The Investigation of the Effects of Cooperative Learning in Lessons English in Reading Skill Development Among University Masin Students, Iraq

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Abstract. *The impact of cooperative learning on English classes for university students in the development of reading skills.   The study was performed on 62 students enrolled in the Sciences College of the University of Masin during the 2022-2023 academic year. The study employed an experimental group of 29 students and a control group of 31 students. To examine the impact of cooperative learning in English lessons on the improvement of students' reading skills, data were analysed using statistical software, employing Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests. The outcomes of the current study indicate no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group for pre-test scores in reading skill development, self-control, avoidance, and overall averages ($p>0.05$). Significant differences exist between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group across all aspects and total scores, favouring the post-test ($p<0.05$). There are notable disparities between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group across all dimensions and total scores, favouring the post-test ($p<0.05$). There are notable disparities between the post-test results of the experiment and control groups across all sub-dimensions and overall*

scores (p<0.05). The results demonstrated that the reading proficiency advancement of the experimental group, which participated in cooperative learning, significantly exceeded that of the control group, which employed conventional methods, revealing a marked disparity between the two groups.

Key words: *Cooperative learning, reading skill development, English lesson*

Introduction

The English language occupies an important position in the university curriculum due to its usefulness to society. The study of the English language enhances our understanding of the world. These encompass the language utilised, the relationships between individuals and their surroundings, and the ramifications of these interactions on both humanity and their language. Additional factors encompass the availability of resources and their prudent utilisation, as well as the maintenance of interactions across civilisations. The instruction and acquisition of the English language cultivate certain abilities, competencies, values, and attitudes in pupils. These encompass introspective and critical thinking, acute observation, patience and endurance, and respect for differing perspectives, all of which are essential for human existence on Earth [1]. Perusal Skill development is a vital component of English language studies, particularly at the university level [2]. Diaz characterises reading proficiency as "crucial in the English language." Research concurs that reading proficiency is an essential component of the English language at various levels [3][4]. Researchers employ reading proficiency to perform investigations on various linguistic phenomena and to articulate their findings accordingly. University lectures are generally founded on conventional educational methods. The lecturer dedicates significant effort to delineate the curriculum in the classroom. During that period, students ought to attentively and passively engage with the lecture. Consequently, they compel the usage of the textbook to memorise English grammar rules, translation skills, and reading proficiency [5]. The instructor endeavours to assist students in advancing their English language skills by employing a conventional teaching methodology [6]. Consequently, conventional

learning significantly influences instructional methods. Cooperative learning seems to be an effective approach for tackling classroom issues [7]. CL is an educational method that promotes social skills via student interaction and improves language acquisition.. Cooperative learning provides students with opportunity to cultivate successful learning. Furthermore, it provides students with opportunity to practise English and enhance their learning from peers and instructors. Moreover, it enhances social relationships among students by facilitating interaction with team members [8]. Numerous scholars examined optimal methodologies for instructing English language learners in classroom settings. They examined the equilibrium between conventional education and collaborative learning. The work of developmental psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who highlighted the critical role of social contact in learning, is also heavily cited by those who advocate for cooperative learning. The zone of proximal development was defined by Vygotsky in a variety of ways. The fundamental concept is "the gap between actual developmental levels, assessed through independent problem-solving, and potential developmental levels, characterised by problem-solving with adult support or collaboration with more skilled peers." It is characterised as "the disparity between what a learner can achieve autonomously and what he or she can accomplish with support" [9]. Additionally, Lev Vygotsky gained increased motivation in 1990 regarding second language learning for learners, a viewpoint known as 'socio-cultural' theory. It is from constructivism that this theory is derived. Piaget and Vygotsky, according to Hashimoto and Nyikes, are both constructivists; nonetheless, they hold different opinions. The conventional educational methodology primarily emphasises independent learning by students and underscores the reciprocal relationship between educators and learners, alongside the instructional methods employed [10].

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A multitude of academics have investigated the impact of various traditional and cooperative learning methodologies on distinct components of the English language. Cooperation in learning has been contrasted with more conventional approaches to language study by some researchers. My contention is that no one has looked at

how Iraqi institutions' use of cooperative learning and conventional methods of instruction affects students' vocabulary growth in English. Iraqi college students' reading comprehension was the target of this research, which sought to compare the efficacy of cooperative and conventional learning strategies. Research has demonstrated that all students, even English language learners, can benefit from cooperative learning. Cooperative learning not only enhances educational outcomes but also fosters respect and camaraderie among diverse student groupings. In fact, greater diversity within a team correlates with increased earnings for each participant. Indeed, to execute various learning activities, peers learn to depend on one another constructively [11]. Furthermore, the teacher's role in the traditional learning method is significant, particularly when he merely instructs students to recite information. There is a lack of collaboration among pupils in the class regarding such tactics. Students are motivated to identify responsibilities when instructed in group formats. The conventional approach results in a lack of inventiveness among students and fosters reliance on their instructor. They find it challenging to resolve the issue in a learning environment devoid of lecturer support, as the methodology relies heavily on the instructor. In Iraqi universities, the majority of lecturers are inclined to employ a teacher-centered approach. Upon completing their English studies at a language institution or school, the majority of pupils tend to forget what they have learnt, as they rely heavily on their instructors. The optimal option is the student-centered approach, enabling autonomous study and learning. The student-centered approach is a collaborative learning paradigm. Consequently, students have responsibility for one another's learning. Moreover, kids are urged to engage in 'positive interdependence' while collaborating inside a group. Consequently, language acquisition is facilitated when pupils engage in the target language. Fekri asserts that cooperative learning strategies enhance motivation, alleviate stress, and foster a healthy classroom environment. This study examined whether cooperative and traditional learning methodologies may enhance students' improvement of English reading skills [25].

1.2 Research Questions

The present investigation aimed to answer the following questions and test the following hypotheses in line with the study's stated goals:

RQ1. Is there any significant difference between the effects of traditional and cooperative learning strategies on Iraqi universities learner's acquisition of English reading skill development?

RQ2. What type of strategies (traditional & cooperative learning) is more effective on Iraqi universities learner's English reading skill development?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H01. There is no significant difference between the effect of traditional and cooperative learning learning strategies on Iraqi universities learners' acquisition of the English reading skill development.

H02. Traditional and cooperative learning strategies have the same effect on Iraqi universities learner's acquisition of the English reading skill development.

Literature Review

1.4 Review of the Literature

1.4.1 Cooperative learning

CL is a pedagogical approach that facilitates students working in groups of four to six to collaboratively construct their own knowledge [12]. This is a constructivist learning approach that necessitates student exploration of material, positioning students at the core of the learning process [13]. It does not require teachers to instruct pupils, but rather to guide them to information sources. In this manner, the students construct their own education. Conversely, CL amplifies the objectives of Constructivism and empowers educators to ascertain that every student attains the designated learning level. Teams of four to six are formed to foster interdependence, enabling members to assist one another in achieving the objective. Davidson and Major assert that an endeavour was undertaken to develop an educational framework pertaining to cooperative learning. These collaborative theories align with conversations on how to promote student engagement and autonomy in their education effectively. Collaborative learning (CL) is a teaching strategy in which students do academic tasks in smaller groups [14]. Johnson et al. contend that CL is an effective pedagogical strategy employed by students to improve their social

development in a classroom setting. Students engage in collaborative efforts within small groups to achieve both personal and shared goals. During collaborative activities, students seek outcomes that yield advantages for themselves and all other group members [26]. CL provides learners the opportunity to apply the language.Bilen and Tavil assert that it allows individuals to independently uncover vocabulary and grammar, enabling them to manipulate the language to meet their educational requirements. Numerous research have demonstrated the efficacy of CL in enhancing reading comprehension. Research indicates that the implementation of CS enhances learners' opportunities for interaction, leading to improved reading outcomes and reduced anxiety levels [15][16]. Reading comprehension and students' views of these approaches were investigated by Sittilert in relation to Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) [17]. The research included 106 pupils who took part in an English reading session. There were two groups into which they were placed. While the control group followed the traditional methodology outlined in the instructor's guidebook, the experimental group was taught utilising the CIRC method by the researcher. Students in the experimental group had a more positive impression of the procedures and showed better reading comprehension on the posttest. The impact of the jigsaw method and students' enthusiasm in learning on eleventh graders' ability to understand business letters is investigated by Tahrun, Simaibang, and Iskandar [18].Pre- and post-tests, as well as questionnaires, were used to gather data in this quantitative investigation. The statistical methods used in the data analysis include two-way analysis of variance, paired sample t-tests, and independent sample t-tests. The outcomes showed that both the Jigsaw technique and more traditional forms of instruction had a notable impact on students' ability to understand business correspondence [27].

1.4.2 Concept of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension entails extracting meaning from cohesive text. It encompasses lexical knowledge (vocabulary) alongside cognitive and analytical thinking. Consequently, it is an active process rather than a passive one. The reader interacts with the letter's content to derive meaning. Active engagement entails utilising prior knowledge. It entails deducing conclusions from the terminology and

phrases employed by a writer to convey information, concepts, and perspectives [28]. Woolley posits that reading comprehension entails the construction of meaning through the coordination of several intricate processes, including word recognition, lexical and contextual knowledge, and fluency. It pertains to the capacity to interpret language, comprehend meaning, and discern the relationships among the concepts expressed in the written text. He delineates reading comprehension training for educators as adhering to a three-step protocol: articulating, practicing, and assessing. Educators ascertain the competencies students aim to enhance, facilitate practice via workbooks or worksheets, and subsequently assess the successful attainment of those capabilities. Valencia, Pearson, and Wixson contend that comprehension consists of three elements: 1) the reader involved in comprehending, 2) the text to be understood, and 3) the process through which understanding takes place. All of a person's abilities, information, and experiences in relation to written or digital material are encompassed when she thinks about the reader. The activity includes the goals and results associated with reading. This study concentrated on restricting reading comprehension to the following skill: (1) The students correctly identified the explicit content in the letter. (2)The students acknowledged references to referent words in the letter, (3) identified the explicit primary concept of a paragraph, (4) deduced the meaning of a word from the context, (5) and uncovered implicit information in the message [29].

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Methods

A quantitative methodology was employed for the research. According to Lisa, quantitative research is the systematic empirical examination of observable events by statistical, mathematical, or computational methods. The researcher employs statistics to analyse the data. This study employed a pretest quasi-experimental approach to assess the comparative impact of cooperative and teacher-centered learning styles on university students' achievement in developing reading skills in English sessions. Dinardo defines a quasi-experiment as "an empirical study employed to assess the causal effect of an intervention on its target population." It resembles the teacher-centered experimental design. A quasi-experiment enables

the researcher to allocate elements to treatment conditions according to specific criteria [19].

Place and Time of the Research

This investigation was conducted at the third graders of College of Science to the academic year of 2022/2023, at university Masin .

Population and Sample

The research population included 90 pupils, split evenly between the experimental and control groups, drawn from two third grade courses at the College of Science. A method that integrates cluster and individual random sampling is known as one-stage random sampling [20].

Results and Discussion

Validity Test

Validity is the fundamental concept to contemplate when designing and selecting instruments to ensure their validity. Geuens and De Pelsmacker define validity as the correspondence between the gathered data and the actual data pertaining to the experimental subject [21]. The researchers employed item validity in this study. Anas stated that the item validity of a test refers to the precision of assessing an individual item independently from the overall test [22]. Researchers used the product moment correlation calculation, also known as Pearson correlation, to verify the tests' item validity. The researcher assessed the importance of the data by comparing the Corrected Item-Total Correlation scores for each item with the two-tailed correlation coefficient table. Conduct a test with a 0.5% variation. If the Corrected Item-Total Correlation score exceeds the correlation coefficient threshold by 0.5% (0.421), the item is deemed valid [30].

Findings and Discussion

The outcomes in this area have been assessed in regard to the goals of the research. Table 1 displays the results of the t-test conducted by the separate groups, which compared the experimental and control groups' mean scores before the test and regarding their attitude.   There were no statistically significant differences seen in the pre-test reading scores [$t(58) = 0.279$, $p > 0.05$] and the experimental reading scores [$t(58) = 0.412$, $p > 0.05$], according to Table 1. The statistical analysis shows that the

cooperative learning group had comparable characteristics based on their reading and test scores before the trial. Table 2 shows the outcomes of the independent groups t-test, which shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the experimental and control groups' post-test mean scores on the vocabulary component of the reading success evaluation. A statistically significant difference in the groups' post-test results for the vocabulary section of the reading accomplishment evaluation is seen in Table 2 [t(58) = 5.365, p < 0.05]. Results from a post-test analysis showed that students' English reading skills had benefited from the cooperative learning strategy [31]. (Table 1)

Table 1: Results of the t-test for pre-test and reading scores related to English language acquisition prior to the experiment

	Groups	n	M	SD	df	t	**Sig.**
Pre-test	Experimental	29	11.68	2.11	58	0.412	0.685
	Control	31	11.57	2.23			
Readings before experiment	Experimental	29	4.22	0.61	58	0.279	0.792
	Control	31	4.27	0.72			

The students in the experimental group had an average pre-test score of 11.68 with a standard deviation of 2.11, compared to the control group students who had an average score of 11.57 (with a standard deviation of 2.23) on the same test. A T-value of 0.412 was computed using a significance level of 0.05 and 58 degrees of freedom when the T test was applied to two independent samples. The researchers may ascribe the students' superiority in the post-test to the pre-test, indicating that the cooperative learning method significantly influenced students' achievement due to the presence of motivation and enthusiasm, which facilitated the understanding and comprehension of educational material [32]. Furthermore, the cooperative learning method enhanced students' cognitive abilities, encompassing levels of knowledge, recall, understanding, comprehension, analysis, and evaluation, which correspond to low, medium, and higher cognitive skills, with students exhibiting low and medium cognitive abilities that emphasise methods. The students' excellence in education and instruction is

attributed to their integration into cooperative learning groups, where each group strives to demonstrate its supremacy over others. **(Table 2)**

Table 2: Results of the t-test for post-test scores from a segment of the reading skill accomplishment assessment.

Groups	n	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Experimental	29	6.42	1.33	58	5.365*	0.001
Control	31	4.77	0.81			
Significant at the 0.05 level.						

The data in the table above show that the experimental group's average post-test reading skills score was (24.66), with a standard deviation of (3.11), compared to the control group's average score of (18.65) and standard deviation of (2.94), respectively. By applying the T-test to two separate samples, we find that the experimental group benefited from a statistically significant difference; this is supported by a computed T value of 9.898 * at a significance level of 0.05 and 58 degrees of freedom, which is higher than the tabulated T value. The results of this study are in agreement with those of Khataybeh and Khasawneh and Salih, Hashim and Kasim, which show that students in the experimental group retained more information after using a cooperative learning strategy in the classroom than students in the control group [33].

Table 3 shows the results of the t-test for the independent groups' post-test means for both the control and experimental groups. Table 3 shows that the experimental group's English reading learners outperformed the control group's learners who used a teacher-centered learning strategy, according to the t-test results for post-test scores [t(58) = 9.898, p < 0.05]. The experimental group was taught English reading using a cooperative learning technique. Participants in the experimental group did better than others in active-passive English reading, according to the statistical analysis, highlighting the effectiveness of a cooperative-learning environment. Table 4 shows the results of the t-test for the separate groups, comparing the control and experimental groups' delayed (post-test) average scores. Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference in the scores of the experimental group when it comes to delayed (post-test)

accomplishments, with a t-value of 9.385 and a p-value less than 0.05. Compared to the control group, the experimental group continued to show improvement and differences in the delayed (post-test) [34].

Table 3: Results of the t-test for post-test scores of the groups.

Groups	n	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Experimental	29	24.66	3.11	58	9.898*	0.001
Control	31	18.65	2.94			
Significant at the 0.05 level.						

According to these findings, students' performance significantly drops after four weeks of a teacher-centered strategy, but cooperative learning significantly boosts retention. A statistically significant difference was seen between the control and experimental groups' post-reading mean scores, as shown in Table 4 of the t-test results [35].

Table 4: Results of the t-test for delayed post-test scores of the groups.

Groups	n	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Experimental	29	18.19	.189	58	9.385	0.001
Control	31	14.69	.174			
Significant at the 0.05 level.						

Table 5: Results of the t-test for post-reading scores of the groups following the experiment.

Groups	n	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Experimental	29	5.27	0.568	58	6.284*	0.001
Control	31	4.69	0.874			
Significant at the 0.05 level.						

Table 5 presents a statistically significant difference in the post-reading mean scores of English learners [t(58) = 6.284, p < 0.05]. The reading scores of the experimental group surpassed those of the control group. The increased average rating of the experimental group demonstrated that English learners' opinions of acquiring the

language improved favourably, as the cooperative learning approach provided ideal learning settings and enhanced classroom advantages [36].

Conclusion

The findings of the current study indicated that the cooperative learning style significantly impacted the development of reading skills in English among university students in Masin, Iraq. Furthermore, a comparison of the efficacy of cooperative learning and teacher-centered instruction revealed through an independent sample t-test that the experimental group utilising the cooperative approach outperformed the control group receiving teacher-centered instruction [37]. The findings of the current study correspond with previous studies by Slavin Molla and Muche and Isiaka Amosa Gambari and Olumorin, which indicated that cooperative learning models substantially influence student performance. Furthermore, the results of the current study correspond with those of Mahamod and Somasundram, who discovered a notable difference in achievement between students employing cooperative learning and those participating in teacher-centered learning [38]. The present research findings correspond with those of Mahmood and Ahmad, which demonstrated that learners employing the cooperative learning method surpassed those participating in the teacher-centered approach. The superiority of students in telemetry over retention in levels of reading comprehension of the English language indicates that learning using the cooperative method led to the development of the abilities of students, especially those with medium and low abilities, through their ability to express their ideas and opinions freely as a result of their integration into cooperative groups [22]. This outcome can be elucidated by the utilisation of cooperative teaching, which fosters collaboration and synergy among group members, enabling students to fulfil their assigned responsibilities and consequently expedite the acquisition of skills, as well as encouraging initiative and accountability within the cooperative group [23]. The results of the current study have several educational implications for improving curriculum and instructional design. Initially, students must comprehend the essence and objectives of cooperative learning practices. Consequently, language instructors must strive to enhance their understanding of the benefits of utilising diverse CL techniques. In Iraqi EFL educational environments, CL is a crucial approach for students to comprehend the use

of English language elements in both the classroom and daily communication [39]. In the Iraqi context, proficient language students may serve as informants for those encountering difficulties in English language instruction regarding the use of various elements in different circumstances. Consequently, language instructors must recognise the importance of CL styles and assess whether students are cognisant of the objectives of acknowledging the diverse applications of these new pedagogical approaches, rather than merely focussing on the teacher-centered model. Furthermore, it is essential for curriculum and material designers in Iraq to consider the enhancement of new language learning styles to foster communicative competence in teacher-centered classes.

Recommendations and proposals

Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommends and proposes the following:

1. Employing contemporary pedagogical methods in English instruction due to their demonstrable beneficial effects on learning outcomes.

2. Arabic teachers must be proficient in contemporary pedagogical methodologies to effectively acquire and impart diverse language abilities.

3. Encouraging educators to utilise the cooperative learning technique in English instruction.

4. Diversification in the application of contemporary pedagogical methodologies for English instruction.

5. The educational institution's concern over the necessity for English language instructors to be proficient in the cooperative learning technique.

6. 6- Undertaking analogous research across several educational stages and both genders to ascertain the effects of the cooperative learning technique on additional competencies.

A comparative analysis of the cooperative learning technique to an alternative instructional method to evaluate its effect on reading proficiency.

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