A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODELS ON THE ORAL ENGLISH FLUENCY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN GUANGXI, CHINA[*]

Mingzhen Bao

Faculty of Education North Bangkok University, Thailand

Corresponding Author's Email: Mingzhen.Bao@northbkk.ac.th

Abstract

The objectives of this study are: 1) to examine the impact of cooperative learning models on students' oral English fluency; 2) to assess students' satisfaction with cooperative learning; 3) to analyze the relationship between satisfaction dimensions and fluency performance; and 4) to propose strategies for enhancing oral instruction effectiveness. This research adopts a quasi-experimental design. The population consists of English majors at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages, and the sample comprises 60 students, equally divided into experimental and control groups selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using oral fluency tests and satisfaction questionnaires, and analyzed through descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, correlation, and regression analysis.

The research results show that: 1) cooperative learning significantly improved students' oral fluency, particularly in coherence and lexical resource

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dimensions; 2) group interaction and feedback mechanisms were the strongest predictors of fluency enhancement; 3) students reported high satisfaction with cooperative learning in terms of motivation, collaboration, and mutual support; and 4) cooperative learning proved more effective than traditional instruction in developing speaking confidence and communicative competence. The study concludes that cooperative learning models provide an effective pedagogical approach for improving oral English proficiency in EFL contexts, especially within resource-limited regions such as Guangxi. The recommended strategies include refining group task design, integrating technology-enhanced interaction, and strengthening multi-level feedback systems to ensure sustainable improvement in students' speaking performance.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning Model, Oral English Fluency, Group Interaction, Feedback Mechanism, Task Allocation

Introduction

The accelerating pace of globalization, English has become the dominant language of international communication, education, and trade. Oral English fluency, as an essential component of communicative competence, directly determines learners' ability to engage in global dialogue and professional exchange. In the Chinese higher education system, however, many college students still demonstrate weak oral proficiency, particularly in underdeveloped regions such as Guangxi, where limited resources, inadequate exposure to authentic language environments, and traditional lecture-based instruction impede progress. The teacher-centered model, which prioritizes grammatical accuracy and test performance over communication, has long resulted in what Chinese scholars' term "mute English," where students can read and write but struggle to speak fluently and confidently (Wang Tan, 2002).

To address these persistent challenges, educational researchers have increasingly turned to learner-centered instructional strategies that promote communication, interaction, and collaboration. Among these, the cooperative learning model (CLM) has attracted significant attention for its capacity to improve language performance and learner engagement. Developed in the 1970s by Slavin (1994) and later expanded by Johnson and Johnson (1999), the cooperative learning model encourages students to work collaboratively in small groups, where each member contributes to shared goals and benefits from mutual support and feedback. This interactive environment allows students to negotiate meaning, share ideas, and construct knowledge collectively—an approach that aligns closely with theories of social constructivism and second language acquisition. Existing research has demonstrated that cooperative learning enhances students' motivation, participation, and academic achievement across disciplines. In English language education, it has been particularly effective in promoting oral communication and reducing anxiety (Kim Ji Sun, 2017; Jiang Dongmei et al., 2013). By providing structured opportunities for peer interaction, cooperative learning enables students to practice target language forms in authentic communicative contexts, improving not only the fluency but also the coherence, vocabulary range, and confidence of learners. Yet despite extensive global research on cooperative learning, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical studies focusing on Chinese university students in Guangxi. Most previous research in China has concentrated on primary or vocational education, leaving the context of higher education relatively underexplored. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap by examining how cooperative learning models influence the oral English fluency of university students in Guangxi. The research specifically investigates whether cooperative learning significantly improves students' speaking performance compared with traditional instruction, how students perceive their learning experiences under this model, and which elements of cooperative learning—such as group

interaction, feedback, or shared responsibility—contribute most to fluency development. Through quantitative analysis based on classroom experiments, oral tests, and satisfaction surveys, this study aims to provide empirical evidence and pedagogical insight into the implementation of cooperative learning in EFL speaking classes.

The significance of this research is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the integration of cooperative learning principles into second language acquisition, offering localized evidence from the Chinese higher education context. Practically, it provides language teachers in Guangxi and similar regions with a student-centered, empirically supported approach to improve speaking proficiency and learner motivation. By emphasizing collaboration, communication, and shared accountability, cooperative learning has the potential to transform passive classrooms into dynamic spaces of linguistic interaction and mutual growth, paving the way toward more effective and equitable English education in China.

Objectives

1．To examine the impact of cooperative learning models on college students' oral English fluency.

2．To assess students' satisfaction levels with the application of cooperative learning in oral English classes.

3．To analyze the relationship between different dimensions of satisfaction (e.g., interaction, feedback, task allocation) and students' oral fluency performance.

4．To propose pedagogical strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of oral English instruction through cooperative learning approaches.

Literature Review

The cooperative learning model (CLM) has emerged as a vital pedagogical approach in the evolution of English language education, aligning with constructivist learning theory and social interdependence theory. The model emphasizes the development of students' communicative competence through collaboration, interaction, and shared responsibility within small learning groups (Slavin, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, cooperative learning allows learners to engage in meaningful dialogue and co-construct knowledge, leading to deeper understanding and higher retention. It shifts the teacher's role from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator and designer of interactive learning experiences. This pedagogical shift represents not only a methodological innovation but also a philosophical realignment toward learner autonomy, reflective thinking, and collaborative problem-solving (Wang Tan, 2002).

Cooperative learning is grounded in several theoretical frameworks, including social constructivist theory, cognitive development theory, and motivation theory. Social constructivism, rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development," posits that learning occurs through social interaction, where peers scaffold one another's understanding. Within cooperative learning, group members exchange knowledge, negotiate meaning, and engage in peer correction, which directly contributes to oral fluency development. Cognitive development theory, proposed by Piaget (1970), reinforces this by asserting that cognitive restructuring occurs when learners interact with peers who possess diverse perspectives and knowledge levels. Such collaboration enhances higher-order thinking and critical reasoning, which are crucial for language organization and fluency. Meanwhile, motivation theory explains that cooperative learning fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through social interdependence and shared achievement (Slavin, 1995). When learners experience success as a

group, their self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in the target language increase, resulting in more fluent oral performance.

From an empirical perspective, cooperative learning has been extensively validated as an effective approach to improving oral English proficiency across different educational levels. For instance, Kim Ji Sun (2017) found that cooperative learning significantly enhanced Korean EFL learners' oral performance and reduced their speaking anxiety. Similar results were reported in studies by Ying Jieqiong and Ning Qiang (2017), who demonstrated that cooperative learning could improve both fluency and accuracy in college English speaking classes by providing authentic communicative contexts and promoting peer feedback. In China, where many students suffer from limited exposure to English-speaking environments, this model provides an alternative pathway to overcome linguistic inhibition and anxiety (Jiang Dongmei et al., 2013). The findings consistently reveal that interaction-rich group work increases speaking frequency, lexical variety, and coherence—core elements of oral fluency.

Oral fluency itself is a multidimensional construct that reflects not only the speed and accuracy of speech but also coherence, lexical resource, and confidence in communication. Researchers define oral English fluency as the ability to produce speech smoothly, coherently, and appropriately, encompassing five interrelated components: rate of speech, coherence, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and self-confidence (Lennon, 1990; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Nation, 2001; Ellis, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Fluency, therefore, involves both linguistic competence and psychological readiness. It is affected by cognitive load, working memory capacity, and social affective factors such as anxiety and self-perception. Empirical findings by Zhen Fengchao (2009) demonstrated that the mastery of lexical chunks and formulaic expressions contributes to fluency by reducing processing time and cognitive burden.

Similarly, Alshehri (2024) showed that learners with higher working memory capacity exhibited greater fluency in both conversation and monologue tasks, reinforcing the cognitive dimension of spoken performance.

The integration of cooperative learning within oral English pedagogy can thus be understood through these theoretical and empirical intersections. By fostering peer-to-peer interaction, the model creates an authentic communicative environment in which learners negotiate meaning and refine their language output through feedback cycles. Each of the five key dimensions of cooperative learning—group interaction, task allocation, shared goals, responsibility, and feedback mechanisms—contributes uniquely to fluency development (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1994; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Group interaction increases the amount of comprehensible input and output, while appropriate task allocation ensures equal participation. Shared goals establish collective accountability, motivating each member to perform effectively. Responsibility promotes individual engagement, preventing social loafing, and feedback mechanisms provide immediate corrective and affective reinforcement. Together, these dimensions produce a self-sustaining learning ecology in which fluency can flourish. A growing body of literature has explored learners' satisfaction with cooperative learning models, emphasizing the affective and behavioral dimensions of engagement. Huang Sheng (2022) found that satisfaction with cooperative learning strongly predicts oral performance in IELTS speaking training, particularly in aspects of speech rate and coherence. Similarly, Zhang Ge and Yang Chen (2017) developed a multidimensional satisfaction scale, highlighting that interaction quality, task appropriateness, and teacher support are key determinants of learners' positive perceptions. Satisfaction has also been shown to mediate the relationship between cooperative processes and learning outcomes. In contexts such as Guangxi, where English exposure is limited, students' satisfaction correlates not only with linguistic improvement but also with increased self-confidence and social connectedness. This suggests that

emotional engagement serves as both a consequence and a catalyst of successful cooperative learning. The interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996) and the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) further provide theoretical support for this relationship. The interaction hypothesis posits that language learners develop proficiency through negotiation of meaning during communicative exchanges, while the output hypothesis emphasizes the role of speaking in consolidating linguistic knowledge. Cooperative learning combines these principles by providing structured opportunities for both input and output, enabling learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage and self-correct through interaction. This cyclical process strengthens lexical retrieval, sentence formulation, and discourse organization, which are central to fluency. Studies conducted in China (Huang Lihua, 2018; Lin Shengqiang, 2019) and abroad (Puji Astuti & Lammers, 2017) consistently confirm that cooperative learning improves students' fluency, motivation, and self-efficacy. Jiang Lingna (2016) reported that group-based oral practice enhanced learners' spontaneity and reduced anxiety, while Li Yamei (2015) observed that cooperative learning strengthened self-efficacy—a critical predictor of fluency. Moreover, research by Gao Ming (2019) addressing "mute English" in high school contexts revealed that group collaboration provided more authentic speaking opportunities, leading to sustained improvement in learners' speech rate and coherence. Collectively, these findings suggest that cooperative learning is not only a pedagogical technique but also a psychosocial mechanism that transforms learners' beliefs, attitudes, and communicative behaviors. In sum, the cooperative learning model represents a comprehensive instructional paradigm that integrates social interaction, cognitive engagement, and emotional fulfillment. It encourages learners to practice language in meaningful, supportive settings that mirror real-life communication, enabling the gradual automatization of speech. For university students in Guangxi, where access to English-speaking

environments is constrained, this model provides a powerful and feasible approach to overcoming traditional learning barriers. The convergence of theory and empirical evidence underscores that cooperative learning, when effectively implemented, enhances both the performance and satisfaction dimensions of language learning—ultimately fostering confident, fluent, and globally competent communicators.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the effect of cooperative learning models on students' oral English fluency and satisfaction. The experiment was conducted at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages with a total of 60 English major students, who were purposively selected and divided into two groups: an experimental group (cooperative learning model) and a control group (traditional instruction). The experiment lasted four weeks. Both groups received instruction on the same speaking topics and content, but the teaching approaches differed: the experimental group engaged in small-group cooperative learning activities, while the control group followed teacher-centered lessons. Two primary research instruments were used: Oral English fluency tests (pre-test and post-test) to measure improvements in speaking performance in dimensions such as rate of speech, coherence, vocabulary use, and self-confidence. Student satisfaction questionnaire to evaluate learners' perceptions of the cooperative learning process, including interaction, task allocation, shared goals, responsibility, and feedback mechanisms. Data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, correlation, and regression analysis to determine the differences between groups, relationships among variables, and predictors of oral fluency improvement. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software, with significance set at the 0.05 level.

Result

The data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings are summarized in the following tables.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Oral English Fluency (Post-Test)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Experimental Group (Cooperative Learning)	30	83.47	4.12	4.621	0.000**	Significantly higher
Control Group (Traditional Teaching)	30	77.63	5.08	—	—	Lower performance

Table 1 compares students' post-test oral fluency scores between the cooperative learning group and the traditional group. The experimental group scored higher (M = 83.47) than the control group (M = 77.63), and the difference was statistically significant (t = 4.621, p < 0.01). This indicates that the cooperative learning model effectively enhanced students' oral English fluency by promoting interaction, communication, and confidence compared to traditional instruction.

Table 2 Correlation and Regression Analysis between CLM Dimensions and Oral Fluency

Cooperative Learning Dimension	Pearson's r	Sig.	Regression	t-value	Interpretation
Group Interaction	0.621**	0.000	0.358	4.271**	Strong positive correlation
Task Allocation	0.473**	0.001	0.244	3.612**	Moderate positive correlation
Shared Goals	0.422*	0.015	0.187	2.485*	Positive correlation
Responsibility	0.510**	0.004	0.265	3.964**	Significant predictor

Feedback Mechanism	0.684**	0.000	0.396	4.801**	Strongest predictor

Table 2 shows the relationships between the five dimensions of the cooperative learning model and students' oral English fluency. All dimensions have positive and significant correlations with fluency (p < 0.05). Among them, feedback mechanism (r = 0.684) and group interaction (r = 0.621) show the strongest effects, meaning that active communication and constructive feedback greatly improve students' speaking performance. The regression results also confirm these two factors as the most influential predictors of oral fluency, emphasizing that cooperative communication and timely feedback are key to developing fluent and confident speakers.

The results validate the effectiveness of the cooperative learning model in improving oral fluency among Guangxi university students. Learners in the experimental group demonstrated more fluent, confident, and coherent speech, and expressed higher satisfaction with the learning process. These findings align with the theoretical predictions of social constructivism and motivation theory, affirming that peer collaboration and feedback mechanisms facilitate both linguistic and affective gains in oral communication.

Conclusions

Based on the quasi-experimental research conducted at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages, the study concludes that the cooperative learning model (CLM) significantly enhances students' oral English fluency compared to traditional teacher-centered instruction. The research employed both quantitative and experimental methods, involving 60 English major students divided into experimental and control groups over a four-week period. Data were collected through oral fluency pre- and post-tests and a student satisfaction questionnaire, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, correlation, and regression analysis.

The experimental results show that the cooperative learning group achieved a higher mean score (M = 83.47) than the traditional group (M = 77.63), with a statistically significant difference (p < 0.01). This confirms that structured group learning activities, peer interaction, and shared responsibility directly improve learners' oral fluency, especially in rate of speech, coherence, and self-confidence.

Correlation and regression analyses further indicate that all five CLM dimensions—group interaction, task allocation, shared goals, responsibility, and feedback mechanism—positively influence oral fluency. Among these, feedback mechanism (r = 0.684, β = 0.396) and group interaction (r = 0.621, β = 0.358) are the strongest predictors, emphasizing the importance of communication and feedback in oral performance development. Students also reported high satisfaction levels with cooperative learning, reflecting its effectiveness in fostering motivation, engagement, and confidence. The findings align with social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), cognitive development theory (Piaget, 1970), and motivation theory (Slavin, 1995), supporting the idea that language learning occurs through interaction, collaboration, and shared achievement. Practically, the study suggests that English educators in Guangxi and similar EFL contexts should integrate cooperative learning strategies—such as group discussions, peer evaluation, and feedback sessions—into oral instruction to create more dynamic, participatory classrooms. In conclusion, the cooperative learning model is proven—through systematic experimental evidence—to be an effective and sustainable pedagogical approach that enhances not only students' oral English fluency but also their satisfaction and confidence. By applying cooperative learning principles, educators can transform traditional English classrooms into interactive learning communities that nurture communicative competence, teamwork, and lifelong learning skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the cooperative learning model (CLM) significantly improves students' oral English fluency compared with traditional teacher-centered instruction. The higher post-test mean score of the experimental group demonstrates that structured group interaction and shared responsibility promote fluency, coherence, and confidence in speaking. These results are consistent with prior research by Kim (2017) and Huang (2018), which emphasized that cooperative learning enhances learners' communicative competence through peer interaction and active participation. The regression analysis further revealed that feedback mechanism and group interaction were the strongest predictors of oral fluency improvement. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which posits that language learning occurs through social interaction within the learner's zone of proximal development. Effective feedback allows students to identify linguistic gaps and self-correct, while interaction provides opportunities to practice and negotiate meaning—both essential processes for oral language development. Moreover, students in the experimental group reported higher satisfaction with cooperative learning activities, highlighting positive effects on motivation, collaboration, and mutual support. This aligns with motivation theory (Slavin, 1995), suggesting that shared goals and group accountability increase learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement. In the Guangxi context, where exposure to authentic English environments is limited, cooperative learning provides a meaningful and supportive framework for real communication, thereby reducing anxiety and fostering learner confidence. Overall, the study's results demonstrate that cooperative learning not only enhances linguistic performance but also strengthens affective and social dimensions of learning. It encourages active participation, peer support, and reflective thinking—key elements in developing long-term communicative competence in EFL settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of oral English instruction through the cooperative learning model (CLM): Integrate cooperative learning activities systematically into English speaking courses. Teachers should design structured group tasks such as discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving exercises that encourage interaction, negotiation of meaning, and authentic communication among students. Enhance feedback mechanisms within group activities. Both teacher and peer feedback should be continuous, constructive, and specific. Incorporating digital tools or learning platforms can help provide timely feedback and record students' progress in fluency and accuracy. Refine group task design and role allocation. Teachers should ensure balanced participation by assigning clear roles (e.g., leader, recorder, speaker) to each member. This prevents dominance by a few students and promotes responsibility and accountability within teams.

Integrate technology to support interaction. Online collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom breakout rooms, Padlet, or Google Classroom) can extend communicative practice beyond the classroom, allowing students to interact more frequently and receive immediate feedback.

Provide professional development for teachers. Training workshops should be conducted to help educators understand cooperative learning principles, classroom management strategies, and assessment methods for communicative competence. Conduct longitudinal and mixed-method studies. Future research should examine the long-term impact of cooperative learning on different aspects of English proficiency and explore qualitative insights into students' experiences and perceptions.

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