

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates on the study's background, research questions, purposes, scope, significance, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and previous research.

A. Research Background

Reading proficiency is a significant indicator of success in language learning. Attaining this level of proficiency is still a tricky challenge. According to the latest PISA 2022 report, Indonesia's average reading literacy score remains significantly below the OECD average, with a considerable percentage of students still struggling to reach basic reading proficiency levels (OECD, 2023). This reflects an ongoing need for effective instructional models to improve students' reading comprehension in Indonesian schools.

The following table presents a comparison of Indonesian students' reading scores with those from other countries:

Table 1.1 Reading Proficiency Statistics Based on PISA 2022

Country	Average Reading Score (PISA 2022)
Singapore	543
Canada	516
OECD Average	476
Indonesia	359

Source : (OECD, 2023).

This data demonstrates the need for improved reading instruction to enhance students' comprehension abilities. Moreover, the Central Bureau of Statistics in Indonesia reports that Indonesians have low reading interest compared to industrialised nations, as evidenced by the limited number of library visits (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). This research highlights the necessity for innovative teaching methods, such as Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), to address these challenges and improve students' reading comprehension.

The students' low motivation, lack of interest in reading, and limited vocabulary are some of the problems that persist despite continuous efforts to improve reading comprehension. An important issue is that students need to be more motivated and interested in reading, especially in English, which is often considered complex and

uninteresting. Furthermore, limited vocabulary knowledge significantly hinders students' ability to analyze and comprehend texts effectively. Those problems are caused by the prevalence of the traditional teacher-centred method, which dominates many classrooms and often fails to actively engage students in the learning process (Richards et al., 2014). These problems are made worse by outdated and inappropriate reading materials. Furthermore, it is challenging for teachers to give struggling children individualised attention in big class groups (Hattie, 2009).

Several previous studies have attempted to address the issue of reading comprehension among students. For instance, Slavin (1995) emphasised the role of cooperative learning models in enhancing students' engagement and comprehension abilities. Another study by Stevens et al. (1987) demonstrated that structured group collaboration significantly improved students' reading and writing skills. However, these studies were mostly conducted in different educational contexts, such as elementary schools or university settings, leaving a research gap in their application at Indonesia's junior high school level. Additionally, research on reading proficiency in rural schools, particularly in Indonesia, remains limited despite students' pressing challenges in such areas (Lingam et al., 2012).

The results of observations and interviews conducted with eighth-grade teachers at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok show that the reading ability of eighth-grade students, particularly in reading comprehension, is still low. Proven by low scores on the pre-cycle reading comprehension test. Marked by the lack of student understanding of the reading content, determining the reading theme, and obtaining information from the read text. The teacher stated that they rarely read English texts outside of class due to limited vocabulary, and feel that reading English texts is difficult and uninteresting. The English teacher at the school also revealed that most students still struggle to identify the main ideas in the text. In other words, the main issue that needs to be addressed immediately is the low reading proficiency of the students.

To address this issue, innovative teaching methods are greatly needed. The Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) model is an adequate

strategy to enhance reading comprehension. This method emphasises cooperative learning by allowing students to work in small groups to analyse texts, identify key ideas, and synthesise material (Slavin, 1995). Research shows that this strategy encourages active engagement, creating a beneficial and dynamic learning environment. According to Stevens et al. (1987), CIRC significantly improves students' reading and writing skills through structured group collaboration. Unlike conventional methods that rely on passive learning, CIRC fosters a student-centered approach, making learning more interactive and effective.;

Considering the efficacy potential of the CIRC instructional paradigm for enhancing reading comprehension capabilities, this study postulates that its implementation within the junior high school context, specifically at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok, engenders substantial enhancements in students' textual interpretation proficiency. The research anticipates that participants allocated to the experimental cohort, receiving instruction through the CIRC learning model, will exhibit statistically superior performance metrics in reading comprehension assessments compared to their counterparts in the control cohort who experience traditional pedagogical approaches. This theoretical proposition is substantiated by extant scholarly literature documenting the pedagogical advantages of cooperative learning structures in fostering learners' cognitive development and linguistic competencies.

The urgency of this research lies in its contribution to addressing the longstanding issue of low reading proficiency among Indonesian students. By investigating the effectiveness of the CIRC model, this study aims to provide empirical evidence that can inform educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers in designing more effective teaching strategies. Furthermore, improving reading proficiency is crucial for students' academic success, affecting their performance in various subjects beyond English. Enhancing reading skills will support Indonesia's broader educational goals and human resource development efforts.

This study was conducted at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok, Karawang, West Java, focusing on eighth-grade students. The research employs a quasi-experimental

design with two groups: an experimental group taught using the CIRC model and a control group taught using conventional methods. The population consists of all eighth-grade students at the school, while the sample is selected using a purposive sampling technique. The findings of this study are expected to contribute valuable insights into the practical application of cooperative learning models in improving students' reading comprehension in Indonesian junior high schools.

B. Research Questions

Based on the explanation of the background of the previous paragraphs, the following research questions can be concluded:

1. How is the students' reading comprehension taught with the CIRC learning model?
2. How is the students' reading comprehension taught with the Conventional learning method?
3. What is the impact of the CIRC learning model on students' reading comprehension?

C. Research Purposes

This study aims to analyse the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model on the reading comprehension abilities of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok, Karawang. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to examine how students' reading comprehension develops when taught using the CIRC learning model, (2) to identify how students' reading comprehension progresses when taught with conventional learning methods, and (3) to determine whether there are significant differences in reading comprehension between students taught using the CIRC learning model and those taught using conventional learning methods.

D. Significance of the Research

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance.

- a) Theoretically, it advances our understanding of cooperative learning techniques, especially using the CIRC model in Indonesian classrooms. This study's emphasis on reading comprehension adds to the knowledge of

successful teaching strategies and guides further research on cutting-edge literacy strategies.

- b) Practically, this research provides valuable contributions in its application.
1. For teachers: This study provides practical guidance for implementing the CIRC learning model in classroom instruction. It introduces strategies such as group discussions, peer reading, and collaborative tasks to enhance students' reading comprehension. It also offers teachers an effective approach to overcoming issues like low engagement and limited text understanding.
 2. For students: The CIRC learning model provides a supportive and interactive learning environment that promotes active participation. Students are encouraged to engage more deeply with the reading material through peer collaboration and group-based activities. This approach is especially beneficial for students who struggle with limited vocabulary or low motivation, as it fosters a sense of confidence and belonging in the learning process.
 3. For other researchers: This study serves as a reference for further exploration of the CIRC learning model in different educational settings and its potential application in subjects beyond reading comprehension.

E. The Scope of the Research

The parameters of this investigation encompass the subject, object, and research site. The subject of this study comprises eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok, Karawang, West Java. The research focuses on the impact of the CIRC learning model on students' reading comprehension, particularly their ability to identify main ideas, understand supporting details, and analyze text structures. Conducted at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok, this research endeavors to furnish comprehensive insights into the efficacy of the CIRC learning model for enhancing literacy development within the Indonesian junior secondary educational framework.

F. Conceptual Framework

Reading is the process of understanding, interpreting, and deriving meaning from written texts. According to Grabe (2009), it is a systematic activity that enables readers to gather information from texts for academic purposes. (Snow, 2010) emphasizes that reading comprehension requires word decoding and connecting new information with prior knowledge. Based on these perspectives, reading is not merely about recognizing words but also about constructing meaning actively by integrating linguistic skills and cognitive processes.

Reading comprehension is influenced by several factors, including vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, and metacognitive strategies (Duke and Pearson, 2004). Strategies such as making inferences, summarising, and questioning allow readers to engage more actively with texts and enhance their understanding. Thus, reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill that integrates cognitive processes and emotional engagement to construct meaning effectively (Mar et al., 2009). This suggests that successful comprehension is influenced by linguistic ability and a reader's motivation, background knowledge, and personal connection to the text, making it a dynamic and individualized process.

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) is a cooperative learning model designed to enhance students' reading comprehension and writing skills through collaborative group work. Students engage in activities such as reading, discussing, analysing texts, and composing written summaries within small groups (Slavin, 1991). CIRC emphasizes collaboration in small, diverse groups where students engage in activities such as reading, discussing, summarizing, and identifying key ideas. The collaborative nature of CIRC fosters an environment in which all students participate actively, share their understanding, and deepen their engagement with the content. Recent studies also highlight the effectiveness of CIRC in improving students' reading comprehension and motivation. For example, a study by Mustofa and Rachman (2020) found that CIRC significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension by promoting peer-assisted learning and fostering critical thinking. Similarly, research by Fatimah et al. (2022) demonstrated that

students in CIRC-based classrooms exhibited higher engagement and better text comprehension compared to those taught using traditional methods..

According to Stevens et al. (1987), research has demonstrated that CIRC significantly improves student engagement and fosters a supportive learning environment. The model promotes critical thinking through group discussions, where students deepen their understanding by exchanging feedback with peers (Johnson et al., 1987). Recent studies have further supported these findings. For instance, Puspitasari and Hidayat (2018) implemented the CIRC technique in an English class. They observed a significant increase in students' active learning behaviours, indicating enhanced engagement and a more supportive learning environment. Similarly, Mahdahera and Ridwan (2023) found that the CIRC technique effectively fostered behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement among EFL students during reading comprehension activities, thereby promoting critical thinking through collaborative discussions. These contemporary studies corroborate the earlier theories proposed by Stevens et al. (1987) and Johnson et al. (1987), highlighting the enduring effectiveness of the CIRC model in enhancing student engagement, fostering supportive learning environments, and promoting critical thinking through group interactions. The effectiveness of CIRC depends on proper implementation, including balanced task distribution among group members and active teacher monitoring to ensure equitable participation (Kagan et al., 2009). Furthermore, CIRC addresses challenges like low student motivation and limited vocabulary by creating an interactive and engaging learning experience.

The CIRC learning model offers a dynamic and inspiring method for teaching comprehension. Through cooperative learning, students gain social support, boost their motivation, and improve their cognitive abilities. According to research, CIRC improves reading comprehension by encouraging teamwork and active engagement, which benefits students' academic and social development.

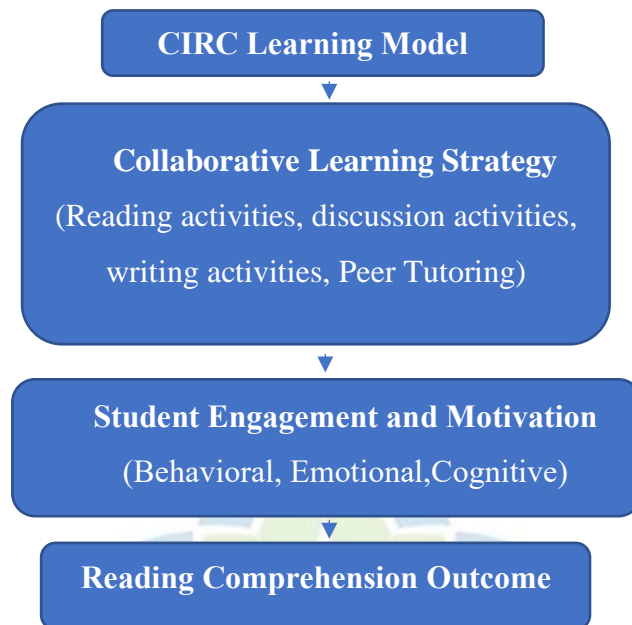


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

G. Hypothesis

The hypotheses for this study are formulated as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in reading comprehension among students who are taught using the CIRC learning model compared to those who receive instruction through conventional methods.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant difference in reading comprehension between students taught with the CIRC learning model and those taught using conventional methods.

H. Previous Studies

Several recent studies have investigated the effects of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) learning model on students' reading comprehension abilities, demonstrating its effectiveness across various educational contexts and learner levels. The following section presents three international and two Indonesian studies providing relevant insights into CIRC implementation.

The first is "Enhancing Reading Comprehension Through Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition: A Randomized Control Trial in Middle

Schools" by Johnson and Williams (2021). This research used a randomized controlled trial design. The population is 240 seventh-grade students from four middle schools in Texas, United States. Reading comprehension tests were used as the instruments. The goal is to determine the effectiveness of CIRC instruction compared to traditional reading instruction over 12 weeks. The findings demonstrate that students who received CIRC instruction achieved significantly higher reading comprehension scores than those who received traditional instruction. CIRC was particularly effective for struggling readers, showing 23% improvement and enhanced metacognitive awareness and collaborative skills.

The second is "The Impact of CIRC Model on EFL Students' Reading Achievement and Motivation: Evidence from Chinese Secondary Schools" by Chen and Liu (2022). This research used a quasi-experimental design with mixed-methods approach. The population is 180 eighth-grade EFL students from three secondary schools in Beijing, China. Reading comprehension tests and motivation questionnaires were used as the instruments. The goals are to assess the effectiveness of CIRC instruction on reading comprehension and motivation over 16 weeks. The findings demonstrate that there is a significant improvement in reading comprehension and a 28% increase in reading motivation after CIRC-based instruction. The study revealed enhanced peer collaboration, increased confidence, and improved critical thinking skills among students.

The third is "Cooperative Learning Strategies in Reading Comprehension: A Comparative Study of CIRC Implementation in Brazilian Public Schools" by Rodriguez and Martinez (2023). This research used a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design. The population is 320 sixth and seventh-grade students across eight public schools in São Paulo, Brazil. Reading comprehension assessments were used as the instruments. The goal is to compare CIRC effectiveness with traditional methods across different socioeconomic levels over 20 weeks. The findings demonstrate that there are significant reading comprehension gains across all socioeconomic levels, with low-SES students showing the greatest improvement. CIRC proved effective in reducing achievement gaps between different socioeconomic groups.

The fourth is "The Implementation of CIRC Method in Improving Students' Reading Comprehension at EFL Classroom" by Octaberlina and Asrifan (2021). This research used a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test/post-test. The population is 30 tenth-grade students in South Sulawesi. Reading comprehension tests and perception questionnaires were used as the instruments. The goal is to determine whether CIRC implementation can improve students' reading comprehension over 4 weeks. The findings demonstrate that there is a significant improvement from pre-test to post-test scores. The greatest improvements occurred in identifying main ideas (30% increase) and making inferences (27% increase), with 87% of students reporting positive perceptions toward CIRC method.

The fifth is "Penerapan Model Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Membaca Pemahaman pada Siswa Kelas V" by Sinaga et al. (2024). This research used a quasi-experimental design. The population is 60 fifth-grade students from two elementary schools in Medan. Reading comprehension tests were used as the instruments. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of CIRC model compared to conventional methods over 10 weeks. The findings demonstrate that there is a significant difference in post-test scores between CIRC group and control group. The study showed 87% adherence to CIRC components, with group discussion and partner reading as the strongest predictors of comprehension improvement.

Although these recent studies demonstrate the positive effects of CIRC in enhancing reading comprehension, several research gaps remain. While Johnson and Williams (2021) investigated seventh-grade students in the United States, their focus was on general reading comprehension in L1 contexts rather than EFL settings. Chen and Liu (2022) conducted research with eighth-grade EFL students in China, providing valuable insights for non-Western contexts. However, the educational system and cultural background differ significantly from those in Indonesian settings. Rodriguez and Martinez (2023) examined CIRC implementation across different socioeconomic levels in Brazil, though their focus

on Portuguese language instruction limits direct application to Indonesian EFL contexts.

Furthermore, the Indonesian studies by Octaberlina and Asrifan (2021) and Sinaga et al. (2024) provide valuable insights into CIRC implementation in Indonesia. However, the first study employed a pre-experimental design without a control group in a senior high school context, focusing on general EFL reading skills. The second study focused on Bahasa Indonesia instruction in elementary schools rather than EFL settings at the junior high school level. This reveals a need for research specifically examining CIRC's effectiveness with specific text types in public junior high school EFL settings. Such research is particularly needed in West Java, where educational contexts and implementations may differ from those in other Indonesian regions due to its diverse socioeconomic conditions and large student population.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by focusing on eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok in Karawang, West Java, using descriptive texts as the primary reading material. Descriptive texts were chosen as they are fundamental in the EFL curriculum and require specific comprehension skills, including visualization and detail identification. Additionally, this study employs a quasi-experimental design with both experimental and control groups, providing a structured comparison of CIRC's effectiveness in a public junior high school EFL setting. The selection of SMPN 2 Rengasdengklok represents typical conditions found in Indonesian public junior high schools, including limited resources, diverse student backgrounds, and standard curriculum implementation. By targeting this specific educational context and text type, this research contributes new insights into the applicability of CIRC in secondary education EFL instruction in Indonesia, particularly in settings that reflect common conditions across Indonesian public schools.