The Effect of Scaffolded Reading Experience and Collaborative Strategic Reading on Students' Reading Comprehension Skills across Different Reading Proficiency Levels

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on the students' performance in ELT reading comprehension classes. A quasi-experimental approach using factorial design was employed with 28 participants, who were Indonesian college students in two complete classes of the Cultural Studies Faculty of Universitas Brawijaya Malang. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the performance of those students taught with SRE and those taught with CSR. A possible cause for this lack of difference could be the greater influence of other factors, including the classroom environment, the teachers' experience, and the students' ability. This study suggests that English lecturers can apply SRE and CSR as two alternative strategies to teach reading comprehension. Future researchers should conduct studies involving larger numbers of participants to identify the factors affecting the learning of reading comprehension.

Keywords: reading comprehension, *Scaffolded* reading experience (SRE), collaborative strategic reading (CSR), reading proficiency levels

1. Introduction

Reading skills are an intricate cognitive process, and mastery of all the elements of reading is pivotal for academic success and achievement (Al Odwan, 2012). Reading is an extraordinary effort when one considers the number of degrees and elements that must be mastered (McNamara, 2007). Reading is a complex interactive process using skills and advanced strategies to generate meaning. Grabe (2009) stated that comprehension is the process of simultaneously removing and arranging meaning through a reciprocal action and participation by using written language. The words removing and arranging purpose the substance and inadequacy of the passage as a determinant of reading comprehension. So, comprehension is the ultimate goal and the successful outcome of the reading process (Snow, 2002). According to Blachowicz and Ogle (2008), reading comprehension is a process demanding skills and strategies. Reading comprehension is an evaluation process, and readers are expected to be able to decide whether the information read is coherent with the objective of the reading. Teaching reading comprehension is essential if students are to gain information from the text. There are several types of reading comprehension. The first type is literal comprehension, and the second is high-order comprehension, which consists of interpretive reading, critical reading, and creative reading (Roe, Smith, and Burns, 2011). According to Crawly and Mountain (1995), there are three types of reading skills. The first is a literal reading that consists of remembering and understanding. The second is interpretive or inferential reading which includes application and analysis. The third is critical or creative reading.

The first type of scaffolding described by Clark and Graves (2005) is the scaffolded reading experience (SRE). SRE is an organizational construction that beginning and secondary educators can use to combine the process of reading with the content. It involves the instructor planning pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading steps for a particular assignment. Sim-ilarly, Johnson (2016) stated that SRE helps students to read independently. He created an SRE lesson plan format that consisted of a pre-reading activity, during reading, and a post-reading activity using narrative and expository texts.

The second type of scaffolding is Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). CSR develops the learner's reading perception in compact interactive groups. It is mostly applied with an expository passage, but it can also be applied with rehearsal, short functional printed work, or various texts. CSR includes four reading comprehension strategies that are implemented before, during, and after reading. These CSR strategies are; (1) viewing or examining the text, (2) understanding the unknown words, (3) obtaining the direction or clues, and (4) analyzing. In other words, CSR involves cogitating and estimating (preview), observing comprehension (click and clunk), discovering the main idea (getting the gist), and creating or producing questions and evaluating key ideas (wrap up).

Many studies of CSR were conducted in elementary and secondary or middle schools. Gani et al. (2016) investigated the impacts CSR when used to teach reading to EFL learners in senior high school. The results from the questionnaires given to the experimental group showed that the students were keen to learn reading by applying CSR. They had positive ideas about the effect of this learning model. Karabuga and Kaya (2013) conducted a study on the effect of CSR on adult EFL learners' (preparation-class college students) understanding of reading and reading-related difficulties by using reflective learning logs. CSR improved not only the students' reading skills but also their grammar knowledge. This finding showed that many of the reading-related problems of adult EFL learners were eliminated or at least de-creased with the help of a CSR approach. Oladele et al (2016) showed that CSR improved the reading performance of primary school children in Oya State Nigeria when it was associated with an entire language method.

In summary, in this present study, we adapted the SRE and CSR teaching methods proposed by Johnson (2016) and Klingner and Vaughn (1999), respectively, to teach reading to college students studying at the tertiary level in the classroom. Most of the previous research on CSR has been conducted at secondary levels, but tertiary level students were considered to be mature learners. Perceptions of the academic atmosphere could be obtained because the principal author works as an English lecturer. This research employed SRE in the form of guided reading, which was planned and modified by the teacher. CSR was also investigated in the context of understanding short functional texts rather than expository or narrative texts, so the present researcher modifies the learning log.

Reading has an essential role in the teaching and learning process and the acquisition of information and knowledge. Consequently, it is vital that reading is mastered by students. Rivers (1981) affirms that "reading is the most important activity in any language classes, not only as a source of information and pleasurable activity but also as a means of consolidating and extending language knowledge". Students are not merely expected to be able to reiterate what a text says out loud, as a part of classroom activities, but also to have a more in-depth understanding of the text and the ability to infer its meaning. The objective of reading comprehension is "to identify those skills needed to understand and apply information contained in a written material" (Olson and Diller, 1982). Teachers cannot neglect the importance of reading comprehension as it plays a crucial role in the success of students, not only in reading classes but in language courses overall. Therefore, teachers need to find strategies and techniques that can be applied to refine students' comprehension of reading passages.

There are a number of methods that can be implemented in teaching reading. Two of these are Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). These methods are especially useful at tertiary levels. SRE can be defined as an organizational framework arranged by the teacher to integrate the reading process and the content of the reading material. Fitzgerald and Graves (2005) discovered that SRE was beneficial in assisting both teachers and students in working together more efficiently. The method provides the teacher with a framework that eventually allows their students to get the most out of the reading experience and to master its content. The other method, CSR, was founded by Klingner and Vaughan (1999). They promoted CSR by combining two instructional tech-niques that the teacher performs – reading comprehension instruction and interactive learning – with a learning log. CSR includes the application of four reading strategies, in collaboration with peers, which facilitate the comprehension of the passage and lead to gains in the student's accomplishment, involvement, and encouragement (Karabuga and Kaya, 2013). Karabuga and Kaya investigated the effect of this method on reading comprehension and related problems of adult EFL novices. In the study, 40 prep-class college and tertiary students had three hours of classes per week. It was reported that the reading comprehension and reading-related problems of adult EFL novice students were positively affected. It can be argued that the implementation of scaffolding in the education field is pivotal since it offers positive effects in the process of teaching and learning.

Although scaffolding has a positive influence by enabling students individually or collaboratively to complete the task better and to learn more effectively, there have been studies that raised concerns about major issues related to teaching EFL/ESL. For example, Clark and Graves (2005) implemented scaffolding to enhance students' understanding. They reviewed three general categories of scaffolding, (1) moment-to-moment verbal scaffolding; (2)

instructional frameworks that nurture content learning; and (3) instructional procedures for teaching reading comprehension techniques. The findings of the study showed that the implementation of these three types of scaffolding by teachers was flexible, and it could be used as adaptable support in helping students to gain reading comprehension. It also encouraged learners as they obtained the necessary skills and critical thinking processes, and it permitted explicit instruction within authentic reading and writing contexts that equips educators with the ability to adapt instruction to the diverse needs of the students.

Lee and Schmit (2014) investigated the impact of teacher language affiliated to a specific network of techniques for troubleshooter, self-supervision, and self-controlled on the advancement and utilize of independent strategic tasks; and metacognitive awareness variables in developing readers. An et al. (2014) used mixed methods research by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources, including online surveys, designed sheets, technology-enhanced tutorials, and reflection papers. In the experimental group, students were given two planning assignments, which involved metacognitive scaffolding and content-specific scaffolding (for example, a WebQuest template, sample tutorials). Students in the comparison group did not receive metacognitive scaffolding; they were given con-tent-specific scaffolding only. Dabarera et al. (2014) also studied the impact of metacognitive scaffolding by observing reading comprehension activities among secondary pupils at a local public school in Singapore. The study revealed that there was a positive correlation between metacognitive awareness-raising and reading comprehension enhancement. They recommend that further research be undertaken to investigate comparisons of various measures in deter-mining metacognitive awareness and to ascertain the most appropriate tool for use in the local context.

After consideration of the previous studies, we decided to try to obtain empirical data on the effect of scaffolded learning. We took into account a number of points. Firstly, to the best of our best knowledge, no studies have explored the effect of scaffolding on the reading performance of learners. Secondly, the research on the use of scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension is still limited, so we attempted to fill this gap by using different types of scaffolding to promote the reading performance of students in reading comprehension. Thirdly, there is a lack of teachers and lecturers in Indonesia who implement scaffolding in their reading classes, especially at tertiary levels. In summary, in this study, we were interested in obtaining empirical data using different reading proficiency levels as a measure to investigate the effects of CSR and SRE on the students' performance in reading comprehension).

The current study is expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical needs. Theoretically, the findings can be beneficial by verifying or refuting the results of previous studies related to the understanding of scaffolding in general and EFL in particular. The findings will also explore more deeply the use of CSR and SRE in promoting students' reading comprehension skills. Practically, if scaffolding (SRE and CSR) has a positive effect on students' reading achievements, the results of this study will provide English teachers and lecturers with a teaching model. In which case, scaffolding would assist students in mastering texts involving much difficult reading material. This study is also expected to encourage English teachers and lecturers to consider the students' reading comprehension skills in the process of teaching reading. The findings might function as one medium for the evaluation and implementation of content area reading in EFL classrooms. From a review of the literature, it was concluded that the competency levels of students are performance stages that reveal the degree to which learners have mastered the materials. In this study, the students' proficiency level was related to their reading comprehension. Therefore, by knowing a student's proficiency level, the teacher can provide an appropriate strategy for their students' needs. Consequently, the results of this study should provide further information on the effects of scaffolding on the different English proficiency levels used to measure the students' reading comprehension ability. The research question addressed in this study is, "do college students who are taught using CSR instruction gain better scores than those taught using SRE instruction?"

2. Method

This was an experimental study, which aimed to investigate the effect of the teaching method on the students' performance. Latief (2015) stated that it is sometimes not possible to select the sample randomly out of a population of all students in an educational setting. Consequently, it is only possible to assign the different treatments randomly to the two different classes. This study employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effect of Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) strategies on students' performance in reading comprehension tasks as measured by the students' scores. In quasi-experimental methods, a sample or population is not used but instead the use of participants or subjects. This study involved two intact classes, one for each teaching method.

There were two kinds of variables in this study, independent variables, and dependent variables. The two independent variables were SRE and CSR, and the dependent variable was the students' reading comprehension. There were two moderating variables, high and medium proficiency levels. The subject of this study was first semester students of the English department in the academic year 2017–2018, who come from two intact classes in the Cultural Studies Faculty of Brawijaya University Malang. The first-semester college students were chosen because they had already taken a TOEFL placement test, and it was assumed that the lecturer could equip the students with the knowledge needed to understand various texts. The two classes were taught by the same lecturer and who was also the principal researcher in this study.

2.1 Instruments

In previous experimental research on reading strategies, Ronkova and Wildova (2016) investigated the development of the reading literacy level based on a standardized didactic test taken from PIRLS, a periodic international survey. A quasi-experimental study by Rivera (2015) examined the impact of explicit instruction of science comparison and contrasted macro text structure and micro text structure in content learning, sentence comprehension, and reading comprehension of eighth-grade English learners and non-English learners in three inclusive science classrooms.

The main instrument was reading a comprehension test comprising a pre-test and a post-test. The tests were designed to measure the reading proficiency of the subject. The texts were taken from TOEFL tests, the internet, and other related sources. The students were expected to answer multiple-choice questions in 30 items, consisting of eight passages. The test lasted for 30 minutes, and students worked individually. The scoring system used was dichotomous: the correct answer was scored one (1), and the wrong answer was scored zero (0). The total score was calculated as a percentage.

An additional instrument was an open-ended interview with some students in the SRE group (experimental group 1) and the CSR group (experimental group 2). The questions asked in the interviews related to the use of the SRE and CSR methods to the students in each group in a piece of paper. This secondary data was used to strengthen the effectiveness of the SRE and CSR methods during the teaching and learning process

2.2 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to reveal the characteristics of the data and covered the minimum score, the maximum score, and the standard deviation. Inferential statistics were used to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean scores between the students taught using SRE and those taught using CSR.

To determine if there was a significant difference in the experimental groups after using scaffolding with different reading proficiency levels, the statistical hypothesis of this study was converted into the null hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis. The first null hypothesis (Ho: $\mu1=\mu2$) states that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores for reading comprehension skills between students taught using CSR and those taught using SRE. The first alternative hypothesis (Ha: $\mu1\neq\mu2$) states that the mean scores for reading comprehension skills of students taught using CSR are significantly different from those taught using SRE. The second null hypothesis (Ho: $\mu1=\mu2=0$) states that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores for reading comprehension skills between the high proficiency students taught using CSR and those taught using SRE. The second alternative hypothesis (Ha: $\mu1\neq\mu2\neq0$) states that the mean scores for reading comprehension of high proficiency students taught using CSR are significantly different from those taught using SRE. The third null hypothesis (Ho: $\mu1=\mu2=0$) states that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores for reading comprehension skills between the medium proficiency students taught using CSR and those taught using SRE. The second alternative hypothesis (Ha: $\mu1\neq\mu2\neq0$) states that the mean scores for reading comprehension of medium proficiency students taught using CSR are significantly different from those taught using SRE.

3. Results

The results of the study fluctuations in anxiety in response to the four topics are presented for each participant separately. First, the preliminary study was done. Then pre-test and post-test were conducted in the intact classes to get the findings of the study to the question is presented.

3.1 Results of the Students' Posttest from CSR and SRE Groups

An independent sample t-test on the students' post-test score was carried out to determine any difference in reading comprehension skills between students who were taught with the CSR method and those taught with the SRE method. The hypothesis in this independent sample t-test was:

H0: there is no significant difference between the reading comprehension skills of students taught with the CSR method and those taught with the SRE method.

H1: there is a significant difference between the reading comprehension skills of students taught with the CSR method and those taught with the SRE method.

The null hypothesis was rejected if the significance value was less than the alpha $\alpha = 0{,}05$ (5%). The results from the t-test on the posttest data for CSR and SRE classes are described as follows.

3.2 The Students' Review of the Implementation of SRE

Based on the open-ended interviews, the students of the SRE class gave positive responses to the use of SRE in the teaching and learning process. One of them stated that the SRE rubric was useful in making a framework for the content of the text. Another student answered that the column prediction SRE rubric helped him to interpret the main idea in the reading text. After using the SRE rubric, a third student stated that she could think critically when she was reading a text

3.3 The Students' Review of the Implementation of CSR

Based on the open-ended interviews, the students of the CSR class gave positive responses to the use of CSR in the teaching and learning process. One of them stated that the CSR rubric was useful in making a framework for the content of the text. Another student answered that the "click and clunk" and "get the gist" columns in the CSR learning log helped her to understand the vocabulary items in the reading text. Other students stated that they could discuss the problems in the reading text with their friends in the group so that they en-joyed the reading classes. After using the CSR learning log, another student stated that he could find the main idea, topic, and vocabulary in the reading texts. In summary, the students' inferential skills were improved by using the CSR rubric.

4. Discussion

The results of the post-test showed that there was no significant difference between the group taught using SRE, and the group taught using CSR. We attempted to relate the results of the study to previous studies and explained qualitatively. We also attempted to find the rea-sons for the lack of any significant difference. It is likely that other factors, such as the class-room facilities, the classroom environment, the students' learning abilities, and the teacher's teaching abilities, had an overwhelming effect on the students' performance. The classroom facilities involved the equipment that supports the teaching and learning process, for example LCD, whiteboard, and internet access.

CSR involves reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning, which was represented in the learning log by brainstorming, prediction or preview, click and clunk, get the gist and wrap up or review. The implementation of CSR as a teaching method accords with sociocultural theory. In sociocultural theory, there is a balance between what the learners bring into the classroom, what they can achieve, and what is needed for them to reach their maximum learning potential. CSR involves overt instruction, scaffolding, peer-mediated learning, and solid support for struggling readers and English Language Learners by using foundations in sociocultural theory, meaning that this kind of theoretical framework mainly captures about grouping strategy using organization matters or social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher addressed the individual differences of the learners through targeted instruction, feedback and the intentional promotion of collaboration in mixed ability groups. Recognizing that literacy is situated in the social system and cultural practices, CSR refuses dominant notions of literacy as an isolated act and instead, focuses on reciprocal peer action as cultural practices. Inside the groups, students think and write independently and then apply the CSR procedure to supply and get direct feedback via student-led discussions.

The model of a CSR learning log involves techniques such as cooperative learning, brainstorming, and student review of what has been learned from reading. CSR uses a mixture of whole-class instruction and small cooperative learning groups so that an educator can handle a whole class at the same time. When using CSR, the classroom educator initially displays and models the techniques to the whole class. As students become more competent, they form cooperative learning groups of four students who cooperate to use the understanding of reading techniques. Many researchers recommend that cooperative learning formats may benefit ELL students (Carlo et al. 2004; Vaughn et al. 2006). Cooperative strategies supply students with a chance to talk to peers instead of educators, and studies reveal that ELL students often take advantage of bilingual support from fellow students while communicating in English.

The present study investigated the differences in the impact of CSR and SRE on students' reading comprehension skills. Statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores for reading comprehension between students taught using CSR and those taught using SRE or guided reading. However, direct

observation found that students of CSR worked together to build knowledge so that they could understand the reading texts. They utilized the notes for brainstorming what students already knew about the topic in the text, making a prediction about what they needed to study by reading the passage, created questions related to the text, and reviewed to write something important they learned from the text. Furthermore, the notes on students' worksheets (learning log sheet) revealed that they learned to explore essential points in comprehending the problem in the reading texts. The students also worked cooperatively to fill in the sheet and develop their critical thinking skills in reading. In short, CSR facilitated students in making a solution together.

These findings gave some insights into the impact of applying CSR when teaching reading. Gani et al. (2016) discovered that the use of CSR in teaching reading to EFL students helped the students to improve their comprehension skills when reading passages but also generated positive outcomes in their social relationships and reciprocal actions in the classroom. In CSR, "....the application of four reading techniques in collaboration with peers leads to gains in terms of students' achievement, participation, and motivation" (Karabuga and Kaya, 2013). This means that the use of CSR can help students to overcome the many problematic areas of understanding when reading in a foreign language. Khonmari and Karimabadi (2015) stated that the results from questionnaires and interviews showed that students found CSR was a facilitating tool for complaining, making comments, and finding the clunks, which led to better comprehension. Khonmari and Karimabadi also reported that one of the positive features of CSR mentioned by the students was that it allowed the group members to share their knowledge with the other members of the group, and generally speaking, the students found CSR was an effective teaching method. The conclusion from these previous studies is that CSR can equip students with a collection of specific reading techniques via group exercises, and helps the student to enhance their analytical reading, which in turn leads to positive attitudes towards reading in a foreign language. Lastly, according to the study conducted by Bryant et al. (2000), CSR research can be embedded with other methods to address the range of skills needed for reading proficiency in secondary school. CSR was applied in conjunction with two other research-based strategies: word identification and partner reading. The study found that students with squat learning skills significantly enhanced their word recognition and fluency but did not improve their reading comprehension.

The present study found that several factors contributed to the similarities in the effects of SRE and CSR. One important factor was the similarity of the facilities and equipment to support the teaching and learning process that was available in both classes. Support for this view comes from Hasbullah et al. (2011), who stated that "school facilities have a pivotal role in guaranteeing the quality of teaching and learning to get quality of education". Hasbullah also stated that "the classroom condition has an essential function in keeping the student en-gaged and permitting them to be prosperous in the classroom because without noticing to the environment of a classroom the educator is setting their students up to be less prosperous". Classroom design also plays a role in elevating students' performance. Therefore, both educators and learners need to work together to establish an interactive classroom atmosphere.

Another factor contributing to the similarities in the effects of SRE and CSR is the students' learning ability and its effect on the students' performance. Bartolini et al. (2012) concluded that internal factors, such as resilience, resulted in better performance. Individual student abilities (cognitive and metacognitive factors) influence the student's aptitude to learn, and more pertinently, also affect the student's ability to analytically comprehend how to best understand and process information. These abilities are related to critical thinking opportunities, the connection of learning to student context, and the selection of options for how learning can occur with some autonomy. Health and attendance (motivational, physical, and affective factors) also influence the students' learning abilities. Developmental differences (readiness for skills development and social and moral development) are implanted or rooted in the culture of the family and community. Whittle et al. (2018) showed that teachers who applied several practices such as surveys, coaching sports teams, and interactions with learners outside the classroom were able to build stronger connections with the learners leading to more significant impacts on the success of the teaching practices used. Indeed, the three factors in combination could affect the results of a study of scaffolding teaching methods.

5. Conclusion

This study found that there was no significant difference between the performances of students who were taught using Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) methods and those taught using Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) methods. Clearly, other factors had a much greater influence on the performance of the students than the teaching methods. Possible additional factors include the classroom environment, the teacher's experience, and the students' abilities. This was a small-scale study, so future studies should involve larger subjects or numbers of participants.

Also, CSR and SRE teaching needs to be designed appropriately by considering other aspects of individual differences, which include personality and cognitive learning styles.

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