



## **Effect of Cooperative Learning on Students' Achievements in Literature in English Subject: A Case of Dodoma City, Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

The study sought to establish effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in Literature in English Subject among government Secondary Schools in Dodoma City, Tanzania. Through survey research design, questionnaires were distributed to 160 students who took the Literature in English subject but the respondent rate was 150 (93.75%). Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study revealed that the rate of cooperative learning effectiveness is high. This is due to the fact that students either strongly agreed or agreed with all the items in the questionnaire regarding effectiveness in Literature in English. Further, the study concludes that the achievement in Literature in English subject is high. This is due to the fact that students agreed with all the items in the questionnaire regarding the achievement in Literature in English subject. Finally, the study established that there is a significant relationship between interest in Literature in English subject and students' academic achievement in the subject. The study recommends that teachers should strive to maintain the effectiveness in cooperative learning which is the key factor for learning effectiveness. They should also take advantage of students' interest in Literature in English subject as a way to mobilize them maintain positive attitude toward that subject. Secondly, teachers should try to convince students who are not taking the Literature in English subject to do so since the subject is manageable as students who take it performed well. Lastly, since interest in learning increases students achievement in Literature in English subject, there is need to inculcate the positive attitude toward Literature in English subject since primary school level so that when students join secondary schools they already have interest in the subject.

**Key words:** Cooperative, learning, achievement, interest, constructivism, method, approach

### **Introduction**

Cooperative learning is one of the most remarkable and fertile areas of theory, research, and practice in education. According to Duckworth (2010), cooperative learning is the working of students in small groups, helping each other to achieve a certain goal in the teaching and learning process. It is a part of a group of teaching and learning techniques where students interact with each other in order to meet expected learning goals. Cooperative learning is a formal way of structuring activities in a learning environment that includes specific elements intended to increase potentials for

rich and deep learning by the participants (Macpherson, 2007). According to Altun (2015) cooperative learning method emerges in the literature as the methods that assist instructors in carrying out the process of teaching and learning for students to reach their goals effectively.

There are various types of cooperative learning. Base groups, for instance, are long-term cooperative learning groups with stable membership. In this type, learners are chosen in a manner that will guarantee a good mix of academic levels in the group. These groups are set up so that members provide support to each other so that all can

succeed academically. Significance of the base groups is that they tend to personalize the classroom, improve attendance and improve the quality of learning. If there is a large number of learners in the classes, one needs to consider having base groups whose members remain together for at least a term. The more learners in the class and the more complex the subject matter, the more important it is to have base groups organized. Another type is Formal Cooperative Learning Groups which may last from several minutes to several class sessions to complete a specific task or assignment. Members are often chosen randomly and rotate on a regular basis (Macpherson, 2007).

In order to construct a lesson in the cooperative learning model, there are five principles to be considered. The first is positive interdependence whereby each student in the group is considered to have a unique contribution toward the joint effort so that team members depend on one another to achieve the goal. Each group member's effort is required and is indispensable for group success. The second principle is individual accountability whereby all students in the group must be accountable for contributing ideas (Kagan, 1994). The third principle is face-to-face interaction whereby each student must interact with group members, provide one another with feedback, challenging reasoning and conclusions and helping, supporting, applauding and encouraging one another in order to reach the group's goals. The fourth principle is appropriate use of social, interpersonal, collaborative and small-group skills whereby students are encouraged and helped to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication and conflict management skills. The fifth principle is group processing whereby team members set group goals, assess what they are doing well as a team and identify changes they need to make to function more effectively in the future (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991).

Studies in various countries have indicated the power of collaborative learning. A recent study by Appiah-Twumasi, Antwi, Anderson and Sakyi- Hagan (2020) investigated on comparative effect of cooperative learning on Students' Performance in mechanics concepts between two secondary schools in Berekum Municipality, Ghana and established that students taught using the cooperative learning approach with the instructional manual performed significantly better in the mechanics concepts than those taught using the

cooperative learning strategy only. They therefore recommended that teachers should use the cooperative learning strategy along with the instructional manual in order to enhance the performance of students in secondary schools. Lie (2002), for instance, conducted a study in China and commented that cooperative learning develops students' higher order thinking skills. Altun (2015) conducted a study in Turkey and commented that cooperative learning assists instructors in carrying out effective teaching and learning process. Osalusi (2012) conducted a study in Nigeria and found out that there is a significant difference in the critical thinking and decision-making ability level between the experimental and control groups. However, subjects exposed to cooperative learning strategy had the highest mean score than those using other learning approaches. The study of Kahiigi (2013) in Uganda, commented that there is the need of encouraging cooperative learning among the students in the classroom because the approach fosters better understanding of what is taught in the classroom. Furthermore, Vitalice (2018) conducted a study in Kisii, Kenya to investigate on the effects of cooperative learning approach on the Students' achievement and attitude toward oral literature genres in selected secondary schools and come up with the results that cooperative learning approach improves the learners' performance and attitude towards the study of oral literature genres.

In Tanzania, Mkomele (2015) conducted study about cooperative learning among Secondary Schools in Temeke District and concluded that cooperative learning stimulates cognitive development along with the constructivist approaches that place students at the center of the learning process. Ngussa (2017) conducted a study in Musoma and concluded that there is a need for educators to encourage participation in learning in order to enhance language competence which is key factor for Literature in English subject as it increases the level of interaction among the learners and between the learners and the teachers.

Cooperative learning is one of the best means through which learning participation can be enhanced. Paschal, Nyoni and Mkulu (2020) conducted a study in Mwanza Region about the implementation of cooperative learning and discovered that cooperative learning was not closely supervised in schools. Teachers simply formulated groups in the classrooms without a close follow up on how effective the groups were performing. Iddy

and Chiwanga (2017) conducted a similar study in Dar es Salaam and observed that teacher in some schools encouraged cooperative learning and many of the activities planned and organized were emphasized through group works. However, the study further revealed that teachers in some other schools did not encourage cooperative learning in their classrooms and that there were poor interactions between the teachers and learners. The teachers preferred involving some individuals to actively participate in the learning activities; more often than not. Particularly, they engaged better learners while those who seemed weaker were hardly given close considerations to participate.

This study therefore, sought to investigate on the effect of cooperative learning on students' academic achievements in Literature in English Subject among secondary schools in Dodoma City, Tanzania. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the rate of Cooperative Learning Effectiveness in Literature in English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma?
2. What is the rate of Students Achievements in Literature in English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma?
3. Is there relationship between Cooperative Learning Effectiveness and Students Achievements in Literature in English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma?

## **Related Literature and Studies**

This section presents literature and studies related to cooperative learning and learning achievement in connection with the Literature in English Subject. It involved the theoretical literature as well as the empirical literature.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This study was guided by the constructivism theory which states that knowledge must be constructed by the learners under the influence of the teachers as facilitators in the process of teaching and learning (Ngussa & Makewa, 2004). Constructivism theory is rooted in the ideas of educators and psychologists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygostky who emphasized on the importance of learners' participation in the teaching and learning process (Kivinen & Ristela, 2003). In constructivism, students are responsible for constructing their own understanding which is based on previous ideas or experiences the students already possess. This

theory suggests that the learners need to be involved to actively participate in the learning process. One of the best ways to enhance the participation of the learners is through the cooperative learning. The interaction among peers can lead to construction of new knowledge. Cooperative learning, therefore, takes the advantage of active learning in order to help students generate information through experiences. According to Ngussa (2018), there is a positive correlation between experiential learning and group collaboration, between experiential learning and the use of instructional technology and between the use of instructional technology and group collaboration. Therefore, it is important for teachers to ensure that experiential learning and instructional technology are maximized in order to realize the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

This section provides the empirical literature that relates to cooperative Learning and students' academic achievement. According to Altum (2015), the essence of utilizing cooperative learning strategies is in that collaborative learning offers a style of leadership that actively involves the participants in their own learning. In that sense, the teachers become facilitators while the learners get fully engaged in the process of learning.

Studies have indicated the place of cooperative strategy toward learning effectiveness. Whitener (2014), for instance, who conducted a study in the United States about using the elements of cooperative learning in school band classes, established that cooperative learning strategies provide music teachers with a theory- and research-based approach to education, promising that students will learn more, like school better, like each other better, and learn more effective social skills when the approach is used. Sigau (2007) carried out a study in Malaysia and established that cooperative learning improves the students' achievements in literature subject. It facilitates the spirits of cooperation among the learners in the classroom. For example if a work involves the group members to discuss themes and sub themes from the book they have read, the teacher can explain what comes from the book and the rest will be accomplished by learners through discussion into small groups. This will lead to the good performance in literature subject.

Another study was conducted by Osalusi (2012) in Nigeria about the differences between cooperative learning in the experimental group and other teaching methods in the control group. The findings revealed a significant difference in the critical thinking and decision-making ability level between the experimental and the control group. The subjects exposed to cooperative learning strategy in the experimental group had higher mean scores as compared to those exposed to other methods in the control group. The study concluded that there is a need for social study teachers to employ the use of cooperative learning strategies in their teaching to enhance the development of critical thinking and decision making abilities in learners. This will foster the performance of the students in social studies including literature subjects because students will get knowledge when they are discussing in the groups with other students under the guidance of the teacher.

Vitalice (2018) conducted a study among Secondary Schools in Kisii, Kenya about the effects of Cooperative Learning approaches on students' achievement and attitude toward oral literature genres and come with the results that cooperative learning approach is the starting point in improving the learners' performance and attitude towards the study of oral literature genres. The authors further added that cooperative learning approach when properly implemented provides better learning opportunities for students to develop skills in group interactions and working with others in analyzing, synthesizing and discussing various tasks.

The study of Mkomele (2015) among secondary schools in Temeke District in Tanzania regarding cooperative learning approaches established that the approaches hold promise as a way of stimulating cognitive development, along with constructivist approaches that place students at the center of the learning process. In their work, Erbil and Kocabas (2018) argue that cooperative learning is a democratic learning method which includes such features as shared ideas, collaboration, interaction, brainstorming, community and discussion as seen in figure 1.

Ehsan, Vida and Mehdi (2019) examined the impact of cooperative learning on developing speaking ability and motivation toward learning English in China and found that all respondents showed a low and moderate performance in English Literature before the treatment. However, after the

treatment, respondents from the experimental group which employed cooperative learning approaches showed a significant improvement than those from the control group which used other approaches of learning. Thus, the use of cooperative learning played an important role in acquiring English language in an English literature class. Furthermore, the qualitative data showed that cooperative learning could enhance student's social development as well as interest in the learning of English literature.

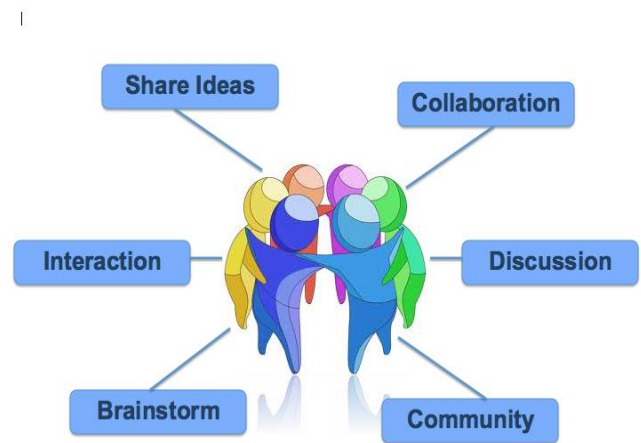


Figure 1: Features in Cooperative Learning

## Research Methodology

This section presents the methodology that was used to guide the study.

The study employed survey research design. The study involved eight secondary schools in Dodoma city whereby 160 students who take literature in English subject were given questionnaires to fill. The response rate was 93.75% as only 150 students returned the questionnaires.

Statistical Treatment of data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The first two research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores while the last research question was analyzed using inferential statistics in terms of t-test in order to test the hypothesis that sought to establish the relationship between cooperative learning and achievement of students in Literature in English subject.

## Validity and Reliability

The study employed content validity approach to make sure that the questionnaire measures what it was intended to measure. Research experts from

the University of Arusha Thesis Defense Committee read the questionnaire against the research questions that guided the study and gave comments for improvement before the instrument was used for data collection.

**Table 1: Reliability Test**

SN	Variable	C. Alpha	Interpretation
1	Effectiveness	0.736	Reliable
2	Interest	0.748	Reliable
3	Achievement	0.758	Reliable

Prior to data analysis, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested through the Statistical Package for Social Science and results yielded the Cronbach's Alpha of above 0.7 which means the questionnaire instrument yielded reliable results as indicated in Table 1.

### Ethical Considerations

Before the researchers went into the field to collect data, certain steps were followed to ensure ethical standards are met. First, permission was sought from government authorities in Dodoma City to collect data from schools under investigation. Secondly, respondents were given complete freedom to either participate or refrain. They were also asked not to indicate their names in the questionnaire for confidentiality and anonymity of responses. Those who filled the questionnaire were free to withdraw at any time, and as a result, 10 out of 160 respondents did not return the questionnaires.

### Analysis and Results

**Table 3: Cooperative Learning Effectiveness**

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	Mean	Interpretation
1	I enjoy better communication skills because it develop and keep friendship	3.77	Strongly Agree
2	Teacher encourage students to share skills and knowledge in learning process	3.72	Strongly Agree
3	Teacher encourage students to listen, talk, discuss and express opinions	3.65	Strongly Agree
4	Teachers encourage equal participation in the classroom.	3.60	Strongly Agree
5	I have self confidence in the classroom during Literature in English periods	3.57	Strongly Agree
6	Teacher encourages the use of group discussion in the classroom.	3.47	Agree
7	Teacher motivate students to participate in group discussion	3.47	Agree
8	Teacher helps students to lower the level of anxiety while learning	3.43	Agree
9	There is Classroom interaction during Literature in English period.	3.35	Agree
10	Teacher support learners who seemed weaker in group discussion	3.22	Agree

### Descriptive Analysis of data

In this section, descriptive statistics was applied to determine the effectiveness of Literature Subject, the students and the achievement in Literature in English subject. To meet this target, students were asked to rate their perception by showing their level of agreement or disagreement with the items in the

Data analysis was guided by three research questions that guided the study. Each research question had corresponding items in the questionnaire which was the major instrument for data collection. Analysis of data was organized into three subsections namely demographic profile of respondents, descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile**

SN	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender		
	Male	56	37.3
	Female	94	62.5
	TOTAL	150	100.0
2	Interest		
	Yes	143	95.3
	No	7	4.7
	TOTAL	150	100.0

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of the questionnaire respondents in terms of gender and interest in Literature Subject. As reflected in Table 2, male respondents were 15 (37.5% while female respondents were 25 (62.5%). Therefore, majority of respondents who filled the questionnaire were females as compared to their male counterparts. In terms of interest in Literature subject, 38 (95%) of respondents indicated to have interest in Literature subject while 2 respondents (5%) indicated to have no interest in literature subject. Therefore, majority of students who filled the questionnaire had interest in the Literature subject.

questionnaire. Interpretation of response was based on the following criteria: 3.50-4.00 = strongly agree, 2.50-3.49= agree, 1.50-2.49 = disagree and 1.00-1.49 = strongly disagree.

**Research Question 1:** *What is the rate of cooperative leaning effectiveness in Literature in*

## English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma City?

Table three describes the rate of Cooperative Learning Effectiveness as perceived by students who take the Literature in English subject. As the table indicates, responses to item number one to five had the mean score of between 3.50 and 4.00 which indicates strong agreement. This means that students strongly agreed that they enjoy better communication skills because it develops and keeps friendship, that teachers encouraged students to share skills and knowledge in the learning process, that teachers encouraged students to listen, talk, discuss and express opinions, that teachers encouraged equal participation in the classroom and that they have self confidence in the classroom during Literature in English subject.

Response to the rest of items in table three ranged between 2.50 and 3.49 which mean agreement. Particularly, students agreed that teachers encouraged the use of group discussion in the classroom, that teachers motivated students to participate in group discussions, that teachers helped students to lower the level of anxiety while learning, that there is classroom interaction during the learning of Literature in English subject and that teachers supported learners who seemed weaker in group discussion. These findings related to those of Yassin, Maasum and Razak, (2018) that the use of cooperative learning in the process of teaching literature in English subject leads to motivation towards learning, lowering the level of anxiety, improving the language skills ,increasing the social skills and maximizing the level of students' achievement in the classroom.

## Research Question 2: What is the rate of Students Achievements in Literature in English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma City?

The second research question aimed at establishing the rate of students' learning achievement in Literature in English subject. Significance of learning achievement is indicated by George (2017) who argues that cooperative learning increases students' achievement. Furthermore, cooperative learning helps students to master English language and to have self-confidence when they are given chances to discuss with their peers in their groups (Paschal, Nyoni, & Mkulu, 2020).

All the items in table four ranged between 2.50 and 3.49 which suggest agreement. Particularly, students agreed that they speak English fluently in normal conversation with fellow students, that they are competent in English subject, that they are doing well in reading novels and plays, that they have confidence in narrating stories in the classroom and that they understand concepts in Literature in English subject. This indicates that students had high achievement in the Literature in English subject.

Furthermore, the students agreed that they enjoy when teachers give assignments to think about stories, that they prefer active learning in classroom, that they are good in writing short stories, that they perform very well in Literature in English subject and that they prefer watching drama activities in the classroom. According to George (2017), cooperative learning helps Students to have more think time. Students have opportunities to orally practice the language, work with their peers in a professional and academic manner.

**Table 1: Achievement in Literature in English Subject**

SN	Items in the Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I speak English fluently in normal conversations with fellow students	3.47	Agree
2	I am competent in literature in English subject	3.45	Agree
3	I am doing good in reading novels and play	3.45	Agree
4	I have confidence in narrating stories in the classroom	3.40	Agree
5	I understand concepts successful in literature in English subject	3.32	Agree
6	I enjoy when teacher give assignments to think about stories	3.30	Agree
7	I prefer active learning in the classroom	3.27	Agree
8	I am good in writing short stories in the classroom	3.25	Agree
9	I perform very well in Literature in English subject	3.25	Agree
10	I prefer listening watching drama activities in the classroom	3.05	Agree

## Hypothesis Testing

The last section in data analysis had to do with hypothesis testing which was guided by the third research question that follows:

**Research Question 3:** Is there significant relationship between Cooperative Learning Effectiveness, learning interest and students' Achievements in Literature in English Subject among Secondary Schools in Dodoma City?

The last research question called for testing a null hypothesis which states: *there is no significant relationship between cooperative learning effectiveness, learning interest and students' achievements in Literature in English Subject among*

*Secondary Schools in Dodoma City.* The null hypothesis was tested through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. As indicated in Table five, there is a significant positive relationship between Learning Interest and achievement in Literature in English subject. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and we agree that there is a significant positive correlation between interest toward learning and achievement in Literature in English subject.

**Table 2: Correlations between Cooperative Learning and Students; Achievement**

		Effectiveness	Learning Interest	Achievement
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	-.048	-.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.769	.446
	N	150	150	150
<b>Learning Interest</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.048	1	.522**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.769		.001
	N	150	150	150
<b>Achievement</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.124	.522**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.446	.001	
	N	150	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This part presents conclusions and recommendations of the study as informed by findings of the study.

### Conclusions of the Study

The researchers came up with the following conclusions regarding cooperative learning, academic achievement and relationship between the two.

1. The rate of learning effectiveness is high. This is due to the fact that students either strongly agreed or agreed with all the items in the questionnaire regarding effectiveness in Literature in English. Therefore, there is an existence of cooperative learning effectiveness in schools under investigation.
2. Further, the study concludes that the achievement in Literature in English subject is high. This is due to the fact that students agreed with all the items in the questionnaire regarding the achievement in Literature in English subject.
3. Finally, the study did not establish any relationship between cooperative learning and achievement in Literature in English subject. However, there is a significant relationship between interest in Literature in English subject and students' academic

achievement in the subject. Therefore, interest towards learning is a determinant of learning achievement in Literature in English subject.

### Recommendations of the Study

Based on the conclusions, the study gives the following recommendations:

1. Teachers should strive to maintain the effectiveness in cooperative learning which is the key factor for learning effectiveness. School administrators should give necessary support in terms of finances and moral support to make sure that teachers in schools under investigation maintain the use of cooperative learning for effective outcomes.
2. It is also recommended that teachers should take advantage of students; interest in Literature in English subject as a way to mobilize them maintain positive attitude toward that subject.
3. With regard to achievement in Literature in English subject, the study recommends that teachers should try to convince students who are not taking the Literature in English subject to do so since the subject is manageable as students who take it perform well.

4. Lastly, since interest in learning increases students achievement in Literature in English subject, there is need to inculcate the positive attitude toward Literature in English subject since primary school level so that when students join secondary schools they already have interest in the subject. For this reason, students will have been prepared to perform very well at the secondary school leaving examinations and beyond.

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