



## Enhancing students motivation through cooperative learning in the EFL classroom

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### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of cooperative learning (CL) on enhancing motivation among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Through a systematic analysis of three empirical studies—Namaziandost et al. (2019) [23], Fakhri Alamdari and Ghani (2022) [11], and Liu and Lan (2016) [21]—the paper demonstrates that CL significantly improves learners' intrinsic motivation, oral proficiency, and collaborative skills. Key findings reveal that structured group activities, positive interdependence, and student-centered environments foster higher engagement and autonomy compared to traditional teaching methods. The study further proposes practical applications for EFL classrooms, including strategic group formation, teacher facilitation, and dynamic evaluation methods. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks (e.g., Dörnyei's motivational theories) and empirical evidence, this paper underscores CL as a transformative strategy for EFL contexts, offering actionable insights for educators to optimize student motivation and learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Cooperative learning, EFL motivation, second language acquisition, student engagement, collaborative strategies

### Introduction

Motivation is essential in maintaining a learning situation (Dörnyei, 2018) [6]. Motivation is a significant factor in second language acquisition and influences the success or failure of a foreign language learner (Dörnyei, 2020) [8]. Many factors influence motivation, but cooperative learning (CL) as a teaching model applied in the classroom can enhance students' interest in learning and increase their motivation to learn. (Busse & Walter, 2013 [2]; Dörnyei, 2001) [5, 9]. Although since the 1970s, the Cooperative learning and motivation are different theoretical studies, but they remain popular research directions in second language acquisition in today's society (Namaziandost et al., 2019) [23]. Motivation and cooperative learning are essential areas of research in second language acquisition. At the same time, there are not many research cases on motivation and cooperative learning. This assignment investigates whether cooperative learning in the EFL classroom enhances learners' motivation to learn a foreign language by analysing three research papers on motivation and cooperative learning. Furthermore, hopefully, it will bring insight and meaning to EFL classroom teaching.

### Theories associated with the cooperation and motivation in SLA

Motivation is a significant factor affecting foreign language learners' performance; as a subjective factor, motivation directly affects learners' mindset and learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2020) [8]. Dörnyei (2018) [6] states that due to the long and tedious learning process, it can be difficult for learners to sustain themselves without the support of motivation, which directly affects their success in learning a language. He also states that it is difficult to achieve satisfactory results in even the best courses without motivation. Moreover, in today's society, the process-oriented phase of motivational theory on second language acquisition is slowly moving towards a socially dynamic phase (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) [10]. Schweisfurth (2011) [25] states that a learner-centred approach solves many problems. Abramczyk and Jurkowski (2020) [1] state that

cooperation learning teaching strategies are a teaching strategy that emerges from the context of adapting to social relationships. Motivation theorists oppose traditional forms of teacher questioning or individual task completion, which they believe will negatively exclude peers from each other (Sharan, 1994). Dörnyei (1997) [3] states that the primary way to improve language skills for foreign language learners is to gain experience and improve through interaction with others. Hence, the cooperative learning model fits this profile. Dörnyei (2001) [5, 9] argues that cooperative learning teamwork can significantly enhance learners' intrinsic motivation. Kagan (2009) [19] states that the cooperative learning model can increase the intrinsic motivation of second language learners. Some researchers believe that the main contribution of cooperative learning instructional strategies is to provide a way to promote learners' intrinsic motivation (Ziafar & Namaziandost, 2019) [23, 32]. Kim (2006) [20] says that cooperative learning strategies can lead to greater motivation and higher achievement than traditional teaching models. Siltala (2010) [27] explains the definition of cooperative learning. He argues that teacher-driven, cooperative learning is student-driven compared to traditional teaching. Siltala (2010) [27] argues that the student's leading role is fully utilised in cooperative teaching. Students communicate through group discussions, which improves learning efficiency and enhances the learning experience of second language learners. Johnson and Johnson (2014) [18] also state that students can help and promote each other through communication in a cooperative learning teaching strategy. Hänze and Berger (2007) [14] have recently found that students who learn with cooperative learning strategies show greater autonomy than those who receive traditional teaching strategies. Cooperative learning can enhance students' learning motivation and avoid vicious competition. In the traditional learning model, competition among students is more pronounced, but the cooperative learning model avoids this phenomenon and students are more willing to help and promote each other (Goh, 2007 [13];

Slavin, 2019) <sup>[28]</sup>. Kagan (2009) <sup>[19]</sup> told a cooperative learning teaching model where group members reinforce each other because of the positive interdependence between them. Slavin (2020) <sup>[29]</sup> states that research on second languages also proves that co-learner one teaching strategies are helpful and beneficial for foreign language learning.

### Current empirical research

#### Study one: Enhancing oral proficiency through cooperative learning among intermediate EFL learners. (Namaziandost, Neisi, Kheryadi & Nasri, 2019) <sup>[23]</sup>

Namaziandost et al. (2019) <sup>[23]</sup> The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore the relationship between cooperative learning and motivation and whether cooperative learning can significantly impact English language learners' motivation to learn to speak. The authors' study was conducted on Iranian intermediate proficiency English learners. Ninety participants were selected for the authors' study. Half of the participants were selected to go to the experimental group, and the other half were selected for the control group. Before the experiment, the participants took an English-speaking test and completed a questionnaire. At the end of the experiment, the participants were asked to take another oral English test and continue to take questionnaires. The purpose of the questionnaire is to test the motivation of students to use cooperative learning in English class. Check the results of the last two comparisons. Finally, the author's research concludes that students' oral English ability has been significantly improved after using cooperative learning in the classroom. The author's research results also show that cooperative learning in foreign language classes significantly affects students' learning motivation.

#### Study two: Enhancing foreign language motivation through the magic of cooperative learning: dream or reality? (Fakhri Alamdari & Ghani, 2022) <sup>[11]</sup>

Fakhri and Ghani's (2022) <sup>[11]</sup> study investigated the effects of cooperative learning (CL) on the motivation of Iranian foreign language learners. Motivation is a significant factor in enhancing language learning ability and can be enhanced and promoted through a regular approach. The study was conducted with 180 intermediate foreign language learners, divided into three groups of 60 students each. The first experimental group is subject to two collaborative learning methods: a team of students divided by grades and a group whose members read and write through a collaborative approach. The second experimental group was set up in a round table format, where group members were asked to reflect and pair up and then share their skills. The last group, the control group, were not given any cooperative learning techniques and was taught traditionally, but they used the same learning materials as the first two groups. A controlled analysis of the experiment and a study of the changes in the participants' motivation was used. It was concluded that group members who used the cooperative teaching model were more motivated to learn a foreign language. The author's study found that the cooperative learning model effectively increased learners' motivation. The cooperative learning model promotes interest and motivation among Iranian learners of foreign languages.

#### Study three: Social Constructivist Approach to Web-Based EFL Learning: Collaboration, Motivation, and Perception on the Use of Google Docs. (Liu & Lan, 2016) <sup>[21]</sup>

Liu and Lan's (2016) study reported differences in motivation, vocabulary growth and perceptions of using Google Docs between individual and collaborative learning at the higher education level. The study recruited two class sizes, and the student's second language was English. The study divided these students into two groups: the individual and the cooperative learning groups. Students from both classes were randomly assigned to the two groups. Liu and Lan's (2016) <sup>[21]</sup> findings are consistent with previous research that collaborators performed better than individuals in vocabulary growth. Students in the collaborative learning group were more motivated to learn and were more willing to express themselves fully than those in the individual learning group. In addition, the author's research also shows that the learning environment of the cooperative learning teaching mode is also essential. The author says that collaborative learning environments are more conducive to critical thinking than individual learning environments. The authors say that web-based programs can also promote cooperative learning, engagement, and motivation when online students.

### Proposed Application

Lin (2015) <sup>[22]</sup> talks about cooperative learning as a student-centred, group-based approach to learning together for a shared learning goal through a clear division of labour and a cooperative interaction in exploring the learning process to promote and improve each other teaching strategies. Effective cooperative learning can be organised in the English classroom to motivate students to learn. The following methods are used in the classroom: firstly, cooperative groups should be formed scientifically. Teachers can group students according to their psychological characteristics and learning abilities. Teachers should have an in-depth understanding of the psychology and learning habits of the students in the class and have a good idea of the basis of each student's learning. When organising cooperative learning activities, teachers may wish to combine some lively and extroverted students with introverted students. Through such a combination of learning, students can help each other in the learning process and discuss together so that even an introverted student will not have anything to say.

Secondly, it is essential to stimulate students' desire to learn collaboratively in the classroom. Hanson (2001) <sup>[15]</sup> pointed out that the better a person's teamwork attitude is, the more they think they have intrinsic motivation, strengthening students' pursuit of learning achievement. Therefore, during cooperative learning in the classroom, the teacher should make a clear division of labour for each student so that everyone is actively involved in the activity. Teachers should encourage students who have poor learning foundations, lack confidence in answering questions and remain silent. Teachers should try to arouse students' sense of cooperation. Teachers should give inactive students praise and encouragement, help them stimulate their enthusiasm for learning, and enhance students' confidence in learning English.

The third point is that the teaching classroom should play a leading role for the teacher in group work. The role of the

teacher using cooperative learning teaching strategies changes from being a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of student learning (Shakibaei et al., 2019) <sup>[26]</sup>. Teachers should carefully observe the progress of the groups' activities in the classroom, inspire and guide the interaction between students, and provide assistance in language and sentence structure for the verbal activities among students when appropriate. Teachers should play a leading role in classroom cooperative group learning. It is essential to realise that both the organiser and the participant of the learning activity. As a collaborator in group learning, this is where the teacher can play a role in creating the learning environment and atmosphere and maintaining order in learning.

The fourth point is that teachers should carefully select meaningful content for collaborative communication. Johnson and Johnson (2014) <sup>[18]</sup> talk about how effective ways to increase student motivation in foreign language classrooms include building team cohesion and positive learning experiences. So for a boring classroom, teachers can design interesting group work content based on the content to stimulate learners' interest in the discussion. Different students will have different opinions and perceptions. Bringing together the group's ideas and then reporting back to the class can have a tremendous collaborative effect.

Fifthly, teachers should also pay attention to the role of evaluation. Teachers should reasonably evaluate the process and results of students' cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, teachers can combine students' evaluation with collective evaluation, which is conducive to students' improving the group's cohesion.

### **Benefits of this Practice**

Cooperative learning not only motivates students to learn but also has multiple benefits. Firstly, cooperative group learning can expand the space for students to learn. Johnson et al. (2013) talk about how cooperative learning motivates learners to work together and broaden the space for learning and can be used to maximise their learning and that of their group peers. Group changes the relationship between students and teachers and changes traditional unilateral or bilateral communication between learners and teachers into multi-directional communication between students. Students have more opportunities to express themselves. The group provides them with a more relaxed learning environment and strengthens the students' thinking ability. In addition, it also allows students to feel a happy emotional experience in the activities they participate in learning.

Secondly, group learning better reflects students' subjectivity and promotes active participation. Jacobs & Renandya (2019) <sup>[16]</sup> state that cooperative learning provides more opportunities for group learners to interact. Students are more motivated to learn and express their views, which significantly enhances the students' thematic status in the classroom. The cooperative learning teaching model requires students to submit the opinions of group members, which can increase the opportunities for students to express themselves and improve their learning ability and expand their vision.

Thirdly, cooperative group learning helps to improve learning efficiency. Veldman et al. (2020) <sup>[30]</sup> state that efforts to promote creative thinking in EFL learners through foreign language learning in a cooperative learning model showed that creativity scores increased significantly in a

cooperative learning context. Group learning is therefore conducive to more effective learning. During cooperative learning, the emphasis is on the need for all group members to be actively involved in the learning activities and for all members to be very enthusiastic. Everyone shares the learning task, and everyone does their best to make the problem easier to solve. Cooperative learning is a process in which students learn from each other and share their knowledge through mutual love and emotional exchange. It brings each member together as one and strengthens the sense of community. Group learning promotes the development of student's independent learning skills. Ning (2013) found that cooperative learning enhances learners' motivation and increases students' autonomy and social communication skills by investigating traditional and cooperative teaching models. Cooperative learning transforms students from spectators to participants. Students who already possess specific knowledge and skills must pass it on to other members. In order to teach clearly and thoroughly, students must read and analyse the material carefully. Therefore, they must make adequate preparations. Therefore, it will lead to the improvement of students' enthusiasm and self-study ability.

### **Evaluation of the Teaching Practice**

In order to effectively assess the impact of collaborative learning on student motivation, there are several ways in which it can be assessed. The first is through direct conversation. Teachers interview students one-on-one directly after class, asking them how they feel about collaborative learning and what they think and would like to see improved in the classroom. Talking to students face-to-face is a more effective way to understand what students think directly. The second way this can be done is through a questionnaire. Teachers can create options for questions about students' cooperative learning and motivation in the classroom and have students fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire approach can be a quick way to gather information from students. The third way is testing. After cooperative learning in class, teachers can have students test what is taught in class. Through the test results, teachers can understand students' grasp of knowledge points in the cooperative learning class.

### **Conclusion**

The three case studies above show that the cooperative learning model can play an important role in second language teaching. Compared to traditional teaching models, cooperative learning models can increase students' intrinsic motivation to learn. However, motivation significantly impacts students' learning success (Yunbao & Nicholas, 2008 <sup>[31]</sup>; Carreira, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup>. The use of group learning in teaching can enhance student motivation. It creates an all-around, multi-level and multi-perspective communication between teachers and students. Applying this cooperative learning model of teaching and learning gives life to classroom instruction and promotes mutual communication between groups. In cooperative learning, each student can express his or her views and opinions and listen to others. The cooperative learning teaching model cultivates students' sense of cooperation and teamwork, shifting students from passive to active and stimulating learners' enthusiasm for learning. Cooperative learning is also conducive to promoting cooperation and communication among students to improve together in a complimentary promotion. In addition, the cooperative

learning teaching mode can also effectively improve the quality of teachers' teaching. Cooperative learning is not only a way of learning that can be motivating. It is also a topic worthy of discussion and research. It can be widely used in EFL teaching and is of great help to EFL teaching.

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