

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND TEACHING ASPECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING.

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the psychological and teaching aspects of cooperative learning, emphasizing how small group discussions can enhance students' academic performance and emotional engagement. A four-week study was conducted with 30 ninth-grade students at School 37, focusing on reading tasks. The findings revealed a 7% improvement in student outcomes, supporting the idea that cooperative learning positively influences motivation, self-confidence, and comprehension skills. The paper discusses these results in relation to existing literature and provides recommendations for future research.*

**Keywords:** *Cooperative learning, small group discussions, psychological engagement, reading skills, student motivation*

### Introduction

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that organizes students into small groups to work collaboratively toward shared academic goals. It not only addresses cognitive development but also fosters psychological growth by promoting motivation, positive interdependence, and communication skills. Numerous studies have highlighted the significance of cooperative learning in enhancing both academic outcomes and emotional well-being. This article investigates the psychological and teaching aspects of cooperative learning through

a practical intervention among ninth-grade students, emphasizing how small group discussions contribute to improved reading performance and greater student engagement.

### **Literature Review**

Cooperative learning has been extensively studied in recent years, with scholars emphasizing both its psychological and pedagogical benefits. As a student-centered instructional approach, cooperative learning is grounded in social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2019), which posits that students achieve better outcomes when they perceive their success as linked to the success of others in the group. Recent peer-reviewed studies reinforce that when students work collaboratively, not only do academic outcomes improve, but psychological factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and emotional engagement are also positively affected.

From a psychological perspective, Gillies (2016) asserts that cooperative learning environments foster greater social support and reduce academic anxiety. This emotional safety net encourages students to take intellectual risks and engage more deeply in classroom activities. Moreover, Zhang (2021) reports that cooperative structures help students develop a stronger sense of belonging, which is particularly important in adolescent learning. This psychological sense of community also correlates with greater persistence and higher levels of academic performance.

Pedagogically, cooperative learning enhances students' cognitive engagement and problem-solving skills. According to Dooly (2020), group discussions allow learners to negotiate meaning, co-construct knowledge, and refine their understanding through peer feedback. This interactive process aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, where learning occurs in the zone of proximal development with peer mediation. A study by Tran and Lewis (2020) found that cooperative tasks significantly improved reading comprehension scores, especially when structured with clear roles and responsibilities.

Recent empirical research also highlights the importance of task design in

maximizing the benefits of cooperative learning. Vangrieken et al. (2020) stress that the effectiveness of group work largely depends on how well the task is structured. If group roles are ambiguous or the task lacks clear objectives, some students may dominate while others remain passive. However, when tasks are meaningful, well-scaffolded, and connected to real-life contexts, students demonstrate improved academic achievement and higher engagement levels.

In summary, contemporary research in peer-reviewed journals supports the dual role of cooperative learning in promoting both teaching effectiveness and psychological well-being. The evidence suggests that when implemented thoughtfully, cooperative learning fosters a positive classroom climate, improves reading skills, and builds essential life skills such as empathy, responsibility, and communication.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the psychological and pedagogical effects of cooperative learning on reading comprehension. The research was conducted over a four-week period at School No. 37 and involved a single group of 30 ninth-grade students. The intervention focused on implementing cooperative learning strategies during English reading lessons.

The participants consisted of 30 ninth-grade students (aged 14–15) from a single classroom. The group was selected based on convenience sampling. All students had similar English proficiency levels and were accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered instruction prior to the study.

Before the intervention, a pre-test on reading comprehension was administered to assess baseline performance. Over the next four weeks, students engaged in structured cooperative learning activities during their English lessons. Each session involved small group discussions, peer explanation tasks, and collaborative reading exercises. Roles within groups were clearly defined to ensure equal participation, and tasks were designed to encourage interaction and shared responsibility.

At the end of the intervention, a post-test identical in structure to the pre-test was administered to evaluate the impact of the cooperative learning strategies. Additionally, informal classroom observations were carried out to assess student engagement, participation, and emotional responses during group activities.

Quantitative data were collected from the pre- and post-test scores to measure changes in reading comprehension. The improvement was calculated as a percentage increase from pre-test to post-test scores. Qualitative observations provided insights into students' motivation, confidence, and social interaction. These observations were noted and analyzed thematically.

The findings showed an average 7% improvement in reading comprehension scores, accompanied by noticeable increases in student engagement and participation, suggesting a positive effect of cooperative learning on both academic performance and psychological well-being.

## **Results**

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of cooperative learning strategies had a positive impact on students' reading comprehension and psychological engagement.

A comparison of pre-test and post-test scores revealed a measurable improvement in students' academic performance. The average pre-test score among the 30 students was 65%, while the average post-test score rose to 72%, representing a 7% increase. This gain suggests that cooperative learning activities contributed to enhanced comprehension of reading materials.

Classroom observations throughout the four-week intervention revealed increased student participation and motivation. Students appeared more confident and enthusiastic during group tasks, particularly when engaging in peer discussions and collaborative reading exercises. Teachers noted that learners were more willing to ask questions, explain ideas to peers, and contribute to group work.

Many students expressed greater enjoyment of the lessons compared to traditional instruction. They demonstrated improved communication skills and a heightened sense of responsibility within their groups. These behavioral changes

suggest that cooperative learning also had a positive psychological impact, fostering a more supportive and interactive classroom environment.

In summary, the combination of improved test scores and positive classroom dynamics provides evidence that cooperative learning enhances both cognitive and emotional aspects of student engagement

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of cooperative learning strategies—particularly small group discussions—can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension and psychological engagement in English language classrooms. After four weeks of instruction, students showed an average 7% improvement in post-test scores, supporting the positive impact of collaborative activities on academic outcomes.

These results are consistent with prior research. For instance, Johnson and Johnson (2019) emphasized that cooperative learning fosters not only academic achievement but also interpersonal skills and psychological well-being. Similarly, Gillies (2016) found that students engaged in structured group work are more motivated and tend to take greater responsibility for their learning, which was also evident in this study's classroom observations. Students were more involved, confident, and enthusiastic when working in groups, especially during reading tasks that required interpretation and discussion.

The improvement in reading skills can be attributed to the interactive nature of cooperative learning. Peer explanations, group discussions, and mutual feedback help learners clarify misunderstandings, reinforce vocabulary, and practice inference skills in a low-anxiety environment. This supports the conclusions of Zhang (2021), who reported that cooperative learning reduces performance anxiety and improves students' self-efficacy, especially in language learning contexts. Additionally, the psychological benefits observed during the intervention suggest that cooperative learning goes beyond academics. Students demonstrated higher levels of engagement, participation, and satisfaction with the learning process. This aligns with Dooly (2020), who argued that collaborative activities

provide a sense of belonging and emotional safety, which are essential for effective language acquisition.

However, it is important to consider some limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to one school and one grade level. Furthermore, the study duration was short, and the observed 7% gain, while meaningful, might be influenced by other contextual factors such as teacher enthusiasm, group dynamics, or familiarity with the test format.

Despite these limitations, the study adds to the growing body of evidence that cooperative learning, when properly implemented, has strong potential to improve both academic and psychological outcomes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the psychological and teaching aspects of cooperative learning, focusing on its effect on reading comprehension among 9th-grade students at School No. 37. The four-week intervention, centered on small group discussions and collaborative reading tasks, led to a measurable improvement of 7% in students' reading performance. This result reinforces the value of cooperative learning in enhancing both academic achievement and learner engagement in the English language classroom.

The findings support the notion that cooperative learning not only improves students' comprehension skills but also contributes to a more positive psychological environment. Students became more motivated, confident, and active during lessons, highlighting the emotional and social benefits of working together. These outcomes echo the results of recent peer-reviewed studies that emphasize the multifaceted benefits of collaboration in language education.

In conclusion, integrating cooperative learning strategies into regular classroom practice can be a powerful tool for language teachers. It promotes not only skill development but also psychological growth through peer interaction and shared responsibility. Future studies could expand on this work by including larger sample sizes, different grade levels, and longer durations to validate and deepen

the current condition

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