Contributory Role of Collaborative Strategic Reading in Improving Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

Azizeh Chalak [1]*, Monir Tahmasebi [2]

*[1]Associate Professor, English Department, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch,
[2]MA in TEFL,English Department, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch

Abstract

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is a research-based instructional practice in teaching reading comprehension which combines comprehension and cooperative learning. This study investigated the effect of CSR on Iranian high school students' reading comprehension. Using a quasi-experimental design, homogenous female high school students were selected based on proficiency tests and were grouped into two Experimental Group and Control Group ((EG and CG). The CG had its conventional teacher-led context, while the EG received CSR as the treatment. Their scores at the onset of the study were collected via a researcher-made comprehension pretest followed by a parallel posttest at the end of the treatment. To analyze the data, independent sample ttests were run to compare the achievement of the two groups. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to investigate their attitudes toward the employment of CSR. The results showed a significant difference between EG and CG emphasizing the positive role of CSR in improving students' comprehension. The findings of the interview also showed positive attitudes of the participants and the teacher on the feasibility of the model to help the learners. The results of the study could help material developers in designing more collaborative tasks, activities, assignments, and materials for Iranian EFL learners.

Keywords: Collaborative Strategic Reading; Collaborative Learning; Expository Texts; Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Any reading component of an English language course may include a set of learning goals. Being able to read a wide range of texts, building linguistic knowledge as well as schematic knowledge, being able to adapt the reading style according to reading purpose are among the immediate goals of reading skill. Learners need to develop an awareness of the structure of written texts and take a critical stance on the contents of the texts. Reading helps in mental development, involves a greater level of concentration, and adds to the conversational skills of the reader. Students learn the language both by drilling structures out of context and by using the language in a community of language learners. They need the collaboration of their peers and teachers in forming meaningful contexts and negotiating meanings in those contexts.

Depending on different factors, a teacher can provide various levels of assistance over tasks to allow the students to do as much as they can on their own and achieve more difficult tasks. This setting can be provided by the teacher in the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) class. The teacher's authority may have a special influence on EFL students who often lack confidence in their ability to express

---

* Corresponding Author's Email:
azichalak@gmail.com

themselves in the foreign language and may also be facing instruction into a new culture and a new discourse community (Hyland, 2000).

Because English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has found its place among other subjects in the syllabus of Iranian schools, it seems necessary to pay attention to the techniques that can promote the language abilities of Iranian learners. In Iranian schools, the dominant atmosphere of the classes is teacher-centeredness. Usually, teachers dominate and direct all the activities but it seems that there is not enough creativity or initiation in students' activities. The students mostly depend on their teachers for the transmission of knowledge and expect them to explain and elaborate the meaning of the reading materials. The emergence of new trends in teaching and the emphasis on learner-centered approaches in educational settings urges the teachers to adopt more collaborative and cooperative approaches in teaching.

This study focused not only on the effectiveness of the CSR model with regard to Iranian high school students' reading comprehension but also concentrated on the process of how learners help each other to comprehend the ongoing text. Despite its positive effects in various studies, there have not been enough studies on the impact of CSR in Iranian high school contexts and among female students.

Reading perhaps more than any other language skills provides the foundation for success in language learning and academic learning. It is critical to academic achievement in second or foreign language settings Chalak (2015). The idea of creating meaning and constructing knowledge from text is commonly referred to as reading comprehension.

Comprehension involves three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity. These three elements occur within a larger sociocultural context that includes the classroom learning environment, instruction, social interaction with peers, school culture, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, students' self-concepts, and instructional history. The reader is the person interacting with text to create meaning and understanding. In order to comprehend a

text, the reader must engage in cognition, be motivated and bring various types of knowledge to the task. Many factors such as vocabulary and background knowledge on the topic, a repertoire of comprehension strategies, knowledge of how to use them as well as linguistic and discourse knowledge are involved in improving reading comprehension of the students. Along with the abilities of the reader, effective comprehension of a text involves instruction on the material in the text, introducing comprehension strategies to the students, and aiding them to become active, metacognitive readers. The text element of comprehension is very significant in this area because the nature and complexity of text has changed over time. The reader interacts with text and must be able to decode the words and understand the meaning and mental models represented in the text. The text features as well as the knowledge and abilities of the reader can be influential in the reader's comprehension.

The purpose of reading can be reader-generated or intrinsically motivated or an external body can impose it. The purpose is also influenced by the before, during, and after reading segments of the comprehension process.

There are two main types of texts in high school (a) narrative text and (b) expository text. Most students have relatively well-developed understanding of narrative texts through adults reading to them, while, expository texts are non-fiction texts meant to inform, analyze, explain, or give additional detail about a topic. Expository writing can prepare students better for the type of writing they may encounter in everyday life. Disconnection between requirements and skills emphasizes the fact that students need scaffold reading experiences with expository texts. They also need to take an active role in their learning through systematic development of reading comprehension strategies either in physical environment or virtual setting (Akbari, Heidari Tabrizi, & Chalak, 2021), but it is important to teach specific appropriate strategies because teachers have a limited amount of time to teach reading and they should get benefit of all the possible sources to d it in the best way.

Collaborative Strategic Reading

Teachers cannot spend all the class time on reading skill. Therefore, it is critical that the time they spend on reading activities is well designed to ensure knowledge and understanding of their text. This can be accomplished more effectively with the use of explicit strategy instruction to monitor and act on improving reading comprehension (Mizbani & Chalak, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2011).

Collaborative Reading Comprehension Strategies (CSR) are prominent tools in comprehension because readers use them to construct the coherent mental representation and explanation of situation which are described in the text (Graesser, 2007). They help the students determine the meaning of what they read As teachers consider introducing strategies to the students in the content area classroom, it is vital that students not only understand the strategy being taught, but also know how the strategy can be used to approach, complete, or modify a task. Reading strategies could help learners to understand and answer questions easily. Many foreign language learners lack these reading skills and as Pressley (2000) believes, those who lack these reading skills turn to be inactive readers. Reading strategies are among the factors that help students gain success in academic settings and they play prominent roles in comprehension. Comprehension strategies are also regarded as deliberate and goal-oriented processes used to construct meaning from text (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008).

A variety of instructional strategies have been developed in response to the need for effective reading comprehension instruction (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). CSR was borrowed from reciprocal teaching. It is an instructional activity that comprises a dialogue between the students and the teacher. Reading strategies could help learners to understand and answer questions easily. Many foreign language learners lack these reading skills and as Pressley (2000) believes, those who lack these reading skills turn to be inactive readers. Reciprocal teaching includes four components: previewing text to obtain a sense of what will be learned when fully immersed in reading, generating questions for oneself about what the text is going to carry, expressing missing information, and summarizing the main ideas. Students try to work through these four strategies in groups. In addition, CSR includes strategies such as cooperative learning, brainstorming, and student review of what has been learned from reading.

CSR takes a social constructivist approach to learning with expository text. It reflects many of the social constructivist views. Students initiate the comprehension processes in small collaborative groups as they process text and gather meaning to complete the task. The learning takes place in a cooperative format where students complete shared goals while taking a significant role within the group. They are actively involved in information gathering and meaning-making through their ongoing experiences with the text in their collaborative groups.

Research Studies on Collaborative Strategic Reading

The first study on CSR was conducted by (Klinger & Vaughn, 1998) with students with low learning abilities who used English as a second language. They found that the students learned to use modified reciprocal teaching methods in cooperative learning groups by brainstorming, predicting, clarifying words and phrases, highlighting main idea, summarizing main ideas with important details, and asking/answering questions. They realized that CSR was effective in improving reading comprehension for most of the students. The findings emphasized that the model has resulted in improvement in reading comprehension and vocabulary learning among elementary students. Students in the CSR group significantly outperformed those in the CG.

In another study (Klingner, Vaughn, Argüelles, Hughes, & Ahwee, 2004) employed CSR in ten classrooms and with their teachers. Five teachers and their classes were assigned to the CSR condition while the other five teachers with their classrooms were assigned to a control condition. The teachers in CSR condition were taught in terms of not only how to implement

CSR but also why to do it. Then, they started to practice it in their classes while they were observed and received constructive feedback. The findings revealed that the students in CSR classrooms had greater improvement in reading comprehension than the students in CG.

In a study conducted by Bryant et al. (2000) they showed that CSR is combined with other approaches to address the range of skills needed for reading competence. CSR was used in conjunction with two other research-based strategies including word identification and partner reading. The results showed that the students significantly improved their word identification and fluency, but not reading comprehension.

Huang (2004) also investigated the feasibility and efficacy of CSR in inquiry-based pedagogy to improve high school students' strategic reading and develop their critical thinking ability. The qualitative data analysis showed that CSR was facilitative in developing students' critical thinking and writing ability in terms of content and idea exploration. In addition, self-reports of the post-intervention questionnaire collected from the majority of the subjects showed that CSR was an effective method to promote their autonomous learning and social skills.

Moreover, Asraf (2004) conducted a study on how readers used the strategies in approaching reading materials in both L1 (Malay) and L2 (English) and why they used these strategies in comprehending reading texts. The findings suggested that the students should be provided more on comprehension monitoring strategies in order to enhance better reading comprehension.

The effectiveness of CSR on EFL classes has been studied in different educational settings with different participants (Gani, Yusuf, & Susiani, 2016; Karabuka & Kaya, 2013; Klinger, Vaughn, Boardman, & Swanson, 2012; Le, Janssen, & Wubbels, 2017; Momtaz & Garner, 2010; Monos, 2005). All of these studies confirm that CSR is more effective than the traditional teacher-led reading approach and the students' reading comprehension achievement can be increased by using CSR. The findings of such studies

emphasize that CSR is a feasible method that can be integrated into reading and language arts instruction with positive impact.

In Iran, reading instruction has been the central focus in EFL learning contexts because English is a required subject for students wishing to enter higher education. The relationship between CSR and reading comprehension in Iranian EFL educational settings has been studies by some scholars (Chalak, 2015; Dabaghmanesh, Zamanian, & Bagheri, 2013; Jalilifar, 2010; Khonamri & Karimabadi, 2015; Rahimi & Tahmasebi, 2010; Rajaei, Talebi, & Abadikhah, 2020; Zare Behtash, Barabadi, & Eskandari, 2019).

These studies have shown that collaborative groups have outperformed the CG, emphasizing the positive role of cooperative learning in Iranian EFL classes. Although some research studies have been conducted on the role of CSR strategies on Iranian EFL learner's reading comprehension, the number of such studies in Iranian high schools are limited. Moreover, not many of these studies have focused on female high schoolers to investigate thoroughly their progress on reading comprehension under the influence of CSR. The main objective of the present study was to gain some understanding of the function and influence of using CSR in the high school environment and compare a teacher-centered classroom with a collaborative reading classroom as well as investigating the attitudes of the students toward using the model. To fulfill these objectives of the study, the following questions were posed:

1.Is there any significant difference between using CSR instruction and traditional instruction on reading comprehension skills of Iranian EFL high school learners?

2. What are the attitudes of the students and the teacher toward the use of CSR in their EFL classes?

METHODOLOGY
Design and Setting of the Study
The study was a quantitative, quasi-experimental design aiming to gather information about the effect of practicing CSR on Iranian EFL students' reading

comprehension in their learning environment. The study was conducted in a public high school in Isfahan, Iran before the Covid-19 pandemic. The class sessions for both groups were held twice a week and each class lasted 90 minutes per session. The classroom for the CG and CG was the same. Thus, the class environment, time, and all the other conditions were the same for both of the groups to minimize the effect of setting and to control the variables.

Participants

The population of the study was Iranian high school students and the target population was Iranian female high school students in Isfahan, Iran. The subjects of the study were 60 female students and their ages ranged from 17 to 18. It was impossible to group them randomly in two classes because they had been placed in two different intact classes in advance by the educational programme of the school. Consequently, one class was assigned as the control and the other as the CG. Thirty students were in the CG and the same number were in CG. The students of the two classes were given a general proficiency test (Nelson 350 A) at the onset of the experiment in order to ascertain their homogeneity in terms of general English proficiency prior to the study. The CG was assigned to specific teams with specific roles for each member.

The students had a chance to practice English only in English classes because their native language was Persian. Based on the proficiency test, they were in the same level of reading comprehension ability. They did not have enough knowledge about CSR and this was obtained through a semi-structured short interview with the students at the beginning of the experiment. CSR was used as the treatment and intervention only for the EG.

Instruments

The instruments used in the study to collect the data were Nelson Proficiency Test, a teacher-made reading comprehension pretest, a parallel reading comprehension posttest, and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and the students. The instruments are elaborated in the following sections:

Nelson Proficiency Test

A general proficiency test was utilized not only to check the homogeneity of the groups in terms of language proficiency level, but also as a criterion against which the reading test scores were validated. The test consisted of 50 multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation items. The total score of the test was 50.

Reading Comprehension Tests (Pretest and Posttest)

A reading comprehension pretest was developed by the teacher based on the course objectives. The test had a total of 30 points and it was validated against the standard test of Nelson Proficiency Test. The resulting correlation coefficient was .74. This test was used to measure the reading comprehension ability of the subjects before starting the program. The expository texts in the test were scientific and similar to those seen in the passages in the students' books. The time limitation was 35 minutes. The test was used for both control and CGs to demonstrate the reading comprehension ability of the students before conducting the research. The same procedure was followed to prepare the reading comprehension posttest. In other words, the items, selection procedure, the expository texts, and the time limitation were exactly similar to the ones in the pretest.

Interviews

To investigate the attitudes of the students and their teacher towards the use of CSR in an EFL setting, semi-structured interviews were done by the researchers. The English teacher of the class and also volunteer students took part in this phase of the research. Their attitudes, ideas, and perceptions about the feasibility of the model were audio-recorded and later transcribed to be used as the data. The interviews were semi-structured interviews and the duration of the interview for every participant was less than 10 minutes.

Reading Materials

Reading passages and materials used during the experiment were four expository texts from the coursebook of the students. The book is

intended to develop students' four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through a variety of activities concerning vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar, language function, and pronunciation. In other words, its main concern is the development of general proficiency and preparation of the students for their future studies in case they enter university. Four passages were selected based on the fact that students need meaningful encounters with expository texts and teachers must engage in essential reading comprehension strategies that have been found effective.

Treatment

The students received four strategies as part of CSR model or strategic reading: *preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap up*. The preview was used only before reading the entire text for that lesson, and wrap up was used only after reading the entire text for that particular lesson. The other two strategies click and clunk and get the gist were used during reading the text and immediately after each paragraph.
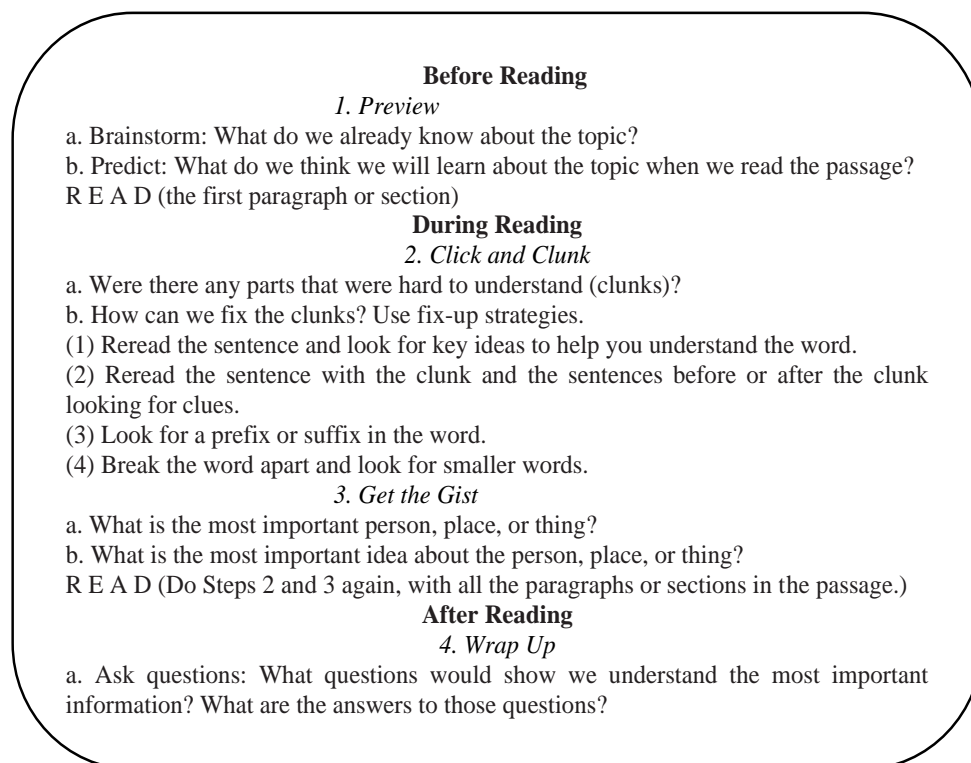
Before Reading
1. Preview
a. Brainstorm: What do we already know about the topic?
b. Predict: What do we think we will learn about the topic when we read the passage?
R E A D (the first paragraph or section)
During Reading
2. Click and Clunk
a. Were there any parts that were hard to understand (clunks)?
b. How can we fix the clunks? Use fix-up strategies.
(1) Reread the sentence and look for key ideas to help you understand the word.
(2) Reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after the clunk looking for clues.
(3) Look for a prefix or suffix in the word.
(4) Break the word apart and look for smaller words.
3. Get the Gist
a. What is the most important person, place, or thing?
b. What is the most important idea about the person, place, or thing?
R E A D (Do Steps 2 and 3 again, with all the paragraphs or sections in the passage.)
After Reading
4. Wrap Up
a. Ask questions: What questions would show we understand the most important information? What are the answers to those questions?

Figure 1. CSR's plan for reading adapted from Klingner et al. (2004)

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

At the beginning of the experiment, the students were interviewed to check their knowledge about CCR and the interview showed that they were not familiar with CSR. Then, the CG and CG were pretested on their reading comprehension ability. The test was examined by two teachers teaching the course to make sure that the test was geared toward the course objectives. After revision and elimination of some items, the test was piloted for two sessions by administering it to a sample population of 16 students. At this stage, some of the poor items were discarded. Then, the pretest was administered to the both control and experimental groups. The pretest scores indicated the ability of the students' reading comprehension before the treatment.

After students were pretested, four similar text passages were given to the subjects in both groups. The CG read the text and the teacher explained grammatical rules and new vocabularies to them. The students in the CG were taught expository text by means of CSR explicitly. In addition, the teacher taught them grammatical rules and new vocabulary. In other words, the treatment was applied only to the CG, while the CG followed the traditional instruction provided by the teacher. At the end of the experiment, the reading comprehension

of both of the groups was tested to compare their performances.

During the treatment, the teacher placed the learners' names on reading comprehension achievement clusters from high to low according to their pretest scores. Consequently, teams involved learners with a range of reading comprehension abilities. Then members of the team were arranged in specific face-to-face settings. The students had to preview the entire passage before reading each section. Previewing served to motivate students' interest in the topic and to engage them in active reading from the onset. Then, the students in the CG were asked to click and clunk while reading each section. Many students with reading and learning problems failed to monitor their understanding when they read. Clicking and clunking activity was designed to teach the students to pay attention to when they were understanding or failing to understand what they were reading or what was being read to them. After students identified clunks, the class used fix-up strategies to figure out the clunks. Then the teacher taught the gist and asked her students to think about the passage they had just read and write down the most important person, place, or thing in the sentence. Then the students worked alone or in pairs to write the gist of the passage.

Finally, the students learned to wrap up by formulating questions and answers about what they had learned and by reviewing key ideas. They generated questions that asked about important information in the passage they had read. The students were encouraged to ask questions that involve higher-level thinking skills, rather than literal recall.

To analyze the data, the descriptive statistics including the mean and standard deviation were calculated. Moreover, to ensure the homogeneity of the two groups prior to the experiment, the students' scores on the Nelson Proficiency Test and also their pretest scores were tabulated using the ttest. The mean, standard deviation, and variances of the two groups in the pretest were calculated. Then, two paired-sample ttests were run to compare the means of both groups' pretest and posttest scores separately to analyze the two groups' gains over time. Another independent samples ttest was carried out to compare the two groups' posttest scores to analyze whether the two groups performed significantly differently, and if so, which group performed better than the other.

RESULTS

The data collected from the pretests and posttests after applying the treatment to the CG were analyzed. First, the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of language proficiency and reading comprehension ability prior to the experiment was investigated and the results were put into the ttest formula. The test consisted of 50 multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary items and the total score of the test was 50. The time limitation was 55 minutes. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and the t observed of the two groups for the Nelson Proficiency Test. The groups were not significantly different at the beginning of the study because the amount of the t observed did not exceed that of the t critical value at 0.05 level.

Table 1

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Nelson Proficiency Test

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Observed
Control	30	27.27	3.79	1.29
Experimental	30	27.90	4.31	
$P< 0.05$ $df =58$		t critical=2.00		

To answer the first research question, the descriptive statistics including the means and standard deviations of the results for the pretest and the posttest were calculated. Table 2 summarizes these results.

The pretest was also validated against the standard test of Nelson Proficiency Test and a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to measure the relationship between the two tests. The test showed that

there was a positive correlation between the two tests (r= 0.742, N= 30, p<0.000).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores for CG and EG

Groups	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		M	SD	M	SD
Control Group	30	13.70	2.90	15.23	2.75
Experimental Group	30	13.96	2.85	17.10	1.73

To investigate whether there was any significant difference between the CG and CG with regard to their reading comprehension ability before the treatment, a pretest was conducted. A paired sample ttest was run on the scores of the two groups. The results showed that the two groups were homogenous before the treatment because the t observed (0.36) was smaller than the t critical (2.00) at the level of probability p<0.05. In other words, the means of the two groups were not found to be statistically significant at the onset of the study.

As Table 2 shows, comparing the means of the students in the CG for the pretest and the posttest indicated that their reading comprehension improved at the end of the study. The means were also found to be

statistically different as the results of ttest revealed (t observed= 2.81, p< 0.5). Likewise, the comparison of the means of the students in the EG for the pretest and the posttest showed more improvement in their reading comprehension. The results of a ttest proved that the difference between the means was statistically significant (t observed= 6.83, p< 0.000). Table 2 also showed that the mean of the posttest for the EG was higher than that of the CG.

In order to investigate whether the difference between the means of the two groups in the posttests was statistically significant, an Independent ttest was also run. Table 3 demonstrates the results.

Table 3
Results of Independent T Test for Pretest and Posttest Scores of CG and EG

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	8.09	.006	-3.14	58	.003	-1.86	.59	-3.05	-.67
Equal variances not assumed			-3.14	48.82	.003	-1.86	.59	-3.05	-.67

While the difference between the two means in the CG group was 1.53, this difference in the EG was 3.13 indicating that the EG performed

better as the result of the treatment. Comparing the posttests of the two groups also showed that EG outperformed the CG. Figure 2 depicts the

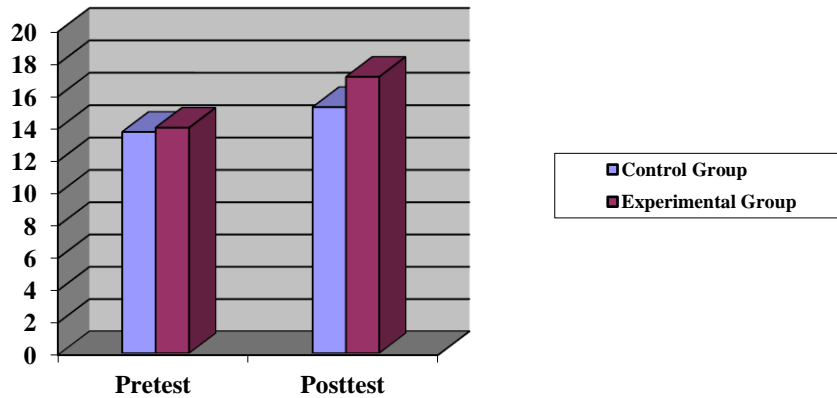descriptive statistics of the pretests and posttests of both the CG and EG.

Figure 2. Comparison of the pretest and posttest of CG and EG.

As Figure 2 illustrates, the comparison of both groups with regard to pretest and posttest shows that both groups gained some achievements after some sessions. This shows that instruction had a positive impact on the reading comprehension achievement of the students. However, the EG showed better improvement in their posttest confirming the positive role of CSR as the treatment.

The findings of the study obtained through the semi-structured interview with five volunteer subjects and the teacher of the class showed that all the students were quite satisfied with the CSR model and enjoyed completing the activities and tasks through collaborative teamwork. They stated that weak students were supported and performed better with the help of their team members by sharing the responsibility and through collaboration and group work supported by their teacher. The teacher also confirmed the feasibility of the CSR model emphasizing that her burden was less because the students became responsible for their learning and were more autonomous for their own and team members' learning.

DISCUSSION

Reading can be regarded as an interactive process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency. In the process of reading, the reader interacts dynamically with the text, and the ability to read academic texts is considered as one of the most essential skills that university EFL students need to acquire. The exposure to using more strategies in reading could be strongly promoted by teaching the students a number of strategies as well as how they work in real reading practices.

This study aimed at investigating the impact of CSR on the reading comprehension of Iranian female high school students. After administrating the Nelson Proficiency Test, a group of 60 homogeneous students was selected from two intact classes. Then, they were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups. The reading comprehension abilities of these two groups were tested before the treatment by a teacher-made test and the results showed that that the reading abilities of both group before the treatment were not significantly different. The students in the CG were taught reading comprehension traditionally, while the EG received the instruction on the basis of CSR. Both classes received the same schedule of instruction. After the intervention, the two groups received a posttest by using another parallel form of the teacher-made reading test. The results of the study obtained through quasi-experimental research showed that the reading comprehension of the students improved significantly as the result of CSR.

The findings showed that the mean score of the EG in the posttest was significantly higher than the mean score of EG in the pretest and the

difference between the mean scores of the EG in the pretest and posttest was significant. The scores gained from the pretest and posttest of the EG showed a remarkable difference which suggested that CSR had a positive impact on Iranian high school students' reading comprehension. In other words, the EG outperformed CG in their posttest indicating that the model could be used as a feasible model to improve the reading comprehension of the students at high school level in Iranian educational settings.

These results are in line with the findings of Klinger and Vaughn (1998) demonstrating that CSR was effective in improving reading comprehension for most of the students with low learning abilities. These results also support Huang (2004) who investigated the feasibility and efficacy of CSR in inquiry-based pedagogy to improve high school students' strategic reading and develop their critical thinking ability. His study's results indicated that CSR was facilitative in developing students' critical thinking and writing ability in terms of content and idea exploration.

The results of this study are also in agreement with the studies conducted by Rahayu (2019), Rajaei et al. (2020) that emphasized on the effectiveness of the CSR approach in fostering her students' overall reading comprehension and in increasing their English learning motivation. Similarly, the results of this research confirm Rahimi and Tahmasebi (2010) study that showed that students working cooperatively and consistently outperformed those who were attending a lecture-based classes. However, the findings of this study are against the findings of Monos (2005) who found no relationship between the CSR and reading comprehension ability of the students.

This study also showed that the students liked the idea of collaboration and group discussion in reading activities and had a completely positive attitude toward using this model in their classes. Their English teacher also had a very positive attitude, confirming that the students were more eager to participate in the activities and tasks because group discussion was making the process of learning

and reading comprehension easier and more comfortable for them. Furthermore, instead of depending too much on the teacher, the students were observed to be autonomous and learn from each other, support each other, correct themselves, and other team members. CSR was observed to facilitate autonomy and independence among the students. It could be a good practical activity and solution in Iranian classes because many students are dependent on the teacher

The findings of this study are in line with the findings of the studies by Dabaghmanesh et al. (2013), Huang (2004), and Klinger and Vaughn (1998) emphasizing that CSR is an effective and feasible model in improving reading comprehension of the students, showing satisfaction of the students in working collaboratively and creating positive mood among the students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that CSR can be employed as an additional comprehension strategy and tactic of cooperative learning. Through the integration of different comprehension strategies in Iranian EFL settings, students could work in collaborative groups and could be guided using pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading strategies. The results of this study could provide evidence that is consistent with more general claims about CSR confirming that comprehension strategy reading is a multi-component comprehension strategy and can be effective in increasing vocabulary and reading comprehension, and can promote cooperative learning.

This study could provide benefits for the students in terms of developing skills related to working in groups or collaboration. They can gain a better comprehension of the reading materials by working with students who have different learning styles. Lower performing students could work harder to keep up with high performing peers because team works provide the students with more opportunities to win in a competitive and collaborative atmosphere. Using collaborative tasks in reading allows the students to develop effective leadership habits.

The findings of the present study could also be beneficial for Iranian EFL practitioners as well as curriculum designers to take these issues into a high priority in teaching and learning programmes at any level of education. The findings can provide Iranian teachers with practical information related to the logistics of implementing CSR in the classroom, with particular attention to the small, cooperative learning groups in which students work during the implementation of CSR.

However, no research can be conducted under ideal conditions, and each research has its own sets of problems or limitations. The present research is not an exception and had some limitations. Therefore, the findings of this study are only applicable to the setting and subjects of this study. More studies are required to support and confirm the findings of the present research. This study can be conducted with various levels of students, ranging from elementary to advance to investigate whether the proficiency level of students could be a determining factor. In addition, other researchers can collect data from both male and female students to study the relationship between CSR and gender. This study could also be replicated by controlling the effects of CSR on a much larger scale. It is hoped that the concept of collaborative learning, especially CSR would be taken seriously in the educational contexts and be researched enough in the future to make language learning more beneficial for Iranian students.

References

Afflerbach, P., Pearson, P. D., & Paris, S. G. (2008). Clarifying differences between reading skills and reading strategies. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(5), 364-373.

Akbari, J., Heidari Tabrizi, H., & Chalak, A. (2021). Effectiveness of virtual vs. non-virtual teaching in improving reading comprehension of Iranian undergraduate EFL students. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education (TOJDE), 22*(2), 272-283.

Asraf, R. M. (2004). Making sense of text: Strategies used by good average readers. *Reading Matrix, 4*(1), 26-37.

Bryant, D., Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Ugel, N., Hamff, A., & Hougen, M. (2000). Reading outcomes for students with and without learning disabilities in general education middle school content area classes. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 24*, 251-264.

Chalak, A. (2015). The effect of task-based instruction on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. *Applied Research on English Language, 1*(4), 19-29.

Dabaghmanesh, T., Zamanian, M., & Bagheri, M. (2013). The effect of cooperative learning approach on Iranian EFL student's achievement among different majors in general English course. *International Journal of Linguistics, 5*(6), 1-11. doi:doi:10.5296/ijl.v5i6.4691

Gani, S. A., Yusuf, Y. Q., & Susiani, R. (2016). rogressive Outcome of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) to EFL Learners. *Kasetsart Joutrnal of Social Sciences, 37*, 144-149.

Graesser, A. (2007). An introduction to strategic reading comprehension. In D. McNamara (Ed.), *Reading comprehension strategies: Theories, interventions, and technologies* Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Huang, C. Y. (2004). *Think to win: An inquiry-based approach via Collaborative Strategic Reading technique to teach English reading in a senior high EFL classroom*

Hyland, F. (2000). ESL writers and feedback: Giving more autonomy to students. *Language Teaching Research, 4*(1), 33-58.

Jalilifar, A. (2010). The Effect of cooperative learning techniques on college students' reading comprehension. *International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics, 38*(1), 96-108. doi:doi:/10.1016/j.system.2009.12.009

Karabuka, F., & Kaya, E. (2013). Collaborative strategic reading practice with adut EFL learners: A collaborative and a

reflective approach to reading. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 106*, 621-630.

Khonamri, F., & Karimabadi, M. (2015). Collaborative Strategic Reading and

Critical Reading Ability of Intermediate Iranian Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5*(7), 1375-1382.

Klinger, J., & Vaughn, S. (1998). Using collaborative strategic reading. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 30*(6), 32-37.

Klinger, J., Vaughn, S., Boardman, A., & Swanson, E. (2012). *Now we get it! Boosting comprehension with collaborative strategic reading*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Klingner, Vaughn, S., Argüelles, M., Hughes, M., & Ahwee, S. (2004). Collaborative strategic reading: "Real world" lessons from classroom teachers. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*, 291-302.

Le, H., Janssen, J., & Wubbels, T. (2017). Collaborative learning practices: teacher and student perceived obstacles to effective student collaboration. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 48*(1), 1-24.

Mizbani, M., & Chalak, A. (2017). Analyzing reading and writing activities of Iranian EFL textbook Prospect 3 based on Bloom's revised taxonomy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 4*(2), 13-27.

Momtaz, E., & Garner, M. (2010). Does collaborative learning improve EFL learner's reading comprehension? . *Journal of linguistics and language teaching, 1*(1), 15-36.

Monos, K. (2005). A study of the English reading strategies of Hungarian university students with implication for reading instruction in an academic context. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research, 1*, 1-23.

Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-

monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction, 1*, 117–175.

Pressley, M. (2000). What should comprehension instruction be the instruction of? . In R. Barr (Ed.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III, pp. 545–561). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rahayu, N. S. (2019). The effectiveness of collaborative strategic reading (CSR) in teaching critical reading to EFL students. *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia, 11*(2), 359-370.

Rahimi, A., & Tahmasebi, S. (2010). Mediating Iranian EFL learners: Private speech and scaffolding in reading comprehension. *Mediating Iranian EFL learners: Private speech and scaffolding in reading comprehension, 1*(2), 56-71.

Rajaei, A., Talebi, S. H., & Abadikhah. (2020). The effects of collaborative and non-collaborative approaches to teaching reading strategies on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension and attitude toward reading. *Ikala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura, 25*(1), 55-73.

Vaughn, S., Klingner, J., Swanson, E., Boardman, A., Roberts, G., S., M., & Steelman-Spisak, S. J. (2011). Efficacy of collaborative strategic reading with middle school students. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(2), 938-964.

Zare Behtash, E., Barabadi, A., & Eskandari, Z. (2019). Reading comprehension strategies used by Iranian university students while reading academic English texts. *Issues in Educational Research, 29*(4), 1089-1106.

Biodata

Azizeh Chalak is an associate professor of TEFL at the English Department of Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Branch, Isfahan, Iran. She has more than 20 years of experience in teaching English at graduate and undergraduate programs. She is the editor-in-chief of Research in English Language Pedagogy (RELP) published at IAU, Isfahan Branch. She has

presented and published many papers at different conferences and journals both at international and national levels and has been the reviewer of different journals or research projects. Her research interests include discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, e-mail communications, and integration of technology in teaching.

Monir Tahmasebi is an MA graduate in TEFL at the English Department of Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Branch, Isfahan, Iran, and a teacher at high school. Her M.A. thesis was on the effectiveness of collaborative strategic reading to improve the reading comprehension of high school learners. Her research interests include teaching methodology and skills.