

The Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in Learning Arabic Literature at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the effectiveness of cooperative learning in learning Arabic literature at a public university in Malaysia. The quantitative research approach, specifically a quasi-experimental design were employed. The purposive sampling technique was used involving 56 Arabic Literature students. The students were divided into two groups namely a control group that was taught using conventional learning strategies and a treatment group that was taught using cooperative learning strategies for six weeks. The scores of the students were analysed descriptively. Findings showed there was an increment in students' achievement in the treatment group with a mean score of (67.29) compared to the control group with a mean score of (49.21). Based on the findings it can be concluded that cooperative learning could be helpful in helping students to learn Arabic Literature.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Cooperative Learning, Arabic, Literature, Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Arabic literature constitutes a significant branch within the study and teaching of the Arabic language in this country. It primarily focuses on the analysis of Arabic poetry and prose. Moreover, Arabic literature is regarded as a core subject for students pursuing Arabic language studies at the tertiary level. Its curriculum examines the historical evolution of Arabic literary traditions, encompassing texts from various stages of development, beginning with the Jahiliyyah period, followed by the early Islamic era, the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, the Andalusian literary tradition, and culminating in the modern period.

To effectively achieve the learning objectives of Arabic literature, contemporary teaching and learning practices must be supported by innovative and student-centred pedagogical approaches. This is because the instructional strategies employed by educators exert a substantial influence on students' academic performance. Cooperative learning and active learning strategies have been shown to enhance student engagement and foster more meaningful learning experiences (Rafiza, 2013). Cooperative learning, in particular, promotes the development of students' cognitive abilities through purposeful interaction and collaborative discussion. Such meaningful learning experiences are instrumental in enhancing students' achievement. Accordingly, this study is undertaken to examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in improving students' achievement within the context of Arabic literature education.

LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

The Arabic Literature course is an important branch of Arabic language studies that requires students to master advanced language skills as well as the ability to analyze and interpret literary texts critically and in depth. However, the teaching of this course often still relies on conventional methods such as lectures and individual presentations, which are seen as less effective in engaging students actively in the learning process. As a result, some students demonstrate low levels of participation, superficial understanding of literary texts, and a lack of

motivation to explore the course content further. One-way lecture methods provide limited opportunities for students to participate actively in learning, particularly in understanding narrative, metaphorical, and culturally embedded texts. This situation highlights the need to explore alternative, more student-centered approaches—such as cooperative learning—to enhance students' understanding and achievement in the Arabic Literature course.

Furthermore, the study of Arabic literature requires comprehension of content rather than mere memorization. However, the majority of students experience difficulties in understanding this field. Various issues arise in learning literature, whether in the historical development of Arabic literature or in literary texts themselves, such as poetry and prose. These challenges lead to a lack of interest among students in learning the subject. Many also struggle to grasp key concepts within the content. Consequently, students tend to resort only to memorizing literary content without truly understanding it, especially during final examinations.

This situation occurs because students are generally less inclined to read and understand Arabic literary texts, as the content is complex and requires appreciation, deep reflection, and higher-order thinking skills to fully comprehend the intended messages. As such, this condition easily leads to boredom among students and hinders their ability to master the subject more effectively. In addressing these challenges, cooperative learning has been identified as a potential alternative approach to enhance students' understanding and engagement.

Cooperative learning is a teaching and learning method that has many advantages and has a positive impact on students' mastery and achievement in their studies today. This is because cooperative learning has certain and specific principles and policies that are able to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The cooperative teaching and learning method refers to the need for students to engage in a small group with various abilities, capabilities and skills and they work together to achieve a common objective.

By working together in small groups, students have the opportunity to share information, discuss text interpretations more deeply, and help one another understand complex content. In addition, this approach can create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning environment, while at the same time reducing the stress students may experience when dealing with difficult-to-understand texts. In addition, cooperative learning activities also have various noble values that can be used throughout teaching and learning such as mutual respect, responsibility, cooperation, mutual assistance and various social skills. There are many active activities in cooperative learning that can attract students' interest and help them improve their performance. Among them are jigsaw reading, think-pair-share, group presentations, roundtable discussions, peer tutoring, gallery walks, debate teams, role play, group research projects, collaborative writing, problem based learning, cooperative quizzes, case studies, cooperative learning circles, simulation games, co-teaching and so on.

As demonstrated in the study by Ainun Rahmah Iberahim, Zamri Mahamod, and Wan Muna Ruzana Wan Mohamad (2017), it was found that 21st Century Learning provides significant positive value and impact on students' achievement and attitudes. The findings of the study show that 21st-century learning has a positive effect and subsequently enhances students' performance in learning the Malay language. Therefore, the ability to select appropriate learning methods for the teaching and learning of Arabic literature becomes a key aspect in ensuring an effective teaching and learning process, which in turn can improve students' achievement in this field in particular.

According to Bhavani Somasundram and Zamri Mahamod (2017) reported a study on the effectiveness of cooperative learning on the achievement and motivation of secondary school students in learning Malay Language. They found that the approach used was proven to increase student achievement and motivation. Therefore, this study can be continued by looking at the effectiveness of cooperative learning in learning Arabic literature at UPSI.

According to a study of cooperative learning by Nor Azizah Salleh, Siti Rahayah Ariffin and Musa Daia (2001) explained that cooperative learning successfully applies the goals of noble values that are focused on such as independence, rationality and cooperation among students. By applying cooperative learning, students will be able to involve themselves comprehensively and actively and not focus solely on the teacher. In fact, traditional methods such as the chalk and talk method can be avoided.

METODOLOGY

Study Design

This study is a descriptive quantitative study to evaluate the effects of using cooperative learning in learning Arabic literature compared to conventional methods. The quantitative approach used by the researcher aims to collect primary data through pre-test and post-test instruments. Experiments are research methods conducted to determine the effects of processing (Mohd.Majid, 2005). The best method to conduct comparative studies between groups is experiments (Chua 2006). After the cooperative learning strategy is used, the experimental method is the appropriate method to compare the differences in results between the control group and the treatment group.

Population and Study Sample

The study sample is 56 university students studying Arabic at the Sultan Idris Education University. This group of students consists of students who have approximately the same abilities, skills and achievements based on their achievements in the pilot test for the subject of Arabic literature of the Islamic and Jahiliyah periods that was conducted previously.

Therefore, the researcher used students with a Bachelor of Arabic Language and Education from the Sultan Idris Education University. These students are required to take an Arabic literature course for 4 semesters. The course is named as the Course on Ignorance and Islamic Manners (semester 4), the Course on Abbasid and Andalusian Manners (semester 5), the Course on Mamluk, Ottoman and Modern Manners (semester 6). Manners of Islamic literature and culture (semester 8). The sampling method used is a purposive non-random sample.

Research Instruments

The research instrument used in this study is a pre-post test.

Pre-Post Test

This study uses two types of tests, namely the pre-test which is called the pre-test and the post-test which is called the post-test. The pre-test is used to obtain data on the level of student mastery before the use of cooperative learning is used. While the post-test is conducted to measure the difference in the level of student mastery when the cooperative learning approach is used in the learning of Arabic literature. The pre-test and post-test have the same set of questions so that the researcher can compare the subject's performance fairly.

The researcher divides the test questions into two parts as follows:

- i. Part A: Seven questions related to the Date of Manners.
- ii. Part B: Four questions related to Adab Nusus.

The levels used by the researcher are stated as follows:

- i. Low Level: Questions related to the definition and concept of Arabic literature.
- ii. Medium Level: Questions related to the development factors and characteristics of the cultural conditions of Arabic literature.
- iii. High Level: Questions related to the analysis of poetic verses.

Scope And Limitations

Geographical Limitation

This study is conducted specifically at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), a public higher education institution focused on teacher education. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to students in other institutions such as non-education public universities, private universities, or community colleges, which may have different student backgrounds, teaching systems, and academic cultures.

Limited Sample Size and Scope

This study only involves students enrolled in a specific Arabic Literature course, with the sample size consisting of one or two class groups (approximately 30–60 students). This relatively small sample size may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the entire program or to students in other universities.

Focus Limited to Academic Achievement

This study focuses primarily on students' academic achievement measured through assessment scores such as course tests. Other aspects such as critical thinking, attitudes, long-term collaboration skills, or deeper appreciation of literary values are not thoroughly examined, despite the fact that cooperative learning often contributes to the development of such soft skills.

Short Intervention Duration

The cooperative learning intervention is implemented over a period of four weeks and only for one course. This duration may not be sufficient to evaluate long-term effects on students' mastery of Arabic literature or their overall intellectual development.

Differences in Students' Maturity Levels and Backgrounds

University students come from diverse educational backgrounds—such as religious schools, tafhiz institutions, or mainstream secondary schools. Their levels of Arabic proficiency and exposure to literature vary, which may influence the effectiveness of cooperative learning even though they are enrolled in the same course.

External Factors That Are Difficult to Control

Various external factors such as personal motivation, lecturer support, pre-existing teaching styles, academic pressure, and off-campus commitments may affect students' achievement. This study is unable to fully control the influence of these factors.

Implementation Of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning Was Implemented After The Pre-Test Was administered to both the control group and the treatment group. Prior to the implementation of the study, a lecturer was appointed as an evaluator and facilitator for the teaching and learning processes of both groups. All procedures related to the study were clearly explained to the lecturer of the Arabic Literature course. During the first week of cooperative learning, the concept was introduced and explained to the students in the treatment group.

For the treatment group, before the learning session began, students were divided into several small groups consisting of three to four members each, randomly assigned according to gender. The cooperative learning session was conducted over a period of six weeks. In the first phase, students were exposed to collaborative discussions, exploration, and shared mastery of learning within their respective groups. At the same time, students were encouraged to support weaker members within their groups. The phases outlined in the cooperative learning strategy were as follows:

- i. Phase One : Understanding the definitions and concepts of Arabic literature.
- ii. Phase Two : Analyzing the development and cultural aspects of Arabic literature.
- iii. Phase Three : Analyzing poetry.
- iv. Phase Four : Analyzing poetry.

For all four phases mentioned above, students were required to assist one another within their groups to understand and master each assigned subtopic. Each group applied various cooperative learning strategies such as gallery walks, group presentations, roundtable discussions, and cooperative quizzes under the lecturer's guidance in every learning session. The entire cooperative learning process was carried out continuously for six weeks, and in the following week, a post-test was administered to the students.

STUDY FINDINGS

Analysis of Pre-Test Results of the Control Group (Conventional Learning Approach) and the Treatment Group (Cooperative Learning Approach)

Analysis of Pre-Test Results

To identify the level of mastery of students in the Arabic literature course, a pre-test was conducted on both the control and treatment groups.

The scores obtained in the test are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Pre-Test Control Group

Score	Frequency	Percentage
(81% - 100%) Excellent	0	0
(61%-80%) Good	2	7%
(41%-60%) Satisfying	4	14%
(21%-40%) Weak	19	68%
(0%-20%) Very Weak	3	11%
Total	28	100

Table 3 : Pre-Test Treatment Group

Score	Frequency	Percentage
(81% - 100%) Excellent	0	0
(61%-80%) Good	2	7%
(41%-60%) Satisfying	3	11%
(21%-40%) Weak	20	71%
(0%-20%) Very Weak	3	11%
Total	28	100

Pre-Test Results Analysis

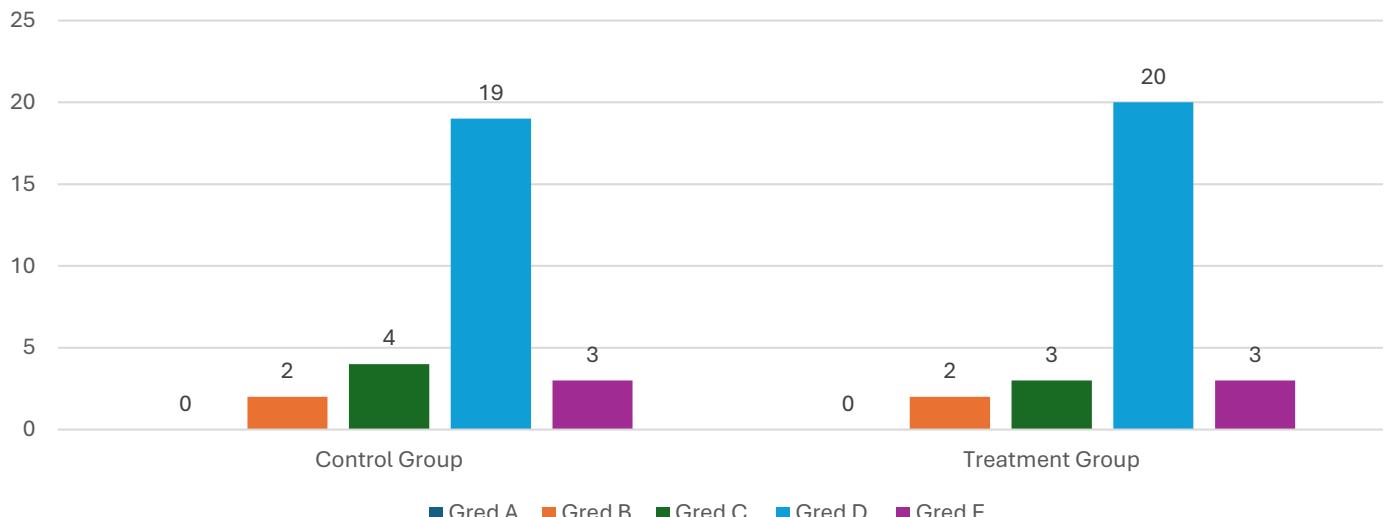


Figure 1: Analysis of Pre-Test Results

The diagram above shows the scores obtained by students from both groups. The classification of each score is divided into five only. From the scores and grades of both groups, it was found that more than half of each group obtained scores in the range of 21-40, namely the control group (68%) and the treatment group (71%) obtained a grade D which is classified as a weak category and has not yet mastered the lesson. While only two people (7%) each from the control and treatment groups obtained a grade B result which is classified as Good and can master the learning. This shows that the level of achievement of the respondents is still at a weak level.

Based on the findings of the pre-test conducted, the study found that many respondents left blank spaces without answers. This is because the respondents relied heavily on theory and memorization alone and did not try to answer the questions given. This was also influenced by the conventional learning situation that has been used so far in learning Arabic literature which does not actively involve students. This causes students to rely heavily on the lecturer's teaching without being able to understand the learning context on their own.

Post-Test Results Analysis of Control Group (Conventional Learning Approach) and Treatment Group (Cooperative Learning Approach)

Post-Test Results Analysis

To identify the effectiveness of cooperative learning on student achievement in learning Arabic literature courses, post-tests were conducted on both the control and treatment groups. Post-tests were conducted to see if there was a significant difference between the test scores of the control group and the test scores of the treatment group. Grades were determined based on the scores obtained by all respondents from the control and treatment groups.

Table 4 : Post-Test Control Group

Score	Frequency	Percentage
(81% - 100%) Excellent	0	0
(61%-80%) Good	3	11%
(41%-60%) Satisfying	11	39%
(21%-40%) Weak	12	43%
(0%-20%) Very Weak	2	7%
Total	28	100

The data above is a graph based on the grades of the post-test results of 28 control group respondents who were taught using the conventional method in Arabic literature. The findings from the test results conducted showed that the control group respondents only obtained a grade B, namely three (11%) in the range of 61-80 marks, C by 11 respondents (39%) in the range of 41-60 marks, while grade D by 12 respondents (43%) in the range of 21-40 marks and grade E by two respondents (7%) in the range of 0-20 marks. Overall, the highest test score in the control group was with a score of B of (11%) and the lowest score in the control group was E with (7%). The data showed that 23 students obtained grades C and D, which shows that students who were taught using the traditional approach were still at a weak level. This means that the traditional method approach used by the lecturers in the control group did not succeed in improving the level of student achievement better.

Table 5: Post-Test Treatment Group

Score	Frequency	Percentage
(81% - 100%) Excellent	3	11%
(61%-80%) Good	14	50%

(41%-60%) Satisfying	10	36%
(21%-40%) Weak	1	3%
(0%-20%) Very Weak	0	0%
Total	28	100

The data above is a graph based on the grades of the post-test results of 28 respondents in the treatment group who were taught using the cooperative learning method in learning Arabic literature. The findings from the test results conducted showed that three respondents (11%) obtained a grade A out of 28 respondents in the treatment group, in the range of 81-100 marks and a total of 14 respondents obtained a grade B (50%) which is in the range of 61-80 marks. While for grade C, a total of 10 respondents (36%) in the range of 41-60% marks and only one respondent obtained a grade D (3%) which is in the range of 21-40 marks. Overall, the highest test score in the treatment group was a B score of (50%) and the lowest score in the treatment group was only a grade D which is (3%). The data shows that there was an increase in the achievement of the members of the treatment group after applying cooperative learning in their learning of Arabic literature. This proves that cooperative learning is able to increase understanding and help students master their learning more deeply.

Analysis of Post-Test Difference T-Test Results for the Control Group (Conventional Learning Approach) and the Treatment Group (Cooperative Learning Approach)

Table 6: T-Test Analysis

Respondent Group	N	Mean	Count Value -t	Std. Deviation	Level Significant
Test Results					
Control Group	28	49.21	-6.973	9.905	.000
Treatment Group	28	67.29		9.486	

Based on the descriptive statistics above, there is a significant difference ($t=-6.973$, $df\ 58, p<.05$) between the control and treatment groups. The comparison of the higher mean values of the treatment group respondents (mean 67.29) shows that they understand learning better than the control group respondents (mean=49.21). This explains that there is a rather encouraging achievement among the treatment group after undergoing cooperative learning in the Arabic literature course. This increase in achievement also clearly shows that the approach used, namely cooperative learning, has successfully provided a positive change in student mastery.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the post-test indicate that cooperative learning exerts a significant positive influence on student achievement (Johnson et al., 2021; Slavin et al., 2022). The results of the post-test also showed an increase in student achievement after applying cooperative learning in learning Arabic literature. This shows that cooperative learning has proven to be effective when applied in Arabic literature courses because this method successfully involves students directly in learning. These findings provide evidence in support of our research which focused on assessing the overall influence of cooperative learning on student achievement.

The study findings show that cooperative learning can attract and encourage students' interest in mastering Arabic literature more easily and fun. The students also gave suggestions that this cooperative learning should be continued for other titles or topics in Arabic literature and applied over a longer period of time.

The findings of this study also confirm the findings of Yasrina Yaacob (2010), which is that her findings show that students and teachers agree on the effectiveness of cooperative learning which can improve and help students in their understanding and interest and they also have the value of fun in learning. In this regard, the respondents of this study agree and believe that the cooperative learning method should be applied as a learning strategy in Arabic literature.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Policy:

The findings carry significant implications for educational theory, practice, and policy. Firstly, the demonstrated positive impact of cooperative learning on student achievement provides strong support for the theoretical underpinnings of this instructional approach (Slavin et al., 2022). Secondly, these results indicate that educators should actively consider integrating cooperative learning strategies within their classrooms as a means of enhancing student performance. Finally, policymakers should recognize these findings and consider allocating resources to professional development programs that enable teachers to effectively implement cooperative learning in their instructional practices.

Future Research Directions:

Despite the generally positive outcomes, this cooperative learning in arabic literature has several limitations. First, the studies included were restricted to publications in English, which may have introduced publication bias. Second, the reported effect sizes may have been influenced by the specific contexts in which cooperative learning interventions were applied. Third, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all learner populations, as the majority of studies involved undergraduate students. Future research should investigate the mechanisms through which cooperative learning contributes to improved student achievement and examine potential moderating factors that may influence the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. Hopefully, the application of this cooperative learning approach can change students' negative and difficult perceptions of Arabic literature courses as well as inject new enthusiasm and change into the teaching staff to carry out the teaching and learning process better and more fun.

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