

# technology and collaboration

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# Microsoft Immersive Reader: Technology and Collaboration to Support Reading Comprehension

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## ABSTRACT

Reading is the skill that is considered the main source of learning. With the rapid development of technology, the main goal of teaching has been tailored towards motivating students to be attentive and critical readers. However, in classroom practices, Indonesian students still experience problems in English reading comprehension. The present action classroom action study dealt with improving students reading comprehension through the integration of Microsoft Immersive Reader (MIR) and collaborative learning. This is due to some studies revealed that collaborative learning and MIR offer effective strategy to improve students' learning achievement. The data were collected by administering a pre-test in pre-cycle and two post-tests in cycle 1 and cycle 2. The mean figure of the pre-test as an initial reflection was 57.1. Then, the mean figure of post-test 1 was 65.5 and it improved to 75.2 in the post-test 2. This indicated that there was significant improvement achieved in post-test 2 as all students achieved the minimum passing grade. This study implies that teachers should consider the integration of Microsoft Immersive Reader and collaborative learning in teaching reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** collaborative learning, Microsoft Immersive Reader, reading comprehension

## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension can be developed through various tools such as collaborative learning environments. Learners who work together could learn together. Collaborative learning environments are spaces within a classroom where students can work together. Collaborative learning is a concept of learning in which students are assigned to be actively engaged in groups and peers in doing the learning activities to achieve a learning goal. It is widely known that collaborative learning refers to an instruction method in which learners at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a learning goal (Jacobs, & Shan, 2015). In addition, educationalists consider that collaborative learning creates an active exchange of ideas within students in their groups and develops students' learning willingness and motivation (Jacobs & Shan 2015; Felix-Augelo, 2017). In a collaborative learning environment, students are given responsibility to manage their own learning as well as their group members. They can feel successful together when they work together. As a peer team, students can use critical thinking skills at a higher level, they are confident in numbers. Moreover, collaborative learning also helps student to attain higher thinking skills (Rokhaniyah, 2016). Working as a collaborative peer team, will allow students to build understanding of the text and increase their comprehension skills because of the top-level thinking. Thus, collaborative learning can help build reading comprehension.

Another tool that can be used to enhance reading comprehension is technology. The ideas behind the use of technology are well documented. Today's people become more inseparable with technology. Technology has supplied a lot of means and tools that have been so prominent and essential in the development of education. It has also contributed to the improvement of the learning process through raising students' motivation towards learning and encouraging them. During the outstanding period in technological development, the computer and the Internet have been developed as the leading learning tools. Edutopia Team (2008) mention that when technology is implemented correctly, it can enhance many aspects of

curriculum. It is implied that <sup>5</sup> technology is effective when it is embedded in the curriculum and is routine in classrooms. In addition, students need a chance to use and learn with a tool that provides motivation. Jeff & Castellani (2001) state that providing opportunities with repetition for students to build their reading skills through available technology tools <sup>6</sup> starts by allowing students to direct their own learning and choose materials they would like to read. One of the technology tools <sup>7</sup> that can be used to enhance reading comprehension is Immersive Reader. Novianti (2017) mentions that Microsoft Immersive Reader offers various features to help learners in reading comprehension. This tool is created on Office 365 and Microsoft Edge to help improving reading comprehension. MIR provides several features to help users in learning reading. According to Novianti (2017), this learning tool makes texts more accessible to learners of all ages and abilities. The features on MIR help users get better understanding when reading the text. The features consist of (1) reading preference with line focus, picture dictionary, and translation (2) grammar preference that allows the users to label different part of speech and split the syllables (3) text preference that allows the users to change the text space and size to get clear text display and (4) read aloud that allows the users to listen to the text they read.

Understanding the importance of technology and collaborative learning, this study focuses on enhancing students' reading comprehension to solve the learning problems encountered by students in reading class. This study belongs to classroom action research conducted intensively to gradually improve students' reading comprehension and build up critical thinking, develop their communication as well as social skills. Moreover, the study was conducted as a part of positive action undertaken as a response to the result of the preliminary study conducted to the students in which the mean figure of their pre-test was low. Lecturers, in this case, felt responsible to help students find an effective alternative that they can achieve the predetermined learning standard.

## METHODS

The subject of this study was a group of English Education Department students. One class with thirty-five students was chosen as the subject of the study because their ability in reading comprehension as indicated by initial reflection was still very low. Therefore, an immediate and <sup>11</sup> appropriate teaching-learning process needs to be carried out to solve the problem. This study was classroom action research. This action research <sup>12</sup> typically involves four broad phases in a cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection as proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (Burns 2010). Those four phases are bond together in a cycle that can be repeated based on the need. In each cycle, there must be pre-test and post-test to measure the improvement of the students' ability on reading. There were 30 questions in each test. The tests were in the form of multiple choice.

In the planning, the researchers prepared the instructional planning for each session before the present study was conducted in the classroom. In action, the researchers conducted the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, in the observation the researchers carefully observe <sup>13</sup> the learning activities. In this step, the researchers observed the subject's attitudes and behavior toward the teaching and learning process to see the improvement of the subjects. In reflection, the researchers analyzed the result of the post-test and the result of observation. The teaching and learning process was divided into two cycles. Each cycle consisted of two learning sessions to enhance students' reading comprehension through the integration of MIR and collaborative learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this classroom action research, the data were collected by administering pre-test, post-test, and observation. The aim of administering the pre-test was to examine the subjects' pre-existing ability in reading comprehension before the treatment was given. Furthermore, the post-test was used to see the extent to which the strategy can be used to improve the subjects' ability in reading comprehension and critical thinking.

### *Pre-cycle*

In the pre-cycle, an initial reflection was conducted by doing an interview with the English lecturers who taught reading comprehension at the selected class. The interview was intended to reveal how the students' learning and what strategies that are usually used in teaching reading, and <sup>2</sup> then the observation conducted. From the interview, it can be implied that there was an inefficient routine for teaching reading to students commonly used in the class. One started with lecturer assigning students to read a text and then waiting for

students to finish reading it. There is no communication between students. Sometimes, students, again individually, answered a few pre-reading questions or did short activity which assisted them activate their reading. Furthermore, a pre-test was carried out to know the existing ability of the subject in reading comprehension before the teaching and learning process. The result of pre-test indicated that students' reading comprehension was poor. The mean figure of the pre-test was 57.1. This figure was low if it is compared with the minimum passing grade 65. Thus, to improve students reading comprehension, Microsoft Immersive Reader and collaborative learning was integrated into reading class.

### *Cycle 1*

The teaching cycle was carried out based on the result of the pre-test. After designing the lesson plan, teaching action was carried out. In each teaching action, there were three main activities namely pre-reading, whilst reading, and post-reading. In pre-reading, the class activity was focused on stimulating the students' prior knowledge by asking some questions. These questions were used as brainstorming on the topic and explaining the objective of the task. In whilst reading phase, the class activity was focused on guiding and assigning students to read the whole text and recite what they had read. In post reading activity, the class activity was focused on having students review the text. In this phase, the lecturer asked the students what the main idea of the text is and asked them to summarize some essential points they got from the text. They were assigned to summarize the text entitled "Digital Learning: what to know in 2020" with their own words.

Then a post-test was administered at the end of second learning session. The students were required to answer 30 questions related to the text being learned. The result of the post-test 1 showed that students' reading comprehension improved considerably.

In reflection, the researchers analyzed the result of the post-test and the result of the observation. Based on the classroom observation, it showed that students took part actively in all learning activities. In addition, the mean figure for the post-test 1 was 65.5. Based on the result of these sessions, it was decided to continue this study to the second cycle.

### *Cycle 2*

The second cycle was also conducted in four interconnected activities which were the same as the steps in the first cycle. There was revision made on the planning to make the second cycle more interesting for the students. In the second cycle, students were assigned to be actively engaged in pairs and group learning activities. They were required to seriously discuss their reading assignments in pairs and in groups. When they were working in pairs and group, they were facilitated with Microsoft Immersive Reader. They used some features of MIR to complete their assignments. Firstly, they used read-aloud feature to have the reading text being read aloud while they take some note. Then, they also maximized the use of grammar feature to highlight different part of speech. Moreover, they also used the Pictionary (picture dictionary) feature to visualize some difficult words they found during reading. The result of the classroom observation also indicated that students working collaboratively in pairs and group using MIR features made the students active in learning. In addition, the worksheet for the post-test 2 was administered at the end of second cycle. The mean figure for the second cycle was 75.2. This indicated that there was significant improvement achieved in the post-test 2. Moreover, the result of the observation showed the class situation was also improved. Thus, it can be implied that the use of collaborative learning and MIR features in reading comprehension was very effective.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to improve students' reading comprehension through the integration of MIR and collaborative learning. The present study was conducted due to the poor ability of the students in reading comprehension as indicated by the result of the preliminary study. This classroom action study, the students' improvement in reading comprehension could be seen by comparing the students' mean score of the pre-test and two post-tests. The study showed that the integration of MIR and collaborative learning were effective to improve students reading comprehension. Moreover, based on the observation it was found that the integration of MIR and collaborative learning could also improve students' motivation and interest in learning reading comprehension. Therefore, English teachers are suggested to carefully carry out MIR and collaborative learning to enhance students' reading comprehension.

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