A Study into the Effects of Competitive Team-Based Learning and 'Learning Together' on the Oral Performance of Intermediate EFL Learners

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Abstract

The present study intended to look into and compare the possible effects of Competitive Team-Based Learning (CTBL) with Learning Together (LT) or Cooperative Group-Based Learning (CGBL)– the most popular method of Cooperative Learning (CL)-on oral performance of Iranian EFL intermediate students. After administering the oral interview, the researcher selected a group of 40 almost homogeneous Iranian intermediate students and randomly assigned them to control and experimental groups – 20 per group. Based on their scores, the experimental class was divided into 5 almost heterogeneous teams - four members each. But in the control group, the participants were allowed to shape their own favourable groups. For six weeks (18 sessions of 90 minutes each), both the groups received the same course materials, instructor, curriculum, out of-class and in-class assignments, schedule of instruction and equivalent methods of evaluation, but the experimental group experienced language learning via CTBL rather than via the CGBL as their counterparts in the control group. At the end of the course again the oral interview was administered to both the groups. Then the obtained scores on pre-test and post-test were analyzed through different statistical procedures. The results of the study rejected the null hypothesis and provided evidence supporting the hypothesis that CTBL can have a more significant effect on improving the oral performance of Iranian intermediate students. This researcher will discuss the probable causes for the results of the study, and will shed light on the pedagogical implications. She will also suggest recommendations for further research.
Keywords: **Competitive Team-Based Learning, Learning Together or Cooperative Group-Based Learning, Intermediate Students, Oral Performance**

1. Introduction
1.1. Background of the Study
Notwithstanding the significant importance of English as an international lingua franca in today world context of globalization, English Language Teaching (ELT) has not been a success in Iran hitherto due to many reasons (Hosseini, 2012). The fact is that

the teaching methods and approaches Iranian educators avail themselves of in the course of teaching English language play a more noteworthy role in this fiasco. As Hosseini argues, despite the considerable developments in the field of ELT, most Iranian teachers are applying the traditional methods and approaches in their language classes. He continues majority of Iranian teachers are using a hybrid of grammar translation methods and audio lingual methods for the purpose of teaching English language in their classes. The problem is that the mechanisms underlying such classes do not have the potentiality to engage all of the students in the process of language learning. Instead of the development of all aspects of communicative competence, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and social skills of students in semi-authentic environments, the stress, in such classes, as Hosseini elaborates, is on parrot-like imitation, repetition, and reproduction of statements in contrived circumstances which are negligent of the majority. Consequently, as he discusses, in such teacher-dominated classes, students lack motivation and so are merely passive recipients of knowledge. This is because they feel their classes are boring and even frustrating, compared to the classes which are run by modern approaches to ELT such as Collaborative Learning methods.

In recent years, one of the greatest changes in foreign language pedagogy has been the shift from teacher-centered learning models to learner-centered models. This shift signals a new era in which English speaking instruction must provide a chance for students to express themselves in speaking the language. It is in such a context that it seems that a promising method to traditional speaking instruction is turning from CLT to CL as it focuses on systematic implementation of groupwork, which is of prominent importance in language learning. CL serves as an alternative way of teaching for promoting speaking and social

interaction among students (Gomleksiz, 2007; Ning, 2011). Prior research suggests that CL is of great effect on developing students' speaking skills (Pattanpichet, 2011). In Iran, however, English speaking instruction within the framework of CL has not been tried yet at the intermediate level particularly when it comes to different CL methods such as LT and CTBL.

Cooperative Learning refers to a teaching technique where students work in groups on a certain activity in order to maximize one another's learning and to achieve certain shared learning goals (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). A survey of research and trends in cooperative language learning reveals that the incorporation of cooperative learning into educational programs was first initiated in content areas such as social studies, science, and mathematics. However, after these innovative methods proved to be effective in educational research, the researchers in the field of language teaching and learning turned their attention to this approach. CL in the sphere of ELT, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), is perceived as "a way of promoting communicative interaction in the classroom" and "is seen as an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching" (p. 193). But CL is a common term that represents a number of educational methods. The truth, however, is that despite their significant contribution to more comprehensive and real learning, CL methods have their own deficiencies. Hosseini (2012) believes that neglecting and even belittling the crucial importance of 'competition' in learning environments is one of the main problems of the present methods of CL. He elaborates that another major drawback of such methods refers to their inability for bringing individual accountability of all team members. Unsystematic implementation of groupwork is also among the main problems with such methods that Hosseini mentions.

In the present study, as such, this researcher has tried to evaluate the

effectiveness of Hosseini's instructional innovation, CTBL, which has tackled such problems, vis-à-vis LT method of CL on oral performance of intermediate EFL students. This researcher selected CTBL to be compared with LT in virtue of the fact that she is under the impression that, in comparison to other methods of CL, these methods are the most effective methods of CL.

1.1.1 Cooperative Learning Methods

As noted, CL is a common term that represents a number of educational methods. The cooperative learning approach encompasses a variety of instructional strategies, including Jigsaw Procedure, Group Investigation (GI), Three-Step Interview, Student-Team-Achievement- Divisions (STAD), Academic Controversy (AC), and Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), to mention but a few. Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000), cited in Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014), report that in the literature LT method of CL has received the most attention:

The CL methods we have focused on in this research study may be briefly introduced here below.

1.1.1.1 Learning Together

Johnson and Johnson (1999), at the University of Minnesota, in the USA, put their efforts together to give birth to LT. This method is considered as a pure cooperative learning method in the sense that it encourages intra- and inter-group cooperation. Members of groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help not only each other, in their groups, but also other groups and become familiar with the topic and issues introduced by the teacher. They gain marks for their group participation and group performance. They are also assessed for their levels of collaboration (cooperative interaction) with other groups in the class.

The role of teachers in CL method shifts from transmitters of knowledge to mediators of learning. This role involves facilitating, modeling and coaching. Teachers adopting this role should maintain a safe, non-threatening and learner centered environment. This environment of teaching will help students contribute positively in the cooperative activities assigned to their group (Ning, 2011).

Table 1.*Modern Methods of CL*

Reseacher-Developer	Date	Method
Johnson & Johnson	Mid 1970s	Learning Together (LT)
DeVries& Edwards	Early 1970s	Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)
Sharan&Sharan	Mid 1970s	Group Investigation (GI)
Johnson & Johnson	Mid 1970s	Constructive Controversy
Aronson & Associates	Late 1970s	Jigsaw Procedure
Slavin& Associates	Late 1970s	Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD)
Cohen	Early 1980s	Complex Instruction
Slavin& Associates	Early 1980s	Team Assisted Instruction (TAI)
Kagan	Mid 1980s	Cooperative Learning structures
Stevens, Slavin& Associates	Late 1980s	Cooperative Integrated Reading & Composition (CIRC)
Kagan	Early 1990s	Three-Step Interview
Kagan	Late 1980s	Inside-Outside Circle

1.1.1.2 Competitive Team-Based Learning

Competitive Team-Based Learning' (CTBL) is another approach to CL which was developed by Hosseini (2000/2012) in the course of pursuing his doctorate in ELT in India. In classes run through CTBL, the teacher presents the lesson and heterogeneous teams of three or four put their efforts together and work on the introduced tasks to prove their superiority over other teams. Students try to internalize the material taught through teacher presentation, individual work, pair work, teamwork, and class wide discussions, followed by peer pre assessment and team evaluation. In class activities team members have no option but to try to be sure that each member has mastered the assigned material because the teacher would randomly call upon a student to answer for the team. Although in this method team members take the finals individually as in CIRC, STAD and TGT, they take quizzes cooperatively. Hosseini states that the philosophy beyond allowing students to take quizzes cooperatively is to subject them to more opportunities for transference of skills and strategies in a metacognitive way through listening to their teammates who are in actual fact thinking aloud. In CTBL, teams are evaluated not only on their members' improvements over their own past performances (as it is in CIRC & STAD) and over their same-level opponents in other teams (as in TGT), they are also recognized based on the extent to which they outgain other teams. Special rewards would also be awarded both to best teams with the highest averages and to the most challenging individuals. This kind of grading system is used as an incentive to harness competition for further cooperation amongst teams' members. To lower affective filter of participants, teams that achieve above a designated standard would pass the course, however.

Hosseini (2012) states

Teachers should take heed of the fact that as in CTBL environments context gives meaning to content, the provision of a psychologically safe social climate that reflects acceptance, care, genuineness, reciprocal and interpersonal trust, tolerance, and respect is of top priority. This is because such atmospheres naturally impetus risk taking, giving and receiving influence, creativity, and critical thinking. Teachers, therefore, at the initial stages of conducting their courses, must explain about CTBL, define academic and social objectives and skills that students are to master and apply, discuss the learning culture, identify norms, and specify and model desired behaviours. They should also elaborate on the criteria for success and evaluation procedures for the appraisal of team and member performance. Importantly, they ought to take care of team formation and composition, the arrangement of classroom, materials, tasks, and activities. They should structure teams and the learning tasks and class activities in such a way that they improve the cohesion of the teams and bring reciprocal meaningful interaction among team members, and encourage their individual responsibility for their own learning and the learning of their teammates, in a relaxing environment. (pp.81-82)

1.1.2 Basic Elements of CL Methods

Roger and Johnson (1994) mention the following five basic elements of CL methods:

1.1.2.1 Face-To-Face Promotive Interaction

Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) believe that this component is when students explain, discuss, and teach what they know to classmates in circles, in face-to-face interactions.

According to Roger and Johnson (1994) positive interdependence results in promotive interaction, which may be defined as individuals encouraging and facilitating each other's efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and produce in order to reach the group's goals.

1.1.2.2 Positive Interdependence

Positive Interdependence is when group members come to the conclusion that they need each other in order to complete the group's task. They accept the idea that they "sink or swim together". This requires pupils in a small group to contribute to the learning of the group (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). According to Jolliffe (2007) pupils are required to work in a way so that each member needs the other to complete the task. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998) opine that instructors may structure positive interdependence by a) establishing mutual goals (maximize own and each other's productivity), b) joint rewards (if all group members achieve above the criteria, each will receive bonus points), c) shared resources (members have different expertise), and d) assigned roles (summarizer, encourager of participation, elaborator).

1.1.2.3 Individual Accountability

Jolliffe (2007) states that Individual Accountability is when each member of the group is accountable for completing his or her part of the work. It requires each pupil in the group to develop a sense of personal responsibility to learn and help the rest of the group to learn also. It is when each student must be held individually responsible and accountable for doing his or her own share of the work and for learning what has been targeted to be learned.

1.1.2.4 Interpersonal Skills

According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1998), for the cooperative learning environment to be successful teachers should teach these skills (e.g., leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills) as purposefully and precisely as academic skills and the learner should utilise the skills they have learnt in completing assigned activities. Teachers may need to describe the expected social interaction behaviors and attitudes of students and to assign particular students specific roles to ensure that they consciously work on these behaviors in their groups.

1.1.2.5 Group Processing

Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998) believe that groups need specific time to discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships among members. Teachers need to ensure that there is some structure to the group processing.

Note: For a comprehensive analysis, evaluation, and understanding of the Banking Method, Interactive Learning methods, and particularly CTBL, its implementation in real classroom situations, theoretical foundations, design, syllabus, main elements, tasks, activities, strategies, evaluation system, teachers/learners' roles, etc., and also for the philosophies beyond the implementation of such methods and approaches in the present didactic regimes, see Hosseini, 2012.

2. Statement of the Problem

In the present scenario of globalization, English speaking ability is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced in language learners. This calls for immediate action to be taken. As it will be clarified later, the effects of CL on students' speaking skills have been repeatedly demonstrated and confirmed by studies conducted in L1 and L2 learning environments. However, studies on this area with EFL students in Iran are none and far between. Thus further investigation to examine whether the positive effect of CL and especially CL methods also holds true for improving Iranian students' speaking skills still calls for empirical validation.

3. Objectives of the Study

The fact is that to communicate appropriately is the main goal of TEFL in most of Iranian language institutes. Nevertheless, it seems that a considerable number of even the students who graduate from these language institutes are not still satisfied with their oral performance. As it will be hypothesised in this research study, one of the main influential factors in our

fiasco, in TEFL, relates to the contexts of our classes. There is no doubt today that CL methods are more effective than the traditional methods in improving oral performance of learners. This study, thereby, is an attempt to investigate the kind of relationship, if any, between LT and CTBL methods of CL and the oral performance of intermediate EFL students.

4. Research Questions

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to answer the following question:

Q1: 'Will there be a difference between the intermediate EFL students who will be taught with CTBL and those who will be taught with CGBL in regard to their oral performance?

Based on this question, the null hypothesis was formulated as well.

5. The Significance of the Study

Despite the fact that English is the language that is basically required for lucrative and powerful jobs and is much in demand and becomes a must-have language for many individuals – at international level, in Iran English is still used as a foreign language. That is, English is not used in official, professional, academic and commercial circles, in Iran. Also, English is not taught as a subject particularly in public institutions and schools. Following this trend, all Iranian universities offer compulsory prerequisite English language courses in the first years in an attempt to promote students' English speaking competencies. However, Iranian students are still weak in speaking skills and find difficulty in expressing themselves in English (Hosseini, 2015).

The significance of this study refers to the fact that it focuses on an area in the arena of educational research which has been overlooked by researchers particularly in Iran. The results of this study would contribute to (Iranian) language educators' knowledge of the quality of CL methods. The value of both the considered methods for language classes refers to their focus

upon groupwork and discussion which are of paramount importance for language learning. Importantly, the study delves into the effectiveness of these two Western oriented instructional approaches in an Asian context, in language classes in Iran. As researchers like Momtaz and Garner (2010) and Hosseini (2000/2010) have confirmed, in spite of the widespread research on the effectiveness of CL methods in the West, there has been little research on their effectiveness in non-Western educational environments, particularly in relation to EFL settings. We will answer the question whether CL methods and particularly CTBL, which has been developed by an Iranian educator, would be effective in Iran.

Our findings, we are hoped, will also provide strong support and encouragement for (Iranian) language educators to incorporate CL methods into their classrooms for the development of particularly oral perfor- mance of Iranian students. Therefore, another significant feature of this study is that it attempts to investigate the effectiveness of CL methods on the oral performance of intermediate EFL students. This is also important because this area has also been neglected by Iranian researchers.

6. Review of Literature

Many researchers have conducted studies to find out how better to use CL in developing students' speaking skills. Pattanpichet (2011) conducted an experimental study to investigate the effects of using CL in promoting students' speaking achievement. Thirty five undergraduate students participated in the study. The students were enrolled in a main English course at Bangkok University to examine their speaking achievement on an English oral test before and after they had participated in provided instructional tasks based on cooperative learning approach.

The data were analyzed by frequency, means, standard deviation, t-test, effect

size and content analysis. The findings reveal the improvement of the students' speaking performance and positive feedback from the students on the use of collaborative learning activities.

Jacobs et al. (1996) found that L2 learners had more language practice opportunities and displayed a wider range of language functions in team or pair work than in teacher-fronted classes. According to them, CL offers opportunities for premodified input that focuses on meaning in lower-anxiety contexts, interactionally modified input, and comprehensible output. Jacobs (1988) has reported that CL, in comparison with traditional methods:

1. Increases the quantity of language students use,

2. Enhances the quality of the language they use,

3. Equalizes the learning opportunities for all students, and

4. Creates a less threatening learning environment for language use.

In another study, Talebi and Sobhani (2012) conducted a study on the impact of CL on English language learners' speaking proficiency. Experimental design was used with 40 male and female students who enrolled as a sample in a speaking course at an IELTS Center in Mashhad, Iran. The sample were assigned randomly to control and experimental groups. The two groups were homogeneous in terms of their oral proficiency before carrying out this study. An oral interview was conducted to collect the data of the study. The control group received instructions in speaking; three sessions per week for one month, while the experimental group was taught speaking skills through CL. The results of the study showed that the performance of the experimental group on oral interview held at the end of the course outperformed the control group. The mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group.

Suwantarathip and Woolfolk (2010) investigated the impact of cooperative learning approach on language proficiency and examined its effectiveness in reducing foreign language anxiety. Forty sophomore students were given the questionnaire "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale", followed by a proficiency test as pretests. Then, a 3-hour lesson was taught through cooperative learning approach for 14 weeks. After applying CL activities in the classroom, another proficiency test and FLCAS (posttests) were used to assess the participants' language proficiency and learning anxiety. The obtained scores from both instruments were compared with the previous ones to reveal changes in language proficiency and anxiety. The results indicated that the use of cooperative learning as part of the language learning led to the students' anxiety reduction and higher language proficiency. The researchers took the idea that the reason why the students' anxiety reduced was probably because this learning environment provided opportunities for them to support, encourage, and praise each other. Hence, feeling relaxed in such a learning environment, students developed their language proficiency.

To have a more comprehensive outlook on the effects of cooperative learning in the classroom, Johnson and Johnson (1981) investigated the impact of cooperative and individualistic learning on interpersonal attraction between handicapped and non handicapped students. 51 students chosen on a stratified random basis, participated in one instructional unit for 16 days. In this study, not only were the handicapped students interacted by their non handicapped peers, but both groups of students perceived the interaction to be supportive, friendly, and facilitative of academic achievement. The findings of this study indicated that cooperative learning compared with individualistic learning enhances interaction between handicapped and non handicapped learners. This result was also supported by Yager, et. al., (1985) that stated the continued use of cooperative learning promote interpersonal relationship

between handicapped and non handicapped students.

In a recent study, Aziz and Hossain (2010) aimed at comparing the effects of cooperative leaning and conventional teaching on the learners' mathematics achievement. To reach the aim of study, the researchers divided 62 students into experimental and control group. Then, the process of Learning Together model of CL only for the students in the experimental group was applied. The result of this study showed a significant difference between experimental and control group in mathematics achievement. The findings indicated that the cooperative students outperformed the conventional students. In other words, CL can effectively be applied to improve students' achievement in mathematics.

As Hosseini (2012) elaborates, despite the abundance of research findings that verifies the advantage of CL over traditional methods of teaching, very few researches, to date, have essayed to directly compare the effectiveness of CTBL and other popular CL methods like LT. For example, Hosseini has tried to fill this gap in the literature via carrying out different researches in the last decade. His MA and PhD research studies are among such studies. His PhD research study (Hosseini, 2009), for example, was a comparative experimental research study which sought to explore and examine the complex effects of CTBL with LT of Johnsons, and the traditional chalk-and-talk mode of presentation or Traditional Lecture Method (TLM) on Iranian and Indian undergraduate learners': (a) reading comprehension in English, (b) language learning strategies, (c) attitudes towards English language learning and the select teaching methods, and (d) retention of information. It became evident from the analyses of the data gathered that the two select CL methods served to (a) increase acquisition of texts contents, (b) widen repertoire of language learning strategies, (c) generate positive attitudes, and (d) improve the retention of information, on the part of the target groups more significantly than the TLM. One important result of his study was that it was CTBL that was more successful in developing the participants' metacognitive and affective strategies. It was likewise noted that CTBL, rather than LT, contributed more effectively to the improvement of the participants' retention of information. The study also provided evidence that it was CTBL that more comprehensively contributed to the success of the lower performers. Hosseini concludes that CTBL facilitated the development of learning-how-to-learn skills, long-term retention rather than survival skills, and recognition memory of the participants, and significantly enhanced the quality of knowledge the participants acquired.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there has been a large body of research addressing the effects of cooperative learning from various perspectives (Gillies, 2004; Yager, et. al., 1985). But few numbers of studies investigated the effects of cooperative learning on academic achievement (Suwantarathip & Woolfolk, 2010; Aziz & Hossain, 2010). And yet, as far as it is in our knowledge, no research has been conducted on comparing the probable effects of CTBL and CGBL on oral performance of Iranian intermediate students. And this research study comes to address this gap in the related literature.

7 Method
7.1 Design of the Study
A 'Pre-test Post-test Control Group Design' was applied to serve the purpose of the present study. This researcher selected this design because randomisation process practically assures equivalency in many ways. For example, some internal variables like maturation, contemporary historical events, and pre-testing effects were controlled as both the groups experienced an equal effect of these variables. Hence, the effects of these variables were equalized and could not

be mistaken in the effect of the treatment. Intersession developments, extraneous variables that arise between pre-test and post-test, were also balanced out due to the presence of randomised selected groups.

7.2 Participants

The initial subjects of this study were 48 students, in Hadaf Institute in Yasouj, Iran. From among these participants a homogeneous group of 40, who were tried to be at the same level in their oral performance, were selected based on their performance through a placement test. Then they were randomly divided into two classes namely experimental (n = 20) and control groups (n = 20). In order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings, the study was conducted with the same teacher for both the control and experimental classes. All subjects were homogeneous with regard to age, ethnicity, mother tongue, exposure to English and educational and cultural background. They were all female native speakers of Persian, and their age ranged between 18 and 23. They have studied English for three years hitherto.

7.3 Instrumentations
7.3.1 Instructional Material

In this study, "American English File" by Oxeden and Latham-Koenig published by Oxford University were used. Its first part consisted of 3 units each of which were covered within two sessions of 90 minutes each. The topics included a range from 'Food and Restaurants' to 'Transportation and Travel' which were all interesting to the participants.

7.3.2 The Oral Interview

To assess the participants' oral proficiency, an *oral interview* was hold at the beginning and end of the course as a pretest and posttest. IELTS sample tests (Cambridge Examinations Publishing, 2011) was used for oral interview. Scales for evaluating the participants' speaking proficiency were taken from Farhady, Ja'fapur, and Birjandi (1994).

Although the validity and reliability of this internationally recognized test is already established, it is piloted on a group representative of the target group, to establish its validity and reliability for our target group.

7.4 Procedure

In order to collect data for this study several steps were taken:

First, it is needed ensure that all the participants were homogeneous and that they were at the intermediate level in terms of the level of their oral performance. So an oral interview was administered as placement test as well as the pre test. This interview was based on IELTS speaking sample test (Cambridge Examinations Publishing, 2011). Students' speaking proficiency was evaluated according to the scales of assessment from Farhady, Ja'fapur, and Birjandi (1994). In order to homogenize the participants according to their oral performance levels, the pre-test was administered to 40 students. On the basis of the information obtained, 30 students who were nearly at the midpoint were chosen as the key informants. That is, scores that were very high or too low on the test were discarded. Therefore, the 30 homogeneous subjects were selected based on their performance on the pre-test to serve the study for a whole academic semester. The term included 15 sessions of 90 minutes each. It is worth mentioning that by putting very high or too low scores aside, the effect of statistical regression were eliminated.

Then the participants were randomly (every other one) assigned to the experimental and control groups. With the intention to minimize the reactive effect of the experimental procedure, this researcher did not allow this population to know the fact that an experiment was conducted. Also, the results of the pre-test were analyzed through t-test to make sure that there was no significant difference between the two groups.

Afterwards, the experimental group's participants, in the CTBL class, were ranked in three clusters of high achievers, average scorers, and low performers on the basis of their performance in the pre-test. Subsequently, they were randomly allotted to five teams so that each team had equal members of high-, average-, and low-achievers. In the control group (in the LT class), the participants were allowed to shape their own favorite teams. Next, teams' members, in both the classes, were arranged in specific face-to-face settings. The importance and basic elements of both the methods were highlighted and explained to the respective target groups.

During the course of experimentation, both classes had the same instructor, the same material and curriculum, and the same schedule of instruction. The difference was that while the control group experienced language learning through LT, the experimental group experienced learning of the language through CTBL. At the end of the course both groups were interviewed and their speaking skill was assessed through IELTS speaking sample test as a posttest. The two groups were given a post-test. The results were compared through t-test again to see whether the two groups were significantly different. The results of

the study, rejected the null hypothesis and provided evidence supporting the hypothesis that CTBL can have a more significant effect on improving the oral performance of intermediate EFL students.

8. Data Analysis
Answering the following question is considered:
Q1: 'Will there be a difference between the intermediate EFL students who will be taught with CTBL and those who will be taught with CGBL in regard to their oral performance?

For investigating the above research question, a t-student test first was applied. But before using t-student test, it is tested to see whether the two groups were normal in regard to their oral performances. It is also tested to see if the variances were equal in these groups. For the former purpose, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test applied and evaluated Equality of Variance test applied.

As p-value (0.906) in Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of oral performance in CTBL group is higher than 0.05, that this group is normal is not rejected. Similarly, as p-value (0.595) in Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of oral performance in CGBL group is higher than 0.05, that this group is normal is not rejected.

Table 2. *One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		Oral Performance in CTBL	Oral Performance in CGBL
N		20	20
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	24.7600	28.4643
	Std. Deviation	4.52106	5.18175
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.113	.145
	Positive	.072	.104
	Negative	-.113	-.145
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.566	.769
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.906	.595

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

Then, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances in the two groups was applied.

As p-value (0.384) in Levene's Test is higher than 0.05, that the variances in the two groups are equal is not rejected.

At this stage, we conducted t-student test with the assumption of the equality of the variances of the two groups. The results are as below:

As p-value (0.012) in t-student Test is less than 0.05, the assumption of the equality of the average of oral performance in the two groups, with the assumption of the equality of the variance of the two groups, is rejected. As it is understood from the tablebecause the average of oral performance in CTBL is higher than the average of oral performance in CGBL, therefore CTBL is more effective in developing oral performance of students.

Table 3.*Levene's Test for Equality of Variances in the two groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig
Speaking مهارت	Equal variances Assumed	.770	.384
	Equal variances not assumed		

Table 4.*Group statistics*

Group Statistics					
	Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Oral Performance	CGBL	20	25.1071	4.41663	.83466
	CTBL	20	28.4643	5.18175	.97926

Table 5.*Independent samples test*

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Oral Performance	Equal variances assumed	.770	.384	-2.609	54	.012	-3.35714	1.28671	-5.93683	-.77745
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.609	52.678	.012	-3.35714	1.28671	-5.93832	-.77597

9. Summary of Findings

The results of the present study rejected the null hypothesis and provided evidence supporting the hypothesis that CTBL can have a more significant effect on improving the oral performance of Iranian intermediate EFL students. The results of this study are congruent with the findings of a number of researchers in the related literature. (Yager et al., 1985; Khadidja, 2010; Suwantarathip and Woolfolk, 2010; Pattanpichet, 2011; Ning, 2011; Talebi and Sobhani, 2012; Hosseini, 2012; Omer & Attamimi, 2014).

10. Discussion

Jacobs (1988) reported that the success of CL, in comparison with traditional methods, refers to the fact that it:

1. Increases the quantity of language students use,
2. Enhances the quality of the language they use,
3. Equalizes the learning opportunities for all students, and
4. Creates a less threatening learning environment for language use.

More specifically, as Hosseini (2012) also confirmed, the main reason for the success of CTBL refers to its dynamic nature. CTBL provides multiple opportunities for input-output treatment whereby students have access to multiple sources of input and output in meaningful situations. They receive repeated input and feedback from a variety of sources through teacher presentation, individual work, pair work, teamwork, and class wide discussions, followed by peer pre assessment and team evaluation.

The nature of team formation in CTBL, which does not encourage high achievers to dominate the learning process and brings equitable opportunities for all teams' members in pursuance of pursuing their shared learning goals, differentiates CTBL from CGBL. In CTBL, each team is usually consisted of four members, who are designed to work in two pairs. Each pair includes one low performer and one average scorer, or one average student and one high achiever.

Also, CTBL evaluation system spurs all team members into sharing not merely their knowledge but also their approaches to thinking, and (language) learning strategies, in their highly structured teams. CTBL evaluation system inspires high achievers to transfer their learning and reasoning strategies to their team members enthusiastically and in more effective ways which facilitates the course of empowerment of their less skilled team members.

11. Conclusion

In the present research study it is tried to identify and introduce the most effective CL pedagogical method to be used in educational environments particularly in countries like Iran. We focused on CL methods because, today, in academic situations, there seems to be a move towards allowing students to be more directly involved in the teaching learning process. Furthermore, the importance of CL for language classes refers to the fact that it focuses on groupwork. Groupwork is conducive to the emergence of diverse and creative ideas, which are favorable to the oral performance of learners. In view of the fact that students, in CL settings, need to exchange information and advice in order to succeed in achieving their shared learning goals, their oral performances develop meaningfully.

In this study, LT or CGBL, we selected developed by Johnson and Johnson (1999), at the University of Minnesota, in the USA, to be compared with CTBL, developed by Hosseini (2009/20012), in Mashhad, Iran.

12. Implementation and Applications of the Study

Based on findings of the study, it is necessary that teachers use CL approaches to teaching as their implementation is the need of the hour. It is worth mentioning that successful implementation of CL

methods requires structurally planned teaching and learning activities. In addition, the literature suggests that additional reasons may motivate the instructors to use CL methods. For instance, "the ability to work with others within a group and to develop interpersonal skills" might be an acceptable justification for implementing CL methods (Abu and Flowers, 1997). Increased interaction in English and easy management of large classes may be other motivating factors for employing cooperative learning approaches. Language teachers and researchers should consider the fact that what differentiates CTBL from other CL methods refers to the emphasis it puts on the significance of 'competition', as a real world phenomenon, in CL settings. As Hosseini (2012) argues,

The significance of competition should also be looked upon from another different angle – *competition is an inevitable real world phenomenon*: Today world is highly multicultural, incredibly complicated, and of course developmentally and fiercely competitive. The bare truth is thereby that, in addition to skills for co-operation, *survival in the present world context requires enormous skills and capacities for competition* (p. 87).

13. Limitations of the Study
This study addressed a short implementation of CL methods, five weeks, in an EFL environment where the exposure to English was very limited. Five weeks is a rather short period to expect significant gains in oral performance in a language. Thus, the findings of this study could not be safely generalized to longer implementations of CL methods or non-EFL environments. Further studies in Iranian EFL environments and longer studies are suggested. Such studies in schools of ministry of education and universities where there are different students with different backgrounds and attitudes may help the authorities of foreign language learning in both ministries make decisions about implementing CL methods in schools and universities.

The number of subjects on which these results were obtained was small (a total of only 30 across the two groups. With a larger group which are more representative of EFL learners' community in Iran, it would have been possible to include another control group and possibly another treatment group exposed to a different method of CL or even the traditional method of language teaching. Practical issues, unfortunately, prevented such endeavors in current study.

14. Suggestions for further research
Finally, it is suggest language teachers and researchers to investigate the effectiveness of Hosseini's approach to language teaching (i.e., CTBL) with regard to other methods of CL and also other skills and subskills rather than speaking.

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