CHAPTER - VI

Summation, Interpretation, and Recommendations

Although the legacy of the past focus on educational pedagogy still persists in many parts of the world, the pendulum in the sphere of EFL/ESL has begun to swing in new directions concurrent with the process of globalization. TESOL has accommodated a paradigm shift from text-based towards context-focused pedagogy and approaches. Interactive ways of learning, rather than teacher-fronted ways of teaching, are becoming a felt need. Though it may take some more years for Iran and India to ensure that interactive and context-based pedagogy becomes a general policy in the field of education at all graded levels, there are signs of hope. Impediments apart because of several factors, new directions in ELT/EFL/ESL/ESP are likely to usher in new wisdom against the old and the familiar. Asian contexts and the contexts in the Middle East demand so. Change is the essence of time, and changes are inevitable. Some modern approaches like CL are rapidly evolving and gaining momentum and significance. In the domain of CL methods, however, the pendulum swings between those methods that stress pure cooperation and those that emphasize
competition. It was in the light of this rationale that this researcher attempted to study and compare the potential effects of Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL with TLM on Iranian and Indian second-year Engineering majors': (a) reading comprehension in English, (b) language learning strategies, (c) attitudes towards English language learning and the select teaching methods, and (d) retention of information.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the select three teaching methods, namely Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM, the hypotheses of the study were formulated, with reference to the abovementioned variables, namely reading comprehension in English, language learning strategies, attitudes towards English language learning and the select teaching methods, and retention of information. As indicated in the first chapter of the present study, the hypotheses assumed and stated that there were significant differences in the effectiveness of these methods.

One hundred and ninety-two second-year Engineering majors from two colleges in Iran and India served as the target group of the study for nine weeks in three groups in each country – two experimental groups namely Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL and one control group called TLM. The reading section of one version of the IELTS test, the SILL survey, the attitude questionnaire, and a delayed free-recall test were employed in order to determine and compare the effects of the select teaching methods on the four dependent variables of the study. The analyses of the select parameters were done using SPSS package. Repeated measures ANOVA, ANOVA, and Scheffe’s test were applied to evaluate the hypotheses of the study. The
hypotheses were either confirmed and accepted or disproved and rejected in the light of the field study and experimentation with the target group of learners both in Iran and India.

**Findings of the Study**

The summary of the findings of the present research study along with their interpretations is given in two parts in this chapter. The first part encompasses a comparison of the effects of the select CL methods on the one hand, and those of the TLM on the other, in relation to the dependent variables of the study. The second part focuses upon the comparison of different effects of the select two CL methods (Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL) on the dependent variables.

**General Findings: Comparison of Select Three Teaching Methods**

In general, as shown in Table 29, the results of the present dissertation proved considerable advantages of the two CL methods, compared to the traditional method, in almost all the areas of concerns in the field study and experimentation with the target groups of learners both in Iran and India. Such outcomes run counter to the claims made by some researchers like Abu and Flowers’ (1997) who asserted that their studies showed no significant differences between the effects of CL and the traditional method of teaching on students’ achievements, attitudes, and retention of information.
The immediate results of the present study supported and confirmed hypotheses 1.1, 2.1, and 4.1 which predicted differences in the effects of Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM on reading comprehension in English, language learning strategies, and retention of information of the target groups. The results clearly indicated the advantage of CL methods (Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL) over the traditional method (TLM) in respect of the mentioned dependent variables of the study. Therefore, these hypotheses were accepted. However, hypothesis 3.1 was rejected. It was found that

1.1 Cooperative T-BL had the most significant effect on the target groups’ reading comprehension;

Table 29. Overview of the Findings of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Achievers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILL (Total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude (Total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to TLM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to CL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about CL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Coop T-BL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Comp T-BL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = Statistically Significant  
Cp = Cooperative T-BL  
Cm = Competitive T-BL  
HA = High Achievers  
AS = Average Scorers  
LP = Low Performers
2.1 Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL contributed more significantly to the development of language learning strategies of the target groups than TLM did;

3.1 There were no significant differences in the effects of Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM on the overall attitudes of the target groups towards English language learning and the select teaching methods, and

4.1 Competitive T-BL had the most significant effect on retention of information by the target groups.

As it was explained in the previous chapter, the reason as to why hypothesis 3.1 is not confirmed is due to the interaction between positive and negative scores in total attitude questionnaire. Fifty percent of the components of the total attitude questionnaire are positive and 50% components are negative. To put it another way, the point values for the first block (statements 1 to 4), the second block (statement 5), and the fourth block (statements 19 to 28) were from −3 to +3. Whereas the values for third block (statements 6 to 18), fifth block (statement 29), and the sixth block (statement 30) were reversed, from +3 to −3. As it is shown in Table 29, further investigation into individual blocks of the questionnaire justified the claim because significant changes in mean scores for different blocks of the questionnaire were observed.

That Cooperative T-BL, as one of the CL methods, helped to develop reading comprehension of the students more significantly than the TLM is congruent with a
number of research findings like those of Cloward (1967), Hassinger and Via (1969), Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon (1981); Palincsar and Brown (1986); Rabow, Charness, Kipperman, and Radcliffe-Vasile (1994), and Totten, Digby, and Russ (1991). However, this finding contradicts findings of researchers like Nederhood (1986) and Tateyama-Sniezek (1990) who reported no significant differences in the academic achievement of students who had been taught through CL compared to those who had been taught through the traditional method.

Likewise, that the select two CL methods served to widen the students’ repertoire of language learning strategies, especially their cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more significantly than the TLM corresponds to the findings of some researchers like Johnson and Johnson (1975), Sharan and Sharan (1988), Slavin (1983), Totten, Digby, and Russ (1991), and Wedman, Kuhlman, and Guenther (1996).

The significant contribution of CL methods, in comparison with TLM, to generating positive attitudes of the students towards English language learning and CL in the present study is in line with the conclusions of researches like Astin (1993), Cooper and Mueck (1990), Johnson and Johnson (1989), Nederhood (1986), Slavin (1995), and Tjosvold, Marine, and Johnson (1977). This finding, however, is in contrast to the findings of some researchers like Carrier and Sales (1987), Klein, Erchul, and Pride (1994), Olsen (1969), Peterson, Janicki, and Swing (1981), and Talmage, Pascarella, and Ford (1984).
Similarly, that the students working together in Competitive T-BL, as a CL method, performed and achieved better than those working alone in TLM in their delayed free-recall test is consistent with literature already available (e.g., Dansereau, 1987; Hall, Mancini, & Hall, 1996; Humphreys, Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Dishon, & O’Leary, 1984; Slavin, 1991). The available literature conveys the idea that CL, compared to TLM, better contributes to the retention of information by the target groups. However, this finding of the study in this regard is not confirmed by the findings of researchers like Abu and Flowers.

**Interpretation of the General Findings**

The results of the present study justify most of the theoretical underpinning of CL and confirm that CL methods ensure academic and affective gains more than TLM. The main reason for the success of CL methods in the present study was the dynamic nature of these methods which provided multiple opportunities for comprehension whereby the students received repeated input and feedback from a variety of sources through the teacher presentation, individual work, pair work, team work, and class wide discussions. These stages provided the time for the students to go through the texts individually and then try to reconstruct the meaning they had built individually through meaningful and mutual negotiation with their partners. They had the opportunities to learn from the teacher presentation and unlearn, relearn, or deepen their learning through activities like clarifying, evaluating of causes and effects, predicting, comparing, synthesising, elaborating, and generalizing and applying of concepts during problem solving with their partners. All these activities were carried
out in authentic, relaxed, and motivating interactive environments, via negotiating and paraphrasing and summarising. The point is that the stress was not on translation, repetition, memorization, recitation, and reproduction of factual or descriptive statements in contrived environments, as it was in TLM. Such situations gave rise to cognitive conflicts, which were favourable to the promotion of higher-level reasoning, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and long-term retention. Intellectual conflicts provided the students with the opportunities to monitor their approaches to learning, which helped them locate their problematic areas. The scaffold of their partners in the course of negotiations enabled them to relate the new information to their contextual background more effectively. Slavin (1992) has stated that in such situations “inadequate reasoning will be exposed, disequilibrium will occur, and higher quality understandings will emerge” (p.162).

The nature of team formation in the select CL methods, which did not encourage high achievers to dominate the learning process, may also be considered as an influential factor for the success of these methods in the present study. As elaborated in Chapter Four, each team consisted of four members, who were designed to work in two pairs. Each pair included one low performer and one average scorer, or one average performer and one high achiever. Therefore, low performers and average scorers had the chances of transferring the teacher’s language to more comprehensible input through the availability of more capable sources of feedback. Lower performers had the chances to be fed with comprehensible input when they were negotiating the meaning with their more capable peers, first through pair conversation and then
through team discussion, after the teacher presentation. They received elaborate explanation and feedback which helped them fill in the gaps in understanding, correct misconceptions, and strengthen connections between new information and previous learning. They also had the opportunities to explain and so get engaged in cognitive elaboration, and reasoning, which were conducive to their effective learning. The success of lower performers must have contributed to the success of these methods of teaching because these groups were the majority.

There is yet another probability. The mechanisms underlying Solve-Pair-Share activity applied in these methods, which brought individual accountability and equitable opportunities for all teams’ members in pursuance of pursuing their shared learning goals, may have also contributed to the dynamics of team work in the select CL methods. Such environments contributed to positive change in the attitudes of especially lower performers, who were the majority, towards language learning and their learning environments. A number of researchers like Mathewson (1976), and Zimbardo and Ebbesen (1970) have argued that favourable attitudes are likely to motivate students for further learning and help increase their attention. Attention, in turn, is conducive to better comprehension of material. Researchers like Oxford (1990a) have also declared that positive attitudes could result in implementation of more effective strategies, which are conducive to academic success. And achievement of academic goals, in its turn, as Healy (1965) has put it, enhances students’ positive attitudes, which, in turn, affect their motivation and engagement in the learning process. A cyclical process could be noticed in these relations.
When countries were considered, it was identified that no particular country gained more significant differential gains out of a particular teaching method in the present study. Therefore, hypotheses 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, and 4.2 were rejected because the effects of Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM on the target groups’:

1.2 reading comprehension,
2.2 language learning strategies,
3.2 attitudes towards English language learning and the select teaching methods, and
4.2 retention of information

were not significantly different in Mashhad (Iran) and Mysore (India).

This finding may be due to the similarities in Iranian and Indian students’ cultures, attitudes, and behaviours in language learning environments which as this researcher has closely observed are more or less the same.

As regards different-level achievers, the overall results of this study clearly indicated equal gains for different level-achievers. Therefore, hypotheses 1.3, 2.3, and 3.3 were rejected because Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM did not have significantly different effects on:

1.3 the reading comprehension of different-level achievers among the target groups,
2.3 the language learning strategies of different-level achievers among the target groups, and
3.3 the attitudes of different-level achievers among the target groups towards
language learning and the select teaching methods.

This result of the study supports the findings of researchers like Slavin (1995), for example, who have declared that CL has no significant influence on high achievers’ academic performances. However, the gains in terms of retention of information by different-level achievers among the target groups are not in tune with this general finding. The results supported hypothesis 4.3, indicating different gains for different-level achievers. Therefore, this hypothesis was accepted because:

4.3 There were significant differences among the effectiveness of Cooperative T-BL, Competitive T-BL, and TLM on retention of information by different-level achievers among the target groups.

It was found that low performers and average scorers developed their capacity for retention of information more significantly than high achievers via competitive T-BL rather than the other two methods. This finding has been discussed in the section on the findings on retention of information.

Specific Findings and Related Interpretations: Comparison of the Effectiveness of Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL

Findings on Reading Performances of Target Groups

That the students in the two CL methods outscored their counterparts in the TLM was not unpredictable. What was interesting was that further analysis of the data revealed that Cooperative T-BL, rather than Competitive T-BL, more significantly contributed to the improvement of the target groups’ reading comprehension. Such
finding does not appear to support several earlier studies like those of Slavin which have indicated that methods like Competitive T-BL are more effective than methods like Cooperative T-BL in the enhancement of academic achievement of students. It, however, is in consonance with the findings of some researchers like Cloward (1967), Johnson’s brothers and Stanne (2000), and Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon in this regard.

As it was noted in Chapter Three of the present study, a possible reason for this finding may relate to the nature, typology, and interests of the target groups of this study. Students in higher levels of education seem to be inclined towards the mechanisms underlying Cooperative T-BL rather than Competitive T-BL in their learning environments. This claim was evident from the responses of the target groups of the study in Attitude Questionnaire, which showed their more favourable attitudes towards Cooperative T-BL rather than Competitive T-BL.

**Findings on Language Learning Strategies of Target Groups**

The two CL methods contributed to the development of overall language learning strategies of the target groups more significantly than the traditional method. However, as the results of the of the study flowed in, some interesting findings emerged. It was surprising to learn that Competitive T-BL proved to be more significant than Cooperative T-BL in developing both of metacognitive strategies and affective strategies of the target groups. This significant finding adds to the value of Competitive T-BL because according to a number of researchers like Graham (1997), these strategies are more helpful to effective learning. Meta-cognition calls for more
mental involvement of the learners in course of learning. Metacognitive strategies can help language learners build up learner independence and autonomy whereby they can take control of their own learning, which is of crucial importance in the era of explosion of information. Affective strategies are also favourable to intellectual motivation and development of cognition and hence language abilities of learners. This premise, as it was noted, is based on constructivists’ views, like that of Vygotsky, which argued that language learning is essentially a social phenomenon and so best occurs in interaction with others.

Such a result may partly be because the evaluation system of Competitive T-BL motivated all members to share their strategies and knowledge. Some other factors might have been influential. For example, as explained in Chapter Four, high achievers were promised to be awarded with high marks if their team members showed some progress. Such incentives inspired this group of students to transfer their strategies to their team members enthusiastically and in more effective ways, which eventually resulted in the development of their team members’ language learning strategies. And of course lower achievers were motivated enough to proactively be in search of more effective strategies in order to, for example, prove their superiority over their same-level opponents in other teams.

It was also interesting to observe that whereas Cooperative T-BL more significantly contributed to the development of affective strategies and compensation strategies of Iranian students, Competitive T-BL was found to be more effective among Indian students. Competitive T-BL was slightly more effective in India. It may
be due to the fact that Indians are more inclined and open towards competition in comparison with their Iranian counterparts. Indian learners are a little more open to accept the norms and principles of Competitive T-BL, compared to their counterparts in Iran (see Appendix K for an example).

**Findings on Attitudes of Target Groups**

Generally, it was found that whereas the two CL methods generated more positive attitudes of the students towards CL, TLM developed positive attitudes of the students towards this traditional method. The reason for this finding may be that the learning atmosphere CL methods provided for the students were not comparable to that of TLM. The learning environments provided by these methods were dynamic, motivating, and engaging. In contrast, the students in TLM classes did not have the opportunity to experience such enjoyable learning ambiences. Therefore, they continued to have positive attitudes towards the traditional method.

But when the differences between the two CL methods were considered, it was observed that whereas Cooperative T-BL brought significant positive change in the attitudes of the target groups towards Cooperative T-BL situations, Competitive T-BL failed to significantly attract favourable attitudes of the students towards it.

One possible reason for the latter finding, the fact that Competitive T-BL failed to significantly attract more favourable attitudes of the students, may be due to the nature of this method, which tends to reflect the real world norms and principles in learning environments. These students, who have been taught through the spoon-fed approaches to teaching, have not had the opportunities to practice and internalise such
norms and principles in their earlier educational experiences, and thus, are not ready to accept them. It takes time for them to get acquainted, accept, and internalise such straightforward and real-world oriented instructional methods. They need to be exercised in such principles and norms from the primary levels in their classes.

It was also found that the target groups of this study did not show specific concerns about CL settings. The reason for this finding may be due to the quality of the implementation of these methods in the present study. Further, that the target groups of the study were at the collegiate level assured the feasibility of these methods and hence lessen their concerns.

**Findings on Retention of Information by Target Groups**

Apart from the fact that CL methods contributed more significantly to the improvement of retention of information by the target groups than TLM, it was found that Competitive T-BL was more effective than Cooperative T-BL because it was observed that the effects of this method of CL were noticeable after a rather long duration of time. This was a significant result because it conveyed the idea that this method was conducive to genuine learning more significantly than Cooperative T-BL. In other words, this method developed the capability of the learners to apply their knowledge after a long interval to a new task, which, as noted in Chapter One, is one of the criteria for effective learning.

This finding does not support the ideas of researchers like Bacharach, Hasslen, and Anderson (1995), Johnson and Johnson (1975), and Ames and Felker (1979), who
have argued that competition, which is prioritized in Competitive T-BL, discourage students from helping one another, decreases coordination of effort, destroys the cohesion of the learning communities, and distracts them from basic learning goals. This finding of the study suggests that well-designed and healthy competition in learning environments facilitates effective learning.

Also it was found that low performers and average scorers benefited out of Competitive T-BL more significantly than high achievers in improving their abilities for retention of information. This finding is congruent with Murfitt and Thomas’ findings, which confirmed further benefits for lower performers in CL settings. It, however, is in contradiction with the findings of researchers like Richards and Rodgers, and Dalton who claimed that high achievers obtain more advantages from CL than others.

One possible interpretation for this finding may refer to the focus the graded evaluation system of this method, Competitive T-BL, had on individual accountability of all team members. This evaluation system made the students stay alert and focused in class activities. It motivated them to elaborate their thought and get engaged in meaning making through discussion with their partners. They, therefore, had the opportunities to process and internalise the information, and encode or register it more effectively. The level of processing of information is very important for the retention because, according to ‘the depth of processing concept’ of Craik and Lockhart (1972), the deeper the information is processed and assimilated, the more probable and longer its retention will be. Additionally, meaningfulness of the material and engagement of
the participants in the learning process have been asserted as the keys to learning and retention (e.g., Richardson & King, 1998).

The interactive learning situations occasioned by Competitive T-BL was favourable to the awareness of the students about prerequisites for good comprehension. As it was proved, the mechanism underlying this method was more effectively conducive to the transference and development of learning strategies, especially metacognitive strategies and affective strategies which have been proved as the most effective learning strategies. This is very important because as some researchers like Oxford and Nyikos (1989) have asserted learning strategies “aid acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information” (p. 291). O’Malley and Chamot (1990) have confirmed the same claim. They have stated that learning strategies help learners “comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (p. 1). And lower performers benefited further in this regard because higher achievers were motivated enough to do their bests for transferring their more effective strategies to these groups of students and so contributing to their success for the retention of information. Therefore, another reason for the success of lower performers in this method may be correlated to the effectiveness of the strategies they gained in Competitive T-BL classes. They had the opportunities to observe different kinds of strategies higher achievers used in metacognitive ways. In other words, while higher achievers were explaining the themes, they were, in fact, shedding light on the procedures and strategies they adopted in course of comprehending the material. This
kind of aloud thinking let lower performers monitor and acquire such approaches to learning. They also had the opportunities to apply such strategies.

Likewise, the evaluation system of Competitive T-BL assured lower performers that showing their superiorities over their same-level counterparts in other teams would contribute to their success. This increased their penchant for further effort in order to show their potential, at least to their counterparts in other teams. This kind of (extrinsic) motivation may have also resulted in their more active engagement in the learning process. This is important because researchers like Oxford (1990a) have stated that better motivated students use more strategies than less motivated students and therefore are able to remember more information.

Learning environments in Competitive T-BL may have also been helpful to the success of lower performers for the retention of information in this method. The ambiance in such situations was very friendly and not only stress-free but also exciting and motivating. The teacher acted as a fellow collaborator and all the teams were aware of the possibility that if their members secured the least acceptable standard mark, they could pass the course. Such atmosphere was contributed to lowering affective filters of the students (e.g., reduced their stress and anxiety). This factor contributed particularly to the success of lower performers because it is such groups of students who lack sufficient confidence and keenness to use all their potentials in the learning process.

However, that the students in Cooperative T-BL outperformed their counterparts in this class in their reading test may be considered as the immediate
result of such methods. Although Cooperative T-BL, as a short-term strategy, proved better than Competitive T-BL, it failed to maintain its dominance in longer duration of time. The point is that if students’ abilities for the application of the language after a long interval to new tasks and situations is considered as the criterion for real learning, then Competitive T-BL was conducive to real learning more effectively than Cooperative T-BL.

Another question may arise here. If the target students did not show significant favourable attitudes towards Competitive T-BL, how is that they performed better than those who were in Cooperative T-BL in their recall test? The possible answer to this question may be that not necessarily one can say that positive attitude is a ‘must’ for academic success all the time and in all situations. It may be said that attitude and motivation may not necessarily always go together. Whereas this justification is against a number of researchers’ findings and theories like that of Mathewson, it is compatible with the results of the studies of researchers like Olsen.

**Findings on Correlations among Dependent Variables of the Study**

The correlations among the dependent variables of the present study in pretests and posttests (see tables 28a and 28b) confirmed that:

1. reading comprehension was positively related to language learning strategies, and
2. reading comprehension was positively related to the attitudes of the students.
These findings are in line with the findings of researchers like Block (1986), Gibson and Levin (1975), Healy (1965), and Rowell (1972) who have reported the same kind of correlations (see Chapter Five). Such findings highlight the significant contribution of CL methods to knowledge development of students from a different dimension because, as it was found in this study also, these methods are conducive to the acquisition of learning strategies and generating positive attitudes among students.

**Summary of the Findings**

To sum up, the main findings of the present study showed that CL methods resulted in the development of reading comprehension of the students, acquisition of language learning strategies, modification of their attitudes, and enhancement of their retention of information. It is important to note that these results confirm the relevance and significance of contextual and interdependent learning, viewed as a cyclical process. Overall, it seems that the attitudes of Iranian and Indian students who are more attuned towards cooperation rather than individual attainments of goals impacted the results of the present study. Such inclinations may be the results of the socio-cultural expectations and norms in Iran and India, which are in favour of CL and group activities. Therefore, it may be said that the results of this study were in parallel with the target groups’ tendencies for cooperation either through Cooperative T-BL or through Competitive T-BL rather than individualistic attainment of their goals.

More specifically, the results of the present study were in contrast with the findings of researchers like Shumway, Stewardson, Saunders, and Reeve (2001) who
have reported no significant differences between the effects of Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL on academic achievement of students. More specifically, the results of this study did not firmly support the findings of researchers like Johnsons’ brothers and Stanne, which have claimed the advantage of those methods of CL that accentuate pure cooperation in intra- and inter-group relations over those methods of CL that prioritize the importance of inter-group competition. Nor did they strictly confirm the findings of researchers like those of Slavin (1983a/1991), which have declared the reverse. It was also observed that competitive T-BL was a bit slightly more effective with the Indian students than with the Iranian students. This was reasoned to be the manifestation of Indian culture, which is more competition oriented, in learning environments.

The results of the present study are also in contrast to the reports of researchers like Ab-Raza (2007) who have argued that students in Islamic countries “do not value diversity of ideas, beliefs, and perspectives” (p. 5) and so cannot be taught through modern methods like those of CL. He has reasoned so because he believes Islam wants them and trains them to be so. He has also concluded that Muslim teachers are following behaviourist principles in their classes because such philosophy, in their perception, originates from The Koran, their holy Book. It is worth mentioning here that the true spirit of Islam is that it appreciates diversity and accommodates different ideas, beliefs, and perspectives. Like any other religious movement that is conscious of realities, Islam too is aware of hegemonic forces that cause marginalization,
alienation and oppression. Islam is not averse to co-operation, consultation, negotiation, and consideration of diverse ideas.

Finally, a clarification about the significance of extrinsic incentives within the arena of the application of CL methods needs to be put forward. All of us, as human beings, need to receive encouraging feedback from the milieu we live in so as to be re-energized and to move forward. Appreciation through extrinsic incentives is a natural, normal, and reasonable way of helping and enabling others to grow and use their potentials to the extent possible for their own benefit and that of society. The same is true for learners too at any graded level. This is one of the reasons why this researcher believes that extrinsic incentives should be injected rather than rejected, as researchers like Damon (1984) have asserted, in CL environments. Damon has argued, “there is no compelling reason to believe that such inducements are an important ingredient in peer learning” (ibid, p. 337). It seems that the contribution of well-designed extrinsic incentives and rewards to the engagement of all the team members in the learning process, as it happened in Competitive T-BL environments in the present study, can be persuasive enough for the consideration of extrinsic incentives in CL settings.

Engagement occasioned by extrinsic motivation in Competitive T-BL in this study contributed to more effective learning. As noted, the sense of achievement, in turn, has the potential to lead to intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the question is not, as researchers like Topping (2000) have argued, whether there is a need for extrinsic reinforcement in CL settings. But, the question is that whether the most effective extrinsic reinforcement strategies, which can develop perseverance, contribute to
group goals, and more importantly, to individual accountability of all group members, which is being ignored in most CL methods. This is important because it is not easy to envisage interactive group learning wherein individual members, say free riders or social loafers, tend to abdicate their responsibilities, and yet flourish because others have contributed to the success of the team learning. These are part of the reasons as to why the modified Competitive T-BL was introduced to CL methods in the present study.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of the present study, CL methods are likely to address and solve the deficiencies found in the conventional ways of teaching the English language in the present education systems in EFL/ESL settings. These results along with the findings of other researchers may be considered potent and consistent enough to warrant a gradual shift towards using CL methods in EFL/ESL learning classes – from primary levels to university levels. Although the limited scope of the present study may only allow for tentative suggestions and not for generalized conclusions, this researcher wishes to put forth certain suggestions regarding pedagogical implication of the findings of this study to all those concerned about and involved in evolving new and alternate educational pedagogies. This researcher hopes that the findings of his study would inspire Iranian and Indian educational policy makers and all other stakeholders to know more about CL and the efficacy of its methods when compared to traditional methods of teaching.
Educational Policy Makers

A number of variables affect the quality of higher education which should be addressed. Who is to teach, what, to whom, for what purpose, to what extent, how, where, when, and how often? The concerns behind these questions should be taken into account. However, as regards the intention of the present study, educational policy makers could consider the idea that, in the context of the present scenario of globalization, CL methods and approaches of learning could usher in certain significant paradigm shifts in education as a collaborative and cooperative venture, and gradually make the stakeholders be aware of social interdependence as a great value. The belief is that the benefits of learning together are immense both from academic and social points of view. CL methods foster academic progress of students and foreground the significance of effective teamwork.

Cooperative learning methods, however, can be interesting and successful provided teachers and students are familiar enough with their professions and responsibilities. To this end, investment in training courses for teachers and students is needed for creating the grounds for the success of these innovations. This can also be done through seminars, lectures, or workshops offered by best of those academicians who are committed to their profession and accountabilities. Such training activities could also focus on familiarizing both teachers and students with emerging online educational technologies like wikis, blogs, and moodles, which can be used for boosting the effectiveness and success of CL methods. These training activities, when organized and coordinated well, would contribute to not only academic success of
students but also the development of their personalities and capacities for team building, working in heterogeneous teams, collective thinking, and sound decision making about personal and civic affairs in the social context. They would also be conducive to nurturing interpersonal relationships, interdependence and humane values. This way, a more civilized social order, social harmony, and world peace could be ensured. The results of this research study suggest that the time is ripe and appropriate to look for ways of revamping higher education systems and educational pedagogies at the collegiate level so that CL methods could be accommodated as regular methods of teaching and learning.

The results of the investigation into the effectiveness of Competitive T-BL, developed by this researcher, suggest that this instructional method could be considered as an effective approach to both education and living because it has the potential for tackling the inefficacy of the conventional methods both at academic and social levels. The results point out that Competitive T-BL could significantly enhance the quality of knowledge students acquire, by, for instance, facilitating interactive learning with a focus on individual accountability and performances of all learners, which are the neglected areas in most current methods of CL. This method stresses the process of learning in authentic contexts rather than products of teaching in contrived environments, contributes to the empowerment of recall memory rather than recognition memory, and fosters a sense of cooperation and collective achievement in competitive environments. As noted, it is favourable to the development of especially metacognitive strategies rather than survival skills. Meta-cognition, as noted, is a kind
of critical thinking, which is helpful to both language learning (Birjandi, & Naeini, 2007) and successful living. The paradox of this method is that, despite its surface structure, which seems to best benefit high achievers, it is, in essence, a method for the benefit of slow learners. It tries to harness high achievers’ potentials for the development of low performers without yet neglecting the former group’s zest and motivation for the attainment of higher goals. Competitive T-BL is conducive not only to true and active cooperative learning but also to learning morals, ethics, and humanitarian values in human relationships amidst competitive environments, which emphasise a respect for the culture of learning.

Competitive T-BL suggests capacity building of students and empowering them to face the challenges of globalization, a phenomenon no one can stay aloof from any more, with better strategies. It foregrounds the importance of connecting learners to the real world as it better reflects the realities and norms of this complicated, dynamic, and competitive world. It has the potential to bridge the present gap between classroom situation and the real world, and serve as a way of coping with the real world. It can serve not only as an exemplary model that could harness the kind of competition among the present world’s citizens, nations, and civilizations, but also as a way of critiquing the Western hegemonic ways of thinking, condescending attitudes towards marginalized cultures and civilizations, and Western models of modernization and development. Therefore, Competitive T-BL, which has the capacity to address certain limitations or deficiencies in the traditional models of classroom learning, may
be considered as a drastic shift from the present directive approaches and even conventional methods of CL.

The integration of technology into language classes which are run through CL methods could also enhance the effectiveness of these methods and hence success of language classes. Likewise, concepts like ‘content-bound web-based collaborative language learning’ courses should be highlighted and invested upon. The formation of web-based collegiate level English teachers’ groups could also be helpful. Such circles of experts could contribute to keeping teachers abreast of the latest developments and issues in the profession through activities like sharing their research and teaching experiences, which are conducive to their professional success. They may also be useful for preparing shared banks of quizzes, tests, and tasks, for instance, so as to lessen the burden of teacher’s responsibilities in the implementation of CL methods.

Even if the belief is that CL methods cannot be recommended and prescribed as panacea for any kind of situation, then the middle path -- combining lecture method and CL methods or at least some of their principles, strategies, and activities – could be considered. Perhaps such an approach would also cater better for learners with different ability ranges and learning styles, especially for those who have an aversion towards group work.

**Resource Material Developers and Syllabus Designers**

It may be said that the success of cooperative language learning depends, in part, on the kind of tasks and activities applied in course of teaching. Therefore, they
should potentially encourage all students to enthusiastically interact with their team members in order not only to relearn and deepen their learning but also to learn about learning more effectively. They should have the capacity to increase the quantity, quality, frequency, and variety of language practice, and support transference of language learning strategies and cognitive development. They should also make more effective transitions to real world settings. Therefore, resource material developers and syllabus designers could consider the integration of more interesting, varied, appropriately authentic, motivating, communicative, goal oriented, and challenging exercises and activities in instructional materials in order to improve the power of team learning and as a result, the acquisition of the language of all group members.

**Methodologists**

It is unfortunate but true that ELT has not been a success in Iran and India. If educators persist in traditional modes of presentation and do not take into account the significance of the new trends in the profession, the situation may get worse in the years to come. The fact is that the dawn of the constructivism has led to new interpretations of concepts like learning and effective variables (e.g., context of learning, students’ attitudes, and cultural expectations) in course of learning. Such developments are impacting the point of view of methodologists, which, in turn, has affected the ways they construct and prescribe their classroom activities, techniques, and instructional innovations. The focus has been shifted towards appreciating the
significance of context of learning, which has been neglected by most of the conventional methods and approaches.

In the new emerging approaches to FL/L2 learning, the special circumstances and mechanisms in which language learning takes place are getting prioritized. CL is an approach that has evolved in such a context. It stresses the significance of some factors of critical importance to SLA such as affective filter, exposure, comprehensible input, attention, pushed output, and meaningful interaction and purposeful communication. Some other crucial significant context variables like attitudes, motivation, and active engagement of all learners in process of language learning in a semi/authentic, analytical, and suggestive feedback-rich environment have also been prioritized. Such context-based approaches give a lot of scope for flexibility. Methodologists, thereby, could adapt and modify CL methods, develop their own models by incorporating certain basic principles of CL and even other methods in the arena of ELT, as tried and experimented in the present study, in order to make language learning a more vivid, interesting, and motivating exercise. Methodologists may suggest Competitive T-BL to English language teachers as one of the most effective methods of CL for language classes inasmuch as it compensates the deficiencies inherent in CL methods effectively. As noted in Chapter Three, Competitive T-BL differs from other methods of CL for it:

1. helps the best students or high achievers feel satisfied and puts an end to their objection and unwillingness to help their teammates;

2. motivates low performers for more active participation in class activities;
3. enforces individual accountability of all group members, and thus limits the scope for free riders or those who tend to abdicate their responsibilities and hitchhike on the work of others;

4. brings further opportunities for students to be more clearly aware of their capacities and capabilities in a broader sense, and

5. contributes not only to a zest for true and active shared learning, but also to learning humanitarian democratic values which, in turn, are favourable to the acceleration of growth and development of humane societies.

**Teachers**

Teachers should realize the fact that mere following TLM means that they neither read the signs of the time nor are in tune with latest methods and approaches to teaching or learning which have more capacity for promoting effective language learning. Language learning process, especially at the collegiate level, is not a smooth one, and therefore, their efforts would be in vain if they insist on mere application of TLM because the nature of this method of teaching is more favourable to students’ short-term satisfaction. TLM deprives students of better opportunities for more effective language learning.

The fact is that the incapability of language teachers in effectual implementation of group work, which is of paramount importance in language classes, in real classroom situations has exacted failure of many language classes. And as McCafferty, Jacobs, and DaSilva Iddings (2006) put it, the significance of CL in
language classes is that it focuses on boosting the effectiveness of group learning, which is highlighted in modern innovations in ELT. Therefore, CL facilitates language teachers in effective implementation of group work and hence success of their classes.

CL methods connote and aim at long-term and enduring effectiveness of language learning. As powerful praxis-oriented methods, they have the capacity to contribute to effective language learning and effect necessary social transformation. An in-depth understanding of the principles of CL and its methods can help teachers develop a range of effective tactics and strategies for ushering in environments for interactive language learning that would help and ensure that students become more responsible and committed to critical negotiation of meanings and building up of a new and just society that believes in cherishing and promoting the values of interdependence.

Teachers could ensure that emphasis is laid on authentic tasks, active participation and individual accountability of all students, and strategy training so that internalisation occurs through scaffolding, and application of new acquired knowledge and strategies in a context that values dialogue in lieu of monologue. Therefore, merely focusing students’ attention on learning the language is not sufficient. Teachers need to make students be aware of the full range of strategies available to them. They could train them to learn to think about what happens during the language learning process (meta-cognition), which will enable them to develop more effective learning strategies, especially monitoring strategies. This way, as a number of researchers like McCombs (1988) and Gibbs (1992) have argued, they facilitate the academic success
of their students and enable them for life-long learning. Other effective variables such as vocabulary and grammar acquisition through reading of authentic texts and creating a culture of learning should not be neglected in language/reading classes if they want to have more effective language/reading courses via CL. And finally, before deciding on implementing any method of CL in their classes, teachers, keeping in mind the objectives of the curriculum and the atmosphere of their classes through different dimensions, have to go through the mechanisms underlying different methods of CL in order to have a right and appropriate selection.

**Test Designers and Examiners**

The fact is that the ways tests are constructed and conducted, and test takers are assessed greatly impact not only students’ attitudes towards the objectives of the course content and the implementation and success of instructional methods but also societal formation. Therefore, test designers and examiners may consider a change in the types of tests, the contexts in which they are administered, and the procedures for assessing test takers. Tests should be realistic and assess the practical abilities of students in the application of knowledge in real life circumstances, that is, the application of knowledge in different, new, and authentic situations. The contexts in which tests are administered should also be appropriate and relaxing thereby letting test takers show all their potentials. Although the main goal of testing is to see whether the outcomes of instructional methods and approaches are in parallel with those
already set by educational policy makers, it could also be subordinated to teaching. As such, testing would contribute to the achievement of teaching objectives.

To sum up this section, CL aims at forming and moulding interdependent competent life-long learners, a task which is seldom achieved through traditional methods of teaching. Therefore, a reform in the present Iranian and Indian education system is the need of the hour. And for this reform to happen in a systematic manner, all involved stakes (viz. students, teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policy makers) ought to, first and foremost, decolonize their minds and move beyond the traditional teacher-fronted lecturing method. If educators do not realise the urgent need for such a change and paradigm shift and continue to indulge in antediluvian concepts and insist on the present ‘mimetic tradition’, the very purpose of true education is likely to be defeated or lost. Recruitment of teachers who are open to new ways of teaching and learning is a crucial requirement and indispensable task. This dissertation is a cogent plea for a holistic approach, for innovative and contextual pedagogies, for radical revamp of course content and syllabi, and for facilitating students to be resource-persons for themselves in the process of learning.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The following questions may be put forth for further research and exploration in order to complement the present study:

1. What kind of methods of CL could contribute more effectively to students’ language proficiency?
2. Do the effects of Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL differ on language skills other than reading?
3. What would be the impact of Cooperative T-BL and Competitive T-BL on students’ critical and creative thinking abilities?
4. To what extent can the structured application of online technologies contribute to the success of CL?

These questions can be considered with reference to areas like homogeneous verses heterogeneous groups, male versus female, small group versus large group, primary school versus higher education, and rural versus urban. Students’ different styles of learning and attitudes towards group learning are also worth considering.

Researchers may also consider the following question in terms of social goals of CL:
5. Against the emerging trends of globalization which foreground excellence and competition as important goals, can CL methods harness successfully the elements of competition and excellence, integrate them within the goals of interdependence, and critical and creative interactive learning, and ensure an adherence to the culture of learning and living cooperatively?

Finally, given the enormous unexplored areas of CL methods, they could be the major focus of FL/L2 research in the years to come. Researchers can also apply quantitative procedures of data collection in order to support their qualitative findings in a more comprehensive manner.
References


In H. Singer, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.). *Theoretical models and process of reading*


