



## EFFECT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN YORUBA READING COMPREHENSION IN OMU-ARAN, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This study examined the effect of cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary school (SSS) students' achievement in Yoruba reading comprehension in Omu-Aran, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the use of cooperative learning strategy would enhance students' achievement in Yoruba reading comprehension. The study employed a quasi-experimental design to collect data. All SSS II Yorubá students constituted the population, while the sample consisted of 100 SSS II students. The instrument used for the study was a 20-item test from some selected Yoruba Comprehension titled "Yoruba Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (YRCAT)". The instrument was validated by an expert in test, measurement and evaluation and two Yorubá education experts, while its reliability was ascertained using the test-retest method where a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The YRCAT was administered as both a pre-test and a post-test respectively. Data collected were analyzed using the t-test. The outcome of the study showed that no significant difference existed between the pre-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups, indicating initial academic homogeneity of the groups. After the treatment, there was a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups with the former outperforming the latter. The study concluded that cooperative learning strategy is an effective teaching method that could be used to sustain and enhance students' reading comprehension performance. It was recommended, among others, that teachers should use cooperative learning strategy as a means of teaching Yoruba reading comprehension or as an adjunct to the conventional method of teaching to bring up slow learners in the class and help the fast learners to assimilate faster.

**Keywords:** achievement, comprehension, cooperative learning strategy, reading, yoruba

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### Introduction

Cooperative learning is one of the teaching and learning strategies that promote student-to-student interaction via working in small groups to maximize their learning and improve performance in any teaching subject. It is considered suitable to be used in the education system due to the National Education Act (2017) which emphasized cooperation in helping each other to acquire knowledge. Johnson (2009) states that the effectiveness of cooperative learning in schools is geared towards finding solutions to students' challenges to poor learning outcomes in their academics and actively engaging learners in the teaching and learning process to ensure active participation and involvement of students. He also noted that this method aids retention, raises students' self-esteem and becoming lifelong learners through a teaching method that promotes higher achievements.

In Nigerian primary and secondary schools, especially at the senior secondary school level, the time allocated to study Yoruba is limited to a maximum of three periods per week which is numerically not enough to comprehend the rudiments of learning all aspects of Yoruba language and literature. This weak



numerical strength in the number of periods allotted to Yoruba teaching coupled with the methods and techniques teachers employ to teach the subject, especially the comprehension aspect has a significant effect on students' understanding and comprehension level. In most cases, it appears that teachers seem to teach academic content, without teaching strategies to learn them and the students, who do not have sufficient working knowledge, usually encounter challenges in tackling Yoruba reading problems. As a result, students seem to have little knowledge of how they can best handle challenges emanating from Yoruba reading comprehension.

The world is constantly changing, and as it does, teachers must adapt and guide their students through these changes. Specifically, Yoruba reading comprehension teachers need to move away from traditional teaching methods, such as the talk-and-chalk approach, and adopt innovative techniques that will enhance their students' reading habits and comprehension skills. Implementing an innovative, interactive, and learner-centred approach to teaching reading comprehension can significantly benefit students and help them reach their full potential. Students' ability to comprehend what they read is closely tied to their acquisition of essential reading skills. According to Colorado (2017), these skills include summarizing, sequencing, making inferences, drawing conclusions, self-questioning, problem-solving, connecting background knowledge, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and identifying main ideas. Reading comprehension enables students to construct meaning from texts while examining and expanding on the text's content (Presley, 2016). Comprehension involves encoding and processing information by relating new information to existing knowledge or ideas (Colorado, 2017). It is essentially an effort to understand a text and construct meaning from it. Difficulty in comprehension robs readers of the opportunity to grasp the author's message, hindering their ability to transfer knowledge, learn new skills, or enjoy reading. Furthermore, poor reading comprehension skills prevent readers from gathering information crucial for functioning effectively in society (Johnson, 2017).

Success in school requires that learners comprehend what they read. The ultimate goal of reading comprehension is to impact the learner the ability to understand written passages and materials to evaluate them and use them for one's needs (Ibrahim, 2013). Achievement is the outcome of education; that is the extent to which the pupil, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Poor achievement may be interpreted as poor performance. The observed poor achievement of students in the transition examination could be attributed to poor reading comprehension which was suspected to be linked with ineffective teaching methodology. The prevalent use of traditional teaching methods by some teachers in institutional settings leads to ineffective teaching, resulting in diminished students' interest in learning and poor academic achievement in reading among learners. This study, therefore, investigated the cooperative learning strategy to determine its effectiveness or otherwise on senior school students' Yoruba reading comprehension achievement in Omu-Aran, Nigeria.

The performance of students in the Yoruba language, both in internal and external examinations, has been declining. The annual WAEC Chief Examiner's Reports for 2020 and 2021 have not been encouraging; instead, they confirm students' poor performance in reading comprehension. The reports highlight reading comprehension as one of the most challenging aspects of the Yoruba language, where students have consistently struggled. This situation is a significant concern for various stakeholders in education, including teachers, parents, school authorities, Ministry of Education officials, and society as a whole. The Yoruba language is a core subject in Nigerian secondary schools, particularly for students in the arts. Achieving a credit pass is crucial, as it can enhance their chances of gaining admission into higher



education for arts-related courses. The importance of the Yoruba language extends beyond education; it plays a vital role in various aspects of life such as media, politics, religion, commerce, law, and government. In the classroom, the Yoruba language serves as a medium for content delivery, especially at the lower basic education level (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Cooperation involves working together, helping one another, engaging in discussions, and encouraging peers. Johnson and Johnson (2012) describe it as a process where students collaborate to achieve a common group goal. In this environment, students discuss various subjects, assist each other in learning, and provide support to their group members. Cooperative strategies have been used alongside traditional lecture methods to enhance student achievement in Social Studies (Martins-Umeh, 2015) and Physics (Uchendu, 2017). Cooperative learning is an approach to group work that minimizes negative experiences and maximizes the learning and satisfaction that result from working in high-performing teams. In a cooperative learning environment, students are encouraged to take centre stage in their learning and work together. They often do not find learning enjoyable when it is conducted in isolation (Bruner & Jerome, 2016). As a result, learners enhance their critical thinking and intellectual skills by learning from one another (Ibrahim, 2013).

George (2018) identifies five key principles that add value to cooperative learning. First, interdependency among learners is crucial; they learn together, and their learning is intertwined. In small groups, they collaborate to complete projects, and this mutually beneficial learning enhances everyone's educational experience. Each member of the group is also responsible for sharing their knowledge with others. The third principle emphasizes the use of collaborative skills, where students support each other in learning and encourage participation in problem-solving activities. This collective effort aims to boost the overall achievement of the group (Negangard & Andrea, 2018). Additionally, equal opportunities are provided for all members; each individual is expected to participate in group-building activities, contributing to the team's success. Together, they learn, interact, and share knowledge. In cooperative learning settings, students share common goals and work towards achieving these objectives together. They strive to benefit one another by exchanging personal knowledge and skills. In these cooperative environments, small groups of learners tackle specific tasks to overcome their weaknesses, build on their strengths, and share their experiences to gain knowledge. A key aspect of cooperative learning is the sharing of knowledge and authority among students and teachers.

Achievement refers to the instructional outcome normally in the form of test/examination scores (Ajaja & Eravwoke, 2012). There is an imperative need to improve secondary school students' achievement in Yoruba language through appropriate teaching methods. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the effect of cooperative learning strategy on students' achievement in Yoruba reading comprehension. The importance of this subject may have led the Nigerian Government to make it a compulsory subject at the basic education level in Yorùbá-speaking states. Mastery of the language enables students to read, write, and communicate effectively in various contexts. However, students' performance in the language has been a cause for concern. According to Oyekanmi (2017), the results from the May/June and November/December examinations in 2015 were very poor, with the percentage of candidates passing at the credit level consistently below 40%. This indicates that many candidates have failed to acquire the fundamental skills required for the language, particularly reading. Researchers have identified several factors contributing to this issue, such as students' weak academic backgrounds, large class sizes, and ineffective teaching methods (Adama, 2010 & William, 2017). It is in light of these



challenges, that teachers need to implement student-centred teaching methods, such as cooperative learning to foster better outcomes.

Like other languages of the world, Yoruba language involves four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In Nigeria, the Yoruba language is one of the core subjects taught at the basic education level and an elective at the senior secondary school level (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), but students seem to shy away from the subject for many reasons. Some of these could be phobia, teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of Yoruba and students' negative attitudes from the assumption that Yoruba language is generally a difficult subject to study (Badru & Ògúnníran, 2020). This negative attitude could be reduced if students work together and learn from one another. However, there are some variables which could influence students' achievement in any given subject. One of such variables is gender.

Gender refers to socially constructed differences between males and females. Studies have been carried out on the effect of gender on students' achievement. Some scholars reported that male students outperformed their female counterparts but some found no significant difference in their achievement, while some others reported that female students out-classed their male counterparts. For instance, Adeboye's (2020) study on the influence of teaching methods on Christian religious studies on students' performance among secondary school students in Ado, Ekiti state, Nigeria showed that the variable of gender significantly influenced students' achievement with female students outperforming their male counterparts. In a related development, Adesina (2021) reported no significant interaction effect of Team-Based-Learning and Jigsaw Instructional Strategy on students' achievement in Economics based on gender, implying that irrespective of gender, students did not perform differently.

Various studies have been conducted on the effect of one approach, strategy, method, technique or the other on a particular subject or an aspect of a subject. For instance, Badru and Ogunniran (2020) researched approaches to teaching reading comprehension in Yoruba's home language in Ilorin, Nigeria. Through a closed-ended researcher-developed instrument, the researchers collected data for the study from a randomly selected sample of 120 teachers of Yoruba. The researchers employed mean rating, rank order and the t-test to analyze data. The findings of the study established that teaching approaches such as story-telling, role-play, structural and situational were most commonly used in reading comprehension classes. The findings of the study also revealed a significant influence of gender on teachers' use of approaches with female teachers claiming higher mean scores than their male counterparts. This is to suggest that some other approaches could be used in teaching Yoruba reading comprehension. The study recommended an integrated approach involving a combination of two or more approaches to ensure effective reading comprehension teaching.

In a similar vein, Abubakar, Sulayman and Aliyu (2020) who adopted a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design with a sample of 80 pupils investigated the effect of activity-based instructional strategy on pupils' achievement in basic science. The study's findings revealed that learners exposed to the treatment outperformed their counterparts who were exposed to placebo. In a related development, Ajayi and Adedigba (2020) conducted research into the effect of phonological awareness strategies on pupils' learning outcomes in reading where a quasi-experimental design was adopted. The scholars reported a significant mean effect on respondent learning outcomes in reading, implying that phonological awareness strategy could be effectively used to improve learners' reading proficiency. The findings of the study also revealed no significant influence of the variable of gender on pupils' reading proficiency,



suggesting that pupils can perform well in reading activities when exposed to phonological awareness strategy, irrespective of their gender. Furthermore, Patrik's (2020) study on the effect of task-based learning strategy on pupils' vocabulary development where a sample of 300 pupils randomly selected from ten purposively selected schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State also adopted a quasi-experimental design. The study findings showed that gender did not significantly influence teachers' use of task-based learning strategies to enhance vocabulary development among school pupils

Reading comprehension has been known to be very important in the academic growth of language learners. It is important in academic achievement as it helps students to construct meaning from texts as well as examine and extend the meaning of the text. Oludipe (2012) In his study investigated the influence of gender on junior secondary school academic achievement in basic science using a cooperative learning teaching strategy, the total number of one hundred and twenty (120) students obtained from the intact classes of the three selected junior secondary schools in the three selected LGAs of Ogun State, South-west, Nigeria, participated in the study. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in academic achievement of male and female students at the pre-test, post-test, and the delayed post-test level respectively. Ajaja and Eravwoke (2012) found cooperative learning strategy to be a veritable tool which aids and facilitates group members' achievement, regardless of gender. Therefore, this study investigated cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary school achievement in Yoruba reading comprehension in Omu-Aran, Nigeria

### Research Questions

The following research question was raised and answered in this study:

1. What is the general performance of students in Yoruba reading comprehension?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the performance of students taught Yoruba using the cooperative learning strategy and those taught using the conventional method.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using a cooperative learning strategy.

### Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design. Students in the experimental group were exposed to Cooperative Learning Strategy (CLS) while the control group used conventional teaching. The population for this research consisted of all senior secondary school students in Omu-Aran metropolis with the target population being all senior secondary school two (SSII) students offering Yoruba in the area. A purposive sampling technique was used to select four senior secondary schools that shared similar histories and were established around the same time in the Omu-Aran metropolis. Twenty-five students were randomly selected from each of the four sampled schools. A researcher-designed instrument titled Yoruba Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (YRCAT) was used to elicit responses from the participants. It consisted of two sections. Section A collected personal data from the respondents, while Section B consisted of twenty multiple-choice items with four options (A-D). The instrument was validated by experts in Social Science Education Department and Mother-Tongue Education in the Department of Arts Education at the University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the test-retest method, yielding a reliability index of 0.81. The instrument was then administered to the students from





the four selected schools. The control group was taught Yoruba reading Comprehension using a conventional teaching method, while the experimental group consisted of five students per group. The students were given four weeks to find a suitable location for their study sessions and to select team leaders working cooperatively to learn under the supervision of a teacher in the school. The data collected were collated and analyzed using the t-test, mean and standard deviation.

## Results

### Demographic Data of Respondents

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage showing the distribution of respondents based on gender

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	51	51
Male	49	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the demographic data of respondents. Fifty-one (51%) of the respondents were females, while the remaining forty-nine (49%) were males.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics of Variables of the Study

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Student ID	100	50.5	29.01149	1	100
Gender	100	1.49	.5024184	1	2
Teaching Med	100	1.5	.5025189	1	2
Pretest Score	100	33.38	8.824644	20	50
Posttest Score	100	53.63	12.30312	38	85

Table 2 presents summary statistics that offer insights into the distribution of key variables in the dataset, highlighting the characteristics of the study participants and their performance in Yoruba reading comprehension. Firstly, the mean Student ID of 50.5, with a standard deviation of approximately 29.01, indicates that the sample consists of 100 students, ranging from Student ID 1 to 100. This suggests that the dataset includes a diverse group of participants, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of student performance. Regarding gender distribution, a mean value of 1.49 for Gender indicates that the sample is fairly balanced in terms of gender representation, with a slight skew towards one gender. The gender variable has two categories, coded as 1 and 2, representing different genders within the sample population. Similarly, the variable for the teaching method shows a balanced distribution as well, with a mean value of 1.5 and a standard deviation of approximately 0.50. This suggests that the dataset contains an equal number of participants exposed to the traditional teaching method (coded as 1) and those using the cooperative learning strategy (coded as 2). In terms of academic performance, the mean Pretest Score of 33.38 reflects the average score obtained by students in the pre-test assessment of Yoruba reading comprehension. The standard deviation of 8.82 indicates variability in the pre-test scores among students, which range from 20 to 50. In contrast, the mean post-test score of 53.63 indicates a higher average score achieved by students in the post-test assessment, following exposure to the respective teaching methods. The standard deviation of 12.30 suggests variability in post-test scores as well, with scores ranging from 38 to 85.

## Research Question

**Research Question 1:** What is the general performance of students in Yoruba reading comprehension?

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the General Performance of Students in Yoruba Reading Comprehension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Score	100	20.00	50.00	33.3800	8.82464
Post-test Score	100	38.00	85.00	53.6300	12.30312

Table 3 provides valuable insights into the performance of students in Yoruba reading comprehension, as demonstrated by their pre-test and post-test scores. The pre-test scores ranged from 20.00 to 50.00, with a mean score of 33.38 and a standard deviation of 8.82. This indicates that, prior to any intervention or exposure to new teaching methods, students exhibited a wide range of performance levels in Yoruba reading comprehension. The mean pre-test score of 33.38 suggests that, on average, students achieved a moderate level of proficiency before receiving any instruction. However, the standard deviation of 8.82 indicates variability among the students' scores, meaning some performed significantly better or worse than the average. After the intervention—specifically the implementation of a cooperative learning strategy—the post-test scores ranged from 38.00 to 85.00, with a mean score of 53.63 and a standard deviation of 12.30. This demonstrates a significant improvement in students' performance in Yoruba reading comprehension following the intervention, as evidenced by the higher average post-test score. The mean post-test score of 53.63 indicates that, on average, students achieved a higher level of proficiency after receiving instruction. However, similar to the pre-test scores, the standard deviation of 12.30 suggests variability among the post-test scores, indicating that while some students showed considerable improvement, others may have shown less progress or even experienced a decline in performance.

## Hypothesis Testing

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the performance of students taught Yoruba using cooperative learning strategy and those taught using the conventional teaching method.

**Table 4:** T-test result showing the significant difference in the performance of students taught Yoruba using cooperative learning strategy and those taught using conventional method

Teaching Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Traditional Teaching Method	50	33.1200	10.14314	98	-0.293	0.770
Cooperative Learning Strategy	50	33.6400	7.36999			

Table 4 shows the results of an independent sample t-test aimed at examining whether there is a significant difference in the performance of students taught Yoruba using the Cooperative Learning Strategy and those taught using the traditional method. The result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of students that were taught Yoruba using Cooperative Learning Strategy and those that are taught using the traditional method with a degree of freedom of 98, t-value of -0.293 and p-value of 0.770, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null



hypothesis is retained and thereby concluded that there is no significant difference in the performance of students taught Yoruba using Cooperative Learning Strategy and those taught using traditional method.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students taught Yoruba using cooperative learning strategy.

**Table 5:** *T-test result showing the significant difference in the performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using cooperative learning strategy*

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	51	1.5294	0.50410	98	0.595	0.553
Male	49	1.4694	0.50423			

Table 5 shows the results of an independent sample t-test aimed at examining whether there is a significant difference in the performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using the Cooperative Learning Strategy. The result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using Cooperative Learning Strategy with a degree of freedom of 98, t-value of 0595 and p-value of 0.553, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained and thereby concluded that there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using Cooperative Learning Strategy.

### Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the use of cooperative learning strategies positively affects students' academic performance in Yoruba comprehension, which improved significantly after the intervention. This suggests that when learners are allowed to work together as a group in the class lessons, as applicable in cooperative learning strategy, their level of performance tends to improve. The results show a significant difference in the performance of students exposed to cooperative learning strategies compared to those who received only traditional classroom instruction. This aligns with Jacob's (2016) study, which found that combining cooperative learning strategies with conventional teaching promotes faster learning outcomes and enhances memory retention, ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

Furthermore, the study found no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students taught Yoruba using cooperative learning strategies. This finding contrasts with the research by Courcier, Cantor, and Fauvel (2013), who discovered that gender does influence outcomes in mathematics, with females performing better than males when using various learning strategies to solve mathematical problems. However, findings from this study align with Olugbode and Adediran (2012), who concluded that there is no gender difference in students' outcomes in mathematics, as both male and female students perform equally when using different problem-solving strategies. This study emphasizes that active participation in group work during class lessons significantly contributes to improving students' performance. This assertion is supported by Bakeer (2018) and Maccoun (2016), who argue that responsibility for facilitating discussions should gradually shift from the teacher to the students.





## Conclusion

Based on this research and the discussion of its findings, it can be concluded that the cooperative learning strategy (CLS) is more effective for teaching Yoruba reading comprehension than conventional teaching methods. This indicates that students exposed to CLS tend to perform better than those who experienced the conventional approach. Additionally, the study found that gender did not have a significant impact on students' achievement in Yoruba reading comprehension when taught using the cooperative learning strategy. This suggests that both male and female learners can achieve comparable results when reading comprehension is taught through this interactive and innovative method. Thus, it can be inferred that cooperative learning strategy has the potential to enhance students' reading comprehension achievements.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. classroom teachers should be encouraged to recognize the importance of using cooperative learning strategies as an instructional method for teaching reading comprehension across all grade levels.
2. curriculum planners should integrate cooperative learning strategies into the teaching methodologies outlined in the curriculum.
3. the government should organize workshops that highlight the essential role of cooperative learning strategies in education and promote their implementation in pre-primary, primary, and post-primary levels.
4. basic teaching facilities should be provided to enhance the effective use of cooperative learning strategies in reading comprehension instruction.

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