



USING THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY ON COMPARATIVE DEGREE OF THE FIFTH GRADERS AT FATHONA ISLAMIC SCHOOL PALEMBANG

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ABSTRAK

Rendahnya penguasaan siswa sekolah dasar terhadap struktur tata bahasa Inggris, khususnya *comparative degree*, menunjukkan perlunya penerapan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih interaktif dan berorientasi pada keterlibatan siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas strategi pembelajaran kooperatif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman *comparative degree* pada siswa kelas V di Sekolah Islam Fathona Palembang. Penelitian menggunakan desain quasi-eksperimental dengan model *pre-test* dan *post-test non-equivalent control group*, melibatkan 30 siswa yang terbagi ke dalam kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen memperoleh pembelajaran dengan strategi kooperatif, sementara kelompok kontrol diajar menggunakan metode pembelajaran konvensional. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata *post-test* kelompok eksperimen (85,4) lebih tinggi dibandingkan kelompok kontrol (72,8). Uji *independent samples t-test* mengonfirmasi adanya perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik antara kedua kelompok ($p < 0,05$). Selain meningkatkan hasil belajar, pembelajaran kooperatif juga terbukti mendorong keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam diskusi dan kerja kelompok. Temuan ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran kooperatif efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman *comparative degree* sekaligus memperkuat motivasi dan partisipasi siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar.

Kata Kunci: Derajat Perbandingan, Pembelajaran Kooperatif, Tata Bahasa Inggris, Siswa Kelas Lima

ABSTRACT

The low level of elementary school students' mastery of English grammatical structures, particularly comparative degrees, indicates the need for the implementation of more interactive and student-centered learning strategies. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in improving students' understanding of comparative degrees among fifth-grade students at Fathona Islamic School Palembang. The study employed a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group model, involving 30 students who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction through cooperative learning strategies, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods. The results of the analysis showed that the average post-test score of the experimental group (85.4) was higher than that of the control group (72.8). An independent samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$). In addition to improving learning outcomes, cooperative learning was also found to enhance students' active engagement in discussions and group work. These findings conclude that cooperative learning strategies are effective in



improving students' understanding of comparative degrees while also strengthening motivation and active participation in English language learning at the elementary school level.

Keywords: *Comparative Degree, Cooperative Learning, English Grammar, Fifth Graders*

INTRODUCTION

English language instruction at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in establishing students' foundational communication skills. At this stage, learners are expected not only to acquire vocabulary but also to develop an understanding of basic grammatical structures that support meaningful language use. However, English instruction in many elementary classrooms continues to be dominated by teacher-centered practices, which tend to limit students' opportunities for active engagement in learning. This condition underscores the need for instructional strategies that promote interaction, collaboration, and active participation among young learners (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Grammar constitutes a core component of language learning as it enables learners to construct accurate and meaningful sentences. One grammatical structure that frequently poses challenges for elementary school students is the comparative degree, which requires both conceptual understanding and accurate grammatical application. When grammar instruction relies heavily on conventional approaches, students often focus on memorization rather than comprehension, resulting in difficulties applying comparative forms in real communicative contexts. Recent research highlights that the effectiveness of grammar instruction is strongly influenced by the instructional approach, particularly for younger EFL learners (Frøisland et al., 2025).

Cooperative learning has been widely acknowledged as an effective instructional strategy for addressing such challenges in English language classrooms. This approach emphasizes structured group activities in which students collaborate to achieve shared learning goals while actively constructing knowledge. Empirical studies have shown that cooperative learning enhances student engagement, interaction, and overall language achievement, especially at the primary education level (Ming Zhi et al., 2025). Through peer discussion and collaborative tasks, learners are encouraged to actively process grammatical concepts rather than passively receive information.

Beyond its cognitive benefits, cooperative learning has also been found to positively influence students' affective dimensions in language learning. Previous studies indicate that cooperative learning can enhance students' motivation, confidence, and self-efficacy in learning English (Qomariah et al., 2024). When learners work collaboratively, they tend to experience a more supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety and increases willingness to participate. This supportive atmosphere contributes to lower language anxiety and greater classroom involvement among EFL learners (Meilasari et al., 2023; Gedikli & Başbay, 2020).

Despite its potential advantages, the implementation of cooperative learning in English classrooms is not without challenges. Effective application requires teachers to possess adequate skills in classroom management, group organization, and instructional design. Prior research indicates that the success of cooperative learning largely depends on teachers' consistency and fidelity in applying cooperative principles during instruction (Hermawan, 2024; Tamimy et al., 2023). Without careful planning and appropriate guidance, cooperative learning activities may fail to achieve their intended pedagogical outcomes.

Although a growing body of research has examined cooperative learning in EFL contexts, most studies have focused on general language skills, learner attitudes, or affective



outcomes. Empirical investigations that specifically explore the teaching of grammatical structures, particularly comparative degree, at the elementary school level remain limited. Pawlak and Csizér (2023) suggest that learners' grammar learning strategies vary considerably depending on instructional contexts, while Handayani and Wardana (2025) emphasize the effectiveness of interactive grammar-based instruction in improving learners' grammatical understanding and confidence. In light of these gaps, the present study aims to examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in enhancing fifth graders' understanding of comparative degree at Fathona Islamic School Palembang, thereby contributing a focused and innovative perspective to grammar instruction for young EFL learners.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design employing a non-equivalent control group to investigate the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving students' mastery of comparative degrees. Two intact fifth-grade classes were involved, consisting of an experimental group and a control group, both of which completed a pre-test and a post-test. The experimental group was taught using the Cooperative Learning Strategy through the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) model, whereas the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction. To ensure internal validity, both groups were exposed to identical learning objectives, instructional content, instructional duration, and assessment formats, with the instructional approach serving as the sole manipulated variable.

The research population comprised all fifth-grade students at Fathona Islamic School Palembang during the 2024/2025 academic year. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select two classes with comparable characteristics, particularly similar English proficiency levels based on previous semester achievement scores. A total of 30 students participated in the study, with 15 students assigned to the experimental group and 15 students to the control group. To reduce potential instructor-related bias, the same English teacher conducted instruction for both groups throughout the intervention period.

Data were collected using a grammar achievement test designed to assess students' understanding of comparative degree forms. The instrument consisted of 25 items, including multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions, allowing measurement of both receptive and productive grammatical knowledge. Content validity was established through expert judgment by two experienced English teachers, while reliability was ensured through a pilot test administered to a different group of students. The research procedure involved four stages—preparation, pre-testing, treatment, and post-testing—conducted over four instructional sessions, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test to identify statistically significant differences between the two groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the empirical findings concerning the comparison of students' learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups following the implementation of different instructional strategies. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for both groups, providing an overview of students' performance before and after the instructional intervention. As shown in Table 1, both groups demonstrated improvement; however, the increase in post-test scores was substantially greater in the experimental group than in the control group. This difference indicates that the instructional strategy applied in the

experimental group was associated with higher learning gains in mastering comparative degree structures.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
Experimental Group	67.6	85.4	+17.8
Control Group	66.9	72.8	+5.9

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the experimental group exhibited a marked increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test, reflecting a notable improvement in students' understanding of comparative degree following the cooperative learning intervention. In contrast, the control group showed a relatively modest gain, suggesting more limited progress under conventional instruction. These differences in learning gains indicate varying levels of instructional effectiveness between the two groups. For a clearer visual comparison of pre-test and post-test performance across groups, the data are illustrated in Figure 1.

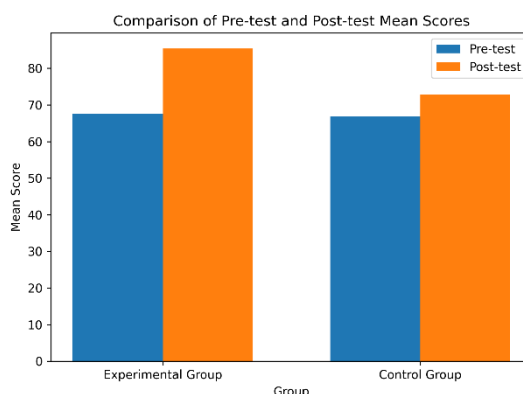


Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

Further statistical analysis using an independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of 4.35 with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. This result confirms that the observed differences in learning outcomes were unlikely to occur by chance. Consistent with the descriptive statistics and graphical presentation, students in the experimental group achieved higher post-test performance than those in the control group following the instructional intervention. Overall, these findings demonstrate that cooperative learning resulted in superior learning outcomes compared to conventional teaching methods in teaching comparative degree at the elementary level.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that cooperative learning significantly enhances elementary students' mastery of comparative degree structures in English. Students who participated in instruction using the STAD cooperative learning model showed greater improvement in post-test scores than those taught through conventional methods. This pattern indicates that cooperative learning facilitates more effective grammar learning by engaging students actively in the learning process. These results are consistent with Khan et al. (2022),



who reported that cooperative learning positively influences elementary students' English achievement through increased peer interaction and shared responsibility in learning tasks.

Beyond academic achievement, cooperative learning also supports students' conceptual understanding and social development during the learning process. Alwi et al. (2024) highlight that cooperative learning environments enable learners to collaboratively construct knowledge while simultaneously strengthening communication and interpersonal skills. In the present study, students' active participation in group discussions and task completion suggests that grammar instruction became more meaningful and accessible. Such findings support the view that cooperative learning transforms grammar learning from a teacher-dominated activity into a more interactive and student-centered experience.

Motivation emerged as an important factor associated with students' learning outcomes in this study. The experimental group not only achieved higher post-test scores but also demonstrated increased participation during classroom activities. This finding aligns with Salamah, Rifayanti et al. (2024), who found that cooperative learning significantly enhances learning motivation among elementary students. Similarly, Wasito (2019) emphasized that motivation plays a mediating role between cooperative learning strategies and academic achievement, suggesting that motivated learners are more likely to engage deeply with learning tasks.

Student engagement also played a central role in explaining the effectiveness of cooperative learning in this study. Diastama and Dewi (2021) reported that higher levels of student engagement are closely associated with increased motivation and improved learning outcomes. Through structured group interaction and shared learning goals, cooperative learning in the present study fostered sustained engagement among students. This active involvement likely contributed to students' improved understanding of comparative degrees as well as their willingness to participate confidently in classroom activities.

The structured design of the STAD model further supports both cognitive and social dimensions of learning. Astuti et al. (2021) demonstrated that STAD-based cooperative learning improves academic performance while simultaneously enhancing students' social skills. In addition, Rachman and Setiyawati (2023) found that cooperative learning models consistently increase students' learning motivation across various subject areas. From a theoretical perspective, Zaharatunnisa and Sari (2023) argue that cooperative learning integrates cognitive, affective, and social elements, making it particularly appropriate for grammar instruction at the elementary level.

Although some related studies were conducted at different educational levels or focused on other language skills, they provide valuable insights that reinforce the present findings. For instance, Ramadhani and Franscy (2025) reported that cooperative learning effectively improves students' English-speaking ability at the secondary school level, highlighting the broader pedagogical value of collaborative approaches in EFL contexts. Similarly, Srijatno et al. (2021) found that active learning strategies enhance both motivation and grammar achievement, while Ariyanti et al. (2025) identified motivation as a key determinant of success in EFL classrooms. Taken together, these findings suggest that cooperative learning, as a student-centered instructional strategy, offers a comprehensive approach that supports both cognitive development and motivational engagement in English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that cooperative learning, particularly through the STAD model, constitutes an effective instructional approach for enhancing elementary students'



understanding of comparative degrees in English. Rather than merely improving test scores, the findings indicate that cooperative learning facilitates meaningful engagement, active participation, and collaborative problem-solving during grammar instruction. These outcomes suggest that grammar learning becomes more accessible and meaningful when students are encouraged to interact, explain concepts to peers, and assume shared responsibility for learning. Consequently, cooperative learning can be viewed as a pedagogically sound strategy for addressing grammatical difficulties among young EFL learners.

Beyond its impact on learning outcomes, the study highlights the practical implications of cooperative learning for English language instruction in elementary schools. The structured use of collaborative activities supports not only cognitive development but also social interaction and learner confidence. Teachers are therefore encouraged to integrate cooperative learning systematically into grammar instruction, particularly when teaching abstract grammatical concepts such as comparative degrees. Such integration may contribute to a more learner-centered classroom environment that promotes sustained motivation and active involvement.

Despite these contributions, the findings should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The relatively small sample size and short duration of the intervention may restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research could extend the instructional period, involve more diverse student populations, or examine the application of cooperative learning to other grammatical structures and language skills. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to explore the long-term effects of cooperative learning on students' grammatical retention, motivation, and overall language proficiency.

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