

ABSTRACT

An Examination of Student Achievement and Critical Thinking after the Use of Cooperative Learning in a Form One Modern Foreign Language Classroom

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The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to examine student achievement and the critical thinking skills of modern foreign language students after the use of cooperative learning. The California Critical Thinking Skills Test Form M-20 (CCTST M-20) was used to measure the critical thinking skills of the participants and the pre-/post-test designed by the researcher was used to measure student achievement. This research also sought to determine whether cooperative learning had an impact on student achievement, students' experiences of cooperative learning and students' perception of cooperative learning as a viable means of developing their critical thinking skills.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent *t*-tests, paired samples *t*-tests, and Pearson's correlation statistics. Independent *t*-tests examined the differences in the means of the experimental and control groups on the CCTST M-20 and the pre- and post-tests, as well as the differences in means among high and low achievers in each group. Paired samples *t*-testing determined differences in the total mean scores of low achievers in the experimental group on the CCTST M-20 and the pre- and post-tests. This process was repeated for high ability students in the experimental group, and low and high achievers in the control group. Qualitative data were collected through the use of a questionnaire and interviews. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed.

It was determined that there was no significant difference between the means of students in the experimental and control groups on the CCTST M-20, the pre-test, or the post-test. There was a significant difference in the means between high achievers and low achievers in both the experimental group and the control group. It was also found that there was a substantial correlation between student achievement and critical thinking among high-achievers and a moderate correlation between the two variables in the experimental group. Students indicated that they generally had positive experiences in their cooperative groups and that they found that cooperative learning facilitated their ability to use skills associated with critical thinking.

Keywords: Achievement; Cooperative Learning; Correlation; Critical Thinking; Modern Foreign Language.