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Research Paper

## Cooperative Vs. Hybrid Analysis of Cooperative-Competitive Learning Approaches of EFL Learners' Writing Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency

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### Abstract

This quasi-experimental study investigated the comparative effects of two instructional approaches—cooperative learning and a hybrid model integrating cooperative and competitive elements—on EFL learners' writing proficiency, involving 23 female participants aged 16 to 45 ( $M = 30.5$ ) from an Iranian language institute, selected via convenience sampling and homogenized using Preliminary English Test (PET) scores, who were randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups and administered pre- and post-writing assessments (argumentative essays scored analytically for complexity, accuracy, and fluency); Group 1 received six weeks of instruction (two 90-minute sessions/week) using exclusively cooperative strategies (e.g., jigsaw, collaborative drafting, peer feedback), while Group 2 engaged in a hybrid model wherein the same cooperative core was enriched with structured, team-based competitive components—such as timed writing challenges and performance-linked recognition—delivered by the same trained instructor with all materials and task types held constant except for the competitive layer; Repeated Measures ANOVA, following verification of sphericity (Mauchly's test) and normality (Shapiro-Wilk), revealed a significant main effect of time ( $p < .001$ ) and, critically, a significant Group  $\times$  Time interaction ( $p = .008$ ), with post hoc pairwise comparisons confirming the hybrid group's superior post-test gains ( $p = .003$ ), particularly in syntactic complexity (e.g., T-unit length, subordination) and lexical accuracy; qualitative feedback indicated that learners in the hybrid condition experienced heightened motivation and peer accountability, with initial anxiety around competition subsiding as norms of "friendly rivalry" emerged; these findings challenge the notion that competition inherently disrupts collaboration in EFL settings and instead suggest that carefully designed, non-zero-sum competitive elements—embedded within a supportive cooperative framework—can foster deeper cognitive engagement and significantly enhance L2 writing development, offering empirically grounded guidance for educators and curriculum designers seeking to optimize socio-dynamic balance in writing instruction.

**Keywords:** Competitive learning, Cooperative learning, EFL writing, Hybrid model, Writing proficiency

تحلیل مقایسه‌ای رویکردهای یادگیری مشارکتی در مقابل ترکیب یادگیری مشارکتی-رقابتی بر پیچیدگی، دقت، و روانی نوشتار زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی

این مطالعه شبه‌آزمایشی تأثیرات مقایسه‌ای دو رویکرد آموزشی - یادگیری مشارکتی و مدلی ترکیبی که عناصر مشارکتی و رقابتی را ادغام می‌کند - را بر مهارت نوشتاری زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی (EFL) بررسی کرده است. شرکت‌کنندگان ( $n = 23$ ) شامل زبان‌آموزان زن ۱۶ تا ۴۵ ساله (میانگین سنی = ۳۰.۵) بودند که از طریق



نمونه‌گیری در دسترس انتخاب شدند و بر اساس نمرات آزمون مقدماتی زبان انگلیسی (PET) همگن‌سازی شدند. شرکت‌کنندگان به‌طور تصادفی به یکی از دو گروه آزمایشی اختصاص یافتند. هر دو گروه پیش‌آزمون و پس‌آزمون دریافت کردند. گروه‌های آزمایشی به ترتیب از رویکرد یادگیری مشارکتی و رویکرد ترکیبی که عناصر مشارکتی و رقابتی را در خود جای داده بود، بهره بردند. تحلیل داده‌ها با استفاده از آزمون تحلیل واریانس اندازه‌های مکرر (Repeated Measures ANOVA) انجام شد. نتایج نشان داد که رویکرد ترکیبی در مقایسه با رویکرد یادگیری مشارکتی به‌طور قابل‌توجهی در بهبود پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتار زبان‌آموزان مؤثرتر بوده است. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهند که ادغام عناصر رقابتی در چارچوب مشارکتی می‌تواند تأثیر چشمگیری در ارتقاء مهارت نوشتاری زبان‌آموزان داشته باشد و پیشنهادهای ارزشمندی برای مربیان و توسعه‌دهندگان مواد آموزشی ارائه کند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** یادگیری رقابتی، یادگیری مشارکتی، نوشتار زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی، مدل ترکیبی، مهارت نوشتاری

## Introduction

Writing proficiency is widely recognized as a fundamental component of second language (L2) acquisition; however, it continues to pose considerable challenges for many EFL learners (Marashi & Rezaei, 2023; Zaker & Tavakoli, 2025). Effective written communication entails the ability to articulate ideas with clarity, accuracy, and coherence (Nosratinia & Abdi, 2017). Conventional teacher-centered pedagogies—often marked by restricted learner autonomy and minimal engagement—have been shown to impede the development of such vital writing skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2020; Nosratinia & Zaker, 2014).

In response to these limitations, increasing attention has been directed toward alternative pedagogical models that promote deeper learning and foster greater learner autonomy. One such model is cooperative learning, which foregrounds peer interaction and collaborative engagement (Gillies, 2016). Within this framework, learners work jointly on shared tasks, enabling the exchange of ideas, mutual scaffolding, and the cultivation of collective responsibility for learning (Gillies, 2016). Such interaction-rich environments have been associated with increased motivation, learner engagement, and enhanced language acquisition outcomes (Slavin, 2015).

Despite its demonstrated efficacy, cooperative learning may not yield uniform benefits for all learners. Variations in learning styles, personality traits, and motivational profiles can significantly mediate learners' engagement with cooperative tasks (Zaker, 2016; Zaker, 2024a; Nosratinia & Zaker, 2017). Moreover, the emergence of group imbalances—such as passive participation by some members or dominance by others—can compromise the effectiveness of cooperative structures (Boiangiu et al., 2016).

To address these challenges, hybrid pedagogical approaches that integrate cooperative and competitive elements have been proposed (Smith et al., 2022). These models aim to harness the motivational benefits of competition while preserving the collaborative essence of cooperative learning (Zhang et al., 2023). By striking a balance between collective effort and individual drive, hybrid frameworks may offer a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment suited to a broader range of learner profiles (Zhang, 2023).

The theoretical underpinnings of cooperative learning are firmly rooted in sociocultural theory, which underscores the role of social interaction and collaborative mediation in cognitive and linguistic development (Zaker, 2016). From this perspective, learning is facilitated through interaction with more capable peers, positioning cooperation as a natural and productive mode of knowledge construction (Gillies, 2016).

Competition, on the other hand, has been the subject of extensive inquiry in both educational and psychological domains (Slavin, 2016). While moderate competition can spur learners toward higher achievement and goal attainment, unchecked competitiveness may engender anxiety, hinder collaboration, and suppress intrinsic motivation (Boiangiu et al., 2016).



Thus, embedding competitive elements within a cooperative structure necessitates thoughtful implementation to optimize educational benefits while mitigating adverse effects.

Investigating the comparative effects of cooperative and hybrid of cooperative-competitive learning approaches on EFL learners' writing proficiency holds considerable pedagogical and curricular significance. Writing proficiency is a multifaceted construct that includes complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). Complexity pertains to learners' ability to utilize increasingly sophisticated linguistic structures and perform cognitively demanding tasks (Ortega, 2003). Accuracy involves the correct use of grammatical rules and syntactic structures in written expression (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Fluency is characterized by the smooth and effortless production of written language, essential for effective communication (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Rooted in the theoretical considerations outlined above, this study aims to address the following research questions:

**RQ1.** Does cooperative learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing fluency?

**RQ2.** Does cooperative learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing accuracy?

**RQ3.** Does cooperative learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing complexity?

**RQ4.** Does a hybrid model of cooperative and competitive learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing fluency?

**RQ5.** Does a hybrid model of cooperative and competitive learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing accuracy?

**RQ6.** Does a hybrid model of cooperative and competitive learning significantly affect EFL learners' writing complexity?

**RQ7.** Is there a significant difference between cooperative learning and the hybrid cooperative-competitive model in their effects on EFL learners' writing fluency, accuracy, and complexity?

Answering the aforementioned research questions may yield valuable insights that can positively contribute to pedagogical practices and the enhancement of writing instruction for EFL learners. By understanding the potential impacts of cooperative and hybrid cooperative-competitive learning models on writing fluency, accuracy, and complexity, educators can better tailor their instructional strategies to meet diverse learner needs. This study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical application, offering empirical evidence that could lead to more dynamic and engaging instructional approaches. Ultimately, these contributions have the potential to foster improved writing outcomes for EFL learners, thereby enriching the overall educational experience.

## Methodology

### Participants

The study initially recruited 50 female EFL learners through non-random convenience sampling from the Hourdad Institute in Karaj, Iran. To ensure homogeneity in language proficiency, the participant pool was narrowed to 23 individuals based on their performance on the Preliminary English Test (PET). These selected participants demonstrated intermediate-level English proficiency (CEFR level B1) and ranged in age from 16 to 45 years ( $M_{age} = 30.5$ ). All participants reported being in good physical and mental health, with no diagnosed disabilities or medical conditions. For the purposes of the study, participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups. To maintain consistency and ensure reliable evaluation of the writing performance, the assessment of participants' written tasks was carried out by the researchers themselves, who were experienced in rating EFL writing and familiar with the study's analytical criteria.

### Instruments

### **Preliminary English Test**

To ensure homogeneity in participants' English language proficiency, the PET, developed by Cambridge Assessment English, was administered at the outset of the study. The PET is an internationally recognized, standardized assessment designed to evaluate English proficiency at the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It comprehensively measures learners' command of core language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, thereby offering a reliable indicator of intermediate-level proficiency.

### **Pre-test of Writing**

A writing task adapted from a sample PET examination was administered to assess participants' baseline writing abilities. The chosen writing task was presented to all learners on the board. Participants were provided with standardized sheets of paper to complete the task. The writing samples were subsequently scored based on the established criteria for assessing CAF. The selected writing task was sourced from official Cambridge Assessment English materials.

### **Post-test of Writing**

To assess writing performance at the conclusion of the study, participants completed a writing task adapted from a separate sample PET examination. This post-test, administered after the treatment period, evaluated participants' writing abilities using a different set of prompts than the pre-test.

### **Procedure**

This study involved 50 female EFL learners enrolled at the Hourdad Institute. All participants were non-randomly selected for the study. To ensure homogeneity in language proficiency, a placement test (a version of the PET test) was administered. Based on the results, 23 participants with scores ranging from 42 to 54, indicating an intermediate (B1) level of English, were selected for further study. The 23 participants were then randomly assigned to two experimental groups: Group 1 ( $n=13$ ) and Group 2 ( $n=9$ ). The intervention comprised 14 sessions of approximately 30 minutes each, focusing on both teaching and writing activities.

It is crucial to highlight that this study was conducted in full compliance with established ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and strict protocols were followed to safeguard their confidentiality, privacy, and dignity. The research design prioritized the maximization of potential benefits and the minimization of any associated risks. Moreover, participants' autonomy and dignity were respected throughout the process, including their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty (Zaker, 2024b).

### **Experimental Group One**

This group followed a dynamic approach that blended cooperative and competitive elements. Learners were initially organized into small groups of three or four members. To establish a positive and collaborative atmosphere, the teacher facilitated introductions within each group. Subsequently, a designated topic was presented, prompting learners to engage in cooperative brainstorming and idea-sharing within their respective groups. To enrich the learners' vocabulary, the teacher introduced relevant terms and guided their application within the context of the given topic, drawing on the approach outlined by Marashi and Sanatipour (2015). Furthermore, the teacher encouraged learners to collectively address and respond to posed questions, fostering a collaborative problem-solving mindset. This cooperative phase was allotted approximately 15 minutes.



Following the cooperative phase, the learning environment transitioned to a competitive mode. Learners were assigned individual writing tasks, with a time limit of 15 minutes imposed. This competitive element aimed to stimulate individual motivation and enhance both the speed and accuracy of their writing. Throughout this phase, the teacher provided additional writing strategies, encouraging learners to strive for individual excellence.

### **Experimental Group Two**

This Group exclusively employed a cooperative learning approach. The teacher actively sought to transform the traditional classroom into a dynamic environment conducive to cooperative learning, fostering a spirit of collaboration and engagement among the learners. Initially, the teacher carefully assigned learners to small groups consisting of approximately three members. Drawing upon the guidance provided by the Longman Academic Writing Books, the teacher imparted instruction on writing techniques, encouraging learners to collaboratively record their notes. To exemplify the principles of effective writing, the teacher presented a sample piece of writing extracted from the Longman Academic Writing Books to each group. Learners were then tasked with collectively analyzing and discussing this example, sharing their insights and perspectives on a designated piece of paper.

Following this initial discussion, learners engaged in group conversations about the assigned topic, with each member actively contributing their thoughts and ideas. A crucial aspect of this cooperative process involved each participant documenting their individual perspectives on the topic and subsequently sharing these with the next member within their group, ensuring that all learners had the opportunity to participate in this collaborative exchange. This approach closely aligns with the framework outlined by Afzalimir and Safa (2021). In subsequent sessions, each group continued to work collaboratively on writing tasks, building upon the foundational principles and collaborative skills developed in previous sessions.

## **Results**

This study employed a two-group pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental design within a quantitative research framework. The independent variables were the cooperative learning model and the hybrid model (combining cooperative and competitive elements). The dependent variables were writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The quasi-experimental design was adopted due to the inherent challenges in meeting all the rigorous criteria of true experimental research within the social sciences, particularly in the field of Applied Linguistics (Zaker & Nosratinia, 2021). The subsequent sections will provide a detailed account of the statistical analyses conducted to address the research questions.

### **Preliminary Analyses**

An initial examination of the data revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range of  $\pm 2$ . This observation suggests that the data exhibited a normal distribution. Furthermore, the PET test demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with a KR-21 coefficient of .77. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the scores for pre-tests and post-tests of writing accuracy, complexity, and fluency assessed by the raters were assessed. The results indicated significant inter-rater agreement for both pre-tests and post-tests of the writing CAF measures.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the two groups' performance on the PET test. The results indicated no significant difference between the cooperative learning group ( $M = 28.90$ ,  $SD = 7.83$ ) and the hybrid group ( $M = 28.08$ ,  $SD = 8.12$ ,  $t(21) = .244$ ,  $p > .05$ , Cohen's  $d = .107$ , representing a small effect size, 95% CI: -6.18, 7.82). This finding suggests that the two groups were homogeneous in terms of their overall English language proficiency prior to the intervention.

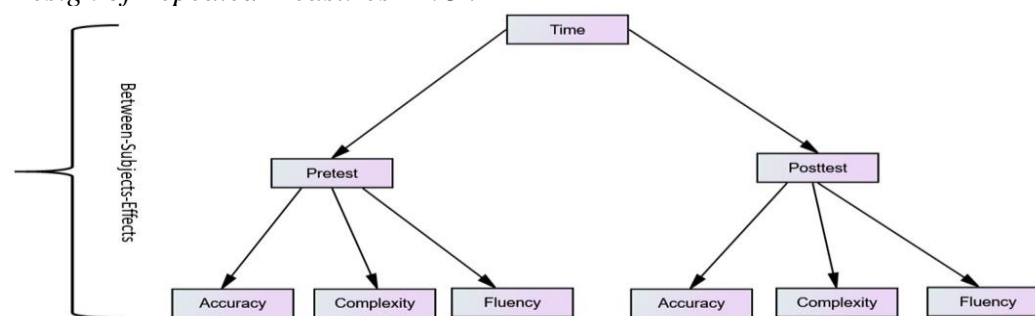


### Addressing the Research Questions

Repeated Measures ANOVA plus Simple Effect Analysis (SEA) were run to achieve the following objectives: first, the two groups' mean scores on pre-tests were compared to show that they were homogenous in terms of their writing CAF prior to the treatments. Second, the cooperative group's improvement from pre-tests to post-tests was probed in order to address the first three questions. Third, the hybrid group's improvement was probed in order to address the second three research questions. Finally, the two groups' post-treatment performances were compared to address the seventh research question. Figure 1 shows the design of the Repeated Measures ANOVA.

**Figure 1**

*Design of Repeated Measures ANOVA*



Prior to conducting the Repeated Measures ANOVA, the results of Levene's test of homogeneity of variances were checked. In addition, inspecting pre-test and post-test scores (Box's M = 49.97,  $p > .001$ ) showed that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was retained. Table 1 presents the mean scores of the cooperative and hybrid groups on the pre-tests and post-tests of writing CAF.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Pre-tests and Post-tests of Writing Accuracy, Complexity and Fluency by Group*

Group	Time	Writing	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Hybrid	Pre	Accuracy	44.538	1.068	42.318	46.759
		Complexity	49.462	1.218	46.929	51.994
		Fluency	51.000	1.312	48.271	53.729
	Post	Accuracy	69.077	1.921	65.082	73.072
		Complexity	65.769	1.593	62.457	69.082
		Fluency	73.615	2.200	69.040	78.190
Cooperative	Pre	Accuracy	44.000	1.217	41.468	46.532
		Complexity	47.800	1.388	44.913	50.687
		Fluency	48.000	1.496	44.889	51.111
	Post	Accuracy	55.500	2.190	50.945	60.055
		Complexity	56.400	1.816	52.623	60.177
		Fluency	63.300	2.508	58.084	68.516



The results of Between-Subject Effect ( $F = 1, 21) = 14.55, p < .05$ , partial eta squared = .409 representing a large effect size) proved that there were significant differences between the two groups' overall means. Further, the Within-Subject Effects' results indicated that:

- There was a significant difference between overall means on pre-test and post-test ( $F = 1, 21) = 456.07, p < .05$ , partial eta squared = .956 representing a large effect size).
- There was a significant interaction between time and groups ( $F = 1, 21) = 36.74, p < .05$ , partial eta squared = .636 representing a large effect size).
- There were significant differences between three types of writing disregarding groups and time of test ( $F = 2, 42) = 16.72, p < .05$ , partial eta squared = .443 representing a large effect size).
- There was not any significant interaction between types of writing and groups ( $F = 2, 4) = .309, p > .05$ , partial eta squared = .015 representing a weak effect size).
- There was a significant interaction between time and types of writing, ( $F = 2, 42) = 7.43, p < .05$ , partial eta squared = .262 representing a large effect size); and finally,
- There was not any significant interaction between time, types of writing and groups ( $F = 2, 42) = 1.53, p > .05$ , partial eta squared = .068 representing a moderate effect size).

Table 2 shows the results of the first Simple Effect Analysis which compared the two groups' means on pre-tests of writing accuracy, complexity, and fluency.

**Table 2**

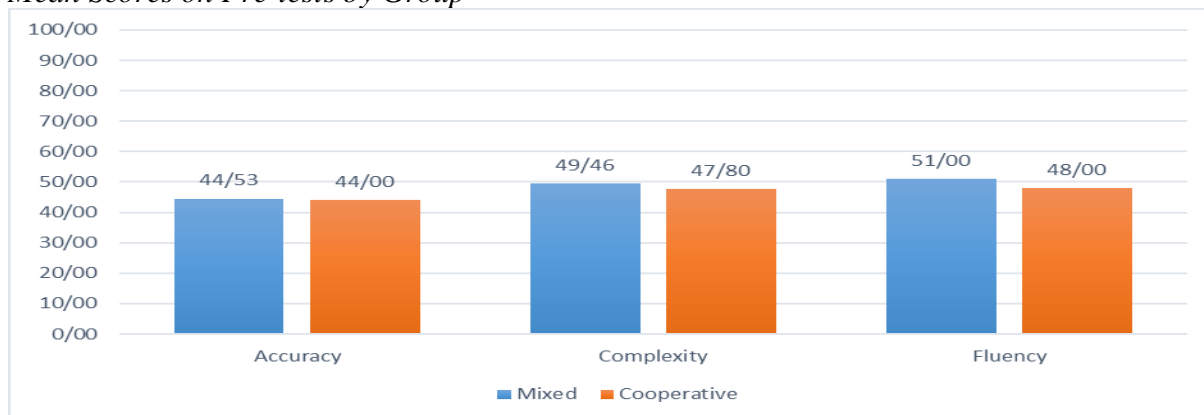
*Simple Effect Analysis for Comparing Groups' Means on Pre-tests*

Writing	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean (I-J)	Difference Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Sig. Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Accuracy	Hybrid	Cooperative	.538	1.619	.743-2.829	3.906
Complexity	Hybrid	Cooperative	1.662	1.847	.378-2.179	5.502
Fluency	Hybrid	Cooperative	3.000	1.990	.147-1.138	7.138

Based on these results, it can be concluded that:

- There was no significant difference between cooperative ( $M = 44.00$ ), and hybrid ( $M = 44.53$ ) groups' means on the pre-test of writing accuracy ( $MD = .538, p > .05$ ).
- There was no significant difference between cooperative ( $M = 47.80$ ), and hybrid ( $M = 49.46$ ) groups' means on pre-test of writing complexity ( $MD = 1.66, p > .05$ ); and finally
- There was no significant difference between cooperative ( $M = 48.00$ ) and hybrid ( $M = 51.00$ ) groups' means on pre-test of writing fluency ( $MD = 3.00, p > .05$ ).

Figure 2 shows the mean scores on pre-tests of writing accuracy, complexity, and fluency. Since there were not any significant differences between the two groups' means on pre-tests of CAF, it was concluded that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their writing knowledge prior to the administration of the treatments.

**Figure 2***Mean Scores on Pre-tests by Group*

Note: Mixed = Hybrid

Table 3 shows the results of the second Simple Effect Analysis which probes each group's mean improvement from pre-test to post-test.

**Table 3***Simple Effect Analysis for Comparing Groups' Mean Improvement From Pre-tests to Post-tests*

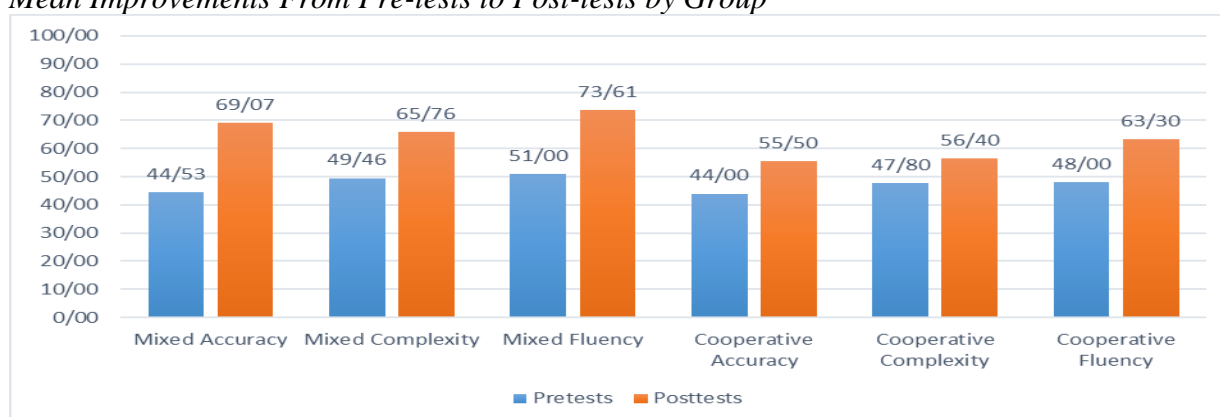
Group	(I) Pre(J) Post	Mean Difference (I-Std. J)	Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Hybrid	Accuracy	24.538*	2.383	.000	19.584	29.493
	Complexity	16.308*	1.033	.000	14.160	18.455
	Fluency	22.615*	1.464	.000	19.571	25.660
Cooperative	Accuracy	11.500*	2.717	.000	5.851	17.149
	Complexity	8.600*	1.178	.000	6.151	11.049
	Fluency	15.300*	1.669	.000	11.829	18.771

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Based on these results it was indicated that:

- d. The cooperative group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing fluency ( $M = 48.00$ ) to post-test ( $M = 63.30$ ;  $MD = 15.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- e. The cooperative group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing accuracy ( $M = 44.00$ ) to post-test ( $M = 55.50$ ;  $MD = 11.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- f. The cooperative group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing complexity ( $M = 47.80$ ) to post-test ( $M = 56.40$ ;  $MD = 8.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- g. The hybrid group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing fluency ( $M = 51.00$ ) to post-test ( $M = 73.61$ ;  $MD = 22.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- h. The hybrid group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing accuracy ( $M = 44.53$ ) to post-test ( $M = 69.07$ ;  $MD = 24.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- i. The hybrid group significantly improved their mean from pre-test of writing complexity ( $M = 49.46$ ) to post-test ( $M = 65.76$ ;  $MD = 16.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Figure 2 shows the mean improvements from pre-tests to post-tests.

**Figure 2***Mean Improvements From Pre-tests to Post-tests by Group*

Note: Mixed = Hybrid

Finally, Table 4 shows the results of the third Simple Effect Analysis which compares the two groups' means on post-tests of writing CAF.

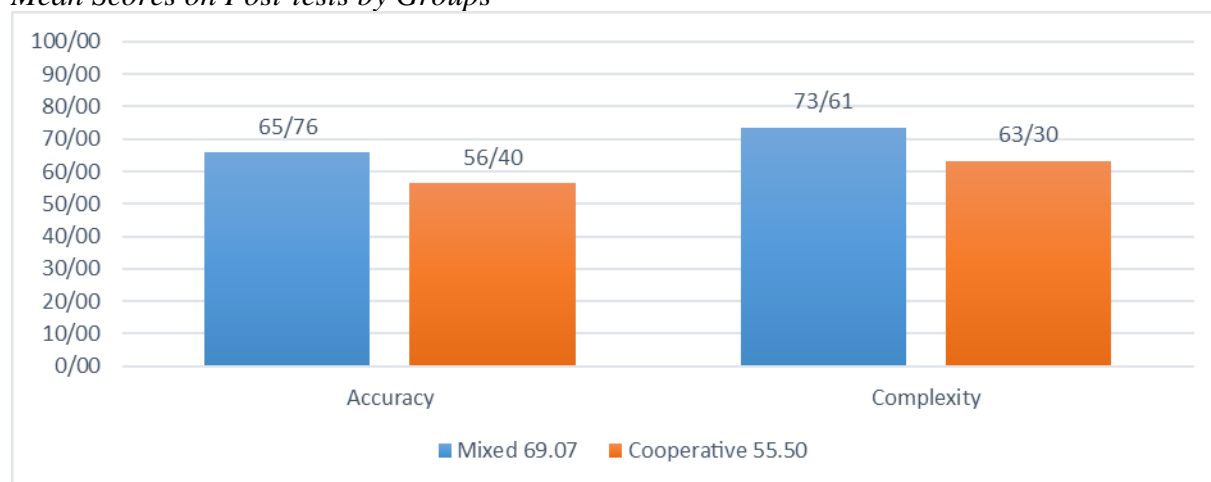
**Table 4***Simple Effect Analysis for Comparing Groups' Means on Post-tests*

Writing	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Sig. Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Accuracy	Hybrid	Cooperative	13.577*	2.913	.0007.518	19.636
Complexity	Hybrid	Cooperative	9.369*	2.416	.0014.345	14.393
Fluency	Hybrid	Cooperative	10.315*	3.336	.0063.377	17.254

These results indicated that:

- j. The hybrid group ( $M = 69.07$ ) significantly outperformed the cooperative group ( $M = 55.50$ ) on post-test, of writing accuracy ( $MD = 13.57$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- k. The hybrid group ( $M = 65.76$ ) significantly outperformed the cooperative group ( $M = 56.40$ ) on the post-test of writing complexity ( $MD = 9.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ); and finally,
- l. The hybrid group ( $M = 73.61$ ) significantly outperformed the cooperative group ( $M = 63.30$ ) on post-test of writing fluency ( $MD = 10.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Figure 3 below shows the mean scores on post-tests.

**Figure 3***Mean Scores on Post-tests by Groups**Note:* Mixed = Hybrid

### Discussion

The findings corresponding to research questions one through three revealed that cooperative learning had a significant positive effect on EFL learners' writing performance across the dimensions of CAF. These results align with a substantial body of prior research underscoring the benefits of collaborative learning environments in supporting the development of writing proficiency (Ansarimoghaddam et al., 2017; Hafour & Al-Rashid, 2020; Haji Jalili & Shahrokhi, 2017; Pham, 2021). The observed improvements are consistent with pedagogical and psychological theories that emphasize the role of peer interaction, mutual scaffolding, and shared responsibility in language development.

With regard to research questions four, five, and six, the results indicated that the hybrid cooperative-competitive learning model also produced a statistically significant and positive impact on learners' writing CAF. This outcome corroborates findings by Zhang et al. (2023), who highlighted the motivational and performance-related benefits of integrating cooperative and competitive elements in instructional design. The present study thereby adds empirical support to the emerging literature advocating for hybrid models as a means of optimizing writing instruction for EFL learners.

Addressing research question seven, the comparative analysis between the two instructional approaches revealed a statistically significant advantage in favor of the hybrid model. This finding resonates with earlier claims by Boiangiu et al. (2016), who proposed that the incorporation of competitive features within a cooperative framework can enhance learner engagement and performance. While cooperative learning promotes collaboration and reduces learner anxiety, it may not fully stimulate the performance of all learners. Conversely, purely competitive environments can inhibit participation, particularly among less confident students. The hybrid model appears to reconcile these concerns by leveraging the motivational benefits of competition while maintaining the supportive dynamics of collaboration.

Generally, the findings of this study reinforce the effectiveness of both cooperative and hybrid instructional approaches in improving EFL learners' writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency. However, the hybrid model seems to offer a more balanced and inclusive framework by mitigating the limitations associated with each individual approach. Future studies are encouraged to investigate the sustained impact of these pedagogical models over longer periods

and to identify the most effective configurations of cooperative and competitive elements to maximize learner outcomes.

### Conclusion

Although the concept of cooperative learning has gained substantial recognition in recent decades, its presence in educational practice is relatively recent. Prior to the 1970s, instructional paradigms predominantly favored competitive learning environments (Kılıç & Özkan, 2021). The advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) marked a pivotal shift toward learner-centered approaches, emphasizing collaboration, interaction, and the co-construction of knowledge (Pham, 2021). This pedagogical transformation catalyzed the adoption of student-centered strategies, particularly within academic writing instruction, where cooperative learning has emerged as a widely endorsed and effective method (Pham, 2019).

Despite the growing body of literature supporting cooperative learning, the integration of cooperative and competitive elements within a unified instructional model remains relatively underexplored. Several researchers have underscored the pedagogical value of combining these seemingly contrasting strategies to create dynamic and motivating learning environments (Boiangiu et al., 2016). Such hybrid approaches hold the potential to simultaneously promote collaborative engagement and individual achievement, thereby fostering improved writing skills, enhanced learner confidence, and the development of essential social competencies (Smith et al., 2022).

The present study set out to examine the comparative effectiveness of cooperative and hybrid (cooperative-competitive) learning models on EFL learners' writing CAF. While prior studies have addressed the individual impact of these instructional approaches, limited empirical work has focused on their direct comparison in the context of EFL writing proficiency.

The findings provide robust empirical support for the efficacy of both cooperative and hybrid learning models in enhancing writing CAF. Importantly, the hybrid model demonstrated a statistically significant advantage over the purely cooperative approach. This outcome supports previous findings by Zhang (2023) and Boiangiu et al. (2016), who have advocated for the intentional integration of cooperation and competition to optimize learning outcomes.

The pedagogical implications of this study extend beyond its immediate context. For EFL instructors, the results underscore the value of employing a balanced instructional approach that incorporates both collaborative and competitive elements. Such a strategy can invigorate writing instruction by fostering peer-supported idea generation and enhancing individual motivation, particularly in overcoming common challenges such as writer's block. Structured group brainstorming followed by individual writing tasks within a mildly competitive framework may yield higher engagement and performance.

Moreover, these findings hold relevance for instructional materials developers. Designing learning resources that integrate the principles of both cooperative and competitive learning can lead to more versatile and engaging materials. Such resources can promote collaborative tasks while also encouraging personal accountability and achievement, thereby addressing diverse learner needs and preferences. Ultimately, this dual-focus approach may enhance the overall effectiveness of language instruction and better prepare learners for academic and professional success.

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