

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION OF LITERARY TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative learning in students' comprehension of literary texts. This research consisted of 134 second year high school students from two classes. One class was assigned as experimental group (n= 67) and the other was assigned as control group (n= 67). The two groups were pretested. At the end of the study, a posttest was given. Data were analyzed using the t-test to determine the performance by comparing the mean of the posttest in the experimental group and control group. The results of this study showed that both instructions based on cooperative learning models and traditional teaching method caused a significant change in the students' achievement in the posttest.

INTRODUCTION

In today's generation, teachers must think about strategies that they may apply to improve their lessons. It is known that teaching literature is not easy. It is a multidimensional task which requires different techniques and methods compared to teaching other subjects. It also requires a lot of creativity, flexibility and responsibility. Furthermore, the teacher must teach his students to understand and to comprehend many literary selections. The goals of cooperative learning are very helpful to both students and teachers as this approach may help teachers budget the time inside the classroom for one particular lesson. Other researchers have also identified positive effects on outcomes such as intergroup relations, attitudes toward mainstreamed classmates, self-esteem, and general attitudes toward school.

Additionally, with the countless benefits derived from cooperative learning as established in the overall findings of various studies between cooperative learning and other instructional approaches-achievement, higher level thinking, self-esteem, and liking for the subject matter, for groups and for the classroom-cooperative learning is greatly recommended in Literature teaching (Fernandez 2011). It requires a lot of creativity, flexibility and responsibility on the part of the teachers to enable students to understand and comprehend literary selections. According to Khan (2008, as cited by Mohammed A. et. al. 2010), education is a teaching learning process; learning depends upon instruction. The teacher should provoke the interests of the students and motivate them to learn. It is also important that teachers promote learning, not only to provoke the students' interest or to enrich understand of the subject matter, but also to foster learning by teaching students to think and process information with other students. According to Jacobs (2009, as cited by Fernandez M.L. 2011), cooperative learning is one of the best researched approaches that work in education. Also, learning activity by cooperative learning is necessarily given to the students to make them actively involved in reading and interaction in literary texts (Khan 2008, as cited by Mohammed A. et. al. 2010)

Realizing that teaching literature nowadays (have) has failed to achieve its purpose, this research is conducted to make teaching and learning literature more meaningful and to give

advantages to learners. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative learning in students' comprehension of literary texts.

METHODOLOGY

Jigsaw reading and STAD are two types of cooperative learning activities that teachers used in the study, since most of the students in each class have mixed abilities. Both activities are fun and educational that ultimately encourages students to work according to their level and ability in a non-threatening way

Cooperative Learning with Jigsaw

In Jigsaw, the teacher divided a reading comprehension into eight parts. The teacher must make sure that each part of the text can be read and understood independently from the rest of the text. The class (experimental group) was divided into eight groups. Four groups are called the EXPERT (students who have good grades) group and the remaining four are called BASE group. Each base group were numbered 1 to 4. The expert group received the reading material and their assigned base group number. The task of the expert group was to ensure that each member of the group understands his/her part of the material she/he was assigned and that s/he will be able to teach it to others. The member of the expert group were responsible for both vocabulary and content. The expert group was given 20 minutes to study the material. While on the other hand, the base group have the chance to read the material and the worksheet. A worksheet was prepared by the teacher. Each members of the expert group have explained their part to each member of their assigned base group. When the expert group have reported to the teacher that members of the base group have cleared picture of what the passage was about, the students both in the expert and base group will work on a worksheet prepared by the teacher.

This method of group work involves peer teaching, even the lowest performing student can actively participate, while the stronger students reinforce their knowledge by teaching it to others. Each student, no matter what his or her level of English is, has a vital piece of information, needed by the other members of the group. This factor contributes to the student's self-confidence and self-esteem.

S.T.A.D. --Student Teams Achievement Division

STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) is another cooperative learning technique which is made up of five components: class presentation by the teacher, teams for peer teaching, quizzes based on group scores, individual improvement scores which allow the lower performing student to contribute as many, if not more points than the stronger students because the points are given for improvement, and team recognition.

The teacher divided the class into eight groups (mixed groups of ability). The teacher taught material. Then, in groups, the students have practiced the material based on worksheets prepared by the teacher. The students helping one another, and/or re-teaching the material when necessary. The students are then tested individually.

Each student was given improvement points and the total number of improvement points for each group was calculated. The teacher then posted the group scores in class. STAD can be a very beneficial learning experience as students can help one another, practice together and become very involved in the inter-group competition.

Instrumentation

This study utilized the Division Achievement Test in English II (DAT). (The) DAT consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. The questions were about Afro – Asian Literature. All items used are based on English II Curriculum Guide. All the items were carefully reviewed by the English Department Head and expert teachers for validation. DAT was used in the pretest and posttest of the control and experimental groups. However, questions in the posttest were jumbled.

Data Collection Procedure

After the principal's approval of the request to conduct the study in two classes of second year high school of Jacobo Z. Gonzales Memorial National High School, students were divided into two groups, namely the control (n= 67) and experimental group (n= 67). In order to determine the difference between the two groups in their achievement test of literary text, a pretest was given at the beginning of the intervention and a posttest after the intervention. Both pretest and posttest used DAT in English II. 60 minutes was given for both tests. (Upon finishing) After the test, the proctor collected the answer sheets for checking and statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The sets of data (test scores) were encoded, organized and classified. The frequency, percentage distribution mean, and a t –test for both independent and dependent samples were applied to gain numerical results. The p – value level of significance was set at 5%.

The test scores of the students' examination were described based on the numerical ranges: 38-50 = Advance Proficient; 25-37 = Proficient; 13-24 = Approaching Proficient; 0-12 = Low Proficient.

For ethical consideration, the researches upheld the principle of confidentiality, not just of the identity of the students but as well as the data provided by each participant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Pretest scores of the respondents in the Experimental Group

Pre- Test Scores	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced Proficient (37-50)	48	72%
Proficient (25-37)	19	28%
Approaching Proficient (13-24)	0	0%
Low Proficient (0-12)	0	0%
Total	67	100%

Table 1 shows the pre-test scores of the respondents in the experimental group. 48 students (72%) were advanced proficient, and 19 (28%) of the students were proficient, and 0% for both approaching proficient and low(0%)proficient.

Table 2
Posttest Scores of the Respondents in the experimental Group

Posttest Scores	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced Proficient (37-50)	58	87%
Proficient (25-37)	9	13%
Approaching Proficient (13-24)	0	0%
Low Proficient (0-12)	0	0%
Total	67	100%

Table 2 shows that 58 students (87%) were advanced proficient, 9 students (12%) were proficient, and 0% for both approaching proficient and low proficient. The use of cooperative learning approach in the experimental group increased the number of students in the advanced proficient group after the posttest. This result is supported by the study of Van Wyk (2010) who used cooperative learning approach in a quasi-experimental design on the student performances in economic literacy. In his study, the result showed that the experimental group had a 16.13 score; an increase from pretest to the posttest compared to the control. Cooperative learning actively involves students in the learning process. These findings are consistent with the findings of some previous researchers such as those of Akinsola (2008) and Brush (2007).

Table 3
Pretest Scores of the Respondents in the Control Group

Pretest Scores	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced Proficient (37-50)	24	36%
Proficient (25-37)	43	64%
Approaching Proficient (13-24)	0	0%
Low Proficient (0-12)	0	0%
Total	67	100%

Table 3 shows pretest scores of the respondents in the control group. 24 students (36%) were advanced proficient, 43 students (64%) were proficient, and none (0 %) for both approaching proficient and low proficient.

Table 4
Posttest Scores of the Respondents in the Control Group

Posttest Scores	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced Proficient (37-50)	45	67%
Proficient (25-37)	19	28%
Approaching Proficient (13-24)	3	5%
Low Proficient (0-12)	0	0%
Total	67	100%

In table 4, 45 students (67%) were advanced proficient, 19 students (28%) were proficient, 3 students (5%) were approaching proficient, and none (0%) for low proficient. Although there was an increase in the percentage of the advanced proficient from pretest (36%) to posttest (67%), this only shows that traditional method is still effective in teaching literary lessons. However, based on Table 4, there were 3 students (5%) who moved to approaching proficient in the posttest compared to the pretest result of zero (0%). Traditional method was ineffective in bringing up the scores in proficient level. Edlich (2006) argues that traditional format for large classes is outdated and a one – way process.

Table 5
Difference in the Pretest Scores of the Experimental and Control Group

variable	Mean, X1 Experimental	Mean, X2 control	Computed t Value	Interpretation
Pretest Scores	37.87	36.88	1.01	Not Significant

0.05 level of significance
Critical value = 1.96

Table 5 shows the pre-test scores of the experimental and the control group. The results indicate that the mean score for experimental group is 37.87 and the control group has a mean score of 36.88. The results also indicate that the difference between the achievement mean scores for experimental at one hand, and the control group in another, is not significant at the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, both the experimental and control group were at the same level of achievement at the start of the study.

Table 6
Difference in the Posttest Scores of the Experimental and Control Group

variable	Mean, X1 Experimental	Mean, X2 control	Computed t Value	Interpretation
Posttest Scores	41.16	41.31	0.14	Not Significant

0.05 level of significance
Critical Value = 1.96

Table 6 shows the posttest achievement mean scores of the experimental and the control groups. The results indicate that the mean score for experimental group is 41.16 and that of the control group is 41.31. The results also indicate that the difference between the achievement mean scores for experimental and the control groups is not significant at the alpha level of 0.05.

Difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the Experimental and Control Group

Group	Mean, X1 Pretest scores	Mean, X2 Posttest Scores	Computed T Value	Interpretation
Experimental Group	37.87	41.16	2.76	Significant
Control Group	36.88	41.31	5.41	Significant

0.05 level of significance
Critical value = 1.96

Table 7 shows the pretest and posttest achievement means scores of the experimental and the control group. The results indicate that there was an increase in the mean scores of the experimental group from 37.87 to 41.16. Likewise the control group increased its mean score from 36.88 to 41.31. The results also indicate that the difference between the achievement scores for experimental and control group is significant at the alpha level of 0.05. These results have two implications in both groups: First, the use of cooperative learning in the experimental group significantly affected the students' performance in the posttest. This means that cooperative learning strategy was successful in terms of increasing the students' comprehension of literary texts. The reason for the increase in students' achievement can be caused by the students' involvement in explaining and receiving explanation in which the concepts can be easily understood.

Cooperative learning gave more space and opportunities for students to discuss, solve problems, create solutions, provide ideas and help each other. The results were also in line with previous studies of Tarim and Akdeniz (2008) and Nichols. Cooperative learning actively involves students in the learning process. These findings are consistent with the findings of some previous researchers such as those of Mohammadi and Salimzadeh (2010)

Second, the results show that the controlled group had increased its mean score. This means that traditional lecture method was also effective in teaching literary texts. However, lecture methods are teacher based, therefore, less opportunity was given to students for discussion, problem solving, creating solutions and working with peers (McIntosh 2003).

CONCLUSIONS. The following conclusions were established based on the findings of the study: (1) No statistically significant mean scores was found in the pretest between the experimental and the control group; (2) There was no statistically significant mean scores difference in the posttest; and (3) Both instructions based on cooperative learning models and the traditional teaching method caused a significant change in the students' achievement in the posttest.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE USE The researchers suggest that the results of the study be disseminated to teachers of literature covering large classes. Similar research studies can be conducted for different grade school levels to investigate the effectiveness of the cooperative learning models. Researchers may likewise explore the other possibilities along this study such as conducting comparative studies, comparing learning and other teaching strategies. Finally, further studies can be conducted to evaluate the effect of cooperative learning methods in other learning outcomes such as critical thinking.