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**The Perception of Cooperative Learning Methods to Enhance  
Students' Reading Comprehension Skill**

**The Case of Second Year LMD Students in the English Department at  
MMUTO**

**Presented by:**

Ms. AMRANI Nabila

Ms. CHERFA Tafsout

**Supervised by:**

Mr. CHETOUANE Madjid

**Board of examiners:**

**Chair:** Dr. YASSINE Souryana; (M.C.A ), Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi- Ouzou

**Supervisor:** Mr.CHETOUANE Madjid; (M.A.A), Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou.

**Examiner:** Ms. BENAÏSSA Amel; (M.A.A ), Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou

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*Dedications*

*To my beloved family*

*My father Mohammed said (in memory) and my mother Sadia*

*To my brothers Mhend, Rabah, Karim and Bilal*

*To my sisters Rasika, Fatiha, Nassima and Ferroudja*

*Special thanks go to my husband Massi for his encouragement  
during all this work*

*To all my friends*

*Nabila*

*Dedications*

*To my beloved family,*

*My father Tahar, my mother Halima*

*To my two sisters kahina and Lynda*

*And to all my friends*

*And to all my family members*

*Tafsout*

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## Abstract

*The present work deals with the use of the cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension ability. The research seeks to find out whether or not cooperative learning improves students' reading comprehension abilities and to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning methods in reading comprehension sessions. It has been conducted in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. The study has adopted a quantitative method which is used to analyze the close-ended questions of the questionnaire that has been handed over to thirteen (13) teachers of reading module and sixty two (62) LMD year two students. The study has also relied on two complementary theories borrowed from Johnson & Johnson's (1994 1999) model: The Learning Together and Slavin's (1995) model of Cooperative Learning. The gathered data have been analyzed using one research instrument, namely a computer program called Social Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the study reveal that cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension skills in the classroom. They also confirm the fact that most teachers of the reading module in the department of English at MMUTO use cooperative learning methods in order to create a good classroom atmosphere for students when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.*

**Key words:** Reading, Reading Comprehension, Cooperation, learning methods.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**CL** –Cooperative Learning

**N**-Number

**EFL**-English Foreign Language

**STAD**-Students Teams Achievement Divisions

**MMUTO**- Mouloud Mammeri Uneversity of Tizi-Ouzou

**H** –Hypothesis

**Q**-Question

**SPSS**- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**QCA**- Qualitative Content Analysis

**LMD**- Licence Master Doctorate

## **List of Diagrams**

Diagram 01: The use of cooperative learning methods in class .....	39
Diagram 02: Interaction of students when using cooperative learning methods in class .....	40
Diagram 03: Teachers encourage students to work in small groups.....	41
Diagram 04: Students' difficulties while working in small groups .....	42
Diagram 05: The effectiveness of cooperative group work over traditional group work .....	43
Diagram 06: The use of cooperative learning methods help students to increase their reading comprehension .....	44
Diagram 07: The main strategies of cooperative learning .....	45
Diagram 08: Teachers' training in cooperative learning .....	46

## List of Diagrams

Diagram 01: The importance of reading comprehension in learning English .....	25
Diagram 02: Reading comprehension is difficult and complex .....	26
Diagram 03: Students' attitudes towards reading module.....	27
Diagram 05: Students' attitudes towards working in group or individually .....	28
Diagram 06: Students' evaluation of cooperative learning methods in increasing reading comprehension ability .....	29
Diagram 07: Students' collaboration when working in small groups.....	30
Diagram 08: Students exchange of knowledge in cooperative learning.....	31
Diagram 09: Difficulties encountered when working in small groups .....	32
Diagram 10: Teachers encourage students to work in small groups.....	33
Diagram 11: The cooperative learning strategies that teachers use while teaching reading.....	34
Diagram 12: Frequency of teachers using of the cooperative learning techniques .....	35
Diagram 13: Cooperative Learning strategies and the classroom atmosphere.....	36

## Contents

Dedications .....	I
Acknowledgements .....	II
Abstract .....	III
List of Abbreviations .....	IV
List of Diagrams .....	V
List of Diagrams .....	VI
Table of Contents .....	VII

### General Introduction

Statement of the problem.....	1
Research questions and hypotheses.....	2
Aims and Significance of the study.....	3
Research tools and Methodology.....	3
Structure of the Dissertation.....	4

### Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Introduction .....	5
--------------------	---

#### Section One : Reading and Reading Comprehension

1.The nature of reading .....	5
1.1. Microskills and Macroskills of reading.....	5
1.2. Definition of reading comprehension .....	6
1.3. Processes involved in reading comprehension.....	7
3.1.The top down processing .....	7
3.2. The bottom-up processing.....	7
3.3. The interactive processing .....	8
1.4. Factors affecting reading comprehension .....	8



4.1. The reader.....	9
4.2. The text.....	10
4.3. The context.....	10
<b>Section Two: Cooperative Learning</b>	
2.1. Definition of cooperative learning .....	11
2.2. Elements of cooperative learning .....	12
2.1. Positive Interdependence .....	12
2.2. Face to face interaction .....	12
2.3. Individual and group accountability .....	13
2.4. Group processing .....	13
2.5. Social skills.....	13
2.3. Cooperative learning methods .....	14
3.1. STAD (Students team achievement Divisions) .....	15
3.2. Learning together .....	15
3.3. Pair read .....	15
3.4. Think pair share .....	16
3.5. Numbered head together.....	16
2.4. Cooperative versus Traditional group.....	16
2.5.The interrelatedness of cooperative learning and reading comprehension .....	17
Conclusion .....	18

## **Chapter two: Research Design**

Introduction .....	20
1. Context and Participants of the study .....	20
2. Procedures of data collection .....	20
2.1. Teachers' questionnaire.....	20
2.2. Students' questionnaire .....	21
3. Procedures of data analysis .....	21
3.1. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) .....	21

Conclusion .....	22
------------------	----

### **Chapter three: Presentation of the Findings**

Introduction .....	23
1. The results of the students questionnaire .....	23
2. The results of the teachers questionnaire .....	34
Conclusion .....	40

### **Chapter four: Discussion of the findings**

Introduction .....	41
1. Discussion of the findings of students and teachers questionnaire .....	41
1.1. Reading and reading comprehension	
1.2. Cooperative learning methods	
1.3. Teachers' practices	
Conclusion .....	52
<b>General conclusion</b> .....	53
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	56

**General**

**Introduction**

## **Statement of the problem**

Learning a new language can be a stressful experience to many language students. Therefore, students who are engaged in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) need endeavor efforts in order to read and understand it well, especially during the learning process. For this purpose, teachers try to provide EFL students with a suitable environment such as studying in collaborative groups and using various activities that aim to improve students' reading comprehension skill.

Among the four skills of English, reading is important in enhancing and improving students' English learning capacities. More importantly, reading is an instrument to access worldwide information. McLaughlin (in Celce-MurciaCelce-Murcia, 1991) states that reading is not an easy skill that students master. In fact, the students do complex activities and tasks in reading. For example, reading newspapers, magazines, novels, and manual instructions in which they find many difficulties in comprehending the meaning especially when using difficult vocabulary.

Furthermore, reading makes students get new information and knowledge of the language used in written texts. It can also help students acquire their language, such as the new vocabulary, phrases, idioms, and many more when they read various kinds of books.

For this, learners need to be actively involved in the reading class so as to expand their reading comprehension skill. Therefore, the strategies should be attractive. There are some interesting strategies that can be successful and helpful in improving students' reading comprehension skill. Cooperative learning is one of these strategies where the teacher can use group work activities to create a good classroom atmosphere, which encourages students to develop their reading comprehension abilities.

Some second year LMD students in the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou (MMUTO) face many problems that influence their reading comprehension. This due to many reason like the ineffective teaching strategies, limited resources of learning and lack of activity that lead to the students' demotivation. All these problems make reading hard to comprehend.

This research focus on the perception of cooperative learning techniques to enhance reading comprehension skills of the second year LMD students in the Department of English at MMUTO.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

In order to conduct our investigation, we ask these following questions:

1. Do cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension skill of the second year LMD students in the Department of English at MMUTO?
2. Do teachers of the reading module in the Department of English at MMUTO use cooperative learning strategies?
3. Do cooperative group work activities create learning atmosphere for students when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity?

In order to answer these questions, we have recommended the following hypotheses:

H1: Cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension in the Department of English at MMUTO.

H2: Cooperative learning methods do not improve reading comprehension in the second year LMD students in the department of English at MMUTO.

H3: Teachers of the reading module in the Department of English at MMUTO use group work activities to improve their students' reading comprehension skills.

H4: Teachers of reading module in the Department of English at MMUTO do not use group work activities to improve their students' reading skills.

H5: Cooperative group works create a good classroom atmosphere for students when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

H6: Cooperative group works do not create a successful environment for students when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

### **Aims and Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it tries to determine the effect of using the cooperative learning techniques and to identify its usefulness in the Department of English at MMUTO. Furthermore it tries to make teachers more aware of the effectiveness of using cooperative group work activities in EFL classes to create a successful learning atmosphere in the classroom in order to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

It is hoped that this study will give students new experiences in doing reading tasks that can be shared with their teachers and classmates and to be able to interact with each other to build a good classroom atmosphere.

Also this dissertation aims at finding out whether cooperative group work is used in teaching students of second year LMD classes during the reading module in the English Department at MMUTO or not.

### **Research Tools and Methodology**

To conduct our investigation, we have chosen a quantitative method for data collection. The quantitative method will help us to get statistical findings of our study.

Our procedure for collecting data is a questionnaire for both teachers and students. The participants are the second year BMD students and their teachers of the reading module in the department of English at MMUTO.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The overall structure of this dissertation follows the traditional complex model. It consists of a General Introduction, four chapters and a General Conclusion. The first chapter deals with review of the literature related to the major theoretical concepts as well as definition of relevant and key terms. The second chapter presents the Research Design in addition to the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter presents the findings of the questionnaire session in the form of diagrams. The last chapter is devoted to the discussion of the findings on the basis of the theoretical framework in order to confirm or refute the hypotheses. Finally, the General Conclusion presents a summary of the main points developed throughout the dissertation and provides some suggestions and recommendations for further research in the field of cooperative learning.

# **Chapter One**

## **Review of the Literature**



## **Introduction**

There are many educators and researchers who claim that learning a new language is a complex, difficult, and lengthy process. This section is theoretical and it deals with the improvement of students' reading comprehension through cooperative learning techniques. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to previous works and theories about reading comprehension and the comparison between cooperative group work and traditional group work. The second section is devoted to the description of cooperative learning activities.

## **Section One: Reading and Reading Comprehension**

### **I.1. The Nature of Reading**

*“Reading is one of the language skills which excite the acquisition of knowledge and exchange of information in language learning context”* (Liu, Chen & Chang, 2010). Reading is the basic skill in language learning that provides students with a source of comprehensible serves in order to facilitate communication in other language skills. *“Reading is an interested and decoding skill”* (Chastain, 1988:216). This means that the reader receives and recreates the writer's message. The purpose of reading is to understand the meaning and to be able to recreate the writer's meaning. When readers do not comprehend, this means that they are not reading because reading affects comprehension (ibid: 217).

#### **I.1.1 Microskills and Macroskills of Reading**

Reading is one of the four skills in language teaching. Murcia (2001:119) states that *“reading is a process of trying to understand a written text”*. The reader has to make a number of concurrent tasks like decoding the message by recognizing the written sign, interpreting the message by transferring of the words and understand what authors' purpose is.

There are some micro and macro skills in reading which are proposed by Brown (1994:290) that need to be developed for effective reading which are presented below:

### **A. Microskills:**

To make a distinction between graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, to be on familiar terms with the grammatical word class such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs... etc and systems such as tense, agreement and pluralisation, patterns and rules. Also to distinguish cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

### **B. Macroskills:**

Recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose. To make a distinction between literal and implied meanings. Also, to develop and use a battery of reading strategies such as skimming and scanning, detecting discourse matters, guessing the meaning. Finally, to understand from context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.

Therefore, based on the microskills and macroskills that have been determined, the reading techniques and activities should include those reading microskills and macroskills as well as use reading strategies that are considered necessary by the students. It aims at helping students comprehending the text successfully and making it easier for them to deal with various kinds of texts.

### **I.1.2. Definitions of reading comprehension**

Lenz (2005:1) claims that “*reading comprehension is the process of constructing meanings from the text*”. It means that the reading comprehension process involves the readers’ ability to make a relationship between their background knowledge and their purpose of reading with the text’ meanings.

Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is “the *process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language*”. The construct of reading comprehension consists of the readers’ ability to construct the meaning of the text or written language in order to understand it.

### **I.1.3. Processes involved in reading comprehension**

In order to get the maximal benefit from reading, the readers should understand the approaches in reading. According to Nuttal (1996) and Nunan (1989) there are three approaches in the reading process, namely the top- down processing, the bottom-up processing, and the interactive processing. Each process will be described below:

#### **I.3.1. The top-down processing**

Nuttal (1996) claims that this approach is used when the reader interprets assumptions and draws inferences. In this model, the reader brings previous experiences and knowledge to the text and they continue on reading as long as the text confirms their expectation. This top-down processing can be explained as follows: the reader first looks at a passage. Then he/she guesses what the passage will be about (based on his/her background and experience of the topic) after reading the title, the headings and sub headings. The reader then continues to read the text in order to search for new information about the topic. So the reader fits the text into knowledge and experiences he/she already holds. Finally, it can be said that in the top down model, the reader begins with the largest element, uses background knowledge, and puts words down towards smallest units to build his/her understanding of what is being read.

#### **I.3.2. The bottom-up processing**

In this model, the reader reads the words, sentences and looks at the organization of the text (without relating it to experience or knowledge) in order to construct meaning from what is written in the text. This process can be explained as follows: when students read, they

extract propositions from the text. This is where the reader chunks the sentences into constituents and constructs the proposition from there. The reader reads all the words in a phrase, or a sentence before being able to understand. Therefore, it can be concluded that bottom-up model consists of the lower level of the reading process. The reader begins with the smallest units to the whole units and builds up to the comprehension of what is being read.

### **I.3.3. The interactive processing**

The interactive process is based on the combination of the bottom-up and top down processing. Nunan (1989) states that both top down and bottom-up are efficient and effective for reading in which the interactive process fills the gap between two models since it emphasizes both letters and background knowledge.

So, the readers combine the elements of both, bottom-up and top down models in the interactive process in order to reach reading comprehension. The readers do many bottom-up effects when they read in order to decode unfamiliar vocabulary, wonder about part of speech of a particular word. And they also do many top down things when they read to anticipate what is coming next in the text and draw on his/ her previous experiences.

### **I.1.4. Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension**

There are several factors affecting reading comprehension proposed by some scholars like Hafner (1974), Alderson, Alexander and Snow (2002) claim that “*reading comprehension involves much more than readers’ response to the text*”. It is a complex process that affects many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text as well as variables related to the text itself.

According to Hafner (1974) there are two main factors influencing reading comprehension. First, intelligence. He argues that intelligence is the main factor influencing

reading comprehension. The second factor relates to background knowledge and experience. When the readers have sufficient background knowledge about the theme of the text, readers are going to read it, it will help him/her a lot in comprehending the text because it is an essential element in learning, it helps us to make new ideas and experiences. In other words when the reader has enough background knowledge about any topic, he/she will be able to understand the full text easily without any difficulties.

In addition, Snow (2002:11) proposes three elements of reading comprehension. They are the reader, the text, and the activity. The reader brings his /her cognitive abilities, motivation, and experience. The text in which some writers produce complex reading materials for this reason readers find difficulties in comprehending the meaning. The context is an important part of the comprehension activities.

#### **I.4.1. The Reader**

Readers who have trouble learning to decode and recognize words, often will have difficulty in reading comprehension. This means that the readers who struggle with decoding and who rarely have a chance to interact with more difficult texts and often learn to dislike reading. As a result, these readers do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers.

Moreover, Alderson (2000:32) states that ‘the reader’ factor in comprehending a text includes student’s background knowledge, which is referred to as schemata, affection and purpose of reading.

- **Background knowledge (schemata)**

This factor provides the readers with repertory on which to draw when searching for an author's meaning. When the readers have sufficient background knowledge and information about a given topic this helps them to understand better.

- **Affection**

It is another factor which includes interest, motivation, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. The affective factor has an important role in influencing what is understood by the readers.

- **Purpose of reading**

The reader should have a particular purpose in his/her mind in order to avoid problems in understanding a text. Purposes of reading help the reader to focus on information that he/she wants to find out.

## **I.4.2. The Text**

According to Alexander (1988:85), reading comprehension is also influenced by the quality of reading material. Some writers produce more complex reading materials than others. Readers who do not have the background, abilities, or motivation to overcome the barriers presented in this kind of text will find difficulties in comprehending these types of texts. When reading, both the reader and the text are commonly important, in the sense that there is a kind of interaction between the reader and the text. The organization of ideas helps readers to understand better the text. In order to achieve the goals in reading, text holds an important role and it should be carefully chosen.

## **I.4.3. The Context**

Sweet & Snow (2003) regard context as a part of the comprehension activities. Context has three dimensions to these activities: purpose (why is the reader reading the text);

processes (what mental activity must the reader engage in); and consequences (what did the reader learn or experience as a result of reading a text).

From the theories mentioned previously (reader, text and context) reading comprehension is not an easy single process. It is a complex one which is affected by some factors like the reader's intelligence and background knowledge, strategy and features used in the texts. All of those factors relate to each other in influencing the reader's reading comprehension ability.

## **Section two: Cooperative Learning**

### **I.2.1. Definitions of Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is one of the strategies of group instruction which is part of the learner-centered approach. Many educators propose different definitions of cooperative learning

Slavin (1995) states that "*cooperative learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic contents*". He further elaborates that in cooperative learning, students are expected to help each other, discuss, and argue with one another, assess each other's current knowledge. The explanation above shows that cooperative learning involves small groups so that individuals work together to maximize their own and each other's achievement. "Cooperative learning is an instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content". (Slavin, 1995)

Cooperative learning involves both positive interdependence in which all members must collaborate to complete the task and individual and group accountability each member is responsible of the completion the final outcome.

## **I.2.2. The Elements of Cooperative Learning**

Johnson and Johnson (1994) propose five elements of successful group based learning in cooperative learning. These elements are explained below:

### **I.2.1. Positive Interdependence**

The first element for an effective structured cooperative learning is that each student in the same group has a unique contribution to make the joint effort in order to succeed. (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000). That is, cooperation occurs only when students comprehend that the success of one depends on the success of others. All group members feel responsible for everything that happens in the group. Furthermore, a number of ways of structuring positive interdependence are carried out such as reward, resources or task responsibilities to supplement goal interdependence. In this element, students have to learn to work together in order to execute tasks and to achieve the goal.

### **I.2.2. Face-to- Face Interaction**

The second element of cooperative learning requires face-to-face interaction among students, although some of the group work may be dealt out and done individually, some must be done interactively with group members providing one another with feedback, challenging, reasoning and conclusions, and most importantly, teaching, helping, supporting and encouraging one another in order to reach the group's goals. It is necessary to maximize the opportunities for them to help, support, encourage and praise each other. Such interaction helps to promote the following:

- a. Orally explaining how to solve the problem.
- b. Teaching one's knowledge to another.
- c. Checking for understanding.
- d. Discussing concepts being learned and connecting present with past learning.



### **I.2.3. Individual and group accountability**

The purpose of cooperative learning group is to make each member a stronger individual. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed and the results are given back to the groups. It also involves both group and individual performance. One of the examinations is by assessing each student in a group to have certain responsibility in finishing the project. Another examination is by calling on a student at random to share the whole class with group members or with another group. (Johnson & Johnson. 1994)

### **I.2.4. Group processing**

Group members should think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time for it to take place, emphasizing positive feedback, maintaining student involvement in processing etc. To be cooperative, group members must promote each other's learning and success, hold each other individually accountable to do a fair share of the work, use the interpersonal and small group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together.

In group processing, Johnson and Johnson (1994) state that students needed to describe which members provided important effort and which ones did not. They claim that students must be provided with time in class in order to analyze the students' involvement within the group, and to evaluate one another to achieve the group goals. However, in individual accountability, Johnson and Johnson (1994) claim that the fully participation of each member of the group is very important and did not attempt to ride on the success of students who did the work. In order to ensure accountability, each student was assigned some individual work within the group.

### **I.2.5. Social skills**

According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991) “*social skills are essential skills in all aspects of life that we use to communicate, interact and work with each others, these skills are used to connect between students*”. It means that social skills have an important role in interaction and communication among students to be able to work together.

Students should be taught the social skills and motivated to use social skills in order to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, teamwork decision-making, communication and conflict management skills. The social skills determine the way students interact with each other as teammates and structuring and structure. Structuring and structure refer to the way of organizing students’ interaction during the learning activity. Those key elements should be well organized in order to create effective group learning in cooperative process. In this case, the teacher plays an important role in designing learning activities which cover all of those elements of cooperative learning in the classroom.

These five essential components must be presents for small group learning to be truly cooperative. Their needs to be an accepted common goal in which the group will be satisfied with their efforts. (Johnson & Johnson. 1991)

### **I.2.3. Cooperative learning methods**

Cooperative learning methods help students to promote motivation in the classroom. In addition, cooperative methods can enhance many familiar English learning activities which encourage all students to be more actively involved as well as improve their reading comprehension. (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Johnson et al, 1995; Slavin, 1995) state that “*Cooperative learning methods increase motivation for learning, redirecting attributions for success and failure, fostering positive feelings toward classmates, and increasing performance on tests of comprehension, reasoning, and problem solving*”. There are some

activities in cooperative learning that can be conducted in the classroom. Each of the activities explained as follows:

### **I.3.1. STAD ( Student Teams- Achievement Divisions )**

Student team achievement division is one of the simplest and most extensively research forms of cooperative learning. It is a good model to begin with for the students who are new to the cooperative model. STAD has five major components as Slavin (1995) defined: class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement score, and team recognition. In STAD, students are assigned to four-members of learning teams that are mixed abilities and background in mixed groups. The teacher presents the lesson and then students work within their team to make sure that all team members have mastered the lesson. The students work in teams for different sessions where they discuss, compare, formulate questions, memorize and elaborate conceptual maps, etc.

### **I.3.2. Learning Together**

Learning together is another technique of cooperative learning which is developed by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1999). In this model students are divided into small heterogeneous groups consists of four to five members. Before students start working together, they need first to make a plan between them about how to work. In the sense that each team draws a plan about the topic.

### **I.3.3.Pair Read**

The purpose of this activity is to increase students' reading comprehension by using shared reading. Students are grouped in pairs then silently read a paragraph or each section. After that, in pairs students take turns describing the content to their partner, when each pair

finishes they can discuss the whole passage. After that, teacher can ask questions to each group in the class. (Brown 2000)

### **I.3.4. Think- pair-share**

This type of cooperative learning involves a three- steps-cooperative structure. During the first step individuals think silently about the question posed by the teacher. Then, in the second step, students exchange ideas with one another and in the last step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs or the full groups. (Brown 2000)

### **I.3.5. Numbered Head Together**

In this method the teacher divides students into four teams, and then s/he gives numbers of 1,2,3,4 for each member. After that, questions are asked to the group. Students work together in order to answer the questions. The teacher calls out a number two and each two is asked to give the answer. (Brown 2000)

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a teacher who uses the cooperative learning method is responsible for planning the lesson, evaluating, and activities, grouping students, and helping when necessary. In addition, students also have responsibilities to get activity involved in the learning process, give positive contributions to the success of their group, and help each other to reach the learning goals.

### **I.2.4. Cooperative versus Traditional groups in Reading Comprehension**

Cooperative learning is more than just group work. The main difference between cooperative learning and traditional group work is that in cooperative learning, group work is planned, prepared, and monitored. However, in traditional group work, students are asked to work in groups without taking into consideration the group functioning (Jacobs, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Ng & Lee, 1996).

Jacobs, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Ng & Lee, (1996) explain the differences between cooperative group work and traditional group work:

First of all, in cooperative learning groups, the focus is on group performance in which each group member believes that they cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed and vice versa. Group members help, assist, encourage and support each other's efforts to learn. In cooperative group work students have time to analyze how well their groups are functioning and how well they are using the appropriate social skills. In addition, the teacher assigns students to heterogeneous groups which are typically small from three to five members and he or she observes and intervenes when necessary.

Second, traditional learning groups focus on individual performance only in which group members compete with each other and refuse to give information. Traditional group work is based on individual accountability only. In addition, social skills are ignored and only one person takes charge to do all the work. Also students often select members, groups typically from five to ten members and the teacher ignores groups in which he do not give importance to all members of the group.

### **I.2.5. The Interrelatedness of Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension**

Improving reading comprehension is a challenge facing teachers. Many teachers seem to be always working on helping and supporting students' reading comprehension. They make efforts to assist reading comprehension by using reading strategies in the classroom (Gauthier, 2001). *“When teaching reading comprehension, teachers don't provide much direct instruction, modeling, coaching, and scaffolding”* (Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991).

Cooperative group works are considered as an effective technique in improving students' ability in reading. Several researchers agree that it is truly an effective technique where

students are given more responsibilities to get the highest achievement. Milios, (2000) claims that *“in cooperative learning groups, students can brainstorm, work, and make decisions together”*.

Stevens, Slavin & Farnish (1991) *“When students are in cooperative learning groups they can improve ‘their depth of processing’ because cooperative learning requires them to reflect on their knowledge and make generalizations and elaborations that they can convey to their partners”*. This means that cooperative learning group helps them to understand the hidden meaning of the text because, when student collaborate, discuss and share new information with teammates they make the task easier to understand.

Cooperative learning is proven to be successful in teaching comprehension strategies because in cooperative learning groups students ask questions and discuss with each other (Gauthier, 2001). According to Caposey & Heider, ( 2003) *“The more students work together, discuss, question, and summarize, the more they are able to understand and retain”*. It means that students who work together have more capacities to understand better a given topic.

There are many benefits of cooperative learning. It helps students stay on task, helps classroom management and creates a good classroom atmosphere. Moreover, cooperative learning increases positive attitudes and self-confidence, improves relations among different students. Also encourages responsibility, participation in learning, and increases motivation. Students are able to communicate better with each other as well as with the teacher. (Caposey, Heider, 2003; Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991)

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter has dealt with the Review of the Literature that sheds light on the process of improving students' reading comprehension through cooperative learning methods. It clarified the concept of reading comprehension and some related issues like its factors, micro and macro skills of reading. Moreover, this chapter has dealt with the use of cooperative learning activities in second/foreign language classroom. Cooperative learning activities enable students to use and comprehend the target language, and also create a more supportive classroom atmosphere. Reading is the basic skill in language learning that helps students to facilitate communication in other language skills.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Research Design**



## **Introduction**

This chapter is methodological. It deals with the description of the techniques and the procedures of our data collection and data analysis used in our research in order to improve students' reading comprehension through the use of cooperative learning methods. It identifies the research tool which is a questionnaire destined for students of the second year LMD and their teachers in the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. Lastly, it presents the quantitative data which are analyzed by using a statistical method called a statistical package of social sciences.

### **II.1. Context and Participants of the Study**

Our research aims to find out how cooperative learning methods enhance students' reading comprehension. The study is conducted in the Department of English at MMUTO in the second semester of the academic year 2016/2017 and involves second year LMD students and their teachers. We have distributed questionnaires for seventy (70) students and we had back sixty-two (62) questionnaires. And also we have distributed fifteen (15) questionnaires for teachers of the reading module of second year and we have got back thirteen (13) questionnaires.

### **II.2. Procedures of Data Collection**

#### **II.2.1. Teachers' Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a data collection tool which is used by researchers in order to collect information about a given topic from a number of participants. According to Brown (2001:6) *“a questionnaire is any written instrument which contains a series of questions and statements, which the respondents can answer, either by using their own words or selecting answers from those they are provided with”*.

The questionnaire we have designed contains eleven (11) questions, and it is divided into three sections. The first one is about background information of the teachers related to their work experience and degree. The second section is about cooperative learning and reading comprehension which contains six (6) close-ended questions. The last part is about teachers' practices related to the activities that teachers use in the classroom while teaching the reading module, that contains a multiple choice question and a close-ended question.

### **II.2.2. Students' Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire aims at finding out whether the students give importance to group work and if it helps them to promote their reading skill through participating with their classmates. It contains open-ended questions and close-ended ones and also multiple choice questions where the participants have to tick in the box the appropriate answer. The students' questionnaire is composed of fourteen (14) questions and it consists of three (03) sections. The first section is about the students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension, the second section deals with cooperative learning and reading comprehension. The last one is about teachers' practices and cooperative learning.

### **II.3. Procedures of Data Analysis**

This part describes the quantitative method that is used to analyze the data. It consists of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### **II.3.1. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences**

This present study makes use of questionnaires containing close-ended questions which provide numerical data. These data are calculated using a computer program called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It is a very complex data tool for manipulation and analysis. SPSS provides statistical description of the numerical data. It also

transforms large amounts of complex data into less complex, visual statistical tables of percentages, graphs, charts...etc.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the general design of our study. It has explained the method used for conducting our research. This chapter also presented the setting and participants, as well as the data collection tool, which consists of questionnaire for both students and teachers. It has outlined the method used for the analysis of the gathered data. Indeed, SPSS is used as a statistical technique to provide a percentage of the data obtained through a questionnaire.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Research Findings**

## **Introduction**

This chapter is about the findings of our study. It presents the results obtained through the questionnaire we administered to sixty two (62) second year LMD students in the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-ouzou (MMUTO) and to thirteen teachers of reading and writing module. The results of this chapter are presented in percentages and displayed in diagrams.

This part is organized into two main sections. The first section presents the results obtained from the students' questionnaire, and the second section of this chapter is devoted to the findings of the teachers' questionnaire.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

### **III.1. Results of the Students' Questionnaire**

#### **Section one: EFL students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension**

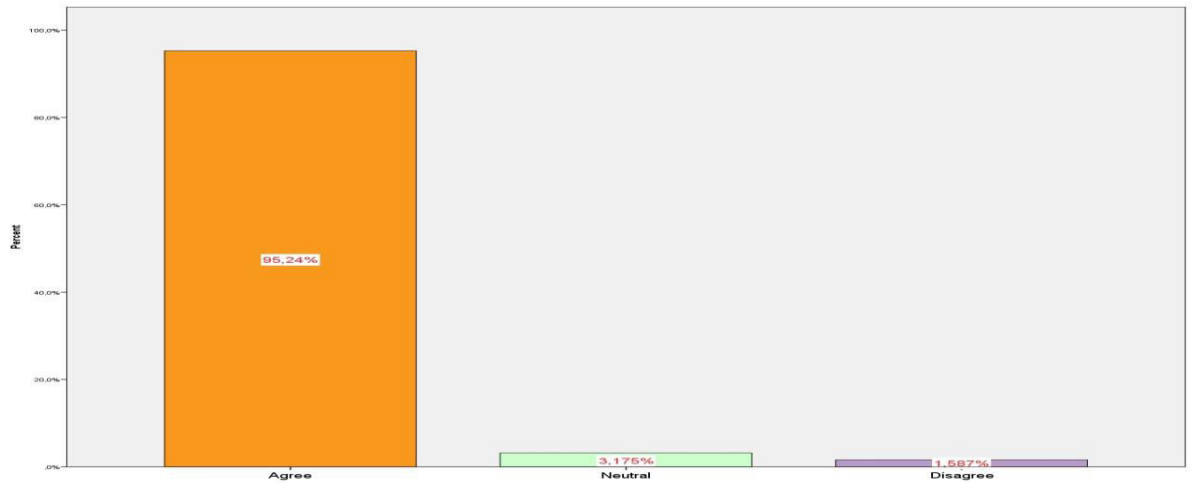
**Item One:** Reading comprehension is very important in learning English.

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Why?

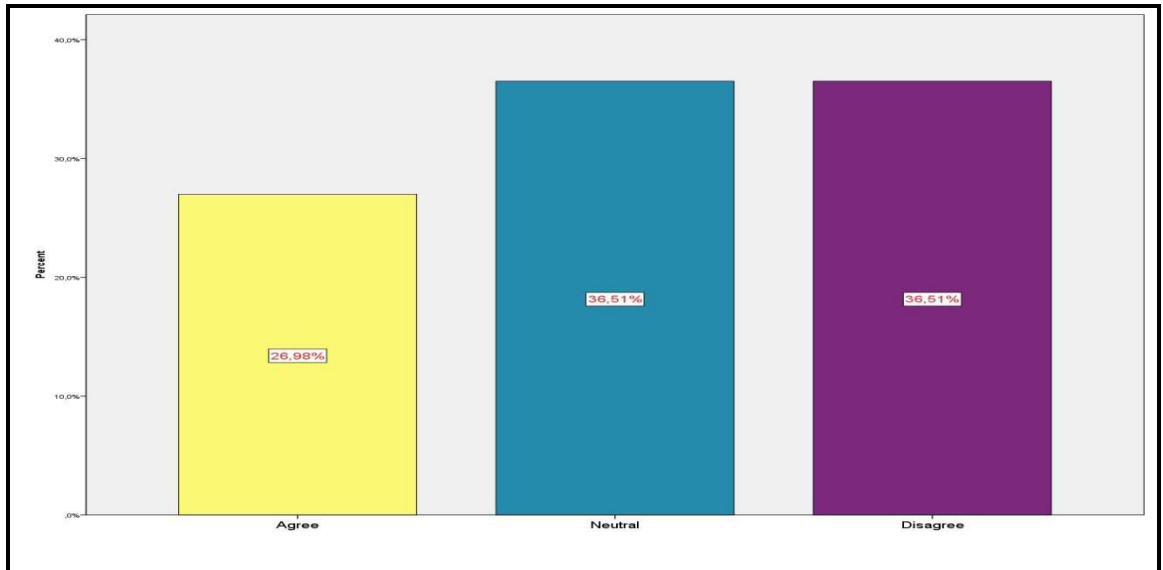


**Diagram (1): The importance of reading comprehension in learning English**

The first item is about the importance of reading comprehension in learning the English language at university. The majority, sixty students (95, 24%) out of sixty-two are agree that reading comprehension is important in learning English because it helps them to improve their reading skill and to reach their vocabulary. While (3, 16%) neutral and only one student (1, 58%) who is disagree.

**Item Two:** Reading comprehension is hard and time- consuming

Agree                      Neutral                      disagree

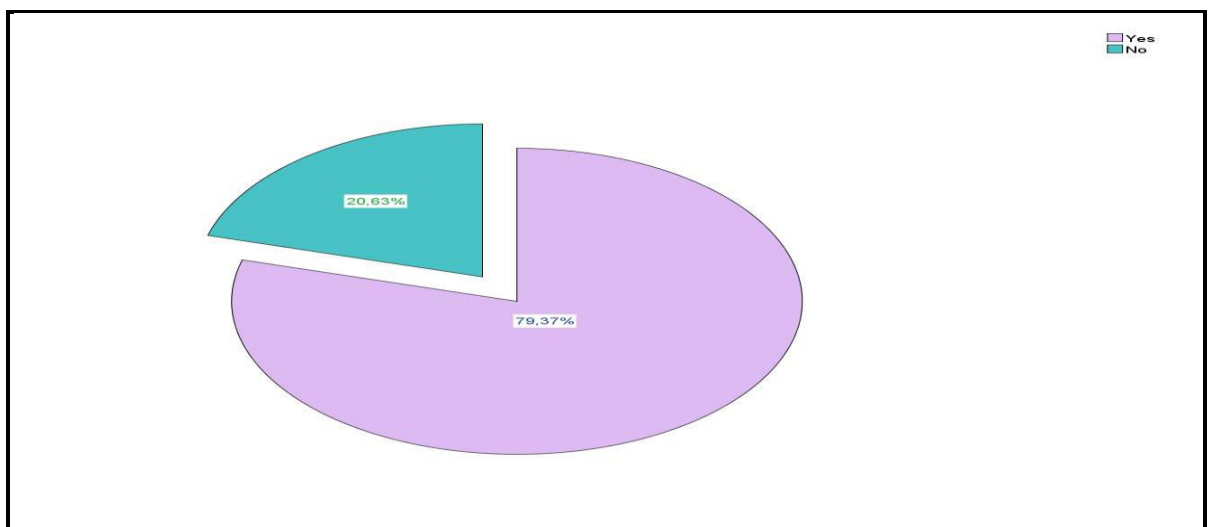


**Diagram (2): Reading comprehension is hard and time consuming**

The result shows that, seventeen students (26, 98%) are agree that reading comprehension is hard and time consuming. While (36, 51% + 36, 51%) of the students are neutral and disagree.

**Question Three:** Do you like the reading module?

Yes                      No                      Why ?



**Diagram (3): Students' attitudes towards reading module**

This question concerns whether students like the reading module or not; if they enjoy studying this module. The majority, fifty students (79, 37%) like reading module. They argue that it helps them to learn how to pronounce words and to improve reading skills. However, thirteen students (20, 63%) dislike this module because for them it is very difficult skill.

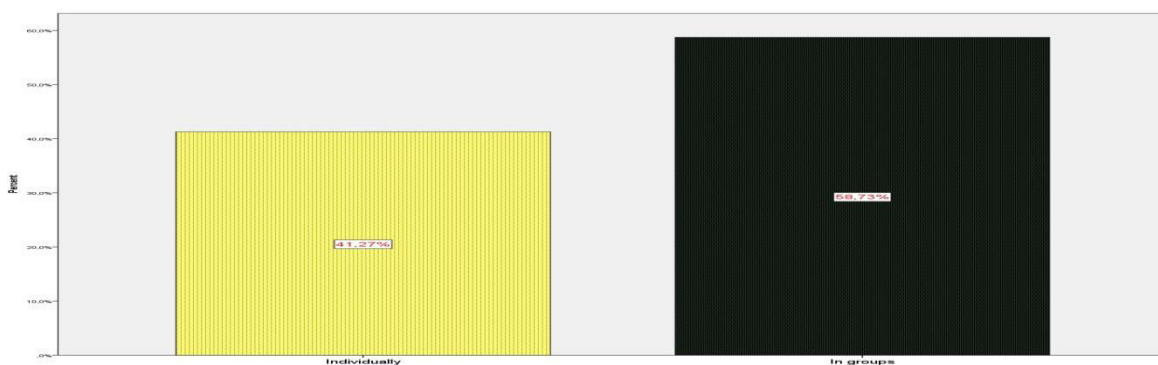
**Question four:** How do you feel when you are asked to read in the classroom?

This question is an open-ended question in which we give the opportunity for informants to speak about their feelings when they are asked to read in the classroom. The majority of students say that they enjoy and they feel happy when their teachers ask them to read in the classroom and to read books at home because for them it is the way to correct their spelling mistakes and help them to read attentively and speak fluently to become active learners in class. Others say that they feel comfortable, confident, excited and happy when reading in the classroom. While some students say that they feel shy, afraid to make mistakes and stress.

**Section two: Cooperative learning and Reading Comprehension**

**Question Five:** Do you like working in groups or individually?

In groups                      Individually                      Say why?



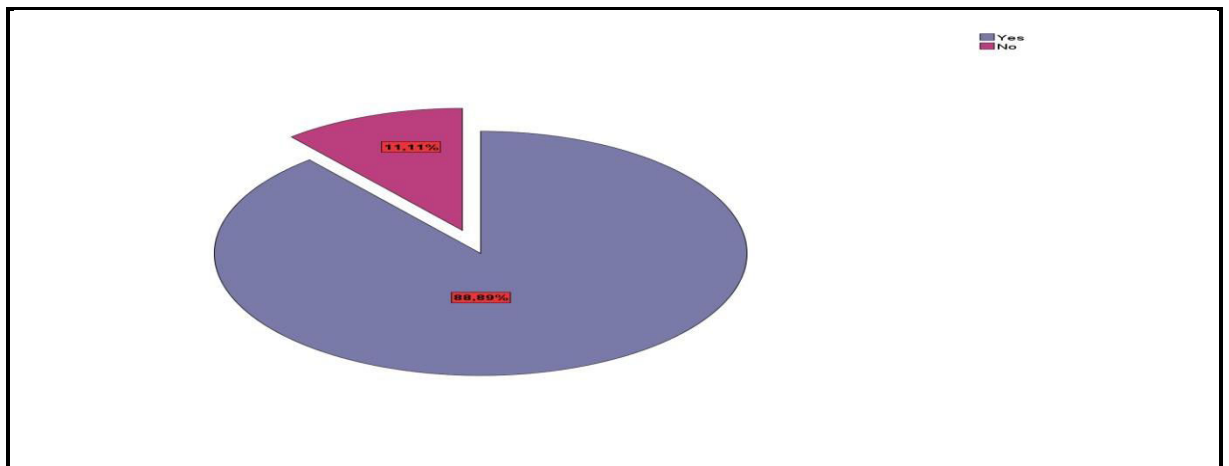
**Diagram (5): Students' attitudes towards working in groups or individually**



This question concerns whether students like working in groups or individually. The majority of the students (58, 73%) desire to work in groups because they share, discuss different ideas with one another and it helps them to understand better. while twenty six students (41, 27%) say that they prefer working individually because they feel autonomous, responsible and more comfortable when working alone.

**Question Six:** Do cooperative learning methods help you increase your reading comprehension skills in class?

Yes                      No



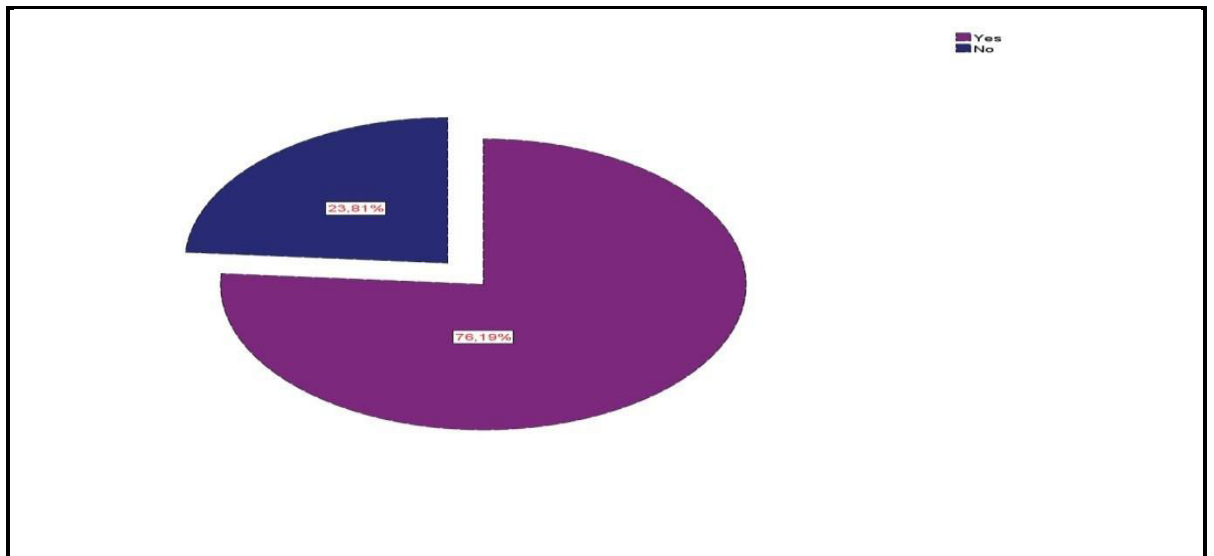
**Diagram (6): Students' evaluation of cooperative learning in increasing reading comprehension skills in class**

As shown in diagram (06), the biggest number of the participants (88, 89%) show that cooperative learning methods increase their reading comprehension skills in class. However, (11, 11%) of the students say that cooperative learning methods do not increase their reading comprehension skills.

**Question Seven:** Do you collaborate in your group when you are assigned a reading comprehension activity?

Yes

No



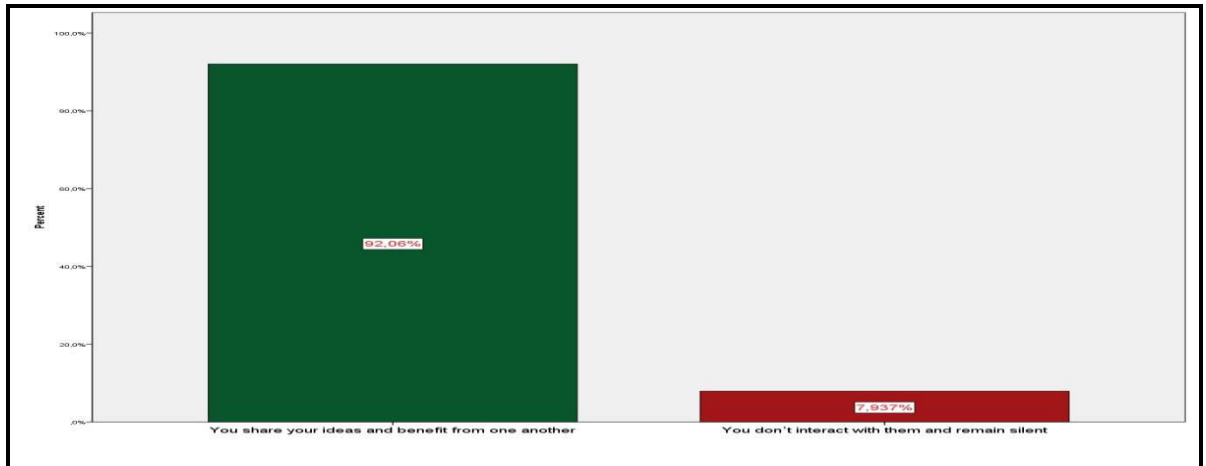
**Diagram (7): Students' collaboration when working in small groups**

As it is illustrated, the majority of the participants, forty eight, representing (76, 19%) indicate that they collaborate in their group when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity, while the rest of the participants, fifteen, making up (23, 81%) reveal that they do not collaborate in their group when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

**Question Eight:** When you work with your friends in small groups,

You share your ideas and benefit from one another

You don't interact with them and remain silent

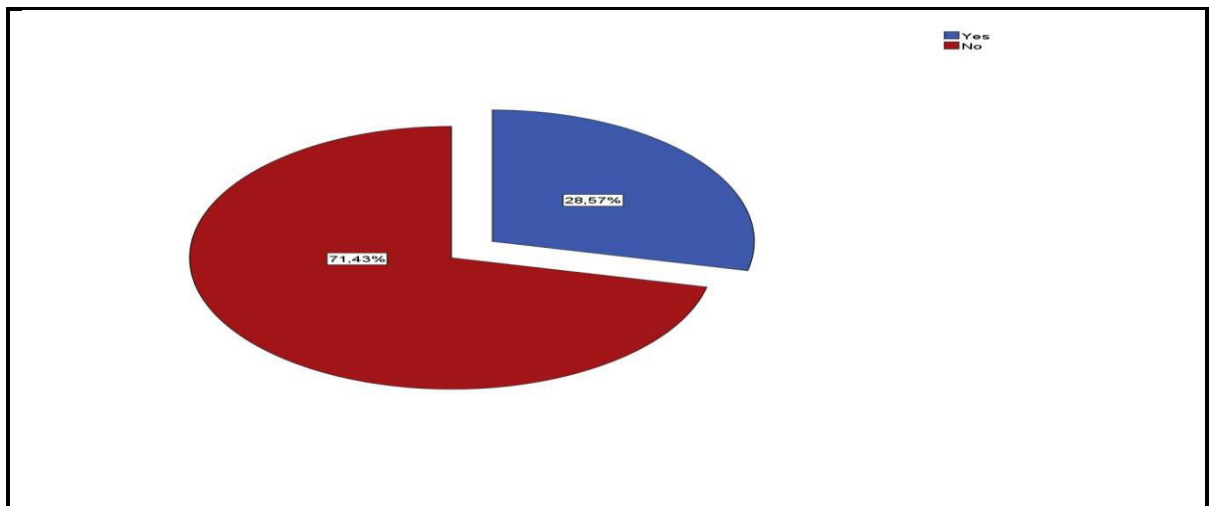


**Diagram (8): Students' exchange of knowledge in cooperative learning**

Diagram (08) clearly indicates that the majority of the participants (92.06%) share their ideas when they cooperate, which means that they strongly share their knowledge and ideas with their mates. While only five students (7.93%) who do not interact and remain silent.

**Question Nine:** Do you find difficulties when you work in small groups?

Yes                      No                      Why?



**Diagram (9): Difficulties encounter when working in small groups**

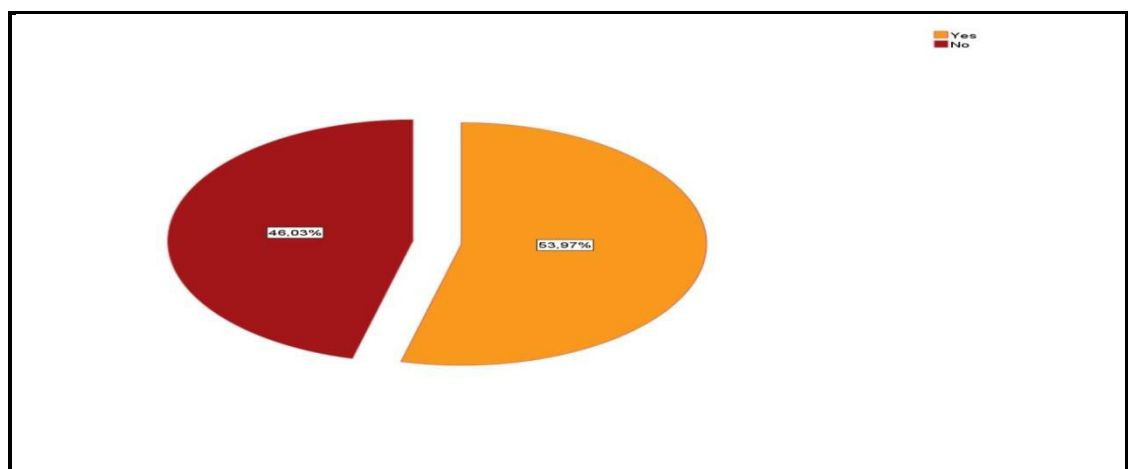
The aim of this question is to figure out whether the students find difficulties when working in small groups or not. Eighteen students making up (28.57%) claim that they find

difficulties to work in small groups because they cannot concentrate in groups. whereas forty five students (71.43%) state that they do not find difficulties to work in groups because they share several ideas and it helps them to get more knowledge.

**Question Ten:** Do your teachers of reading module encourage you to work in small groups?

Yes

No



**Diagram (10): Teachers of reading module encourage students to work in small groups**

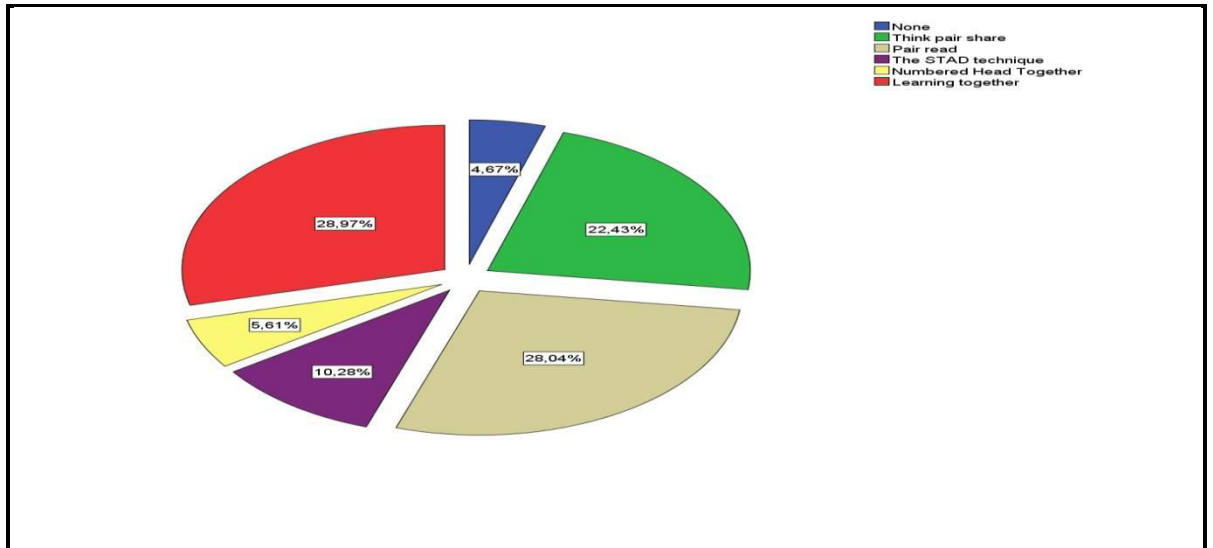
The results gathered from the questionnaire shows that the greatest portion of the students (53.97%) claims that their teachers of reading module encourage them to work in small groups. However, only twenty nine of the respondents (46.03%) say that teachers do not encourage them to work in small groups.

### **Section Three: Teachers' practices and cooperative learning**

**Question Eleven:** What are the cooperative learning methods or techniques that teachers use in class while teaching the reading module?

The STAD technique                      Pair read                      Think pair share

Learning together                      Numbered head together                      None



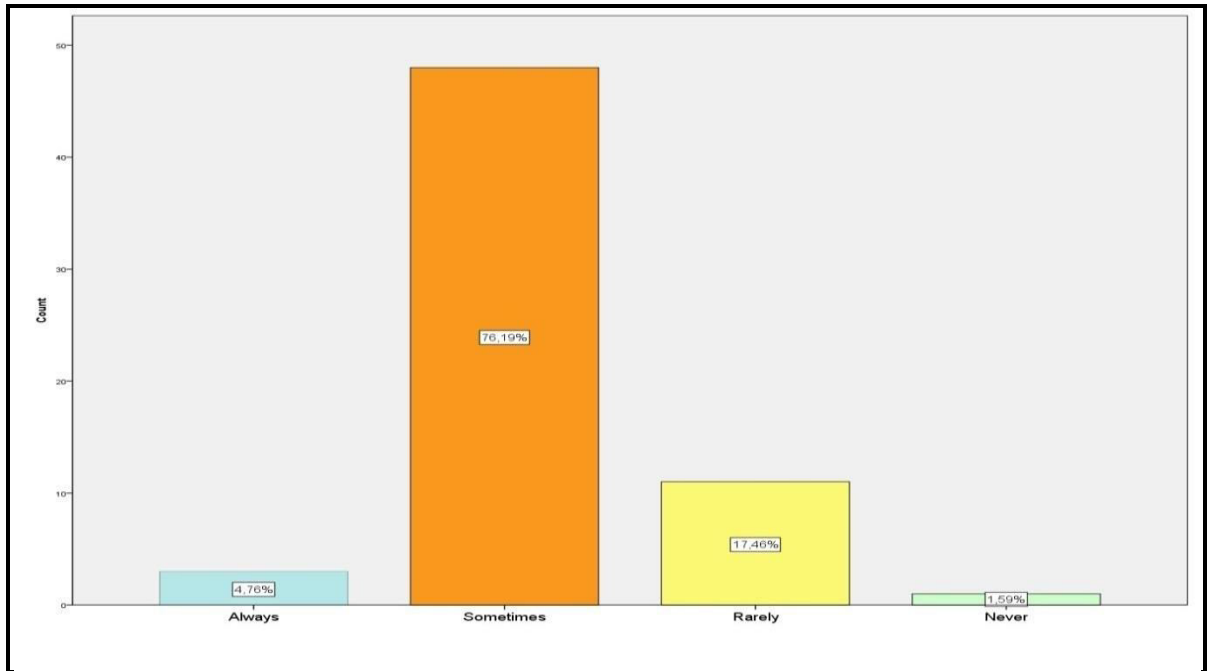
**Diagram (11): The cooperative learning strategies that teachers use while teaching reading**

In this question we wanted to know about the cooperative learning methods that teachers use in the classroom while teaching the reading module. This diagram shows that the majority of the students (28.97%) opted for ‘Learning together’. Thirty participants (28.04%) opted for ‘Pair read’ and twenty four students (22.43%) opted for ‘Think pair share’. Then, eleven students (10.28%) opted for ‘STAD’. Six students (5.61%) opted for ‘Numbered head together’ and only five students (4.67%) opted for ‘None’.

**Question Twelve:** How often do teachers focus on the use of cooperative learning groups while teaching the reading module?

Always                      Sometimes                      Rarely

Never



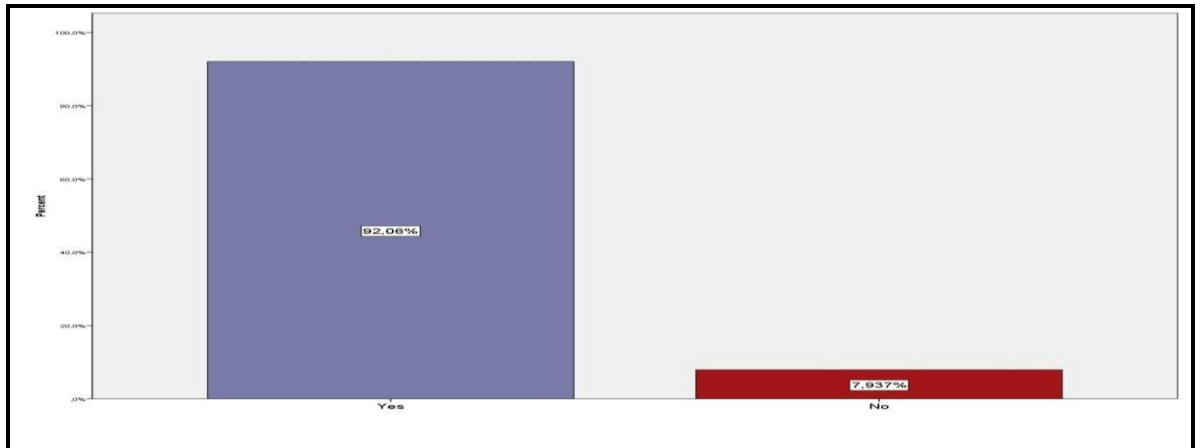
**Diagram (12): Frequency of teachers using the cooperative learning groups in teaching the reading module**

When it comes to the frequency of using cooperative learning groups while teaching the reading module, the result shows that the majority of informants (76.19%) say that teachers sometimes focus on the use of cooperative learning groups. While eleven of them (17.46%) opted for 'rarely'. Three students (4.16%) opted for 'always' and only one student (1.59%) opted for 'never'.

**Question Thirteen:** Do cooperative learning strategies create a good classroom atmosphere?

Yes

No



**Diagram (13): Cooperative learning strategies and the classroom atmosphere**

Diagram (13) highlights that the largest number of the participants (92.06%) say that cooperative learning strategies create a good classroom environment. However, only five students (7.93%) state that cooperative learning strategies do not create a good classroom atmosphere.

**Question Fourteen:** In what way do your teachers motivate you in reading comprehension module?

This question is an open-ended question in which we provided the opportunity for informants to speak about their opinions on how teachers motivate them, in their reading comprehension module.

**Remark:** a number of the informants who have answered this question.

The data gathered from this question show that teachers in reading comprehension motivate students by using different techniques. They said that teachers motivate them by giving passages and handouts to read at home. Also, they give them home works and they propose books, novels and short stories to read and look for difficult words by using

dictionaries. Also, teachers encourage them to work in groups in order to exchange and discuss different ideas and opinions between us. Our informants added that their teachers motivate them in a positive way, through the techniques of ‘pair reading’ and ‘learning together’.

### III.2. Results of the Teachers’ Questionnaire

#### Section One: Information on Teachers’ Profile

**Question One:** How old are you?

Age	25-35	36-45	46-65
N	5	6	2
%	38,5%	46,2%	15,4%

**Table 1: Teachers’ Age**

The first question is about teachers’ age of reading module. This varies between 35-45 years old (46.15%). We have just (15.38%) teachers who are between 45-55 years old, and five teachers representing (38.46%) are between 25-35 years of age.

**Question Two:** What is your experience?

Work experience	2-5	6-10	11-15	16-25	26-35
N	0	5	4	2	2
%	0%	38,5%	30,8%	15,4%	15,4%

**Table 2: Teachers’ work experience**



The majority of teachers (38.5%) have 5-10 years of experience and four of them (30.8%) are 10-15 years. We have only two teachers (15.4%) have 15-25 years and also two teachers have 15-25 years.

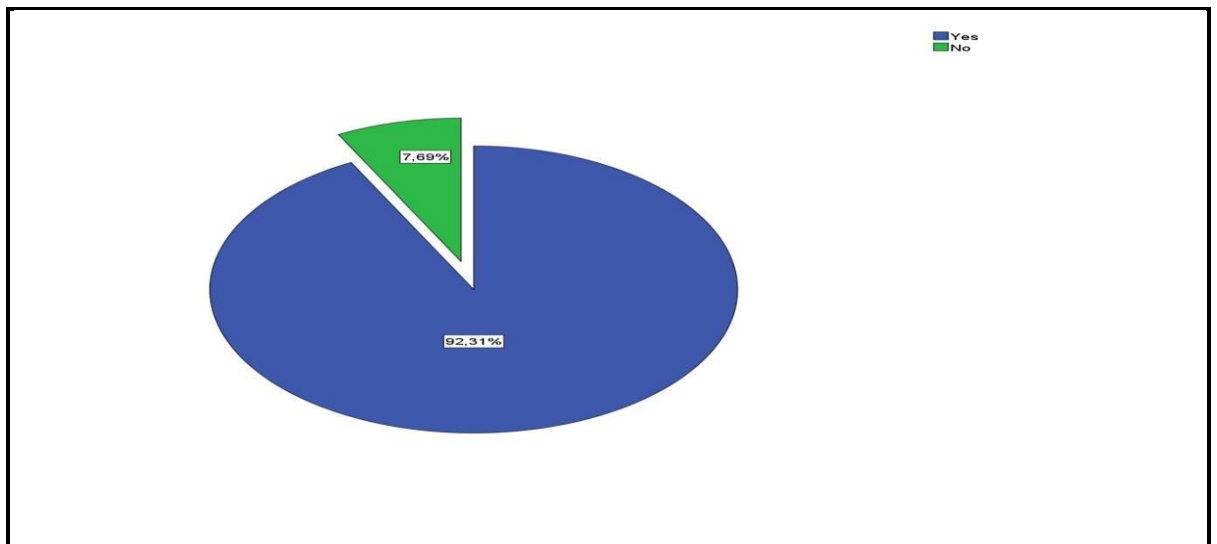
## Section Two: Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension

**Question Three:** Do you use cooperative learning methods in teaching reading in class?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Explain



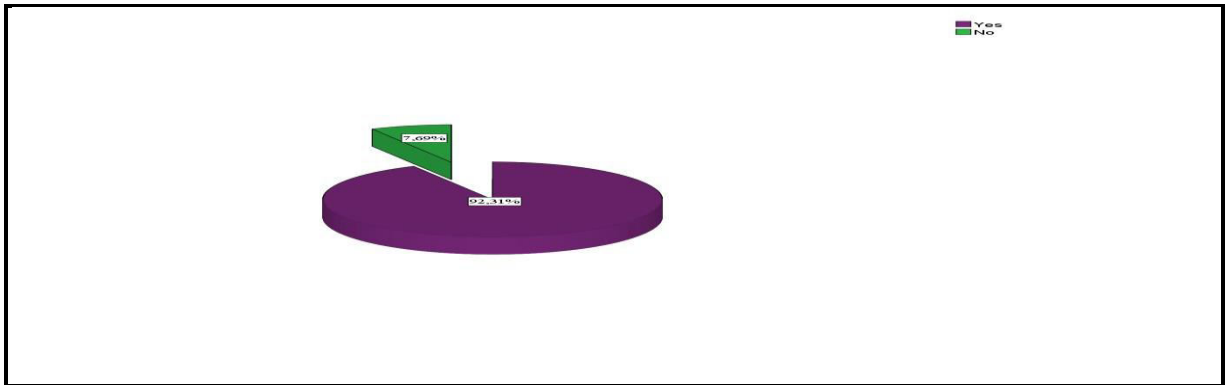
**Diagram (1): Teachers' use of cooperative learning methods in class**

This diagram clarifies if teachers use cooperative learning methods in teaching reading in the classroom or not. The majority of our participants (92.31%) say that they use cooperative learning methods in class. They argue that cooperative learning enhances students' interactional skills when working together and it makes them confident to participate and to solve problems. However, we have only one teacher (7.69%) who does not use it in class.

**Question Four:** Do your students interact when you teach reading through cooperative learning in the classroom?

Yes

No



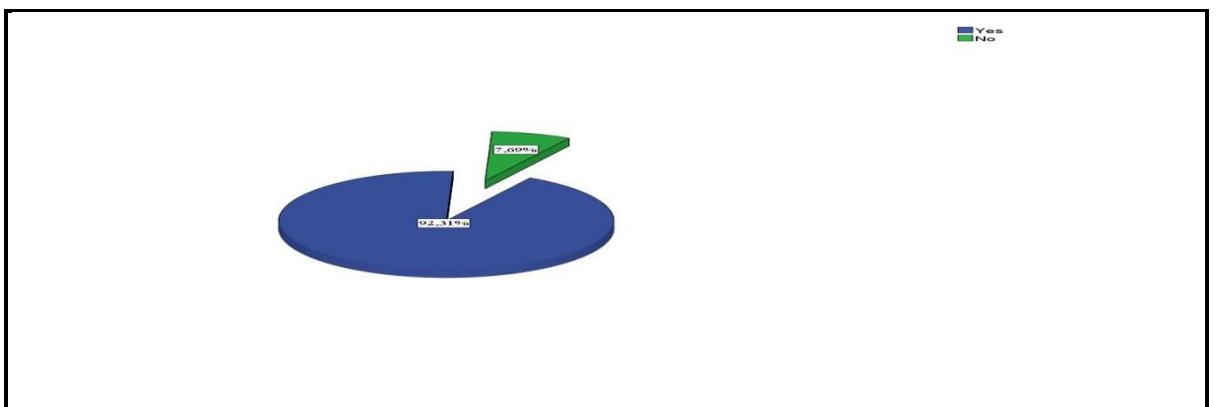
**Diagram (2): Students' interaction when using cooperative learning methods in class**

As it is shown in the Diagram 02, the majority of the participants (92.3%) claim that their students interact when using cooperative learning in the classroom and we have just one teacher (7.7%) who says that their students do not interact.

**Question five:** Do you encourage your students to work in groups?

Yes

No



**Diagram (3): Teachers' encouragement of students to work in small groups**

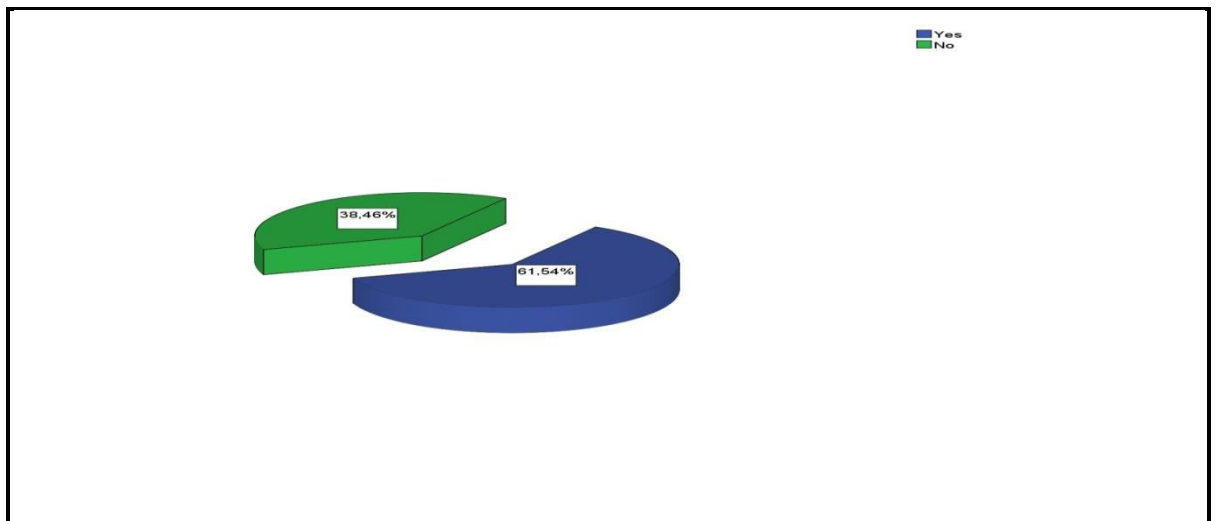
The results in Diagram (03) indicate that the biggest number of the teachers (92.3%) encourage their students to work in groups. However, only one of them answers that s/he do not encourage them to work in groups (7.7%)

**Question Six:** Do your students find difficulties while working in small groups?

Yes

No

If there are any, what are they?



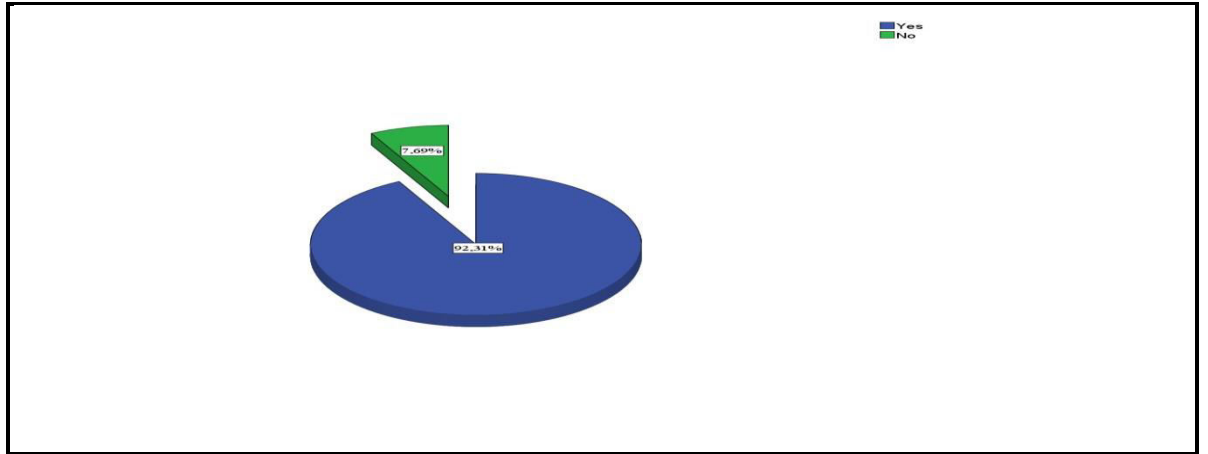
**Diagram (4): Teachers' answers about Students' difficulties while working in small groups**

Eight teachers (61.5%) say that students find difficulties while working in small groups. They explained that sometimes they off task, and they chat instead and some students like working individually. And we have (38. 5%) who say that they don't find any difficulties.

**Question seven:** Is cooperative group work more effective and efficient than traditional group work in improving your students' reading comprehension skills?

Yes

No



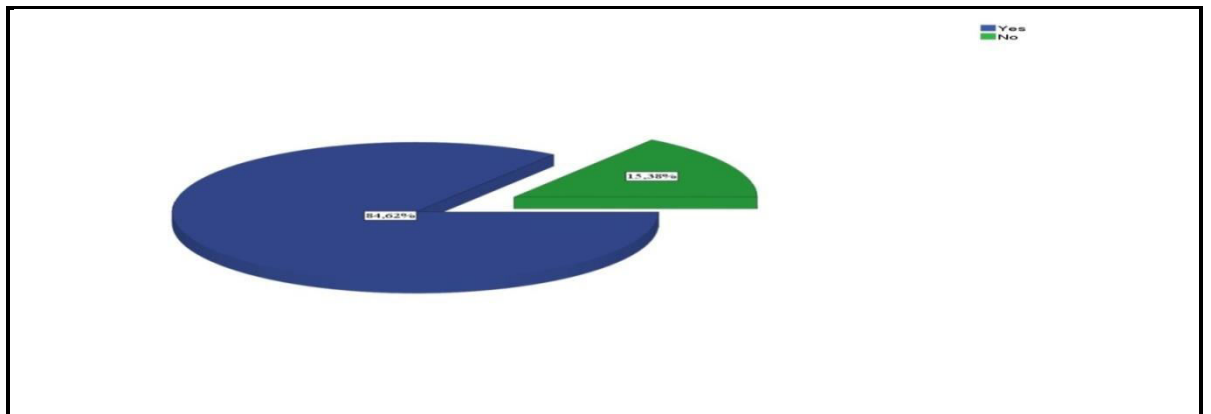
**Diagram (5): The effectiveness of cooperative group work over traditional one in improving students' reading comprehension skills**

The majority, twelve of all teachers (92.3%) answer that cooperative group work is more effective than traditional group work and we have just one teacher (7.69%) who say that it is not more effective than traditional group work.

**Question Eight:** Do cooperative learning methods increase your students reading comprehension skills?

Yes

No

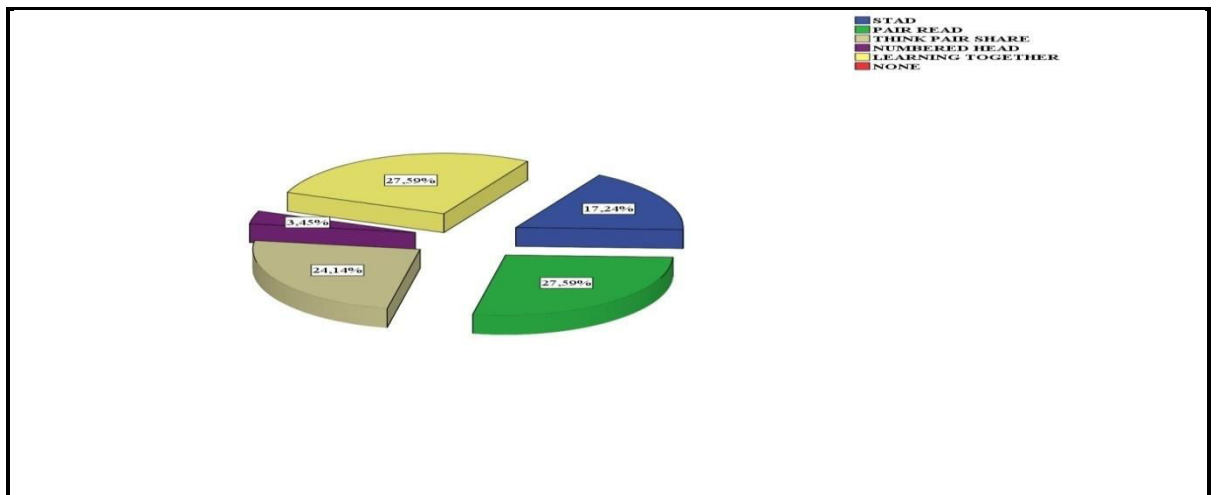


**Diagram (6): The increase of cooperative learning methods of students' reading comprehension skills**

As demonstrated in this diagram, the largest numbers of the teachers (84.6%) say that cooperative learning methods increase their students' reading comprehension skills. However, (15.4%) of the teachers argue that cooperative learning methods do not increase their students reading comprehension skills.

**Question Nine:** What are the cooperative learning strategies that you use in class when teaching reading comprehension?

- A) STAD      B) Pair read      C) Think pair share      D) Numbered head      E) Learning together      F) None.

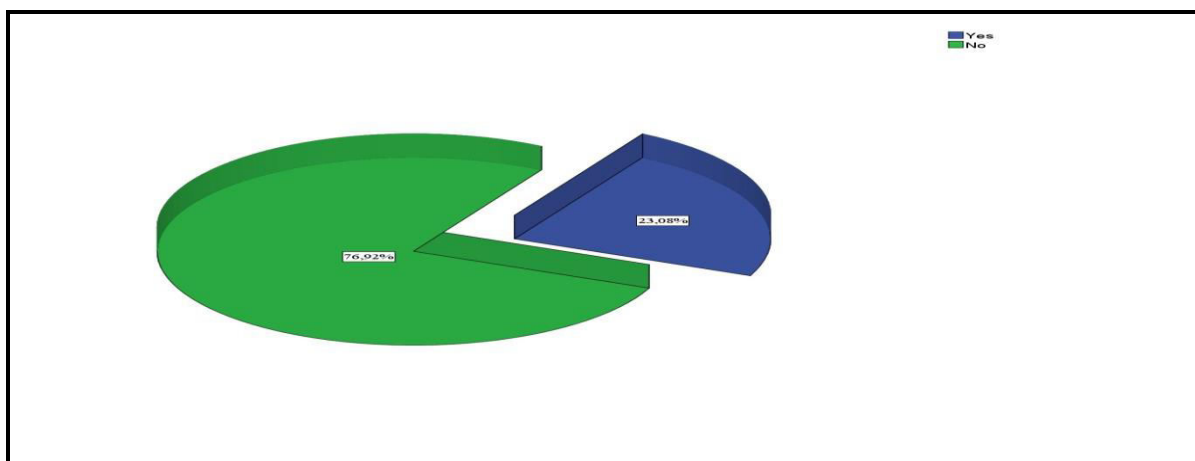


**Diagram (7): Cooperative learning strategies implemented in the classroom**

The results of Diagram (07) can be read as follows: ‘STAD’ strategy represents (17.2%), ‘Pair read’ including (27.6) ‘Think pair share’ representing (24.1) ‘Numbered head’ representing (3.4%) and ‘Learning together’ representing (27.6) and no one say ‘None’.

**Question Ten:** Have you received any special training to teach cooperative learning?

- Yes                  No



**Diagram (8): Teachers’ training to teach cooperative learning**

The majority of teachers (76.9%) have not received any special training to teach cooperative learning, and just three teachers (23.1%) have gone through a training period.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the results gathered from questionnaire answered by sixty two second year LMD students in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, and another questionnaire answered by thirteen teachers of the reading module at the same department. According to the results, we figure out that the majority of the students like working in groups because for them cooperative learning methods help them to increase their reading comprehension in the classroom in the sense that, they share their ideas and benefit from one another. Also, teachers encourage students to work in small groups. These findings are going to be discussed in details in the following chapter.

**Chapter Four**  
**Discussion of the Findings**

## **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the results of the study in relation to the research questions. The findings derived from the teachers' and students' questionnaire which are analyzed and interpreted together and this is because of the correlation that exists between the outcomes collected from this tool. The results are then discussed and interpreted in relation to the literature review presented in chapter one. The chapter comprises three major sections; each part aims to provide an answer to the research questions asked in the General Introduction. It first discusses the results obtained through students' attitudes towards reading comprehension. It, then, discusses the outcomes relating to cooperative learning and reading comprehension. Finally the third part outlines teachers' classroom practices regarding cooperative learning.

### **IV.1. Discussion of the students' and teachers' questionnaire**

#### **1. Students' attitudes towards English Reading Comprehension**

The analyses and interpretation of the students' questionnaire has revealed many facts about the importance of reading comprehension in learning English. The majority of the students have the same opinion that reading comprehension in the EFL classroom is important. They have understood that reading comprehension helps them to improve and to facilitate their English language, as one student says, '*reading skill is very important in English language, reading help us to understand and makes things clear*'. Also, it is an important aspect which helps them to get knowledge and vocabulary. These findings confirm Kirby's (2007) view that reading comprehension is the process that we use to understand the text that we read. Moreover, Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw (2003) have stated that reading is one of the most important foreign language skills, especially when students have to read English material for their own subjects.



Students affirm that reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming, in the sense that it is a difficult and complex process. When reading, students take much time to comprehend the context of a given text; sometimes they find several difficulties to understand the meaning. This is due to many reasons such as, limitation of students' vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation problems. In addition, students who do not have sufficient background knowledge and capacities find difficulties to understand the text. This is explained by Hafner (1974) by the fact that background knowledge and experience are the most factors that influence students' reading comprehension. According to Alexander (1988) some writers produce complex reading materials which influence reading comprehension. So, readers cannot understand the text because they do not have enough background knowledge and capacities to overcome the barriers of the passage. (See chapter one)

According to the results, the majority of students like the reading module because, for them, it is very important in learning English. It helps them to learn how to pronounce words and to improve their reading skills as one of the participants says *'it is the way to improve our knowledge and to improve language skills like speaking and writing'*. This means that reading skill help students to get information and to become fluent in other language skills. However, there are some students (20.63%) who dislike the reading module; they have said that reading is difficult. Snow (2000) claims that readers do not have enough opportunities to develop the language skill and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers.

Concerning the students' feeling when they are asked to read in the classroom, it appears that the majority of the participants feel comfortable and motivated when reading in the classroom. As one participant says *"I feel happy and comfortable when I read in class because it helps me to improve the reading skill."* This means that students like reading in class. Another respondent argues *"I enjoy reading in class because it gives me a chance to correct my mistakes in pronunciation"*. Reading skill has many benefits on students like to

learn how to pronounce in the correct way, to rich their vocabulary and to learn new words. However, there are some students who have admitted that they feel stressed, anxious, uncomfortable and shy maybe because they feel afraid to make some mistakes such as pronounciation and others cannot concentrate until the end of a given passage . This has led Huang (2012) to say that

Comfortable reading needs to be unafraid. However, very often when one is studying something difficult or something that is difficult in one's own opinion, and when one is going to be tested, one's reading will not work well. These feelings make one feel it difficult to concentrate, to remember the ideas and to learn anything new. If one is reading for fun, usually one will not have the feeling of worry and nerve and anxiety (2012:1521).

Ending, English learners must be aware of the fact that they need to read in English in order to learn the language. Thus, they have to overcome their barriers.

## **2. Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension**

After we have analyzed the results obtained from the students' questionnaire, we show that more than half of the students prefer to work in groups (see diagram 05). Because when teachers organize students into small groups, this helps them to learn academic content, to improve students' achievement in different subjects and also to discover their weaknesses. The learners argue their choices as follows:

First and foremost, the participants claim that group work gives them opportunities to share and exchange ideas and when they interact they discover new experiences. They feel more comfortable to speak and to discover their weaknesses when they work together. Moreover, group work helps them to be motivated. In this respect, Doff (1991) finds that *"Learners feel secure and within the group where they create a part of a whole. There is a real chance that learners who would never say anything in a whole class activity participate partially during the group work"*. In addition to this, Johnson and Johnson (1986) claim that in group work, students achieve advanced levels of thought and maintain knowledge more

than individual work. Whereas, some of them prefer to work individually may be because individual work makes them feel comfortable, relaxed and confident. In other words, they count on themselves and they have a total responsibility on the whole work. As one of the students says, “*working individually allows me to discover my weaknesses and I feel better to do everything by myself*”.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the majority of the students indicate that cooperative learning methods increase their reading comprehension skills in the classroom. We can say that students when they work together, they share and exchange information between them in which each learner is held accountable for his/her own learning to achieve a similar goal. According to (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Johnson et al, 1995; Slavin, 1995) cooperative learning methods can enhance many familiar English learning activities which encourage all students to be more actively involved as well as improve their reading comprehension.

Most students affirm that cooperative learning methods help them increase their reading comprehension skills with the percentage of (88.89%) compared to the students who think that cooperative learning methods do not facilitate their reading comprehension skills (11.11%). This shows that students are eager to learn English and they may easily learn new things from classmates while working together, and it motivate them to progress quickly in their learning. Besides cooperative learning methods enhance students' reading comprehension due to their successful techniques such as ‘STAD’, ‘Learning Together’, ‘Pair read’ that are explained by some scholars like Slavin and Johnson in the first chapter. Moreover, students can improve their capacities in reading comprehension by relying on Johnson and Johnson' elements of cooperative learning, because these latter affect when they are assigned to work together in class. This means that each one should exchange opinions with the other group members, feels responsible for everything that happens in the group and

makes more efforts to succeed. Therefore, group processing and individual accountability allow students to perform better in class by sharing, helping each other and discussing different ideas to achieve the common goal. In addition, from the teachers' questionnaire, the majority of the teachers (84.2%) say that cooperative learning methods increase their students' reading comprehension skills.

In order to get valuable answers, we have asked students if they collaborate and share ideas with classmates while working in small groups, and also we have asked teachers of the reading module if their students interact or not. From the results of diagrams (07) and (08), the majority of the participants of the second year LMD in the English Department at MMUTO collaborate and share ideas with other classmates when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity. From the sixth diagram of teachers' questionnaire findings, the majority of the respondents (92.3%) argue that when they teach reading through cooperative learning methods in the classroom, students interact and discuss with each other. This means that when students collaborate in class, they share ideas and interact to accomplish tasks and solve problems, such as, when a teacher assigns students to do a work together, if one student does not understand the task, the other members help her/ his to clarify the complex point and to render the task easier. This relates to what Slavin (1995) states that in cooperative learning, students help each other, discuss and exchange information between them because working together maximizes students' achievement. (See chapter one)

However, some students do not collaborate and do not interact with their teammates when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity, because working in small groups, according to them, takes much time and the shy students prefer to remain silent. For example, there are a few students who do not accept others' ideas and they like to work on their own.

The majority of the participants declare that they do not find difficulties while working in small groups. Whereas, some students (28.17%) say that they find difficulties when they work together (see diagram 9). On the one hand, these results lead us to understand that second year LMD students enjoy working in small groups because it helps them to learn new things from classmates, also they become active participants in the classroom. For instance, one student says, *"I prefer to work in small groups to avoid problems because all students have an important part in the group"*. And another one claims that, *"group work helps me to get more knowledge"*. This goes hand in hand with Johnson & Johnson (2009) who argue that participants must trust, accept and support each other and get to know and they should communicate accurately for example in workshops. From what has been said above, most of the students feel at ease when working together. On the other hand, students who find difficulties while working together cannot concentrate when the group is too large as one student says, *"I can't concentrate when I work in large groups"*. Another one states, *"I like to work alone because everyone in group tries to improve his ideas and sometimes we get off task"*. This result relates to what McGraw and Tidwell (2001) state that students have to deal with several issues such as poor communication, cultural difference approaches to work, they do not have an equal share of work. This means that there is a lack of communication among students and they do not have an equal capacity while working.

Besides, teachers of the reading module are also asked in the same question (08) in the 2 second part. From teachers' opinions of if students find difficulties when working in small groups, teachers have argued that sometimes their students find some difficulties while working together because some of them prefer to work alone and there are problems of organization and space availability. To support this, some teachers say *"sometimes, they forget about the assignment and they chat instead"*. Another says, *"some students have difficulties when they are interacting or working together particularly students who like*

*working individually and even shy students". Another one states, "problem of organization and available space in class".*

The collected data from the students' questionnaire concerning whether the teachers of the reading module in the English Department at MMUTO encourage their students to work in small groups, help us understand that (53.97%) of the participants claim that teachers of reading module encourage and support their students to work together in the classroom. This means that working in team work makes students more active and motivated participants during the lectures essentially students who are shy and anxious in class. Besides, working in small groups can be an effective way to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop critical thinking. For instance, when the teacher assigns students in suitable way to read and comprehend together a given passage, students feel comfortable and they make efforts to have good results. Participants should respect, feel responsible for the success of their teammates and they should also know that their individual success depends on the success of the whole group members. This goes hand in hand with what Slavin, et al (1991) who state that students while working together, they share ideas negotiate meaning. (See chapter one)

Moreover, we have asked the same question to the teachers of the reading module in order to confirm whether they encourage students to work in small groups or not. From the results of diagram (04) the majority of the teachers (92.3 %) argue that they encourage students to work in small groups, because this method helps them to enhance reading comprehension skills. This is related to Kajiura and Goodmacher (2010) who say that collaborative reading techniques motivate students, encourage them to correct their mistakes, and learn from each other. This supports Milios (2000) view that cooperative group work is a useful technique to improve students' reading ability because students can brainstorm and make efforts to work better together. In the light of this, we can understand that small groups

help both teachers and students in the field of the teaching/ learning process. On the one hand, it helps students to understand more the subject and to get new information from the others. On the other hand, it helps teachers to create a successful classroom environment.

The results obtained from the ninth question of the teachers' questionnaire, (92.3%) affirm that cooperative group work is more effective than traditional group work. From what is mentioned above, we can say that in cooperative group work all the members of the same group are responsible for doing their part of the work in order to complete the task. This means that the focus is on the group performance, for instance, to do a project work. However, traditional group work focus on the individual performance without taking into account the group functioning. This goes hand in hand with what Johnson & Johnson (1994) et al view about cooperative group work and traditional group work. (see chapter one)

### **3. Teachers' Practices and Cooperative Learning**

The results of the last part of the questionnaire show important facts about teachers' practices regarding cooperative learning. Our findings in diagram (11) in the students' results and diagram (07) in teachers' results show that the majority of students argue that their teachers of the reading module use more 'learning together', 'pair read' and 'STAD' techniques. This means that these techniques are the most used in the English Department to teach reading than other strategies because they increase students' reading activities and help them to solve problems which are related to the comprehension of the text. In addition, through these strategies students can develop their social skills. Besides, the data also reveal that students support and respect each others' contribution and explanation in team work sessions. This finding is also in accordance with Slavin, Johnson and Johnson views that students with these strategies are divided into small groups in order to work together, discuss and to formulate questions. (See chapter one)

Analysis of the findings of teachers' questionnaire in the final part, we have found that the majority of them claim that they use most of the time 'STAD', 'Learning Together', 'Pair read' techniques to teach reading. These findings indicate that teachers prefer to use more these three techniques than the others as students say.

As regards the frequency of using cooperative learning groups in teaching the reading module, the results show that (76.19%) of the informants say that teachers sometimes focus on the use of cooperative learning methods. To clarify this, we can say that teachers of reading module in English Department at MMUTO do not always use this method because sometimes it has some obstacles such as the organization of small groups which takes much time, and groups are too noisy and students work slowly and do not finish the work. On the other hand, they use it to teach reading in class because this method has many benefits to improve students' reading comprehension. For example, different tasks can be assigned to different groups, this may lead to a cohesive whole class environment. A teacher who works with mixed proficiency group may have the flexibility to allocate activities according to students' levels. Moreover, cooperative learning is dynamic because it causes students to react, share and exchange information with one another. The reached results lead us to rely on the explanation provided by Clifford, 1999; and Thomson, 1986, cited in Shaaban and Ghaith, (2005) That "*cooperative learning promotes autonomous learning and enhances active involvement in genuine discussion and problem solving activities in an environment of academic and social collaboration*". From the results of teachers' questionnaire in the first part (see diagram 01), the majority of the teachers argue that they use cooperative learning methods in teaching reading comprehension skills. To support this, some teachers say "*most of the time I divide the classroom into groups of four or five the main aim is to help students to work together to solve problems*". And as another one says, "*some students can gain self-confidence and enhances active interaction between students*". This means that the results that



we have obtained from teachers' findings confirm students' results. From the explanation above we figure out that these results answer the second question which is asked in the General Introduction and confirm the third hypothesis which claims that teachers of reading module in the Department of English at MMUTO use group work activities.

A large number of students affirm that cooperative learning strategies create a good classroom atmosphere. This shows that the use of CL methods creates successful atmosphere of teaching reading comprehension, because students while working together, feel responsible for achieving the common goal. Each member helps the other one in doing the task and understanding the materials. As a result, they become active and motivated participants in class. This goes hand in hand with Johnson (2005) who states that cooperative learning is a strategy in which small teams work together to improve their understanding of the topic by helping teammates to learn and creating a good classroom environment to complete the work. This is related to the explanation of Slavin (1995) that "*cooperative learning is an instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content*". The reached results lead us to rely on the explanation provided by Slavin and Farnish (1991) who claim that cooperative learning creates a good classroom atmosphere because it helps students to keep on task, makes them active participants by interacting and discussing between them as well as with the teachers.(see chapter one )

The results of our analysis have provided an answer to the last question asked in the General Introduction, and confirms the fifth hypothesis which states that cooperative learning methods create a good and successful environment in the English Department at MMUTO.

When analyzing the students' views about teachers ways in motivating their students' reading comprehension, the respondents suggested different answers: giving them handouts to read at home, books or novels to read and write a summary in order to enrich their

vocabulary. In addition, teachers encourage students to read in small groups in order to exchange ideas. For instance, some students say "*teachers motivate us by correcting our speaking errors by asking us to read some passages*". Another one says, "*Our teacher always asks us to read many books and novels as much as we can, because in order to master any language we should be competent in reading, writing, listening and speaking*". And also another says, "*teachers motivate us through 'pair read' and 'learning together'*". Moreover, this result shows that teachers are knowledgeable about the appropriate ways that can help their students to get rid of their reading comprehension difficulties.

Concerning the last question related to teachers' questionnaire about whether the teachers of the reading module have a special training to teach cooperative learning or not, the findings of diagram (08) show that the majority of teachers have not received any special training to teach cooperative learning methods. Whereas, only three teachers have gone through a training period to teach cooperative learning methods in the English Department at MMUTO. It is possible to say that, the Department of English has not organized any training to use cooperative learning methods for teaching reading. For this reason, teachers find obstacles to apply CL methods while teaching reading comprehension skills in the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the results obtained from our research instruments. It comprised the discussion of the findings obtained from the students' and teachers' questionnaire. This part provided clear answers to the research questions of the study which are asked in the General Introduction. While some of the hypotheses suggested in the introduction are confirmed, others are rather refuted. Relying on the whole findings, we conclude that the majority of second year LMD students improve their reading comprehension through the use of cooperative learning methods. More importantly, teachers of English at MMUTO use

cooperative learning methods when teaching reading module. By applying cooperative methods, the students became more motivated when they work together; they help one another by sharing their ideas and information. Also, they became confident and active during the reading class.

# **General Conclusion**

## **General conclusion**

The research study has investigated the use of cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension ability at the level of second year LMD students in the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. In this research, we have focused on identifying the different factors and techniques that enhance the students' reading comprehension in the classroom as well as the difficulties that students face in teaching reading comprehension through cooperative learning methods. Conducting such an investigation and dealing with such a topic is important as its ultimate aim is the use of cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

Interestingly we have figured out that reading comprehension is improved when using cooperative learning methods. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn from this investigation is that cooperative learning plays an important role in the teaching and learning process as it enhances the students' motivation and fosters positive feelings towards classmates and encourages all students to be more actively involved in the classroom activity as well as improve their reading comprehension skills.

This dissertation has two main objectives. The first objective is to determine the effect of using the cooperative learning techniques and to identify its usefulness in the Department of English at MMUTO. The second objective aims at finding out whether cooperative group work is used in teaching students of second year LMD classes during the reading module in the English Department at MMUTO or not.

The study has relied on two major theories which are Johnson & Johnson's (1994) theoretical framework of cooperative learning on students' reading comprehension and that of Slavin's (1995). Both frameworks have provided us with essential information on the techniques of cooperative learning in teaching reading comprehension in class.

To answer the advanced research questions and to check the validity of the hypotheses, the study relied on the quantitative research method. The study has also used a questionnaire administered to both second year students in the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou and their teachers. The quantitative data are analyzed by using a computer program called (SPSS) a social package for social sciences.

As we have hypothesized previously, the majority of second year students of English promote their reading comprehension skills through the use of cooperative learning methods. In addition, our findings indicate that almost all teachers use group work activities to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

The results of our study have confirmed the first hypothesis stating that the majority of second year students in the Department of English at MMUTO believe that cooperative learning methods increase their reading comprehension skills and have disconfirmed the hypotheses two and four stating respectively that cooperative learning methods do not increase students' reading comprehension and teachers of reading module do not use cooperative group work to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Additionally, our investigation has confirmed hypothesis three indicating that teachers of reading module in the English Department at MMUTO use cooperative group work to develop students' reading comprehension abilities and hypothesis five indicating that cooperative group work creates a good classroom atmosphere for students' when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

It is hoped that the findings of this study shed light on the issue of improving students' reading comprehension skill through the use of the cooperative learning methods. Furthermore, we hope that teachers will always focus on the use of cooperative learning methods in the classroom in order to create an enjoyable atmosphere for the learners, and to

give them this chance to collaborate with their teammates to understand better a given subjects and to improve their reading comprehension skills.

## **Recommendations**

For the purpose of using cooperative learning methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skill, we provide some suggestions for both teachers and students.

1. Teachers should focus on on the use of cooperative learning methods when teaching reading comprehension skill.
2. Students need to use cooperative learning methods in order to increase their reading comprehension skill in class.
3. Teachers make use the cooperative learning methods in class when teaching the reading module.
4. teachers should create a good classroom environment in teaching and learning process in which all students can be involved.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendix I

### The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is a part of our research work, which is addressed to teachers of reading module in the Department of English at MMUTO in order to collect information about the use of cooperative learning methods in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions. Your answers will be strictly kept anonymous and confidential.

Thank you so much for your collaboration.

#### Section One: Teachers' Profile

Age	25-35	35-45	45-65

Work experience	02-05	05-10	10-15	15-25	25-35

#### Section Two: Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension

3. Do you use cooperative learning method in teaching reading comprehension in class?

Yes  No

Please, justify.....

4. Do you think that cooperative learning enhances students' reading comprehension skills?

Yes  No

5. Do your students interact when you teach reading through cooperative learning in the classroom?

Yes  No

6. Do you encourage your students to work in groups?

Yes  No

7. Do your students find difficulties while working in small groups?

Yes  No

If there are any, what are they... ..

.....

8. Is the cooperative group work more effective than traditional group work in improving your students' reading comprehension in class?

Yes  No

## Section Two: Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension

3. Do you use cooperative learning method in teaching reading comprehension in class?

Yes  No

Please, justify.....

4. Do you think that cooperative learning enhances students' reading comprehension skills?

Yes  No

5. Do your students interact when you teach reading through cooperative learning in the classroom?

Yes  No

6. Do you encourage your students to work in groups?

Yes  No

7. Do your students find difficulties while working in small groups?

Yes  No

If there are any, what are they... ..

.....

8. Is the cooperative group work more effective than traditional group work in improving your students' reading comprehension in class?

Yes  No



### Section Three: Teachers' Practices

9. What are the cooperative learning strategies that you use in class when teaching reading comprehension?

A) STAD

B) Pair read

C) Think pair share

D) Numbered head

E) Learning together

F) None

10. Have you received any special training to teach cooperative learning?

Yes

No

**Thank you very much for your time and help**

## Appendix II

### The students' questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to answer this questionnaire that aims to figure out the use of cooperative learning in improving second year students' reading comprehension skills in the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. Your answers will be kept anonymous and are very important for the validity of this research.

Please put a tick (✓) to the answer(s) that fit (s) your opinion, and provide a full statement where necessary.

#### Section One: EFL Students' attitudes towards English Reading Comprehension

Item1: Reading comprehension is very important in learning English.

Agree       Neutral       Disagree

Why.....

Item2: Reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming

Agree       Neutral       Disagree

Q3. Do you like the reading module?

Yes       No

Why.....?

Q4. How do you feel when you are asked to read in the classroom?

.....

## **Section Two: Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension**

Q5. Do you like working in groups or individually?

In groups

Individually

Say why.....?

Q6. Do cooperative learning methods help you increase your reading comprehension skills in class?

Yes  No

Q7. Do you collaborate in your group when you are assigned a reading comprehension activity?

Yes  No

Q8. When you work with your friends in small groups,

You share your ideas and benefit from one another

You don't interact with them and remain silent

Q9. Do you find difficulties when you work in small groups?

Yes  No

Justify your answer. ....

Q14. In which way do your teachers motivate your reading comprehension?

.....

.....

**Thank you very much for your cooperation**