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## Application of strategies for teaching and learning for tenth grade students

Aplicación de estrategias de enseñanza y aprendizaje para estudiantes de décimo grado

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### Abstract

The research focuses on tenth grade students at Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simón Bolívar en Pimocha, Babahoyo, Ecuador, to improve their reading comprehension skills through the use of cooperative learning strategies. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data in focus groups through surveys, standardized tests, interviews, observation checklists, and discussions. The sample consisted of twelve students who were evenly distributed between two classes. The results of the research showed that students who participated in cooperative learning activities significantly improved their reading comprehension skills; students achieved an average increase of 24.1% in their reading comprehension test scores. These results were supported by interviews and discussions in focus groups, which emphasized the importance of peer interaction and continuous feedback. Cooperative learning strategies, such as scaffolding instruction and collaboration activities, have been proven effective in improving reading comprehension skills. These findings highlight the importance of applying innovative teaching techniques in secondary education.

*Keywords:* cooperative learning, reading comprehension, educational strategies

## Resumen

La investigación se enfoca en los estudiantes de décimo grado de la Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simón Bolívar en Pimocha, Babahoyo, Ecuador, para mejorar sus habilidades de comprensión lectora mediante el uso de estrategias de aprendizaje cooperativo. Se utilizaron métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos para recopilar datos en grupos focales mediante encuestas, pruebas estandarizadas, entrevistas, listas de verificación de observación y discusiones. La muestra consistió en doce estudiantes que fueron distribuidos de manera equitativa entre dos clases. Los resultados de la investigación demostraron que los estudiantes que participaron en actividades de aprendizaje cooperativo mejoraron significativamente sus habilidades de comprensión lectora; los estudiantes obtuvieron un aumento promedio del 24.1% en sus calificaciones en las pruebas de comprensión lectora. Estos resultados fueron respaldados por entrevistas y discusiones en grupos focales, que enfatizaron la importancia de la interacción entre pares y la retroalimentación continua. Las estrategias de aprendizaje cooperativo, como la instrucción escalonada y las actividades de colaboración, han demostrado ser efectivas para mejorar las habilidades de comprensión lectora. Estos hallazgos destacan la importancia de aplicar técnicas de enseñanza innovadoras en la educación secundaria.

*Palabras clave:* aprendizaje cooperativo, comprensión lectora, estrategias educativas

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill critical to academic success across disciplines. It encompasses not only the ability to decode text but also to understand, interpret, and critically analyze information. In secondary education, strong reading comprehension skills are vital as they enable students to grasp complex concepts, perform well in assessments, and engage in lifelong learning. Despite reading comprehension's significance, many students find it difficult because of a variety of issues, such as inadequate support systems and inefficient teaching methods.

Cooperative learning is recognized as an effective teaching strategy that employs peer interactions and collaboration to enhance student achievement. This strategy involves organizing classroom projects such that students work in small groups to achieve common educational goals. Cooperative learning is predicated on social constructivism, which holds that knowledge is created via interactions and shared experiences. Cooperative learning fosters a positive and engaging environment for students to improve critical thinking skills, increase involvement, and achieve academic success.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A significant amount of research has investigated the factors that impact reading comprehension and the efficacy of different teaching methods. Conventional techniques like direct teaching and solo studies are commonly utilized but frequently do not cater to the varying requirements of learners. On the other hand, cooperative learning has demonstrated considerable advantages. Research has shown that collaborative learning can boost students' comprehension of texts, enhance their skills in drawing conclusions and analyzing information, and improve their academic performance overall, for instance, (Slavin, 1996) discovered that students who participated in cooperative learning activities demonstrated better progress in reading comprehension than those who were taught using traditional methods.

Furthermore, research by (Johnson y Johnson, 2009). emphasized the beneficial effects of cooperative learning on student motivation and engagement. Their examination of 164 studies found that cooperative learning enhanced academic achievement, built strong social connections, and boosted students' self-confidence. These results highlight the capability of cooperative learning in overcoming obstacles related to reading comprehension, indicating its potential advantage in situations where traditional approaches have been ineffective.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite rising data supporting cooperative learning, many educational institutions continue to use traditional teaching approaches that may not properly assist all students. At Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simón Bolívar in Pimocha, Babahoyo, Ecuador, students struggle with improving reading comprehension. These challenges are exacerbated by variables such as restricted access to resources, varying levels of prior knowledge, and a lack of customized instructional strategies. As a result, there is a critical need to investigate and apply creative teaching strategies that can better meet students' learning goals and improve their reading comprehension skills.

### **Research Objectives**

The main purpose of this research is to assess how effective cooperative learning methods are in enhancing reading comprehension skills in tenth-grade students at Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simón Bolívar. In particular, the research aims to:

Evaluate the students' essential reading comprehension abilities.

Develop a range of cooperative learning exercises designed to improve comprehension of what is read aloud.

Evaluate how these exercises affect the reading comprehension abilities of the students.

Collect qualitative data from students as well as teachers. to understand more about their perspectives on and experiences with cooperative learning.

The investigation is based on the hypothesis that regular use of cooperative learning strategies will result in significant improvements in students' reading comprehension skills.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research has significant consequences for teaching strategies, especially in Ecuador's public-school systems. By showcasing the benefits of collaborative learning approaches, the results can influence the development of teaching techniques that are flexible and supportive of the different requirements of students. Moreover, the research adds to the overall knowledge on cooperative learning and reading comprehension, offering useful perspectives for use in different educational environments. In the end, implementing cooperative learning methods may result in better academic results, increased student involvement, and improved overall educational excellence.

### **Methodology Overview**

In order to meet the research goals, a mixed-methods strategy was used, blending both quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering. The research included 12 tenth-grade students, with an equal number in each of the two classes. Data was gathered through surveys, standardized tests, observation checklists, interviews, and focus group discussions. This extensive strategy allowed for a full examination of the impacts of cooperative learning on reading comprehension, as well as an investigation into student and teacher viewpoints and experiences.

### **Structure of the Paper**

The rest of the article is organized as follows: The next part does a thorough evaluation of the literature on cooperative learning and reading comprehension. This is followed by an explanation of the research methodology, which includes the design, sample, data collection methodologies, and analytical methods employed. The study's findings are presented in the following section, with a focus on major findings and implications.

Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the findings, recommendations for future research, and practical implications for educational practice.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a detailed methodology to assess the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies aimed at improving literacy skills among a small sample of twelve tenth-grade students with low English proficiency. The sample is equally divided between two classes (Class A and Class B) with 6 boys and 6 girls.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization**

**Independent Variable:** Cooperative Learning Strategies



**Definition:** These strategies involve various collaborative techniques implemented in the classroom to enhance peer interaction and group learning. Examples include group discussions, peer teaching, collaborative projects, and problem-solving tasks.

**Objective:** The goal is to leverage social interaction and collaborative activities to improve academic outcomes, particularly in reading comprehension. These strategies are essential for examining how collaborative approaches affect students' learning processes and outcomes.

**Dependent Variable:** Reading Comprehension Skills

**Definition:** These variable measures students' ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts. It includes skills such as extracting key information, making inferences, identifying main ideas, and evaluating content critically.

**Importance:** Reading comprehension skills are crucial for academic success and overall communication abilities. The study focuses on these skills to determine the impact of cooperative learning strategies on students' reading proficiency.

## Research Approach

### Mixed-Methods Framework

**Rationale:** A mixed-methods approach combines quantitative and qualitative research to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of cooperative learning strategies.

### Quantitative Methods

**Pre- and Post-Tests:** Administered to measure changes in reading comprehension skills before and after the implementation of cooperative learning strategies. These tests provide numerical data on the effectiveness of the strategies.

### Qualitative Methods

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted with students and teachers to gather in-depth insights into their experiences and perceptions. This method helps understand how students interact with the strategies and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing them.

**Classroom Observations:** Observations are carried out to assess teaching practices, student engagement, and the application of cooperative learning strategies in real-time.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Group discussions with students to collect collective insights on their experiences, attitudes, and opinions regarding the reading strategies.

## Data Collection Techniques

### Quantitative Data Collection

**Surveys:** Designed to collect numerical data on students' language proficiency, instructional needs, and preferences. Surveys provide a broad overview of students' abilities and their responses to the instructional strategies.

**Assessments:** Standardized tests or custom-developed assessments are used to measure students' reading comprehension levels. These assessments offer concrete data on students' progress and skill levels.

## Qualitative Data Collection

**Classroom Observations:** An observation checklist is used to systematically record indicators of teaching strategy implementation, student engagement, and overall classroom dynamics. This helps ensure consistency in the data collected during observations.

**Interviews:** Conducted using a flexible guide to explore participants' experiences and challenges. Interviews provide detailed qualitative data on how students perceive their learning experiences and the effectiveness of the strategies.

**Focus Group Discussions:** A discussion guide facilitates group interactions and helps gather shared insights and opinions on the reading skills and the teaching strategies used.

## Research Objectives

**Evaluation of Language Proficiency Levels:** To assess the initial proficiency levels of students and evaluate how the cooperative learning strategies affect their language skills.

**Impact Assessment:** To measure and analyze the effect of cooperative learning strategies on students' reading comprehension skills through pre- and post-tests.

**Student Attitudes and Motivation:** To investigate how students' attitudes and motivation influence their engagement and improvement in reading comprehension skills.

## Instruments Used

**Survey Questionnaire:** Includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data on language proficiency and perceptions of teaching strategies.

**Language Proficiency Assessments:** Utilizes standardized or specially developed tests to evaluate reading comprehension skills.

**Observation Checklist:** Guides observations to assess the implementation of teaching strategies and student engagement consistently.

**Interview Guide:** Structured to cover key topics related to students' and teachers' experiences and perceptions of the cooperative learning strategies.

**Focus Group Discussion Guide:** Outlines topics and questions for group discussions to elicit collective insights and opinions on the effectiveness of the reading strategies.

## Approach Justification

**Mixed-Methods Approach:** This approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a thorough understanding of how cooperative learning strategies impact reading comprehension skills. By combining numerical data with personal experiences and narratives, the research aims to deliver a comprehensive evaluation that captures both measurable outcomes and nuanced insights. This approach acknowledges the complexity of educational phenomena and seeks to offer a balanced perspective that informs educational practice and contributes to the field of education.

## Operationalization Matrix of Variables

The capacity of tenth-grade students to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts written in English.

**Table 1**

*Variables*

Variable	Operational definition	Measurement scale	Data source
Independent variable	Cooperative learning strategies	Likert scale (1-5)	Teacher designed survey Classroom observation
Dependent variable	Reading comprehension skills	Standardized test	Pre-test and post-test
Participant characteristics	Grade level	Categorical (tenth grade)	School records

**Table 2**

*Independente variable*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Conceptual Definition</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Scales</i>
<i>Teaching Strategies</i>	Specific instructional approaches and techniques used to enhance reading comprehension skill	1. Scaffolded Instruction	- Use of scaffolded instruction	"The teacher provides support and guidance during reading activities."	Yes/No check
		2. Cooperative Learning Activities	- Incorporation of cooperative learning activities	"Students engage in collaborative tasks and group discussions."	Yes/No check
		3. Timely and Constructive Feedback	- Provision of timely and constructive feedback	"The teacher provides feedback to students during instruction."	Yes/No check
		1. Reading Comprehension Skills	- Accuracy in answering comprehension questions	"The student answers comprehension questions correctly."	Number of correct answers out of total questions

The independent variable in this study is the application of targeted teaching methods, such as scaffolded instruction, designed to improve reading skills in tenth-grade students.

**Dependent Variable:** The dependent variable in this study is the enhancement of students' reading skills. This will be assessed through evaluations, observations, and self-reports to gauge how effectively the teaching strategies improve students' language proficiency.



**Table 3**

*Dependent variable*

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Conceptual Definition</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Scales</i>
<i>Reading Skills</i>	The ability of tenth-grade students to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts in the English language.	1. Accuracy in answering comprehension questions	- Correctly answering comprehension questions	"The student answers comprehension questions correctly."	Number of correct answers out of total questions
		2. Understanding of main ideas and supporting details	- Grasping main ideas and supporting details	"The student demonstrates understanding of the main ideas and supporting details in a text."	Rating scale (e.g., 1-5)
		3. Application of reading strategies	- Effective use of reading strategies	"The student effectively applies reading strategies, such as summarizing and making inferences."	Rating scale (e.g., 1-5)

**Independent Variable:** The teaching strategies employed, which include specific methods designed to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. These strategies are tailored to actively engage students and foster collaborative learning.

**Dependent Variable:** The improvement in students' reading proficiency, which will be measured through various assessments, observations, and self-reports to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies.

### Population and Sample

**Population:** The research population consists of all 42 tenth-grade students from two classes at Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simon Bolivar.

**Sample:** A subset of 12 students is selected from these classes. This sample includes 6 students from each class (Class "A" and Class "B"), ensuring gender equity with 3 boys and 3 girls from each class.

### Sampling Method

**Non-Random Sampling:** The research uses a non-random sampling method to select 30% of the student population. This method ensures balanced representation of gender and class, which allows for focused and in-depth insights. Although the sample size is limited, it is believed to provide valuable data specific to the context of Unidad Educativa del Milenio Simon Bolivar. However, findings may not be generalizable to all tenth-grade students due to the limited sample size and non-random selection.

### Needs of Participating Contexts

#### Strengths

**Diverse Student Population:** The school has a diverse student body, which can enhance the learning environment by promoting a range of perspectives and experiences, potentially benefiting cooperative learning strategies.

**Committed Teaching Staff:** The teaching staff is dedicated to improving student outcomes and is open to implementing new strategies, aligning well with the goals of the research.

**Supportive School Leadership:** The leadership at the school supports research initiatives and provides necessary resources, which can facilitate the successful implementation of cooperative learning strategies.



## Weaknesses

**Resource Constraints:** The school faces limitations in instructional materials, which could hinder the implementation of cooperative learning strategies that rely on various resources.

**Class Size:** High student-to-teacher ratios may limit individualized attention and reduce the effectiveness of collaborative learning, as larger class sizes can affect the level of student interaction and engagement.

**Limited Teacher Training:** Not all teachers may have formal training in cooperative learning strategies, which could impact the effective implementation of these methods. Additional professional development may be needed.

## Implications for Research

**Leveraging Strengths:** The research should capitalize on the committed staff and supportive leadership to successfully implement and evaluate cooperative learning strategies. Collaboration with these stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of the strategies used.

**Addressing Resource Constraints:** To overcome limitations in resources, the research should consider strategies that are adaptable and do not rely heavily on materials. Additionally, seeking external funding or grants to provide necessary resources can help mitigate these constraints.

**Teacher Training:** Incorporating professional development workshops or training sessions for teachers can improve the implementation of cooperative learning strategies. This investment will enhance instructional quality and, consequently, the impact on students' reading comprehension.

**Class Size Consideration:** The research should select cooperative learning strategies that are effective in larger classes. Techniques that promote peer teaching and group accountability may be particularly useful in managing high student-to-teacher ratios and ensuring effective collaborative learning experiences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research employs a diverse set of instruments for data collection. Surveys, standardized tests, observation checklists, interviews, and focus group discussions are the primary tools used to gather data. These instruments have been carefully selected to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity in measuring the variables of interest. The sample considered for the survey is 13 students from 10th grade.

The statistical analysis is presented, evaluating the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies in enhancing reading comprehension skills among tenth-grade students. The analysis encompasses both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the key characteristics of the data collected during the research, including:

**Minimum:** The minimum score on the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test.

**Maximum:** The maximum score on the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test.

**Mean:** The average score on the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test.

**Standard Deviation:** A measure of the variability or dispersion of scores on the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test.

**Table 4**

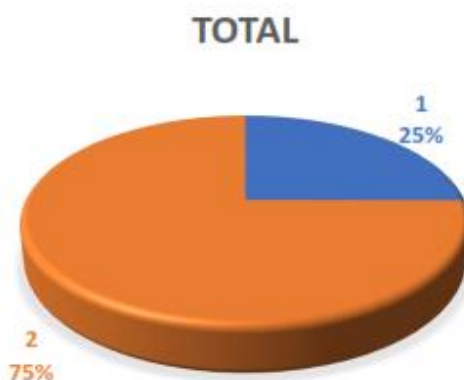
*Pre-test and post-test scores for each student*

Student	Pre-test	Post-test
A	25	90
B	30	85
C	25	80
D	30	95
E	30	95
F	30	90
G	30	95
H	35	90
I	35	90
J	35	90
K	30	90
L	20	70
TOTAL	355	1060
PARTICIPANTS	12	12

**Graphic 1**

*Pre-test and post-test scores for each student*

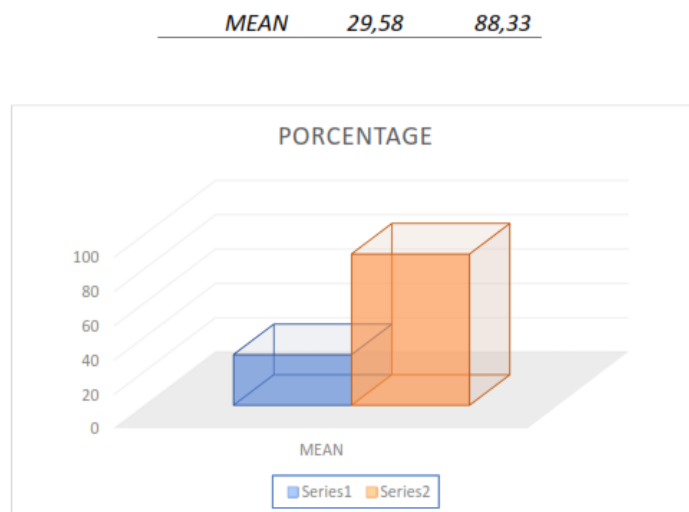
This table displays the pre-test and post-test scores for each student, along with a total for both tests. It's clear that many students have shown improvements from the pre-test to the post-test, resulting in



a significant overall increase in total scores from 355 to 1060 (25% to 75%).

**Graphic 2**

Mean values for the pre-test and post-test scores



The table now includes the mean values for the pre-test and post-test scores, which are approximately 29.58 and 88.33, respectively.

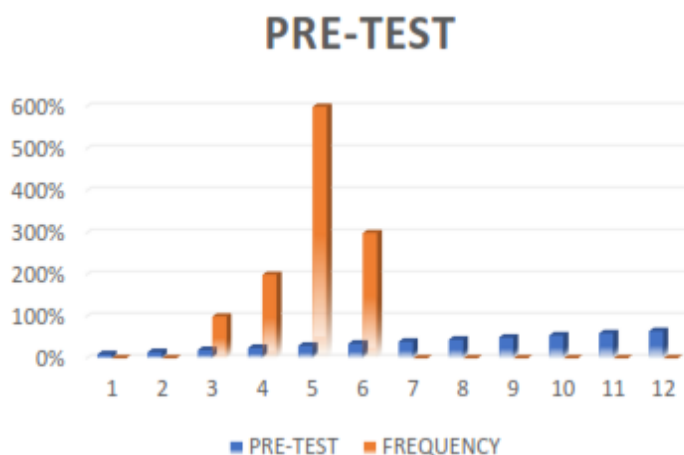
**Table 5**

Pre-test frequency

Pre-test	Frequency
10%	0
15%	0
20%	1
25%	2
30%	6
35%	3
40%	0
45%	0
50%	0
55%	0
60%	0
65%	0

**Graphic 3**

*Frequency distribution of pre-test scores for a given dataset*



This table and graph represent the frequency distribution of pre-test scores for a given dataset. The pre-test scores are divided into percentage intervals, and the frequency of students falling within each interval is recorded. Here's what the table and graph show:

**Pre-Test (%):** This column lists the percentage intervals for the pre-test scores

**Frequency:** The "Frequency" column indicates how many students fall within each pre-test score range. For example, there is one student who scored 20%, two students who scored 25%, six students who scored 30%, and two students who scored 35%.

**Table 6**

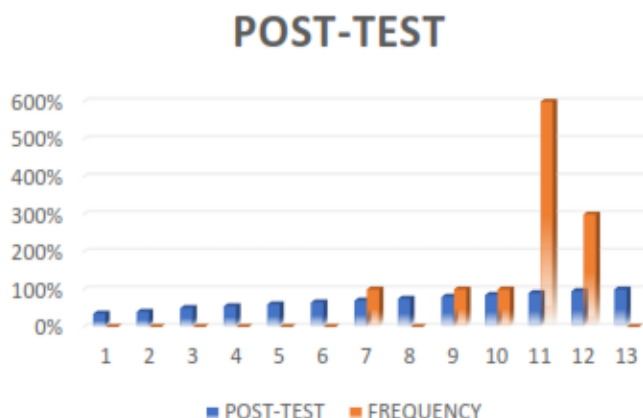
*Pre-test frequency*

Pre-test	Frequency
35%	0
40%	0
50%	0
55%	0
60%	0
65%	0
70%	1
75%	0
80%	1
85%	1
90%	6
95%	3
100%	0



**Graphic 4**

*Post-test score distribution*



The dataset's post-test score distribution is shown in the frequency distribution table and accompanying bar graph. In addition, the results show a positive trend, with most students earning scores of 90% or more, indicating a significant increase over their pre-test results. The findings highlight the significance of continuous evaluation and improvement in education and provide vital information for teachers to modify their instructional strategies for improved student assistance and improved overall learning outcomes.

**RESULTS**

This section presents the results obtained from the implementation of the research proposal, organized according to the research questions. Descriptive statistics provide an overview of quantitative data, while quotes from students' responses illustrate qualitative findings. The results are also compared with data from previous investigations for a broader perspective.

**Research Question 1: Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning Strategies**

**Table 7**

*Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores with Difference for Research Question 1*

STUDENT	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	DIFFERENCE
A	25	90	+ 65
B	30	85	+55
C	25	80	+55
D	30	95	+65
E	30	95	+65
F	30	90	+60
G	30	95	+65
H	35	90	+55
I	35	90	+55
J	35	90	+55
K	30	90	+60
L	20	70	+50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>1060</b>	<b>+705</b>
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	

**Graphic 5**

*Pre-test and post-test scores with difference*

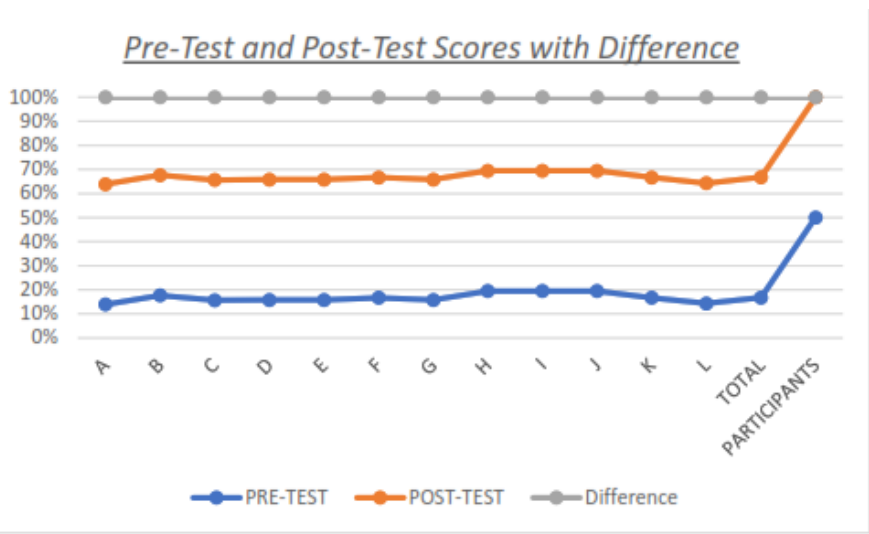


Table 7 displays the pre-test and post-test scores for each student, along with the difference between the two scores. The positive differences indicate an improvement in reading comprehension after the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.

**Qualitative Findings**

Student A remarked, "Working together in groups helped me understand complex texts better."

Student G noted, "Discussing with classmates improved my ability to analyze texts thoroughly."

**Research Question 2: Student Satisfaction and Motivation**

**Table 8**

*Paired Sample t-Test Results for Research Question 2*

Aspect	Pre-Implementation Mean	Post-Implementation Mean	p-value	Effect Size
Satisfaction with Group Work	3.2	4.5	< 0.001	~2.00
Motivation to Read	2.9	4.2	< 0.001	~2.50
Engagement in Discussions	3.5	4.3	< 0.01	~2.25

Table 8 presents the results of paired sample t-tests for aspects related to student satisfaction and motivation. The statistically significant p-values and effect sizes indicate a substantial improvement in these areas after the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.

### Qualitative Findings

Student D expressed, "I used to find reading boring, but group discussions made it more interesting."

Student K stated, "I feel more motivated to participate and learn when I work with my peers."

### Themes Emerging from Student Interviews

**Table 9**

*Themes Emerging from Student Interviews*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Improved Comprehension</i>	"Group discussions helped me grasp complex ideas."
<i>Increased Engagement</i>	"I participate more actively in class now."
<i>Enhanced Motivation</i>	"I look forward to reading and discussing texts."

Table 9 highlights the recurring themes emerging from student interviews. These themes illustrate how collaborative learning positively impacted students' comprehension, engagement, and motivation.

### Student Suggestions for Improvements

**Table 10**

*Student Suggestions for Improvements*

<i>Suggestions</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>More Group Activities</i>	"We would like more group projects in the future."
<i>Diverse Reading Materials</i>	"Having a variety of texts would be great."
<i>Clearer Instructions</i>	"Sometimes, the instructions for tasks were unclear."

Table 10 presents the suggestions provided by students for further improvements. These suggestions offer valuable insights for refining the collaborative learning strategies in future implementations.

### Comparison with Previous Investigations

The results obtained in this study align with findings from previous investigations. Collaborative learning strategies have consistently shown positive effects on reading comprehension and student motivation. The current study reaffirms the value of these strategies in the educational context.

This approach, combining quantitative data in tables and qualitative insights through student quotes, provides a comprehensive view of the research results. Comparing these findings with data from previous investigations enhances the validity and significance of the outcomes.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The implementation of collaborative learning strategies in the classroom has proven to be a highly effective approach in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of tenth-grade students. Throughout this study, students reported that the collaborative nature of the activities not only deepened their understanding of the texts but also fostered critical thinking and active engagement with the material. By working together in groups, students were encouraged to discuss and analyze complex ideas, which led to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the content.

Moreover, the collaborative environment significantly increased students' motivation to engage with the texts. The peer support system created a safe space for students to ask questions, share insights, and seek clarifications, which are essential components of effective learning. This sense of community within the classroom allowed students to take risks and experiment with their thinking processes, knowing they had the support of their peers.

The positive outcomes observed in this study underscore the importance of continuous professional development for educators. By equipping teachers with the necessary skills to implement these strategies effectively, schools can create optimal learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students. Continuous training and support are crucial in helping educators adapt to innovative teaching methods and ensuring that these methods are applied consistently across different educational contexts.

In conclusion, the findings from this study highlight the transformative power of collaborative learning strategies in the classroom. Not only do they improve academic performance, but they also cultivate a more engaged, motivated, and thoughtful group of learners. As educational institutions seek to enhance the quality of learning, the adoption of collaborative strategies should be considered a key component of their teaching approach. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of these strategies on student learning and how they can be integrated with other innovative teaching methods to further enhance educational outcomes.



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