



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Technique for Improving Content and Organization in Writing

Faisal Mustafa*
Nanda Marlina Abdul Samad

Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, INDONESIA

Abstract

This study examines the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique for improving students' English writing skills, specifically in content and organization when focused on writing recount texts. This experimental research used random sampling and random assignment to determine the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG). Pre-tests, treatment or teaching and post-tests were done to both groups. The study was conducted with 60 second year students from a junior high school in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Students' mean scores for the pre-test in the CG were 40.76 and 60.76 for the post-test, meanwhile students' mean scores for the pre-test in the EG were 40 and 72.69 for the post-test. Thus, the t-test between both groups was 9.39 and the t-table was 2.056 which used 0.05 as the level of significance for this research. Because the t-test value was higher than the t-table ($9.39 > 2.056$), H_a was accepted and H_o was rejected. Therefore, the CIRC technique can improve the content and organization of students' writing in doing recount texts. In addition, because students work in groups, they have more opportunity to learn and share their ideas with other students to produce better writing.

Keywords: Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique, writing, content, organization, recount text.

1. INTRODUCTION

English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, in Indonesia specifically face difficulties in generating the content and the organization of ideas in their English compositions (Dewi, 2013). In Banda Aceh especially, our preliminary study in a junior high school discovered that the students are often confused about how to write an essay in English because they did not fully understand the characteristics of the text being studied. For instance, its generic structure and language features. Furthermore they

*Corresponding author: faisal.mustafa@unsyiah.ac.id

faced difficulties to determine the type of writing they had read since they did not directly practice writing similar to what they have read. This is a problem as Tangpermpoon (2008, p. 1) highlights that to produce good writing, students need a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as mastering principles of organization in the second or foreign language. Rao (2007), as cited in Ahmed (2010, p. 212), further mentions that EFL writing is useful in two respects for EFL learners. First, it motivates their thinking, organizing of ideas, developing their ability to summarize, analyse and criticize. Second, it strengthens their learning, thinking and reflecting in the English language.

Hence, to read in order to discuss a text that will be written is essential. In short, it is effective to teach integrated reading and writing skills because reading can support students to produce coherent writing (Byrne, 1985). In relation to this, Perego and Boyle (1993) recommend teaching reading and writing (and re-reading and re-writing) together as a way to help students develop their comprehension of text. This means that both reading and writing skills will be more effective if they are taught in an integrated way. Regarding this, Wrick (2011, p. 190) says that to read and analyse an essay in the class discussion can also strengthen students' competence in writing. Reading is a part of writing and that is why students need to read a lot to get ideas and at the same time they need to write more to share ideas. For this reason, most experts agree that although not identical, reading and writing are similar (Mason, 1989; Rosenblatt, 1989; Shanahan, 1990; Squire, 1983, as cited in Farnan, Flood, & Flapp, 1994, p. 138) and mutually supporting language processes (Stotsky, 1983, as cited in Farnan, Flood, and Flapp, 1994, p. 138).

Pertaining to the matter above, this study intends to investigate the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique to EFL students in Banda Aceh. CIRC is known to be able to assist students in reading and writing because it trains them to summarize, identify main ideas, answer literal questions, predict and clarify, and make inferences (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 246). By doing so, they are expected to have sufficient vocabulary to generate ideas to produce a text and also comprehend the kinds of text to be written. Accordingly, the research question that we intend to seek the answer to in this study is: how does CIRC improve students' writing skill in content and organization? Consequently, based on the research question posed, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): The use of CIRC technique improves students' writing skill in content and organization.
- Null Hypothesis (Ho): The use of CIRC technique does not improve students' writing skill in content and organization.

It is hoped the findings of this study will give meaning and better understanding to English teachers teaching EFL learners writing by integrating it with teaching reading skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CIRC is one of the techniques offered within the Cooperative Learning method. Ahuja (1994, p. 10) defines Cooperative Learning as an instructional method whereby students are encouraged to work in groups on academic tasks with a common goal. He furthermore explains that the members of the group share their perspectives, argue their

points of view, and very often modify their opinions (p. 3). Students are not assigned to do something as a team but to learn something as a team (Slavin, 1996, p. 21). Therefore, students can achieve the goals of learning only when they work together. Two heads are better than one to help each other in learning. As with any instructional alternative, teachers who use this technique need to be good presenters, insightful in developing worthwhile team assignments, and able to monitor teamwork, diagnose problems, and prescribe remedies.

CIRC is derived from research and development by Slavin and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins University (Slavin, 1986, as cited in Stevens, et.al. 1987, p. 435). CIRC is mainly used to teach reading and composition (Cruickshank, Jenkins & Metcalf, 2006, p. 241) and has been found to be effective when used in teaching reading and writing (Durukan, 2011). Richardson and Morgan (2003, p. 390) highlight that in CIRC teachers use basic reading texts and traditional reading groups but assign pairs of students from different reading groups to meet and work on specialized tasks. For instance, students in the pairs might read to each other, make predictions about reading, summarize stories, write responses to stories, work together on getting the main idea of the story and often work together on vocabulary.

Indeed, a major objective of the CIRC is to design, implement, and evaluate a writing process approach to the writing/language arts which makes extensive use of peers (Stevens, et. al., 1987, p. 438). Calderón, Tinajero and Hertz-Lazarowitz, (1992, p. 85) propose that the expected outcome of CIRC is to promote higher student achievement by promoting more social and academic interactions. Through using CIRC, students are introduced to new patterns of thought when they engage in dialogues with their peers (Calderón, Tinajero & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, p. 85). The verification of ideas, the planning of strategies for task completion, the protocols of politeness, consensus seeking, compromising, and the symbolic representation of other intellectual acts are enacted through peer communications (Palincsar (1987) and Vygotsky (1978), as cited in Calderón, Tinajero & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, p. 85).

2.1 The Principle Elements of CIRC

There are three main elements of CIRC: story-related activities, direct instruction in comprehension and integrated writing and language arts (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 243). These are explained as the following.

a. *Story-related activities*

In this phase, the teachers introduce new vocabulary, set a purpose for reading, and discuss the story before and after the students have read it. After the stories are introduced, students are given a series of cooperative learning follow-up activities to do in teams or with partners. The work activities are related to the teacher-directed instructions to the reading groups (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 244).

b. *Direct instruction in comprehension strategies*

Instructions begin with the teacher presenting the new information or strategies through models and explanations. Students receive cognitive support during the initial phase of practice in the form of collaboration with their peers and teacher guidance and feedback. Gradually, the cognitive support is diminished by reducing the guidance from the teacher while allowing the peers to work closely with partners. Eventually students

work independently and receive occasional feedback from their peers or the teacher (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 243).

Students are assigned in heterogeneous ability teams where they collaborate on structured follow-up activities. Cooperative activities are reinforced through group goals and recognition based on points that team members receive for their individual performance on all quizzes and compositions (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 243).

c. *Integrated language arts and writing*

During language arts periods, the teachers use a writing and language arts curriculum based on a process approach to giving instructions for writing work. Students spend significantly more time in extended writing activities than they would in traditional language arts instruction (Bridge & Hiebert, 1985; Graves, 1978).

In terms of this, Durukan (2011, p. 103) adds some elements in internal structure of CIRC such as knowing individuals well, establishing proper groups, ensuring inter-group communication, using material appropriate for the content in a timely and orderly manner, supporting groups, fostering cooperation, group and individual assessment. Hence, we can assume that the teacher as model should monitor the students work well since each student should participate actively in the groups and responsible to their own work as the final task.

2.2 The Components of CIRC

Stevens, et al. (1987, p. 438) noted that there are eight major components of CIRC: the cycle of instructions, reading groups, teams, basal-related activities (e.g. texts or reading materials already made available by the school), partner checking, tests, direct instruction in reading comprehension and integrated language arts and writing. These eight components are described below:

a. *Cycle of instructions*

In this component, all activities follow a regular cycle, which begins with teacher presentation of new skills or vocabulary, or an introduction for a story for the group. This is followed by teacher-guidance practice with the groups, called team consensus, whereby pairs of students work cooperatively to answer questions while the teacher monitors their work, checks their understanding, and provides feedback or re-teaching when necessary. Finally, at the end of the cycle there are quizzes on story comprehension, vocabulary, comprehension skills, and language mechanics to assess students' mastery of the skills that were taught (Stevens, et al., 1987, p. 438).

b. *Reading groups*

In reading groups, students are assigned to reading groups according to their level, as determined by their teachers (Stevens, et al., 1987, p. 438).

c. *Teams*

Stevens, et al. (1987, p. 438) highlight in this phase students are assigned to pairs (or triads) within their reading groups, and then each pair is teamed with another pair from a different reading group.

d. *Basal-related activities*

In this turn, Stevens, et al. (1987, p. 438) explain teachers set a purpose for reading, introduce new vocabulary, review old vocabulary and discuss the story after students have read it. Story discussions are structured to emphasize such activities as making and supporting predictions about the story and understanding major structural components of the story. Osborn (1984), as cited in Stevens, et al. (1987, p. 438) adds that during this section there are six activities eligible such as partner reading, story structure and story-related writing, words out loud, word meaning, story retelling and spelling.

e. *Partner checking*

After a student completes each of the activities above, his or her partner checks the results of their task work (Stevens, et al., 1987, p. 439).

f. *Tests*

Students are asked to write meaningful sentences for each vocabulary word, and are asked to read the word list aloud to the teacher. Students are not permitted to help one another on these tests (Stevens, et al., 1987, p. 439).

g. *Direct instruction in reading comprehension*

Stevens, et al. (1987, p. 439) say that here students receive direct instructions on specific reading comprehension skills they must do, such as identifying the main ideas, drawing conclusions, and comparing and contrasting ideas.

h. *Integrated language arts and writing*

In this section the students work with team-mates to edit and revise their writing. Team-mates edit one another's work using "peer editing forms" emphasizing both the content and the grammatical correctness of the composition. Then, students revise their composition on the basis of their peers' feedback (Stevens, et al., 1987, p. 440).

Furthermore, Calderón, Tinajero and Hertz-Lazarowitz (1992, p. 84) assert CIRC gives a good impact in two situations. First, CIRC offers a natural approach, rich in language experience that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The activities tap the students' cultural background and make these experiences more meaningful, relevant, and interesting to students. More importantly, the extensive interaction from the CIRC activities help students develop fluency and become more comfortable using English. When students begin the transition phase into English, the teaching strategies used allow them to tackle increasingly complex material; thereby building their English vocabulary and helping them gain fluency, confidence, and independence in reading. The CIRC strategies coupled with innovative transitional and EFL strategies maximize the learning opportunities for students. Thus, students quickly realize they are active participants, and their ideas are valued and encouraged by peers and teachers. Since students first learn CIRC process through their reading in the primary language, they can concentrate on enjoying the stories in English, not having to worry about guesswork or classroom procedures.

Second, CIRC can develop critical thinking amongst the students. During CIRC activities students learn how to solve problems, how to study together, to help each other, to solicit opinions, to present rationales, to defend, to synthesize, to listen to each

other, and how to ask relevant questions. After each activity, the students learn how to talk about their thinking strategies and how to improve to be better the next time.

2.3 The Procedure of CIRC

There are four characteristics of CIRC, i.e. pair work and team work, individual student quizzes, team scoring, and recognition (Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2006, p. 241). These characteristics are found in the procedures for CIRC technique. Cruickshank, Jenkins, and Metcalf (2006, p. 241) describe the teaching procedures for teaching of CIRC as follows: the teacher sets a lesson in some specific area of reading and composition, for example, identifying the main character(s) and ideas in a piece of literature. Student teams (of 4 to 5 members) are then asked to read the story and to note the main characters and ideas. Team members, who may work in pairs, interact to check each other and gain consensus. They may then check their understanding with another pair on their team or against an answer sheet. While these paired and team activities are going on, the teacher convenes members from each team who have comparable proficiency or skill level in order to teach them a new reading skill, and the cycle continues. Teachers should be well prepared to create the materials and the lesson implementation plan as well in order to achieve optimum results.

2.4 Previous Studies on CIRC in Teaching Writing Skill

There are some research findings that show the effectiveness of CIRC in teaching writing skills. Himawati (2011) found that CIRC could improve students' writing ability. Her research was conducted at MTSN Kudus in the academic year 2010/2011 and involved 39 students. She used an observation checklist and tests as research instruments. The results showed significant improvement achieved by the students: the average score in the pre-test was 35.8, whilst the minimum passing score was set at 65. After she conducted three sessions of treatment using CIRC, almost 90% of the students achieved a score of 80 or more.

Durukan (2011) further investigated the influence of the CIRC technique compared with traditional reading and writing pedagogical methods for primary school students. The findings generally indicated that the CIRC technique and also traditional methods are effective for teaching reading comprehension and writing expression skills, yet the CIRC technique used with the experimental group were more effective for achievement and retention than the traditional methods.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is quantitative using true experimental design. In relation to this, Arends (2004, p. 497) explains that during experimental research, a researcher performs three important actions: (i) establish pre-test competencies, (ii) divide the research participants into two groups: a control group and an experimental group, and (iii) give post-tests to compare the competencies in some measurable writing aspects of the two groups to see if the treatment made any difference. The writing aspects that this study focused on are content and organization out of the six aspects

proposed by Brown (2004). These two aspects were chosen because we found them to be the most problematic for our students.

In Indonesia's school curriculum, narrative and recount text writing are taught to junior high school students in the second semester (Depdiknas, 2006). Therefore, the genre we concentrated on was recount text, which is text which tells about experiences in the past, chronologically.

3.1 Sample

A total of 60 students were selected as the sample for this study. Kasim (2010, p. 167) explains that experimental research should involve at least 30 students for each group. Therefore, after 60 students were selected using the simple random sampling, we selected 30 students to join the control group and the other 30 students to join the experimental group by using random assignment. Random assignment is the use of a chance procedure to assign subjects for the treatment (Ary, et al., 2006, p. 304). Therefore, the groups could be considered equivalent.

3.2 Instruments

To collect the data, the researcher used tests in particular a pre-test and a post-test as the research instruments.

3.2.1 Tests

Tests are valuable measuring instrument for educational research (Kasim, 2010, p. 173). In this research, the writer used two kinds of tests specifically a pre-test and a post-test.

Pre – test

A pre-test was implemented at the start of the experiment to both the control and the experimental groups. This was done to make sure that the students in both groups had the same level of performance before the treatments (Nunan, 1992).

Post – test

A post-test was given after the treatments to both the control and the experimental groups. Then, the results of the post-test were compared with the results of the pre-test to find out if using CIRC made any difference in improvement of performance in the writing aspects studied (i.e. content and organization).

3.2.2 Validity and Reliability

The tests used in pre-test and post-test were adopted from the book *English on Sky 2 for Junior High School Students Year VIII*. The test was categorized valid; since its content was based on the syllabus and had been taught by teachers in junior high schools in Indonesia. Furthermore, its construct was based on the concept of writing recount text.

Reliability means the degree of consistency from the instruments (Setiyadi, 2006, p. 16). This study used the Internal-Consistency Measures of Reliability formula as follow:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\} \{N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

Where:

- r_{xy} = inter-rater correlation
 $\sum$ = sum of the scores
 X = scores of control class
 Y = scores of experimental class
 N = number of scores

To calculate reliability of the test, this study used the Spearman-Brown formula as follows (Ary, et al., 2006, p. 261):

$$r_{xx} = \frac{2r_{\frac{11}{22}}}{1 + r_{\frac{11}{22}}}$$

Where:

- r_{xx} = reliability of the whole test
 $r_{\frac{11}{22}}$ = correlation between the two scores

3.3 The Research Process

In the learning cycle in the EG and CG groups, the treatment in the EG was done in the second and the fourth meetings, whereas, the teaching in CG was done in the third and the fifth meetings. In addition, pre-test and post-test for the EG and CG were done on the same days in the first and in the sixth meetings. For the final task, they were also asked to compose a recount text individually. The task was given in order to know their ability in writing. Here, we gave them the topic of *Holiday* which they had to write on their own. This topic was chosen to make it easier for them to explore ideas.

The second author taught both of these classes, since having the same person to teach both groups is recommended (Ary, et al., 2006). In the experimental group, she implemented the CIRC technique; meanwhile, in the control group she taught by using the method that EFL teachers at the junior high school commonly used to teach. This was a mixture of Audio Lingual and Grammar Translation methods.

3.4 Data Analysis

The students' writing was scored based on the description rubric used for students writing adapted from Glass (2005). The results of the data were analysed by using statistical procedures consisting of means, standard deviations and t-tests. The mean (M) was used to find the average for each sample. To find the mean, Brown (1999, p. 66) suggests the following formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum fX}{N}$$

Where:

M = mean

X = scores

N = number of scores

$\sum$ = sum (or addition) of scores

f = frequency

To measure the difference in the students' scores the writer used the standard deviation formula as follows (Ary, et al., 2006, p. 194):

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N - 1}}$$

Where:

SD = standard deviation

D = difference between pre -test and post test scores

N = number of scores

T-test (T) is the primary statistic used to determine whether or not both scores (pre-test and post test scores) have a significant difference. In other words, the t-test is used to test the hypothesis level of significance. The formula for the T-test suggested by Ary, et al. (2006, p. 195) is as follows:

$$T = \Delta\sqrt{N} \text{ or } T = \frac{\bar{D}}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N - 1)}}}$$

Where:

T = significant correlated sample

Δ = effect size

D = difference between pre -test and post test scores for each sample

$\bar{D}$ = mean of difference scores (mean of D)

D^2 = quadrate of D

N = number of scores

4. FINDINGS

Figure 1 presents the results of students' pre-test and post-test scores for the Experimental Group (EG) and the Control Group (CG).

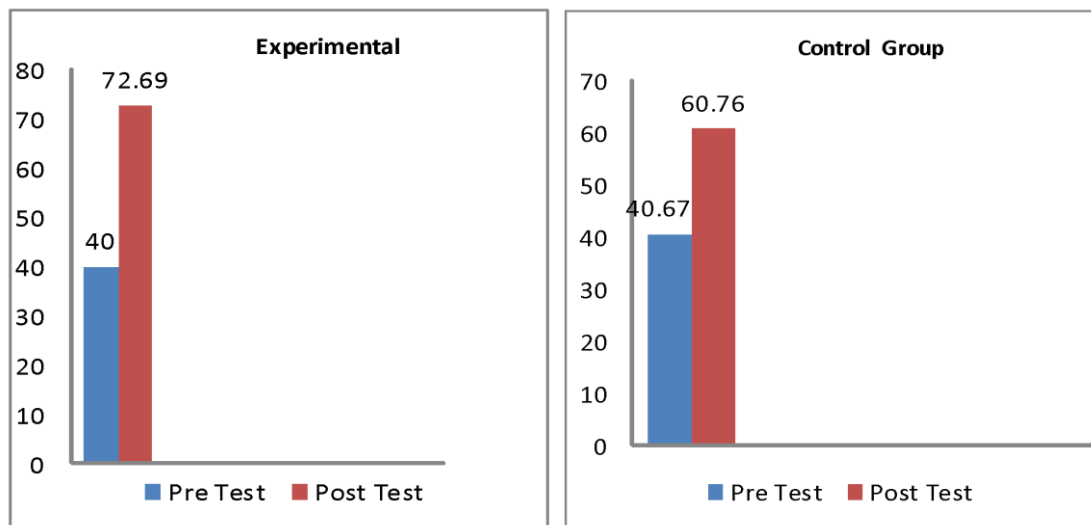


Figure 1. The results of pre-test and post-test scores for the EG and the CG.

The figure above shows that there was improvement in both the EG and CG in this experiment, with the EG (treated with CIRC technique) gaining better results than the CG (treated with the standard technique, no CIRC technique). The score of pre-test in the control group was 40.76 and the score of post-test was 60.76, meanwhile, the score of pre-test in the experimental group was 40.00 and the score of post-test was 72.69. We found that the students' who were taught using CIRC gained better scores than those who were given the standard teaching. Below are some examples from the students pre-test and post-test in both groups with the scoring rubric that was used to grade them. The examples show the improvement made by the students before and after the experiment was done.

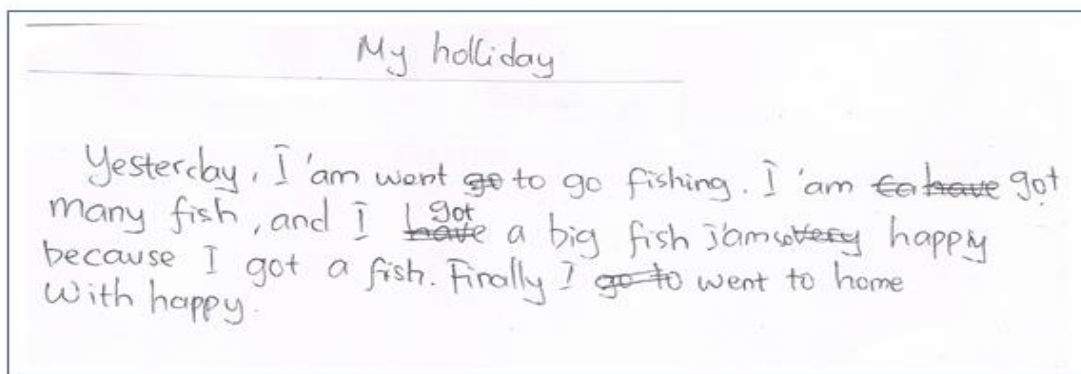


Figure 2. Student 1 worksheet from the pre-test in the CG.

Table 1. The scoring for Student 1 worksheet from the pre-test in the CG.

Points :	Scores				
Ideas/Content:	5	4	3	2	1
One clear main idea; stays on topic; specific and interesting details.					
Comments: The student got 2 in ideas and content because his writing just had very little ideas to be developed.					

Table 1 continued...

Organization: Structure (beginning, support, ending); compelling beginnings; appropriate ending; indents.					
	Comments: The student got 1 in organization since his paragraph organization did not suit enough with the generic structure of a recount text.				

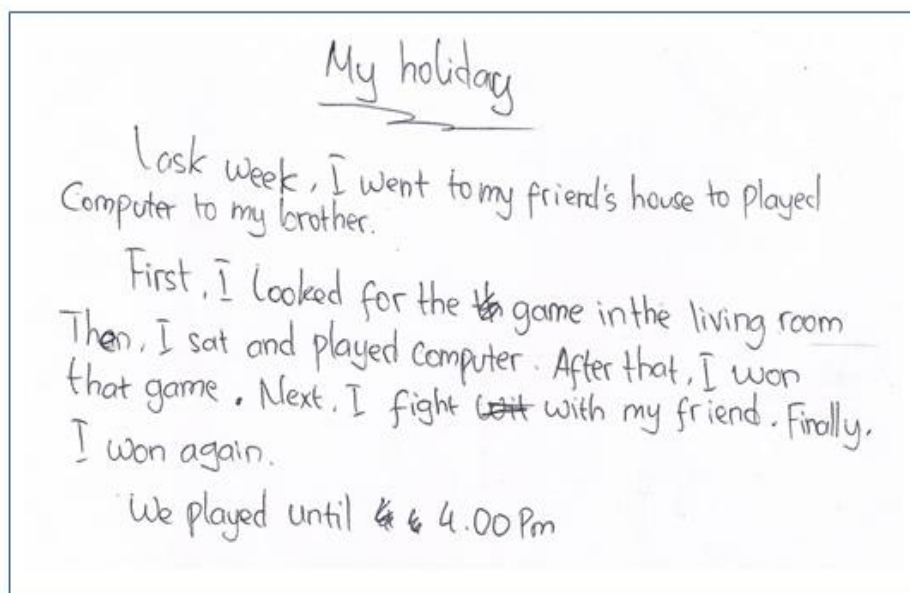


Figure 3. Student 1 worksheet from the post-test in the CG.

Table 2. The scoring for Student 1 worksheet from the post-test in the CG.

Points :	Scores				
Ideas/Content: One clear main idea; stays on topic; specific and interesting details.	5	4	3	2	1
	Comments: Here, the student got 5 because she gave a clear main idea, and stayed on the topic. Moreover, she also presented many interesting and original details for support.				
Organization: Structure (beginning, support, ending); compelling beginnings; appropriate ending; indents.					
	Comments: Overall, the student's writing had a very good organization such as she could attract the readers by the opening and most of her ideas were logically sequence. However, her writing did not presented an effective ending.				

In Figure 2 and Table 1, Student 1 got 2 for ideas/content and 1 for organization. In other words, the total score which he got was 30. Meanwhile, in post-test (see Figure 3 and Table 2), it rose to 5 for the ideas/content and 4 for the organization or 90 for the total score. Moreover, Figure 4 to Figure 5 and Table 3 and Table 4 show the writing composition and scoring in the pre-test and post-test of Student 2 from EG.

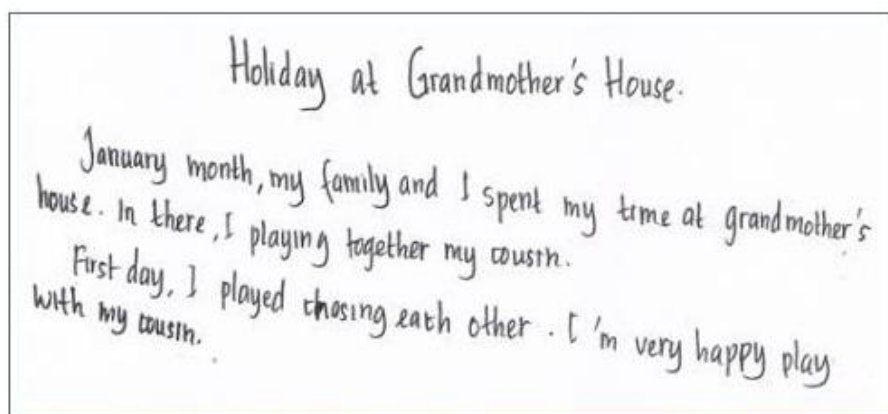


Figure 4. Student 2 worksheet from the pre-test in the EG.

Table 3. The scoring for Student 2 worksheet from the pre-test in the EG.

Points :	Scores				
Ideas/Content: One clear main idea; stays on topic; specific and interesting details.	5	4	3	2	1
	Comments: The writer gave 2 for this student's work because there were many repetitions and it lacked supportive details.				
Organization: Structure (beginning, support, ending); compelling beginnings; appropriate ending; indents.					
	Comments: The student got 2 for his organization since his writing had an unclear paragraph structure which did not suit the correct organization of a recount text.				

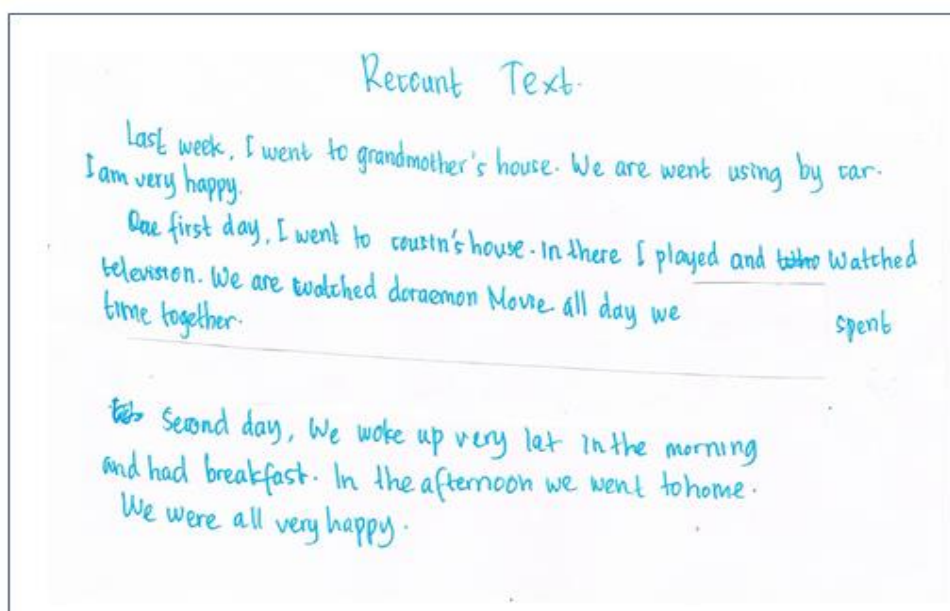


Figure 5. Student 2 worksheet from the post-test in the EG.

Table 4. The scoring for Student 2 worksheet from the post-test in the EG.

Points :	Scores				
Ideas/Content: One clear main idea; stays on topic; specific and	5	4	3	2	1

Table 4 continued...

interesting details.	Comments: Here, the student got 5 because she gave a clear main idea, and stayed on topic. Moreover, she also presented many interesting and original details for support.			
Organization:				
Structure (beginning, support, ending); compelling beginnings; appropriate ending; indents.	Comments: The writer gave 5 for the student's organization since it had a clear, strong, and sophisticated opening which attracted the readers. Her writing also used a consistent and appropriate transition to connect the paragraphs. Furthermore, the ending of the text was effective.			

From Student 2 in the EG, we can see that in pre-test, the student got 2 for the ideas/content and 2 for the organization with the total score of 30. Meanwhile, in the post-test it increased to 5 for the ideas/content and 5 for the organization with 100 for the total score. Hence, it can be concluded that the students in the EG who were taught using CIRC technique gained better scores than those who were not in the CG.

Furthermore, after we assessed the students' scores, then they were calculated into formulas to find out the Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test scores. The summary of the scores from the EG and CG students can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Experimental Group: Means, Standard Deviations, T-Tests, and T-Table.

Test	Scores	Means	Standard Deviation	Difference (D)	T-Tests	T-Table
Pre Test	1040	40	17.78	850	9.39	2.056
Post Test	1890	72,69				

Table 6. Control Group: Means, Standard Deviations, T-Tests, and T-Table.

Test	Scores	Means	Standard Deviation	Difference (D)	T-Test	T-Table
Pre Test	1060	40.76	13.70	530	7.60	2.056
Post Test	1580	60.76				

Table 5 and Table 6 clearly show the results of the research in both the EG and CG. The data showed that there was a significant improvement on students' marks after they received treatments by using CIRC. It can be concluded that students' in both the EG and the CG had a very good improvement in the writing recount text test after the teaching and learning processes during the research. However, students' writing ability in the EG for which CIRC was used had higher improvement than that of the CG who were taught by using a mixture of Grammar Translation Method and Audio Lingual Method.

Additionally, in analysing the hypothesis, it referred to the t-table at the level of significance of α 0.05. According to Bungin (2005, p. 185), the testing criterion used for the hypothesis result is: If $t\text{-test} > t\text{-table}$, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected. Furthermore, Bungin (2005, p. 266) explained that the t-table with the level of significance of α 0.05 with the degree of freedom (df) $\rightarrow n-1 = 26-1 = 25$ is 2.060 and (df) $\rightarrow n-1 = 52-1 = 51$ is 2.008. This means that H_a in this study is accepted since the students t-test in the EG is 9.39 and the t-table is 2.056. Because the t-test value is higher than the t-table ($9.39 > 2.056$), therefore, it can be concluded that the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique can improve students' skill in writing recount text, especially in content and organization.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After conducting the experiment of implementing the CIRC technique in teaching writing for recount texts, it was found that the students' writing improved in content and organization. It was a more effective technique to enhance students' writing skill than the traditional methods (in this case, a mixture of Grammar Translation Method and Audio Lingual Method) since it tapped the students' cultural backgrounds and made these experiences more meaningful, relevant, and interesting to the students (Calderón, Tinajero & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, p. 84). More importantly, the extensive interaction from the CIRC activities helped the students develop fluency and to be more at ease when writing in English. Moreover, during the CIRC activities, the students studied how to solve problems and how to study together, help each other, solicit opinions, present rationales, defend, synthesize, listen to others, and ask relevant questions (Calderón, Tinajero & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, p. 84). These findings are also supported by other researchers such as Himawati (2011) and Durukan (2011). To sum up, the CIRC technique is not only applicable for improving students' writing competencies, but it also builds students' awareness amongst other benefits.

There are many techniques that can be used by English teachers for teaching writing. In this case, they just need to find the appropriate technique for teaching writing to create a good learning atmosphere and to help the students learn enjoyably. As for CIRC, teachers can use this technique as an alternative for teaching writing since this technique has been found to have significant benefits for students. In addition, because students work in groups, they have more opportunities to learn and share their ideas with others to produce their best writing. Furthermore, for further research similar to this present study, we hope that the results of this study can be used as a reference in the literature. It is suggested that further studies involve a larger population of students to gain better understanding of the benefits from the implementation of CIRC.

REFERENCES

- Ahuja, A. (1994). *The effect of cooperative learning instructional strategy on the academic achievement, attitudes toward science class and process skills of middle school science students*. (Doctoral), The Ohio State University, Columbus, O. H.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, C. (2006). *Introduction to research in education* (7th ed.). Belmont, C.A.: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Arends, R. I. (2004). *Learning to teach* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Ahmed, A. H. (2010). Students' problems with cohesion and coherence in EFL essay writing in Egypt: Different perspective. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, 1(4), 211-221.
- Bridge, C., & Hiebert, E. (1985). A comparison of classroom writing practices, teachers' perceptions of their instruction, and textbook recommendations on writing practices. *Elementary School Journal*, 86, 155-172.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principle and classroom practice*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, J. D. (1999). *Understanding research in second language learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bungin. (2005). *Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif (komunikasi, ekonomi, dan kebijakan publik serta ilmu-ilmu sosial lainnya)*. Jakarta: Prenada Media Group.
- Byrne, D. (1985). *English teaching perspectives*. Singapore: Longman Singapore Publishers Pte Ltd.
- Calderón, M. E., Tinajero, J. V., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (1992). Adapting cooperative integrated reading and composition to meet the needs of bilingual students. *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, 10 (Special Issue): 79-106.
- Cruickshank, R. D., Jenkins, B. D., Metcalf, K. K. (2006). *The act of teaching* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (Depdiknas). (2006). *Standar kompetensi dan kompetensi dasar: Panduan pengembangan silabus per mata pelajaran, rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran (RPP), dan model kurikulum tingkat satuan pendidikan (KTSP)*. Jakarta: PT. Binatama Raya.
- Dewi, A. P. (2013). Using the Four-Square Writing Method to improve eleventh graders' ability of writing hortatory exposition texts at MAN Keboan Jombang. *English Language Education*, 3(1), 1-10
- Durukan, E. (2011). Effect of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique on reading – writing skills. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(1), 102-109.
- Farnan, N., Flood, J., & Lapp, D. (1994). Comprehending through reading and writing: Six research-based instructional strategies. In K. Spangenberg-Urbschat & R. Pritchard (Eds.). *Kids come in all languages: Reading instructions for ESL students* (pp. 135-157). Newark, D. E.: International Reading Association.
- Glass, K. T. (2005). *Curriculum design for writing instruction*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Himawati, U. 2011. *The use of cooperative integrated reading and composition (CIRC) method to improve students' ability in composing narrative writing (A classroom action research at the eighth grade students of MTs Negeri Kudus in the academic year of 2010/2011)*. (Master), State Institute for Islamic Studies, Walisongo, Semarang.
- Kasim, U. (2010). *Research on English language teaching*. Banda Aceh: Syiah Kuala University Press.
- Mason, J. M. 1989. *Reading and writing connections*. Boston, M. A.: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peregoy, S., & Boyle, O. (1993). *Reading, writing and learning in ESL: A resource book for teachers*. White Plains, N. Y.: Longman.
- Richardson, J.S., & Morgan, R.F. (2003). *Reading to learn in the content areas*. Belmont, C. A.: Thomson.
- Rosenblatt, L.M. (1989). Reading and writing: The transactional theory. In J. M. Mason (Ed.), *Reading and writing connections* (pp. 153-176). Boston. M. A.: Allyn and Bacon.
- Setiyadi, B. 2006. *Metode penelitian untuk pengajaran bahasa asing*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.
- Slavin, R.E. (1996). *Education for all*. Den Haag: Swets and Zeitlinger BV.
- Stevens, R. J., Madden, N. A., Slavin, R. E., & Farnish, A. M. (1987). Cooperative integrated reading and composition: Two field experiments. *Reading Research*

Quarterly, 22(4), 433–454.

Stevens, R. J., & Slavin, R. (1995). Effects of a cooperative learning approach in reading and writing on academically handicapped and non-handicapped students. *Elementary School Journal*, 95, 241-262.

Tangpermpoon, T. (2008). Integrated approaches to improve students writing skills for English major students. *ABAC Journal*, 28(2). 1-9

Wrick, J. (2011). *Steps to writing* (7th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

[Received 28 November 2014; revised 27 February 2015; accepted 29 February 2015]

THE AUTHORS

Faisal Mustafa, who graduated from Syiah Kuala University with a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching in 2008, earned a Master's degree in Linguistics from the University of Manchester in 2011. He started working as a permanent lecturer at the Study Program of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Syiah Kuala University in 2012. His research interests cover linguistics, translation, teaching methodology and language learning assessment. In addition, he is also one of the editors of the English Education Journal, an academic journal managed by the Department of English Language Education at the Graduate Program in Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Nanda Marlina Abdul Samad was born in Langsa on March 19, 1991. She is the youngest child among six siblings. Her father is Drs. H. A. Samad Hasan, MBA, and her mother is Hj. Sumiati, SP.I. She spent most of her study from the elementary until the secondary schools in Langsa at SDN 11, SMPN 9 and SMAN 1. After that, she pursued her Bachelor's degree in Education at the Study Program of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, from 2009-2014, in which she graduated with a *cumlaude*. She is active in taking parts in various formal and informal activities, especially those that are related to education because she loves togetherness.