

Effect of Cooperative Learning on the Writing Skill at Elementary Level in the Subject of English

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Abstract

Cooperative learning may have beneficial impact on classroom teaching. The study aimed to identify the effect of cooperative learning in writing ability of the 7th class students in the subject of English. The population of the study consisted of 68 students enrolled at elementary level (7th grade) in Government Girls High School Burj Attari, Sheikhpura. There were two sections of 7th grade in the school and 34 students in each section. The study was Quasi Experimental with a Non-equivalent control group, pre-test and post-test design. One section was randomly selected as experimental group (X_1) and the other was assigned to control group (X_2) on the basis their previous class results. The results describe there is a significant difference between post-test scores of control and experimental group. Findings of the current study reveal that cooperative learning method is more effective than the grammar translation method among students. It is recommended that teachers might apply cooperative learning techniques to improve students' writing skill in the classroom.

Keywords: Linguistic intelligence, cooperative learning, writing skill, grammar translation method

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Introduction

Speaking and writing skills belong to linguistic intelligence. This knowledge provides basis for students to use skills effectively to convey the message. This is the process of reading, writing and speaking in different situations. Language means talking, articulating, expressing, and passing on one's thoughts in the outside world in many ways. Language intelligence deals with oral and written skills. The linguistic intelligence is an ability to understand and comprehend the language learning (Gardner, 1999).

Writing is the most concrete and precise version of the language. If the writing skill is more developed then an individual can write more systematically. A man can speak, read and write in a more accurate way (Iftanti, 2016). There has been a shift in pedagogy of English in modern era from a teacher-focused to a student-focused learning. English writing and teaching provides an opportunity for active participation of students and teachers in the writing skills. A valuable strategy for developing writing ability is cooperative learning. It provides an option for instructors to teach in many cooperative situation where social interaction is possible among students (Gomleksiz, 2007; Ning, 2011). Cooperative learning might be used in the teaching procedure where teacher gives chance to students to actively participate in speaking and writing. Teachers need to know information and training to use cooperative learning method in a specific learning situation (Stevens, 2003; Zarei & Layeq, 2016). Under cooperative learning method syllabus is renewed by using such activities and techniques focusing on active participation of students in learning process. This learning approach can be characterized where small, and mixed student groups help one another in learning subject which increases their confidence and their collaboration (Bloom, 1979; Yalçın, 2002; Gillies, 2016).

Cooperative learning has been recognized as a valuable instructive technique that keeps in mind students feelings, mental level and social background. Cooperative learning focuses on students' self assessment, ensures group participation and increase learning (Brown & Ciuffetelli, 2009). In a situation of cooperative learning students are helping each other to complete a task (Siegel, 2005). Cooperative learning techniques are useful for every racial group and all ability levels. The perceptions of students about other members in group are developed by providing them opportunity to work within group. Cooperative learning is a dynamic instructional method which makes students to comprehend ideas easily (Coleman, 2011).

The learning rates of the student may increased by the cooperative methods .This approach provides students opportunities for discussion and shared ideas in groups as a result academic performance of students has been improved (Slavin & Cooper, 1999). Students who completely take interest in group activities show cooperation and

responsibility to complete a task. This cooperation with their group fellows provides them a chance of getting higher scores. Cooperative learning is an instructional method that makes it possible for both teachers and students to achieve academic goals. Cooperative learning methodologies have to be proved effective in enhancing the standards of dependability among students , giving students' chances to write, learning by sharing and improving their academic performance (Cianciolo, Henderson, Kretzer, & Mendes, 2001; Almuslimi, 2016).

Cooperative method motivates students to take part actively in the process of learning. Cooperative learning is different from Grammar Translation Method (GTM). In cooperative method students learn to know how to give and receive information during interaction .They can write and develop their understanding about academic tasks in a more effective and accurate way (Gillies, 2004). While in Grammar Translation Method students are provided with detailed rules about grammar and they are treated as passive listeners (Liu, 2014). The Grammar Translation Method has negative effects on learners and they cannot improve their writing abilities (Chang, 2011). In modern era there has been a shift from a instructor-focused approach to a student-focused approach. English writing provides students an opportunity to describe themselves through writing in English. Writing skills of English can develop by this way among students (Gomleksiz, 2007; Ning, 2011). Coleman expresses few reasons why the standard of English in Pakistan does not meet with the global standards. First of all, he describes that English language has become an examination subject and for this purpose students make use of rote learning method to obtain marks (Coleman, 2011).

Another issue recognized by Coleman in English language in Pakistan is that English teachers do not utilize higher order skills, for example, critical and analytical thinking in instructing English. In many English classrooms, students are not provided with situations of problem solving of tasks for developing critical thinking. As a outcome, students have superficial knowledge of English. English is being taught in the larger areas of Pakistan. Students think about English as a difficult subject since it is not their first language. They have to learn it as a second language. They cannot understand its rules because they consider English as a difficult language. In Pakistan, students initially learn Punjabi or any other home Language as their mother language. In schools, Urdu is taught as a national language and English is taught as a second language (Coleman, 2011).

Objectives of the study

Following objectives were formed to conduct the present study:

1. Identify the effect of cooperative learning in writing ability of the 7th class students in the subject of English.
2. Find the mean difference between the writing abilities of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H₁: There is significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of students on writing abilities of students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through Grammar Translation Method.
- H₂: There is no significant mean difference between the usage of tenses achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method.

Research Methodology

The study was experimental in nature; which was conducted to examine the effect of cooperative learning on writing abilities of students. The intact groups were randomly assigned to the treatments. The Quasi-experimental (non-equivalent groups) pre-test, post-test, control group design was used. Population comprised 68 students enrolled at the elementary level (7th grade) in Government Girls High School BurjAttari, Sheikhpura. One section was randomly assigned to experimental group (X₁) and the other was assigned to the control group(X₂). Cooperative learning on writing linguistic intelligence practices were measured through standardized and validated instrument. Descriptive statistics were used. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed by using SPSS-21 version. Mean, Standard Deviation and Variance of pre-test scores were obtained. To measure the difference in achievement scores of control group and experimental group paired sample *t*-test was used.

Instrumentation

The control and experimental groups compared on the basis of their past class achievement and a teacher made pre-test was conducted after the assessment of students to experimental and control groups. After the treatment of Cooperative Learning, a teacher made post-test was administered on experimental and control groups. The researcher with the help of standardized and validated instrument developed pre-test and post-test after a careful review of test development methods to evaluate students' writing skill. Pre-test and post-test were same but arrangement of items were different. Validity of the tests was assured by instructors and specialists in English subject. Each test was consisted of 60 items of writing practice.

The Writing Test

Students were given a series of pictures. They wrote short sentences in the given time by using pictures. In brainstorming session vocabulary on "A visit to Murree" was written by the researcher on the blackboard. Researcher taught students the usage of the vocabulary and then checked the student's pronunciation of all the vocabulary items of the mentioned lesson. Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique would be used to develop writing skill. Firstly, reading groups would be established in the classroom. Next, students would be paired off within the groups. The researcher worked with writing groups tried to teach each other writing skills by using reciprocal writing technique. They helped each other in performing basic skill-building activities (such as oral reading, contextual guessing, asking questions, summarizing, writing a composition based on the lesson, revising-correcting composition). In general, paragraph on "A visit to Murree" would be written at the end of this process. Writing ability test comprised of 60 items. Students answered the questions of 30 items for usage of five parts of speech i.e. Pronoun, Adverb, Adjective, Proposition, Conjunction, rewriting sentence, combining sentence and rearrangement of sentence. They had to solve 30 items for tenses i.e. Present Indefinite, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, Present Perfect Continuous, Past Indefinite, Past Continuous, Past Perfect, Past Perfect Continuous. The reliability index of the test used as pre- test and post- test to measure writing skill of students in control and experimental groups. Value of the Cronbach's Alpha depicts that reliability of the test was .742 which is statistically significant.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1

Independent sample' t-test to identify mean difference between the writing abilities scores of students who had been taught through cooperative learning and grammar translation method

Variable	N	M	SD	df.	t-value	sig.
Control Group	34	14.70	5.28	66	-6.33	.000
Experimental Group	34	23.29	5.89			

Table-1 shows the results of independent sample' *t*-test to identify mean between the writing abilities achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method. It is indicated that significant difference between mean scores of control group ($M = 14.70$, $SD = 5.28$) and experimental group ($M = 23.29$, $SD = 5.28$), $t(66) = -6.33$, $p < .000$. On the basis of these results, the research hypothesis that "There is significant mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores of students on writing comprehension of students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method" is accepted and it is concluded that after treatment students in the experiment group performed better in post test than control group students.

Table 2

Independent sample' t-test to identify mean difference in mean scores of students on usage of parts of speech who had been taught through cooperative learning and grammar translation method

Variable	N	M	SD	df.	t-value	sig.
Control Group	34	13.47	4.02	66	-5.37	.000
Experimental Group	34	21.00	7.11			

Table-2 shows the results of independent sample' *t*-test to identify mean between the writing comprehension achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method. It is indicated that significant difference between mean scores of control group ($M = 13.47$, $SD = 4.02$) and experimental group ($M = 21.00$, $SD = 7.11$), $t(66) = -5.37$, $p < .000$. On the basis of these results, the research hypothesis that "There is significant mean difference between the usage of parts of speech achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method" is accepted and it is concluded that after treatment students in the experiment group performed better in post test than those in the control group.

Table 3

Independent sample' t-test to identify mean difference in mean scores of students on usage of tenses who had been taught through cooperative learning and grammar translation method

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Control Group	34	14.26	6.58	66	.166	.869
Experimental Group	34	14.03	4.98			

Table 3 shows the results of independent sample' *t*-test to identify mean between the writing comprehension achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method. It is indicated that no significant difference between mean scores of control group ($M = 14.26$, $SD = 6.58$) and experimental group ($M = 14.03$, $SD = 4.98$), $t(66) = .166$, $p = .869$. On the basis of these results, the research hypothesis that " There is no significant mean difference between the usage of tenses achievement scores of 7th grade students in the subject of English who were taught through cooperative learning and those who were taught through grammar translation method" is accepted and it is concluded that after treatment students in the experiment group performed better in post test than those in the control group.

Discussion

The results showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups regarding writing skill, who had been taught through cooperative learning as compared to those who were taught through grammar translation method. Cooperative learning techniques used in the experimental group had a strong effect on reading comprehension abilities as compared to the effects of grammar translation method. It reveals that cooperative learning plays a vital role in improving writing skills. The findings of different studies on writing skill and cooperative learning were in accordance to this study (Alodwan, 2012; Bolukbas, Keskin & Polat, 2011; Khan, 2008). The results were similar with many past studies. For example, Liao (2005) has also described the effect of cooperative learning on motivation and different learning strategies related to grammar reading and writing skills of English as foreign language students in Taiwan. It showed that by using cooperative learning language skills, achievements of students were improved and writing skills were polished. Other studies such as (Gillies, 2011; Soares & Wood, 2010) examined that cooperative learning help students for developing the reading, writing and speaking. The results were also comparable with the outcomes of Moryadee (2001) who examined the impacts of group study using in the technique of Student Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD) on self-efficacy and achievement of English learning Prathomsuksa students. Student who learned by using the technique of Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD) have more

confidence. The findings described that student who studied by using the technique of Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD) have a higher self-efficacy. The responses of learners in questionnaire and volunteers' opinions on teaching writing with the help of the movies and online technologies revealed the expected belief, with respect to usefulness, innovation, motivation, getting ideas for better writing, and improving writing skills. The results of the survey coincide with some recent studies (Anggraini & Radjab, 2014; Aliyev & Ismayilova, 2017).

Conclusions

The results also revealed that students in the experimental group achieved higher scores on writing in English comprehension than the control group. Hence, it is concluded that cooperative learning techniques have significant effect on achievement of the seventh grade school students in the subject of English. In order to examine the effect of the treatment, a post- test was administered after four months in the usual classroom setting. It was found out that there was significant sustainability effect of cooperative learning techniques even after four months of treatment. It is concluded that students are likely to adopt the same pattern in future. .

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions, following recommendations were made. The method of cooperative learning is more effective than the grammar translation method among students. Researchers have confirmed that cooperative learning is connected with learning techniques and strategies, It is recommended that teachers might apply cooperative learning techniques to improve writing skill of the students in the classroom. The cooperative learning techniques should be integrated with instructional practice to make students' performance better. More English language learning centers based on cooperative learning should be setup for the development of students' writing skills when their learning approaches become energetic. It is also recommended that the teachers should develop writing skill in the classrooms to engage them in writing activities.

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