

Learner Motivation Strategies and Students Achievement; Case of Cooperative Learning Approach and Conventional Teaching Methods

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Abstract

Language learning is the attainment of proficiency in a target language (TL) through formal instruction. Effective teaching strategies require students and not the teacher to do the conceptualizing, organizing, and theorizing about the subject matter. There are many teaching and learning methods used in teaching and learning English. The objective of this study was to determine any differences in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in mixed day sub-county public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. The study was founded on cognitive-developmental, social-cognitive, behavioural-learning and social interdependence theories which support the use of cooperative learning. The study applied an experimental research design. It targeted all 1665 form two students and 54 English language teachers from 14 public mixed day sub-county secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County where the respondents were the form two students and English language teachers. Sample size was 273 students and 8 English subject teachers. In sampling for the schools, students and teachers, simple random sampling technique was applied. Data was collected using learners' questionnaires which were administered to both the experimental groups and the control groups, interview schedules which were administered to teachers of English in the sampled schools and Learners' English Language Achievement Tests which were administered as pre-tests before the treatment to one experimental group (E_1) and one control group (C_1) and a post-test was administered after one week of treatment to the four groups (E_1 , C_1 , E_2 and C_2) to measure students' achievement. A pilot study was conducted in Machakos sub-county to test validity and reliability of the research instruments. These instruments were also validated by experts from the university. Reliability of the achievement tests was established through a split-half method and a correlation coefficient of $\alpha=0.86$ was obtained. Test re-test method was used to establish reliability of the questionnaire and the interview schedule. A correlation coefficient of $\alpha=0.807$ for the questionnaire and $\alpha=0.806$ for interviews was obtained and the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the tools was higher than the minimum acceptable alpha value of 0.70 or above hence, the research tools were considered reliable. Data was analyzed using both descriptive analyses (percentages, mean scores and standard deviation) and inferential analyses (a t-test and ANOVA) and presented in tabular form while the Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis majorly thematic analysis. The study revealed that the mean gain ($M = 15.34$) of the Experimental group was significantly different from that of the control group ($M = 11.67$). Experimental groups (E_1 and E_3) had higher mean scores than the control groups (C_2 and C_4). This implies that the treatment (CL) enhanced students' achievement on English test among students in mixed day sub-county public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. Experimental groups were taught through cooperative learning (CL), which may imply that the method resulted into higher achievement than the conventional teaching methods. The differences between the mean scores were statistically significant at the 0.05 level implying that the treatment given to the experimental group had some effects on students' motivation. The hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant difference in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among

students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County was rejected. CL positively affects motivation to learn English. Secondary school teachers should use motivational strategies such as standardized achievement test, competitions in composition writing, debating and drama-based approaches of teaching.

Key words: *Achievement in English language, Conventional teaching, Cooperative Learning, Motivational Strategies, Students Achievement*

Background to the Study

Cooperative learning (CL) is a teaching strategy where students of mixed levels of ability are arranged into groups and rewarded according to the group's success, rather than the success of an individual member. In some cases, each group member is individually accountable for part of the task; in other cases, group members work together without formal role assignments (Illies et al., 2015). Conventional approach refers to the traditional way of teaching where in most of the time lecture method is used. The way learners interact and perceive one another has a lot of impact on their achievement.

A study to investigate the effects of CL on Chinese English foreign learners' competencies in listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary revealed clear improvement when using CL in the teaching of listening, speaking and reading but no differences were found between the CL and the conventional teaching in the areas of writing and vocabulary (Ning & Hornby, 2010). Another study conducted among the Taiwanese college students in terms of English oral performance and motivation when teaching is done using CL showed an improvement of the learners' oral skills and motivation (Yough, 2018). In addition, a study amongst Yemeni university students revealed that there was a remarkable development in the students' speaking and motivational strategies after the introduction of CL (Ahmed & Omer, 2014). These and other studies not mentioned herein indicate that there is a significant effect of CL on learners' language skills.

English as a second language is taught and used as an official language of communication in Kenya as well as a medium of instruction in schools and other learning institutions. It is also a language used for international communication hence those who master and speak it well; reap many academic, social and professional benefits (Owiti et al., 2014). Teachers need to apply methods and strategies for learner centered instruction and a promising method to traditional speaking instruction is the Cooperative Learning Approach (Hall, Haley, & Ferro, 2011). This method serves as the alternative way of teaching for promoting speaking and social interaction among the students (Ning, 2011). Cooperative learning as per the available research suggestions is of great influence on the development of learners' speaking skills (Al-Sohbani, 2013).

In Kenya, a study on the use of CL on poetry teaching indicated that there was a great improvement on poetry learning and motivational strategies among learners (Chemwei & Somba, 2014). Another research conducted on the effects of CL on students' achievement and motivational strategies towards oral literature genres revealed that CL was an effective method which English and literature teachers needed to be encouraged to use in the instruction of English and literature (Sono, 2018). A research on the effectiveness of computer-based CL on students' English grammar indicated that computer-based CL method helped learners improve their achievement in English grammar (Orato, 2013). However, among the boys and girls who were exposed to cooperative learning strategy, there was no significant difference in their performance in English. In addition, those in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group who were instructed using the conventional teaching approach. The study therefore was on effectiveness of cooperative learning on achievement in English language in Kathiani sub-county, Kenya.

The Kenya national examinations council (KNEC) report for the year 2018 KCSE examination outlined the performance of candidates in the three papers offered in the English subject. Data for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 was also provided for comparison. Candidates' overall performance in English subject for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 were reported to be poor. Performance of candidates in the year 2018 is comparable to that of 2017. The English subject mean dropped minimally by 0.77 points from 73.55 with a standard deviation of 22.57 to 72.78 with a standard deviation of 22.27 (KNEC, 2019). The overall performance in the

subject for the five years falls short of the ideal mean of 100 (50%) calling for innovation in curriculum implementation (KNEC, 2019). Poor mean scores in English language were also reported in Kathiani sub-county for the last four years. The mean scores were: 2015 (4.87) D plus, 2016 (4.59) D plus, 2017 (4.05) D plus and 2018 (4.58) D plus (Kathiani sub-county examination reports, 2019).

Teachers of English language in most of the Kenyan schools use conventional teaching, the teacher is seen as the authority of the classroom and learners have a limited chance to practice their English language skills (Sure & Ogechi, 2019). Despite the academic, social and professional benefits of the English language, its performance in K.C.S.E continues to be poor over the years. There is need therefore to improve the current performance of English language among Kenyan secondary school learners (KNEC, 2019). This study was therefore on effectiveness of cooperative learning on student's achievement in English language in Kathiani sub-county, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To determine any differences in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County

Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on four major theories supporting the use of cooperative learning cognitive-developmental, social-cognitive, behavioural-learning and social interdependence theories.

Review of related literature

Cooperative learning is a promising method in relation to the traditional language teaching method (Renau, 2016). It serves as alternative way of teaching for promoting language skills and social interaction among learners (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Research done by scholars from various parts of the world indicate that CL is of great effect on developing learners' language skills (Katawazai & Saidalvi, 2020). The effects of CL on learners' language skills have been repeatedly demonstrated and confirmed by studies conducted in L1 and L2 learning (Devi et al., 2016; Haq et al., 2015; Mohammad & Mohammad, 2018; Rodphotong, 2018). Many of these studies indicate that the use of CLA in the teaching of language skills can lead to increased speaking skills (Hikmat, 2019; Kalyani & Murugan, 2021; Mokhtar, 2016). It has also been noted that most studies on the effects of CL have consistently shown that CLA improves learners' English-speaking skills (Makini et al., 2020) and English reading skills (Alemayehu, 2014; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018). English competence in skills and vocabulary in CL classes are superior to whole class instruction particularly in speaking, listening and reading (Liang, 2016). Ning and Hornby (2010) conducted a study to investigate the effects of CL on Chinese EFL learners' competencies in listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary. The findings revealed clear improvement in CLA in the teaching of listening, speaking and reading but no differences were found between the two approaches in the areas of writing and vocabulary.

A study conducted among the Taiwanese college students in terms of English oral performance and motivation when teaching is done using CLA showed an improvement of the learners' oral skills and motivation (Çağatay & Demircioğlu, 2016). Ahmed and Omer (2014) conducted another study amongst Yemeni university students and the findings revealed that there was a remarkable development in the students' speaking and attitudes after the

introduction of CL techniques. These and other studies not mentioned herein indicate that there is a significant effect of CL on learners' language skills.

Motivational perspectives on cooperative learning assume that cooperative efforts are based on group reward or goal structures (Sure & Ogechi, 2019). From a motivational perspective, cooperative learning activities, when properly carried out, create a situation in which individual group members can achieve their goals if and only if each member is successful. Therefore, the members of the group are motivated to help their classmates in order to meet their own goals. And even more importantly, they encourage their group-mates to exert maximum efforts. This gives rise to interpersonal reward structure in which group members with hold social reinforces in response to group-mates task related efforts (Slavin, 2017). Thus, due to cooperative goal; structures as identified by Siltala, (2020), cooperative learning encourages students to want their classmates to succeed in contrast, to competitive learning where individuals compete for grades, or individualistic goal structures where individuals have no concern with the attainment of others.

Johnson and Johnson (2015) and Slavin (2017) have adopted motivational concerns of cooperative learning from behavioural and humanistic learning theories. Two important behaviourist concepts are group contingencies by Skinner and vicarious reinforcement or imitation by Bandura. Slavin (2017) cites one intervention that uses cooperative goal structure as the group contingency, in which group rewards are given on the basis of group members behaviour. The theory underlying group contingencies require that group members be able to actually help one another or work together. The fact that their outcomes are dependent on one another's behaviour is enough to motivate students to engage in behaviour which helps the group to be rewarded, because the group incentive induces students to encourage goal-directed behaviours among their group mates.

The other behaviourist concept is that individuals who observe someone else getting reinforced for a particular behaviour tend to exhibit that behaviour more frequently themselves-known as vicarious reinforcement (Efrizal, 2012). This phenomenon induces those students to learn not only by being reinforced themselves, but also seeing other people receiving rewards or punishment. Cooperative learning especially when students are heterogeneously grouped according to motivation and past achievements offers many opportunities for students to be motivated for hard work from models who are rewarded for their efforts. However, Gull and Shehzad, (2015) believes that extrinsic motivation is preferable over intrinsic motivation. He argues that students receive about 900 hours of instruction every year. It is unrealistic to expect that intrinsic interest and internal motivation will keep them enthusiastically working day out. Evidently, motivational theorists have built group rewards into their cooperative learning methods. The theoretical rationale for these group rewards is that if students value the success of the group, they will help and encourage one another to achieve much in contrast to the situation in a traditional competitive classroom (Slavin, 2017). This study was therefore on the effectiveness of cooperative learning on students' achievement in English language in Kathiani sub-county, Kenya.

Methodology

The study utilized Experimental Research Design, in which the researcher used Solomon's four, non-equivalent control group design. The quasi-experimental design compared control groups, which were taught English using the conventional teaching methods with experimental groups which were instructed English using CL. To achieve the objective, form two learners of English in four intact classes were sampled for the study. From a population of fourteen public mixed day sub-county secondary schools, four intact classes were identified through simple random sampling. There was a sample of two experimental classes which were taught English subject for one week using CL to check on learners' involvement in CL activities and two control groups which were taught English using the conventional methods. The researcher used questionnaire, interview schedules and English language achievement tests as data collection tools.

Research Findings**Comparison of students' pre-test mean scores**

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value
E ₁	64	28.69	2.85	121	0.842	0.291
C ₁	59	29.04	2.76			

Two groups (E₁ and C₁) were pre-tested before the collection of actual data. This was important to enable the researcher to check whether the groups were homogenous before exposing them to the treatment. From the table above, it is observed that the mean score of students in the experimental group (28.69, SD = 2.85) was slightly less than that of the control group (29.04, SD=2.76). The t-test results revealed that the difference in mean scores between the two groups was not statistically significant at 0.05 level, $t_{(121)} = 0.842$, $p = 0.291$.

Post-test Analysis Mean Score on Motivational Strategies

Group	N	Mean score	SD
I	64	40.32	3.97
II	59	32.66	4.56
III	64	44.65	4.08
IV	59	36.07	5.45

The table above shows that experimental groups I and III which were taught English language using CL had higher mean scores than the control groups II and IV which were taught English language using conventional methods. This may be a pointer that CL influenced English students' motivation.

Comparison of Post Mean Score on Motivational Strategies Using ANOVA

The table below shows a comparison of post mean score on motivational strategies using ANOVA.

Scale	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-value
Between groups	985.65	3	328.55	8.983	0.009
Within groups	3114.654	158	19.713		
Total	4100.304	161			

The null hypothesis in this study was that there is no statistically significant difference in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. In order to test the hypothesis, t-test and ANOVA were used. The results indicated that the differences between the mean scores were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, $F(3,158) = 8.983$, $p = 0.009$ implying that the treatment given to the experimental group had some effects on students' motivation. This implies that the treatment (CL) enhanced students' motivation. Learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching method in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County is different. Therefore, the hypothesis that stated that there is no statistically significant

difference in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County is not accepted at 0.05 alpha level.

The objective of this study sought to determine any differences in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English through cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching methods in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. On motivational strategies, experimental groups I and III which were taught using CL had higher mean scores than the control groups II and IV which were taught using conventional teaching methods. This is a pointer that CL influenced English students' motivation. The differences between the mean scores were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, $F(3,158) = 8.983$, $p = 0.009$ implying that the treatment given to the experimental group had some effects on students' motivation. However, students do not examine their understanding of the topic through the listening and speaking skills first before expanding through reading and writing activities. This implied that teachers needed to gauge students understanding of the topics covered through listening skills which in turn leads to acquisition of writing and reading skills. In addition, students over relied on the teacher and English grammar text books to find information thus inhibiting the acquisition of learner's linguistic skills. Standardized achievement test outcomes, competitions in composition writing, debating and drama-based approaches of teaching were not used by most schools in the assessment for learners' acquisition of linguistic skills. This hindered secondary school learners' acquisition of linguistic skills. Therefore, the inefficiencies associated with learner's use of motivational strategies hindered their achievement of linguistic skills. This shows that effective use of various motivational strategies during the instruction of English leads to students' achievement of linguistic skills. CL positively affects motivation to learn English as such the hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant difference in learner's motivational strategies towards achievement in English among students taught English by cooperative learning approach and conventional teaching in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County was rejected.

Recommendations

Teachers of English in secondary schools need to embrace student-centred teaching approaches during instruction since student-centred approaches were associated with efficiency in the acquisition of linguistic skills. In addition, secondary schools need to use motivational strategies such as standardized achievement test, competitions in composition writing, debating and drama-based approaches of teaching. These motivational strategies are associated with student's effectiveness in the acquisition of linguistic skills. Secondary school English teachers should also be encouraged to explore the application of cooperative learning in their classroom instruction as the task is enormous. Teacher trainers should integrate CL among instructional strategies being inculcated into the students. Further, seminars and workshops should be organised for serving teachers to keep abreast with principles and implementation process of CL.

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