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Cooperative Learning as an Instructional Approach for Promoting Language Achievement in English Language Learners

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH FOR PROMOTING

LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning (CL) on the language achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) by comparing it to traditional, individualistic and/or competitive approaches to learning. It also aims to identify the characteristics of effective CL methods. The research found that CL positively impacts language achievement across various dimensions of language, countries, and grade levels. Eight CL methods were identified as being the most empirically validated, all of which were found to have a positive impact on student achievement. Also identified were certain characteristics that could improve a CL method's efficacy. These characteristics were using CL methods that ensure positive interdependence in the form of group goals or rewards coupled with individual accountability, arranging small groups of students (2-5) with varying levels of language proficiency, implementing more conceptual CL approaches and instructing students on the principles, expectations and rationale of CL prior to implementation. Based on these findings, a CL instructional guide was created for incoming English Teacher Volunteers at the Ndulu English Project in Indonesia.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the use of Cooperative Learning (CL) as an instructional approach for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). More specifically, this research aims to examine how CL could improve the language achievement of ELLs. For the purpose of this research, ELLs are defined as any active learner of the English language (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). While this research could be beneficial to all teachers of ELLs, it is especially designed to guide English Language Teachers (ELTs) volunteering to teach at The Ndulu English Project in Lagundri Bay on Nias Island, Indonesia. The Ndulu English Project was developed by the author of this research and utilizes volunteer ELTs to deliver free English language lessons to interested Indonesians living in the Lagundri Bay area. CL was evaluated for the purpose of aiding the project's volunteer teachers so that they could more effectively improve the language achievement of their students.

What is Cooperative Learning (CL)?

Cooperative learning (CL) falls under the umbrella of peer-mediated instruction (PMI). PMI refers any instructional strategy that focused on student-student interaction, as opposed to the traditional whole-class approach to teaching. CL is a general term referring to any structured instructional approach that involves small groups of students working together towards a common goal. It is based on the position that students working together can positively contribute to each other's learning and enhance their own learning (Slavin, 1991). As suggested by Heron, Welsch and Goddard (2003), using

students as instructional support may be the most valuable and overlooked resource in classrooms.

What distinguishes cooperative learning from other PMI approaches, such as collaborative learning or simply, "group work", is that cooperative learning is structured in specific ways so that all students are involved in completing the task as a group (Oxford, 1997). An example of group work could be the teacher putting a small number of students together and asking them to complete a worksheet. In this scenario, there is not much reason for the more proficient students to help the rest of the group. Instead, it is often easier to just provide them the answers. Here, students have been told to "do something" together, as opposed to "learn something" together. Conversely, through a CL approach, the task in structured in a way that ensures every group member is participating towards their shared goal, therefore, higher achieving students have more reason to explain concepts to group mates (Slavin, 1991).

CL Methods

Though examples of peer learning can be found throughout history, (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991), research on CL in classroom settings gained momentum in the 1970's in the United States. At that time, three research organizations began to examine and develop methods to be used by classroom teachers. At the University of Texas, Elliot Aronson and his colleagues developed the Jigsaw method. David Johnson and Roger Johnson of the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota developed the Learning Together (Slavin,1991) and Constructive Controversy (CC)

methods (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000) while David DeVries, Keith Edwards and Robert Slavin at the Center for Social Organization at John Hopkins University developed the Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) and Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) approaches (Slavin,1991). Also developed in the 1970's out of Israel was the Group Investigation (GI) method by Yael Sharan and Shlomo Sharan. In the 1980's Robert Slavin and his colleagues developed the Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI) method and Robert Stevens along with Robert Slavin developed the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method (Johnson et al., 2000). Though many other methods and strategies have been developed, those eight are still being used by teachers today.

Jigsaw. In the Jigsaw method, students are put into teams and the teacher divides the academic material being learned into the same number of sections as there are members in each team. Each student in the team reads one of those sections then meets with the other members who were assigned the same material from other teams so that they can share information and become "experts". After meeting with their expert teams, students return to their original teams so that they can instruct their other group members on what they've learned. They also listen to what each of the other members of the group has learned (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Learning Together. The Learning Together approach refers to various cooperative strategies developed by Johnson and Johnson. There are five basic elements associated with this approach: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face

interaction, social skills and group processing (Liao, 2005). Teams generally consist of

4-5 members of varying abilities and backgrounds (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Constructive Controversy (CC). The CC method starts with student groups of four then

makes two pairs within the group. An issue is presented to the group and one pair works

to develop the pro side of the argument, while the other pair does the same for the con.

Pairs work together to research their side of issue then present it to each other,

challenging the other side and defending their own. Then the pairs switch perspectives

of the argument. Ultimately the team must come to an agreement on the issue and

synthesize their group response in a group report. Members are then given individual

quizzes on both positions (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2000).

Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT). In TGT, students are put into four member teams of

varying ability, gender and ethnicity. Students work together on tasks to help one

another master the material presented by the teacher. At the end of the week, students

compete against members from other teams of the same ability and winners earn

points for their team (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD). The STAD method is similar to TGT but

replaces the tournaments with quizzes. Like TGT, mixed teams of four students work

together to master the material the teacher presented. Students then take quizzes

individually but rewards are given to the group (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Group Investigation (GI). In this method, students are put into teams based on their

interest in a topic. The team works together to divide tasks, plan research and

synthesize their findings. The team then presents their learning to the class once their project is finished (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI). This method was designed to be used in mathematics classes. Students are put into teams of four of mixed ability and progress through the material at their own pace. Team members help each other solve problems and check one another's work. The teacher gives group rewards each week. Unit tests are taken individually but scored by student monitors (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). This approach was designed specifically for teaching reading and writing. Students are put into reading teams. While the teacher works with one team, other teams are cooperatively engaged in various learning activities practicing things such as vocabulary work, story predicting and summarizing. Teams follow the schedule of teacher instruction, team practice, team pre-assessments and ultimately quizzes, once each team feels that every member is ready. Team rewards are given based on quiz results (Manning & Lucking, 1991).

Connecting the various methods. Though there are numerous variations between CL approaches, researchers have called attention to two important characteristics that underlie them all: positive interdependence and individual accountability (Holt, 1993; Liao, 2005; Slavin, 1991). Simply put, through cooperative learning students work together towards a common goal, being responsible for each other's learning as well as their own (Slavin, 1991).

Positive Interdependence

Positive interdependence is an essential element of CL in which students believe that they cannot succeed unless the whole group succeeds. It refers to the need for students to believe that they are all connected if the task is to be completed successfully (Hendrix 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2001). One way to promote positive interdependence is by giving students specific roles within the group (Cohen, 1994). This could also be reached through the goal structure (having one goal where the successful completion relies on each member) or the reward structure (the team grade depends on the individual group member's grades), as well as through structuring materials or rules so that gains for one member are associated with gains for others (Holt, 1993).

Individual Accountability

Individual accountability is an essential element of CL where individuals within the group are responsible for their contribution to the group and to their own learning. It means that in order to reach the group goal, each member must master the content or skills and will be held individually accountable (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). Without individual accountability two unwanted consequences could occur: the "free-rider effect" and "the know-it-all". With the free-rider effect, some students put in minimal effort, letting the other students complete the task for them. With the know-it-all, groups may be dominated by students who want to do the work themselves, discouraging input from other members (Slavin, 2014). Individual accountability can be ensured in different ways depending on the CL approach. For example, a student may

be held accountable for listening to their group members by stating what one of them said after the activity. Or, if points are being kept, then an individuals points may contribute to the team's points (Holt, 1993).

Structure Comparison

Putting students in pairs or a group and asking them to complete a task does not constitute CL. Rather, structuring the activity to ensure positive interdependence and individual accountability does (Pyle, Pyle, Lingugaris-Kraft, Duran & Akers, 2017). CL structures can be defined as organized, content-free and repeatable classroom behaviors that are employed to encourage CL (Oxford, 1997). One way to better understand CL structures is by comparing them to traditional instruction. Traditional instruction refers to a whole-class, teacher led instructional approach that utilizes individualistic and/or competitive classroom structures (Ning & Hornby, 2014). Individualistic learning refers to classroom structures where students work independently of each other and neither recognition nor reward are affected by the efforts of another. Within this type of learning, students are required to work independently from their classmates. There is no interdependence, as students' work is neither benefited nor diminished by the work of another student. Competitive learning refers to classroom structures that reward the best performing students, thus promoting students to compete against each other for teacher recognition. These competitive and individualistic learning structures are in sharp contrast to those structures related to CL. In a classroom utilizing cooperative structures, cooperation

between classmates is imperative for recognition and reward and thus central to the learning process (Dörnyei, 1997).

Significance of This Research

The fastest growing population of students in U.S. public schools is English language learners (ELLs). The number of ELLs in public schools (K–12) rose 95% from the 1991/92 school year to 2001/02, while the total enrollment of schools increased by only 12% (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005; Kindler, 2002). The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics states that ELLs made up 9.5% of the total public school population (4.8 million students) in the United States in Fall 2015 (NCES, 2019). Spanish is the most common language spoken by ELLs, however, a wide range of languages are represented. In 2001-2002, data collected reported more than 460 languages spoken nationwide by ELLs in K-12 schools (Kindler, 2002). In 2006, 60% of all teachers had at least one ELL in their classroom; thus, many teachers across the country must accommodate for this diversity to ensure student success (American Federation of Teachers, 2006).

English Education in South East Asia

This need to learn English expands beyond the borders of the United States. Due to globalization, the demand for English as a lingua franca is increasing. The British Council (2013) reported that English is spoken by 1.75 billion people and projected that by 2020 that number will reach 2 billion. Research shows a direct correlation between the English proficiency of a nation and that country's economic output; a rise in a

country's English proficiency correlated with a rise in per capita income. This prompts

governments and individuals to invest more in English education so that people can

raise their standard of living (McCormick, 2013). A striking example of this demand can

be found in South East Asia, a region experiencing rapid economic growth (OECD, 2018).

The importance placed on English in South East Asia can be seen through the region's

education curricula. Nine out of the ten countries in the Association of Southeast Asian

Nations (ASEAN) make English a compulsory subject in primary school while some even

require math and science to be taught in English (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

English education in Indonesia. The national language of Indonesia is Indonesian, yet

there exists 735 local languages spoken across the 17, 767 islands that make up the

country. Despite this linguistic saturation, English proficiency in Indonesia today is

associated with economic value (Zein, 2012a). Since 1993, English has been introduced

to Grade 4 students in public schools. Since then, the Indonesian government has taken

interest in improving teaching strategies to help their young people learn English more

effectively (Rachmajanti, 2008). Studies in Indonesia have shown that teachers regularly

implement a traditional, whole-class lecture approach without varying their methods

(Rachmajanti, 2008; Zein, 2012b). Rachmajanti (2008) found that many Indonesian

students didn't like the traditional approach and preferred working in small groups.

Huda (1994) suggested that the traditional, lecture method in Indonesian English classes

was one of the most critical issues prohibiting Indonesian students from effectively

developing their English proficiency.

Teaching English Through Voluntourism

Some students continue their English language studies outside of their public school classrooms and are instructed by an individual who has traveled to the region for the purpose of volunteer teaching. This form of tourism is referred to as volunteer tourism, or voluntourism. Wearing (2001) describes such volunteers as those who volunteer, "in an organized way to undertake holidays and invoke the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment" (p.1). While there are many types of projects involved in volunteer tourism, English language teaching is a common one. More specifically, this form of voluntourism is referred to as English language teaching (ELT) voluntourism. There are virtually no prerequisites to volunteer as an ELT other than English speaking ability; neither professional educator certification nor teaching experience are necessary (Jakubiak, 2016).

Purpose of this Research

This research aims to add to the existing literature on effective instructional approaches for promoting ELL achievement. More specifically, it aims to identify how CL could promote ELL language achievement. It will examine the characteristics of effective CL methods and review the research on CL and achievement. This will be done for the purpose of guiding ELT volunteers with little or no teaching experience so that they can more effectively and confidently instruct their ELL students. This purpose will be accomplished by addressing two primary research questions. Firstly, how can CL

improve English language achievement in ELLs? Secondly, what are the characteristics of

effective CL methods?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of EBSCO MegaFILE, Expanded

Academic ASAP, Education Journals, ERIC, and Academic Search Premier were

conducted for publications from 1980-2019. This list was narrowed by focusing on

published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that concentrated on English

language learning or literacy and addressed the research questions. The key words that

were used in these searches included "cooperative learning," "ELL cooperative

learning," "cooperative language learning," and "cooperative learning literacy." The

purpose of this chapter is to review the literature investigating the effectiveness of

cooperative learning on achievement and is structured in three major sections. The first

two sections, "Research on CL and Student Achievement" and " Research on CL and

Language Achievement for ELLs" aims to review the empirical literature regarding the

efficacy of CL on student achievement and on English language development for ELLs.

The final section, "Characteristics of Effective CL Methods," aims to analyze the efficacy

of specific CL methods and their characteristics.

Research on CL and Student Achievement

CL is a widely recognized and used approach in education. It can be found in

preschool to college levels, in all subject areas and in classrooms all over the world

(Johnson et al., 2000). Syntheses of research meeting strict inclusion criteria have

shown positive effects for CL on a range of variables, including student academic

achievement (Johnson et al., 2000; Roseth, Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Slavin, 1991;

Stevens & Slavin, 1995).

Johnson et al. (2000) found over 900 studies validating the effectiveness of

cooperative efforts over competitive and individualistic efforts. The purpose of their

meta-analysis was to examine the effectiveness of specific cooperative learning

methods, thus reducing the number of studies used in the analysis to 164. The

researchers looked for specific CL methods that have been empirically tested in such a

way that a relevant effect size could be calculated. Eight CL methods were identified and

all eight were found to produce significantly higher achievement in students when

compared to competitive or individualistic learning: Learning Together (LT),

Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), Group Investigation (GI), Constructive Controversy

(CC), Jigsaw, Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team Assisted

Individualization (TAI), and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC).

A two-year comparative study was completed by Stevens and Slavin (1995)

involving 1,012 students in grades 2-6 across five elementary schools in a suburban

Maryland school district. Twenty-one classes in the two treatment schools were

matched with 24 classes in three comparison schools on mean California Achievement

Test scores for Reading, Language and Math. Comparison schools from similar

neighborhoods were chosen as an attempt to control socioeconomic and ethnic

background. The treatment schools adopted a whole-school cooperative model which

included widespread use of CL activities in academic classes and increased cooperation

between teachers, administrators and parents. Various CL methods were gradually phased in across subject areas over the course of the first year and teachers were instructed on all of the CL approaches prior to their implementation. The strategies included CIRC, TAI, Jigsaw, TGT and STAD. Comparison schools did not utilize CL. The posttest scores after two years showed significant effects favoring the cooperative schools on reading vocabulary ($t = 3.04, p < .01$), reading comprehension ($t = 3.62, p < .01$) and language expression ($t = 2.93, p < .01$).

Research on CL and Language Achievement for ELLs

Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, Ivory and Slavin (1997) evaluated the effects of the CL method Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC) on limited English proficient second and third graders in Spanish bilingual programs in El Paso, Texas. This was an adaptation of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) that essentially uses the same principles as CIRC but begins with reading instruction in the child's home language before transitioning to English.

Three schools with a total enrollment of 2,165 acted as the experimental group. Extensive teacher staff development was given on how to deliver the BCIRC program. During BCIRC, four heterogenous students learning groups worked together on language activities such as reading comprehension, spelling, writing and vocabulary. The comparison group consisted of four schools with a total enrollment of 3,829 students. Teachers in the comparison group used traditional reading approaches such as round robin reading and independent worksheet activities. Both schools used the same basal

reading series and allotted two hours of instruction a day to the program (Calderon et al., 1997).

Students were assessed on their Spanish and English using the Bilingual Syntax Measure in Kindergarten and by Texas state standardized tests in grades two and three. At the end of the treatment, the second graders scored significantly better than comparison schools on their standardized tests in writing (ES +0.54) and marginally better in reading (ES +0.31). The third graders who were in the program for at least one year scored significantly better than comparison students in reading (ES +0.63) but not writing. Third graders who were in BCIRC for the full two years showed greater achievement than the comparison schools on both measures with effect sizes of +0.38 for writing and +0.87 for reading (Calderon et al., 1997).

BCIRC was evaluated against a number of other instructional strategies in a meta-analysis of 26 ELL studies involving 3,150 ELL immigrant students in Kindergarten through 6th grade. The purpose of the analysis was to assess strategies for teaching English literacy to immigrant ELL students. Inclusion criteria for the analysis included sufficient data to calculate an effect size, a clearly identified experimental group of a specific strategy and a control group using a traditional approach, and clearly reported measured outcomes related to literacy for both groups. Twenty-six studies met this criteria. Their findings indicated that cooperative reading interventions, (dyad reading and BCIRC) produced larger effect sizes than the other strategies analyzed, (versions of

systemic phonics instruction and multimedia assisted reading) (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson & Ungerleider, 2010).

Another study that utilized the CIRC CL method was performed on 102 English majors in the Foreign Language Department at Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry Management in Henan, China. A pre- and post-test method was applied to the experimental (cooperative) group from two classes and control (traditional instruction) group from another two classes. An English proficiency test was given to both groups prior to the study and each group received the same instructional material in their classes. At the start of the experiment, the cooperative group was instructed on the rationale and requirements of CL, including those related to positive interdependence and individual accountability. Groups were arranged so that one high performing, two middle performing and one low performing student was in the group. Roles were assigned within the groups: reader, speaker, recorder/timer and respondents. The teacher circulated the room listening to student dialogue and points were given to teams for demonstrating academic knowledge or by challenging the other group's answers. Simpler CL methods were utilized at the start of the course, (i.e. Roundtable and Rapid Brainstorming) progressing then to more structured methods by the end of the course (i.e. Solving Problems with Cooperative Learning and CIRC). The control group received traditional instruction in the form of a whole-class lecture approach. Quizzes were given following a unit of lectures then again after three weeks so that evaluations could be done on both achievement and retention. The means of the total

test scores from the course were then evaluated using a t-test and compared to the English proficiency test given at the start of the course. Results showed a significant difference in both student achievement (t=2.60, p=0.011) and retention of learned knowledge (t=2.45, p=0.016) favoring the cooperative learning group (Zhang, 2012).

In Zonguldak, Turkey, Yavuz and Arslan (2018) carried out a 5 week study of 66 10th graders to assess the effect of CL on students' language skills. A pre- and post-test design was implemented which assessed each participant's vocabulary, grammar, listening and reading comprehension. A 75 question Academic Achievement Test designed by Yavuz and covering all four language dimensions was given to all students at the start of the research which showed no significant differences. Thirty-three students were taught in the traditional method while the other 33 were instructed using a CL approach, though it is unclear exactly which methods were utilized. Those in the CL group were first instructed about CL and the Learning Together method. Heterogeneous groups of 5-6 were formed. Points were given to groups for correct answers and both individual and group evaluations were made, suggesting that individual accountability and positive interdependence were ensured. At the end of the study, post-mean scores on all four measures (grammar, listening, reading and vocabulary) were significantly higher than the pretest when compared to the control group. The experimental group showed significant differences between the pre-tests and post-tests as well as greater effects on all four sub-tests when compared to the control group.

A similar study was performed by Sijali (2017) who tested 150 grade 10 students in Nepal over a period of 12 weeks. Seventy-eight students were placed into the experimental group and seventy-two were placed in the control. The experimental group was taught using a CL approach while the control received traditional instruction. The CL strategies employed included Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, Round Robin/Roundtable and Group Investigation, although little detail was further provided on the CL implementation. A listening, speaking, reading and writing assessment was given after the 12 week instruction and the overall performance of the CL group (M = 26.71, SD = 4.478) was significantly greater than that of the control group (M = 16.50, SD = 5.619). Some limitations of this study are that the researcher taught both groups (researcher bias) and no pre-test was given as a control comparison.

Another study on 10th graders was performed by Alghamdi and Gillies (2013) in Saudi Arabia. One hundred and thirty-nine tenth grade male students were tested on their English grammar proficiency across four schools in Al-Baha city. Students in the experimental group were taught English through cooperative methods while those in the control group were taught in the traditional, teacher-led approach. Teachers and students in the CL group were provided with five weeks of comprehensive training on the basic skills and principles of CL prior to the study. For example, teachers were instructed on how to monitor progress and explain expectations for both individuals and groups while students were instructed on their individual and group expectations. The same English grammar achievement test was given at the beginning and the end of the

study and consisted of 20 multiple choice questions and a written component. The tests

were assessed by English teachers not involved in the study. The post-test results

showed that there were statistically significant differences (p = 0.009, p < 0.05) between

those students who learned through cooperative approaches and those who learned in

the traditional method. There were no statistically significant differences in the pre-test

scores between the two groups, indicating that the two groups had similar knowledge of

the grammar items prior to instruction, thus attributing the gain in achievement to the

cooperative learning environment.

Similar outcomes were found by Zarrabi (2016) who also tested the impact of CL

strategies on English Language proficiency. 150 randomly selected, female, intermediate

EFL learners (ages 18-40) from 15 classes of different English Language Institutes in

Tehran, Iran, participated in the study. These students were administered the

Cambridge First Certificate of English (FCE) test prior to the study to assess initial

language proficiency. Students who scored one standard deviation above and below the

mean were included in the study as a way to control the achievement score, bringing

down the participant number to 135. All participants were then instructed on how to

complete various cooperative tasks: Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, Roundtable/Round Robin,

Numbered Heads Together and Group Investigation. Following twenty sessions of

English instruction of 90 minutes each, the researcher administered the FCE post-test. A

paired samples t-test comparing the mean scores of the FCE pretest and posttest

demonstrated a significant difference (t (134) = 61.42, P =0.000 < 0.05, R = 0.98).

Characteristics of Effective CL Methods

There is an abundance of research supporting the notion that CL has a positive

impact on student achievement; however, there is some confusion surrounding why CL

has this effect and little understanding of the specific factors that influence achievement

(Slavin, 1996). The majority of the existing research on CL does not directly test the

effectiveness of specific CL strategies, but rather the effectiveness of a cooperative

approach in general (Johnson et al., 2000). Many of the aforementioned articles used in

this research on ELL language achievement implemented or analyzed a variety of CL

strategies in their study as opposed to testing specific ones (Adesope et al., 2010;

Bejarano, 1987; Sijali, 2017; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2010).

To address this shortcoming in the literature, the meta-analysis by Johnson et al.

(2000) involving 164 studies sought to validate the effectiveness of specific strategies on

academic achievement using empirical support. The researchers found eight CL methods

within those 164 studies that met the inclusion criteria of utilizing positive

interdependence and demonstrating an effect on achievement. Each method was then

scored and ranked from most effective to least effective based on their effect size on

achievement and the number of studies that were available. This ranking was the first of

its kind, therefore it has some limitations. Firstly, there was a lot of variance in how

many studies existed of each method (i.e. Learning Together had 113 independent

effects and Group Investigation had 3). Another factor that limits this research was that

a wide range of achievement measures were used and the implementation strength of

the methods between studies varied. Despite these limitations, all of the eight methods demonstrated substantial effect on achievement when compared to competitive and individualistic learning. Therefore, the researchers stated that teachers should feel confident using any of the eight methods.

Rating of CL Methods

The meta-analysis by Johnson et al. (2000) included a further evaluation of those eight CL methods found to be most empirically validated. The researchers rated each method on a 1-5 scale (easy-moderate-difficult) across five dimensions: a. ease of initial learning of the method, b. ease of initial implementation, c. ease of long-term use and maintenance, d. ease of applicability to a wide variety of contexts, and e. ease of adaptability to changing conditions. Results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Rating of CL Methods

Strategy	*Learning*	*Initial Use*	*Maintain*	*Applicability*	*Adaptability*	*Total*
Learning Together	5	5	5	5	5	25
TGT	3	3	1	2	2	11
GI	5	5	3	2	2	17
CC	5	5	5	4	4	23
Jigsaw	2	2	3	3	3	13
STAD	2	2	1	2	2	9
TAI	2	2	1	1	1	7
CIRC	2	2	1	1	1	7

(Adapted from: Johnson et al., 2000)

The results of this study suggest that CIRC, TAI and STAD are the easiest methods for educators to initially learn and use, maintain, apply to various contexts and adapt to changing conditions; conversely, these results suggest that Learning Together, CC, and GI are the most difficult. These findings could be limited by subjectivity and researcher bias, for the researchers rated the methods themselves and two of the researchers, Roger Johnson and David Johnson, are the creators of two of the eight methods that were evaluated.

Grouping

Also important when implementing CL strategies is being thoughtful about the grouping of students. Students may be grouped by similarities (homogeneous grouping) or by differences (heterogeneous grouping). Some CL methods have specific grouping procedures. For example, Learning Together utilizes 4-5 member heterogeneous teams and STAD divides the class into four heterogeneous learning teams with mixed performance levels, gender and ethnicity (Manning & Lucking, 1991). Regarding language proficiency, a 2007 practice guide issued by the Institute of Education Sciences highlighting best practice for teaching ELL literacy, Gersten et al. (2000), found strong evidence that providing regular, structured activities that pairs ELLs with different proficiencies can help their literacy development. Two of the aforementioned studies on CL and language achievement in ELLs mentioned specifics about their grouping procedure: Calderon et al., (1997) used groups of four with varying language

proficiencies and Zhang (2012) created arranged heterogeneous language proficiency groups of one high performing, two middle performing and one low performing student.

Positive Interdependence and Individual Accountability

Positive interdependence refers to the need for students to believe that they are all connected if the task is to be completed successfully (Hendrix, 1999). This can be achieved through the structuring the rules or materials of the task (Holt, 1993), giving students specific roles within the group (Cohen, 1994), or through the goal structure or the reward structure (Holt, 1993). Research indicates that group goals and rewards, when coupled with individual accountability, have the greatest impact on achievement (Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Slavin (1995) reviewed 99 studies on CL and achievement and found that 64 of them provided group rewards based on each member's individual learning. Of those 64 studies, 50 resulted in significantly positive effects on achievement with a median effect size of +0.32. Conversely, studies whose group goals consisted of a single group product or no group rewards had a median effect size of just +0.07 (Slavin, 1995).

Roseth et al. (2008) completed a meta-analysis of 148 studies involving 17,000 early adolescents to analyze the effect of cooperation on achievement and peer relationships. Results found that cooperative goal structures were associated with a +0.46 standard deviation in academic achievement compared to competitive goal structures and a +0.55 standard deviation in academic achievement compared to individualistic goal structures.

Group goals or rewards coupled with individual accountability can also be found producing significantly positive effects on achievement in the aforementioned studies on CL and ELL language achievement (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Calderon et al., 1997; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zhang 2012).

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH APPLICATION

This research sought to examine the impact of Cooperative Learning (CL) on the language achievement of ELLs. In response to the research of Chapter II, a CL instructional guide was created for English Language Teaching (ELT) volunteers involved in voluntourism. More specifically, the guide was made for incoming volunteers of the Ndulu English Project on Nias Island in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The Ndulu English Project is a volunteer after-school English language center for students of all ages, created and developed by the author of this research. The research found in Chapter 2 was utilized when creating the application guide in a number of ways, described below.

Page 3 of the application guide describes CL through a comparison to the traditional approach of teaching. This was included because many of the studies and meta-analyses in Chapter 2 compare CL to the traditional approach as a means for evaluating its effectiveness (Adesope et al., 2010; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Sijali, 2017; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zhang, 2012). Also, it is hypothesized that volunteer teachers with little or no experience would otherwise utilize a traditional approach to instruction since they do not have exposure or training in more innovative practices. Thus, a comparison of traditional and cooperative learning seemed essential.

Page 4 of the application guide provides rationale for utilizing a CL approach. The experimental studies used in Chapter 2 resulted in a CL approach being effective in increasing language achievement across a range of dimensions including reading (Adesope et al., 2010; Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Yavuz & Arslan,

2018), grammar (Alghamdi and Gillies, 2013; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), listening (Sijali,

2017; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), speaking (Sijali, 2017), vocabulary (Yavuz & Arslan, 2018),

writing (Calderon et al., 1997; Sijali, 2017), and general English language proficiency

(Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012). Studies in Chapter 2 also span ages from elementary

school (grades 2-6) (Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995), to high school

(grades 10), (Alghamdi and Gillies, 2013; Sijali, 2017; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018) to college

(Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012) as well as various countries, including the United States

(Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995), China (Zhang, 2012), Turkey (Yavuz &

Arslan, 2018), Nepal (Sijali 2017), Saudi Arabia (Alghamdi and Gillies, 2013), and Iran

(Zarrabi, 2016).This empirical validity was essential in order to feel confident in using it

as an approach at the Ndulu English Project. Furthermore, this generalizability of age,

nationality, and language dimension further suggests its potential benefit to the project.

Page 5 of the application guide describes positive interdependence and

individual accountability. These two characteristics of CL were referenced in every

experimental study included in the first two sections of Chapter 2, "Research on CL and

Achievement" and "Research on CL and Language Achievement for ELLs" (Alghamdi &

Gillies, 2013; Calderon et al., 1997; Sijali, 2017; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Yavuz & Arslan,

2018; Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012); thus, it was deemed imperative to include an

explanation of both in the application guide. Another observation made in reviewing the

literature was that researchers in some studies mentioned teaching students about the

principles and expectations of CL prior to implementing the approach (Alghamdi &

Gillies, 2013; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012); therefore, on this page

of the guide volunteers were also instructed to share these principles with their

students.

Page 6 of the application guide instructs volunteers on how to structure the

group goal or reward structure. The meta-analysis by Roseth et al. (2008) found that

group goals, when compared to individualistic or competitive goal structures, resulted in

greater achievement for adolescents. Also, findings by Slavin (1995) suggest that group

goals or rewards coupled with individual accountability is imperative for achievement.

Thus, the explanation of goal and reward structures was included on page 6 of the

application guide and further suggestions on how to implement them was included on

page 7.

Page 8 of the application guide gives guidance on how to group students.

Grouping procedures were described in three of the experimental studies used in

Chapter 2 and all of them were small (4-6 members) heterogeneous groups (varying

proficiency) (Calderon et al., 1997; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zhang, 2012). Further evidence

for this was found in the 2007 practice guide issued by the Institute of Education

Sciences, where it was suggested for teachers of ELLs to provide regular, structured

activities with pairs of ELLs at different proficiencies (Gersten et al., 2000).

Page 9 was included as a means to condense the various CL methods into the

eight that were found to be most empirically supported by the Johnson et al. (2000)

meta-analysis. The choice to then further describe STAD on page 10 was through

considering the rating of the methods across five dimensions by Johnson et al. (2000). Considering the inexperience of many incoming volunteers, a method that was easier to initially learn and utilize, maintain, apply to different contexts and adapt to changing conditions was preferred. Learning Together, Group Investigation (GI) and Constructive Controversy (CC) were found to be the most difficult; therefore, they were not deemed fitting for the purpose of the application guide. Team Assisted Individualization (TAI) is used for mathematics and therefore was also not included. Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) was one of the easiest to learn, initially use, maintain, apply to a variety of contexts and adapt to changing situations (Johnson et al. 2000), thus a further description on using this method on page 10 of the guide.

Although choices were made in the creation of the CL teaching guide reflecting the considerations of the program, (limited resources, emphasis on conversational English vs. academic English and teacher inexperience), this guide could benefit any teacher of ELLs by providing user-friendly, practical, research-based instruction on using CL in the classroom.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Summary of Literature

Cooperative Learning is a widely recognized and used approach in education. It can be found in preschool to college levels, in all subject areas and in classrooms all over the world (Johnson et al., 2000). This statement was supported by the research included in this study. A range of grade levels were represented, from elementary school (grades 2-6) (Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995), to high school (grades 10), (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Sijali, 2017; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018) to college (Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012). CL was shown to have a significant positive effect on various dimensions of language achievement, including reading (Adesope et al., 2010; Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), grammar (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), listening (Sijali, 2017; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), speaking (Sijali, 2017), vocabulary (Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), writing (Calderon et al., 1997; Sijali, 2017), and general English language proficiency (Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012). These findings suggest that CL can increase achievement across dimensions of language. Furthermore, the experimental studies used in this research on CL and achievement took place in the United States (Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995), China (Zhang, 2012), Turkey (Yavuz & Arslan, 2018), Nepal (Sijali 2017), Saudi Arabia (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013), and Iran (Zarrabi, 2016), further suggesting its generalizability.

With the exception of Sijali (2017), all of the experimental studies measuring CL on achievement utilized a pretest/post test comparative design in which the average test scores of the treatment group (those exposed to CL instructional methods) were compared to the average test scores of the control group (those exposed to traditional instructional methods). Each experimental study resulted in a significant increase in language achievement when compared to a traditional approach (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012).

Given the wide range of CL methods, an attempt was made to evaluate the most effective methods on student achievement. The meta-analysis by Johnson et al. (2000) attempting to answer this question found that eight CL methods have the most empirical support and all eight have been found to produce significantly higher achievement in students when compared to competitive or individualistic learning. Those strategies are: Learning Together (LT) , Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)), Group Investigation (GI), Constructive Controversy (CC), Jigsaw, Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team Assisted Individualization (TAI), and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). Another useful component of the meta-analysis was the rating of each method's ease of initial learning and use, maintenance, applicablicability and adaptability. STAD, TAI and CIRC were found the be the easiest across those dimensions, while Learning Together, CC and GI were found to be the most difficult. This rating can help educators choose the most appropriate method for their

situation and context; however, this finding may be limited by possible bias and subjectivity.

In an attempt to evaluate the characteristics of effective CL methods, a couple of observations were made. Firstly, how students are grouped may affect achievement. While grouping may vary across CL methods, the research indicates heterogeneously grouping students based on language proficiency has positive results on language achievement (Calderon et al., 1997; Gersten et al., 2000; Zhang, 2012).

Also, positive interdependence and individual accountability have been noted as important characteristics underlying all CL methods (Kagan, 1989; Kagan & McGroarty, 1993; Liao, 2005; Slavin, 1991). While this can be ensured in a variety of ways, research suggests that group goals or group rewards, when coupled with individual accountability, have the greatest impact on student achievement (Roseth et al., 2008; Slavin, 1995). Group goals or rewards coupled with individual accountability can also be found producing significantly positive effects on achievement in the aforementioned studies on CL and ELL language achievement (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Calderon et al., 1997; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zhang 2012).

Lastly, another observation made in the review of the literature was an emphasis on instructing students about the principles, expectations and rationale behind CL prior to implementation (Calderon et al., 1997; Stevens & Slavin, 1995; Zarrabi, 2016; Zhang, 2012) suggesting that teaching students how to work cooperatively is needed in order for the CL methods to improve achievement.

Limitations of the Research

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of EBSCO MegaFILE, Expanded

Academic ASAP, Education Journals, ERIC, and Academic Search Premier were

conducted for publications from 1980-2019. This list was narrowed by focusing on

published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that concentrated on English

language learning or literacy and addressed the research questions. The key words that

were used in these searches included "cooperative learning," "ELL cooperative

learning," "cooperative language learning," and "cooperative learning literacy." Studies

that were theoretically based or used qualitative approaches were not included. Also

not included were studies that didn't specify the group work as CL. For example, studies

on "group work" or "collaborative learning". Also, in order to be included, the study

needed to be measure CL on achievement, specifically. While many studies were found

supporting the benefit of CL on a variety of other variable, (i.e. motivation, social skills,

self-esteem) or subjects other than English these were not included. Of most interest to

this research was CL's impact on language achievement in ELLs. The research was

limited by the small number of studies found including those specifications.

Furthermore, some of the included studies were limited by small sample size. With the

exception of Calderon et al., (1997), all studies on CL and language achievement in ELLs

had sample sizes ranging from 66-150. Lastly, an attempt was made to find information

on the impact and scope of ELT voluntourism but no research was found.

Implications for Future Research

Though some research exists on the effectiveness of CL as an approach for promoting language achievement in ELLs, more study of this could be done. As stated by Slavin (1996) "...there is still a great deal of confusion and disagreement about *why* cooperative learning methods affect achievement and, even more importantly, *under what conditions* cooperative learning has these effects" (p. 44). While this research sought to analyze the characteristics of effective CL approaches on achievement, more can be done to identify the most essential components. More specifically, it would be useful to empirically study what aspects of CL are most effective for ELLs and their language development. This information could better direct instructors of ELLs when selecting CL methods. As suggested by Johnson et al. (2000), it is difficult to recommend specific CL methods to educators when there is a lack of research evaluating various methods.

Also of interest would be research directed at ELT tourism and its impact on the language development of those they teach. Considering many ELT volunteer teachers have little or no teaching experience, it would be beneficial to evaluate their effect and make informed suggestions on how to better prepare them so that their teaching is most effective.

Implications for Professional Application

This research supports the notion that the traditional teacher-led, whole-class approach to learning is not the most effective. It suggests to ELL educators that peers

working together to learn can produce greater effects on achievement than the traditional approach alone. ELL educators should assess their practice to see if they are providing the time, space and structure for peers to work together effectively. They should evaluate the general structure and climate of their classrooms. Are students spending most of their time working independently on tasks? Are they competing with each other for rewards and recognition? If so, restructuring their classes to promote cooperation should be considered.

CL is a general term and encompasses a variety of strategies and methods. This may be overwhelming to teachers who want to try CL in the classroom but don't know where to begin. This research condenses the numerous methods into those which are most empirically supported. It also rates the methods helping teachers choose the appropriate approach for their given situations. Furthermore, this research provides evidence for grouping students with mixed language proficiency.

The application guide was created for a specific program but it could be adapted so that it could be used in other ELT voluntourism programs. Considering how many volunteers enter their programs with little or no teaching experience, this research and application guide has the potential to help these teachers feel more confident. There is great potential to better aid incoming volunteer teachers and thus increase their effectiveness in teaching their students. English has the potential to create opportunity for many of those in developing nations; thus, if this research is implemented by those

teaching ELLs in such countries, it has the potential to improve the quality of life of those who receive their instruction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CL has been found to positively impact language achievement in ELLs across various dimensions of language, including reading, grammar, listening, speaking, vocabulary and writing. Eight CL methods were identified as being the most empirically validated CL approaches on student achievement, all of which were found to have a positive impact. A number of characteristics were identified as possible factors in increasing CL effectiveness on achievement, such as using CL methods that ensure positive interdependence in the form of group goals or rewards coupled with individual accountability, arranging small groups of students (2-5) with varying levels of language proficiency and instructing students on the principles, expectations and rationale of CL prior to implementation.

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