THE EFFECT OF USING THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH ON THE ACQUISITION OF VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative Learning is based on using groups that are structured to encourage members to learn from their peers and also to assist the less proficient learners. Learners in such groups are trained to be aware of their responsibility to maximize their individual as well as their peers' learning potential in social contexts. This paper tries to show the positive effects of Cooperative Learning on foreign language teaching, specifically concerning the acquisition of vocabulary. The study is restricted to second intermediate students in Al-Qahira High School for girls in Baghdad, Iraq, during the second term of the academic year 2018– 2019. The sample of the study consists of 60 students selected from a total population of (185) and divided into two groups: Experimental Group and Control Group. To achieve the aim of the study, both groups were taughtunit seven from their curriculum for a period of two weeks, five lessons a week, using two different approaches: Cooperative Learning and traditional learning. A pre-test and a post-test were applied as an instrument to collect the results. In addition to the teacher's remarks and feedbacks regarding the students' interaction in both groups. The results show that during the pre-test both groups have low and nearly similar percentages in answering correctly (27% Control Group, 26% Experimental Group). Whereas the results of the post-test show a huge difference between the two groups in favor of the Experimental Group (59% Control Group, 90% Experimental Group).

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

In recent years, teachers in schools started to become aware of the importance of interaction in language learning. The new curriculums of language teaching that have been used for the past few years emphasize on classroom interaction is in order to help students become not only language learners but also language users.However, the traditional methods used by teacher in the classroom in previous years did not help them achieve these aims found in the curriculum. Which made them seek new methods and approaches that focus on communicative activities and student-student interaction.

Recently, many scholars have pointed that Cooperative Learning is effective in language teaching, theoretically and empirically. This is due to the fact that Cooperative Learning provides maximum opportunities for meaningful classroom interaction in a supportive environment, which improve the learners' achievement, motivation to learn, and overall psychosocial adjustment. The use of such interactional approaches in improving the students' speaking and reading abilities within second/foreign language classes has been proven to be effective by many scholars, (e.g. Kagan, 1995; Kessler, 1992; McGroarty, 1993).Moreover, many studies (e.g. Mason, 2006; Adams, 2000; Lancaster & Strand, 2001) have also shown that the use of a Cooperative Learning approach increase confidence, self-esteem, and social. However, little research is done on the effect of using interactional approaches, especially Cooperative Learning, on the acquisition of vocabulary.

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1.2 Aims

The study aims at:

- Examining whether using Cooperative Learning activities and techniques in classrooms would help students acquire vocabulary better that using traditional learning techniques.

1.3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

- Using Cooperative Learning Approach would provide students with better opportunities to develop their vocabulary acquisition skill than using the traditional approach.

1.4 Limits

The study is limited to second intermediate students at Al-Qahira High School for Girls in Baghdad, Iraq during the academic year 2018-2019.

1.5   Definitions of Basic Terms

1) **Cooperative learning**: Cooperative Learningrefers to the pedagogical practices in which groups of students are encouraged to work together to facilitate active participation in discussing different perspectives on a common topic (Chapman, et al., 2006; Hirst&Slavik, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

2)   **Vocabulary**: Vocabulary refers to the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which covey a particular meaning, the way individual words do, (Lessard-Clouston, 2013).

SECTION TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 What is Cooperative Learning?

Over the last few decades, many scholar tried to provide an accurate, comprehensive definition of Cooperative Learning. Sharan (1980: 242) defines Cooperative Learning as a set of instructional strategies "which employsmall teams of pupils to promote peer interaction and cooperation for studying academic subjects".Slavinet al. (1980: 315) state that "the term refers to classroom techniques in which students work on learning activities in small groups and receive rewards or recognition based on their group's performance". Another definition is by Johnson & Johnson (1999: 5), who define the Cooperative Learning as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning". Finally, a more recent and simpler definition is by Jacobs, Power, &Loh, (2002: 1), which refers to Cooperative Learning as "Principles and techniques for helping students work together more effectively".

In general,Cooperative Learning involves more than just asking students to work together in groups. Instead, conscious thought goes into helping students in order to make the experience as successful as possible.

According to Sugie (2011), Cooperative Learning was originally developed in the field of general pedagogy, and its roots can be found in the democratic view of education advocated by John Dewey. Cooperative Learning is often characterized by its well-defined structure of activities, which aim at increasing social skills and maximizing learning outcomes. Most of these activities requires learners to interact with each other in order to achieve a shared goal.

In Cooperative Learning, the interaction of learners is to some extent relatively dominatedby the teacher. Although in Cooperative Learning the learners are expected to actively join in an activity, it is the teacher who determines what this activity is and what they are going to learn from it. In this sense, Panitz (1999) sates that Cooperative Learning can be described as a form of teacher-centered approach, in which there is a "covert teacher-centeredness".

2.2 Principles of Cooperative Learning

Learners in an actual classroom do not actively get involved in a group activity, which makes group interaction less efficient. To prevent this, Cooperative Learning sets out several basic principles. The principles vary widely among researchers, but generally, they

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constitute the list below (Jacobs & Ball, 1996; McCafferty et al., 2006; Millis &Cottell, 1998):

1. Positive Interdependence

Many consider this principle as the heart of Cooperative Learning. It is one of three types of social interdependence (positive, negative, and none), which can be expressed as "a sink or swim together feeling among group mates" (Kimura, 2009: 13). Positive interdependence exists when the members of a group feel that what helps one member of the group helps the other members and that what hurts one member of the group hurts the other members. In other words, "the actions of individuals promote the achievement of joint goals" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 366).

When positive interdependence is established, each member takes different role and responsibility for a part of the given task. The group's success is the result of every member's contribution in the task. Without positive interdependence, learners occasionally fall into the trap of "hitchhiking" where they let one learner do all the work for them, or of being "off task" (Cohen, 1994).

2. Individual Accountability

Each member of a group should believe that learning their material and sharing their knowledge and ideas with others is essential. It "exists when the performance of each individual member is assessed and the results are given back to the individual and the group to compare against a standard of performance" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009: 368). Each team member is responsible for their own as well as their teammates' learning. Thus there was no "hitchhiking" or "freeloading" for anyone in a team (Kagan, 1989). The feelings of personal responsibility resulting from this principle makes Cooperative Learning more likely to succeed.

3. PromotiveFace-To-Face Interaction:

Students must empower each other by offering help, praise, feedback and resources. According to Johnson, Johnson&Holubec (2001), this principle helps in checking for understanding, teaching one's knowledge to others, and in explaining orally how to solve the problems that the group may meet.This means that students promote each other's success by sharing resources. They help, support, encourage, and praise each other's efforts to learn. Both academic and personal support are part of this mutual goal.

4. Collaborative Skills

Collaborative skills include giving reasons, decision-making, trust, communication, conflict-management, etc. Students may lack these skills, the language involved in using the skills, or the inclination to apply the skills. Most books and websites on Cooperative Learning urge that collaborative skills be explicitly taught one at a time. Johnson & Johnson (1998) explain that one way to help students learn collaborative skills is for the teacher to explicitly model the collaborative behavior. For instance, to teach the skill of disagreeing politely, the teacher must model that behavior by using it with students more often.

5. Group Interaction Process

This principle encourages students to look to themselves for resources rather than relying solely on the teacher. When someoneis having difficulty, it is very tempting for teachers to intervene either in a particular group or with the entire class. However they must resist this temptation, because as Roger Johnsonwrites, "Teachers must trust the peer interaction to do many of the things they have felt responsible for themselves"

In this process, learners have to interact face-to-face verbally so they can explain, argue, elaborate and link current material with what they have learned previously. Therefore, it is necessary to let students sit in comfortable places where they can interact face to face easily. Johnson and Johnson (1989) suggests that groups should be small when learners are just beginning to work together and develop their skills.

6. Simultaneous Interaction

When in the group activities are not used in classrooms, the normal interaction pattern is that of sequential interaction, in which one person at a time speaks. However, when group activities are used, one student per group is speaking, (Kagan, 1994). In contrast to this sequential turn taking, interactive discussions and activities both take place simultaneously at the same time. These interactive activities include constructive

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criticism, encouragement, compromise, negotiation, and clarifying.

7. Equal Participation

A frequent problem that might occur in group-work is that one or two members dominate the group andmight even impede the participation of others. Cooperative Learning offers many ways of promoting more equal participation among group members, like the use of rotating roles in a group such as facilitator, checker, questioner, praiser, encourager, reader, writer, paraphrase, and the use of multiple ability tasks which require variety of abilities like singing, drawing , acting and categorizing. Teachers are encouraged to include the rest of the group members in any way possible, (Stahl,1994).

8. Cooperation as a Value

This principle means that Cooperation is not only a way to learn, cooperation is also a part of the content to be learned and used as a value in their way of living. Jacobs, Power, &Loh, (2002) explain that viewing cooperative as a value is to encourage students to consider helping each other and cooperating together as a shared goal; something the turn to whenever is possible. This principle flows from the most crucial Cooperative Learning principle, positive interdependence. It involves taking the feeling of "All for one, one for all" and expanding it beyond the small classroom group to make it as a daily life value.

9. Social Skills

Social skills, such as interpersonal and small-group skills, are essential for Cooperative Learning. Therefore, it is important for teachers to spend some time describing the skills needed for each role. Johnson et al., (1991) suggest encouraging students by giving bonus points whenevera member of agroup demonstrates a high percentage of the social skills reviewed in class, to increase the likelihood of students using those skills.

Sufficient usage of social skills provides appropriate communication, leadership, trust and conflict resolution skills, which make the team function effectively. Social skills include"group-related" skills and "task-related" social skills. Group-related skills refer to the way

students interact as teammates within a group, such as mediating disagreements, encouraging, and praising. Whereas task-relatedskills refer to the way students interact to achieve task objectives, such as asking, paraphrasing, explaining and summarizing.

2.3 Cooperative Learning activities

Cooperative Learning use several interactive activities, such as:

- **Think-Pair-Share**: This strategy was developed by Lyman in 1978. In which(1) students listen to a question presented by the teacher. (2) Students think of a response individually. (3) Students discuss their responses with a partner. (4) Students share their partners' response with the class, (Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

- **Solve-Pair-Share**:This activity includes the following steps: (1) Teacher pose a low-consensus or high-consensus question that may be resolves with different strategies. (2) Students work out solutions individually. (3) Students explain how the solved the problem in peer interviews, (ibid).

- **Numbered Heads Together**: This is an example of Kagan's (1989) Structural Approach which is based on using content-free ways of managing classroom interactions. It includes the following steps: (1) Students number off within teams. (2) The teacher asks a high consensus question. (3) Students put their heads together and make sure everyone on the team knows the answer. (4) The teacher calls a number at random, and students with that number raise their hands to be called upon to answer the question and earn points for their teams, (ibid).

- **Jigsaw**: This activity was developed for narrative materials in areas like social studies, science, literature, and other school subjects in which the goal is to learn concepts rather than skills (Aronson et al., 1978; Slavin, 1986). It includes the following steps: (1) Students leave their original group and form an "expert group" which consist of students with the same piece of information. (2) They learn about this piece of informationand decide on the best way to

teach it to their peers in the original groups. (3) Students return to their original groups, and each teaches his/her portion of the lesson to the others in the group, (Knight &Bohlmeyer in Sharan, 1990)

- **Circle the Sage**:This activity consist of several steps: (1) The teacher polls the class to see which students have a special knowledge to share. For example the teacher may ask who in the class had visited Paris. (2) Those students (the sages) who have a special knowledge stand and spread out in the room. (3) The teacher then makes the rest of the classmates divide and surround a sage, with no two members of the same team going to the same sage. (4) The sage explains what they know while the classmates listen, ask questions, and take notes. (5) All students then return to their teams. Each in turn, explains what they learned. Because each one has gone to a different sage, they compare notes. (6) the disagreements are aired and resolved.

- **Three-step Interview**: This activity has several steps: (1) Students are in pairs; on is interviewer and the other is interviewee. (2) Students reverse roles. (3) Each shares with his partner what was learned during the two interviews, (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

- **Roundtable**: This activity requires one piece of paper and one pen for each team. (1) One student makes a contribution and (2) passes the paper and pen to the student on their left. (3) Each student makes contributions in turn. If done orally, the structure is called "Round Robin", (ibid).

2.4 The Difference between Cooperative and Traditional Learning

Many researchers (e.g. Brown, 2008 and Kumpulainen& Wray, 2002) argue that adopting Cooperative Learning approach in small group activities, provide students with the opportunities to practice the target language more naturally compared to a traditional teacher-fronted form of instruction in the classroom.

Johnson, Johnson, Holubec and Roy (1984) and Putnam (1997) distinctly compare Cooperative Learning and Traditional Learning, as shown in Table 1 below:

Cooperative	Traditional
• Shared Leadership	• One appointed leader
• Heterogeneous	• Homogeneous
• Teacher selected groups	• Student selected groups
• Cooperative skill instruction	• No cooperative skill instruction
• Concern for peer learning	• Little concern for peer learning
• Positive interdependence	• No positive interdependence
• Equal opportunity for success	• Uniform standard for success
• Individual accountability	• No individual accountability
• Task and maintenance emphasized	• Only task emphasized
• Teacher observation and feedback	• No teacher observation and feedback
• Group process their effectiveness	• No group processing

Table 1: The Difference between Cooperative and Traditional Learning

Table 1 shows how making groups in Cooperative Learning does not stop with just putting the learners in a group (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1991), but also integrating learner attributes in order to enhance a group's success. The teacher is the one who selects the groups so he can choose a diversity of abilities, learning styles, viewpoints, gender, race, and even consistency of attendance. Heterogeneous groups produce the greatest opportunities for peer tutoring and support as well as improving relations and integration, (Kagan, 1994). Letting the students choose their own groups can result in a homogeneity, whichin turn reduces the acquisition of social skills and increases the possibility of a lack of focus on the learning task (Cooper, 1990).

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SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sample

The sample of this study includes60 second intermediate class students, from a population of 185 students, inAl-Qahira High School for girls, Baghdad, Iraq. All selected students are females, whose age ranging between 12-15 years.The participants were assigned into two groups: an Experimental Groupand a Control Group, each group consists of 30 students.All students in both groups are homogeneous in their intellectual level. They were chosen according to their general scores in school in order to make sure that they are at the same level and that the results of the study are not affected by the initial differences between the participants.

3.2 Materials and Instruments

The material include the vocabulary found in unit seven of the English language curriculum for second intermediate students "English for Iraq". Two different instruments were used to collect data for this study. Quantitative data was collected from the pre-test and the post-tests and qualitative data was collected from the feedbacks and remarks of the teacher who implemented the teaching techniques in both groups. The pre-test and post-test included vocabulary items taken fromunit seven of the book 'English for Iraq' the learners were studying. Each test consists of 10 items, and each item consist of two choices.

3.3 Procedures

The selected participantswere divided into two groups, the Experimental Group and the Control Group. The first step was to test both groups on their vocabulary knowledge using a pre-test (sample found in Appendix A). After that, the instructional period, which lasted for two weeks, five lessons a week, started. During this period, the students in the Experimental Groupwere taught vocabulary from unit seven of their English language book using Cooperative Learning activities and techniques. Whereas, the students in the general group were taught the same vocabulary in these lessens but using the traditional teaching techniques. It is important to note that both groups were instructed by the same teacher all through the study period.

Table 2 below shows the difference in the teaching techniques used in both groups:

	Experimental Group	**Control Group**
Learner's Role	The learner's role is active participator and autonomous learner	The learner's role is passive receiver and performer
Teacher's Role	The teacher's role is the facilitator of communicative tasks, organizer and counselor of group work, and intervener to teach collaborative skills	The teacher's role is the center of the classroom, the major source of assistance, feedback and reinforcement, and the controller of teaching pace and direction
Student-Teacher Relation	The student-teacher relationship is that of cooperators.	The student-teacher relationship is that of superior-inferior.
Materials	The materials are arranged and changed according to the purpose of the lesson.	The materials consist of a complete set for each student
Interdependence	Positive interdependence	None or negative interdependence
Classroom Management	The classroom is arranged in the form of separate desks for each student or two.	The classroom is arranged in the form of collaborative small groups
Activities	The types of activities used include any instrumental activity, mainly group work to	The types of activities used include knowledge recall, memorization, phrasal or

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	engage learners in communication. They involve process like information sharing, negotiating, giving opinion, and giving feedback	sentence pattern practice, and translation.

Table 2: The Teaching Techniques Used in Both Experimental and Control Groups

After the two weeks are over, a post-test (sample found in Appendix B) is administered to see whether there is any difference between the two groups in regards to acquiring the vocabulary presented to them earlier.

Finally, the researcher took the notes, remarks and feedbacks of the teacher who instructed the two groups during the period of the study. The notes were taken to focus on several aspects, such as students' attendance, attitude towards group work, willingness to participate, and general activity.

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Results

The results of the pre-test for both groups are shown below:

Control Group					Experimental Group				
Test item No.	**Students with RIGHT answer**		**Students with WRONG answer**		**Test item No.**	**Students with RIGHT answer**		**Students with WRONG answer**	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
1.	14	46.7%	16	53.3%	1.	12	40%	16	60%
2.	5	16.7%	25	83.3%	2.	3	10%	27	90%
3.	13	43.3%	17	56.7%	3.	11	36.7%	19	63.3%
4.	3	10%	27	90%	4.	4	13.3%	26	86.7%
5.	4	13.3%	26	86.7%	5.	5	16.7%	25	83.3%
6.	8	26.7%	22	73.3%	6.	6	20%	24	80%
7.	11	36.7%	19	63.3%	7.	12	40%	18	60%
8.	6	20%	24	80%	8.	10	33.3%	20	66.7%
9.	12	40%	18	60%	9.	13	43.3%	17	56.7%
10.	5	16.7%	25	83.3%	10.	3	10%	27	90%
	Total percentage		Total percentage			Total percentage		Total percentage	
	27 %		**73%**			**26.3%**		**73.7%**	

Table 3: Results of the Pre-Test for Both Groups

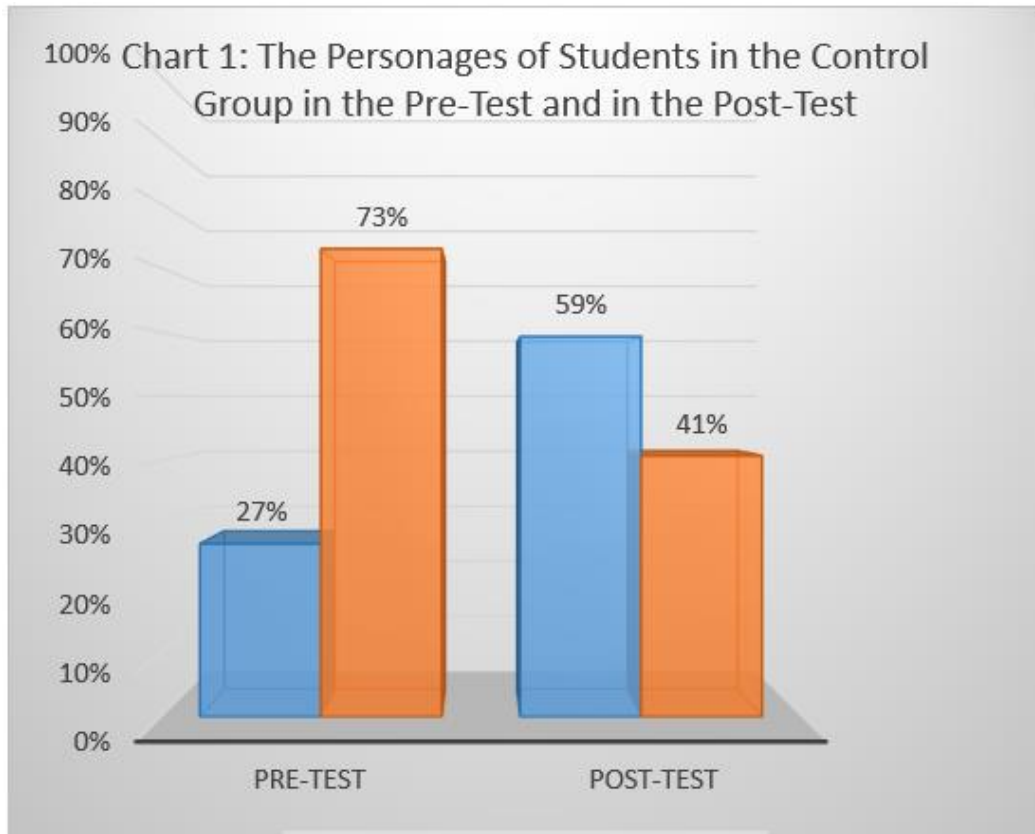The results of the post-test for both groups can be found in Table 4 below:

Control Group					Experimental Group				
Test item No.	**Students with RIGHT answer**		**Students with WRONG answer**		**Test item No.**	**Students with RIGHT answer**		**Students with WRONG answer**	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
1.	23	76.7%	7	23.3	1.	30	100%	0	0%
2.	16	53.3%	14	46.7%	2.	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
3.	17	56.7%	13	43.3%	3.	26	86.7%	4	13.3%
4.	16	53.3%	14	46.7%	4.	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
5.	18	60%	12	40%	5.	28	93.3%	2	6.7%

6.	15	50%	15	50%	6.	27	90%	3	10%
7.	22	73.3%	8	26.7%	7.	30	100%	0	0%
8.	16	53.3%	14	46.7%	8.	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
9.	21	70%	9	30%	9.	30	100%	0	0%
10.	14	46.7%	16	53.3%	10.	28	93.3%	2	6.7%
	Total percentage		Total percentage			Total percentage		Total percentage	
	59.3%		**40.7%**			**90.3%**		**9.7%**	

Table 4: Results of the Post-Test for Both Groups

The difference of percentages in the per-test and post-test of each group is explained in the two charts below:

Chart 1: The Personages of Students in the Control Group in the Pre-Test and in the Post-Test

Chart 2: The Personages of Students in the Experimental Group in the Pre-Test and in the Post-Test
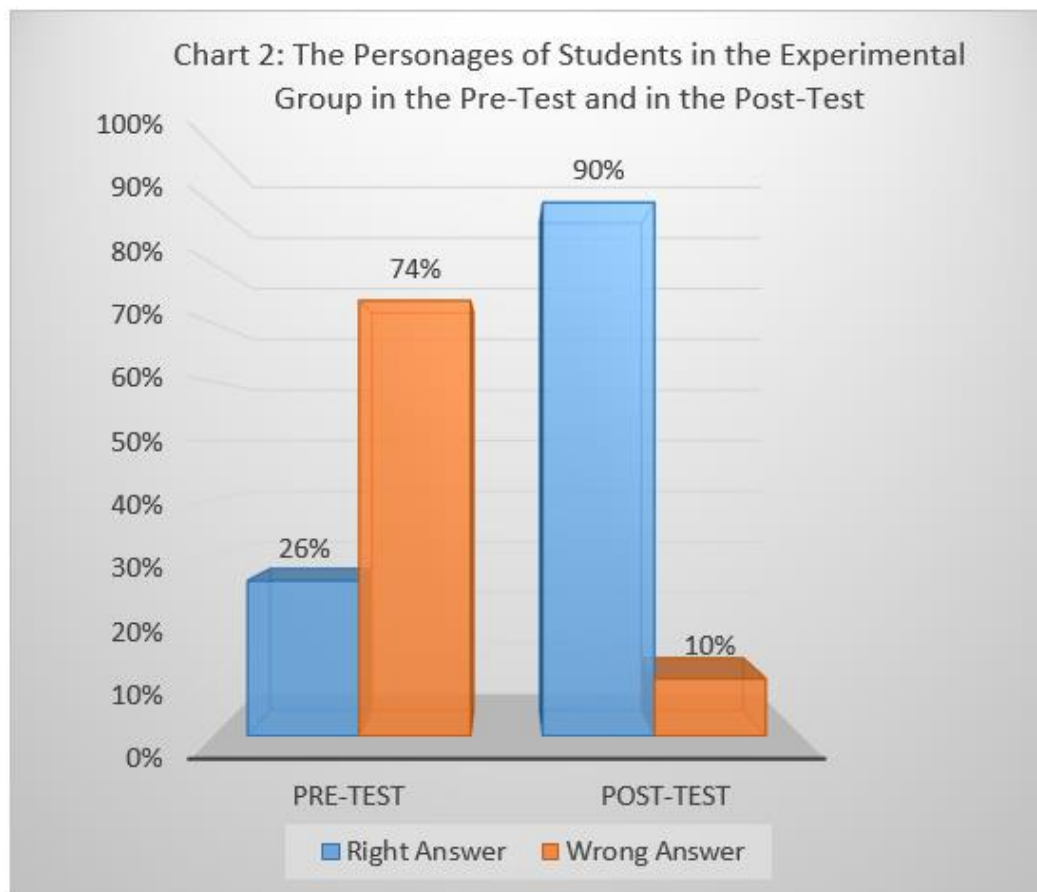
4.2 Conclusions

The results show that in the pre-test, both Experimental and Control Groups answered very little questions correctly, thus making their percentages so low with only 27% of the students in the Control Group and only 26% of the students in the Experimental Group answering correctly. The fact that their percentages are so close adds to the reliability of the study since it excludes the possibility of having individual differences between the two groups which could have affected the final results. The results of the post-test, however, are quite different for each group. Even though the percentage of answering correctly in the Control Group does increase to 59%, the percentage of Experimental Group surpass it to reach 90%. This proves that using the Cooperative Learning Approach in teaching vocabulary is indeed better than using traditional techniques, which validates the hypothesis of this study.

This great improvement in acquiring vocabulary can be attributes to the role of social interaction in increasing the amount of comprehensible vocabulary that students receive. This interaction includes students asking their groupmates for help when they do not understand a certain words. Input from groupmates may be more likely to be comprehensible, as the language levels of group membersmay be roughly equal. The remarks and feedbacks taken from the instructing teachers does match this perspective. According to the teacher, students in the Experimental Group were more eager to participate and interact with each other than those in the Control Group. They always try to help each other and jump to explain a certain vocabulary to anyone who don't understand it.

4.3 Recommendations

Itis recommendedthat more Cooperative Learning activities should be used in classrooms to teach vocabulary as well as other langugae skills. In addition, teachers of English in elementary, secondary and preparatoryschools should be trainedto use new cooperative techniques in their classrooms.

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RESOURCES

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APPENDIX A

Pre-test Sample

Please circle the option that best answers each question

1. What does dropping cardboard boxes or plastic bottles on the ground means?
   - (a) Tidying
   - (b) Littering
2. If a man saved a cat from a moving car, then he …
   - (a) Returned it
   - (b) Rescued it
3. What do we call a person who is in charge of fixing and deciding what will be published in a newspaper or a magazine?
   - (a) An editor
   - (b) A writer
4. What is the meaning of 'wetlands'?
   - (a) A land full of grass
   - (b) A land full of water
5. If the ice turns into liquid, then it is …
   - (a) Melting
   - (b) Frosting
6. What do we call the nature that surround us?
   - (a) Environment
   - (b) Weather
7. If something 'vanishes', then it …
   - (a) Appears
   - (b) Disappears
8. If you are looking forward to a special event, what are you doing?
   - (a) Emphasizing the event
   - (b) Anticipating the event
9. What are you doing if you try to describe or draw attention to (a product, service, or event) in newspapers and magazines?
   - (a) Advertise something
   - (b) Advise something
10. A polluted coast is one filled with …
    - (a) Sand
    - (b) Rubbish

APPENDIX B

Post-test Sample

Please circle the option that best answers each question

1. What does 'environment' mean?
   (a) The weather
   (b) The natural world
2. When you lose sight of something, it …
   (a) Vanishes
   (b) Varnishes
3. Anticipating something means …
   (a) Looking forward to it
   (b) Looking backward to it
4. What do you call managing and correcting articles?
   (a) Writing
   (b) Editing
5. To litter means …
   (a) To write a letter
   (b) To throw garbage
6. What do you call an announcement or a notice of a product in a magazine?
   (a) An advertisement
   (b) An endorsement
7. Which of the following words belong to the coastal water?
   (a) Starfish
   (b) Rubbish
8. What does the word 'rescue' mean?
   (a) To rest with someone
   (b) To save someone
9. Toads live in places covered with water called …
   (a) Watergrounds
   (b) Wetlands
10. What do you call the process of 'melting' ice?
    (a) Defrosting
    (b) frosting