

Narrowing the Achievement Gap between EFL Students in Oral Expression through Cooperative Learning

Tarek Ghodbane

Department of English

University of Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen-Algeria

Hafida Hamzaoui El Achachi

Department of English

University of Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen-Algeria

Abstract

Any learning is stimulated by the teaching method or technique adopted. When put in traditional competitive settings, students worry more about their self-esteem and tend to shy away from participating in the activities, while, only those with higher level of oral skills volunteer in answering the questions. This inequity in practice causes a discrepancy in students' performance in the oral expression exams and thus, results in a gap in the achievement. This paper suggests cooperative learning as a means to reduce the achievement gap between high and low achievers in the oral expression classes. This study is an endeavor to highlight the effectiveness of cooperative learning in reducing the disparity between high and low achievers and also to accentuate the benefits of this method in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The study followed an experimental pretest-posttest non-equivalent groups design with a sample of 44 second year EFL students from the University of Khenchela, Algeria. The intervention lasted for a semester. The results showed that the achievement gap was reduced in the experimental group after using cooperative learning instructions, while the traditional method, in the control group, failed in closing the achievement gap between high and low-achievers. As a conclusion, some recommendations will be given with the aim of promoting the use of cooperative learning in the EFL classrooms as well as fostering teachers' awareness of the effectiveness of such teaching method in improving students' performance in oral expression.

Keywords: Achievement gap, cooperative learning, effect size, oral skills

Cite as: Ghodbane, T. & El Achachi, H. H. (2019) Narrowing the Achievement Gap between EFL Students in Oral Expression through Cooperative Learning. *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (2) 365 -378. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no2.28>