and written guidance are required to be provided by teacher.

The second procedure is the group activities. In the CIRC, each student in the groups had to take turn to read aloud some parts of the text in their group. The other members are required to listen and give feedback or any correction for mispronunciation or intonation mistakes. In this activity student were stimulated to be aware to the structural linguistic components of the text, such as, words, phrase, clause, and also spelling patterns. It is clearly seen that the CIRC strategy also utilizes the principle of bottom up reading comprehension model. As stated by Goodman (1967) bottom up reading comprehension is a process that involves “exact, detail, letters, words, spelling patterns and larger units.” Therefore, the students took part as

active learners because they could exposure and learn from others instead of learning from the teacher's lecture.

The following procedure of implementing the CIRC is assigning the students to write a short and simple composition about what they have learnt from the reading process. In the principle of an intensive reading lesson, the student's role as a reader is an important aspects that should be provided by teacher. Nuttall (1982:147) mentions that student' role as a reader demands that he or she should make sense of the text for him/herself. The process of writing a short composition is to assign the students to make their conclusion or summary of text. Through this activity students would be able to make sense of the text for themselves.

The next procedure is taking turn to retell their conclusion to their group. Each student could have different point of view and also different ways in explaining their conclusion. In this process each student could add their existing knowledge as an additional argument in explaining their conclusion. According to Stanovic (1980) interactive models assume that the pattern is synthesized based on information provided simultaneously from several knowledge sources. The process of taking turn to retell their conclusion in their group then giving feedback and comment to the other conclusion applied the principle of interactive reading model. All of those steps were carried out in whilst-teaching stage.

While whilst-teaching stage activities were used as the learning process for the training process for the students, activities that were carried out in skill-building stage were used to implement what they had learnt from the previous stage. The teacher distributed the second worksheet which assigned students to answer several questions related to the text. In this study the researcher focus on several parts of reading comprehension; finding topic, identifying main ideas, guessing vocabulary, identifying details information, and determining explicit and implicit meaning of the text. Brown (2001) mentions that one of the principles in designing interactive reading technique is answering questions about the text. By assigning students to do the worksheet 2, it means the principle of interactive reading technique also applied in this learning process.

The next step is taking turn to tell their answer to the group along with their reasons to come up to that answer each of the group members are required to give comments or feedback to the other member's ideas. If there is a different opinion each of them could explain more about their ways of thinking which lead them to that particular conclusion. This process let the students enrich their knowledge of other reading strategies which was used by their partners in their own group. In other way, these activities also enrich their students' knowledge about the content of the text because each member was free to explore their background knowledge in order to explain and defense their answers. These activities also stimulated the other students

to make prediction and used their own background knowledge to solve the problems. This can be categorized to the top-down process of understanding.

In line with those things, Eskey (1980:6) mentions that to get to the comprehension stage, it means readers have to relate what the reader does not know to what the reader has already known. Therefore, crucially the successful reading depends on that individual's having acquired background knowledge or schemata. These steps, once again explain the secret of the effectiveness of the CIRC strategy in reading comprehension because it led students to activate their schemata like explained above.

The next step is writing the group conclusion. This step is carried out after all students in that group had a long and deep discussion. They have to come up to only one and correct conclusion also final answer of all the questions provided which is used as the representative of their ideas. Nuttall (1982:9) cites that for the most purposes, the understanding need to be total; but the fact that reader cannot get inside the writer's mind is no excuse for not doing the readers best understanding to what the writer's or author's want to say. Since readers seldom do consultation, therefore the process of sharing ideas in groups could be one of the way to dig deeper the concept of the writer's really want to express. In other words, the students as readers could have total understanding from these activities.

As follow up activities, the students are assigned to presents their group report in front of the class. This step combines all aspects of language skills in one situation. After that the whole class members could give their response, comments and feedback from the presenters report. Teacher herself finally gave her comment or even correction at the end of the teaching learning process. All of those steps are shown that the CIRC strategy combines many types of reading models in one integrated reading activities. This becomes the strength and also the secret of the effectiveness of the CIRC in solving reading comprehension problems. The role of teacher to provide the students any kind of specific ways in developing the students' ability in micro skills of reading still do not be abandoned. The students get training and lesson from the teacher's explanation, their own analysis, their group partner's sharing, and the whole class response. In line with Slavin (2008) this study also prove that the reduction of teachers' domination in teaching learning process is clearly effective to student's achievement.

Furthermore, the result of the researcher's and observer's observation gained during the implementation of the CIRC strategy within one cycle consisting of six meetings showed that the students' achievement in reading comprehension increased. The researcher took the conclusion from the result of the reading test that was given after the end of the cycle. In order to get valid data, the researcher also followed the

standard procedures of developing test in this study. The researcher validate the test by following all the steps began from making blueprint and consult it to the senior teacher as the expert, developing the test draft, trying it to seven students in other class in the same level, analyzing it through item difficulties, and revision from the result of the try out until came up to the final test document. This result come up as the empirical evidence of the achievement of the Cooperative Learning goal. It is in line with Yasa (2008) who says that one of the purposes of Cooperative Learning is to increase the students' academic achievement by increasing students' involvement in their academic task. It is clearly carried out by the CIRC strategy that all students must get involved to do their task without dominating by several students only.

After completing six meetings, the researcher together with the collaborator saw the result of the test and saw weather the main focus of this study which were focus on five elements of reading skills; identifying topic, main ideas, analyzing vocabulary, details information, and explicit and implicit information from the text had already got by the students. Since the content of the reading test were focus on those elements, therefore, the researcher could conclude that the implementation of this strategy only in one cycle had already succeeded to enhance the students' ability in reading comprehension especially in *XKPR3* class. Each of the students has already achieved the criteria of success which required them to get at least 7.5 in the reading test. In other words, the use of the CIRC strategy to enhance the students' ability in reading comprehension has already proven successful.

Besides, all the strength of this study, of course it still cannot cover all the reading comprehension level. As mention by Crawley and Mountain (1998) which taken from Bloom's Taxonomy, an idea reader should be able to come up to the level interpretive, critical and even creative reading comprehension level. However, the basic processes of comprehending have already achieved as the basic skills in order to come up to the higher level. The next level could be carried out in the next grade since the subject of this study still in the X grade of *SMK* or vocational schools.

Refer to the previous study which was focus on enhancing students' ability in identifying main idea of paragraphs in the level of elementary conducted by Wuragil (2010), this study shows broader explanation of the implication of the CIRC to the students' reading ability. This study not only helped the students' problem in identifying main ideas of the paragraph but also helping students to enhance their ability in identifying topic of the text, finding details information , predicting difficult vocabulary, and identifying explicit and implicit information from the text correctly. All these parts even though still in the level of literal comprehension, but take a really essential part in comprehending a reading text.

When Morellion (2007) found that the result of his study on the CIRC showed that this strategy was easily integrated into classroom-library lesson plans and story time learning objectives of reading, the result of this study strengthen this finding by providing evidence of the students' achievement result reading comprehension and also from the result of the questionnaires. Based on the reading test result and also questionnaires result which could achieve the criteria of success, it is clearly shown that this strategy is easily integrated to the reading lesson plans. Even though, the process of teaching learning process did not fully use the CIRC as the single teaching and learning strategy. This strategy still can be received easily by the students. The students also felt enjoyable to follow the CIRC instruction. In other words, the CIRC strategy could be combined with other strategies without abandon the quality of the reading instruction.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the results of the research which are reported in the research findings, the researcher concludes that the Cooperative Integrative and Reading Composition (CIRC) strategy has demonstrated to be effective to increase students' achievement in reading comprehension of the tenth grade students of Public Vocational School 2 Malang (*SMK 2 Malang*). This strategy also got a positive response from the students because they felt comfortable, easy and joyful in learning reading.

The first step in the CIRC strategy is providing communicative media. Utilizing clear and communicative media in form of student's worksheet gives the students correct reaction and equal responsibility in their groups. The second step is reading aloud. Each student must take turn to read aloud the text and give response, feedback, comments and also correction to any part of the text which is found during the reading aloud activity. This step leads the students to get familiar with the difficult vocabulary. The third step is writing short composition. Students are assigned to write a short conclusion around 50 words. This step makes the students well trained to predict and identify the topic of the text, main idea, important details and also explicit and implicit information from the text. The next step is individual presentation in the group. Each student has to present their work and get responses from their group partners. This step leads the students to check and recheck their understanding process and in the same time could enrich their knowledge of the reading strategies employed by the other students sharing process.

To give the effect of repetition process to the students in comprehending the reading text, the step employs leading questions worksheet as the media. Each student must do it individually. The next step is presenting their answers and the process of

understanding the text in front of their group. Then, each of them also gets responses, feedback, and correction from their friends' opinion. The last step is working on the group report. Short composition and questions' answer should be united into one report which represents the group answer. This step once again gives chance to the students to share the process, strategy and also all evidence that they have just used to come up the their work. The deeper sharing and learning from their partner is explored in this step. The last step is the group presentation and feedback from the class members and the teacher. This step makes the whole students get the exact the equal reading comprehension strategy from each group presentation process and also from the class and teacher's responses feedback or correction.

Finally, based on the findings in this study, there are several suggestion are offered the English teachers, and the future researchers. The first is for the English teacher. The findings of this study prove that the implementation of the Cooperative Integrative and Reading Composition strategy in reading has been successfully effective to enhance the students' reading comprehension ability. It also gives easy and joyful learning atmosphere to the students in reading. Therefore, it is suggested to English teachers to employ this strategy to face the same problems in teaching reading in other grades, second and third grade of *SMK*.

However, since the findings also show that 2.5% or one student out of 40 students in *XKPR3* could not pass the criteria of success because she did not present in all the teaching learning process, this student needs remedial actions in order to achieve the criteria of success. It is also suggested to the teachers to pay attention to the students' and group tasks which should cover more specific activities in order to control the students' active involvement during the discussion process in order to make the strategy more effective. The teacher can set the job description of the group leader more specific to record their partners' active involvement but not to give score or judgment but only filling the criteria which are stated clearly in group leader report sheet. The role of teachers in providing conducive and joyful discussion is also important. The selection of interesting reading materials should be carried out more carefully. Therefore, good preparation in designing students' tasks and selecting materials are really needed before implementing the strategy.

Last, for future researchers, the finding of this research can be used as beneficial reference to conduct similar studies in higher grades. The researcher also suggests that any further research could be conducted in public high school level (*SMA*) or at the level of university students. By using the *CIRC* strategy further researchers are also suggested to solve other reading comprehension problems in the other reading comprehension level. The researcher could add the students' activities

in writing composition not in the level of making summary or conclusion only but go further to create or predict the continuation of the text based on their own perspective and by using their words. This activity will lead students to be creative and innovative readers as required in the high order comprehension level.

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