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IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING ABILITY AND INTEREST THROUGH COOPERATIVE INTEGRATED READING AND COMPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the improvement of students' reading ability and reading interest through the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model. The research focuses on identifying whether cooperative learning activities can help students better understand reading texts and encourage them to participate more actively in classroom reading tasks. This research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the model proposed by Arikunto and involved 33 eleventh-grade students. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, reading interest questionnaires using Likert-scale items, and classroom observation sheets. The research was conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The findings indicate that the use of the CIRC learning model improved students' reading comprehension and increased their interest in reading activities. Students showed better performance in identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary, and interpreting reading texts, while classroom participation also improved during group discussions and cooperative learning tasks. The results of this study can be applied in English language teaching, particularly in reading instruction at senior high schools and vocational schools, where teachers may use the CIRC model as an alternative cooperative learning strategy to enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement in learning. This study also provides practical evidence that integrating cooperative reading and writing activities through the CIRC model can simultaneously improve students' comprehension skills and reading interest, contributing to more interactive and effective classroom learning.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, Reading interest, Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition, Cooperative learning, Classroom action research, English reading instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills that students must develop in order to gain knowledge and understand information presented in written form. Through reading activities, learners are able to explore different ideas, learn new concepts, and expand their understanding of various subjects. Reading comprehension allows students to interpret information, analyze ideas presented in texts, and relate new knowledge to their previous experiences (Brown, 2017; Jaya et al., 2025). Because of its essential role in learning, reading ability is considered one of the most important competencies in language education.

In the learning process, reading activities provide students with opportunities to interact with texts that contain information, opinions, and knowledge. When students are able to comprehend texts effectively, they can identify the main ideas, understand supporting details, and interpret the meaning of the text as a whole. These

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abilities are necessary not only for language learning but also for academic success in other subjects.

However, many students still encounter difficulties in understanding reading texts. Some students have trouble identifying the main idea of a passage, while others struggle to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary or understand complex sentence structures. These challenges often lead to frustration and reduced confidence when students are asked to read English texts in the classroom.

Another issue frequently observed in classrooms is the lack of students' interest in reading activities. Students who have little interest in reading tend to avoid reading tasks and participate less actively in reading lessons. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to practice reading comprehension skills, which further limits their ability to understand texts effectively. Reading interest plays a significant role in influencing students' reading achievement because students who enjoy reading are more likely to engage with texts and explore new information (Fitria, 2019; Lubis, 2018).

Reading interest refers to the students' willingness and enthusiasm to participate in reading activities. Students who have strong reading interest usually demonstrate curiosity toward reading materials and spend more time engaging with texts. On the other hand, students with low reading interest often perceive reading as a difficult or uninteresting activity. This lack of engagement may affect their motivation to learn and reduce their opportunities to develop reading skills.

Teachers therefore need to create learning environments that encourage students to become more involved in reading activities. One way to achieve this is by implementing teaching strategies that allow students to interact with texts in meaningful ways. When students are given opportunities to discuss reading materials, share their opinions, and work collaboratively with their peers, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward reading.

Cooperative learning has been widely recognized as an effective instructional approach that promotes active participation among students. In cooperative learning environments, students work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals. Through collaboration, students can exchange ideas, discuss problems, and support each other in understanding learning materials (Slavin, 2019). This learning approach not only improves academic achievement but also encourages communication and teamwork.

The collaborative nature of cooperative learning allows students to interact with their peers and develop a deeper understanding of the learning materials. When students discuss reading texts together, they are able to clarify misunderstandings, compare interpretations, and build shared knowledge. Such interactions contribute to the development of both cognitive and social skills (Rojabi, 2021).

One cooperative learning model that can be applied in reading instruction is Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). The CIRC model combines reading and writing activities within cooperative group work. In this model, students collaborate with their peers to read texts, identify key information, discuss ideas, and complete writing tasks related to the reading materials (Arif, 2023).

The CIRC model encourages students to participate actively in the learning process. Instead of reading texts individually without interaction, students engage in discussions that help them understand the meaning of the texts more effectively. Through group collaboration, students can support each other in identifying main ideas, interpreting vocabulary, and summarizing information from the reading materials.

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In addition, cooperative learning activities can help create a more supportive classroom environment. Students often feel more comfortable asking questions and sharing opinions when they work in groups. This interaction allows them to express their ideas freely and learn from their peers' perspectives.

Previous research has shown that cooperative learning strategies can improve students' comprehension skills and increase their motivation to learn. The use of structured collaborative activities allows students to interact with texts more actively and develop deeper understanding of reading materials (Dewi et al., 2023; Chandra et al., 2025).

Based on these considerations, the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model is expected to improve students' reading ability and increase their interest in reading activities. This study therefore focuses on applying the CIRC learning model to enhance students' reading comprehension and motivation during reading lessons.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in language learning because it enables students to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts. Reading is not only a process of recognizing words but also a complex cognitive activity that involves constructing meaning from the information presented in the text. Effective reading comprehension requires readers to integrate their prior knowledge with the information contained in the text in order to understand the message conveyed by the author (Afflerbach, 2025). Therefore, reading ability plays an important role in helping students develop their academic knowledge and critical thinking skills.

In the learning process, reading activities allow students to gain access to various sources of information. Through reading, students are able to expand their knowledge and develop intellectual abilities that support their learning in different subjects. Reading also contributes to students' cognitive development because it encourages them to analyze ideas, evaluate information, and form their own understanding of the material they read (Patiung, 2016). For this reason, reading instruction is considered one of the fundamental components of language education.

However, many students still experience difficulties in comprehending reading texts, especially when they are required to interpret information written in a foreign language. Students often encounter challenges in identifying the main ideas, understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, and interpreting complex sentences within a text. These difficulties may lead to low comprehension performance and reduced motivation during reading activities. One factor that strongly influences students' reading achievement is their level of interest in reading.

Reading interest refers to the students' willingness and enthusiasm to engage in reading activities. Students who have strong interest in reading tend to spend more time interacting with texts and demonstrate greater curiosity toward learning materials. In contrast, students with low reading interest often avoid reading tasks and show limited engagement during reading lessons (Fitria, 2019). As a result, they have fewer opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills.

Reading interest also plays an important role in shaping students' reading habits. When students develop positive attitudes toward reading, they are more likely to practice reading regularly and explore different types of texts. Regular reading practice helps students improve their vocabulary knowledge and comprehension ability over time. Students who develop consistent reading habits tend to achieve better academic performance because they are accustomed to processing

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information from written sources (Noortyani, 2018).

In addition to individual motivation, the learning environment also influences students' interest in reading. Teachers play a crucial role in creating classroom activities that encourage students to participate actively in reading tasks. When teachers apply instructional strategies that are interactive and engaging, students are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward reading activities. Supportive learning environments can motivate students to explore texts and share their ideas with their peers (Marin & Bocos, 2021).

One instructional approach that can increase students' engagement in learning is cooperative learning. Cooperative learning emphasizes collaboration among students in small groups to achieve shared learning goals. Through cooperative learning activities, students are encouraged to exchange ideas, discuss information, and support each other in solving learning problems (Slavin, 2010). This learning approach allows students to participate actively in the learning process and develop both academic and social skills.

Cooperative learning also creates opportunities for students to interact with their peers while working on academic tasks. During group discussions, students are able to share their perspectives, ask questions, and clarify misunderstandings about the learning materials. According to Sharan (1999), cooperative learning environments support students' cognitive development because they encourage learners to actively construct knowledge through collaboration.

One cooperative learning model that has been widely applied in reading instruction is the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) model. The CIRC model integrates reading and writing activities within cooperative learning groups. In this approach, students work together to read texts, identify key information, discuss ideas, and complete writing assignments related to the reading materials (Ariyana & Suastika, 2022).

The CIRC model provides structured learning activities that help students develop their reading comprehension skills. During the learning process, students collaborate with their peers to analyze texts, summarize information, and respond to reading questions. These activities encourage students to think critically about the texts they read and deepen their understanding of the content.

Research has shown that the CIRC learning model can effectively improve students' reading comprehension. Durukan (2012) found that cooperative reading activities integrated with writing tasks help students develop better comprehension and analytical skills. The collaborative nature of the model allows students to discuss ideas and clarify misunderstandings, which contributes to improved learning outcomes.

Furthermore, cooperative learning strategies such as CIRC can also increase students' motivation and participation in reading activities. When students are involved in group discussions and collaborative tasks, they tend to feel more confident and motivated to express their ideas. This positive learning atmosphere encourages students to become more active participants in the classroom.

Several studies have also reported that the implementation of the CIRC model contributes to improved reading performance among students. Dewi et al. (2023) found that the use of cooperative learning strategies significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension and encouraged active participation during reading lessons. Similarly, Chandra et al. (2025) reported that students who learned through the CIRC model demonstrated better engagement and improved ability in understanding reading texts.

Based on these theoretical perspectives and previous research findings, it can be concluded that the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model has the potential to

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improve students' reading ability and reading interest. By integrating cooperative interaction with structured reading and writing activities, the CIRC model creates a learning environment that encourages students to participate actively in reading tasks and develop their comprehension skills.

3. METHODS

This study employed Classroom Action Research to improve students' reading ability and reading interest through the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition learning model. Classroom Action Research is a reflective research approach conducted by teachers to improve teaching practices and enhance students' learning outcomes (Arikunto, 2010).

The participants of this study consisted of 33 eleventh-grade students in a vocational high school. The class included 12 male students and 21 female students. The research was conducted during English lessons in the second semester of the academic year.

The research was implemented in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans, teaching materials, and learning activities based on the CIRC model. The action stage involved implementing the learning activities in the classroom, where students worked collaboratively in small groups.

During the observation stage, the researcher recorded students' participation, interaction, and engagement during the learning process. The reflection stage was conducted to evaluate the results of the learning activities and determine improvements that needed to be made in the next cycle.

Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, questionnaires on students' reading interest, and observation sheets used to document classroom activities. The collected data were analyzed descriptively to evaluate students' improvement in reading comprehension and reading interest across the two research cycles.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model contributed to improvements in students' reading ability and their interest in reading activities. During the first cycle, some students still experienced difficulties in understanding the reading texts. Several students struggled to identify the main ideas and interpret unfamiliar vocabulary. These difficulties were mainly caused by limited reading practice and lack of confidence when dealing with English texts.

Although the students initially faced challenges, the cooperative learning activities encouraged them to participate more actively in the learning process. Students began to engage in discussions with their group members and share their understanding of the reading texts. Through these interactions, they were able to clarify misunderstandings and support each other in interpreting the meaning of the texts.

The classroom atmosphere also became more interactive during the implementation of the CIRC model. Students showed greater enthusiasm when participating in group discussions and collaborative tasks. Instead of working individually, they were able to exchange ideas and discuss their interpretations of the reading materials with their peers.

In the second cycle, students demonstrated significant improvement in their reading comprehension. They were able to identify the main ideas of the texts more easily and understand supporting information presented in the passages. Students also became more confident in expressing their opinions and explaining their interpretations of the texts during group discussions.

The improvement in students' reading comprehension was also accompanied by an increase in their reading interest. Students showed greater enthusiasm when participating in reading

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activities and demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading tasks. The cooperative learning environment allowed students to feel more comfortable engaging with texts and discussing their ideas.

The integration of reading and writing activities in the CIRC model also contributed to students' learning improvement. When students summarized and discussed reading texts, they were able to organize information more effectively and develop deeper understanding of the materials. Writing activities allowed students to reflect on the reading content and express their ideas in a structured manner.

These findings support previous research indicating that cooperative learning strategies can improve students' reading comprehension and motivation (Dewi et al., 2023; Chandra et al., 2025). By providing opportunities for collaboration and discussion, the CIRC model encourages students to engage actively in the learning process.

Overall, the implementation of the CIRC learning model created a positive learning environment that supported students' academic development. Students became more confident in expressing their ideas, worked cooperatively with their peers, and demonstrated improved comprehension of reading texts.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to improve students' reading ability and reading interest through the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition learning model. The findings indicate that the CIRC model effectively enhanced students' reading comprehension and increased their motivation to participate in reading activities.

The cooperative learning environment allowed students to discuss reading materials, exchange ideas, and support each other in understanding texts. These interactions contributed to the development of students' comprehension skills and helped them build greater confidence in reading activities.

The results of this study suggest that the CIRC model can be used as an effective instructional strategy in teaching reading. By integrating collaborative learning activities with structured reading tasks, teachers can create a more engaging learning environment that encourages students to develop their reading skills.

Future studies may explore the implementation of cooperative learning strategies in different educational settings and investigate their impact on other aspects of language learning.

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