

The Effect of a Cooperative Inquiry-Based Learning Program on Developing Preparatory School Students' EFL Reading comprehension and Self-Regulation

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed at investigating the effect of a cooperative inquiry-based learning program on developing preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension and self-regulation. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design. The participations were forty students from preparatory stage enrolled in the second grade from Bahtit, Abo Hamad Directorate, Sharkia Governorate, who were equally divided into two groups: experimental group and control group. The experimental group was taught by the cooperative inquiry-based learning program while the control group received regular instruction in the first semester of the academic year (2025-2026). The experiment lasted for eight weeks. The researcher carried out ten sessions; each session took about 120minutes. So, the treatment took about 20hours. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher designed these instruments, an EFL reading comprehension skills checklist, a pre-post reading comprehension skills test, a rubric of the reading comprehension skills test, and a pre-post self-regulation scale. The data obtained were statistically treated through the SPSS program. Results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both reading comprehension skills and self-regulation due to the use of the cooperative inquiry-based learning program. These results indicated that cooperative inquiry-based learning program has a large effect on developing preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension, and self-regulation.

Keywords: *EFL reading comprehension, self-regulation and the cooperative inquiry-based learning program..*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Scmitt (2002), reading is the most important function of the human brain. There are numerous tactics, methods, and strategies available for teaching/learning reading abilities. To improve our children's reading skills, we need them to investigate, and comprehend these strategies thoroughly. Comprehension is an important element of learning; it is also a complex process with many levels of understanding. Ideally, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of what has been read, but that is not always the case. Educators must understand how students interact with material in order to determine which strategy instruction will be most effective. "Readers should understand what they read (Teele, 2004).

Reading comprehension is one of the fundamental skills in any language. It is the center of the foreign language learning curriculum because true understanding happens when readers combine their thoughts with the text, ask questions, draw inferences, think about what is relevant, summarize and synthesize, enabling them to use their understanding to ask more questions and direct new learning (Elghotmy,2018).

Because of the wide literature that confirms the importance of reading comprehension, many studies have been conducted to investigate various approaches and strategies of teaching to develop it. Al Safadi (2017) investigated the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading CSR approach on ninth graders' reading comprehension skills in Palestine, learning English motivation and reading motivation. The result showed that CSR was effective on developing ninth graders' reading comprehension skills and motivation.

Self-regulation is essential for learning, but it is neither innate, nor spontaneous. Schunk & Zimmerman (2009) stated that self-regulation can be seen as a process in which an individual plan, organizes, self-instructs, self-monitors, and evaluates at various stages of the learning process. They also indicated that self-regulation skills are

acquired in a series of four self-regulatory skill levels: (a) observation, (b) emulation, (c) self-control, and (d) self-regulation.

Actually, Pintrich (2000) described a self-regulated learner as a student who deliberately generates his or her own thoughts, feelings, and actions to achieve his or her learning goals. Although there have been many theoretical perspectives on SRL over the past 30 years, most typically integrate goal setting, self-observation, and self-evaluation. Self-regulation is related to a student's effective participation in his or her own learning process in terms of motivation and behavior. In other words, self-regulation is the affecting, guiding, and controlling of the student's behavior by himself/herself (Senemoğlu, 2007).

In the EFL classroom, a cooperative inquiry is offered as a means of involving students in meaningful learning when language learning moves beyond linguistic structures and is focused on personal and social knowledge. Cooperative inquiry requires understanding and application of Vygotsky's theories of cognition, which acknowledge how knowledge is generated and demonstrated by social and material contexts (Lee and Smagornsky, 2000).

Cooperative learning has been researched for over 50 years and connected positively to students' performance (Adams, 2013). From the perspective of second language teaching, McGroarty (1989) offers six learning advantages for ESL students in CLL classrooms:

1. Increased frequency and variety of second language practice through different types of interaction.
2. Possibility for development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills.
3. Opportunities to integrate language with content-based instruction.
4. Opportunities to include a greater variety of curricular materials to stimulate language as well as concept learning
5. Freedom for teachers to master new professional skills, particularly those emphasizing communication.
6. Opportunities for students to act as resources for each other, thus assuming a more active role in their learning.

Inquiry-based learning is a type of instruction method that emphasizes the student's involvement in the learning process. Inquiry-based learning is being implemented at all levels, from within-class activities to inquiry courses and even inquiry degree programs, because there is strong educational theoretical backing for the use of inquiry methodologies. Inquiry-based learning is a popular method for increasing both involvement and skill development. Students can delve deeply into the topic matter via inquiry-based learning, which keeps them engaged in posing questions and discussing ideas with their peers and instructor. Students' questions elicit a lot of participation (Najimova, 2022).

Statement of the problem:

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the problem of the current study is that a great number of second year preparatory-stage students lack EFL reading comprehension, writing performance skills and self-regulation. Hence, the present study is an attempt to develop preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension skills and self-regulation by using a cooperative inquiry-based Learning program.

Questions of the study:

The current study attempted to answer the following main question: What is the effect of a cooperative inquiry-based learning program on developing preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension, and self-regulation?

The main question branched out into the following sub-questions:

What are the most important EFL reading comprehension skills required for second-grade preparatory school students?

How can a program based on cooperative inquiry-based learning be designed to develop EFL second grade preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension, writing performance and self-regulation?

What is the effect of a cooperative inquiry-based learning program on developing second grade preparatory school students' EFL reading comprehension?

What is the effect of a cooperative inquiry-based learning program on developing second grade preparatory school students' self-regulation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1. Nature of EFL reading comprehension

Reading is one of the most important skills; it is an active process of constructing meaning. It is also crucial and indispensable for the students because the success of their study depends on their ability to read. It is the main way to get knowledge and communicate with other cultures to improve learners' way of thinking and satisfy their curiosity. It is not only a source of information, but also as a way to consolidate and expand one's language skills (Diab, 2020).

According to Doyle (2004) comprehension is a progressive skill in attaching meaning beginning at the same level and proceeding to attach meaning to an entire reading selection. All comprehension revolves around the reader's ability in finding and determining main idea and topic sentence from the text. Reading comprehension, according to Grabe and Stoller (2013),

is the capacity to comprehend and interpret information from written texts. Understanding the idea and content of the piece is what is meant by comprehension.

2.1.2. Importance of EFL reading comprehension

Reading skills are important in this new age of knowledge explosion, e-learning, and mobile learning because they allow us to gather and retrieve information from numerous textual resources. We read because we want to understand the message, information, or meaning given by the writer. Reading is an active and interactive process of communication, which enhances the process of language acquisition and generates an interest to develop communicative competence. A key to students' success in learning is their ability to comprehend and use the information in the reading texts (El-Marsafy and Abdel Hack, 2009). A skill is highly valued by teachers and students as well.

McShane (2005) highlighted five important reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is worthwhile for comprehension to be the goal of reading teaching; all reading components contribute to the development of comprehension. "Comprehension is drawing meaning from words; it is the essence of reading... central both to academic and lifelong learning" (Tankersley, 2005). It is a purposeful interaction between the reader and the text. That interaction is shaped by prior knowledge and experiences.

2.2. Self-regulation

2.2.1. The concepts of self-regulation

Self-regulation is a psychological concept that has piqued the interest of numerous education researchers such as Zimmerman (2008), refers to self-generated thoughts, outlooks, and behavior that are preplanned and regularly modified based on performance feedback in order to achieve self-set goals. Put another way, learners manage and take control of their own learning by employing cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, motivational strategies, and social and behavioral strategies (Teng & Zhang, 2018).

Schunk (2009) described SRL as "learning that results from students' self-generated thoughts and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of their learning goals" (p. 125). Zimmerman (2009) stated that is neither an ability nor a skill, but rather a process that self-directed learners use to transform mental ability into task-related skills.

2.2.2. The importance of self-regulation

Self-regulation is essential in EFL instruction, enabling students to set goals, track progress, and adapt strategies, which is particularly vital in EFL learners' settings with individualized learning tasks. Previous research emphasizes its role in performance and satisfaction (Azari Noughabi et al., 2022).

Magno (2009) pointed out that self-regulation focuses on how students personally activate, alter, and sustain their learning practices in specific context. Self-regulation was applied in different context such as health, performance, sports, and academic settings.

Theoretically, some scholars argue that self-regulation plays a main role in reading comprehension. Specifically, Davis and Grey (2007) suggested that readers should adopt self-regulated strategies to fully use their strengths in reading the texts. As a result, self-regulation learning promotes engaged reading comprehension, whereas self-regulated readers adapt and monitor their performance with the goal of addressing their own learning requirements.

2.3. Cooperative Inquiry

2.3.1. Co-operative inquiry framework

Cooperative inquiry is a way of combining between cooperation and inquiry. According to Reason (1999), is an inquiry strategy in which all participants are co-subjects—their involvement in the activity under study—and co-researchers—their ideas, project management, and conclusions are influenced by their collective thinking and decision-making. Cooperative inquiry occurs when a group of individuals work together to explore issues that they find fascinating and important. Each group member contributes ideas and research to the group's research initiatives as well as joint efforts. Everyone contributes to the debate of how to examine the themes, everyone engages in the research activity, and everyone has an opinion on the cooperative inquiry group's findings. As a consequence, everyone participating acts as both "co-researchers" and "co-subjects," blurring the line between "researcher" and "subject" in cooperative inquiry.

Pedaste et al. (2015) provided an explanation of the IBL model's implementation in the classroom using a cycle plan (Fig. 1). He uses the four steps of orientation, conceptualization, inquiry, and conclusion to demonstrate how IBL may be accomplished. In the first step, known as orientation, the topic is presented, grabbing students' interest and encouraging them to participate in class. Following this, the students discuss the issue, come up with questions, and begin considering potential solutions. This takes place throughout the stage of conceptualization. Next, investigations are carried out to get information and facts pertinent to the topics addressed using the resources that are available from the internet, library, and experts in the field. From here on, students utilize the information gathered to draw conclusions. In other words, pupils determine the solution or answers to the questions based on the facts. The response could prompt more questions and research, which are essential for students to become self-directed students. In addition to the aforementioned phases, it is crucial that students

interact, think, and debate as they go through the IBL stages.

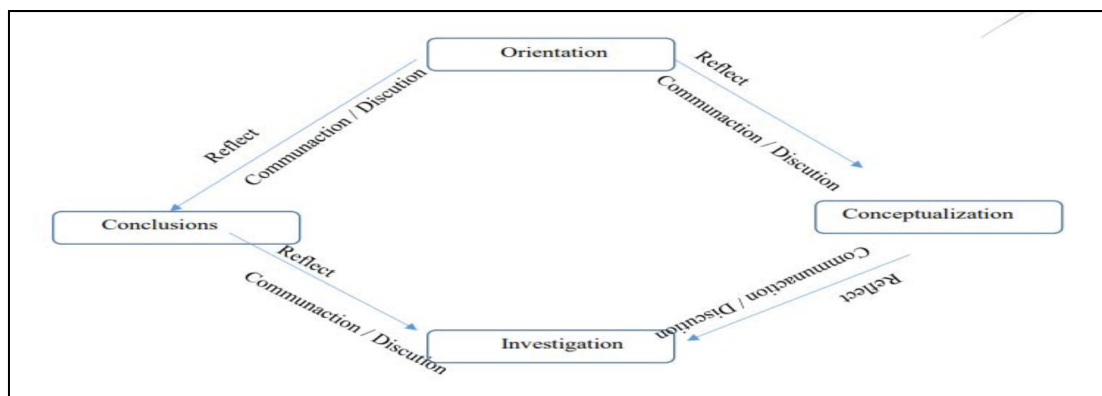


Figure (1) The inquiry-cycle Deprived of Phases of inquiry-based learning: Definitions and the inquiry cycle by

2.3.2 Components of inquiry

Komalasari (2010) outlined the five common components of learning the methods of inquiry, as follows:

Question: Learning usually begins with an opening question that provokes curiosity or admiration of students and the students will be a phenomenon. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions, which are intended as guidance to the core question to be solved by the students. Furthermore, teachers deliver the core questions or core problem to be solved by the students. So, the teachers give opportunity to ask some questions which intended to be solved by the students.

Students' engagement: in the method of inquiry, the active involvement of students is a must, while the teacher's role is as a passive facilitator. The students do not plan to write answers to questions in the field or to answer the questions at the end of the chapter of a book, but prosecuted involved in creating a product that shows a students' understanding to the concepts which are being studied or in conducting an investigation. However, students' engagement involved in creating a product being learned by the students.

Cooperative interaction Students are required to communicate, work in pairs or in groups, and discuss various ideas. In this case the student is not currently competing. The answer to the problems posed, the teachers can come in many forms, and probably the correct answer. So, Cooperative Interaction let the students to improve their skills from communication work pair or group and discuss about various ideas by correcting answers.

Performance evaluation: in answering the problem, usually the students are asked to create a product that can describe the knowledge about the problem being solved. This product can be a form of slide presentations, charts, posters, essays, and others. These products are to evaluate teachers. So, performance evaluation, students are asked to create the product and then the students describe the knowledge how to solve the problem.

Variety of resources: the students can use a variety of learning resources for example, textbooks, websites, television, video, posters, interviews with experts and others. So, varieties of resources more emphasize on students take them from wide range.

3. METHOD

3.1. Design of the study

The current study adopted the quasi-experimental design. Fifty students were randomly assigned to two groups, experimental and control, (25) students each. The experimental students received instruction through a cooperative inquiry-based learning program for developing EFL reading comprehension, and self-regulation. On the other hand, students in the control group received regular instruction. A pre-post reading comprehension test, and self-regulation scale were given to the two groups before and after the experiment.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants included (50) students of preparatory stage students of females in (2025-2026) from preparatory school in Bahtit, Abu Hamed, Sharkia Governorate. They were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental (n=25) students and control (n=25) students. The participants were assumed to be a homogeneous group. As a result, they were expected to have a lot in common and not differ much in terms of experience or age.

3.3. The instruments of the study:

3.3.1. An EFL reading comprehension skills checklist.

- 3.3.2. An EFL reading comprehension skills test.
- 3.3.3. A Rubric of scoring EFL reading comprehension Skills test.
- 3.3.4. An EFL self-regulation questionnaire.
- 3.3.5. An EFL self-regulation scale.

3.4. The study Material:

First of all, the experimental group received two sessions at the

beginning of the experiment on the nature of the cooperative inquiry-based program and how to use it. During teaching the selected reading comprehension passages and writing activities relevant to units 1 and 2 of the second-grade preparatory (Students' book) to the experimental group using of the cooperative inquiry program, the following steps are followed to help students improve EFL reading comprehension skills and understand the reading passages successfully. They are as follows:

The researcher redesigned the first and second units of the second grade preparatory (Students' book), unit 1 Meeting Gen Alpha,

and unit 2 My digital footprint, according to the cooperative inquiry method.

3.5. The study hypotheses

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the EFL reading comprehension skills test results, in favor of the experimental group.
- 2- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administrations of the EFL reading comprehension skills test results, in favor of the post administration.
- 3- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post administration of the EFL self-regulation scale results, in favor of the experimental group.
- 4- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administrations of the EFL self-regulation scale results, in favor of the post administration.
- 5- Co-operative inquiry-based learning program has a large effect on improving EFL reading comprehension skills.
- 6- Co-operative inquiry-based learning program has a large effect on increasing EFL self-regulation of preparatory stage students.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

To determine whether the experimental treatment actually has an effect on the experimental group participants, whether there were any differences between the means of scores both groups in the study pre/post administrations and whether the groups are different from one another, a *t*-test was used.

- The First Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post EFL reading comprehension skills test results, in favor of the experimental group. To verify this hypothesis, *t*-test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. There would be a statistically significant difference between both groups in favor of the experimental group in the post administration of the EFL overall reading comprehension skills and sub-skills, where *t*-values were, (24.8) for overall reading comprehension skills (**Table 1**).

- The Second Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group in the pre and that in the post test of the EFL reading comprehension skills test results administration, in favor of the post-administration. The *t*-test for paired samples was used to compare the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the EFL reading comprehension test before and after administering cooperative inquiry-based learning program.

There is a statistically significant difference between the pre and the post of the experimental group in favor of the post ones, where *t*-values were, (15.9) for overall EFL reading comprehension skills (**Table 2**).

- The Third Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post administrations of the self-regulation scale results in favor of the experimental group. To verify this hypothesis, *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups in the self-regulation scale.

It can be inferred that the t-value is (23.5) for overall self-regulation skills which significant at (0.05). So, the fifth hypothesis was validated. This means that cooperative inquiry-based learning program had developed the level of self-regulation of students more than traditional strategy (**Table 3**).

- The Fourth Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre/post self-regulation scale results, in favor of the post ones. To verify this hypothesis, t-test for paired samples was used to compare the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the self-regulation scale before and after administering the cooperative inquiry-based learning program. It can be inferred that the obtained t value is (21.7) for Overall self-regulation skills which significant at (0.05). So, the sixth hypothesis was validated. This refers that the cooperative inquiry based learning program has a large effect on reducing the students' level of self-regulation (**Table 4**).

- The Fifth Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that "The cooperative inquiry-based learning program would have a large effect on EFL reading comprehension Skills ". Cohen's (1988) equation was used to verify this hypothesis. The effect was measured through Cohen's equation. the effect sizes of the experimental group results in the post reading comprehension test were higher than those of the pre-ones, where the effect sizes were (0.86) for overall reading comprehension skills, (0.82) for literal, (0.84) for inferential, and (0.81) for creative. All these values were significant at 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis was confirmed. These differences can be attributed to the cooperative inquiry-based learning program. According to the findings of Cohen's formula, the percentage (0.86) indicates that cooperative inquiry-based learning program had a large effect on improving the experimental participants' EFL reading comprehension skills (**Table 5**).

- The Sixth Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that "The cooperative inquiry-based learning program would have a large effect on developing the self-regulation". Cohen's equation was used to verify this hypothesis. The effect was measured through Cohen's equation.

As indicated in table (6), it is obvious that the final value of Cohen's equation for the experimental group, comparing the pre to the post results of the Overall self-regulation scale is (0.87), (0.81) for Goal setting, (0.83) for Organization, (0.82) for Memory strategy, (0.85) for Seeking assistance, (0.84) for Self-evaluation, which are all significant at (0.05). Based on that, it has been concluded that there is a positive effect of the cooperative inquiry-based learning program on the experimental participants self-regulation.

Table (1): Comparing both groups post results in EFL reading comprehension skills

Sig	df.	t. value	Standard deviation	Mean	N	Test	Skills
0.05	48	15.6	1.2	18	25	Control	Literal
			1.6	25.4	25	Experimental	
0.05	48	12.8	2.9	9.8	25	Control	Inferential
			2.5	15.7	25	Experimental	
0.05	48	14	1.7	19.5	25	Control	Creative
			1.5	24.4	25	Experimental	
0.05	48	24.8	3.05	48.4	25	Control	Overall EFL reading comprehension skills
			4.2	50.8	25	Experimental	

**Significant at (0.05)

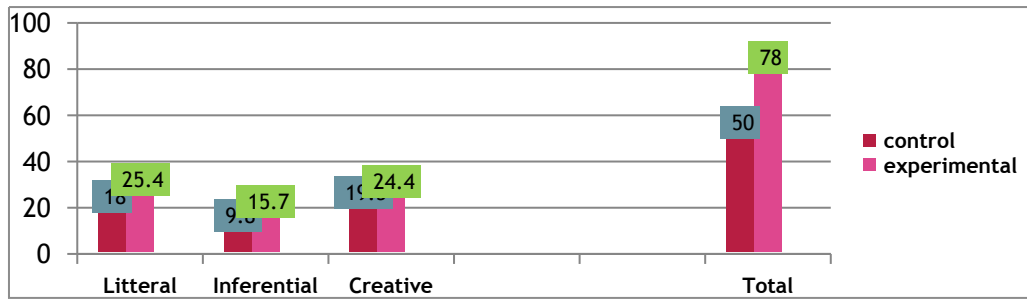


Figure (2): t-test of the mean scores of the post-measurement of the control group and the experimental of Reading Comprehension test

Table (2): Comparing the pre to post EFL reading comprehension skills test results of the experimental group

Sig	def.	t. value	SD	Mean	N	Test	Skills
0.05	24	9.6	2.05	11.7	25	Pre	Litteral
			1.2	22.4	25	Post	
0.05	24	10.2	1.7	9.3	25	Pre	Inferential
			2.9	15.7	25	Post	
0.05	24	12	1.2	13	25	Pre	Creative
			1.7	24.4	25	Post	
0.05	24	15.9	3.05	37.8	25	Pre	Overall EFL reading comprehension skills
			4.9	55.6	25	Post	

**Significant at (0.05)

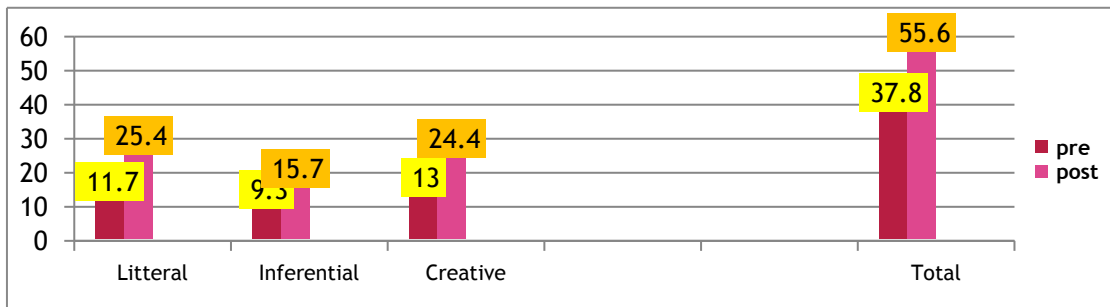


Figure (1): The mean scores of the pre- and post-measurements of the EFL Reading comprehension Test

Table (3): Comparing both groups post results in the self-regulation scale

t. value	df	Standard deviation	Mean	N	Group	Skills
17	48	1.3	50.5	25	Control	Goal setting
		2.9	59.9	25	Experimental	
19.8	48	2.8	20.8	25	Control	Organization
		3.9	23.6	25	Experimental	

18	48	1.9	30.4	25	Control	Memory strategy
		2.7	38.6	25	Experimental	
21.2	48	2.9	40.7	25	Control	Seeking assistance
		3.8	50.2	25	Experimental	
15.8	48	1.4	65.8	25	Control	Self-evaluation
		3.5	70.4	25	Experimental	
23.5	48	6.8	61.5	25	Control	Overall self-regulation skills
		8.9	82.4	25	Experimental	

**Significant at (0.05)

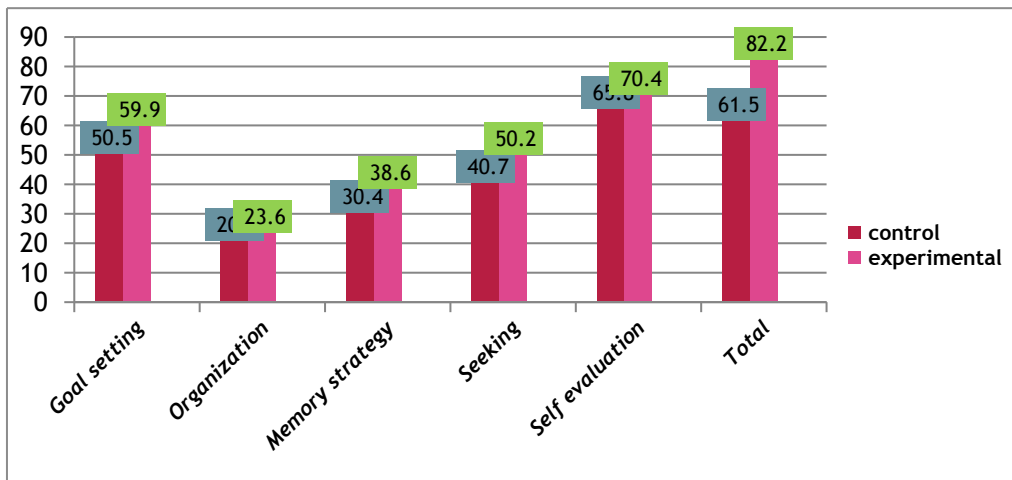


Figure (3): t-test of the mean scores of the post-measurement of the control group and the experimental of Self-regulation scale

Table (4): Comparing the experimental group on the pre to post results of the self-regulation scale

t. value	df	Standard deviation	Mean	N	Test	skills
9.4	24	4.5	31.6	25	Pre	Goal setting
		5.9	59.9	25	Post	
11.5	24	3.6	13.3	25	Pre	Organization
		4.9	23.6	25	Post	
13.6	24	2.8	25.9	25	Pre	Memory strategy
		3.7	38.6	25	Post	
12.8	24	3.4	27.8	25	Pre	Seeking assistance
		5	50.2	25	Post	
10.9	24	1.9	35.3	25	Pre	Self-evaluation
		3.5	70.4	25	Post	
21.7	24	6.4	43.7	25	Pre	Total

		8	82.4	25	Post	
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**Significant at (0.05)

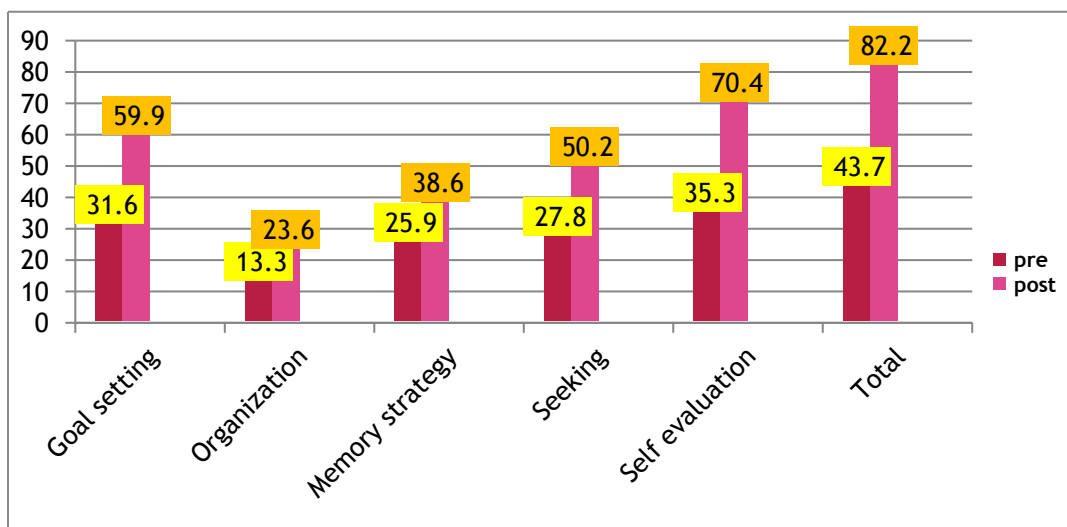


Figure (4): The mean scores of the pre- and post-measurements of the EFL Self-regulation scale

Table (5): The effect size of the cooperative inquiry-based learning program on EFL reading comprehension skills

Value	Effect size	t. value	Standard deviation	Mean	N	Test	Skills
Large	0.82	9.6	2.05	11.7	25	Pre	Literal
			1.2	22.4	25	Post	
Large	0.84	10.2	1.7	9.3	25	Pre	Inferential
			2.9	15.7	25	Post	
Large	0.81	12	1.2	13	25	Pre	Creative
			1.7	24.4	25	Post	
Large	0.86	15.9	3.05	37.8	25	Pre	Overall EFL reading comprehension skills
			4.9	55.6	25	post	

**Significant at (0.05)

Table (6): The effect size of the cooperative inquiry-based learning program on developing self-regulation

Value	Effect size	t. value	df	Standard deviation	Mean	N	Test	skills
Large	0.81	9.4	24	4.5	31.6	25	Pre	Goal setting
				5.9	59.9	25	Post	
Large	0.83	11.5	24	3.6	13.3	25	Pre	Organization
				4.9	23.6	25	Post	

Large	0.82	13.6	24	2.8	25.9	25	pre	Memory strategy
				3.7	38.6		post	
Large	0.85	12.8	24	3.4	27.8	25	pre	Seeking assistance
				5	50.2		post	
Large	0.84	10.9	24	1.9	35.3	25	pre	Self- evaluation
				3.5	70.4		post	
Large	0.87	21.7	24	6.4	43.7	25	Pre	Total
				8	82.4		25	

**Significant at (0.05)

5. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

On the pre- results, it was clear that the experimental group had problems in EFL reading comprehension skills and self-regulation. The results of the present study showed that the experimental group, taught through the cooperative inquiry-based learning program performed better than the control one as shown in the post results of the reading comprehension, skills test and the self-regulation scale since there were statistically significant differences at (0.05) between the means of scores of both groups, in favor of the experimental group, so the cooperative inquiry-based learning program has a positive effect on developing experimental participants' EFL reading comprehension skills and increased the self-regulation.

6. CONCLUSION RECOMMENDATION &

EFL Curriculum designers should pay attention to emphasize the importance of EFL reading comprehension skills and self-regulation in all the educational stages to achieve fruitful gains.

Literal, inferential, and creative levels of reading comprehension should all be taken into account when developing reading comprehension products. Questions should be different to evaluate both explicit and implicit information. Additionally, the students should assess and rate the reading material and be asked for any original suggestions.

Cooperative inquiry-based learning activities should be integrated with the learning curriculum, relating them to the objectives of the course.

EFL teachers should not provide students with information in a direct way. They should encourage students to use their experience and prior knowledge to ask them questions with various answers to brainstorm and enhance their self-regulation.

Cooperative inquiry-based learning should adhere to certain principles so that EFL teachers understand how to implement tasks effectively and how learners are guided to work on the tasks.

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