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INCREASING READING INTEREST AND ABILITY TO READ EXPLANATORY TEXTS THROUGH THE CIRC METHOD IN STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method in enhancing students' reading interest and their ability to comprehend explanatory texts. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups. The participants were students at the secondary school level, divided into an experimental class that received CIRC-based instruction and a control class that was taught using conventional methods. Data were collected through questionnaires measuring reading interest and reading comprehension tests specifically designed for explanatory texts. The results showed that the CIRC method significantly improved both reading interest and reading comprehension ability compared to the conventional approach. Students in the experimental group demonstrated higher motivation, active engagement in collaborative learning, and improved critical understanding of the text. These findings indicate that the CIRC method is an effective pedagogical strategy to foster reading interest and strengthen reading skills, particularly in the context of explanatory texts. The study contributes to the development of innovative literacy teaching practices and highlights the importance of cooperative learning models in supporting students' language development

Keywords: cooperative integrated reading and composition (circ); reading interest; reading ability

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading skills are one of the most important basic literacy competencies in the 21st century, where information develops so quickly and requires the ability to understand texts critically, analytically, and reflectivelya(Hariyadi et al., 2023a; Syafruddin et al., 2024). Reading not only serves as a means of acquiring knowledge, but also as a skill that supports the development of higher-level thinking skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making (OECD, 2019). In the context of education, reading ability is the foundation for students to understand various subjects, because almost all fields of study require reading activities as an entrance to knowledge (Snow & Sweet, 2003). Therefore, low reading skills can have an impact on students' overall academic achievement and hinder the achievement of competencies demanded by the curriculum(Yanda & Ramadhanti, 2021).

In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 towards 5.0, reading skills are no longer just a simple cognitive activity, but have shifted to complex information literacy skills(Ali et al., n.d.; Hariyadi et al., 2023b; Oktarina et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2023; Santosa et al., 2023). Students are required to be able to interpret, evaluate, and integrate information from various sources, both print and digital (UNESCO, 2017). These skills also play an important role in shaping citizens who are informative, critical of social issues, and adaptive to global change(Safitri et al., 2024). Thus, improving students' reading skills is a must that not only has implications for academic achievement, but also on their readiness to face the challenges of the 21st century that demand literacy competencies as a basic capital in life (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015).

The low interest in reading of students is still a big challenge in the world of education, especially in Indonesia. Data from *the Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA) shows that the reading literacy ability of Indonesian students is still below the international average, indicating low student involvement in meaningful reading activities (OECD, 2019). One of the factors that affect this condition is the lack of students' intrinsic motivation to read, which is influenced by learning habits, environmental support, as well as limited learning strategies that encourage their active involvement. Low interest in reading causes students to not be used to exploring texts in depth, which has an impact on weak comprehension and analysis skills (Zahara et al., 2021); (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

This problem becomes more evident when students are faced with explanatory texts, which require the ability to understand the cause-and-effect relationship and the process of the occurrence of a phenomenon(Safitri et al., 2024). Previous research has shown that students often have

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difficulty identifying the structure of the text, finding the main ideas, and deducing important information from explanatory readings (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2021). This shows that although explanatory texts have an important role in developing critical and logical thinking skills, students still have difficulty understanding them due to the lack of effective reading strategies and low interest in reading. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that can increase students' motivation while strengthening their ability to comprehensively understand the structure and content of explanatory texts (Al Adawiyah, 2023).

Explanatory text is a type of functional text designed to explain the process of the occurrence of a phenomenon, both natural and social, in a concise and objective manner. In language learning, explanatory texts have strategic value because they not only emphasize the aspect of language understanding, but also teach students to reason about the cause-and-effect relationship of an event(Ogle, 1986). Through reading and analyzing explanatory texts, students are trained to identify the structure of the text, find the main ideas, and organize information according to the logical flow presented. Thus, explanatory text reading skills can help students develop critical thinking skills and assess information based on evidence, not just opinions (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

In addition, explanatory texts also play an important role in building a systematic mindset that is urgently needed in facing the challenges of the 21st century(Coiro & Dobler, 2007);(Rahman et al., 2023; Zulkifli et al., 2022; Zulyusri et al., 2023). The structure of explanatory texts consisting of general statements, explanatory rows, and concludes requires students to understand information sequentially, logically, and fact-based (Emilia, 2011). This process encourages students to organize ideas in sequence, compare information, and deduce the broader meaning of the text read. Thus, explanatory text-based learning not only improves literacy competence, but also instills scientific thinking skills that can be applied in various fields of study(Hasibuan & Afnita, 2022). This shows that explanatory texts are an effective medium to integrate language learning with the development of critical, logical, and systematic thinking skills of students.

Conventional *teacher-centered learning* is still widely used in educational practices, especially in reading learning. This model generally places students as passive recipients of information, while teachers play a dominant role in explaining the material. This condition often makes the classroom atmosphere monotonous, because learning activities focus more on lectures and assignments without in-depth interaction (Slavin, 2015). As a result, students become less motivated, have little opportunity to actively participate, and tend to memorize information without critical understanding. This causes learning goals, especially in improving reading skills, to not be achieved optimally (Chi et al., 1994)

Furthermore, conventional learning is also limited in providing space for collaboration and the development of high-level thinking skills. Students are rarely given the opportunity to discuss, collaborate, or explore their own ideas, so the learning process does not foster curiosity or problem-solving skills (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2015). In fact, in the context of 21st century literacy(Edy Nurtamam et al., 2023; Utomo et al., 2023), students are required to be able to analyze, evaluate, and integrate information critically. Thus, the weakness of this conventional model shows the importance of learning innovations that are more interactive, collaborative, and oriented towards active student involvement so that the goal of literacy development, especially reading skills, can be achieved optimally (Nafisah, 2017).

Research by Slavin (2015) confirms that CIRC as one of the *cooperative learning* models is able to encourage students' active involvement in understanding texts through group work, discussions, and writing exercises. A study conducted by Nurjanah and Rahmawati (2020) found that students taught with the CIRC method experienced a significant improvement in reading comprehension compared to conventional methods. This shows that cooperation between students in reading can strengthen their ability to understand the content of the text more deeply (Bamford & Day, 2005).

In addition to improving reading comprehension skills, other research also highlights the positive impact of CIRC on increasing students' reading interest. According to research conducted by Sari and Putra (2021), the use of CIRC in language learning is able to foster students' intrinsic motivation to read, as they feel more challenged and involved in the learning process. With social interaction in groups, students are encouraged to actively participate, help each other, and be responsible for learning outcomes. The results of these studies support the idea that the CIRC method has great potential to be applied in the learning of explanatory texts, because it can improve both reading interest and comprehensiveness. Based on this, this study aims to find out Increasing Reading Interest and Ability to Read Explanatory Texts through the CIRC Method in Students .

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quasi-experimental design method with *a pretest-posttest control group design model*. This design was chosen to measure the effectiveness of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method in increasing students' reading interest and explanatory text reading ability. The research subjects consisted of two groups, namely the experimental class that obtained learning using the CIRC method and the control class that was taught using conventional methods. Sample selection was carried out through *purposive sampling techniques* by considering the uniformity of student characteristics at certain levels and classes. The instruments used include a reading interest questionnaire to measure students' motivation and interest in reading, as well as a reading comprehension test to evaluate their ability to understand the structure and content of explanatory texts.

The research process is carried out through three stages, namely pretest, treatment, and posttest. In the pretest stage,

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both groups were given an initial test and a reading interest questionnaire to find out the student's initial condition. Furthermore, the experimental class was treated with the application of the CIRC method in learning to read explanatory texts during several meetings, while the control class continued to use the conventional method. After treatment, the two groups were again given a posttest and questionnaire to measure the increase in reading interest and reading ability. The data were analyzed using independent t-tests to compare the differences between the experimental and control groups, as well as paired t-tests to see improvements in each group. With this design, the research is expected to be able to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the CIRC method in increasing students' interest and reading ability.

III. RESULT AND METHODS

The results of the study showed an increase in students' interest in reading after being given treatment. In the experimental class using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method, the average score of reading interest increased significantly from the initial condition (pretest) to the final condition (posttest). Students show higher motivation to read, are more active in group discussions, and feel challenged by collaborative reading strategies. In contrast, the control class that used the conventional method also experienced an increase in reading interest, but with a lower average score than the experimental class. This shows that conventional learning can still increase reading interest, but not as effectively as CIRC. A comparison of the two groups showed a significant difference in improvement, where the CIRC method was shown to be more able to motivate students to engage in reading activitie yang hasilnya dapat dilihat pada Tabel 1.

Table 1. Table of Increase Students' Reading Interest

Group	Pretest (Mean ± SD)	Posttest (Mean ± SD)	Increased (Δ)	Information
Experiment (CIRC)	65.20 ± 8.45	82.75 ± 7.90	+17.55	Significant improvement
Control (Conventional)	64.80 ± 7.95	72.30 ± 8.10	+7.50	Low upgrade
Difference	-	-	10.05	Higher on CIRC

The table above shows that there was an increase in students' reading interest in both the experimental and control classes, but with different levels of achievement. In the experimental class using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method, the average reading interest score increased from 65.20 ± 8.45 in the pretest to 82.75 ± 7.90 in the posttest. This increase of 17.55 points can be categorized as significant because it shows a considerable change in reading motivation after students are given collaborative-based learning. This indicates that the implementation of CIRC has succeeded in encouraging students' involvement in reading activities more actively, while fostering intrinsic motivation to understand the text.

Meanwhile, control classes taught by conventional methods also showed an improvement, but it was relatively lower. The average score of students' reading interest increased from 64.80 ± 7.95 in the pretest to 72.30 ± 8.10 in the posttest, with an increase difference of only 7.50 points. The difference in improvement between the experimental and control classes of 10.05 points confirmed that the CIRC method was more effective in fostering reading interest than the conventional method. Thus, these results show that group-based learning not only improves reading skills, but also builds stronger motivation to read explanatory texts continuously. The improvement in the ability to read explanatory texts in the experimental class and the control class can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Explanatory Text Reading Improvement Table

Group	Pretest (Mean ± SD)	Posttest (Mean ± SD)	Increased (Δ)	Information
Experiment (CIRC)	66.10 ± 7.85	84.25 ± 6.95	+18.15	Significant improvement
Control (Conventional)	65.70 ± 8.20	73.40 ± 7.50	+7.70	Low upgrade
Perbedaan Δ	-	-	10.45	Higher on CIRC

Table 2. The above illustrates the difference in the improvement of explanatory text reading ability in the experimental class and the control class. In the experimental class that received treatment through the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method, the average reading test score increased from 66.10 ± 7.85 in the pretest to 84.25 ± 6.95 in the posttest, with an increase of 18.15 points. This improvement shows that the application of the CIRC method is effective in helping students understand the structure of explanatory texts, find main ideas, and organize information based on the cause-and-effect relationships contained in the reading.

On the other hand, the control class taught using conventional methods only experienced a relatively low increase, from 65.70 ± 8.20 in the pretest to 73.40 ± 7.50 in the posttest, with a difference of 7.70 points. The difference in improvement between the experimental and control classes of 10.45 points confirms that the CIRC method is superior in improving students' reading ability. These findings show that collaborative strategies in CIRC not only increase motivation, but also have a significant impact on the ability to comprehensively understand explanatory texts.A significant increase in reading interest scores in experimental classes showed that collaborative-based learning strategies were able to arouse students' intrinsic motivation to engage in reading activities. This finding is in line with the opinion of Slavin (2015) who emphasized that cooperative learning provides opportunities for students to actively participate, help each other, and feel more challenged in understanding reading. With this active involvement, students are more motivated to

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make reading a meaningful activity, not just an academic obligation.

In addition, the CIRC method has also been proven to significantly improve students' ability to read explanatory texts(Graham & Hebert, n.d.). The increase in reading test scores in the experimental class was higher than in the control class, indicating that students were able to understand the structure of the text, find the main ideas, and organize information based on cause-and-effect relationships. This is in accordance with the findings of Rahmawati and Hidayat (2021) who stated that the use of a cooperative learning model encourages students to think more critically and systematically in understanding explanatory texts. Thus, the CIRC method not only contributes to increased motivation, but also strengthens students' cognitive skills in comprehending reading (Al Adawiyah, 2023)

The significant differences between the experimental and control classes indicate that the weaknesses of conventional methods, which tend to be monotonous and teacher-centric, are not able to have as much impact as the CIRC method. Conventional learning still produces improvements, but in the low category because students play a passive role in the learning process. This is consistent with the view of Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun (2015) that learning with minimal student interaction and participation has only a limited impact on the development of higher-level thinking skills. Thus, the results of this study confirm the need for more student-oriented learning innovations to support the achievement of literacy in the 21st century (Coiro & Dobler, 2007).

Overall, this study strengthens the empirical evidence that the CIRC method is a relevant and effective strategy in learning to read, especially explanatory texts. The advantage of CIRC lies in the integration of reading, discussion, and writing activities that are carried out in groups so that students can more easily understand the material and are motivated to read(Chi et al., 2014). These findings have implications for educational practice, where teachers can use CIRC as an alternative literacy learning strategy to improve interest and reading skills. In addition, this research also supports efforts to improve the quality of literacy education which emphasizes the importance of mastering reading skills as a foundation for learning in various fields of study.

the holistic meaning of physical education for students can be seen from their ability to integrate the physical, psychological, and social dimensions simultaneously. Physical education not only improves motor skills, but also strengthens self-identity, builds confidence, and encourages prosocial behavior through teamwork (Dyson, 2014). With this holistic approach, physical education can be a strategic instrument to form a healthy, resilient, and able generation to face global lifestyle changes that increasingly demand health awareness (Dewanto et al., 2024; Santosa & Dwi, 2018; Leisterer & Jekauc, 2019).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the application of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method is able to significantly increase students' interest in reading and reading ability to read explanatory texts. This can be seen from the comparison of pretest and posttest scores in the experimental class which showed a higher increase compared to the control class. The findings prove that a cooperative learning approach that involves integrated reading, discussion, and writing activities can help students understand the structure of explanatory texts and train them in identifying key ideas and cause-and-effect relationships in reading.In addition, the CIRC method has been proven to have a positive impact on students' active involvement in the learning process. With collaborative interaction in groups, students are more motivated to read, participate in discussions, and express opinions constructively. This shows that student-centered learning strategies are more effective than conventional methods that tend to focus on the role of teachers. Thus, this study emphasizes that the CIRC method can be an alternative to relevant literacy learning strategies to improve the quality of education, especially in the development of explanatory text reading skills in students.

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