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**THE EFFECT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS AN  
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON LEARNERS' READING  
COMPREHENSION**

**The Case of Third Year Foreign Languages Stream Students at Hamza Ben  
Abdelmotalib Secondary School in Khemis-Miliana**

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Master in English Language and Communication

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### **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is the result of my investigation due reference of acknowledgment is made when necessary to the whole of other researchers.

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Abderrahmane & Ibrahim

**Abstract**

This research investigates the effect of using cooperative learning as a strategy to enhance students' level of English language reading comprehension. It aims to determine whether the students reading ability would be improved by using a cooperative learning strategy. To give consistency to the study, a questionnaire has been submitted to a sample composed of a group of twenty five third-year Foreign Languages stream students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School. The questionnaire aims to collect information about cooperative learning and its importance in developing reading skills besides their attitude toward using cooperative learning as a strategy to enhance reading skills in the classroom. The results have revealed that cooperative learning is the appropriate strategy that increases students' reading skill. Moreover, the questionnaire results confirmed the hypothesis that students have a positive attitude toward using CL as a strategy to develop their reading. It also proved that the CL is the right technique that develops students' reading skills and creates a good classroom climate where students can participate without fear of making mistakes.

*Keywords:* cooperative learning; reading comprehension; skills; strategy; technique

## Résumé

Des études récentes dans le domaine de l'enseignement des langues soulignent l'importance du processus d'apprentissage et le rôle central de l'apprenant. Avec le nouveau rôle qui est assigné à l'apprenant, nos salles de classe doivent être reconsidérées et beaucoup plus d'emphase doit être donnée à l'apprenant. En effet, le contexte d'apprentissage affecte grandement l'apprenant et le rythme de son intégration. Parce que la lecture est importante, les techniques des enseignants pour enseigner cette compétence ont été étudiées, et plus précisément dans quelle mesure elles intègrent des éléments de l'apprentissage coopératif des langues (CLL) : une nouvelle approche qui est soutenue par la recherche en raison de ses effets motivationnels sur l'apprentissage de l'apprenant. De plus, les attitudes des élèves face au travail de groupe ont été explorées. Cette recherche est basée sur l'hypothèse que les apprenants comprennent mieux lorsqu'ils lisent et discutent le texte en coopération, sur la base des aspects étudiés, une autre hypothèse a été posée concernant la sensibilisation des enseignants au CLL, serait conduire à créer un environnement d'apprentissage efficace grâce aux participants en classe dans les tâches de compréhension de la lecture. Pour mener à bien cette étude, un questionnaire a été analysé et ses résultats montrent que les élèves du secondaire ont une attitude positive envers l'utilisation de l'AC comme stratégie pour développer leur compréhension en lecture.

## ملخص

تؤكد الدراسات الحديثة في مجال تدريس اللغة على أهمية عملية التعلم والدور المركزي للمتعلم. مع الدور الجديد الذي تم تعيينه للمتعلم، يجب إعادة النظر في فصولنا الدراسية ويجب التركيز بشكل أكبر على المتعلم. في الواقع، يؤثر سياق التعلم بشكل كبير على المتعلم ومعدل تناوله. نظرًا لأهمية القراءة، تم التحقيق في تقنيات المعلم لتدريس هذه المهارة، وبشكل أكثر دقة إلى أي مدى يتم دمج عناصر التعلم التعاوني للغة (CLL): نهج جديد يدعمه البحث بسبب آثاره التحفيزية على تعلم المتعلم. علاوة على ذلك، تم استكشاف مواقف الطلاب من العمل الجماعي، ويستند هذا البحث إلى الفرضية القائلة بأن المتعلمين يفهمون بشكل أفضل عندما يقرؤون النص ويناقشونه بشكل تعاوني، بناءً على الجوانب التي تم بحثها، تم وضع فرضية أخرى تتعلق بوعي المعلمين للتعلم التعاوني للغة CLL ، يؤدي إلى خلق بيئة تعليمية فعالة من خلال المشاركين في الفصل في مهام الفهم القرائي. لإجراء هذه الدراسة، تم تحليل استبيان وأظهرت نتائج أن طلاب المدارس الثانوية لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه استخدام CL كاستراتيجية لتطوير فهمهم للقراءة.

### **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CL –Cooperative Learning

CLL- Cooperative Language Learning

N- Number

STAD-Students Teams Achievement Divisions

EFL-English Foreign Language

H –Hypothesis

Q-Question

SPSS- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

FL: Foreign Language

**List of Graphs**

**Graph 1.....46**

**Graph 2.....47**

**Graph 3.....47**

**Graph 4.....48**

**Graph 5.....49**

**Graph 6.....50**

**Graph 7.....50**

**Graph 8.....51**

**Graph 9.....52**

**Graph 10.....53**



## Table of Contents

Declaration .....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	1
Abstract .....	2
Résumé.....	3
ملخص.....	3
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	5
List of Graphs.....	6
Chapter One, Introduction.....	10
1.1. Background of the Study .....	10
1.2. Statement of the Problem .....	11
1.3. Rationale of the Study .....	11
1.4. Aims of the Study.....	11
1.5. Research Questions .....	12
1.6. Hypotheses.....	12
1.7. Research Methodology and Tools.....	13
1.8. Definition of Key Terminology .....	13
1.8.1. Reading comprehension .....	13
1.8.2. Cooperative Learning.....	13
1.9. Structure of the Dissertation .....	14
1.10 Summary .....	15
Chapter Two, Literature Review .....	16
1.11. Section One: Reading Comprehension.....	16
1.12. 2.1. Micro skills and Macro skills of Reading .....	16
2.1.1. Micro skills.....	17
2.1.2. Macroskills .....	17
1.13. 2.2. Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension.....	18
2.2.1. The Reader .....	18
2.2.2. Background knowledge (Schemata) .....	19
2.2.3. Affection .....	19
2.2.4. Purpose of reading .....	19
2.2.5. The Text .....	19

2.2.6. The Context .....	20
1.14. Section Two: Cooperative Learning.....	20
1.15. 2.3. Definitions of Cooperative Learning .....	20
1.16. 2.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Cooperative Learning .....	20
1.17. 2.5. Place of cooperative learning within the theories .....	23
2. 5. The Elements of Cooperative Learning.....	25
2.5.1. Positive Interdependence.....	26
2.5.2. Face-to- Face Interaction.....	26
2.5.3. Individual and Group Accountability .....	27
2.5.4. Group Processing.....	27
2.5.5. Social skills .....	28
1.18. 2.6. Cooperative learning methods.....	28
2.6.1. STAD (Student Teams- Achievement Divisions).....	29
2.6.2. Learning Together .....	29
2.6.3. Pair Read .....	30
2.6.4. Think- Pair-Share.....	30
2.6.5. Numbered Head Together .....	30
1.19. 2.7. Principles of Cooperative Learning .....	31
2.7.1. Positive Interdependence .....	31
2.7.2. Individual accountability.....	31
2.7.3. Face-to-face interaction.....	32
2.7.4. Group Processing.....	32
2.7.5. Interpersonal/Social Skills .....	32
1.20. 2.8. Advantages of Cooperative Learning .....	33
1.21. 2.9. Drawbacks of Cooperative Learning .....	34
1.22. 2.10. Cooperative versus Traditional groups in Reading Comprehension .....	38
1.23. 2.11. The Interrelatedness of Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension.....	39
1.24. Summary.....	40
Chapter Three, Methodology.....	41
1.25. 3.1. Research Question .....	41
1.26. 3.3. Research Design .....	42

1.27.	3.4. Sample .....	42
1.28.	3.5. Instrumentation .....	42
1.29.	3.6. Pilot Study .....	43
1.20.	3.7. Data Collection .....	43
1.31.	3.8. Data Analysis .....	44
1.32.	Summary .....	44
Chapter Four: Results and Findings .....		45
1.33.	4.1. Results of the Students' Questionnaire .....	45
4.1.1.	Section one: EFL students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension .....	45
4.1.2.	Section Two: Cooperative learning and Reading Comprehension .....	48
1.34.	Summary .....	52
Chapter Five: Conclusion .....		53
1.35.	5.1. Research aims and overall findings: .....	53
1.36.	5.2. Contribution to the Field .....	56
1.37.	5.3. Limitations of the Study .....	58
1.38.	5.4. Recommendations .....	59
1.39.	Summary .....	60
References .....		61
Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire .....		63
Appendix B .....		65

## **Chapter One, Introduction**

Chapter one presents an overview about the research. It sheds light on the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the rationale of the study, aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, the hypotheses, the significance of the study, the research methodology and tools, definition of key terminologies, and the structure of the dissertation.

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Learning a new language can be a stressful experience for many language students. Therefore, students who are engaged in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) need to endeavour efforts to read and understand it well, especially during the learning process. For this purpose, teachers try to provide EFL students with a suitable environment, such as studying in collaborative groups and using various activities to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

Among the four skills of English, reading is important in enhancing and improving students' English learning capacities. More importantly, reading is an instrument to access worldwide information. McLaughlin (cited in Celce-Murcia, 1991) states that reading is not an easy skill for students to master. In fact, students do complex activities and tasks in reading, for example, reading newspapers, magazines, novels, and manual instructions. They find many difficulties in comprehending the meaning of new difficult vocabulary.

Furthermore, reading gives students new information and knowledge of the language used in written texts. It can also help students acquire their languages, such as the new vocabulary, phrases, idioms, and many more when they read various kinds of texts.

For this, learners need to be actively involved in the reading class to enhance their

reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the strategies should be motivating. Some interesting strategies can be successful and helpful in improving students' reading comprehension skills. Cooperative learning is one of these strategies where the teacher can use group work activities to create a good classroom atmosphere, which encourages students to develop their reading comprehension abilities.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

As teachers, we notice that some students in secondary school face many problems that can influence their reading comprehension. This is due to the ineffective teaching strategies, limited resources for learning and lack of activity that demotivate students. All these problems make reading hard to comprehend.

This research focuses on the perception of cooperative learning techniques to enhance the reading comprehension skills of Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School students.

## **1.3.Rationale of the Study**

Many studies have addressed the issue of cooperative learning and its impact on language skills acquisition. However, it is noticed that insufficient research was carried out about the effect of cooperative learning as a teaching practice on learners' level of reading comprehension in the Algerian EFL classroom.

## **1.4.Aims of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it tries to determine the effect of using the cooperative learning techniques and identify its usefulness in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School. Furthermore, it tries to make teachers more aware of the effectiveness of

using cooperative group work activities in EFL classes to create a successful learning atmosphere in the classroom to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

It is hoped that this study will give students new experiences in doing reading tasks that can be shared with their teachers and classmates and to be able to interact with each other to build a good classroom atmosphere.

Also, this dissertation aims at finding out whether cooperative group work is used in teaching students in the third year during the reading module in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School or not.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

In order to conduct our investigation, we ask the following questions:

1. To what extent do cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension skill for the third year "Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib" Secondary School students?
2. To what extent do cooperative group work activities create a positive learning atmosphere for students when assigned a reading comprehension activity?

### **1.6. Hypotheses**

In the light of the research questions, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension at

Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School.

H2: Cooperative group works create a good classroom atmosphere for students when

they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

## **1.7. Research Methodology and Tools**

We have chosen a quantitative method for data collection to conduct our investigation. The quantitative method will help us get the statistical findings of our study. Our procedure for collecting data is a questionnaire for students. The participants are third-year Foreign Languages students in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School.

## **1.8. Definition of Key Terminology**

### ***1.8.1. Reading comprehension***

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meanings from the text". It means that the reading comprehension process involves the readers' ability to make a relationship between their background knowledge and their purpose of reading with the text's meanings.

Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is "*the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language*" (p.2). The construct of reading comprehension consists of the readers' ability to make the meaning of the text or written language in order to understand it.

### ***1.8.2. Cooperative Learning***

Markulis and Strang (2002) explain that Cooperative Learning is a truly American approach to teaching and learning. The roots of CL can be traced back to John Dewey and the practical orientation toward learning which promotes the belief that students can and should learn something specific and that learning may be facilitated in a group setting.

Researchers and educators have provided different definitions of Cooperative Learning.

*Cooperative learning refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content. In cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, discuss and argue with each other, assess each other's current knowledge, and fill in gaps in each other's understanding. (Slavin, 1995, p.2)*

In other words, CL constitutes a set of teaching methods where learners interact to discuss a given task together, help each other learn, and evaluate each other's understanding.

*Cooperative learning is a within-class grouping of students usually of differing levels of second language proficiency, who learn to work together on specific tasks or projects in such a way that all students in the group benefit from the interactive experience. (Kessler, 1992, p.7)*

CL is a way of organising learners of different levels into groups to fulfil a particular activity together. Learners, in this way, take advantage of the interaction they have with each other in that they listen and respond to each other's ideas, opinions and so on.

However, Harris and Hodges (1995, p.45) define CL as any mode of classroom organisation that allows learners to work together to achieve their individual goals. In this respect, CL is associated with the way seats are arranged in the classroom, which will help learners to interact with one another.

## **1.9. Structure of the Dissertation**

Before engaging in any experimental work, some theoretical foundations were given to establish concepts needed for methodological and interpretative decisions. Chapter one deals with a review of the literature related to the major theoretical concepts and definition of relevant and key terms. The second chapter presents the Research Design and the procedures



of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter presents the findings of the questionnaire session in the form of diagrams. The last chapter is devoted to discussing the findings based on the theoretical framework to confirm or refute the hypotheses. Finally, the General Conclusion presents a summary of the main points developed throughout the dissertation and provides some suggestions and recommendations for further research in cooperative learning.

### **1.10. Summary**

This chapter talks in general about the steps that we will take in order to achieve our dissertation. It starts with the background of the study which represented the importance of conducting our study, the statement of the problem that aims to identify the goal of our research and the need to fill the gap, the rationale of the study, aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, the hypotheses, and the significance of the study. The research methodology and tools, definition of key terminologies, and the structure of the dissertation.

## **Chapter Two, Literature Review**

Many educators and researchers claim that learning a new language is a complex, difficult, and lengthy process. This section is theoretical, and it deals with the improvement of students' reading comprehension through cooperative learning techniques. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to previous works and theories about reading comprehension and comparing cooperative group work and traditional group work. The second section describes cooperative learning activities.

### **1.11. Section One: Reading Comprehension**

Since reading is strongly related to the notion of comprehension, it is very important to know first how comprehension is defined. Comprehending a reading passage is a crucial aspect and the core of reading. Indeed, it has been stressed that real reading is reading with understanding which means that reading with no comprehension cannot be thought of as reading.

### **1.12. 2.1. Micro skills and Macro skills of Reading**

Reading is one of the four skills in language teaching. Murcia (2001, p.119) states that "*reading is a process of trying to understand a written text*». The reader has to make several concurrent tasks like decoding the message by recognising the written sign, interpreting the message by transferring the words, and understanding the author's purpose.

There are some micro and macro skills in reading which are proposed by Brown (1994, p. 290) that need to be developed for effective reading, which is presented below:

### ***2.1.1. Micro skills***

To distinguish between graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, be on familiar terms with the grammatical word class such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs...etc. and systems such as tense, agreement and pluralisation, patterns and rules. Also, to distinguish cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signalling the relationship between and among clauses.

### ***2.1.2. Macroskills***

Recognise the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose. To make a distinction between literal and implied meanings. Also, to develop and use a battery of reading strategies such as skimming and scanning, detecting discourse matters, and guessing the meaning. Finally, to understand from context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.

Therefore, based on the microskills and macroskills that have been determined, the reading techniques and activities should include those reading microskills and macroskills as well as use reading strategies that are considered necessary by the students. It aims at helping students comprehend the text successfully and making it easier for them to deal with various kinds of texts.

## **1.13. 2.2. Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension**

There are several factors affecting reading comprehension proposed by some scholars like Hafner (1974) and Alderson, Alexander and Snow (2002) claim that "*reading comprehension involves much more than readers' response to the text*". It is a complex

process that affects many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text and variables related to the text itself.

According to Hafner (1974), two main factors influence reading comprehension. First is intelligence; he argues that intelligence is the main factor influencing reading comprehension. The second factor relates to background knowledge and experience. When the readers have sufficient background knowledge about the text's theme, readers are going to read it, and it will help him/her a lot in comprehending the text because it is an essential element in learning; it helps us make new ideas and experiences. In other words, when the reader has enough background knowledge about any topic, he/she will be able to understand the full text easily without any difficulties.

In addition, Snow (2002:11) proposes three elements of reading comprehension. They are the reader, the text, and the activity. The reader brings his /her cognitive abilities, motivation, and experience. The text in which some writers produce complex reading materials; for this reason, readers find difficulties in comprehending the meaning. The context is an important part of the comprehension activities.

### ***2.2.1. The Reader***

Readers who have trouble learning to decode and recognise words often will have difficulty in reading comprehension. This means that the readers who struggle with decoding and who rarely have a chance to interact with more difficult texts often learn to dislike reading. As a result, these readers do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers.

Moreover, Alderson (2000:32) states that 'the reader' factor in comprehending a text includes the student's background knowledge, referred to as schemata, affection and purpose of reading.

### ***2.2.2. Background knowledge (Schemata)***

This factor provides the readers with a repertory on which to draw when searching for an author's meaning. When the readers have sufficient background knowledge and information about a given topic, this helps them to understand better.

### ***2.2.3. Affection***

It is another factor which includes interest, motivation, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. The affective factor has an important role in influencing what is understood by the readers.

### ***2.2.4. Purpose of reading***

The reader should have a particular purpose in his/her mind to avoid problems in understanding a text. The purpose of reading helps the reader focus on information that he/she wants to find out.

### ***2.2.5. The Text***

According to Alexander (1988:85), reading comprehension is also influenced by the quality of reading material. Some writers produce more complex reading materials than others. Readers who do not have the background, abilities, or motivation to overcome the barriers presented in this text will find difficulties comprehending these types of texts. When reading, both the reader and the text are commonly important because there is a kind of interaction between the reader and the text. The organisation of ideas helps readers to

understand better the text. In order to achieve the goals of reading, the text holds an important role, and it should be carefully chosen.

### **2.2.6. The Context**

Sweet & Snow (2003) regard context as a part of the comprehension activities. Context has three dimensions to these activities: purpose (why is the reader reading the text), processes (what mental activity must the reader engage in), and consequences (what did the reader learn or experience as a result of reading a text).

Reading comprehension is not a single easy process from the theories mentioned previously (reader, text and context). It is a complex one affected by factors like the reader's intelligence and background knowledge, strategy, and features used in the texts. All of those factors relate to each other in influencing the reader's reading comprehension ability.

### **1.14. Section Two: Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning is a truly American approach to teaching and learning. The roots of CL can be traced back to John Dewey and the practical orientation toward learning which promotes the belief that students can and should learn something specific and that learning may be facilitated in a group setting.

### **1.15. 2.3. Definitions of Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is one of the strategies of group instruction which is part of the learner-centred approach. Many educators propose different definitions of cooperative learning. Slavin (1995) states that "*cooperative learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic contents*" (p. 105).

He further elaborates that in cooperative learning, students are expected to help each other,

discuss, argue with one another, and assess each other's current knowledge. The explanation above shows that cooperative learning involves small groups so that individuals work together to maximise their own and each other's achievements. "Cooperative learning is an instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content". (Slavin, 1995, p. 108)

Cooperative learning involves both positive interdependences in which all members must collaborate to complete the task and individual and group accountability; each member is responsible for completing the final outcome.

#### **1.16. 2.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is a set of instructional learning method aimed to encourage students to work together on academic tasks. The purpose of this research is to provide high quality assistance for students to gain achievement in their study. In this study, the researcher concerns with the "Theoretical Perspectives on Cooperative Learning" focused on Cognitive developmental, behavioral and social interdependence based on Piagetian and Vygotskian's theories (2017). Cognitive interdependence is a mental state characterised by pluralism, and collective representations of the self-in-relationship. Behavioral interdependence refers to the mutual impact that people have on each other as their life and daily activities intertwine. Social interdependence relates to positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, appropriate use of social skill, and group processing. The type of the research used in this study is library research with the research design descriptive qualitative research by Sugiyono (2013). The sources of the data are documents, script and other relevant sources relating to the topic. The finding of this research shows that cooperative learning creates students' social interaction and maximizes their academic skills.

There have been many scholars developing theories of cooperative learning. In this study, the researcher focuses on Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. Jean Piaget's work (1959) stressed on the benefits of cognitive conflicts among students that expose students' misconceptions and lead to higher quality understandings. Vygotsky's work (1978, p.90) stressed benefits of collaborating with a more expert peer because what a student carries out jointly with another could be incorporated into his or her individual performance.

Research on cooperative learning strategies has been done from two major theoretical perspectives, developmental and motivational. The developmental perspective, based on Piagetian and Vygotskian theories, holds that task-focused interaction among students enhances learning by creating cognitive conflicts and by exposing students to higher-quality thinking. In contrast, motivational theories of cooperative learning emphasize that rewarding groups on the basis of the individual learning of all group members creates peer norms and sanctions favoring achievement-related efforts and active helping of peers. In the developmental view, incentives for group learning efforts are unnecessary, while in the motivationalist view they are crucial to enhance learning outcomes. From the developmental perspective, the effects of cooperative learning on student achievement would be largely due to the use of cooperative tasks. In this view, the opportunity for students to discuss, argue, and present their own and listen to one another's viewpoints is the critical element of cooperative learning with respect to student achievement.

The main theory that underpins cooperative learning refers to social constructivism advanced by Vygotsky who considered that the roles of culture and society, language, and interaction are important in understanding how humans learn. Vygotsky assumed that knowledge is cultural; he took a socio-cultural approach in his study with children. This



approach can be briefly described as “cooperative” and “cultural.” Vygotsky asserted that the development of individuals, including their thoughts, languages, and reasoning processes, is a result of culture. These abilities are developed through social interactions with others therefore; they represent the shared knowledge of a given culture. Vygotsky studied the growth of children from their environment and through their interaction with others, he found that what are given and what happens in the social environment (e.g., dialogues, actions, and activities), help children learn, develop, and grow.

In Vygotsky's social constructivism, social interaction is an important way in which children learn knowledge available in their culture without needing to reinvent it by them. Parents, adults, caregivers, teachers, and peers play important roles in the process of appropriation in children's learning. Teachers and adults give direction and instructions, comments, and feedback to students. These are not passively received by students because they also communicate with teachers, conveying them their problems or their answers in an interactive manner. Children also use conversations in working with their peers in handling exercises, projects, and problems. In this way, they exchange ideas and receive information; thereby they generate understanding and develop knowledge.

This process of learning is regarded as important because knowledge itself is developed through history, and it should go through appropriation in a social environment. Learning is achieved through the process of development; hence, learners should be active participants in the process of learning. Activity is important in learning; it is also a key concept in socio-cultural theories that explain the importance of doing. By engaging in meaningful activities, learners interact with peers and more knowledgeable people. Through interaction, children develop dialogues within the structure of activities; as a result, learning

and development occurs.

### **1.17. 2.5. Place of Cooperative Learning within the Theories**

Second language acquisition theories, whether cognitive or social-cultural, assume access to a large population of native L2 speakers, because SLA theorists assume the language learner lives and studies in a country in which the target language is used. Students in an EFL context such as a Japanese university do not have a large amount of input from their second language; they are surrounded by Japanese language, not English, in their daily lives, and often receive second language input from their EFL instructor only once or twice per week for 90 minutes at a time. Even then, it is debatable whether all 90 minutes of class time provide comprehensible input in English to all students, particularly those in large classrooms without opportunities for negotiation of meaning through one-on-one conversational checks and with this in mind, cooperative learning techniques are designed to increase the amount of comprehensible input as well as to encourage motivation and self-confidence through social interaction between non-native speaker peers. Encouraging a greater sense of community within the language classroom can only occur through increased interaction between students—learning communities need to “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information”. (Wenger, 2006, p. 77)

This change in student-student relations also necessitates a gradual change in the role of the teacher in the classroom, from the “autocratic model” to the “democratic model” (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003). Though many students and teachers alike may feel more comfortable with a teacher-centered style of learning, ultimately the goal of learning is for the student no longer to need the teacher—or even to become the teacher. An intermediate step towards learner self-regulation and self-reliance in the language classroom is the increased use of cooperative

learning techniques, starting with simple motivation and self-confidence through social interaction between non-native speaker peers.

Encouraging a greater sense of community within the language classroom can only occur through increased interaction between students—learning communities need to “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information” (Wenger, 2006, p.110). This change in student-student relations also necessitates a gradual change in the role of the teacher in the classroom, from the “autocratic model” to the “democratic model” (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003).

An intermediate step towards learner self-regulation and self-reliance in the language classroom is the increased use of cooperative learning techniques, starting with simple pairs and building up to small groups then large groups. Students can learn how to effectively teach each other, along the way becoming more capable of clarifying their own knowledge by verbally communicating and monitoring their language use. As the axiom says, “Those who teach learn twice” (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000; Murphey, 2001b).

Dornyei (1997) has further argued that although classrooms in which the teacher largely controlled the learning may result in short-term learning gains, cooperative classrooms in which positive interdependence was a key factor consistently result in more learner achievement over a longer period of time. In order to encourage intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy, “we may conclude that from a motivational point of view CL is undoubtedly one of the most efficient instructional methods” (Dornyei, 1997, p. 490). However, Dornyei also repeated the warning by Johnson and Johnson (1995), that cooperative skills do not appear “magically” when students are placed into groups; teachers must act as a guide by providing a structure for task goals, rewards, student roles, materials, and rules for

group behavior.

Good, well-planned CL activities require each individual within a group to have specific roles and responsibilities during the group effort, ensuring a high level of cooperation and achievement by all members in the class. The following section will explain some basic patterns of CL activities, including graphical representation of how these techniques can be carried out in the language classroom.

## **2. 5. The Elements of Cooperative Learning**

Johnson and Johnson (1994) propose five elements of successful group-based learning in cooperative learning. These elements are explained below:

### ***2.5.1. Positive Interdependence***

The first element of effective structured cooperative learning is that each student in the same group has a unique contribution to make a joint effort in order to succeed. (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000). That is, cooperation occurs only when students comprehend that the success of one depends on the success of others. All group members feel responsible for everything that happens in the group. Furthermore, several ways of structuring positive interdependence are carried out, such as rewards, resources or task responsibilities to supplement goal interdependence. In this element, students have to learn to work together to execute tasks and achieve the goal.

### ***2.5.2. Face-to-Face Interaction***

The second element of cooperative learning requires face-to-face interaction among students. However, some group work may be dealt with and done individually. Some must be

done interactively with group members providing one another with feedback, challenging, reasoning and conclusions, and most importantly, teaching, helping, supporting and encouraging one another in order to reach the group's goals. It is necessary to maximise their opportunities to help, support, encourage, and praise each other. Such interaction helps to promote the following:

1. Orally explaining how to solve the problem.
2. Teaching one's knowledge to another.
3. Checking for understanding.
4. Discussing concepts being learned and connecting present with past learning.

### ***2.5.3. Individual and Group Accountability***

A cooperative learning group aims to make each member a stronger individual. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed, and the results are given back to the groups. It also involves both group and individual performance. One of the examinations is assessing each student in a group to have a certain responsibility in finishing the project. Another examination is calling on a student at random to share the whole class with group members or another group. (Johnson & Johnson. 1994)

### ***2.5.4. Group Processing***

Group members should think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time to take place, emphasising positive feedback, maintaining student involvement in processing etc. To be cooperative, group members must promote each other's learning and success, hold each other individually accountable to do a fair share of the work, use the

interpersonal and small group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together.

In group processing, Johnson and Johnson (1994) state that students needed to describe which members provided important effort and which ones did not. They claim that students must be provided with time in class to analyse the students' involvement within the group and evaluate one another to achieve the group goals. However, in individual accountability, Johnson and Johnson (1994) claim that the full participation of each member of the group is very important and did not attempt to ride on the success of students who did the work. In order to ensure accountability, each student was assigned some individual work within the group.

#### ***2.5.5. Social skills***

According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991), "*social skills are essential skills in all aspects of life that we use to communicate, interact and work with each other; these skills are used to connect between students*" (p. 189). It means that social skills have an important role in interaction and communication among students to be able to work together.

Students should be taught social skills and motivated to use social skills in order to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, teamwork decision-making, communication and conflict management skills. The social skills determine how students interact with each other as teammates and structuring and structure. Structuring and structure refer to organising students' interaction during the learning activity. Those key elements should be well organised in order to create effective group learning in a cooperative process. In this case, the teacher

plays an important role in designing learning activities which cover all of those elements of cooperative learning in the classroom.

These five essential components must be present for small group learning to be truly cooperative. There needs to be an accepted common goal in which the group will be satisfied with their efforts, (Johnson & Johnson. 1991)

## **1.18. 2.6. Cooperative Learning Methods**

Cooperative learning methods help students to promote motivation in the classroom. In addition, cooperative methods can enhance many familiar English learning activities that encourage all students to be more actively involved and improve their reading comprehension. (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Johnson et al., 1995; Slavin, 1995) state that "*Cooperative learning methods increase motivation for learning, redirecting attributions for success and failure, fostering positive feelings toward classmates, and increasing performance on tests of comprehension, reasoning, and problem-solving*" (p. 204). There are some activities in cooperative learning that can be conducted in the classroom. Each of the activities is explained as follows:

### ***2.6.1. STAD (Student Teams- Achievement Divisions)***

Student team achievement division is one of the simplest and most extensive research forms of cooperative learning. It is a good model, to begin with, for the students who are new to the cooperative model. STAD has five major components, as Slavin (1995) defined: class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition. In STAD, students are assigned to four members of learning teams that are mixed abilities and backgrounds in mixed groups. The teacher presents the lesson, and then students work within

their team to make sure that all team members have mastered the lesson. The students work in teams for different sessions to discuss, compare, formulate questions, memorise and elaborate conceptual maps, etc.

### ***2.6.2. Learning Together***

Learning together is another cooperative learning technique developed by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1999). In this model, students are divided into small heterogeneous groups consisting of four to five members. Before students start working together, they need first to make a plan between them about how to work because each team draws a plan about the topic.

### ***2.6.3. Pair Read***

This activity aims to increase students' reading comprehension by using shared reading. Students are grouped in pairs and then silently read a paragraph or each section. After that, in pairs, students describe the content to their partners; when each pair finishes, they can discuss the whole passage. After that, the teacher can ask questions to each group in the class. (Brown, 2000)

### ***2.6.4. Think- Pair-Share***

This type of cooperative learning involves a three- steps-cooperative structure. During the first step, individuals think silently about the question posed by the teacher. Then, in the second step, students exchange ideas with one another, and in the last step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs or the full groups. (Brown, 2000)



### ***2.6.5. Numbered Head Together***

In this method, the teacher divides students into four teams, and then s/he gives numbers of 1,2,3,4 for each member. After that, questions are asked to the group. Students work together in order to answer the questions. The teacher calls out a number two, and each two is asked to answer, (Brown, 2000)

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a teacher who uses the cooperative learning method is responsible for planning the lesson, evaluating activities, grouping students, and helping when necessary. In addition, students also have responsibilities to get actively involved in the learning process, give positive contributions to the success of their group, and help each other reach the learning goals.

## **1.19. 2.7. Principles of Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning is said to be more productive under certain conditions. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999, pp.81-82), five basic elements distinguish CL from traditional group work; they are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, interpersonal/social skills, and group processing.

### ***2.7.1. Positive Interdependence***

It is when learners believe they "sink or swim together" (Ellis & Whahen, 1990, p. 15). This is known as positive interdependence, which implies that cooperation occurs only when learners perceive the success of one of them as dependent on the success of the other. Whatever task learners are given to perform, each group member must feel that his or her contribution is necessary for the group's success (Roger & Johnson, 1994, p. 1). Moreover, Lee (2005) believes that positive interdependence "is established through mutual goals, joint

rewards, divided resources, complementary roles, and a team identity" (p. 119). In other words, each group member is interested in explaining his or her knowledge to the others and extracting knowledge from the others until he or she has understood each other. Learners are required to learn to work together in order to accomplish tasks.

### ***2.7.2. Individual accountability***

According to Jacobs, Ward and Gallo (1997, pp. 5-8), individual accountability refers to the learners' feeling of responsibility to participate and learn from the activity they are doing as a group. Salkind (2008, p.187) considers individual accountability an important feature that distinguishes CL from traditional group learning. It makes sure that each participant of the group does his or her part of the work. Consequently, learners who feel individual accountability are more likely to try to learn by themselves rather than to let others do the work and learn from them.

### ***2.7.3. Face-to-face interaction***

It is also known as promotive interaction; Lee (2005) asserts that Promotive interaction occurs as group members encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to contribute to accomplishing the group's goals. Group members give and receive help, exchange resources, and challenge each other's reasoning.

Accordingly, face-to-face interaction guarantees mutual help among learners who support each other via suggesting and exchanging different ideas and feedback that would lead to the completion of a common objective.

Joffille (2007, p.36) suggests that, “*promotive interaction facilitates learning by helping learners explain orally how to solve problems, teach one's knowledge to others, check for understanding, discuss concepts being learned, and connect present with past learning.*”

#### **2.7.4. Group Processing**

Group members would think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Members of the group, then, are required to determine the helpful and unhelpful behaviours of each other and make the necessary changes to elevate their working relationships.

#### **2.7.5. Interpersonal/Social Skills**

These interpersonal/social skills are needed for teamwork and task work, and they include leadership, negotiation, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills. Accordingly, learners develop the appropriate skills concerning how they should behave, deal, help, and even disagree with one another. Johnson and Holubec (1993, p.10) argue that learners have to be taught social skills and be motivated to use them.

### **1.20. 2.8. Advantages of Cooperative Learning**

Crawford, Saul, Mathews, and Makinster (2005, p.48) highlight many academic and social advantages of implementing CL in classrooms.

First of all, CL promotes learners' thinking abilities in the sense that each member of the group seeks to interpret, analyse and explain the information found in a given topic; while explaining their thoughts to their partners, learners extend their thinking and enhance their

own understanding. The CL technique also increases inter-personal and inter-group understanding. Working in groups helps learners learn to work with and understand others who differ in gender, abilities, level, and ethnic group.

Moreover, learners who learn cooperatively feel related to the school and the class. Thus, their participation in completing a given task and helping one another comprehend motivate them to learn. In addition, CL is an effective technique that enables learners to learn actively in both small and large classes. All learners are allowed to participate and discuss with each other for much of the time and then enhance their learning.

Richard and Rodgers (1986, p.106) add further benefits to CL. They believe that learners in cooperative learning groups learn in a comfortable environment where they have the chance to express themselves and correct each other's mistakes freely. Apart from being a member of the cooperative group, the learner plays a variety of roles; "at times one is an independent individual, at other times a group member. A learner also must be a teacher, a student, part of a support system, a problem solver, and a self-evaluator".

### **1.21. 2.9. Drawbacks of Cooperative Learning**

Instructors who are unfamiliar with cooperative learning may not initially accept this style of learning because they may feel they will lose control of their classroom, or they may be unsure of the techniques used or possibly even think that it is too time-consuming. This next section will discuss some of the possible drawbacks to cooperative learning.

Loss of Control – Cooperative learning is a structured approach that requires instructor support and guidance. For cooperative learning to be utilised in the classroom, instructors must receive training to be proficient in implementing the techniques. Maximum learning will only emerge if the instructor receives proper training and then transfers it to the student.

Instructors may resist using cooperative learning techniques in their classrooms because they are afraid they may lose control of their teaching routine. Cooperative learning takes time to implement; therefore, initial lessons may take longer. Once students and the instructor are comfortable with the process, the amount of time for each lesson decreases.

Instructors may have difficulty giving up their control of the content that is being covered. They are accustomed to presenting the curriculum to the students and cannot give students the freedom to learn on their own. Students learning only one part of the curriculum in their group may make an instructor anxious about what their students know.

Showing their expertise in a subject area is important for some instructors. Giving up the opportunity to show off this expertise may deter instructors from using cooperative learning in their classrooms. Also, if students are expected to explore independently, they may have questions that the instructor cannot answer. These possibilities may cause an instructor to lose confidence in her teaching abilities. Instructors can still be experts, but they will be using their knowledge as a facilitator rather than a giver of information.

Group Work – Depending on age, students may resist using cooperative learning in their classrooms. The lecture does not require much interaction and participation from the students; therefore, they can get as much or as little from the class as they like. Being required to work in a group may ruffle a few feathers with the students because now they are being asked to participate and contribute to their learning. In addition, they are also asked to learn new concepts and taught how to work in a group. They may not be accustomed to working in a group and, therefore, may be unsure of the dynamics involved in group work.

Since cooperative learning is centred on group work, students may be concerned that other members of their group will bring their grades down. This is especially true if students

are grouped by mixed ability, requiring higher ability students to guide lower ability students.

Deciding how groups should be formed is an important part of the cooperative learning planning process. There has been some debate about how groups should be formed for students to work together and reach their maximum potential effectively.

Mixed ability grouping allows all group members to be involved, though the type of involvement differs. Advanced students can teach struggling students, but concerns arise about advanced students doing all the work and struggling students not being motivated to be involved. There are also concerns that gifted students are held back by the lower ability students in their group.

If students are grouped with others of the same ability level, then the lower ability group may feel frustrated and unmotivated to try. This is also true of those grouped by gender or race because it may support stereotypes that certain groups dominate certain subject areas.

There are also varying opinions about the optimal number of people for small group formation. The consensus seems to agree that no more than four people in a group produce higher achievement, (Slavin, 1987). Fixed seating and large class sizes may make group arrangement difficult, in any case. Still, even if the room is easily arranged into small groups, instructors may have difficulty accessing all of the numerous small groups.

Most students are not accustomed to group work, especially in high school classrooms. Students will have to be taught to work effectively in a group setting. Resolving group conflict can be a major challenge for instructors. Groups will need to make sure that every member listens to and appreciates each group member's contribution. Identifying responsibilities within the group and encouraging each to do their best work must be

addressed before group work begins. Also, students that work better alone may struggle to succeed in a group atmosphere.

Since the classroom will be made up of several small groups, the noise level will escalate. This can be very uncomfortable for some instructors, especially if they are accustomed to a lecture and seatwork classroom. This can also cause problems for those students who have attention difficulties.

Cooperative learning is based on social interaction; thus, grouping students together to work independently, even for a short period of time, may encourage off-task behaviour. While the instructor is circling the room to observe and interact with the groups, it is difficult to make sure every group is productively working on their assignment. Self-management skills will have to be introduced before students break out into groups and are reinforced as they progress through their work.

**Time Requirements** – With cooperative learning, the textbook is used only as an instructional supplement, so instructors must create additional materials for the students. Usually, these materials are made from scratch because many instructors' manuals offer limited suggestions for group activities. Creating these new materials can be very time-consuming. So, not only are instructors spending a large amount of time implementing this new way of learning, but they also have to create the materials to go along with it.

Since students have to generate an answer or information within their group, work time may take longer than the traditional lecture. Because of this additional time, instructors may be unable to cover the same amount of curriculum as before when they used teacher-directed class discussions. In a traditional classroom, the quality of the work is often compromised to

teach the entire curriculum.

Other Drawbacks – Since students are working together on a group assignment, it is difficult to assess students with a paper and pencil test. Instructors will have to find another way to assess student work and progress. Since students are used to concrete assessments, it may be difficult for students to adjust to authentic assessments.

Vague objectives, avoidance of teaching, and lack of critical thinking activities are other problems associated with cooperative learning. With the focus on managing groups, instructors can overlook the students' objectives and tasks. Therefore, students do not receive the needed guidance to learn the task at hand effectively. Some critics say that instructors who rely on small group work are avoiding their teaching responsibilities, and students are left on their own to teach themselves the curriculum. In addition, since students are working in small groups that require additional time, instructors may be more apt to assign tasks that do not demand higher-level thinking skills. The quality is overlooked in order to increase the number of assignments.

### **1.22. 2.10. Cooperative versus Traditional groups in Reading Comprehension**

Cooperative learning is more than just group work. The main difference between cooperative learning and traditional group work is that group work is planned, prepared, and monitored in cooperative learning. However, in traditional group work, students are asked to work in groups without considering the group functioning (Jacobs, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Ng & Lee, 1996).

Jacobs, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Ng & Lee (1996) explain the differences between cooperative group work and traditional group work:



*“First of all, in cooperative learning groups, the focus is on group performance in which each group member believes that they cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed and vice versa. Group members help, assist, encourage and support each other's learning efforts. In cooperative group work, students have time to analyse how well their groups are functioning and how well they are using the appropriate social skills.” (p.130)*

Second, traditional learning groups focus on individual performance only in which group members compete with each other and refuse to give information. Traditional group work is based on individual accountability only. In addition, social skills are ignored, and only one person takes charge to do all the work. Also, students often select members, groups typically from five to ten members, and the teacher ignores groups in which he does not give importance to all group members.

### **1.23. 2.11. The Interrelatedness of Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension**

Improving reading comprehension is a challenge facing teachers. Many teachers seem to be always working on helping and supporting students' reading comprehension. They make efforts to assist reading comprehension by using reading strategies in the classroom (Gauthier, 2001). *“When teaching reading comprehension, teachers do not provide much direct instruction, modelling, coaching, and scaffolding” (Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991, p.67).*

Cooperative group work is considered an effective technique for improving students' reading ability. Several researchers agree that it is an effective technique where students are given more responsibilities to achieve the highest achievement. Milios (2000) claims that *“in*

*cooperative learning groups, students can brainstorm, work, and make decisions together"* (p.164).

Stevens, Slavin & Farnish (1991) *"When students are in cooperative learning groups, they can improve 'their depth of processing' because cooperative learning requires them to reflect on their knowledge and make generalisations and elaborations that they can convey to their partners"* (p.99).

. This means that a cooperative learning group helps them understand the text's hidden meaning because when students collaborate, discuss, and share new information with teammates, they make the task easier to understand.

Cooperative learning is proven to be successful in teaching comprehension strategies because, in cooperative learning groups, students ask questions and discuss with each other (Gauthier, 2001). According to Caposey & Heider (2003), *"The more students work together, discuss, question, and summarise, the more they can understand and retain"*. It means that students who work together have more capacity to understand better a given topic.

There are many benefits of cooperative learning. It helps students stay on task, helps classroom management and creates a good classroom atmosphere. Moreover, cooperative learning increases positive attitudes and self-confidence and improves relations among different students. It also encourages responsibility and participation in learning and increases motivation. Students can communicate better with each other as well as with the teacher. (Caposey, Heider, 2003; Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991)

#### **1.24. Summary**

To sum up, this chapter has dealt with the review of the literature that sheds light on the process of improving students' reading comprehension through cooperative learning

methods. It clarified the concept of reading comprehension and some related issues like its factors, micro and macro reading skills. Moreover, this chapter has dealt with the use of cooperative learning activities in second/foreign language classrooms. Cooperative learning activities enable students to use and comprehend the target language and also create a more supportive classroom atmosphere. Reading is the basic language learning skill that helps students facilitate communication in other language skills. Cooperative learning is one of the alternative methods that can be implemented to build face to face communication that can create positive interaction among learners.

## **Chapter Three, Methodology**

This chapter is methodological; it deals with the description of the techniques and the procedures of our data collection and data analysis used in our research in order to improve students' reading comprehension through the use of cooperative learning methods. It identifies the research tool which is a questionnaire destined for third year students in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School at Khemis Miliana. Lastly, it presents the quantitative data which are analyzed by using a statistical method called a statistical package of social sciences.

### **1.25. 3.1. Research Question**

Is there any relationship between cooperative learning strategies and reading comprehension? In this study we examined the effect of first aim on the later, whether cooperative learning affects performance of the students in reading comprehension or not.

### **3.2. Hypotheses**

In the light of the research questions, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Cooperative learning methods increase students' reading comprehension at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School.

H2: Cooperative group works create a good classroom atmosphere for students when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

### **1.26. 3.3. Research Design**

This research is quantitative in the sense that it studies the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving reading comprehension. Collecting data is an integral part of this study, to elicit information from our sample we have chosen to administrate a questionnaire which

was handed to a class of twenty-five third year foreign languages students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School in Khemis Miliana.

After collecting data from the questionnaire, a representation of the results of the students' answers is made through bar graphs and pie charts. The representation of the results is preceded by interpretation already stated in mind about their answers. Then a comparison between the results and interpretation is made to draw the general results and conclusion.

#### **1.27. 3.4. Sample**

This questionnaire was addressed to a group of twenty-five (25) third year foreign languages students during the Academic Year 2021/2022; it was applied in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School in Khemis Miliana (Ain Defla). They have been randomly chosen as a case of our study, due to the fact that our research aims to discover how cooperative learning methods enhance students' reading comprehension.

#### **1.28. 3.5. Instrumentation**

The tool used in this study is a questionnaire because it is the most appropriate one to collect information that will help infirm or confirm the research question. In fact, the questionnaires are all in print, none of them are emailed. By doing so, we help making data collected more accurate, standard and more importantly reliable. Our presence in the process of filling in the questionnaires was of prime importance to make sure that the participants clearly understand.

This questionnaire encompasses ten (10) questions. This latter are of three kinds, close questions that require Yes/No answers. The second kind is multiple choice questions that necessitate the respondents to choose the appropriate answers from a given list of options.

The third kind of questions is open ended questions, which ask the respondents to freely express or explain their points of view.

The questionnaire is designed to survey the participants' views and attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning for the purpose of enhancing students' reading comprehension.

### **1.29. 3.6. Pilot Study**

The pilot phase of the study was conducted in Ain Soltan Secondary School, which is not far from Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School.

A total of fifteen (15) third year foreign languages stream students participated in the pilot phase. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the participants. After collecting data from the questionnaire, students' answers seemed to be as expected before, and towards our objectives.

### **1.30. 3.7. Data Collection**

The students' questionnaire aims at finding out whether the students give importance to group work and if it helps them promote their reading skill through participating with their classmates. It contains open-ended questions and close-ended ones and also multiple choice questions where the participants have to tick in the box the appropriate answer. The students' questionnaire is composed of ten (10) questions and it consists of two (02) sections. The first section is about the students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension, the second section deals with cooperative learning and reading comprehension.

### **1.31. 3.8. Data Analysis**

This part describes the quantitative method that is used to analyze the data. It consists

The Effect of Cooperative Learning as an Instructional Strategy on Learners' Reading Comprehension of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

This present study makes use of questionnaires containing close-ended questions which provide numerical data. These data are calculated using a computer program called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It is a very complex data tool for manipulation and analysis. SPSS provides statistical description of the numerical data. It also transforms large amounts of complex data into less complex, visual statistical tables of percentages, graphs, charts...etc.

### **1.32. Summary**

This chapter has addressed the general design of our study. It has explained the method used for conducting our research. This chapter also presented the setting and participants, as well as the data collection tool, which consists of questionnaire for students. It has outlined the method used for the analysis of the gathered data. Indeed, SPSS is used as a statistical technique to provide a percentage of the data obtained through a questionnaire.

## Chapter Four: Results and Findings

This chapter is about the findings of our study. It presents the results obtained through the questionnaire we administered to twenty-five (25) third-year foreign language students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School. The results of this chapter are presented in percentages and displayed in diagrams.

This part is organized into two main sections, which present the results obtained from the students' questionnaire.

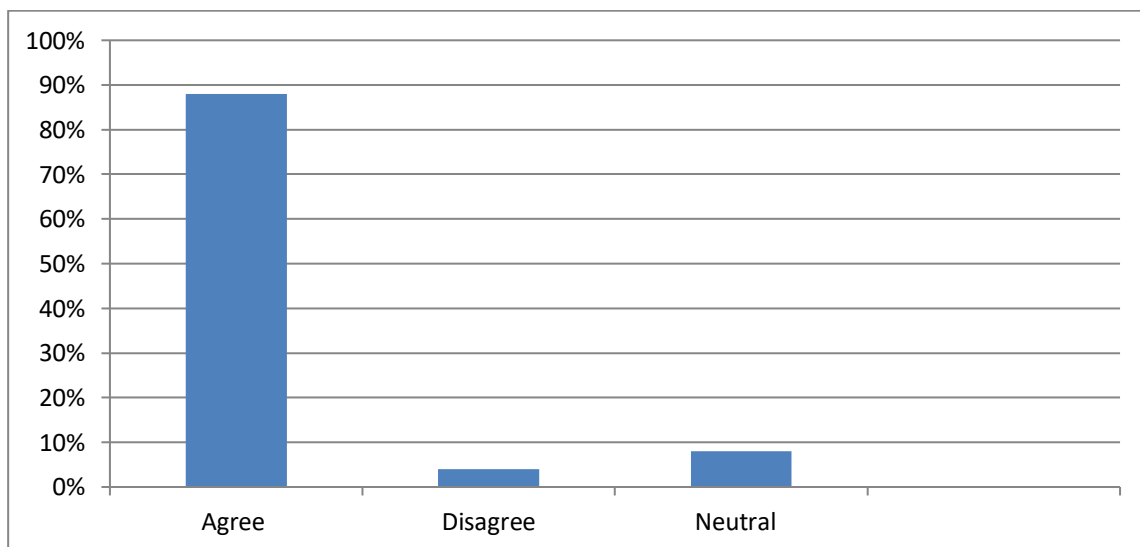
### 1.33. 4.1. Results of the Students' Questionnaire

#### 4.1.1. Section one: EFL students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension

##### 4.1.1.1. Item One: Reading comprehension is important in learning English.

Agree                      Disagree                      Neutral

Why?



#### Bar Graph (1): The importance of reading comprehension in learning English

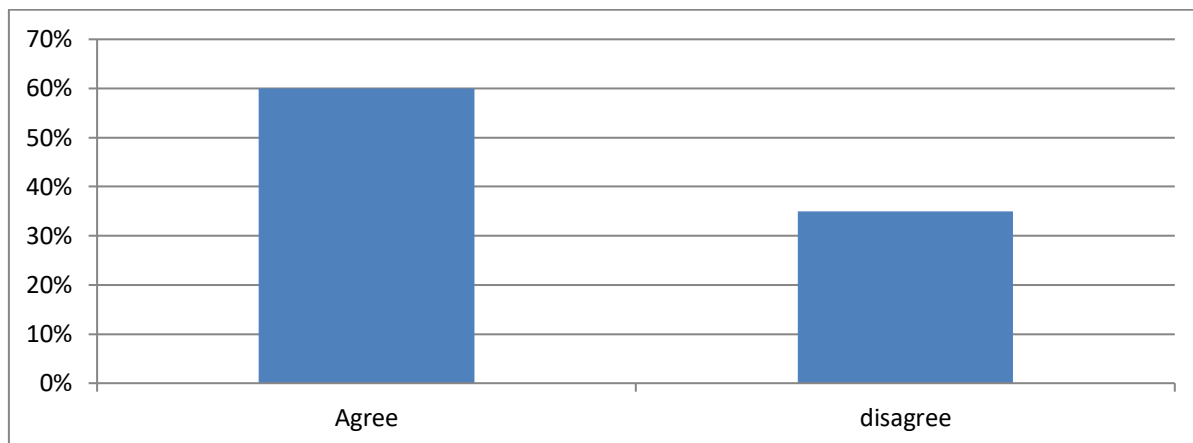
The first item is about the importance of reading comprehension in learning the English language in Secondary Schools. The majority, 22 students (88%) out of twenty-five, agree that reading comprehension is important in learning English because it helps them improve



their reading skills and reach their vocabulary. While (8%) are neutral, and only one student (4%) disagrees.

**4.1.1.2. Item Two: Reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming**

Agree disagree

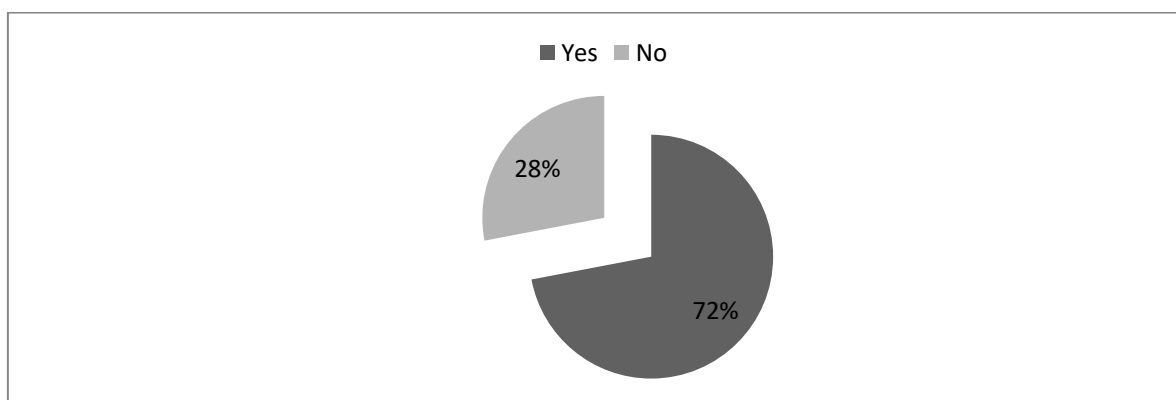


**Bar Graph (2): Reading comprehension is hard and time consuming**

The result shows that, fifteen students (60%) are agree that reading comprehension is hard and time consuming. While (40 %) of the students are disagree.

**4.1.1.3. Question Three: Do you like the reading module?**

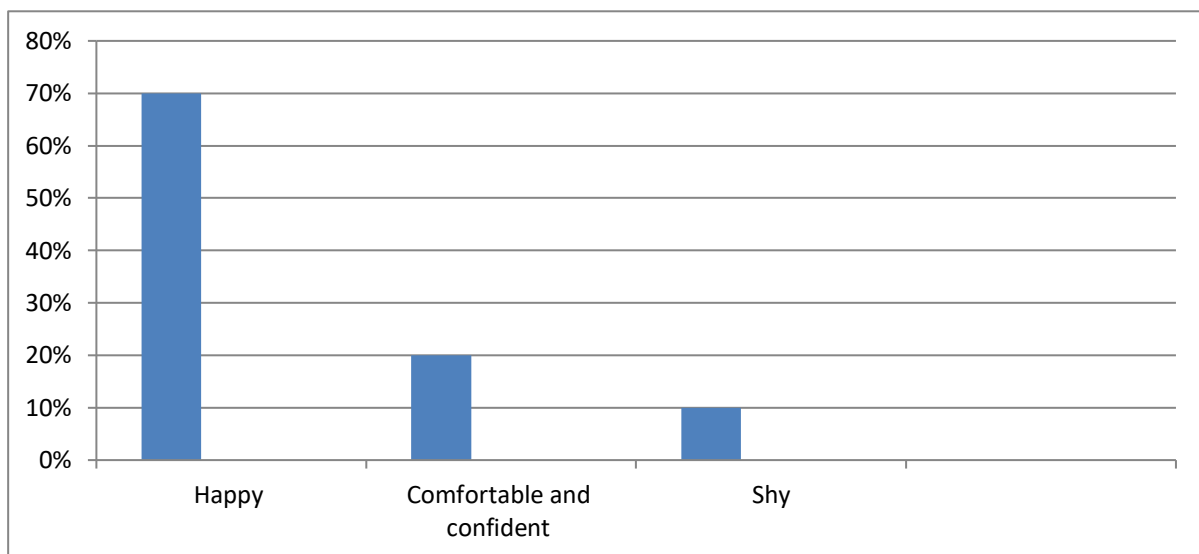
Yes No Why?



**Pie chart (3): Students' attitudes towards reading module**

This question concerns whether students like the reading module or not; if they enjoy studying this module. The majority, eighteen students (72%), like the reading module. They argue that it helps them learn how to pronounce words and improve reading skills. However, seven students (28%) dislike this module because it is a very difficult skill for them.

**4.1.1.4. Question Four: How do you feel when you are asked to read in the classroom?**



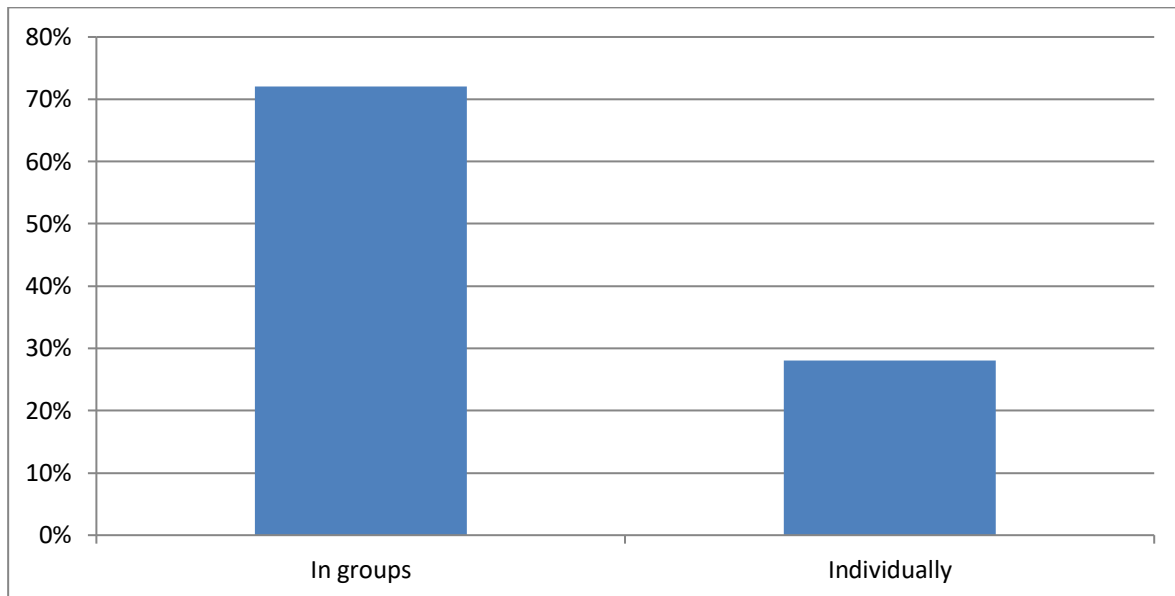
Bar Graph (4): Students' feelings towards reading in the classroom.

This question is an open-ended question in which we allow informants to speak about their feelings when they are asked to read in the classroom. The majority of students (70%) say that they feel happy when their teachers ask them to read in the classroom and to read books at home because, for them, it is the way to correct their spelling mistakes and help them to read attentively and speak fluently to become active learners in class. Others (20 %) say that they feel comfortable and confident when reading in the classroom. Some students (10 %) say that they feel shy, afraid to make mistakes and stressed.

**4.1.2. Section Two: Cooperative learning and Reading Comprehension**

**4.1.2.1. Question Five: Do you like working in groups or individually?**

In groups                      Individually                      Say why?

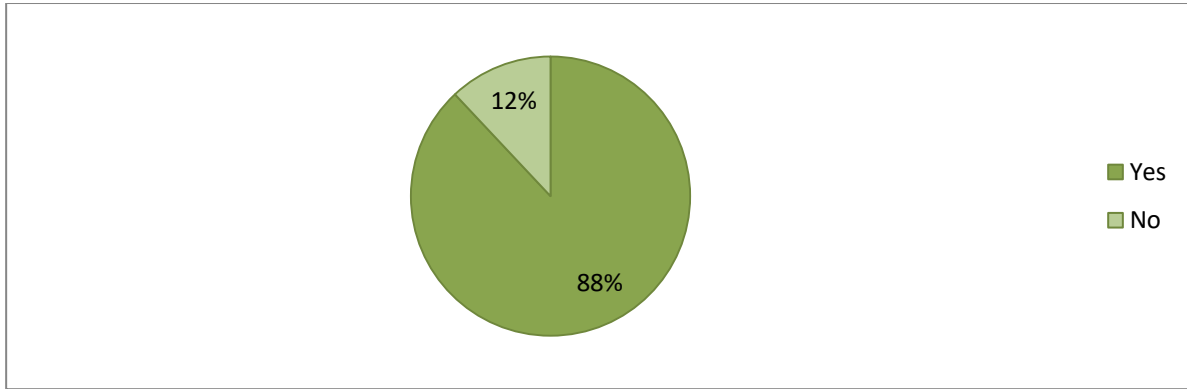


**Bar Graph (5): Students' attitudes towards working in groups or individually**

This question concerns whether students like working in groups or individually. The majority of the students (72%) desire to work in groups because they share, discuss different ideas with one another and it helps them to understand better. While seven students (28%) say that they prefer working individually because they feel autonomous, responsible and more comfortable when working alone.

**4.1.2..2. Question Six: Do cooperative learning methods help you increase your reading comprehension skills in class?**

Yes                                      No

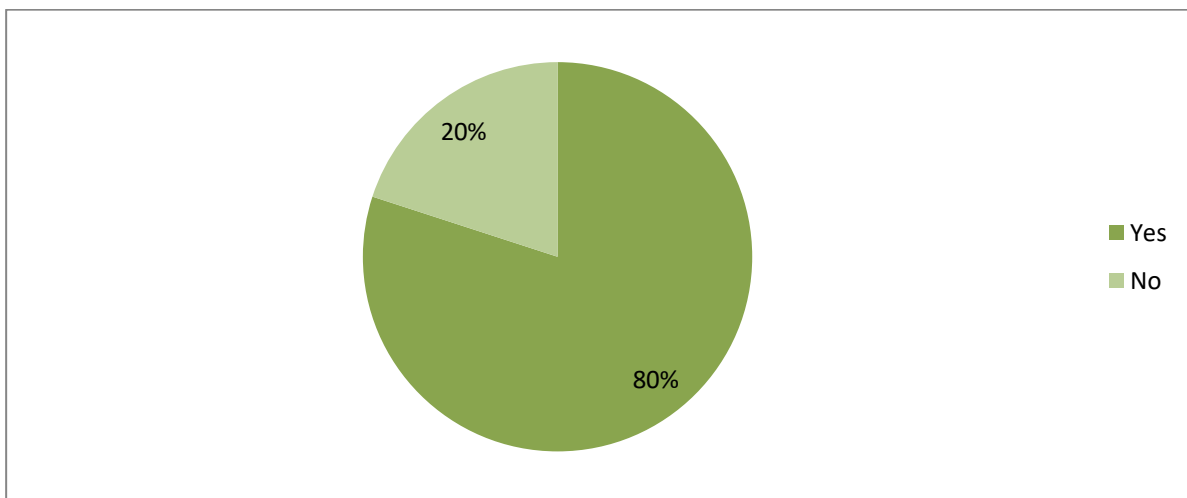


**Pie chart (6): Students' evaluation of cooperative learning in increasing reading comprehension skills in class.**

As shown in diagram (06), most participants (88%) show that cooperative learning methods increase their reading comprehension skills in class. However, (12%) of the students say that cooperative learning methods do not increase their reading comprehension skills.

**4.1.2.3. Question Seven: Do you collaborate in your group when you are assigned a reading comprehension activity?**

Yes No



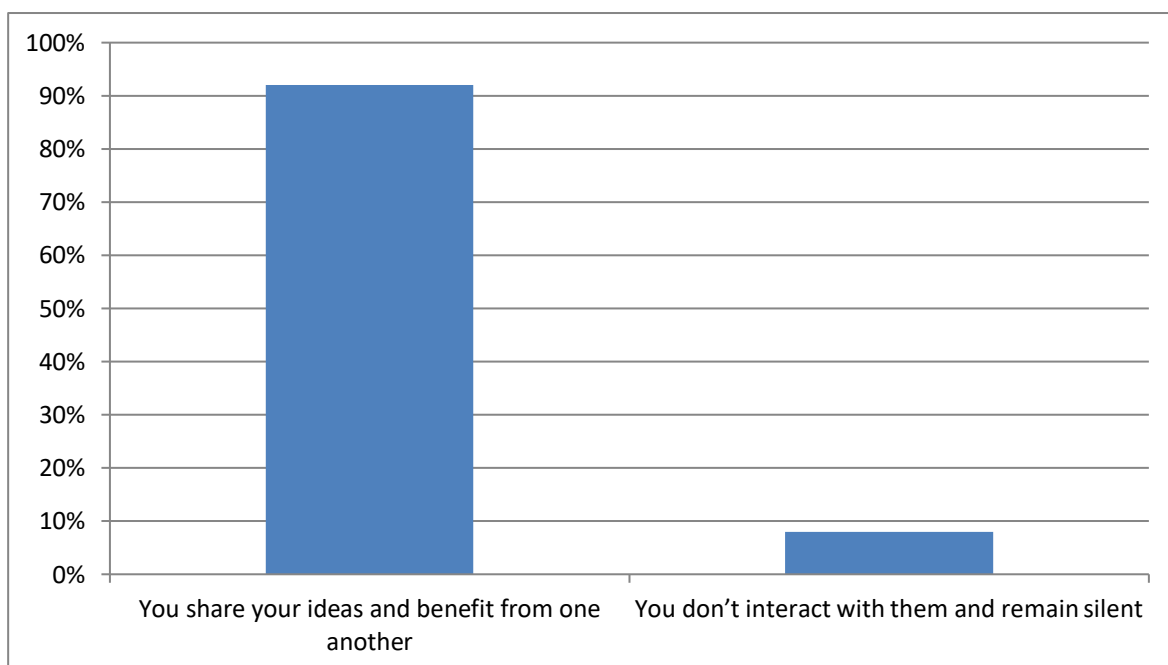
**Pie chart (7): Students' collaboration when working in small groups**

As it is illustrated, the majority of the participants, twenty, representing (80%) indicate that they collaborate in their group when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity, while the rest of the participants, five, making up (20%) reveal that they do not collaborate in their group when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity.

**4.1.2.4. Question Eight: When you work with your friends in small groups,**

You share your ideas and benefit from one another.

You don't interact with them and remain silent.

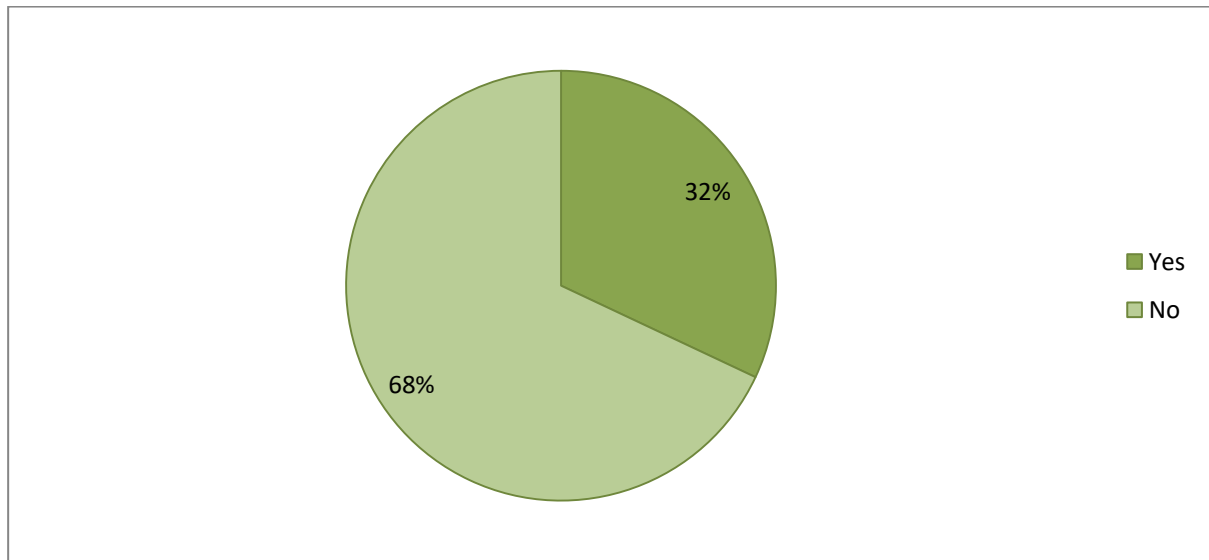


**Bar Graph (8): Students' exchange of knowledge in cooperative learning**

Diagram (08) clearly indicates that most of the participants (92%) share their ideas when they cooperate, which means that they strongly share their knowledge and ideas with their mates. While only two students (8%) do not interact and remain silent.

**4.1.2.5. Question Nine: Do you find difficulties when you work in small groups?**

Yes                      No      Why?

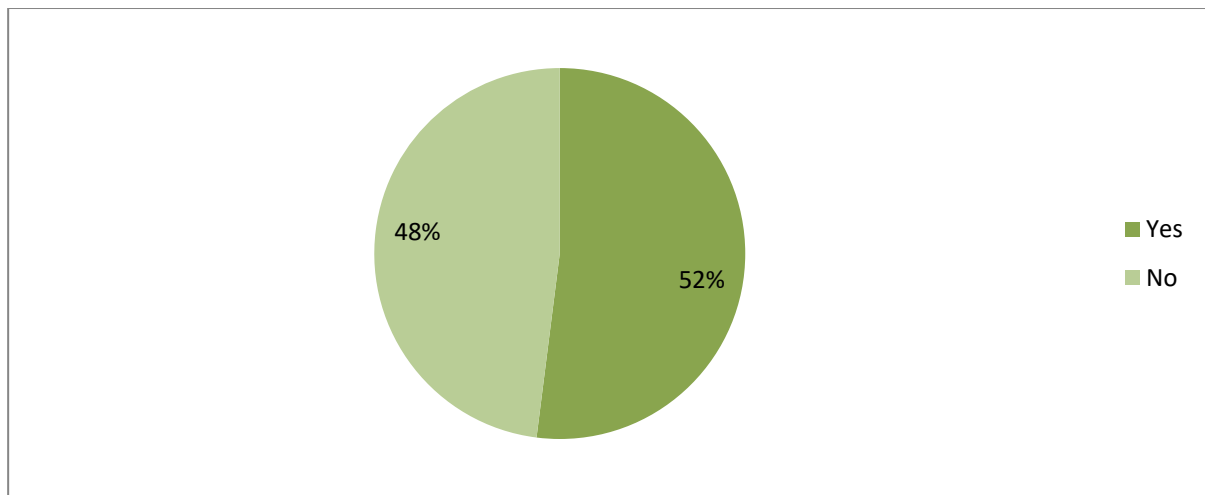


**Pie chart (9): Difficulties encountered when working in small groups**

This question aims to figure out whether the students find difficulties when working in small groups or not. Eight students making up (32%) claim that they find it difficult to work in small groups because they cannot concentrate in groups. Whereas seventeen students (68%) stated that they do not find it difficult to work in groups because they share several ideas, which helps them get more knowledge.

**4.1.2.6. Question Ten: Do your teachers encourage you to work in small groups?**

Yes                      No



**Pie chart (10): Teachers encourage students to work in small groups**

The results gathered from the questionnaire show that the most significant portion of the students (52%) claims that their teachers encourage them to work in small groups. However, twelve respondents (48%) say that teachers do not encourage them to work in small groups.

#### **1.34. Summary**

This chapter presented the results gathered from questionnaire answered by twenty-five third year foreign languages stream students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School of Khemis-Mliliana. According to the results, we figure out that the majority of the students like working in groups because for them cooperative learning methods help them increase their reading comprehension in the classroom in the sense that, they share their ideas and benefit from one another. These findings are going to be discussed in details in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

Chapter five aims to conclude the most important steps of our research. First, it tackles the research aims and overall findings concisely. Then, it shows to what extent our research contributed to the field of study despite limitations and problems faced during the research. Finally, some recommendations are suggested by us and some students to implement cooperative learning as an instructional strategy.

### **1.35. 5.1. Research aims and overall findings:**

This chapter discusses the results obtained from our research instruments. It comprised the discussion of the findings obtained from the students' questionnaire. This part provided clear answers to the research questions of the study which are asked in the General Introduction. While some of the hypotheses suggested in the introduction are confirmed, others are rather refuted. Relying on the whole findings, we conclude that the majority of third year Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School students improve their reading comprehension through the use of cooperative learning methods.

The research study has investigated the use of cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension ability at the level of third year Foreign Languages students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School in Khemis Miliana. In this research, we have focused on identifying the different factors and techniques that enhance the students' reading comprehension in the classroom as well as the difficulties that students face in teaching reading comprehension through cooperative learning methods. Conducting such an investigation and dealing with such a topic is important as its ultimate aim is the use of cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.



This dissertation has two main objectives. The first objective is to determine the effect of using the cooperative learning techniques and to identify its usefulness in Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School. The second objective aims at finding out whether cooperative group work is used in teaching students of third year F.L classes during the reading module at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School or not.

The preceding chapters discharged the setting of ground for the research project through discussing the results of the study in relation to the research questions. The findings derived from the students' questionnaire which is analyzed and interpreted carefully and this is because of the correlation that exists between the outcomes collected from this tool. The results are then discussed and interpreted in relation to the literature review presented in chapter one.

The analyses and interpretation of the students' questionnaire has revealed many facts about the importance of reading comprehension in learning English. The majority of the students have the same opinion that reading comprehension in the EFL classroom is important. They have understood that reading comprehension helps them to improve and to facilitate their English language, as one student says, "*reading skill is very important in English language, reading helps us to understand and makes things clear*". Also, it is an important aspect which helps them to get knowledge and vocabulary. These findings confirm Kirby's (2007) view that reading comprehension is the process that we use to understand the text that we read. Moreover, Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw (2003) have stated that reading is one of the most important foreign language skills, especially when students have to read English material for their own subjects.

Students affirm that reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming, in the sense that it is a difficult and complex process. When reading, students take much time to comprehend the context of a given text; sometimes they find several difficulties to understand the meaning. This is due to many reasons such as, limitation of students' vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation problems. In addition, students who do not have sufficient background knowledge and capacities find difficulties to understand the text. This is explained by Hafner (1974) by the fact that background knowledge and experience are the most factors that influence students' reading comprehension. According to Alexander (1988) some writers produce complex reading materials which influence reading comprehension. So, readers cannot understand the text because they do not have enough background knowledge and capacities to overcome the barriers of the passage. (See chapter one)

According to the results, the majority of students like the reading module because, for them, it is very important in learning English. It helps them to learn how to pronounce words and to improve their reading skills as one of the participants says "*it is the way to improve our knowledge and to improve language skills like speaking and writing*". This means that reading skill helps students to get information and to become fluent in other language skills. However, there are some students (28%) who dislike the reading module; they have said that reading is difficult. Snow (2000) claims that readers do not have enough opportunities to develop the language skill and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers.

Concerning the students' feeling when they are asked to read in the classroom, it appears that the majority of the participants feel comfortable and motivated when reading in the classroom. As one participant says "*I feel happy and comfortable when I read in class because it helps me to improve the reading skill.*" This means that students like reading in

class. Another respondent argues *"I enjoy reading in class because it gives me a chance to correct my mistakes in pronunciation"*. Reading skill has many benefits on students like to learn how to pronounce in the correct way, to rich their vocabulary and to learn new words. However, there are some students who have admitted that they feel stressed, anxious, uncomfortable and shy maybe because they feel afraid to make some mistakes such as pronunciation and others cannot concentrate until the end of a given passage. This has led Huang (2012) to say that:

*"Comfortable reading needs to be unafraid. However, very often when one is studying something difficult or something that is difficult in one's own opinion, and when one is going to be tested, one's reading will not work well. These feelings make one feel it difficult to concentrate, to remember the ideas and to learn anything new. If one is reading for fun, usually one will not have the feeling of worry and nerve and anxiety."* (p.95)

Finally, English learners must be aware of the fact that they need to read in English in order to learn the language. Thus, they have to overcome their barriers.

#### **1.36. 5.2. Contribution to the Field**

Interestingly we have figured out that reading comprehension is improved when using cooperative learning methods. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn from this investigation is that cooperative learning plays an important role in the teaching and learning process as it enhances the students' motivation and fosters positive feelings towards classmates and encourages all students to be more actively involved in the classroom activity as well as improve their reading comprehension skills.

After we have analyzed the results obtained from the students' questionnaire, we show that more than half of the students prefer to work in groups. Because when teachers organize students into small groups, this helps them to learn academic content, to improve students' achievement in different subjects and also to discover their weaknesses.

Most students affirm that cooperative learning methods help them increase their reading comprehension skills with the percentage of (88%) compared to the students who think that cooperative learning methods do not facilitate their reading comprehension skills (12 %). This shows that students are eager to learn English and they may easily learn new things from classmates while working together, and it motivates them to progress quickly in their learning.

In order to get valuable answers, we have asked students if they collaborate and share ideas with classmates while working in small groups. From the results of diagrams (07) and (08), the majority of the participants at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School collaborates and share ideas with other classmates when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity. This means that when students collaborate in class, they share ideas and interact to accomplish tasks and solve problems, such as, when a teacher assigns students to do a work together, if one student does not understand the task, the other members help her/him to clarify the complex point and to render the task easier.

A large number of students affirm that cooperative learning strategies create a good classroom atmosphere because students while working together, they feel responsible for achieving the common goal. Each member helps the other one in doing the task and understanding the materials. As a result, they become active and motivated participants in class.

### 1.37. 5.3. Limitations of the Study

The majority of the participants declare that they do not find difficulties while working in small groups. Whereas, some students (32%) say that they find difficulties when they work together (see diagram 9). Students who find difficulties while working together cannot concentrate when the group is too large as one student says, "*I can't concentrate when I work in large groups*". Another one states, "*I like to work alone because everyone in group tries to improve his ideas and sometimes we get off task*". This result relates to what McGraw and Tidwell (2001) state that students have to deal with several issues such as poor communication, cultural difference approaches to work, they do not have an equal share of work. This means that there is a lack of communication among students and they do not have an equal capacity while working.

This study has some limitations. To begin with, the number of participants is not sufficient to generalize the results. Some Foreign Languages stream students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary school were unaware about the objective of our research; the questionnaire's questions were carefully explained and clarified by the teacher. At first, we were not able to involve them in our study. In addition, some students do not collaborate and do not interact with their teammates when they are assigned a reading comprehension activity, because working in small groups, according to them, takes much time and the shy students prefer to remain silent. For example, there are a few students who do not accept others' ideas and they like to work on their own. Moreover, we can't depend on students' answers only in our research because it is necessary to include teachers' answers too, since cooperative learning as an instructional strategy should be applied by them in class. Furthermore, SPSS-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences is used by researchers to perform statistical

analysis but it takes a professional to understand all its functions. It was hard for us to interpret SPSS output; as a result, we needed help from a computing teacher.

The fact that cooperative learning is such a dynamic practice means that it can not be used effectively in many situations. While cooperative learning will consume time, the most effective application of cooperative learning hinges on an active instructor. Teachers implementing cooperative learning may also be challenged with resistance and hostility from students who believe that they are being held back by their slower teammates or by students who are less confident and feel that they are being ignored or demeaned by their team.

#### **1.38. 5.4. Recommendations**

When analyzing the students' views about teachers' ways in motivating their students' reading comprehension, the respondents suggested different answers: giving them handouts to read at home, books or novels to read and write a summary in order to enrich their vocabulary. In addition, teachers encourage students to read in small groups in order to exchange ideas. For instance, some students say "*teachers motivate us by correcting our speaking errors by asking us to read some passages*". Another one says, "*Our teacher always asks us to read many books and novels as much as we can, because in order to master any language we should be competent in reading, writing, listening and speaking*". And also another says, "*teachers motivate us through 'pair read' and 'learning together'*". Moreover, this result shows that teachers are knowledgeable about the appropriate ways that can help their students to get rid of their reading comprehension difficulties.

For the purpose of using cooperative learning methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skill and depending on students' results in both questionnaire and observation, it could be helpful to suggest some recommendations to help students solve problems they

face in learning within cooperative groups. First, students need to use cooperative learning methods in order to increase their reading comprehension skill in class. They ought to read about cooperative learning in order to have background knowledge about the conditions in which cooperative learning occur. In addition to this, students had better develop their social relationship with all classmates by working with different students from time to time. This would increase interaction and create groups with mixed abilities. Moreover, students have to support each other, correct each other's; express their ideas without feeling any anxiety of making mistakes. They also need to remind each other with the norms of group and to reduce the noise by speaking quietly.

### **1.39. Summary**

The last chapter of our study aims to investigate the use of cooperative learning methods to improve the students' reading comprehension ability at the level of third year Foreign Languages students at Hamza Ben Abdelmotalib Secondary School in Khemis Miliana. It also reports the findings of the questionnaire's answer that confirm that cooperative learning plays an important role in the teaching and learning process as it enhances the students' motivation and fosters positive feelings towards classmates and encourages all students to be more actively involved in the classroom activity as well as improve their reading comprehension skills. However, there are some limitations and difficulties found during our research that may create problems when using cooperative learning as an instructional strategy. At last, some suggestions and recommendations are needed to make students active, more autonomous, and responsible for their own learning process.

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## Appendix A

### 1.40. Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

I would be thankful if you could fill this questionnaire. Please tick (✓) the answer or give a full statement where necessary.

#### Section One: EFL Students' attitudes towards English Reading Comprehension

**Item1:** Reading comprehension is very important in learning English.

Agree       Neutral       Disagree

Why.....

**Item2:** Reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming.

Agree       Neutral       Disagree

**Question Three:** Do you like the reading?

Yes       No

Why?

**Question Four:** How do you feel when you are asked to read in the classroom?

.....

#### Section Two: Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension

**Question Five:** Do you like working in groups or individually?

In groups       Individually

Say why?

**Question Six:** Do cooperative learning methods help you increase your reading comprehension skills in class?

Yes  No

**Question Seven:** Do you collaborate in your group when you are assigned a reading comprehension activity?

Yes  No

**Question Eight:** When you work with your friends in small groups,

- a. You share your ideas and benefit from one another.
- b. You don't interact with them and remain silent.

**Question Nine:** Do you find difficulties when you work in small groups?

Yes  No

Why? .....

**Question Ten:** Does your teacher encourage you to work in small groups?

Yes  No

Why? .....

**Thank you for your help**

## Appendix B

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

I would be thankful if you could fill in this questionnaire, please tick (✓) the right answer or give a full statement when necessary

#### Section one: EFL students' attitudes towards English reading comprehension

**Item One:** Reading comprehension is very important in learning English.

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Why? *because I can learn when I read.*

**Item Two:** Reading comprehension is hard and time-consuming

Agree

disagree

Neutral

**Question Three:** Do you like the reading module?

Yes

No

Why?

**Question four:** How do you feel when you are asked to read in the classroom?

*I feel happy because it is the only time when I can show my skill.*

#### Section two: Cooperative learning and Reading Comprehension

**Question Five:** Do you like working in groups or individually?

In groups

Individually

Say why? *because I can discuss with my classmates.*

**Question Six:** Do cooperative learning methods help you increase your reading comprehension skills in class?

Yes

No

**Question Seven:** Do you collaborate in your group when you are assigned a reading comprehension activity?

Yes

No

**Question Eight:** When you work with your friends in small groups, you

a. share your ideas and benefit from one another. ✓

b. You don't interact with them and remain silent.

**Question Nine:** Do you find difficulties when you work in small groups?

Yes

No

Why?

..... It is the opposite, I find it easy. ....

**Question Ten:** Does your teacher encourage you to work in small groups?

Yes

No

a lot

**Thank You For Your Help**