European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching
ISSN: 2537 - 1754
ISSN-L: 2537 - 1754
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/edu

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1145450 Volume 3 | Issue 1 | 2018

THE EFFECT OF COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING ON EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

Farnaz Masoud Kabir,
Ghasem Aghajanzadeh Kiasi[i]
Department of English Language,
Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Rasht, Iran

Abstract
The present study investigated the effect of collaborative strategic reading on the Iranian EFL students' achievements in English reading comprehension and vocabulary. To this cause, a true experimental design was utilized to examine the differences in students' achievements in reading comprehension and vocabulary gain under two different treatments of collaborative strategic reading and traditional instruction. A sample of QPT was conducted to check the general language proficiency of students and save their homogeneity. Forty students were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. Two pretests of reading comprehension and vocabulary were also administrated to know their initial levels of the skills. The experimental group received instruction on reading comprehension and vocabulary via collaborative strategic reading. The control group, however, received the usual processes of teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary. Two posttests of reading comprehension and vocabulary were administered to the both groups. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that providing collaborative strategic reading affected the students' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition in the experimental group. The findings can be beneficial to teachers to favor pair or group work on the grounds that it forces participation and offers more opportunities for language use.

Keywords: collaborative strategic reading, reading comprehension, vocabulary, EFL context

1. Introduction

In the context of EFL, there is a closed inter-relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge is one of the many

[i] Correspondence: email aghajanzadeh@iaurasht.ac.ir

basic elements of text reading comprehension. This is in line with what Min and Hsu (as cited in Hashemzadeh, 2012) state that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading comprehension and the other way around. In terms of constructing meaning of the text, the readers need to know most of the vocabulary and the contextual meanings used in the text. A better understanding of the vocabulary meaning will produce a better understanding on the whole meaning of the text. However, in the EFL context, knowing all meaning of words still cannot guarantee that someone will simply be able to comprehend the whole meaning of the text

Collaborative learning is a process through which students with various abilities, gender, nationalities, and different level of social skills carry out their learning process by working in small groups and helping each other (Bölükbaş, Keskin, & Polat, 2011). The authors note that collaborative learning is a pedagogical use of small groups which enables students to maximize both their own and others' learning. As a learner-centered method, collaborative learning is a teaching method by which learners study by helping one another in small groups in their learning process in order to achieve a common objective (Açıkgöz, as cited in Bölükbaş, et al, 2001).

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is a set of instructional strategies designed to improve the reading comprehension of students with diverse abilities (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000). Teachers implement CSR at the classroom level using scaffolded instruction to guide students in the independent use of four comprehension strategies. The goals are to improve reading comprehension and conceptual learning so that academic performance also improves. Because CSR involves changes to teachers' instructional practices, regardless of subject matter, it can be used with a variety of curricula and in a variety of settings. According to Johnson and Johnson (2003), it refers to a reading comprehension program that uses explicit instruction, group collaborations, and scaffolding.

As Klingner, Vaughn, Dimino, Schumm, and Bryant (2001) state, CSR places an emphasis on small group work and teacher-assisted learning in turn. Scaffolding is used to present a new text and teach students how to break up reading into stages. By first completing the task in full, and then slowly allowing more student control over the assignment and less teacher instruction. Emphasis is not only put on peer-mediated learning, but also on insuring that all students' have the skills necessary to accomplish peer-mediated learning.

The study of L2 interaction focusing on collaboration draws on the sociocultural claim that learning is a socially situated activity. Higher cognitive functions appear first on the intermental or social plane and on the intramental or psychological plane. Research (e.g., Dobao, 2014) conducted from this perspective supports the use in the L2 classroom of tasks that encourage learners to work together and collaborate in the solution of their language-related problems.

Researchers (e.g., Klingner & Vaughn 2000; Klingner et al., 2001; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996) in this area indicate that students who were afforded the opportunity to practice their second language in classrooms that employed

cooperative learning demonstrated a broader array of language functions than students in classrooms that were predominantly teacher directed.

The researcher believes that reading comprehension and vocabulary achieved by the learners working in pairs have a direct influence on task performance. Pairs tend to produce linguistically more accurate texts than individual learners (Dobao, 2014). August and Shanahan (2006) argue that non-native English speakers often acquire basic literacy skills (that is, word reading) at rates comparable to native English speakers, but not in the area of comprehension, for which depth of vocabulary knowledge and familiarity with syntax play a large role (Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002).

To attain a more satisfactory result, many efforts have been taken by teachers, researchers as well as stakeholders. Various teaching methods and learning strategies have been tried and applied in the context of EFL. Collaborative learning is one of them. Therefore, because limited English language skills put English language learners at risk for developing academic difficulties (August & Shanahan, 2006; Gersten, 1996), and because this population represents a growing segment of students across the country, it is important to evaluate whether CSR could be an effective means of improving student reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge in Iranian EFL context of education. A majority of EFL learners struggle with literacy. According to Biancarosa and Snow (2006), *"very few older struggling readers need help to read the words on a page; their most common problem is that they are not able to comprehend what they read, and obviously, the challenge is not a small one"* (p. 3). Over the next 20 years, a large body of research emerged on methods for explicitly teaching reading comprehension to students in the upper elementary grades (Carlisle & Rice, 2002). The goal of these methods is to teach students to learn from text to discern which information is critical, integrate such information with what is already known, and draw valid inferences.

Students face a daunting challenge in school; they are expected to master the double demands of learning grade-level material and developing proficiency in English (Gersten, 1996; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Given the large number of students in the critical need to enhance the comprehension of all students, it would seem important to provide reading comprehension instruction that is effective with EFL students. August and Shanahan (2006) argue that non-native English speakers often acquire basic literacy skills (that is, word reading) at rates comparable to native English speakers, but not in the area of comprehension, for which depth of vocabulary knowledge and familiarity with syntax play a large role (Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002).

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The present study, however, was done using a quantitative research method employing a true-experimental design pretest –treatment- posttest design to answer the research question that asked if instructing collaborative strategic reading had any significant effect on students' reading comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge.

2. Literature review

Several studies (e.g., Klingner & Vaughn, 2000; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998) have investigated the benefits of peer collaboration by comparing collaborative and individual tasks, that is, the same tasks completed by learners working in pairs and individually. For example, Klingner and Vaughn (2000) suggest that CSR is effective with ELL students because the peer interaction that occurs during cooperative learning is intended to increase students' opportunity to discuss informational text in a non-threatening, low anxiety atmosphere. Cooperative learning permits linguistically diverse students to take advantage of support in their native language from their peers are bilingual (Klingner &Vaughn 2000).

Many researchers suggest that cooperative learning formats may benefit ELL students (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs 2005; Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, Cirino, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2006). Cooperative strategies provide students with an opportunity to talk to peers instead of teachers, and studies show ELL students often benefit from receiving bilingual support from fellow students while communicating in English. For example, Cummins (1984), Hakuta (1990), and Hudelson (1987) reported that comprehension of informational text increased when discussions in the student's native language were used to explain and clarify content. Klingner & Vaughn (2000) suggest that CSR is effective with ELL students because the peer interaction that occurs during cooperative learning is intended to increase students' opportunity to discuss informational text in a non-threatening, low anxiety atmosphere.

CSR was piloted in linguistically diverse classrooms with both ELL and non–ELL students (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000). It has been studied for more than a decade; most of the research (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000; Klingner, et al., 1998) has been case study research without control groups. One quasi-experimental design suggested that CSR has positive effects. Klingner, et al. (1998) explored the efficacy of CSR in five grade 4 social studies classrooms that included both ELL and non–ELL students. Researchers taught students in treatment classrooms to use CSR strategies while reading social studies texts; students in control classrooms were not taught CSR strategies. Students in both groups received typical social studies instruction for 11 sessions lasting 45 minutes each. ELL students constituted 52 percent of students in treatment classrooms and 48 percent of students in control classrooms. The Gates- MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test was used as both a pretest covariate and an outcome measure. Larger gains in reading comprehension scores among students in treatment classrooms were statistically significant. Positive gains were found for both ELL and non–ELL

students, with pretest to posttest change scores favoring CSR students (3.45 for ELL students, 2.22 for non-ELL students).

The Klingner, Vaughn, and Schumm's (1998) study used a quasi-experimental design, which does not provide internal validity as strong as that provided by randomized controlled trials (Bloom 2005; Boruch 1997; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Seven Groups are not formed by random assignment in a quasi-experimental design. Therefore, it is advisable to examine the intervention and control groups to determine whether they are sufficiently similar on observed characteristics. Examination of baseline scores from Klingner et al. (1998) show a 0.11 standardized mean difference favoring the CSR group. Using What Works Clearing house (WWC) guidelines, the groups are sufficiently equivalent at baseline to yield a reasonable estimate of CSR's effects.

Klingner et al (1998) suggest that CSR has positive effects in linguistically diverse classrooms serving both ELL and non–ELL students. Because their quasi-experimental study used a small sample and was conducted within a single school, it is unclear whether CSR is likely to produce a similar effect in wider settings. Moreover, the developers of CSR were directly involved in implementation and provided extensive ongoing support to the teachers, precluding generalization to school settings where support is more limited.

Research also indicates that comprehension strategies should be explicitly taught and modeled long term at all grade levels (Block & Pressley, 2002; Gaskins, 2003: Sweet & Snow, 2003). Initially, comprehension strategies can be taught one at a time (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997) to "*acquaint students with a strategic process*" (Pressley, 2006a, p. 19). According to Pressley (2006b, p. 17), the aim, over time, is to teach "a small repertoire of strategies" so that the children can use them in a "self-regulated fashion" to enhance comprehension.

In a related study, Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, Davis, and Humenick (2004) confirmed that a high number of stimulating tasks increased students' motivation and that motivation has a positive effect on reading comprehension (Tasks must be integrally connected to the content of texts and students' interests to increase motivation). Reading comprehension instruction that explicitly combines motivation practices with strategy instruction increases reading comprehension compared with strategy instruction alone or traditional instruction.

Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005) combined explicit strategy instruction and whole-class activities with cross-age tutoring and same-age peer-tutors. Second-grade students who received explicit strategy instruction and then practiced reading with cross-age (fifth-grade) tutors made similar gains to students who practiced under direct teacher supervision. This was not true of second graders who practiced with same-age peer-tutors.

Berninger, Vermeulen, Abbott, McCutchen, Cotton, and Cude (2003) studied the effectiveness of three instructional approaches in supplementing the core reading program: (a) word recognition training, (b) reading comprehension training, and (c)

combined word recognition and reading comprehension training. They found that (c), combined word recognition and reading training, and (b), reading comprehension training, increased struggling second-grade readers' phonological decoding skills significantly more than did (a), word recognition training or the control condition.

3. Method and Procedures for Data Collection

The initial pool of the Participants of the study consisted of 56 high school students of the third grade were randomly selected from a non-profit high school in Rasht. The participants were tested to make sure of their homogeneity level via a sample of Quick Placement Test containing 60 grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension test items. Having administered the proficiency test, the researcher finally had 40 students that were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups, each of which included 20 students. The researcher administered a pretest on the dependent variables (reading comprehension and vocabulary). Pretest and posttest designs compared students' performance before the treatment with their performance and after the treatment. Then, the treatment was carried out for six sessions for the experimental group and the placebo for the control group. The experimental or intervention group had a workshop-like collaborative atmosphere in which students worked in a closed interaction in reading activity. The group worked in learning teams that were provided with a text, a worksheet, and a reading comprehension and vocabulary test to measure their achievement after the treatment at the end of each class meeting. There were five teams of four students in the collaborative group in which each member of the team has her/his own role of a leader, a writer, a reader, a speaker or as a checker. The roles were aimed at maintaining individual accountability.

The control group was also provided with the same text and the same vocabulary as used in the collaborative group. The difference was that the participants did the activities all alone. They were encouraged to answer all questions on their own way individually. After the treatment, a posttest of reading comprehension and a posttest of vocabulary were administered. The vocabulary items in the test were mainly selected from the new lexical items taught and given exposure to during the course. The whole treatment lasted for six weeks.

4. Data Analyses and Findings

A sample of QPT was administered to select uniform participants with regard to their general English language proficiency. Table 1 presents descriptive data for the participants with regard to their performance on QPT. The test was administered to 56 EFL learners with a maximum possible score of 60 points, and a cut-point of one standard deviation above and below the mean was set. Descriptive statistics for the QPT is available in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics for QPT scores

N	Valid	56
	Missing	0
Mean		32.7500
Median		31.0000
Mode		29.00
Std. Deviation		5.11105
Variance		26.123
Skewness		1.497
Std. Error of Skewness		.309
Kurtosis		2.222
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.608
Minimum		26.00
Maximum		51.00
Sum		1965.00

As displayed in Table 1, the cut-point of (32.75±5.11) was set, and 40 EFL learners whose proficiency scores were within this range of 28 to 36 (intermediate EFL learner) were selected as the main participants of the present study.

The reliability of the reading comprehension and vocabulary tests was measured using Kurder- Richardson Formula 21. The results of the reliability estimates are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability of reading comprehension and vocabulary tests

	Pretest	**Posttest**
Reading Comprehension	0.81	0.82
Vocabulary	0.86	0.89

As seen in Table 2, the reliability of reading comprehension and vocabulary tests was high indicating that the tests were reliably acceptable for the purpose of the research. Moreover, the values of reliability were interpreted according to the reliability criterion recommended by Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott (1994) in which a reliability index beyond .70 is acceptable, and a reliability index of .80 and beyond is considered a good and excellent indices.

Then, the participants were given a reading comprehension test and a vocabulary test separately to examine the possible initial differences between the two groups regarding the skills. Table 3 shows the group statistics of the scores reached on the pretest of reading comprehension and vocabulary for both control and experimental groups.

Table 3: Group statistics for control and experimental groups' pretest of reading comprehension and vocabulary

Pretest scores	**Groups**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Reading Comprehension	control	20	12.60	6.51	1.18
	experimental	20	12.50	5.43	.99
Vocabulary	control	20	11.40	5.88	1.29
	experimental	20	11.55	6.68	.98

For the reading comprehension test administered at the beginning of the study, the mean scores for the control and experimental group were 12.60 and 12.50, respectively. The degree of scatteredness of the scores for the experimental group was slightly smaller than that of the control group ($SD_{experimental\ group}$ = 5.43, $SD_{control\ group}$ = 6.51). However, the results of the vocabulary test administered at the pretest showed a smaller degree of scatteredness for the control group ($SD_{experimental\ group}$ = 6.68, $SD_{control\ group}$ = 5.88), and the mean scores for the control and experimental group were 11.40 and 11.55, respectively.

Table 4 shows the results of an Independent Samples *t*-test used to make an analysis of the students' scores on the pretests. The independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the performance on pretest of reading comprehension and vocabulary for the two groups. The Independent-Samples *t*-test presented the results of Levene's test for the equality of variances which tested whether the variances of scores for the two groups were the same for the reading comprehension and vocabulary tests.

Table 4: The results of independent samples t-test on the pretests of reading comprehension and vocabulary

		Levene's test for equality of variances		**t-test for equality of means**						
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Dif.**	**Std. Er. Dif.**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.**	
									Lower	**Upper**
Reading com. Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.24	.62	.36	38	.715	.20	.54	-.89	1.29
	Equal variances not assumed			.36	37.6	.715	.20	.54	-.89	1.29
Vocabulary Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.25	.61	.34	38	.712	.19	.49	-.82	1.31
	Equal variances not assumed			.34	37.88	.712	.19	.49	-.82	1.31

Based on Table 4, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in pretest of two tests ($p > 0.05$). That is; the control and experimental groups were almost at the same level of proficiency in terms of their reading comprehension and vocabulary in the pretests administered at the beginning of the study. For the pretest of reading comprehension, there was no significant difference in scores for the control (M =12.60, SD = 6.51) and experimental group (M = 12.50, SD = 5.43; t (38) = .36, p = .715**,** two-tailed). Similarly, for the vocabulary pretest, there was also no significant difference in scores for control (M =11.40, SD = 5.98) and Experimental group (M = 11.55, SD = 6.68; t (38) = .34, p = .712**,** two-tailed). In other words, the two groups were approximately at the same level of proficiency in terms of their reading comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge in the tests administered at the beginning of the study

The effect size statistics provided an indication of the magnitude of the differences between the groups. Eta squared was used to compute the effect size. Eta squared can range from zero to one and represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent (group) variable. Eta squared value for t-test was calculated using the information provided in the output.

Replacing with the appropriate values, eta squared=22.75/ 22.75 + (30+ 30-2) = (. 281). The guidelines for interpreting this value are .1 = small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 =large effect. It was seen that that the effect size of (.281) is medium effect. Expressed as a percentage, the eta squared value was multiplied by 100), 28.17 percent of the variance in posttest scores was explained by groups.

Table 5 depicts the values of the means and standard deviation along with standard error of mean for the two groups on posttests of reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Table 5: Group statistics for control and experimental groups' posttests of reading comprehension and vocabulary

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading Comprehension	control	20	12.80	6.20	1.13
	experimental	20	20.56	6.40	1.16
Vocabulary	control	20	11.84	5.88	1.14
	experimental	20	19.45	6.12	1.23

Based on Table 5, the mean score of the experimental group (mean $_{\text{experimental group}}$= 20.56) was (7.76) points higher than that of the control group (mean $_{\text{control group}}$= 12.80) in reading comprehension test. Moreover, the standard deviation for the two groups was nearly the same (SD $_{\text{experimental group}}$ =6.40, SD $_{\text{control group}}$ = 6.20). Furthermore, for the vocabulary test, the mean score of the experimental group (mean $_{\text{experimental group}}$= 19.45) was (8.05) points higher than that of the control group (mean $_{\text{control group}}$= 11.84) in vocabulary test. Moreover, the standard deviation for the two groups was nearly the same (SD $_{\text{experimental group}}$ = 6.12, SD $_{\text{control group}}$ =5.98).

Calculating the possible effect of treatment on the dependent variables of reading comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge of the students, two Independent Samples *t*-tests were run separately to show the results of the posttests of reading comprehension and vocabulary. It was implemented to make a comparison between the experimental and control groups in terms of their performance after supplying the specific treatment for the experimental groups (See Table 6).

Table 6: The results of independent samples t-test on the posttests of reading comprehension and vocabulary

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Er. Dif.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
									Lower	Upper
Reading com. Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.35	.55	-4.77	58	.00	-7.76	1.62	-11.02	-4.50
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.77	57.93	.00	-7.76	1.62	-11.02	-4.50
Vocabulary Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.36	.63	-4.34	59	.00	-6.39	1.49	-10.12	-4.45
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.34	58.65	.00	-6.39	1.49	-10.12	-4.45

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the posttest scores for control and experimental groups for reading comprehension and vocabulary test. There was significant difference in scores for control (M =12.60, SD = 6.20) and experimental group (M = 20.56, SD = 6.40; t (58) = 4.77, p = .00**,** two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 7.76**,** 95% CI: -11.02 to -4.50) was medium (Eta squared = .281). For the posttest of vocabulary, there was also significant difference in scores for control (*M* =11.40, *SD* = 5.98) and experimental group (*M* = 19.45, *SD* = 6.12; *t* (59) = 4.34, *p* = 00**,** two-tailed). In other words, the two groups were significantly different in terms of their vocabulary knowledge in the tests administered at the beginning of the study.

In order to investigate students' progress within groups, two paired samples t-tests were also run, which showed the students' progress in pretest and posttest presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Paired samples t-test statistics for reading comprehension and vocabulary tests

Groups				Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading comprehension	Control group	Pair 1	Pretest scores	12.60	20	6.51	1.188
			Posttest scores	12.80	20	6.20	1.131
	Experimental group	Pair 1	Pretest scores	12.50	20	5.43	.991
			Posttest scores	20.56	20	6.40	1.169
Vocabulary	Control group	Pair 1	Pretest scores	11.40	20	5.88	1.29
			Posttest scores	11.84	20	5.98	1.14
	Experimental group	Pair 1	Pretest scores	11.55	20	6.68	.98
			Posttest scores	19.45	20	6.12	1.23

The mean score of the control group for the reading comprehension test improved from (M= 12.60) in pretest to (12.80) in posttest; that of the experimental group progressed

from (M= 12.50) in pretest to (20.56) in posttest. Similarly, the mean score of the control group for the vocabulary test improved from (M= 11.40) in pretest to (11.84) in posttest. However, the mean score of the experimental group progressed from (M= 11.55) in pretest to (19.45) in posttest

As shown in Table 7, based on the results of Paired Samples t-tests, both control and experimental groups proceeded in the posttests. However, this improvement was statistically significant simply for the experimental groups but not for the control group ($P_{\text{experimental group}} < .05$, $P_{\text{control group}} \geq .05$). In other words, the experimental groups made a noticeably higher progression as compared to the control groups in the posttests of both reading comprehension and vocabulary.

5. Discussion

The results of independent samples *t*-test for the posttest of reading comprehension and vocabulary showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups in their performance on posttest of reading comprehension and vocabulary (sig= .00, p≤ .05).

Concerning the research questions stating if CSR had any statistically significant effect on reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners, two independent sample *t*-tests were run to the results of the posttest of reading comprehension and vocabulary. The results showed that providing CSR affected the performance on the reading comprehension and vocabulary of the experimental groups.

The findings of the present study are supported by the findings of various other studies carried out through reading comprehension and collaborative learning both nationally and internationally (Adams, 1995; Ghaith, 2003; Stevens, 2003). Results such as these align with those found in Hwang, Wang, and Sharples (2007) that explained the collaborative group had more lexical gain, plus with higher level of reading comprehension ability.

Collaborative learning is a learning method in which learners help each other in terms of their learning process by making up small homogenous groups to achieve a common goal. In this regard, the finding of the present study was supported by Wiryodijoyo's (cited in Bölükbaş, Keskin, & Polat, 2011) research in which he found collaborative reading was the activity which involved whole individual abilities of the readers that consisted of memory, experience, knowledge, brain, language ability, psychologist condition, and emotional.

In the same line, the study conducted by Harris and Sipay (2003) revealed that the learners' emotion, feeling, and intellectual ability, such as thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem solving, involved in a collaborative reading activity. However, the finding is in contrast with Scott's (2001) research finding that said the learners combined their own background knowledge with the information

while comprehending the text. Scott believed that the sheer cooperation among learners does not give the opportunity to do the job well.

The finding was also supported by Jones (2006) who stated that the keys to comprehension were the activation of prior background knowledge, active engagement in the content, and metacognition that displays the learners' emotion, feeling, and intellectual ability, such as thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem solving, involved in a collaborative reading activity.

Min and Hsu (2010) also support the statement that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading comprehension and the other way around vocabulary knowledge was one of the many essential factors needed for text reading comprehension. A higher vocabulary gain was attained by the collaborative group whereas the traditional group gained lower mean gain. It implies that working in groups has a more dominant impact on vocabulary acquisition than can be achieved by working individually. The result supports Saragi, Nation, and Meister's (cited in Zhang, 2010) and Hermann's (2003) findings that asserted that significant gains in vocabulary were achieved whereas the participants had not explicitly learned vocabulary. They acquired and constructed their knowledge of words in their reading activities. In general, the result was in line with most of the research findings that exposed positive impacts of collaborative learning on students' achievements (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Law, 2010; Zhang, 2010).

6. Conclusion

The study investigated the effects that CSR has on EFL students' performance in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. An overview of the current research was given by explaining the rubrics of the collaborative strategic reading, the reading comprehension ability, and vocabulary knowledge of learners. The whole literature argued that group learning was powerful in terms of increasing vocabulary and, at the same time, enhancing students' reading comprehension. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistics procedures were used to investigate the research questions. It was found that providing CSR significantly influenced EFL students' performance on the English language reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

In terms of pedagogically implications of the present study, it can be argues that collaborative learning needs to be implemented in classroom settings by a means of designed learning activities as the learners may transfer the learning behavior to new environments. Among many other benefits, students will be more capable of thinking critically if they work collaboratively rather than working individually. Hence, it is suggested that the use of collaborative learning has an important role to play when learners are out of the classroom as it promotes collaborative learning which will in turn increase learners' motivation and engagement in learning.

In L2 classrooms, the finding may help teachers favor pair over small group work on the grounds that it forces participation and offers more opportunities for language use. Furthermore, the inclusion of collaborative learning examples in textbook series or the provision of lesson plans that are examples of good practice in relation to collaborative learning implementation can be fruitful for increasing the use of collaborative learning in teaching practice. More to it, in order to enable teacher educators to engage in this collaborative learning, in-service training on the topic of implementing collaborative learning should be provided for teachers. That is, teacher education should familiarize student teachers with the principles of collaborative learning.

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