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# Empowering Young Indonesian Readers: The Effectiveness of CSR in a Rural Junior High School

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## Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of language proficiency and academic success, yet many EFL learners struggle to understand texts due to limited strategic reading instruction. This study investigates the effectiveness of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) technique in enhancing reading comprehension among eighth-grade students in an Indonesian junior high school context. Employing a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, the research involved 33 students selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using a multiple-choice reading comprehension test administered before and after the intervention. The results were analysed using SPSS 17.0, with descriptive and inferential statistics including normality, homogeneity, and paired-sample t-tests. Findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in post-test scores ( $M = 17.18$ ,  $SD = 3.24$ ) compared to pre-test scores ( $M = 14.12$ ,  $SD = 3.20$ ), with a p-value of  $< 0.001$ . These results suggest that CSR is an effective instructional strategy for improving EFL learners' reading comprehension. The study highlights the potential of CSR to foster strategic reading behaviours, promote student collaboration, and support more meaningful engagement with texts. Implications for classroom practice and suggestions for further research are discussed.

## Keywords:

collaborative strategic reading, reading comprehension, EFL learners, instructional strategy, reading intervention

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## INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, reading is widely recognised as a foundational skill significantly influencing learners' academic progress and cognitive development. It is a tool for acquiring information and a gateway to higher-order thinking, critical analysis, and self-directed learning. In EFL contexts, where opportunities to engage with English outside the classroom may be limited, reading becomes especially critical as a primary source of language exposure and linguistic input.

Nevertheless, many EFL learners continue to experience substantial difficulties in reading comprehension. These challenges often stem from limited vocabulary knowledge, restricted background information, and no explicit instruction in reading strategies. Reading comprehension is not merely a matter of recognising words on a page; it is, as Anderson (in Klingner et al., 2007)

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describes, a multifaceted process that involves integrating word recognition, syntactic understanding, prior knowledge, and strategic thinking to construct meaning from text. Without adequate instructional support, students view reading as a mechanical task rather than an active and purposeful meaning-making process.

In order to tackle these challenges, educational researchers and practitioners have introduced instructional models that focus on strategy use and student participation. One such model is Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), an evidence-based method developed by Klingner et al. (1998), which combines cooperative learning with metacognitive reading strategies. CSR carefully guides students through four phases—Preview, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap-Up—each designed to support understanding and encourage peer-supported learning. This method allows students to interpret meaning, ask questions, check their comprehension, and work together to overcome difficulties, thus actively engaging them in their educational development.

Several empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of CSR in improving reading comprehension across educational contexts. For example, Tiana et al. (2025) demonstrated that CSR significantly enhanced the reading comprehension scores of Indonesian EFL students, while Aldossary (2024) noted substantial gains among Saudi university students following the implementation of CSR strategies. In a related study, Pinninti (2024) reported that combining CSR with reflective journal writing deepened learners' strategic awareness and self-monitoring behaviours. These findings emphasise CSR's capacity to support linguistic and cognitive development, especially in EFL environments.

Despite the expanding body of literature, a significant gap persists in applying CSR at the lower secondary level, especially in Indonesian junior high school classrooms. Most existing research has focused on primary school settings or university students, leaving the middle-grade learner group under-researched. Moreover, studies rigorously evaluating CSR through controlled pretest-posttest designs remain limited, particularly in mainstream classroom environments. As a result, this study explores whether Collaborative Strategic Reading effectively improves reading comprehension among eighth-grade EFL learners in a typical Indonesian junior high school setting.

This study also investigates how CSR affects learners' reading comprehension performance using a pre-experimental design and statistical analysis, including tests for normality, homogeneity, and paired-sample t-tests. Addressing these two key research questions within a relatively underexplored educational context provides a nuanced understanding of how CSR operates in real-world EFL classrooms and offers empirical evidence to guide policy and practice.

This study responds to a practical pedagogical need for more interactive and student-centred reading instruction and contributes theoretically to the existing scholarship on strategic reading interventions. Situating CSR within the Indonesian EFL context offers valuable insights into how collaborative techniques can be harnessed to foster deeper comprehension and active engagement among adolescent learners. The findings will inform future instructional practices and support adopting research-informed strategies in EFL reading classrooms.

## Method

### *Research Design*

This study used a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) technique in enhancing reading comprehension among EFL students. This design measures a single group before and after an intervention, allowing for assessing changes attributable to the intervention (Salkind, 2010). While this design lacks a control group, it is suitable for preliminary investigations where random assignment is not feasible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### *Participants*

The participants included 33 Year 8 students (roughly 13–14 years old) from a government junior secondary school in Indonesia during the 2024–2025 academic year. The sample was chosen through cluster random sampling, in which one class was randomly selected from the eight available Year 8 classes. Cluster sampling is beneficial in educational contexts where intact groups, such as classrooms, are naturally formed and can be randomly chosen to represent the broader population (Kelley et al., 2003).

Before collecting data, ethical approval was obtained from the school administration. Guardians provided informed consent, and students gave verbal assent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, per established ethical standards in educational research.

### *Instruments*

Data were collected using a standardised reading comprehension test of 30 multiple-choice items. This test was designed based on the Indonesian national English curriculum for junior secondary schools and targets various levels of comprehension, including literal, inferential, and evaluative understanding. The same test was administered as the pretest and posttest, with a two-week interval between administrations to mitigate potential memory effects.

Two experts in English language education reviewed the test items to ensure content validity. A pilot study was carried out with a similar group of 30 Year 8 students who did not participate in the main study. The reliability of the test was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.81, which indicates high internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

### *Procedure*

The study was conducted over four weeks during the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. In the first week, the pretest was administered to establish baseline reading comprehension levels. The test was conducted under standardised conditions to ensure consistency.

During the second and third weeks, the CSR technique was implemented across six instructional sessions, each lasting approximately 80 minutes. The researcher, serving as the instructor, introduced the four CSR strategies: Preview (activating prior knowledge and predicting content), Click and Clunk (identifying and clarifying unfamiliar words or concepts), Get the Gist (summarising main ideas), and Wrap-Up (reviewing key ideas and generating questions). Students worked in small, heterogeneous groups, rotating roles such as leader, chunk expert, gist expert, and summariser. The researcher modelled each strategy, provided guided practice, and facilitated

group discussions to ensure effective implementation. In the fourth week, the posttest was administered under conditions identical to the pretest to assess any changes in reading comprehension following the intervention.

### *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 17.0. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarise students' performance. Before conducting inferential analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were tested. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to evaluate the normality of score distributions, which is suitable for determining whether a sample comes from a specific distribution (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Levene's test was used to examine the homogeneity of variances, ensuring that the variances of the pretest and posttest scores were equal (Levene, 1960). A paired-samples t-test assessed the statistical significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores. This test is appropriate for comparing means from the same group at two different times, evaluating the effect of the intervention (Pallant, 2020). A significance level of  $p < .05$  was set for all statistical tests.

## **FINDINGS**

This section presents the quantitative results of the study, which aimed to examine the effect of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) technique on the reading comprehension of Year 8 EFL students. Students' scores from pretest and posttest assessments were analyzed to assess the intervention's effectiveness. The main goal was to see if there was a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension after implementing CSR in classroom instruction.

Descriptive statistics offered an initial look at student progress. The mean score rose from 14.12 (SD = 3.20) on the pretest to 17.18 (SD = 3.24) on the posttest. This positive change suggests a possible effect of the CSR intervention on students' ability to understand and process written texts. Although descriptive statistics alone cannot determine statistical significance, the upward trend indicates that students may have gained from the structured, strategy-based approach to reading comprehension that CSR promotes.

Before conducting inferential analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity were verified to ensure the appropriateness of parametric tests. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test showed that both pretest ( $p = .417$ ) and posttest ( $p = .647$ ) data were normally distributed, as the p-values exceeded the typical alpha level of .05. Additionally, Levene's test yielded a significance value of  $p = .782$ , confirming the homogeneity of variances. These results support using a paired-samples t-test to compare reading comprehension scores before and after the intervention.

The paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the CSR treatment, with  $t(32) = -15.75$  and  $p < .001$ . The mean difference between pretest and posttest scores was -3.06, with a 95% confidence interval from -3.46 to -2.67. This strong statistical evidence suggests that the CSR technique effectively improved students' reading performance. The large t-value and narrow confidence interval support the reliability of the findings, indicating the observed improvement is unlikely due to chance.

The findings offer empirical support for the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading in enhancing the reading comprehension of adolescent EFL learners. By guiding students through

structured stages such as Preview, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap-Up, CSR seems to have promoted deeper engagement with texts and encouraged strategic reading behaviors. These results align with prior research emphasizing the importance of scaffolded instruction and metacognitive strategy use in second language reading development. The key statistical results are summarized in Table 1 to provide a precise reference for the observed performance improvements.

Table 1. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Pretest and Posttest Scores (N = 33)

Measure	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
Mean	14.12	17.18	-3.06
Standard Deviation	3.20	3.24	1.12
Standard Error of Mean	–	–	0.19
t-value	–	–	-15.75
df	–	–	32
p-value (2-tailed)	–	–	< .001

These findings provide strong evidence that Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) has a statistically significant and pedagogically meaningful effect on improving reading comprehension among adolescent EFL learners in the Indonesian context. The notable improvements seen in post-test scores confirm the effectiveness of CSR as a strategy-based approach and emphasize its potential to encourage deeper engagement with texts, boost metacognitive awareness, and foster collaborative learning behaviors, elements often lacking in traditional EFL classrooms. By guiding students through structured stages such as Preview, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap-Up, CSR promotes active reading habits that support comprehension monitoring and meaning-making, underscoring its importance for teaching practices in similar educational environments.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show a statistically significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after using the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) technique. The increase in post-test scores ( $p < .001$ ) supports the initial hypothesis that CSR positively impacts reading comprehension among EFL learners in lower secondary education. This result adds to the growing body of research supporting CSR as a practical teaching method that combines strategic reading and collaborative learning to tackle the complexities of comprehension challenges.

The observed improvement in student performance aligns with recent research highlighting CSR's effectiveness in EFL settings. Purnadesia et al. (2023) observed similar gains in an Indonesian senior high school. Sarshogh et al. (2024) reported improved reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners and significant increases in reading motivation and metacognitive awareness. These results support the idea that CSR's structured yet flexible approach enables learners to actively engage with texts while encouraging critical reading skills such as summarising, questioning, and inferring meaning.

A key strength of the CSR technique lies in its systematic and interactive format. The four stages—Preview, Click and Clunk, Get the Gist, and Wrap-Up—serve as cognitive scaffolds that guide learners through pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading processes. These stages encourage students to activate prior knowledge, clarify unfamiliar information, identify key ideas, and synthesise textual content. Such structured engagement aligns with findings from Khampool and

Chumworatayee (2023), who observed that EFL university students taught using CSR developed better comprehension and self-regulation than those taught using traditional methods.

Beyond the cognitive processes involved in reading, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is deeply rooted in social interaction. CSR promotes peer learning, shared responsibility, and collective problem-solving by placing students in small, mixed-ability groups and assigning collaborative roles. This cooperative dynamic reflects principles from sociocultural theory, which posits that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction with others. Vygotsky's (1978) foundational concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners benefit from assistance provided by more capable peers or adults until they can internalise the skills independently. Recent studies affirm the relevance of this theoretical foundation in modern educational practice. For instance, Zhou (2024) emphasises that cognitive development is significantly shaped through social interaction and collaborative tasks in classroom environments, particularly in language learning. Similarly, Kilag et al. (2024) argue that the sociocultural framework remains central in promoting active engagement and culturally responsive pedagogy, where learning is both a social and contextual process. These contemporary perspectives reinforce the idea that CSR leverages interaction not merely as a classroom practice, but as a mechanism for developing deeper cognitive and linguistic competence.

Recent studies further affirm the relevance of this theoretical foundation in modern educational practice. Zhou (2024) emphasises that cognitive development is significantly shaped through social interaction and collaborative tasks in classroom environments, particularly in language learning. Likewise, Kilag et al. (2024) argue that the sociocultural framework remains central in promoting active engagement and culturally responsive pedagogy, where learning is both a social and contextual process. These contemporary perspectives reinforce the idea that CSR leverages interaction not merely as a classroom practice, but as a mechanism for developing deeper cognitive and linguistic competence.

The cooperative aspect of CSR also addresses emotional factors that often impede EFL reading performance, such as anxiety, low self-efficacy, and limited engagement. CSR can reduce these issues and foster positive learner attitudes by creating a supportive peer environment. Sarshogh et al. (2024) noted that students involved in CSR reported higher levels of motivation and self-awareness in monitoring their comprehension, indicating that the technique benefits academic progress and enhances students' confidence as readers.

Although promising, this study acknowledges several limitations. First, employing a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group limits the ability to establish definitive causal relationships. While the notable improvement in test scores strongly indicates the intervention's effect, future research using quasi-experimental or randomised control trials would provide more conclusive evidence. Second, the relatively small sample size from a single school restricts the generalisability of the results. Conducting similar studies across multiple schools, grade levels, and regions would offer a better understanding of CSR's scalability.

Furthermore, while quantitative data demonstrate CSR's effectiveness, they do not capture the nuances of student engagement, perceptions, or interactions during the intervention. Including qualitative data, such as interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations, could enhance understanding of how and why CSR influences learning outcomes. Investigating the long-term retention of reading strategies learned through CSR and their transferability to other subjects or language skills also presents a valuable direction for future research.

The results of this study support the pedagogical integration of CSR into junior secondary EFL curricula. Teachers can benefit from structured training in CSR techniques to ensure implementation fidelity and adapt the model to their students' proficiency levels and classroom dynamics. Moreover, CSR offers a practical solution for educators seeking to shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred reading instruction, especially in large classrooms where differentiated support can be challenging to manage individually.

This study affirms the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading in improving reading comprehension among EFL learners in junior secondary education. Through its blend of explicit strategy instruction and cooperative learning, CSR enhances comprehension and fosters metacognitive growth, learner autonomy, and social interaction, critical components of 21st-century language education. As EFL contexts evolve, CSR emerges as a pedagogically sound and contextually adaptable technique with considerable promise for transforming reading instruction in diverse educational settings.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) technique considerably improves reading comprehension among junior secondary EFL learners. The statistical results significantly increased students' post-test scores, highlighting CSR's effectiveness in combining cognitive strategy instruction with peer collaboration. Through structured stages and interactive group roles, CSR encourages learners to engage more deeply with texts, collaboratively clarify meaning, and become more reflective readers.

Besides its educational benefits, CSR offers practical value for classroom use, especially in EFL settings where students often face comprehension challenges. This approach improves students' reading skills, learner independence, and confidence. Although the study's design and sample size mean we should be cautious in generalizing the findings, the results provide strong initial evidence for wider application of CSR. Future research involving a broader range of participants and qualitative insights could deepen understanding of CSR's long-term effects on reading and other language skills.

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