



Effect of Interpersonal and Social Skills in Cooperative Learning on Learners' English Language Speaking in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: English Language speaking practices in Kenyan secondary schools are insufficient to improve students' progress in speaking skills. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of interpersonal and social skills in Cooperative Learning (CL) on secondary school learners' English-speaking skills in Nandi Central Sub-County. The study used the quasi experimental with a non-equivalent control group pre-test post-test design under the mixed methods approach. The sample size was all the form three learners selected schools. The instruments of the study included learners' questionnaire, Learners' English-Speaking Skills Achievement Test and observation guide. These instruments were validated and a Pilot test was done prior to the study whereby a Cronbach coefficient of 0.78 was computed. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in tabular form, while analysis from the observation guide was used for triangulation. The study revealed that there is a statistically significant effect of interpersonal and social skills ($t=2.953$; $df=66$), on learners' achievement in English language speaking. It was concluded that, interpersonal and social skills positively affect learners' achievement in English language speaking. The findings of this study are beneficial to the learners of English language and their teachers in the teaching and learning of speaking skills. They are also important to teacher educators, curriculum developers and the ministry of Education on decision making. The researcher recommends that teachers of English should consider incorporating Cooperative Learning in their teaching of English language speaking skills.

Keywords: Interpersonal, Social Skills, Cooperative Learning, English, Speaking

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1. Introduction

Interpersonal and social skills refer to skills such as giving constructive feedback, reaching consensus, communicating accurately and unambiguously and involving each member in the learning process. Learners must be taught these skills before they tackle the problem to ensure the success of the group in cooperative learning (Baker & Clark in Bores-García et al., 2021). Teachers

should carefully teach their learners the required skills which include instructorship, decision making, trust building, communication and conflict management skills. The teacher is not someone who measures learners' capacities in terms of the final product but someone who acts as a friend, coordinator, director, guide, counselor and facilitator (Fahraeus, 2013). These skills make learners more responsible in their work hence won't depend on their group members to handle their group tasks.

In the recent years, one of the changes in the English language pedagogy has been the shift from a teacher centered learning model to a learner centered learning model. The shift signals a new era in which English speaking teaching should give room to students to express themselves in speaking the language. Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as a means of communication (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). The modern job market requires good command of English, especially of the spoken English. Everybody wishing to get the benefits of modern education, research, science, trade and technology knows that it is impossible without the working knowledge of English language and good communication skills (Crystal, 2010). A learner may have memorized endless lists of vocabulary but cannot speak fluently. A person who speaks effectively is able to receive and respond to information appropriately. He or she is likely to create a favorable impression of one self and therefore interact with others effectively and confidently (Gorjian, 2015).

English as a second language is taught and used as an official language in Kenya as well as a medium of instruction in schools and other learning institutions. It is also a language used for international communication hence those who master and speak it well, reap many academic, social and professional benefits (Efrizal, 2012). In a school set up, proficiency of English will make the learning of other subjects easier. Safitri, Rafli & Dewanti, 2020) have proposed ways of enhancing learners' speaking skills with the help of different methods of teaching, use of appropriate exercises and a learner centered approach to teaching and learning. By use of the teacher centered approach to teaching and learning, teachers seem to do most of the talking and act as the only source of knowledge to students while students are treated as passive recipients in the learning process (Ning, 2011). These types of methods, according to Gomleksiz (2007), have negatively affected students and produced incompetent users of the English language who are unable to improve their speaking skills. On the other hand, in the learner centered approaches, students are given the opportunity to express themselves in speaking the language. English classes are mainly taught using the teacher centered methods (Murrey & Christison, 2010). The available communication and interaction in the classroom are insufficient to enhance learners' speaking skills, which should be developed along other skills (listening, reading and writing). This is because the integration of the skills will enhance the students' ability to communicate.

Teachers need to apply methods and strategies for learner centered instruction and a promising method to traditional speaking instruction is the Cooperative Learning Approach (Hall Haley, & Ferro, 2011). This method serves as the alternative way of teaching for promoting

speaking and social interaction among the students (Ning, 2011). Cooperative learning as per the available research suggestions is of great influence on the development of learners' speaking skills (Al-Sohbani, 2013).

Over the past decade, Cooperative Learning has emerged as the leading new approach to classroom instruction. One important reason for its advocacy is that numerous research studies in various school settings and across a wide range of content areas, have revealed that students completing Cooperative group tasks tend to have higher academic test scores, higher self-esteem, greater comprehension of content and better speaking skills (Naim, Luqman & Matmin, 2020).

The Cooperative Learning Approach is reached through interdependence among all group members rather than working individually. This makes CL produce greater student achievement as opposed to the traditional methodologies (Okolie, *et al.*, 2022). Students who work individually must compete against their peers to gain praise or other forms of rewards and reinforcement unlike in CL where the success of an achievement is beneficial to all members. There is also competition among groups in CL and hence is a solution to a myriad of problems (Pereira & Sithole, 2020).

Cooperative small group instruction provides students with opportunities to explore clarify and internalize ideas among their peers. This kind of classroom conversation helps students develop higher level thinking through the analysis, evaluation synthesis and application of new information (Lynch, 2013). CL has a number of positive outcomes which include academic gain, positive relationship amongst students and improved social and affective development (Naim, Luqman & Matmin, 2020). Weak students working individually are likely to get stuck hence working cooperatively, they keep going. Strong students faced with the task of explaining and clarifying material to weaker students often find gaps in their own speaking skills and try to improve on them (Thompson, Aizawa, Curle, & Rose, 2022).

English language learners are not usually provided with content classes taught in their primary language and they often struggle with the difficult academic material. CL groups enable them to work in a team with other students who have already gained proficiency with the language (Díez-Palomar, Chan, Clarke & Padrós, 2021). This group dynamic does not only provide a supportive environment for learning new content but acquiring English language speaking skills. English classes in Kenya are traditionally teacher centered (Ndiku & Metto, 2014) and this probably may impede learners' speaking skills. There is little communication and interaction between the teachers and the learners in the classroom, which is therefore insufficient in enhancing learners' speaking skills (Kenjali

& Abduramanova, 2022). Insufficient speaking exercises in Kenyan secondary schools fail to improve learners' progress in speaking skills (Kandagor & Rotumoi, 2018). Learning in most of the schools is based on the teacher who is seen as the authority of the classroom and learners have a limited chance to practice their speaking skills and hence find it difficult most of the time to express their thoughts in English (Otieno, 2021).

The use of Cooperative Learning Approach has been extensively researched on (Kristiansen, 2022). Most of the studies indicate that the use of Cooperative Learning, which differ, from the traditional learning methods, has some benefits resulting from the social interaction amongst the learners (Okolie *et al.*, 2022). According to Efrizal (2012) and Gilakjani (2016), speaking is beneficial to overall language development.

Speaking is an important skill to be developed and enhanced in language learners. There is need therefore, to improve the current level of speaking skills among Kenyan secondary school learners. The effects of Cooperative Learning (CL) on learners' speaking has been repeatedly demonstrated and confirmed by studies conducted in first and second language learning classrooms (Bengu, 2014). There is however, very little research done on this area with English language students speaking in Nandi central, Nandi County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

The Cooperative Learning (CL) is defined as an instructional method which students work together in small heterogeneous groups to solve a problem, complete a project or achieve other instructional goals, while teachers act as guides or facilitators (Haugland, Rosenberg, & Aasekjær, 2022). As an educational approach, it aims at organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences (Kristiansen, 2022). It is a situation where students work together in small groups to help themselves and others to learn (Camacho-Minuche, *et al.*, 2021). The CL is an alternative method to lecture based paradigm in the teaching and learning process. It is a learner centered paradigm which has gained popularity. Cooperative learning according to Kim, as cited in Okolie *et al.*, (2022) produces higher learning achievement and motivation. Pereira and Sithole (2020), states that a learner centered approach is solution to a myriad of problems.

The role of teachers using CL shifts from transmission of knowledge to facilitators of student learning (Chan, Maneewan & Koul, 2021). This role involves facilitating, modeling and coaching. Teachers who adopt this role should maintain a safe non-threatening and learner centered environment. This environment of teaching will

help students contribute positively in the cooperative activities assigned to their group (Vellayan, 2021). For the activities to be genuinely cooperative, each type of activity requires the presence of five basic components of CL (Camacho-Minuche, Espinoza-Celinica, & Ulehlova, 2021).

Interpersonal and Social Skills refers to skills such as giving constructive feedback, reaching consensus, communicating accurately and unambiguously and involving each member in the learning process. Learners must be taught these skills before they tackle the problem to ensure the success of the group in cooperative learning (Baker & Clark in Bores-García *et al.*, 2021). Teachers should carefully teach their learners the required skills, which include instructorship, decision making, trust building, communication and conflict management skills. The teacher is not someone who measures learners' capacities in terms of the final product but someone who acts as a friend, coordinator, director, guide, counselor and facilitator (Fahraeus, 2013). These skills make learners more responsible in their work hence won't depend on their group members to handle their group tasks.

Fulcher in Tridinanti, (2018), defines speaking as the verbal uses of language as a medium through which human being communicate. It is an important skill which people need for their day to day communication. Speaking is one of the four related skills in English, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. English speaking skills should therefore be developed alongside these skills so that these integrated skills will enhance communication competence of the learners (Morozova, *et al.*, 2020). Learners can improve their speaking skills through listening and repeating. Teachers can use short questions or dialogue or develop their learners' speaking skills while in CL groups (Safitri, Rafli & Dewanti, 2020). Additionally, Efrizal (2012) and Gilakjani (2016) expressed that speaking is of great significance for the people's interaction when they speak everywhere and every day. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and then better their writing skills students can express their thoughts.

In Kenya today, English is associated with the advancement of technology, trade, tourism, research etc. This therefore makes English an important language in different aspects of life. Most ESL learners in Kenya, especially in Nandi County, have got difficulty in English language speaking skills. They are troubled in grammar, pronunciation, use of tonal variation and turn-taking skills. English language teachers should train learners to attain their oral communication. Chan *et al.*, (2022) states that oral communication can be maintained by having three components which include; accuracy, fluency, pronunciation and intonation.

3. Methodology

This study used the quasi experimental with a non-equivalent control group pre-test and post-test design. This was because the study required a comparison between the learners’ English-speaking skills the pre-test and that of the post-test. This design enables the researcher to identify the effect of the experimental treatment relative to the control treatment, assess the effect of the pre-test and the interaction between the pre-test and treatment condition (Bhat, 2015). It also allows for adequate control

on moderator variables that might affect the internal and external validity of the study. One intact class was selected as the control group and another as the experimental group. The dependent variable was measured by comparing the learners’ speaking skills in the pre-test with the learners’ speaking skills based on CL. The learners of the control group were not exposed to treatment but to regular ways of teaching followed in Kenyan secondary schools. Both groups were given equal opportunities in sharing the same learning materials, schedule and tests Figure 1.

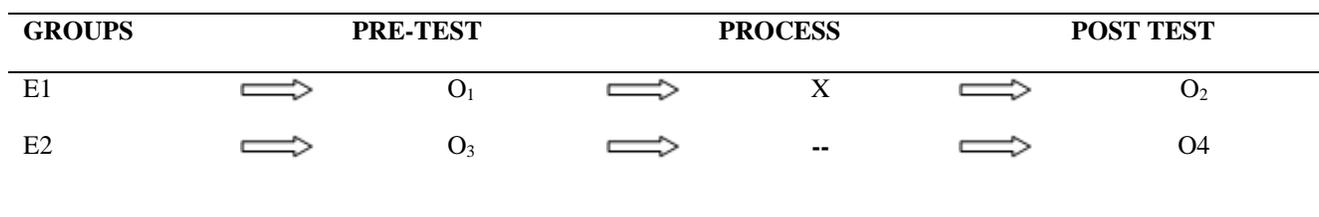


Figure 1: Pre-test and Post-test Research Design

The target population in this study were all the form three students from the 27 day mixed public sub-county secondary schools from Nandi central, Nandi County. However, only two secondary schools with a student population of 73 learners was used where control group had 34 learners while experimental group had 39 learners.

In this study, learners’ English-speaking skills achievement test was used to measure students’ English-speaking skills. It was administered to learners from one control and one experimental group as a pre-test just before the experiment and then to both the two groups again as a post-test after the experiment. The pre-test was administered to the learners from both the control and the experimental groups to assess their ability in English speaking before treatment so as to be in a position to compare the results of the groups at the end of the experiment. A post-test was later administered to find out whether there was any significant change in learners’ English-speaking skills for both the groups after treatment of the experimental group.

The researcher further observed the experimental class every time they had their CL classes to check on learners’ involvement in CL activities as she facilitated on the lessons. The total number of observations made were four. Through observation, the researcher was able to assess how frequent learners used English speaking skills which were being studied here in and whether there was any improvement on the same or not as time progressed. In addition, a three-point scale Likert questionnaire was administered to learners of the experimental group at the end of the experiment to find out their views on the use of

Cooperative Learning in their learning of English speaking skills. The questionnaire had both closed and open-ended questions to enable the researcher collect learners’ background information and their own views on the general use of CLA in their learning of English language speaking skills.

Validity of the research instruments was ensured through expert judgement while Reliability of the questionnaires was done through a test retest technique. The study found Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.794 on items in interpersonal and social skills which had four items. The Cronbach alpha coefficient were higher than the minimum acceptable value, hence, the items were considered reliable. A Cronbach alpha of equal or more than 0.70 was considered adequate to allow the researcher proceed with the study (Creswell, 2014).

Data collected from this study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and inferential statistics, in this case, t-test of the English-speaking achievement test. The results were tabulated with the results of the experimental against that of the control group to determine the influence of CL On learners’ speaking skills. A test for significance was at the significance level of 0.05. Quantitative data has been presented using tables while the qualitative data is presented through reporting and narration.

4. Results and Discussion

For the purpose of analysis, mean and standard deviation from Learners' English-Speaking Skills Achievement Test (LESSAT) were established and summarized in Table 1 and 2. Moreover, frequency and percentage

ratings of students' (experimental group) perceptions for each item in the questionnaire were established and summarized in Table 3. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the variable interpersonal and social skills effect.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Interpersonal and Social Skills in CL Pre-Test

	Treatments	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interpersonal and social skills pretest	Experimental group	34	35.62	7.471
	Control group	34	35.32	6.270

The results in Table 1 show the pre-test mean scores of LESSAT E= (M = 35.62, SD = 7.471) which was greater than C = (M = 35.32, SD = 6.270). Since these were raw scores, a t-test was undertaken to establish whether the difference between the sets of scores for experimental and

control groups were statistically significant. Moreover, to establish the effect of CL interpersonal and social skills on learners' English language speaking skills, a mean gain analysis was done on pre and post-test means as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for mean gain analysis on interpersonal and social skills in CL

SCALE	Experimental group	Control group
Post-test means	44.85	39.68
Pre-test mean	35.62	35.32
Mean Gain	9.23	4.36

Table 2 shows the mean gain analysis for Experimental and Control groups. These results show that the mean gain for Experimental group (9.23) for interpersonal and social skills is more than that of Control group (4.36). This may have been as a result of the treatment that was given to the Experimental group. Learners may have had enough time to practice their speaking while in cooperative learning groups leading to the improvement of the English-speaking skills. A progressive improvement on learners' use of turn taking, polite interruption and careful listening to other people's opinions was observed. The skill was rarely observed at the beginning of the study but by the second week it was noticed more often. This is in

agreement with Scheurell, in Chan, et al., (2021) who explains that interpersonal and social skills in CL brings about a great improvement in learners' English language speaking skills since members feel free to openly communicate with each other as they express concerns. It is also supported by Sobhani (2012) and Bores-García et al., (2021) who agree that social skills in CL lead to improved English speaking skills.

Further learners' perception on the effect of interpersonal and social skills on learners' English language speaking skills was analysed. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for effect of interpersonal and social skills in CL on Learners' English Speaking Skills

Statements	False		Undecided		True	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Through cooperative learning I have learnt to apply the skill of turn-taking in English speaking.	3	9.1	7	21.2	23	69.7
In cooperative groups I learnt to listen carefully to other people's opinions.	9	27.3	4	12.1	20	60.6
In cooperative groups I learnt how to predict when my turn to speak comes by to speak	5	15.2	10	30.3	18	54.5
In cooperative groups I learnt to apply the skill of polite interruption in speaking.	6	18.2	3	9.1	24	72.7

Table 4 shows that majority 23(69.7%) of the learners stated that, it was true that through cooperative learning, students had learnt to apply the skill of turn taking in English speaking, 7(21.2%) learners were undecided on the statement and 3(9.1%) learners indicated that the statement was false. In addition, most 20(60.6%) of the learners believed that, it was true in cooperative groups, students learnt to listen carefully to other people's opinions, 9(27.3%) learners indicated that the statement was false, while 4(12.1%) of the learners were undecided on the statement. The findings were supported by what was observed that: always, through cooperative groups, students had learnt to apply the skill of turn taking in English speaking and could also listen carefully to other people's opinions. This implies that for improved learners English speaking skills, teachers should adopt interpersonal and social skills to enable learners apply the skill of turn taking in English speaking, listen carefully to other people's opinions, predict when their turn to speak comes by and apply the skill of polite interruption in speaking.

Similarly, majority 18(54.5%) of the learners believed that, it was true in cooperative groups, students learnt how to predict when their turn to speak comes by, 10(30.3%) learners were undecided and 5(15.2%) of the learners indicated that the statement was false. Lastly, most 24(72.7%) learners were of the opinion that, it was true in cooperative groups, students learnt to apply the skill of polite interruption in speaking, 6(18.2%) learners indicated that the statement was false and 3(9.1%) learners were undecided on the statement. The findings were supported by what was observed that: through cooperative groups, students learnt how to predict when their turn to speak comes and could also apply the skill of polite

interruption in speaking. Learners could all want to speak at ago as the study began such that the conversation could transform into a quarrel. They also were observed to interrupt others as they spoke and could rarely pay attention to other members' contributions. All these were seen to have progressively improved as learners worked in their cooperative groups. By the end of the study, learners took turns in speaking, politely interrupted their colleagues and closely paid attention to their group members as they spoke which is in line with Ning (2011) who argues that CL provides opportunities for interaction among students and increases their participation to discussion in class.

The results are in line with the findings of Carmichael (2009) that, learners must be taught these skills before they tackle the problem. Teachers should carefully teach their learners the required skills. The teacher is not someone who measures learners' capacities in terms of the final product but someone who acts as a friend, coordinator, director, guide, counselor and facilitator. Kothandabang and Bagarathi (2011) too support this when they state that students placed in CL group feel a sense of belonging and learn to ask for and receive help hence learn to speak in English language and improve on the same. This descriptive statistics analysis of objective two was followed by an independent sample t test to establish the effect of interpersonal and social skills on students' achievement in Learners' English-Speaking skills. This was analyzed under the following sub-section.

The study hypothesis stated that;

H0₂: There is no statistically significant effect of interpersonal and social skills on students' achievement in

Table 5: Independent sample t test of the Pre-test Mean Scores on LESSAT for interpersonal and social skills Pretest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Interpersonal and social skills pretest	Equal variances assumed	.982	.325	.176	66	.861	.294	1.673	-3.046	3.634
	Equal variances not assumed			.176	64.072	.861	.294	1.673	-3.048	3.636

The results of Table 5 indicate that the difference between the mean score on LESSAT for interpersonal and social skills in the experimental group and in the control group were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. It shows that the calculated t-value was .176 with a degree of freedom of 66. Since the critical t is higher than the calculated t, the findings are not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ and thus the null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant effect of interpersonal and social skills on students' achievement in Learners English language speaking was accepted

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that, interpersonal and social skills have a statistically significant positive effect on learners English Speaking Skills. That is, interpersonal and social skills help students to apply the skill of turn taking in English speaking, listen carefully to other people's

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opinions, predict when their turn to speak comes by and apply the skill of polite interruption in speaking. Moreover, face to face promotive interaction has a statistically significant positive effect on learners English Speaking Skills. That is face to face promotive interactive helps students to identify and separate homophones in English speaking, pronounce English words correctly in speaking and separate long vowels from short vowels in speaking.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that teachers to consider and use cooperative learning as one of the new methods that can help to improve learners English Speaking Skills. In addition, curriculum developers should consider incorporating cooperative learning as one of the important teaching methods which can help in acquisition of knowledge in English Speaking by mobilizing both teachers of English language and other stakeholders through workshops

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