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Algerian EFL Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Using Group Investigation Cooperative Learning Model for Teaching English School Projects

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Abstract

To help secondary school learners overcome the difficulties they encounter when working on their English school projects, we have used one of the cooperative learning techniques Group Investigation (GI), based on the Sharan and Sharan (1992) Model. After applying the model, we wanted to determine the students' attitudes towards project work and the new teaching method. Thus, this research study aimed to measure the effect of the Group Investigation technique on the students' attitudes towards English projects in general and Group investigation in particular. We hypothesize that the GI model will positively affect the students' attitudes and motivation towards their school English projects. To reach the aim of this descriptive quantitative study, we developed a four-section attitude scale, and the current situation is described by analyzing the data obtained from the applied scale. The study's sample is a focus group of 21 students studying at Elhachemi Bouzidi Secondary School in Khenchela, Algeria. The research data were collected, coded, and analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 24.0 Packet program). The researcher also used Cronbach's Alpha to measure the scale's reliability. The research findings reveal that the applied model positively influenced the students' attitudes, project performances, motivation, target language use, and cooperation.

Keywords: cooperative learning, group investigation model, oral project presentation, project-based learning, secondary school students' attitudes

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Introduction

Recently, there has been a noticeable trend away from teacher-centered toward learner-centered classrooms. Teachers are no longer considered the experts in charge of transmitting knowledge to their learners, often described as “empty vessels” who listen and absorb their teachers’ lectures or direct instructions. Instead, student-centeredness focuses on students understanding their role, constructing and exploring information, and thus taking responsibility for their learning. This approach proved its effectiveness by boosting students’ academic performances and empowering lifelong learning, making it more fun. Moreover, since education focuses on developing learners’ social interests to expand their curiosity in their world, schools worldwide should consider the learners’ interests in their social environment. In this regard, they should foster the child’s social interactions and communications via group involvement. Therefore, The Algerian Ministry of National Education has incorporated Project-Based Learning (PBL) under the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) and designed project-based curricula in secondary school course books (At the Crossroads, Getting Through, New Prospects). The main aim was to make learning more like the real world. Unlike traditional teaching, PBL allows learners to include what they know in real-life situations (Markham et al., 2003). It helps them develop flexible skills to cope with the rapid technological change. Now learners are requested to use what they learn in class to solve real-life problems. They are supposed to direct their learning guided by well-trained educators.

However, based on several studies that have been conducted in different regions in Algeria, the English project is not dealt with appropriately (Asma & Sabrina, 2021, Bessai & Djaffar, 2021, Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019). Students are not interested in doing English projects; all they do is copy Google-made work.

In recent years, there has been an increase in Cooperative Learning (CL) studies to improve classroom teaching and learning. Thus, this study investigates the students’ attitudes towards the Group Investigation CL model after being applied to English School Projects.

Literature Review

Project-Based Learning

Many researchers have given various definitions of PBL. According to Beckett (2002), the project is:

A long term (several weeks) activity that involves a variety of individual or cooperative tasks such as developing a research plan and questions, and implementing the plan through empirical or document research that includes collecting, analyzing and reporting data orally and/or in writing (p.3).

Because PBL moves the focus of learning from the teacher to the learner and empowers learners to interpret, analyze, and make judgments, it necessitates precise comprehension and promotes real-world inquiry (Harun, 2006). According to Wrigley (1998), project-based learning involves a group of students investigating a problem they are passionate about, producing a solution, and presenting their findings to a larger audience. Thus, PBL enables students to explore a topic of their choice, come up with solutions, and share their findings and experiences with others. Put

differently, it is a method of education in which students take responsibility for learning knowledge by assessing what they know and applying it to new situations (Simpson, 2011).

According to proponents of PBL, learning occurs when students explore personal interests to build on existing knowledge and engage in hands-on, authentic activities. While a wealth of literature expresses such goals, research on implementation tactics such as cooperation for PBL in classrooms is sparse (Chen, 2004).

Cooperative Project-Based Learning

John Dewey is credited with pioneering the establishment of democratic learning in communities in the early twentieth century; he recognized the intimate connection between democracy and education. Most of us use the term "learning by doing," which Dewey coined to underline the importance of experience in all forms of learning, not only in school but also in private and professional contexts (De Florio, 2016). This educational paradigm is closely tied to cooperative and project-based learning. Dewey's concept of experience-based action is cited by progressive educators and scientists who employ quantitative methods.

Integrating cooperation and project-based learning aims to help learners develop automaticity in their knowledge and abilities, as well as the desired attitudes. Learners will be equipped with a variety of engaging opportunities to help them develop automaticity in their knowledge and abilities, as well as the desired attitudes (De Florio, 2016).

As previously stated, PBL is a student-centered approach in which learning occurs in small groups, the teacher serves as a facilitator or guide who offers authentic challenges, and students acquire new material through self-directed learning. These same features are present in all forms of cooperative learning and apply to learning projects as well (Hattie, 2009).

Students learn most effectively when they are taught to cooperate and given appropriate help. Academic success, critical thinking, and the development of social skills are all associated with cooperative and project-based learning and, as such, should be incorporated into the instructional design (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). In addition, students contribute to one another's learning through cooperative and PBL. Thus, educators should incorporate both concepts into their classrooms as they can help develop creative, independent thinkers capable of solving future problems and thinking critically to achieve higher academic results.

Cooperative learning models, including learning together (LT), Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team-Games-Tournaments (TGT), jigsaw, and group investigation (GI), are systematic, planned instructional strategies that can be used in a wide variety of educational settings and at any grade level. Each method calls for the teacher to divide the children into four to six learning groups of high-, average-, and low-achieving students.

The majority of the models are founded on social psychological theory and research, some of which extend back to the early 1900s; nevertheless, they have been adjusted to some extent to meet the practical needs of classrooms and to address challenges associated with the use of cooperation (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2013). While different CL approaches have some characteristics, they differ in their components, methodology, and applicability for various subject areas, grade levels,

and educational settings. This research paper discusses the results of using the GI model on the students' attitudes when doing their English school projects.

Group Investigation

Group Investigation is a cooperative learning technique that places a premium on student participation and activity. Sharan and Sharan (1992) define Group Investigation as:

A method for classroom instruction in which students work collaboratively in small groups to examine, experience, and understand their topic of study. Group Investigation is designed to appeal to all facets of the students' abilities and experience relevant to the process of learning, not just to the cognitive or social domains (p.1).

Sharan and Sharan (1992) identified four essential components of classroom learning that typify the GI cooperative learning model by following in Dewey's footsteps. These four components can determine if we are adopting the Group Investigation method following its essential ideas and goals or if we have only made superficial modifications to the way classroom teaching and learning is conducted. The four components are investigation, interaction, interpretation, and intrinsic motivation. These four elements are interrelated and fall together to ensure the full implementation of the method (Sharan & Sharan, 1992).

Learners' Attitudes

The term "attitude" refers to good or negative emotions and thoughts about a particular social item (Bilgin, 2007). Attitude is a state of mental or neurological preparedness that serves as both the premise and the outcome of conduct because of emotional, cognitive, or behavioral tendencies that formed as a result of prior experiences (Richardson, 1996).

Şen (2013) affirms that "attitudes towards learning are important factors on the learners' levels of goal setting, problem solving abilities, their beliefs towards learning, their inner and external motivations in the process of learning and all the academic performances they perform" (p. 1).

While attitudes, which are not visible but can be detected through behaviors, guide human conduct, they are a phenomenon that can differentiate decision-making, problem-solving processes, and all relationships, resulting in bias. Thus, the student's effort to demonstrate expected behaviors in terms of teaching objectives and their attitudes toward learning is a predictor of the student's academic success (Williams, 1992; Richardson, 1996). A student expresses sentiments and thoughts about the learning environment and learning processes through appropriate or incorrect activities that conform to the environment's expectations. In addition, he or she frequently uses positive or negative sentiments to justify oneself (Meral, 2019).

While positive attitudes help learners understand the nature of learning, they also make pupils more receptive to learning, raise their expectations for the learning process, and decrease their anxiety levels (Şen, 2013). For this reason, we attempted to investigate the pupils' attitudes towards a cooperative learning technique to determine better the model's effects on their learning and achievements.

Methodology

To determine the learners' attitudes towards GI cooperative learning model and English school projects, we have relied on an attitude scale that the researcher developed. The study was conducted in Bouzidi Elhachemi Secondary School, Khenchela during the academic year 2019-2020 with a selected focus group of (21) second-year scientific-stream students.

The Likert Scale

Constructing the Scale

Depending on the literature review connected to attitudes to English and the attitudes toward project-based learning and cooperative learning methods, the researcher built this scale. We used simple language with clear short statements to ensure pupils' understanding. We consulted teachers and specialists in the English language, and changes were made based on their comments and suggestions.

Describing the scale

The scale consisted of four parts: attitudes towards group investigation in English projects (nine statements), attitudes towards target language use (five statements), attitudes towards content knowledge (four statements), and attitudes towards group work (six statements). The scale items were constructed to measure pupils' answers. Thus, the 5-point Likert scale was employed: strongly disagree (1 point), disagree (2 points), Neutral (3 points), agree (4 points), and strongly agree (5 points). We asked the pupils to tick the answer that best describes their viewpoints.

Reliability and Validity of the Scale

Reliability of the Scale

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

To measure the internal consistency of the Likert scale, we applied the Cronbach's Alpha technique, and the results are presented in Table 1.

The table below shows that the values of Cronbach's Alpha for all axes (Attitudes towards Group Investigation in English Projects=0.835, Attitudes towards Target Language Use=0.724, Attitudes towards Content Knowledge=0.823, Attitudes towards Group Work= 0.798), as well as the total score (0.945), are greater than (0.7). Therefore, it indicates a high reliability of the test, which allows it to be used in data collection.

Table 1. *Cronbach's Alpha Reliability coefficient*

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Attitudes Towards Group Investigation in English Projects	0.835	09
Attitudes Towards Target Language Use	0.724	05
Attitudes Towards Content Knowledge	0.823	04
Attitudes Towards Group Work	0.798	06
Total	0.945	24

*Validity of the Scale**Construct Validity*

Results illustrated in Table 2 show that all the degrees of significance (Sig) for the axes' correlation with the total score are less than (0.01), indicating a statistical significance for the correlation. These results confirm the Likert scale's high construct validity.

Table 2. *The scale's Construct Validity*

Axes	Correlation with the total score (R)	Sig
Attitudes Towards Group Investigation in English Projects	0.970**	0.000
Attitudes Towards Target Language Use	0.926**	0.000
Attitudes Towards Content Knowledge	0.941**	0.000
Attitudes Towards Group Work	0.938**	0.000

Intrinsic Validity

$$\text{Intrinsic Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

Table 3. shows that the values of validity coefficient for all axes (Attitudes towards Group Investigation in English Projects is 0.914, Attitudes towards Target Language Use= 0.851, Attitudes towards Content Knowledge= 0.907, Attitudes towards Group Work = 0.893), as well as the total average (0.972), are higher than (0.8), which are high values that indicate a high validity of the scale that allows it to be used in data collection.

Table 3. *Intrinsic Validity of the Scale*

Axes	Cronbach's Alpha	Intrinsic Validity
Attitudes towards Group Investigation in English Projects	0.835	0.914
Attitudes towards Target Language Use	0.724	0.851
Attitudes towards Content Knowledge	0.823	0.907
Attitudes towards Group Work	0.798	0.893
Total	0.945	0.972

Findings, Discussion and Analysis*Attitudes towards Group Investigation in English Projects*

This table shows that the value of the test (T) is (11.787), and the degree of significance of the test is (Sig= 0.000), which is less than the significance level (0.01). Therefore, the test has a statistical significance, indicating statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean (Mean= 38.0476) and the hypothetical test value (Test Value= 27). When comparing these two, we find that the differences go for the validity of the mean value. This means that the answers of the sample members go in the positive direction (Approval).

Table 4. *One-sample T-test for attitudes towards GI in Project work*

One-Sample Test					
Attitudes Towards Group Investigation in English Projects	Test Value = 27				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
	11,787	20	0,000	38,0476	11,04762

Table 5. shows that most respondents enjoy doing projects under the group investigation model. Most of them think the model helps them relate what they learn in class to real-life contexts. Almost all participants agree that GI helped them think of authentic ideas, thus developing creativity. Furthermore, the pupils agreed that learning becomes more enjoyable after using the GI model, and all felt more independent and took over responsibility for their learning. Besides, incorporating technology into their presentations becomes an easy and necessary task. They believe that the method made them experience self and peer evaluation, which reduced their anxiety and fear of assessing themselves and others. After dealing with GI, the participants learned how to work independently and at the same time with other individuals within a group. Therefore, they developed both individual accountability and positive interdependence. Finally, the majority of the informants feel excited to work on future projects using the same technique. These results indicate that the pupils' attitudes towards the GI model were positive. They liked the new methodology and benefited greatly from the unique experience.

Table 5. Pupils' attitudes towards GI in Project work

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Project work becomes more enjoyable	6	28.6	11	52.4	3	14.3	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Now, I can make real-world connection to what I learn	6	28.6	12	57.1	3	14.3	00	00	00	00	21	100
Group Investigation helps me think of new ideas and be more creative	10	47.6	10	47.6	1	4.8	00	00	00	00	21	100
Group Investigation makes learning more interesting	7	33.3	10	47.6	3	14.3	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Now I feel more independent and responsible	13	61.9	8	38.1	00	00	00	00	00	00	21	100
The method encourages me to incorporate technology into my presentation	7	33.3	10	47.6	4	19.0	00	00	00	00	21	100
I can evaluate myself and others	7	33.3	9	42.9	4	19.0	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I work both independently and together	13	61.9	7	33.3	1	4.8	00	00	00	00	21	100
I feel excited to do future projects	6	28.6	9	42.9	5	23.8	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Total	39.67%		45.5%		12.7%		2.13%		00%		21	100

Attitudes towards Target Language Use

Table 6 indicates that the value of the test (T) is (8.533), and the degree of significance of the test is (Sig=0.000), which is less than the significance level (0.01). Therefore, there is a statistical significance of the test, and from this, we can say that there exist statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean (Mean= 20.0476) and the hypothetical value (Test Value= 15). In addition, when comparing the two, we find that the differences go for the validity of the arithmetic mean; that is, the answers of the sample members go in the positive direction (Approval).

Table 6. *One-sample T-test of pupils' attitudes toward Language Use*

One-Sample Test					
Attitudes Towards Target Language Use	Test Value = 15				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
	8,533	20	0,000	20,0476	5,04762

According to Table 7, group investigation increased classroom participation in the target language by more than half. It also helped them use their target language with friends and family outside class. Now, most people feel relaxed and secure speaking English. Almost all agree that GI prompted them to read more articles and short stories in the target language, which expanded their vocabulary. Most respondents agreed that GI improved their language skills (speaking, reading, and writing).

To summarize, Group Investigation taught students to appreciate and listen to one another. They used to talk in English all the time. This reduced their fear of public speaking and increased their language proficiency.

Table 7. *Pupils' attitudes towards Target Language Use*

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Now, I can participate in the class using English	4	19.0%	8	38.1%	8	38.1%	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I can use English outside the classroom better than before	4	19.0%	8	38.1%	9	42.9%	00	00	00	00	21	100
When I speak English now, I feel more relaxed and confident	7	33.3%	11	52.4%	3	14.3%	00	00	00	00	21	100
The method encourages me to learn new words to use later	7	33.3%	12	57.1%	1	4.8%	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I can speak, read and write better than before	9	42.9%	8	38.1%	3	14.3%	1	4.8%	00	00	21	100
Total	29.5%		44.76 %		22.88 %		2.88 %		00%		21	100

Attitudes towards Content Knowledge

Table 8. shows that the value of the test (T) equals (7,737), and the degree of significance (Sig=0.000), which is less than the level of significance (0.01), and therefore there is a statistical significance for the test. These results reveal statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean (Mean= 16, 0476) and the hypothetical Test Value (12). The differences go for the validity of the arithmetic mean; that is, the answers of the sample members go in a positive direction (Approval).

Table 8. *One-sample T-test of pupils' attitudes towards Content Knowledge*

One-Sample Test					
Attitudes Towards Content Knowledge	Test Value = 12				
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
	7,737	20	0,000	16,0476	4,04762

Table 9. indicates that most participants (76.1%) developed investigation skills and searching techniques after experiencing project work under GI. In addition, the method made the majority of the class learn how to play the role of the teacher and explain information to themselves and others. They used to look for the data needed, summarize it, and find easy ways to make other members grasp it. Therefore, pupils had to understand what they were learning first in order to be able to share it with others. Moreover, the pupils agree that GI helped them connect background knowledge with newly acquired one to make relevant results and conclusions and enhance the way they memorize information. Finally, a significant component of learning is answering questions. Questions to be answered entail having pupils listen carefully to the question, think about it, and understand its meaning.

Most importantly, answering questions about a given topic proves the pupils' understanding of what they are doing. Most of the participants (85.7%) could easily find answers to their teachers' and peers' questions. Therefore, we can say that GI helped pupils search for information about a particular topic using keywords, understand the topic of the project, explain it to their peers and answer questions about it. This indicates that GI greatly impacted pupils' learning in genera

Table 9. Pupils' Attitudes toward Content knowledge

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Now, I am able to search for useful information and sources about my topic	4	19.0%	12	57.1%	4	19.0%	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I understand my topic very well, and I can explain it to others	7	33.3%	9	42.9%	5	23.8%	00	00	00	00	21	100
I connect what I am learning to what I already know, which enhances my memory storage	4	19.0%	12	57.1%	3	14.3%	00	00	00	00	21	100
I can easily answer questions about my topic	6	28.6%	12	57.1%	3	14.3%	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Total		25.0%		53.55 %		17.85 %		2.4 %		00%	21	100

Attitudes towards Group Work

Results in Table 10 indicate that the value of the test (T) is equal to (10.445), and the degree of significance of the test (Sig) is equal to (0.000), which is less than the level of significance (0.01). Therefore, there is a statistical significance of the test; therefore, there are statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean (Mean= 25.0952) and the hypothetical Value Test (18). When comparing both results, we find that the differences go for the validity of the arithmetic mean; that is, the answers of the sample members go in the positive direction (Approval).

Table 10. *One-sample T test of Pupils' attitudes toward Group Work*

One-Sample Test					
Attitudes Towards Group Work	Test Value = 18				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
	10,445	20	0,000	25,0952	7,09524

Table 11 shows that all the participants enjoyed working in groups under Group Investigation Model. Most of them experienced better ideas exchange and teamwork interaction, and communication. Almost all of them agree that learning from peers is exciting and fun. Group Investigation helped them learn to trust and respect each other in a team. They discovered that teamwork is like family work. Thus, the model helped them develop stronger team bonding, increasing creativity and productivity. The majority now realize the importance of team roles and responsibilities, which is one of the critical elements of GI.

The informants agree that GI improved collaborative problem-solving, a requirement of cooperative learning. Most participants learned how to bring the correct attitude to the group and cope with other members. They learned to keep eye contact, listen to others, and freely exchange ideas. This allowed them to share knowledge and build creativity and problem-solving skills.

Table 11. *Pupils' Attitudes toward Group Work*

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Working in groups becomes easier and enjoyable	10	47.6	11	52.4	00	00	00	00	00	00	21	100
I exchange ideas and interact better with my teamwork	7	33.3	9	42.9	4	19.0	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I can learn new interesting things from my peers better than before	11	52.4	9	42.9	1	4.8	00	00	00	00	21	100
I respect and trust my peers; it is like family teamwork	5	23.8	11	52.4	4	19.0	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
I respect team roles and understand my and others' responsibility	7	33.3	11	52.4	2	9.5	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Now, I can resolve team conflicts	5	23.8	12	57.1	3	14.3	1	4.8	00	00	21	100
Total	35.7%		50.01%		11.1%		14.4%		00%		21	100

Pupils' Attitudes towards the New Teaching Method

Table 12 indicates that the value of the test (T) is equal to (10.531), and the degree of significance of the test (Sig) is equal to (0.000), which is less than the level of significance (0.01). Therefore, there is a statistical significance for the test, confirming statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean (Mean=99.2381) and the hypothetical Test Value (72). It is clear that the differences go for the validity of the arithmetic mean; that is, the answers of the sample members at the level of all the scale's sections are in the positive direction (Approval).

Table 12. *One-Sample T-test of pupils' attitudes towards the methodology*

One-Sample Test					
TOTAL	Test Value = 72				
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
	10,531	20	0,000	99,2381	27,23810

Conclusion

It is worth noting that the current work attempts to explore the students' attitudes toward a cooperative learning technique, Group Investigation. Its scope is restricted to examining the second-year scientific-stream secondary school students. However, the study only included one focus group with 21 members from Elhachemi Bouzidi Secondary School, Khenchela. As a result, the presented results should be regarded as tentative and should not be generalized. Nevertheless, the findings reported in this study show that Group Investigation Model has a positive impact on the pupils' projects, oral performances, attitudes, motivation, target language use, knowledge, and cooperation. It completely changed the way they perceive and work on English school projects.

The Likert scale results indicate that working on projects becomes an enjoyable and exciting part of the pupils' learning, where they can meet as a family to work on the topic that interests them. They become more aware of the importance of projects and appreciate the time they spend together in class. In addition, it helped teachers create an engaging classroom where learners can freely interact with each other and discuss ideas. Pupils also developed a sense of responsibility. For the first time, they felt independent and autonomous as they took control of their learning.

Furthermore, the more educators are aware of peer connections in their classrooms, the more equipped they are to create an environment where pupils may interact with one another while participating in beneficial instructional activities. As a result, the difficulty is to provide opportunities for students to engage with one another while also learning in structured environments. Pupils learned how to employ social interaction to foster and create new information acquired by the group during the investigation.

The Group Investigation Model (GI) is a student-centered approach that helped the researcher develop pupils as information specialists who can share their knowledge with their peers. Therefore, they enjoyed playing the role of the teacher, explaining and giving assignments to others. Because the teacher only interacts with the group when needed. It also helped cultivate the spirit of collaboration in groups to promote active, creative, and enjoyable learning.

Group Investigation proves to build a stronger teacher-learner relationship. It made pupils more willing to participate in activities their teachers want them to do because it helps create a trusting relationship. This leads to constructive classroom conduct such as helping, cooperating, sharing, being courteous to each other, and engaging in pleasant social exchanges with others.

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