



THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JIGSAW COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the impact of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning on improving reading comprehension among Grade VIII EFL learners in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia. Adopting a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework grounded in Kemmis and McTaggart's model, the study involved 44 students and utilized structured observation checklists alongside semi-structured interviews to gather data. The findings demonstrated that the Jigsaw approach significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension by fostering expert group collaboration and joint text interpretation. Learners exhibited heightened engagement, more active participation, and a generally favorable attitude toward the instructional strategy. This study offers a valuable contribution to the field of EFL instruction, particularly in the domains of cooperative learning and curriculum design. Moreover, by employing a qualitative lens, it addresses a notable gap in the predominantly quantitative literature, offering deeper insights into the interactive and social dimensions of collaborative learning within Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Jigsaw, Cooperative Learning, Reading Comprehension*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is one of the important competencies that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners must develop for effective learning of their target language (Magnusson, Roe & Blikstad-Balas, 2018; Smith et al., 2021; Kaforina et al., 2023). However, many EFL learning environments still adhere to traditional instructor-centered methods, which limit student participation and do not promote reading comprehension efficiently. Therefore, this widespread condition presents a significant challenge, as EFL learners often play a passive role, which undermines their capacity to develop the necessary skills for evaluating and analyzing written texts independently (Tran & Duong, 2020; Daflizar, 2021; Treesattayanmunee & Baharudin, 2024).

The driving force for this research lies in the need for the use of more effective instructional methods that can better engage English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in reading comprehension exercises (Nayeem et al., 2025; Jaya et al., 2025). Cooperative learning, especially the jigsaw technique, has proven effective in learning languages by promoting cooperative efforts between learners in groups so as to enhance their learning process (Namaziandost et al., 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2019; Jacobs & Goh, 2017). This learning strategy not only increases learners' motivation but also reduces anxiety and promotes learning in a favorable environment (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Namaziandost et al., 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2018).

Existing literature has reported that jigsaw collaborative learning increases learners' motivation, engagement, and

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cognitive processes (Abuhamda et al., 2021; Herman et al., 2020; Mutaqin & Haryudin, 2020). Despite this, very little research has been done regarding how teachers implement this strategy and the ensuing behavior experienced by EFL learners during reading comprehension classes. This gap in the literature, in particular the lack of qualitative studies examining the implementation process and the reaction by the learners, motivates this study. Therefore, this study focuses on using cooperative jigsaw learning in reading comprehension teaching and aims to examine the responses of EFL students toward this teaching method. Utilizing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, this research hopes to provide meaningful information in terms of efficacious teaching techniques that can ensure student engagement and enable the development of reading comprehension skills among EFL students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension represents a key skill in the language learning model and has been described as the process by which readers make meaning from written text and process information in an appropriate manner (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Amirah & Saidalvi, 2023; Arrasul et al., 2023). The interactive process inherent in reading, in which readers engage with the text in order to make meaning, has encouraged researchers to explore various teaching methods for improving comprehension skills. In this group of methods, cooperative learning has been recognized as an effective reading skills technique (Mubarok & Sofiana, 2017; Arif, 2023; Mariana et al., 2020).

Cooperative learning represents an educational strategy that involves creating small groups where the learners work together for both improving their own achievement and that of their group members (Johnson & Johnson, 2019). One very common strategy in cooperative learning is the jigsaw technique, introduced by Isgiaro et al. (2020), where small groups are formed and each member has

the task of learning individual parts of the material before teaching the rest of the members in their group.

Recent empirical studies have long emphasized the effectiveness of cooperative learning methodologies, specifically the jigsaw technique, in improving reading comprehension at various educational levels. In their investigation, Abuhamda et al. (2021) assessed the attitudes of Palestinian secondary school EFL students towards the administration of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Technique (JCLT) for reading comprehension using the quantitative research methodology. Students' favorable attitudes were reflected through the aggregate mean value obtained, which was 3.63 (72.6%), indicating the achievement of high levels of reading comprehension regardless of gender and geographic factors.

Similarly, Mutaqin and Haryudin (2020) conducted a pre-experimental study to examine the efficacy of the jigsaw technique with 33 eighth-grade students. Their quantitative evaluation demonstrated a substantial improvement in reading comprehension based on a rise in the mean pre-test scores from 47.45 to 68.85 in the post-test measurements. The paired samples t-test supported a large effect size ($d = 3.37$, $p < 0.05$), providing statistical confirmation of the efficacy of the technique.

Herman et al. (2020) supported these findings through the study conducted with tenth-grade students, where the group that was exposed to the experiment showed an increase in 28.47 points, and the control group revealed 14.30 points increase. Their quantitative analysis confirmed that the jigsaw technique greatly increased the abilities in recognizing main ideas, locating specific details, and understanding contextual meanings in the students.

A recent study by Sihombing et al. (2024) involved the reading comprehension skills of Grade VII students using an experimental design methodology. Through quantitative analysis, significant improvements were seen, with the scores in the experimental

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group improving from 67.81 to 81.25, as compared with the control group, with scores improving from 69.21 to 73.43. The t-test value (4.25) provided support for the statistical significance in improving comprehension skills.

Helami et al. (2024) applied the cycle of classroom action research to study the effect of the jigsaw method on the understanding of narrative texts. Through its phases planning, implementation, observation, and reflection they showed increased student participation and comprehension through two cycles of implementation.

Additional research has looked into other collaborative learning strategies in addition to the jigsaw model. Strategies used in research have also included Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), Small-Group Teaching, and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), which all indicate positive results in improving reading comprehension (Slavin, 2019). All have similar features in common, including positive interdependence, promotive interaction, and individual responsibility, which account for their effectiveness.

The underlying theoretical framework that supports the effectiveness of cooperative learning in increasing reading comprehension aligns with constructivist principles of learning, which hold that knowledge is actively constructed through social interactions and collective engagement in meaning-making. The approach addresses the complex cognitive processes inherent in reading comprehension, including text analysis, inference making, and critical thinking.

Despite the extensive body of literature attesting to the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in raising reading comprehension, there has been a significant lack of methodological frameworks in recent literature. Most previous studies have employed quantitative study designs, which have mainly focused on statistical analyses between pre- and post-tests, comparisons between experiment and control groups, and quantitative measurements of comprehension

gain (Abuhamda et al., 2021; Mutaqin & Haryudin, 2020; Herman et al., 2020; Sihombing et al., 2024).

While quantitative research provides strong statistical information about effectiveness, it lacks in presenting full insights into the basic mechanisms, learning processes, and qualitative factors explaining how cooperative learning methods enhance reading comprehension. The lack of qualitative research frameworks is a significant weakness in understanding the complex dynamics under which students interact with texts, socially construct meaning within groups, and develop comprehension strategies through group learning. The research gap that has been identified highlights the need for a qualitative investigation of how cooperative learning affects reading comprehension, considering the complex and multifaceted aspects of student attitudes, peer interaction within groups, and cognitive and social processes that allow comprehension to be enhanced. Qualitative knowledge would complement the existing quantitative evidence, thus providing a more complete view of the role of cooperative learning in the context of reading education.

3. METHODS

a. Research Design

This study took a qualitative approach, utilizing Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on paradigm (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). The study used a cyclical approach of four stages: preparation, action, observation, and reflection to investigate the effectiveness of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

b. Participants and Settings

The study was carried out at a junior high school in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia. Participants were Grade VIII students (n=44) from a single class chosen based on their developmental aptitude for collaborative learning and critical thinking abilities. Six kids

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were purposefully selected for in-depth interviews.

c. Collection Instruments

Two qualitative data-collection strategies were used:

- 1) Classroom Observation: Structured observation with a checklist derived from Fanani et al. (2022) that includes pre-activity, during-activity, and post-activity stages.

a) Pre-activity Organization

Criteria	Check (√)
The teacher greets the students and motivates them.	
Delivering Competency Standards, Basic Competencies, and Indicators.	
Practically explain the learning activities that will be carried out	
Students are divided into heterogeneous home groups (4-6 students)	
Expert groups are clearly assigned	
Reading materials are properly distributed to each expert group	
Clear instructions are given for both home and expert group activities	

Table 2: Classroom Observation: Pre-activity Organization

b) During Activity Implementation

Criteria	Check (√)
Teacher's Role	
Apperception and motivation	
Development of student motivation through group discussions/activities	
Accompanying the group discussion process	
Giving reinforcement to the material being studied	
Give awards to the group with the highest score in answering questions	
Students' Role	

Contribute to each other in completing tasks	
Listening to the teacher	
Pay attention to the teacher	
Actively deliver assigned material	
Individual duty responsibilities	
Students ask	
Students think	
Students answer questions	
Discuss in groups	

Table 2: Classroom Observation: During Activity Implementation

c) Post-Activity Assessment

Criteria	Check (√)
The teacher summarizes the lesson clearly	
Delivering Competency Standards, Basic Competencies, and Indicators.	
The teacher closes the class with motivation or homework assignment	

Table 3: Classroom Observation: Post-Activity Implementation

- 2) Semi-structured Interviews: Interview guide developed from Habiburrahman and Dwinalida (2024), with an emphasis on students' experiences with the Jigsaw Learning Strategy. The Interview questions as it follows:

- How do you feel about learning English using the jigsaw strategy? Do you think it makes the learning experience more enjoyable?
- Do you think this learning strategy suits your personal learning style or preference? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, does the jigsaw strategy help you collaborate better with your friends? Can you give an example?
- How comfortable do you feel when asking questions or speaking up in a discussion using the jigsaw method?
- Is learning English easier to understand when the jigsaw method is used? Please explain.

- What benefits do you think English subjects offer in your daily life?
- When you are given tasks in this learning model, how do you approach them? Would you say you're responsible with your learning?
- Has using the jigsaw method changed your interest in learning English compared to previous learning methods? Why or why not?
- Do you enjoy learning English as a subject in general? What makes it interesting or not for you?
- Are you able to follow and adapt to this new learning strategy? What helps or hinders you?
- Do you enjoy group learning activities in English class? Why or why not?
- Did learning through jigsaw make you more active during the lesson? What part of the learning made you feel more involved?
- What did you learn about your group members while working together? Do you notice their strengths or weaknesses during the activity?

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Effectiveness of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning in Enhancing Reading Comprehension*

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning method significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension abilities in the EFL classroom context. This aligns with Hashemi (2021) conceptualization of reading comprehension as "the process of constructing meanings from the text," where readers must actively connect their prior knowledge with textual content. The structured peer discussions and collaborative text analysis facilitated through the Jigsaw approach enabled students to engage in this meaning-construction process effectively.

Evidence from the classroom implementation revealed that students achieved deep comprehension of the narrative text

through expert group discussions, where they thoroughly analyzed their assigned text portions before sharing insights with their home groups. This supports Sheng (2019) assertion that reading comprehension is "a complex cognitive skill set that goes beyond simple text comprehension." The collaborative framework encouraged students to engage in analytical thinking, identify underlying themes, and critically examine narrative content through peer interaction.

Interview data further corroborated these findings, with students consistently reporting enhanced understanding through collaborative learning and peer explanations that clarified complex concepts. This confirms Kit et al. (2024) theory that reading is "a dynamic interaction between the reader's cognitive processes and the language aspects of the text." The Jigsaw method facilitated this interactive process by requiring students to integrate textual information with prior knowledge through group discussions, ultimately forming comprehensive mental representations of the text's meaning.

B. *Enhanced Student Engagement and Participation*

The implementation of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning resulted in dramatic improvements in student engagement and active participation, supporting Johnson and Johnson's (2019) principle that cooperative learning involves "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning." Observational data revealed that all students actively participated in both expert and home group discussions, while interview responses consistently indicated positive emotional reactions and enjoyment during the learning experience.

The heightened engagement observed can be attributed to the incorporation of Johnson and Johnson's (2018) five essential elements of effective cooperative learning: positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills development, and group processing. Students demonstrated understanding that their group's success depended on each member's

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contribution, naturally supporting and encouraging each other's efforts while maintaining individual responsibility for their assigned text portions.

Interview findings indicated that students experienced increased comfort in academic discussions within the Jigsaw framework, contrasting sharply with traditional teacher-centered approaches. This supports Harmer's (2004) assertion that group work "encourages learner independence by enabling students to make their own decisions within the group rather than being dictated to by the teacher." Students reported greater feelings of ownership and control over their learning process through their designated roles and responsibilities.

C. Implementation Challenges in EFL Contexts

Despite its effectiveness, the Jigsaw implementation encountered several challenges consistent with common EFL classroom difficulties. Time management emerged as the primary constraint, with expert group discussions extending beyond allocated timeframes. This reflects the inherent tension between implementing dynamic collaborative learning processes and working within rigid traditional classroom schedules.

The large class size (44 students) in a relatively confined physical space presented significant challenges for effective classroom organization and management. This supports the observations of Ehsan et al. (2019) that cooperative learning "requires teachers to plan interactions and prepare students for cooperation," emphasizing the critical importance of meticulous logistical planning when employing these pedagogical strategies.

Language proficiency limitations necessitated frequent code-switching to Bahasa Indonesia for clarity and comprehension, illustrating the inherent challenges of implementing cooperative learning approaches in EFL settings. The need for translation tools and peer vocabulary support indicates that successful implementation requires careful attention to students' linguistic proficiency levels and appropriate scaffolding strategies.

D. Transformed Teacher and Student Roles

The Jigsaw implementation required substantial role transformations for both teachers and students, converting the traditional teacher-centered classroom into a collaborative learning environment. The researchers' role evolved from knowledge transmitter to learning facilitator, guiding group discussions, providing essential support, and encouraging student participation throughout the learning process.

Students successfully adapted to their new roles as peer educators and collaborative learners. In expert groups, students assumed responsibility for thoroughly analyzing their assigned text sections and accurately communicating their understanding to group members. This role transformation exemplifies Gillies (2018) description of reading as "an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text," where students actively engaged in meaning-construction through peer interaction rather than passively receiving information.

The individual accountability inherent in the Jigsaw method was reflected in students' systematic approaches to task completion. Interview data revealed that students employed structured methods for handling assignments, with most describing thorough preparation strategies before engaging in group discussions. This indicates a shift from traditional passive learning modes to active content engagement, where students recognized that their group's effectiveness depended on their preparation and contribution.

E. Alignment with Previous Research

The findings demonstrate significant alignment with previous research regarding Jigsaw Cooperative Learning's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension skills. Similar to Abuhamda et al.'s (2021) and study with Palestinian EFL secondary learners, this research revealed positive student perceptions toward the Jigsaw approach, with all interviewees reporting satisfaction and enjoyment with their learning experience.

The reading comprehension improvements observed align with findings

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from Mutaqin and Haryudin (2020), who reported significant enhancement in narrative text comprehension through the Jigsaw method. Both studies identified peer-to-peer explanations and discussions as instrumental in clarifying difficult concepts and improving overall understanding.

However, this study's focus on Indonesian junior high school students in an EFL context contributes additional insights regarding the method's applicability across different educational levels and cultural backgrounds. The positive outcomes described, including increased student engagement and improved comprehension, support the growing body of evidence demonstrating the Jigsaw method's effectiveness across diverse educational environments.

F. Implications for EFL Teaching Practice

The findings have significant implications for junior high school English language teaching, particularly in EFL environments. The successful Jigsaw implementation demonstrates that cooperative learning frameworks can address common issues in teacher-centered classrooms, such as low student participation and passive learning attitudes.

The emphasis on purposeful reading aligns with Amin (2023) and Puripunyanich (2025) assertion that "reading is more exciting, and text material is better grasped and remembered when it is purpose-driven." The Jigsaw technique inherently creates meaningful reading experiences by assigning specific roles and responsibilities to individual students, making them read with clear objectives.

These results suggest that English teachers should consider integrating more structured collaborative activities that provide students with clear reading purposes, thereby enhancing both engagement and comprehension. The increased student participation and motivation observed in this research supports the integration of cooperative learning strategies in EFL classrooms as an effective means for creating inclusive and engaging learning environments.

5. CONCLUSION

This study successfully accomplished its primary objective of examining the effectiveness of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning in enhancing reading comprehension skills among Indonesian EFL learners. The implementation demonstrated significant improvements in students' reading comprehension abilities through structured peer interactions in expert groups, where students analyzed assigned text portions before sharing insights with home groups. This process transformed passive learning into active meaning-construction, enabling students to achieve deeper comprehension levels through collaborative discussions and critical thinking processes.

The study also achieved its secondary objective of investigating student responses to the Jigsaw method. Findings consistently showed positive student perceptions, increased engagement, and enhanced participation levels, with all interviewed students expressing satisfaction with the collaborative learning experience. Despite challenges including time management constraints and language proficiency limitations, the research demonstrated that the Jigsaw technique successfully transformed traditional teacher-centered approaches into dynamic, student-centered learning environments, providing valuable insights for English language teachers seeking more engaging instructional strategies in EFL contexts.

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