CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

6.0. Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the study, a discussion of the results relative to the existing research, an examination of the implications of the research, conclusion and recommendations for future study. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the relationship between the use of Learning Together strategy and Saudi EFL undergraduate students reading comprehension achievement. Students' perceptions of the impact that Learning Together strategy had on students' reading comprehension achievement were also investigated.

6.1. Summary of the Study

There has been a problem with Saudi EFL undergraduate reading comprehension education. In Saudi EFL classrooms, reading is a problematic skill for both teachers and learners. According to Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman (2011), Saudi EFL students of different educational levels are unable to read efficiently or comprehend what they read. Even worse, Al Abik (2014) pointed out that Saudi TOEFL candidates' average mean score in reading (X=12) is far below the average mean score worldwide (X=20). This result was supported by his own study of Saudi English-major undergraduates, in which he concluded that the majority of students (almost 70 percent) who were majoring in English and translation could not score

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more than 10 in the reading comprehension test. He emphasized that reading comprehension instruction in Saudi Arabia is not given proper attention and that there is an urgent need to change classroom practices in order to develop students' reading skills.

Derived from the researcher's experience in teaching EFL reading comprehension course for second year students of both the Community College and the Science and Arts College, the researcher found the main problem on the students' reading comprehension skills was that, the use of an inappropriate teaching method, namely, traditional lecturing instruction. Hence, the impact was straight lacking on the student's achievement in reading comprehension tests. Founded on this teaching situation, it is needed to select the most innovation teaching method, like Learning Together strategy, in order to enhance the student's reading comprehension achievement. Thus, this research attempted to select the Learning Together strategy which is derived from cooperative learning which facilities the students to understand the reading comprehension text much more easily. The students were taught to work together within small groups to achieve the goal of reading comprehension text.

The literature review discussed the effects of cooperative learning. One of these effects of cooperative learning was that students of all abilities increased their academic achievement (Stevens & Slavin, as cited in Orlich et al., 2007) in different domains and in many academic subjects such as reading, writing, math computation, math application, comprehension, critical thinking, and physical education (Bramlett; Dyson & Grineski; Hart; Megnin; Nattiv; Stevens & Slavin; Webb et al.; all as cited in Orlich et al., 2007). Some other effects of cooperative learning included interpersonal relations and conflict resolution skills (Zhang, 1994).

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Communities of caring are created in which students feel responsible for their classmates regardless of their race, age, class, gender, or disability (Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 1992), and enhanced intrinsic motivation, self-perception, and positive attitudes (Nastasi & Clements, 1991). Therefore, the researcher's interest in conducting this study stemmed from the observable unsatisfactory state of reading instruction performance in Saudi Arabia and the lack of sufficient empirical literature on the topic of Learning Together instruction to EFL reading comprehension learners.

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine if there was a correlation between the Learning Together strategy (independent variable), and Saudi EFL undergraduate students' reading comprehension achievement (dependent variable). Learning Together is generally defined as a cooperative learning strategy that allows a heterogeneous group of students, assigned specific roles, to achieve a common goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). The goal of this research study was to generalize from a small sample in both Unaizah Community College and Unaizah Science and Arts College to the larger population of Saudi Undergraduate EFL students, providing insight into best practices to support undergraduate EFL students' reading comprehension achievement.

The study was conducted in both Unaizah Community College and Unaizah Science and Arts College, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia, 80 students representing took part in the study. Convenience sampling was used since classes were departmentalized, but these classes had been randomly selected at the beginning of the first semester of the 2016/2017 academic year. The students were divided into two groups, experimental group of 40 students and control group of 40 students. The researcher was designated to instruct both the experimental group and control group as classes were departmentalized.

The control group received traditional lecture instruction from the researcher and did not participate in the learning together strategy instruction. Students were required just to stay individually in their seats, listen to lectures, take notes, and complete written assignments in accordance with the reading comprehension course specifications. Students were not stimulated to work together with other students; a quiet learning atmosphere was imposed.

The control group engaged in traditional lecture instruction for the duration of three class lectures per week (50 minutes per lecture) for 12 weeks, including testing days. The Learning Together groups in the treatment classroom were constructed by pairing groups of approximately five students according to the students' pretest results. Learning Together groups were formed by pairing two students scoring in the lower 50th percentile with three students scoring in the upper 50th percentile, as indicated by pretest scores.

The experimental group engaged in the Learning Together strategy instruction, and experienced work together in groups. Throughout the course of the study, students were highly stimulated to engage in working together and discuss reading comprehension topics with each other. The data collection instruments used for this study were identical reading comprehension pretest posttest, observation notes, Learning Together strategy survey, semi-structured individual interviews and students focus group interviews.

For this study, student individual interviews were conducted with 12 undergraduate EFL reading comprehension students from a classroom that used learning together strategy. Two student focus group interviews were also conducted with two groups of five students for the first and four students for the second. Scheduling the interviews was a difficult part of the process. The students handed in

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their consent forms, and then the scheduling began. After the scheduling was complete, ten to 15 minutes were put aside for each individual student interview, but most were completed within 5 minutes. They took much less time than expected as the students' answers lacked depth.

In addition to the student individual and focus group interviews, students from a classroom that utilized Learning Together strategy and a classroom that used traditional lecture instruction were observed. Both classes took an identical reading comprehension pretest and posttest and data were analyzed and desegregated. Obtaining the scores from the identical reading comprehension pretest and posttest took longer than anticipated in the data analysis process. Data collection from the interviews revealed six themes relating to the research questions. The conclusions presented in this chapter are the results of those six themes as they relate to the purpose of the study and literature review.

For this mixed-method study, t test was conducted to assess if there was a difference in pre- and posttest scores by group. Using *t* test allowed the researcher to determine whether there was a significant difference in the sample means of the experimental group and control group data. The following research questions were addressed in this mixed-method study:

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between using Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores?

RQ2: What are undergraduate EFL experimental group students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using Learning Together instruction in improving their reading comprehension achievement?

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RQ3: How do undergraduate EFL experimental group students react to using Learning Together instruction in their EFL reading comprehension classroom?

6.2. Discussion and Summary of Findings

6.2.1. Discussion and Summary of Quantitative Findings

6.2.1.1. Research Question 1

Is there a significant relationship between using Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores?

To assess RQ1, an independent *t* test was conducted to compare the mean difference score from the Learning Together strategy instruction classroom to the mean difference score of the traditional lecture instruction classroom. As regards the experimental group, (n=40), the result of the t-test showed that there was a significant difference in scores between the pre-reading comprehension test (M = 16.24, SD = 4.46) and the post-reading comprehension test (M = 17.61, SD = 3.53) conditions; t (39) = -4. 556, p = .000. As regards the control group (n=40), the result of the t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the scores for the pre-reading comprehension test (M = 16.80, SD = 2.97) and post-reading comprehension test (M = 16.17, SD = 3.77) conditions; t (39) = 1.103, p = .279. The results indicated that, at posttest, the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group, and only the experimental group scored significantly higher from pretest to posttest. It was hypothesized that participation in the Learning Together experimental group would lead to significant gains in reading comprehension in comparison to those of the traditional lecture instruction control group.

6.2.1.1.1. Hypothesis

Alternate Hypothesis:

There is a significant relationship between using cooperative learning strategy of Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores.

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant relationship between using cooperative learning strategy of Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores.

The two hypotheses were tested by computing an independent *t* test to compare the mean difference score from the Learning Together strategy instruction classroom to the mean difference score of the traditional lecture instruction classroom. As regards the experimental group, (n=40), the result of the t-test showed that there was a significant difference in scores between the pre-reading comprehension test (M = 16.24, SD = 4.46) and the post-reading comprehension test (M = 17.61, SD = 3.53) conditions; t (39) = -4. 556, p = .000. The result of the t-test is outlined in table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1: Paired sample t-test comparing the pre- and post-reading comprehension test scores of the experimental group

The experimental Group (n=40)	Pre- Post	Mean	SD	T	Df	P
		1.368	1.852	4.556	39	.000*

*Significant at p < .05

As regards the control group (n=40), the result of the t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the scores for the pre-reading comprehension test (M = 16.80, SD = 2.97) and post-reading comprehension test (M = 16.17, SD = 3.77) conditions; t (39) = 1.103, p = .279. The result of the t-test is outlined in table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2: Paired sample t-test comparing the pre- and post-reading comprehension test scores of the control group

The Control Group (n=40)	Pre-	Mean	SD	T	Df	P
	Post	.633	3.146	1.103	39	.279*

*Significant at p < .05

In brief, the mean score of the control group decreased .63 in the post-reading comprehension test. On the contrast, the mean score of the experimental group increased 1.37 points in the post-reading comprehension test. According to the change of the mean scores of the two groups, the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension test by showing as much as 2.00 point (1.37 - (- 0.63)) difference. Consequently, it could be stated that Learning Together strategy instruction was effective and supportive for Saudi undergraduate EFL students to improve their reading comprehension achievement through the process of assessment.

Therefore, the statistical analysis proved the alternative hypothesis, which means there is a significant relationship between using cooperative learning strategy of Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores and rejected the null hypothesis which means there is no significant relationship between using cooperative learning strategy of Learning Together in undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom and students' reading comprehension achievement as determined by students' pre-test and post-test scores.

An analysis of the results of both groups in pretest and posttest and comparing the level of reading comprehension for the two groups over the course of the study during the first semester of the 2016/2017 academic year revealed that the participants in the experimental group who received Learning Together instruction made significantly higher gains in reading comprehension than their counterparts in the control group who received traditional lecturing instruction. Thus, Learning Together strategy instruction led to statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension.

The above findings clearly support the past research of scholars who asserted that using different cooperative learning strategies promote student achievement in education. Slavin (2010) stated "Cooperative learning has established itself as a practical alternative to traditional teaching, and has proven its effectiveness in hundreds of studies throughout the world" (p. 10).

The results of this study confirmed the results of several studies that suggested that Learning Together strategy intervention could improve learners' reading comprehension. These studies have shown that social interaction and interactive learning of different cooperative learning strategies create the desire, generate stimulation and activate motivation necessary for reading comprehension to occur and to ensure reading and actively engaging with the reading comprehension text (Koda, 2005; Mathewson, 1994).

Compared with the traditional lecture instruction, experimental group students articulated that encouragement from their partners motivated them to use more time and do their best to preview and study reading comprehension texts in maximal depth. Working together with group partners offered students the opportunity to work on reading comprehension texts much more easily with the help of other group members,

and they gained encouragement, support, and achievement which enhanced their reading comprehension skills.

Learning Together strategy significantly improved medium- and low-proficiency student EFL reading comprehension. However, it only provided high-proficiency students with limited benefits. This result agreed with what Hill (1982) stated that high-proficiency student performance did not reach the expected level because they could not obtain help from medium- and low-proficiency students when they encountered unsolved problems, and lacked a model to emulate.

According to Vygotsky's scaffold theory, peer interactions allow students to enter the proximal development zone where a less able peer is able to enter a new area of potential development through problem-solving with someone who is more able (Vygotsky, 1978). This can be a reasonable justification why medium- and low-proficiency students benefited from learning together strategy instruction; they got help from higher-proficiency students facilitating their study of reading comprehension texts and making it more effective.

6.2.1.2. Research Question 2

What are undergraduate EFL experimental group students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using Learning Together instruction in improving their reading comprehension achievement?

To assess RQ2, the Learning Together strategy survey asked the experimental group students to compare their previous learning experience with traditional lecture instruction and their learning experience with Learning Together instruction. The survey analysis showed the student perceptions on Learning Together strategy instruction. For much easier interpretation of the students' perceptions, the *strongly*

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agree and *agree* responses were combined into an *agree* response, and *strongly disagree* and *disagree* responses were combined into a *disagree* response.

The Learning Together strategy survey analysis showed that 80% of the students believed that Learning Together strategy could inspire them to active learning. Additionally, group discussion during working together was the major method adopted in reading comprehension Learning Together strategy instruction classes, and over 85% of the experimental group students confirmed that group discussion benefited their reading comprehension, while 75% of the experimental group students thought that group discussion assisted them to achieve better higher reading comprehension post-test scores.

Totally, 70% of the experimental group students demonstrated that they have improved their reading comprehension skills and learned different study strategies through working together with their partners during the Leaning Together strategy instruction process. Almost 60% of the experimental group students felt satisfied with their group partners' performance in the course of Learning Together activities. Although experimental group students spent much more time preparing and engaging in discussions in the working together process, 70% of the students preferred Learning Together strategy instruction over traditional lecture instruction.

Thoroughly, 50% of the experimental group students agreed that Learning Together strategy instruction brought much more fun and pleasure to their reading comprehension study. To summarize, most of the experimental group students agreed that Learning Together strategy instruction inspired them to reading comprehension active learning, and improved both of their EFL reading comprehension achievement and skills; though, nearly 60% felt satisfied from interaction with their group members for the duration of Learning Together strategy instruction activities.

The points of view of experimental group students expressed in the Learning Together Strategy Survey showed that in learning together reading comprehension classroom, besides listening to the lectures, they were offered, through working together, more opportunities to enthusiastically learn by previewing the reading comprehension text, interacting with other group members, and helping each other during group discussions. Consequently they gained better reading comprehension, which, in turn, helped them increase their self-confidence and achieve higher scores in the posttest than those obtained in the pretest.

All through group discussions, students got partners' support, assistance and encouragement, which made them ready to dedicate much more time to study reading comprehension and enjoy working with each other through Learning Together activities more than just sitting passively and listening to lectures. Therefore, over 86% of the experimental group students asserted that the group discussion of Learning Together strategy instruction promoted their reading comprehension skills, enhanced their scores, and increased their self-confidence.

6.2.2. Discussion and Summary of Qualitative Findings

6.2.2.1. Research Question 3

How do undergraduate EFL experimental group students react to using Learning Together instruction in their EFL reading comprehension classroom?

The results from research questions 1 and 2 indicated, in isolation, that Learning Together strategy intervention helped promote students' greater levels of reading comprehension. However, the core point of inquiry behind research question 3 was how experimental group students experienced utilizing and interacting with this strategy.

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The research question 3 aimed to ascertain the lived experiences and perceptions of EFL undergraduates implementing learning together strategy in their EFL reading comprehension classroom. A basic qualitative research methodology was used to gather information pertaining to research question 3 from the participants as they revealed their experiences and perceptions of learning together during its implementation in EFL reading comprehension classroom. This was to determine whether the Learning Together strategy intervention led to a change in students reading comprehension achievement.

The analysis for the research question 3 was conducted using thematic analysis. The research acknowledged themes in the participants' answers to the third question that was asked. Data was then examined and separated to reveal distinct results from the third research question used to guide the qualitative part of this research study. The basic qualitative investigation phase of the research allowed the researcher to comprehend how the participants interpreted their experiences, theorized their worlds, and associated meaning with their experiences (Boddy, 2016; Merriam, 2009).

A total of 12 participants from the experimental group of 40 EFL undergraduates were selected for both the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. These 12 chosen participants readily volunteered to share their experiences and perceptions while implementing learning together strategy in their EFL reading comprehension classroom. These EFL undergraduates, from two different colleges, were carefully chosen through purposive sampling. This sampling approach enabled the researcher to purposely select participants and sites to collect data (Creswell, 2013).

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The purpose of the qualitative phase of this research was to discover what experiences and perceptions EFL undergraduates have while implementing learning together strategy in their EFL reading comprehension classroom. Participants were interviewed, and their responses were recorded, transcribed and used to find out their experiences and perceptions while implementing learning together strategy in their EFL reading comprehension classroom. As soon as the interviews were completed, the data analysis began.

Once all the interviews were uploaded, the data coding began. Through classification, sorting, and rearranging of data, the researcher was able to inspect the connections in the data and combine coded elements as part of the analysis. Coding involved assigning codes to key statements and phrases found in the interview answers. The next step in the data analysis was to refine and summarize the initial codes to create larger categories. During this step, the researcher looked for the patterns that began to emerge in the data. Once patterns began to emerge, the researcher looked for themes that were descriptive of the patterns. These themes were then associated with the research third question.

Research Question 3 generated a total of eight themes related to eight different categories. The themes emerged from qualitative data collected included eight emerging themes. These areas were (a) EFL reading comprehension instructor provided continuing support during the learning together instruction sessions, (b) learning EFL reading comprehension skills is much easier when working in learning together groups, (c) working in learning together groups improves EFL reading comprehension skills learning, (d) learning EFL reading comprehension is more fun when students work in learning together groups, (e) learning together is a strategy that can be used in teaching other EFL skills, (f) Student help-seeking strategies were

widened due to learning together instruction, (g) Participating in learning together activities produces secure learning atmosphere and positive student interactions and (h) the future use of learning together strategy would yield better students' achievement. These themes served to inform the understanding of research question 3 and gave a deep insight into the other two research questions and hypothesis.

Built upon his close observation of the students throughout the course of the study, the researcher noticed that working together with other partners in a group made the process of interaction, sharing ideas and suggestions much easier which in return facilitated the reading comprehension learning process since group members used to assist and foster each other when they encounter any obstacles in understanding the reading comprehension texts.

Generally speaking, the study results proved that Learning Together strategy instruction supports active and interactive learning, which produces a positive learning environment and offers students the chance to interact, enjoy and involve in their study of EFL reading comprehension course.

6.3. Recommendations

This mixed-methods research study offered both quantitative and qualitative research data, analysis, and conclusions with respect to the relationship between the use of Learning Together strategy and undergraduate EFL students' reading comprehension achievement. Students' perceptions of the impact of Learning Together strategy on students' reading comprehension achievement were also explored. The results from this mixed-methods study were not only exploratory but descriptive and inferential in nature as well. These results led to some

recommendations for further research on the field of the impact of Learning Together strategy on EFL skills.

6.3.1. Recommendations for Future Research

In going through the whole study and taking into consideration reasons for the unexpected outcomes, there are undoubtedly additional EFL teaching areas that warrant further investigations when one weighs on a potential research project in line with this study. Several matters to be considered in strengthening similar future research project are a larger sample size, a prolonged study time, an inclusion of additional cooperative learning strategies, and a structured interview. Following are some recommendations for future research in the study of Learning Together strategy built upon the research and conclusions of this study.

1. This research study focused on only undergraduate EFL third-level in two colleges in one university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Further research studies could involve more participants by including more undergraduate EFL levels, more colleges, and more universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. This study was carried out among undergraduate EFL third-level students in the content area of EFL reading comprehension. Additional research could be carried out across other EFL skills domains such as writing and speaking, and across other undergraduate EFL levels. Learning Together is a teaching strategy that can be easily adapted for not only EFL courses but also other domains such as science, social studies, language arts and math.

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Researching the impact of this instructional strategy in other subject areas and across other undergraduate levels might prove to be effective.

3. This study focused on only one specific cooperative learning strategy, in other words, Learning Together strategy. According to the meta-analysis conducted by Johnson et al. (2000), further research is needed on various strategies of cooperative learning.

4. This study was conducted using convenience sampling because undergraduate EFL classes were departmentalized. Although EFL reading comprehension classes were randomly assigned at the beginning of the first semester of the 2016-2017 academic year, random sampling of undergraduate EFL students could help increase the generalizability of the study.

5. Although the study was conducted with a minimum sample size of 80 participants, employing a larger sampling size would have provided more accurate and reliable outcomes because by applying a larger sample size in the study, smaller effects are easier to detect and large effects can more accurately measured, thus, validity and reliability of the results are ensured (Kraus, 2014). At the same time, however, recruiting a greater number of participants from other colleges reading comprehension classrooms within a short period of time might be difficult because not all EFL reading comprehension instructors were convinced by the idea that use of learning together instruction improves students' reading comprehension academic performance and achievement. Thus, in order to

persuade other EFL reading comprehension instructors to incorporate learning together strategy in the EFL reading comprehension classrooms, more compelling facts, such as test results and testimony from students, would need to be gathered. In the future, if more instructors are interested in the teaching/learning concept or the idea of learning together strategy captures more students' attention, this restriction could be resolved and a more extensive study can be performed.

6. In addition to being small, the sample size for this study consisted mainly of male students. A larger gender mixed sample size could have yielded more dramatic results, but the location of both Community College and Science and Arts College in the Saudi separate gender education system and their total EFL third-level enrollment of 80 students did not allow a larger sample size to participate in this study.
7. In addition to the limitation of a relatively small male sample size, the length of the research study was a factor as well. Understandably, the research study had to be completed within a semester due to the pre-established reading comprehension course schedule by the university. Otherwise, a prolonged time for the research would produce more reliable and justifiable results. Having extended time to conduct the research study would mean more time to improve the study procedures and to scrutinize the data more meticulously, so that a deeper understanding of the study matter and more accurate and reliable results can be accomplished. This study adhered to a 12-week time plan through the first semester of the 2016-2017 academic year for implementing the Learning Together strategy. A longer period of study through the whole academic year could

have produced different results. Using Learning Together strategy in teaching EFL reading comprehension material and delivering the content at a slower pace could offer students opportunity for deeper understanding. Commonly, lecturers are pressured to teach many EFL reading comprehension skills over a short period of time, so there is an urgent need for extending the period over which the EFL reading comprehension course could be instructed. This idea is consistent with Andrietti and Velasco (2015), in which students earn better grades when they invest extensive hours in academic learning and daily practices because study time imposes a significantly greater impact on academic success. In the future, those who are interested to conduct similar research could explore whether longer practice time would further increase students' reading test score. Future research should be employed with other EFL skills using learning together strategy for a much longer period of time.

6.3.2. Recommendations for Practice

Due to the great importance of EFL reading comprehension education in the Saudi higher education context, this study suggests the Learning Together strategy can be an effective teaching method in the EFL classroom. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between the use of Learning Together strategy and students' EFL reading comprehension achievement, and student perceptions experiences of using Learning Together strategy in EFL reading comprehension classroom. Teaching undergraduate EFL students reading comprehension skills while working cooperatively together has been proven to improve students' achievement in the content area of EFL reading comprehension for

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undergraduate EFL students in both Unaizah Community College and Unaizah Science and Arts College.

The results of the reading comprehension pre-test did not show significant results of both experimental group and control group, as the students were not accustomed to using Learning Together strategy. Though, the reading comprehension post-test showed significant results. Relating to the impacts learning together instruction had on students' reading comprehension academic performance and achievement, one portion of the study outcomes are undeniable that use of learning together strategy generated a significant difference in experimental group students' pre- and post- reading comprehension test scores. The Learning Together reading comprehension classroom improved significantly more than the traditional lecture instruction classroom. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, certain recommendations pertaining future practices using Learning Together strategy can be made:

1. The first recommendation is to encourage EFL lecturers to employ learning together strategy to their EFL learners' classrooms. By doing so, this will help to build confidence and friendships, which will lead to learners trusting each other in group or peer settings. This will allow students who are able to grasp information faster provide positive support for those who are struggling. Since participants come to the classroom with apprehension regarding their level of knowledge, working together in a group where the group members are mostly at the same level of acquisition will enhance learning, and the environment will be less threatening for them.
2. EFL lecturers should be trained through professional development courses held by university in how to apply Learning Together strategy in the

undergraduate EFL classrooms, as most of them are used to utilizing traditional lecture instruction. Having ongoing professional development is important for EFL lecturers in the way they will be able to employ learning together strategy and will not be afraid to implement it to improve the EFL teaching and learning environment.

1. EFL lecturers should train their undergraduate students how to work together with their peers in groups. EFL undergraduate students need to be trained how to work cooperatively with each other, how to manage and use their time effectively, and how to work out any problematic learning situations should they encounter.
2. After effective application of Learning Together strategy in EFL reading comprehension course, EFL lecturers can apply it one by one in other EFL courses such as writing, grammar, speaking, translation and literature.
3. The findings of this mixed methods study could be of great interest to stakeholders who seek teaching strategies and methods of improving performance, enhancing achievement and increasing test scores not only in the content area of EFL reading comprehension skills but also in other language skills such as writing, listening and speaking.
4. EFL lecturers across other undergraduate levels should also be informed of Learning Together strategy; it could be easily adaptable for use in many other educational contexts or academic subject areas. Learning Together may also prove beneficial in other content areas such as computer science, Arabic language and economics.
5. Adequate in-service training courses should be provided by the Deanship of Professional Development of Qassim University in Saudi Arabia to

enhance lecturers' knowledge of how to correctly implement the Learning Together strategy.

6. EFL undergraduates, as future practitioners, will benefit from this study by selecting a pedagogy that will most likely impact student achievement in their EFL reading comprehension classroom.

6.4. Conclusions

In spite of great efforts done to get over the problem of Saudi EFL learners underperformance in reading comprehension, EFL learners nationwide continue to produce low test scores in TOEFL generally and in reading section in particular. For many years, Saudi EFL learners' test scores at TOEFL indicated a weakness in the reading comprehension domain. A need for traditional lecture instruction change was identified because the status quo is not producing desired test results.

Traditional methods of teaching should be examined and new teaching strategies should be researched and applied to produce the required positive change. Learning Together is an instructional strategy that was proven in this study to improve third-level undergraduate EFL students' reading comprehension test scores in an undergraduate EFL reading comprehension classroom in Saudi Arabia. Learning Together is generally defined as a cooperative learning strategy that allows a heterogeneous group of students, assigned specific roles, to achieve a common goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

Learning Together may be an effective teaching strategy that can be utilized across all undergraduate levels, not only in the content area of reading comprehension, but also in other academic courses such as Grammar, Academic Writing, Listening and Speaking, Translation and Literature. It could be concluded that undergraduate

EFL students receiving Learning Together strategy instruction performed significantly better on EFL reading comprehension post-test than undergraduate EFL students who were taught using traditional lecture instruction.

With respect to different proficiency levels of groups, the medium- and low-proficiency groups benefited more in improving their EFL reading comprehension achievement, scores and skills from Learning Together strategy instruction than from traditional lecture instruction. As EFL undergraduates worked together in groups and with peers, they began to develop relationships through their social interactions. Stronger students provided peer support and assistance to students who were struggling with their responses. Stronger students repeated information, assisted peers with reading comprehension tasks and exercises completion inside and outside their classroom.

This study results and findings support the results and findings of previous studies carried out though the domain of the impact of cooperative learning on reading comprehension (Bolukbas, Keskin, Polat, 2011; Ghaith, 2003; Gomleksiz, 2007; Ning, 2011; Suh, 2009; Tsai, 2004). Additionally, compared to traditional lecture instruction, it could be noted that Learning Together strategy instruction resulted in a significantly positive improvement in the students' learning outcomes, attitudes, perceptions and motivation. These results and findings are consistent with the results and findings of other previous studies (Chen, 1998; Liao & Oescher, 2009; Manolas & Filho, 2011; Tsai, 2004).

It is high time for EFL lecturers to change their teaching practices in the undergraduate EFL classrooms. Lecturer-directed teaching and lecturer-centered instruction do not support a deeper understanding of content material in the reading comprehension skills domains. Learning Together represents a powerful means of

social positive change. This study strongly recommends that EFL lecturers in Qassim University in Saudi Arabia be informed of one of the cooperative learning best strategies, Learning Together, and be empowered to use this effective instructional instrument to produce a notable increase in undergraduate EFL students' achievement scores since student test scores are too significant to delay incorporation of effective learning tools in undergraduate EFL classrooms. The Learning Together strategy may be the key to making such difference.

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