

USING CIRC TECHNIQUE FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION COURSE AMONG STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT THAILAND NATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were 1. to investigate the efficacy of the learning management plan employing CIRC techniques for enhancing English reading and writing skills during English for communication course among students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University 2. to compare English reading and writing abilities in the course of English for Communication among students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University before and after employing CIRC 3.to investigate students' perspectives on the efficacy of learning management through the CIRC technique for improving English reading and writing skills in the course of English for Communication. The population comprises students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University across its 17 campuses. The sampling method used was stratified sampling, categorized based on region, campus, and classroom. The research design was one group pretest posttest design. The research instruments were the lesson plans based on the CIRC Technique which was included of five units for 15 hours, English reading comprehension and summary writing pretest-posttest and questionnaire used for asking students' satisfaction toward the CIRC technique. The data obtained were analyzed by using mean and standard deviation.

The findings revealed that 1. the effectiveness of the learning management plan utilizing the CIRC technique to improve English reading and writing skills in the English for Communication course for the students of the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University in the experimental group (comprising 120 individuals) exceeded the specified criteria, with a performance score of 83.00/80.33. 2. English reading comprehension and summary writing ability of teacher students were increased, and 3.they were very satisfied with CIRC technique.

Keywords: CIRC techniques; English reading and writing abilities; English for Communication

Introduction

The utilization of English from diverse global sources is increasingly prevalent among individuals undertaking the process of learning the language. It has been indicated that within the next 10-15 years, spanning approximately 2015 to 2030, the number of English learners is anticipated to surge to an estimated 2 billion individuals (Davis Graddol, 2006: 114). This data underscores a global recognition of the pivotal role English plays in contemporary society, prompting a widespread acknowledgment that various nations ought to accord it due significance. Consequently, the acquisition of English has evolved into a paramount skill, as it facilitates the augmentation of knowledge and abilities, serving as the foundational cornerstone for effective language utilization in both oral and written communication. In the current educational landscape, students are compelled to engage with a myriad of resources, drawing from both domestic and international textbooks, as well as diverse media platforms, in order to optimize their learning efficacy.

Engaging in graduate-level studies necessitates students to explore and research a wide array of information, with proficiency in the English language being a requisite. The ability to seek information from global sources is essential for compiling reports that not only demonstrate knowledge but also showcase a deep understanding of the acquired content. The cultivation of English reading skills is akin to unlocking the doors of wisdom, providing students with access to a diverse range of knowledge sources. Additionally, the significance of English writing skills cannot be overstated. These skills are crucial for students seeking employment with international agencies post-graduation, as they enable effective communication with individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Proficient English writing skills empower students to articulate ideas coherently, fostering the capacity to communicate with foreigners through written means and contributing to successful global collaboration.

CIRC (Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition) is a learning management technique rooted in cooperative teaching methods, as developed by Slavin and colleagues (Slavin, 1990). This approach is designed to foster the concurrent development of reading and writing skills. A key aspect of this method involves organizing students into groups of approximately 4-6 individuals, encouraging collaborative learning experiences. Within these groups, students engage in activities and mutually assist one another, taking turns in leadership and follower roles. The methodology emphasizes active listening to group members' opinions and shared responsibilities for the collective group work.

Objectives

1.To investigate the efficacy of the learning management plan employing CIRC techniques for enhancing English reading and writing skills during English for communication course among students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University.

2.To compare English reading and writing abilities in the course of English for Communication among students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University before and after employing CIRC.

3.To investigate students' perspectives on the efficacy of learning management through the CIRC technique for improving English reading and writing skills in the course of English for Communication.

Hypothesis

Reading and writing abilities of students studying the course of English for communication in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University would be higher after studying with the CIRC technique than before.

Literature review

English Reading

The reading process is the cognitive activity that transpires in the reader's mind, facilitating comprehension and the creation of new knowledge. It involves interpreting and evaluating the text by drawing upon one's personal experiences. This process, however, is not overtly observable and requires examination of external behaviors, often inferred from evidence or events investigated by research.

According to Bond & Tinker (1957, p.19, cited in Yuwadi Pothaya, 2003), success in reading relies on fundamental elements, including:

1. **Understanding the meaning of words (Word Meaning):** Students must comprehend the meanings of individual words.
2. **Understanding the meaning of word groups (Word Units):** It is essential for students to learn how to read word groups to grasp continuous meaning rather than reading one word at a time.
3. **Sentence Comprehension:** In addition to understanding individual words and word groups, learners must connect words or groups of words to comprehend sentence meaning.

4. **Understanding Paragraph Comprehension:** Comprehensive study entails the ability to understand paragraphs by perceiving the relationships and organization of ideas within the read text, thereby comprehending the entirety of the content.

Chanthanon (1998) posited that understanding the primary purpose of reading is crucial for influencing reading ability. Drawing upon knowledge structure theory, there are three essential elements that impact reading comprehension:

1. **Basic knowledge of language (Linguistic Schema):** This entails understanding letters, spelling of words, grammatical structures, and relationships within the text.
2. **Content Schema:** This involves knowledge about culture, general information, and specific content as it pertains to or connects with the material presented in reading passages.
3. **Basic knowledge about the structure of reading passages (Formal Schema):** This refers to understanding the structure of various writing types employed to present content in reading passages. Numerous types include descriptive, narrative, and comparative structures.

Reading comprehension is a process that involves creating mental images in the brain. Consequently, dissecting the components of reading comprehension proves challenging, and direct examination is not feasible. Instead, indirect methods, such as observing reading behaviors, validating the accuracy of readers' responses to questions, and subsequently summarizing and referencing elements anticipated to influence reading comprehension, must be employed for study.

Writing

Arapoff (1967: 199-120) asserted that writing is a cognitive process wherein each writer establishes goals and recognizes the significance of their writing. It unfolds as a series of sequential steps. According to Finocchiaro (1973: 3), writing is the manifestation of thoughts through written expression. Writers articulate their experiences, thoughts, and emotions, conveying them through the medium of written language. MacCrimon (1974: 3) characterized writing as a process involving learning, applying, and transcribing ideas. This is accomplished through the use of symbols to ensure clarity and understanding for the reader.

Moffett (quoted in Kean, 1983: 8, cited in Khamlertlak, 1999: 8-9) posited that cursive writing involves assigning symbols to represent letters. The process of creating symbols encompasses activities such as copying, memorizing words, and incorporating additions into writing. This process involves editing words into written form with the ultimate goal of conveying information to readers and expressing thoughts in words. Aksaraanukroh (1989: 75)

asserted that writing is a method intertwined with thoughts. It serves as a means of communicating ideas to the reader, requiring the writer to gather, convey, and organize information in written form using the mechanisms of language. Saiudom (1998: 6) further elaborated that writing is the transformation of spoken language into symbols. This involves selecting thoughts with the aim of organizing experiences in a coherent manner that aligns with popular language conventions and facilitates effective communication.

Moreover, Swales (1997: 34) comments that writing is a method that necessitates the arrangement of text in the correct order of words, vocabulary, and grammar. This alignment is contingent upon the author's objective to effectively communicate with readers.

CIRC (Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition)

Robert J. Stevens, Nancy A. Madden, Robert E. Slavin, and Anna Marie Farnish (1987, cited in Woraphan Sittilert, 1994) are educational researchers affiliated with the Center for Research on Academic Effectiveness of Students with Academic Problems at Johns Hopkins University in the USA. They are the developers of the CIRC (Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition) learning activity technique, a form of cooperative learning emphasizing team collaboration. CIRC is a learning management technique designed to foster students' reading comprehension skills by encouraging them to articulate their understanding through writing summaries of the stories they read, expressing their opinions in a narrative style.

Furthermore, CIRC employs a group learning model to enhance broad reading skills. The teacher organizes students into groups, each comprising 2 high-reading proficiency learners and 2 low-reading proficiency learners. These groups are paired, allowing proficient and weaker learners to assist each other in assigned reading activities. After the teacher presents the content and during the final study period, all group members reconvene to collaboratively edit each other's work. Upon completion of each lesson, individual testing takes place, and the scores, both from the tests and the collaborative group work, are combined to form a group score. This approach aims to raise awareness among students about the collective success of learning together.

In essence, CIRC is an instructional strategy in which teachers create opportunities for high-achieving students to support their peers with lower proficiency, fostering interaction, empathy, problem-solving skills, and shared responsibility for the group's work. This approach considers the interests and success of all group members.

Population and sample group

The population comprises students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University across its 17 campuses. The research employed a sample group consisting of students from the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University, specifically selected from four classrooms. The sampling method used was stratified sampling, categorized based on region, campus, and classroom.

Experimental Design

In this research, the researcher utilized pre-experimental research, employing a pre-study and post-study design, specifically the One-group pretest posttest design.

Table 3-1 illustrates the single-group experimental design that underwent testing both before and after the learning activity.

T1	X	T2
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T1 represents a pre-learning test utilizing the CIRC technique to improve English reading and writing skills for communication among students.

X represents learning management using CIRC techniques to enhance reading and writing skills in English for communication for students.

T2 represents a post-test for learning using the CIRC technique to enhance reading and writing skills in English for communication among students.

Research Instruments

The instruments employed in this research consist of three parts:

1) A learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques designed to improve English reading and writing skills for communication, implemented over a duration of 15 hours.

2) An English reading skills test created by the researcher, comprising multiple-choice questions with four options.

3) An English Writing Skills Test, a written examination wherein students are required to compose a summary of their reading in approximately 6-8 sentences. Evaluation is conducted using Scoring Rubrics criteria, based on the framework established by Chantalay (2005). The criteria encompass five aspects of English writing, including important points, thematic support, redundancy, new sentences formation, and linguistic accuracy and punctuation usage.

4) A student satisfaction assessment form gauging satisfaction with the learning management utilizing CIRC techniques for enhancing reading and writing skills in English for communication. This evaluation form employs a rating scale format with five levels.

Data Analysis

To analyze the effectiveness of the learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques in enhancing reading and writing skills in English for communication among students, the efficiency criteria $E1/E2 = 70/70$ were employed. The learning outcomes were then compared with those of a learning management plan utilizing the CIRC technique through a t-test (Independent Sample).

Additionally, the analysis encompassed students' satisfaction with their studies under the learning management plan using CIRC techniques to enhance English reading and writing skills for communication. This was achieved by determining the mean (μ) and standard deviation (S.D.), followed by a comparison with predetermined interpretation criteria.

Results

The analysis of the effectiveness of the learning management plans utilizing CIRC techniques to enhance reading and writing skills in the English for Communication course was conducted for students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University.

Table 4-1 presents the results of the analysis of the effectiveness of the learning management plan using the CIRC technique to improve English reading and writing skills in the English for Communication course for students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University, in accordance with the 70/70 criteria.

Students Number	Process efficiency (E1) in terms of practice and subtest scores.		Lesson efficiency (E2) in terms of English reading skill scores.	
120	Mean	Efficiency	Mean	Efficiency
	41.50	83.00	32.13	80.33

From the table, it is observed that the effectiveness of the learning management plan utilizing the CIRC technique to improve English reading and writing skills in the English for Communication course for the students of the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University in the experimental group (comprising 120 individuals) exceeded the specified criteria, with a performance score of 83.00/80.33.

A comparative analysis of English reading skills in the English for Communication course was conducted among students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University who studied with a learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques.

Table 4-2 presents the results of the comparative analysis of English reading skills in the English for Communication course for students of the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University, both pre and post studying with the CIRC technique.

	n	X	SD	df	t	p
Pre-Test	120	8.88	4.16	119	56.36**	.000
Post-Test		24.05	5.31			

**p<.01

From the table, it is evident that the English reading skills of students who studied with the CIRC learning management plan improved after studying compared to before studying. This improvement is statistically significant at the .01 level.

A comparative analysis of English writing skills in the English for Communication course was conducted for students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University who studied with a learning management plan using CIRC techniques.

Table 4-3 presents the results of the comparative analysis of English writing skills in the English for Communication course for students of the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University, both before and after studying with the CIRC technique.

	n	X	SD	df	t	p
Pre-Test	120	5.02	2.44	119	38.127**	.000
Post-Test		16.17	2.34			

**p<.01

From the table, it is evident that the English writing skills of students who studied with the CIRC learning management plan improved after studying compared to before studying. This improvement is statistically significant at the .01 level.

An analysis of student satisfaction was conducted regarding their learning experiences with a learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques to enhance English reading and writing skills in the English for Communication subject for students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University.

Table 4-4 presents the results of the satisfaction analysis for the experimental group students who continued their learning with a learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques to enhance English reading and writing skills in the English for Communication course for students in the Faculty of Education at Thailand National Sports University.

Descriptions	Satisfaction Level		
	X	SD	Level
Contents			
1. The difficulty of the content is appropriate for students' abilities.	4.18	0.44	High
2. Content, language, and format match the interests and needs of students.	4.23	0.68	High
3. Contents are arranged in order of increasing difficulty.	4.03	0.76	High
4. Arrange content appropriately within the allocated class time.	4.26	0.75	High
Mean Content Score	4.18	0.66	High
Learning Activities			
5. Students can participate in learning activities together.	4.32	0.66	High
6. Students employ various communication methods during learning.	4.43	0.44	High
7. Students articulate their knowledge to group members.	4.33	0.68	High
8. Students engage in exchanging opinions with each other.	4.52	0.52	Highest
9. Students practice communication skills among group members, such as being a leader, making decisions, and solving problems.	4.14	0.75	High
10. Students follow a sequential approach while performing activities.	4.27	0.43	High
Mean Score for Learning Activities	4.34	0.58	High
Measurement and Evaluation			
11. There is a formative assessment of students' academic performance.	4.61	0.44	Highest
12. There is an assessment of learning achievement before and after studying.	4.59	0.68	Highest
13. Students are aware of their individual learning outcomes.	4.67	0.51	Highest
14. Students are aware of the learning outcomes of	4.46	0.64	High

the group.			
Mean Score for Measurement and Evaluation:	4.58	0.57	Highest
Overall mean score	4.36	0.60	High

From the table, it is evident that students are highly satisfied with continuing their learning through a plan using CIRC techniques to enhance reading and writing skills in English for communication. Overall satisfaction is at a high level, and when evaluating each aspect individually, it was found to be at a high level across all aspects.

Discussion and Conclusion

The learning management plan utilizing CIRC techniques to enhance English reading and writing skills for effective communication yielded a score of 83.00/80.33, surpassing the specified criteria of 70/70. This success can be attributed to the organization of cooperative learning through the application of CIRC (Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition) techniques as a pedagogical approach. This method provides students with the opportunity to cultivate reading and writing skills collectively, engaging in group processes to complete assigned activities. The practice of English reading and writing skills spans the entire learning process, with a particular emphasis on collaborative work at the conclusion of each lesson. Students collaboratively review and edit each other's work, followed by individual assessments. The scores from both the individual tests and the collaborative group work are amalgamated into a group score, fostering awareness among students of their collective learning achievements. It is evident that CIRC learning is an instructional approach through which students genuinely acquire knowledge, fostering a sense of acceptance and a shared goal among all group members.

Between organizing collaborative group learning activities using the CIRC model and the SQ4R model, it was observed that organizing collaborative group learning activities using the CIRC model achieved an efficiency score of 80.08/78.05, surpassing the efficiency criteria set at 75/75. This aligns with the findings from a study conducted by Khamasawut (2006: 58-84) on the comparison of achievement and attitudes towards English subjects among Grade 5 students at Joseph Uppatham Sampram School in Nakhon Pathom Province. The study indicated that teaching using the CIRC technique differed significantly from normal teaching, with the CIRC learning set for Grade 5 students demonstrating an efficiency score of 89.97/81.37. This finding is also consistent with the research results of Dasri (2009: website) on the use of collaborative, blended learning activities to develop reading and writing skills in English from Aesop's fables for Grade 5 students.

The proficiency in reading and writing English for students who underwent the CIRC learning management plan to enhance reading and writing skills for communication showed a significant improvement after studying compared to before studying, reaching statistical significance at the .05 level. This result aligns with the hypothesis and may be attributed to the CIRC technique employed in the learning management, aimed at developing both reading and writing skills. Natural language learning skills, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, were integral to the learning plan designed by the researcher. The plan was structured to prioritize reading skills training, followed by writing skills training. The learning activities commenced with each group of students practicing reading skills collaboratively to identify the topic and main idea of the story read. Subsequently, they engaged in the practice of writing summaries of the main points (Summary Writing). This involved crafting summaries using their own words, without copying directly from the passage. Following this, students within each group collaborated to review and edit the reading and writing activity sheets. The findings were then presented to other groups and teaching staff for discussion, allowing participants to express their opinions and assess the accuracy and completeness of the summaries (Laoriandee, 2002: 178).

Student satisfaction with learning through the learning management plan using CIRC techniques to enhance reading and writing skills in English for overall communication is at a high level. This high level of satisfaction is observed across all aspects considered. The success of this approach may be attributed to the suitability of the CIRC technique for teaching reading and writing English. The technique effectively contributes to the development of learning outcomes and group work skills. In group settings, students collaborate to learn and assist each other, fostering the promotion and development of reading and writing skills collectively. The benefits of collaborative learning extend beyond individual progress, as students recognize the advantages of teamwork in enhancing their own and their peers' learning outcomes. Moreover, organizing learning using the CIRC technique creates an environment where students learn and work together in groups toward a common goal. The collaborative nature of this approach brings joy to students, fostering unity among peers. Consequently, students gain confidence, experience enjoyable learning, freely express their opinions, and establish a friendly atmosphere. The approach helps students become more acquainted with working alongside their friends, engaging in the exchange of opinions and sincere mutual assistance. These findings align with the principles of group work skills in cooperative learning outlined by Johnson and Johnson (1990, cited in Laoriandee, 2004: 30). According to these principles, successful collaborative learning involves building familiarity, trust, and acceptance among group members, clear and correct communication, mutual

support and encouragement through praise, and the ability to find resolutions and understand arguments between group members.

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