

# The Effectiveness of Cooperative learning approach on Arabic Teaching among Non- Native Speakers at Universities in Malaysia:

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## ABSTRACT:

Cooperative learning is considered as one of important approach of learning acquisition and skills acquirement. It is firmly believed that the approach enhancing students' academic achievements, skills and also helping them in social interaction and human relation. Hence, this research attempts to explore the effectiveness of cooperative learning approach in teaching Arabic for non-native speakers in selected universities of Malaysia, as well as to investigate any of relevant skills which effected by using cooperative learning. A total of 100 students were randomly selected from 3 universities (UPSI, IIUM, and USIM) and self-reported instruments were distributed for data collection. The instrument was divided into two parts. The first part focuses on cooperative learning in general and consists of 8 distinctive questions while the second part consisted of 16 questions which categorized into 3 dimensions. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents and they were asked to define the degree to which they agree or disagree with each item in the questionnaire rated from 1 to 5 used the Liker-style scale. Multiple Linear Regression was used to investigate a hypothesized relationships between students' interaction and their skills on one hand and Arabic language proficiency on the other hand. It was found as a result of Multiple Linear Regression that both factors (interaction and skill) were substantially and statistically predict Arabic language proficiency. However, gender, age, year of study and university were found to be statistically insignificant-

## Keyword:

**Cooperative learning, Arabic teaching, Non-Native Speaker.**

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## Introduction:

Teaching Arabic for non-Arabic speaker would fail to achieve its main target and when instructors did not use proper strategies or approaches in the teaching (Al Muhsin et al., 2020). In 21<sup>st</sup> century when World witnesses fast developments in every aspect of life, the teaching tools and strategies are also dramatically changing due the changes of technology, economics and social situations. But still a lot of teachers and lecturers are using traditional teaching method without any changing in the classroom, especially in high learning institute (Thomas, 2001). However, studies indicated that the teacher – center approach is not suitable for the students anymore especially in the university, the university students unlike the students in the school have ability to search knowledge by themselves, and have higher creative and critical thinking skills compared to their secondary schools counterparts (Chemwei,

Kiboss, & Ilieva, 2005; Fuentes-Azpiroz et al., 2019; Jermsittiparsert et al., 2019). But for these students to meaningfully utilize their acquired skills through interaction with the environment for the betterment of their academic endeavors, their instructors should effectively play their facilitation roles.—Therefore, many approaches such as Cooperative learning, Students' center approach, Discover center approach and Problem based approach are introduced to help students learn by themselves with minimum facilitation from their instructors (Meteetham, 2001). These learning approaches aim to transfer learning processes from been instructors dominated approach to learning from personal experiences and through meaningful involvement in the learning processes (Henderson, Martin, & Kasey, 2002).

The major problem in teaching Arabic language in non-Arab society as Malaysia is in the teaching approaches use in inculcating Arabic

language (Davoudi, 2012). Although no doubt that instructors acquired necessary body of knowledge due to their high qualification, however, traditional methods of teaching is still pervaded in every higher institution of learning (Abdul - Hamad, 2004). Arabic usage and practice is just limit to the classroom, the students would just listen and taking note without practicing (Al Muhsin & Mustafa, 2020). If cooperative learning approach is adopted it is believed to compensate the lack environment conduciveness (Chen, & Wang, 2013).

Cooperative learning is a teaching approach that can help students to be successful in academic achievement and skills, as well as can assist the students to enhance the social interaction and human relation (Slavin, 2009)). It was developed from social psychological studies of cooperation and competition in human behavior (Deutsh, 1949). Since the early 1970s, cooperative learning has one of the greatest success stores in the history of educational innovation, cooperative learning approach is now so common place that they are often seen as standard part of education practice, not as a innovation (Slavin1999). It was empirically found that cooperative learning approach leads to high achievement, increased retention, positive relationships, and a wider circle of friends (Jacobs & Hall, 2002; Jacobs & Small, 2002). Additionally, it's also discovered that cooperative approach boosts learners' intrinsic motivation, lift their self-esteem, enhances their social support, more on-task behavior and better attitudes towards teachers (Meteetum, 2001; Chen, 2005; Porto, 2001; 2002). Studies also suggested that using cooperative learning approach improve cognitive processes in the learners and enhance their learning abilities because they elaborate and organize information in their minds, as they work together to comprehend a passage (Myllymaki, 2012). Although this approach is considered to be relatively new, huge body of research is available to support the importance and effectiveness of cooperative learning in the classrooms (Polly, 2017; Chin-Min, 2012; Porto, 2001; 2002).

In relation to language, Hsuan-Yu (2011) and Ghaith (2002) conducted his study on learning English as a second language and he found that cooperative learning approach associated positively with language achievement (proficiency), personal supports, feelings of belongingness and more academic involvement, while learners' feelings of alienations were negatively correlated with language achievement (Atsuts, 2003). Hence, the main objective of this research is to explore the effectiveness of cooperative learning approach in teaching Arabic for non-native speakers in 3 selected universities of Malaysia.

## Research Methodology

### Participants and Sample

A sample of 100 students learning Arabic as a second language from 3 different universities were voluntarily participated in this study. These institutions of higher learning are University Pendidikan Sultan Idris Malaysia (UPSI), Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). These samples were randomly selected and participated in answering the questionnaires. The sample size consists (22.3%) males and 78 (78.7%) females. As for the students respondents' age 25.3% (n = 25) of respondents were between 18 to 20 years old, while 74.7% of students (n = 74) were between 21 to 23 years old.

### Instrumentation

In this study, the instrument was divided into two parts. The first part focuses on cooperative learning in general and consists of 5 distinctive questions while the second part consisted of 18 questions and was categorized into three dimensions; namely academic achievement, social interaction and Arabic language skills. This scale was self-developed instrument to examine the cooperative in learning Arabic as a second language. The internal consistency of the scale was investigated through Cronbach's alpha and the result indicated that it is suitable to be used for

any meaningful academic exercises. The Cronbach's alpha was ranged between .73 to .90 which suggested that the scale is psychometrically sound and can be used for this research activity. The questionnaire was then distributed to the respondents and they were asked to define the degree to which they agree or disagree with each item in the questionnaire rated from 1 to 5 used the Liker-style scale.

### **Preliminary Analysis**

To be meaningfully employed Multivariate statistics in research, some preliminary assumptions should be fulfilled; among the most significant of these assumptions are linearity and normality. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) linearity assumption means "a straight-line relationship between two variables" p.83. The linearity assumption is very important especially when using multiple linear regression because Pearson's  $r$  can only capture the linear relationship among variables. Linearity assumption explored through a studentized residual plot (SRED) in the standard multiple regression analysis. Visual inspection of scatterplot suggested that the scores were visually scattered with no distinct pattern which indicating that the assumption of linearity was met. It is worth mentioning that checking the assumption of linearity is very crucial due to the fact that deviation of the score from linearity would affect the magnitude of the correlation coefficient because Pearson's  $r$  only captures the linear relationship as was previously indicated (Schumaker & Lomax, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Furthermore, the assumption of normality was also examine through employment of Skewness and Kurtosis to ensure that the employed data was normality distributed. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) indicated that the assumption of normality is very significant because when it met the residuals are also normally distributed and independent. An examination of normality suggested that the assumption was held. The values of skewness and Kurtosis with the stipulated value of + 2 which

suggested that the assumption of normality held and data is normally distributed. Further analysis through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test also suggested that the test was statistically insignificant which meant that the normality assumption was met. Moreover, Shapiro-Wilk also supported the assumption of normality. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the normality assumptions were tenable and the parametric data analyses were justifiable. The satisfaction of these assumptions encourages the researchers to continuing with the Multiple Regression Analysis to test the proposed model.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

Category frequencies of the demographic variables which are gender, age and university for the sample of 100 students from three Malaysian high institutions, UPSI, USIM and IIUM are displayed in Table 1 and Table 2. The table 1 shows that the majority of the participants are female students (78%,  $n = 78$ ) while 22% are male counterparts  $n = 22$ . For respondents' age, the majority of the participants' age ranged between 21-23 ( $n = 74$ , 74.7%) while participants' age ranged between 18-20 were 25.3% ( $n = 25$ ). In relation to the year of the participants' study, the analysis indicated that 35% of them were fourth year student ( $n = 35$ ), followed by third year with 34% ( $n = 34$ ) and then first year with  $n = 22$  (22%). However, first year students were the lowest participants in the study with 9% ( $n = 9$ ). Moreover, the analysis showed that more than one-third of the participants drawn from University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) (40%,  $n = 40$ ) while 30% ( $n = 30$ ) represented each of Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University of Malaysia respectively. The analysis also shown that majority of the participants (58%,  $n = 58$ ) have spent between 5 to 10 years learning Arabic language, 36% ( $n = 36$ ) spent more than years while only 6% ( $n = 6$ ) spent years ranged between 2-5 years in learning Arabic language.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents according to their Background Characteristics**

Characteristics		<u>n</u>	%
Gender	Males	22	22.0
	Females	78	78.0
Age	18-20 years	25	25.3
	21-23 years	74	74.7
Institution	UPSI	40	40.0
	USIM	30	30.0
	IIUM	30	30.0
Years of study	First Year	22	22.0
	Second Year	9	9.0
	Third Year	34	34.0
	Fourth Year	35	35.0
Periods of Study Arabic	2-5 years	6	6.0
	6-10 years	58	58.0
	More than 10 years	36	36.0

### Bivariate Correlations

The analysis of the Pearson correlation found the existence of a substantial correlation among the dimensions of the study. Table 2 shows that students' interaction and Arabic skills were substantially and statistically correlated with academic achievement ( $r = .603$ ,  $p = .001$ ;  $.536$ ,  $p = .001$ ) for interaction and skills respectively. This finding projected that interaction and skills could be used to predict students' Arabic achievement.

However, the analysis indicated that gender, year of study, age and university were statistically insignificant. More precisely, the study found no differences between gender ( $r = .123$ ,  $p = .113$ ), age ( $r = .163$ ,  $p = .053$ ) year of study ( $r = .171$ ,  $p = .064$ ) and university ( $r = .029$ ,  $p = .416$ ) respectively. It is means that these demographic variables have no effects on students' academic Arabic language study.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation among the variables**

Achievement	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interaction	.603					
Skills	.536	.761				
Gender	.123	-.167	-.260			
Age	.163	-.005	-.082	.087		
Year of study	.171	-.006	.013	-.038	.824	
University	.022	.029	.008	-.101	-.287	-.378

### Regression analysis

Multiple Regression Analysis was used to analyse data collected from 100 undergraduate students from 3 different universities of Malaysia; namely Islamic science university of Malaysia, International Islamic University of Malaysia, University of Malaya. The self-reported instrument was distributed to the targeted samples

and was collected later. As was previously highlighted, the researchers tested the appropriateness of the scale through employment of the Cronbach's alpha. The result of the analysis indicated that the instrument is appropriate for regression analysis since the value of the Cronbach's alpha is .97 and above for each sub-dimension of the scale.

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	19.223	6	3.204	11.511	.001
Residual	25.606	92	.278		
Total	44.829	96			

The multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of predictors which consists of interaction, skills, gender, age, year of study and university on Arabic academic achievement (criteria). Generally, the results of Multiple Linear Regression suggested that the predictors statistically predicts the students' achievement  $F(8, 2) = 30.021, p = .001$ . According to this analysis, the predictors accounted for 62% in total variance of students' Arabic academic achievement. This suggested that the predictors play a significant role in

determining students' achievement in Arabic language. Moreover, it was found that interaction was the main predictor of students' Arabic academic achievement ( $r = .477, p = .001$ ) followed by skills ( $r = .173, p = .001$ ). However, the analysis shown that gender ( $r = .004, p = .914$ ), age ( $r = .129, p = .380$ ), year of study ( $r = .075, p = .618$ ) and university ( $r = .029, p = .736$ ) were statistically insignificant. This indicated that these demographic variables were have no effects on participants' Arabic academic achievement.

**Table 3: Coefficient among the variables**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	.301	.543		.549	.584
Interaction	.510	.141	.448	3.61	.001
Skills	2.65	1.537	.220	1.73	.001
Gender	.006	.135	.004	.045	.964
Age	.200	.226	.129	.883	.380
Year of study	.045	.089	.075	.500	.618
University	.024	.070	.029	.338	.736

### Discussion and Conclusion:

The concept of cooperative learning is drawn from the educational philosophies of early social researchers such as Vygotsky, Piaget and Lewin (Kagan, S., & Stenlev, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), who called attention to the role of

community and social interaction in all aspects of learning. This approach is believed to foster a positive learning environment which leads to greater academic achievement for all group members, as well as developing important social skills, improving communicative ability, and



providing a positive model for lifelong learning (Kagan & Stenlev, 1994). In addition, as Kagan stresses, cooperative learning is an effective means for addressing multiple intelligences, while McCombs (2000) argues that constructivist strategies such as collaborative learning allow for the development of the cognitive and metacognitive skills that are critical to building true knowledge.

The findings of this quantitative study consistent with previous studies as was previously highlighted. The result of analysis shows that cooperative learning had positive effect for students' language skill, academic achievements, and social interaction. This findings suggest that when cooperative learning approach used effectively, it might compensative the lack of language milieu in Malaysian higher institutions. The approach encourages learners to participate in learning discussions and eager to use target language which would eventually contribute to their language proficiency. Moreover, the effect of cooperative learning is not limit to acquire knowledge but also expand learning social interaction, feeling of belongingness, broadening friends' circle and magnifying self-esteem.. Therefore, instructors are strongly encouraged to strategically utilize cooperative learning approach in Arabic classroom to motivate the learning using their target language in different context which believed would effectively enhance the Arabic language proficiency, increase academic achievement and social interaction

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