

Cooperative and Project-Based Learning Strategies and Students' Academic Performance in Composition Writing in Rivers State

Prof. Chioma Chukueggu^{1*}, and Dr. Onyinyechi Blessing Excelokoye²

¹ Department of Curriculum Studies and Instructional Technology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria

² Department of English and Communication Art Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria

E-mail: chukuegguchioma@gmail.com

Cite this article as: Chukueggu, Ch., & Excelokoye, O. B. (2025). Cooperative and Project-Based Learning Strategies and Students' Academic Performance in Composition Writing in Rivers State. *International Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 4(1), 36-51. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ijsfle.v4i1.876>

Abstract

This paper investigated the Cooperative and Project-based Learning Strategies and Students' Academic Performance in Composition Writing in Rivers State. The study was conducted in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest and post-test control group research design. The population for the study was 14,227. A sample size of 210 students was chosen for this study, using the stratified sampling technique. This consisted of two experimental groups and one control group. The instrument used for data collection was English composition writing performance test (ECWPT). The Instrument's reliability was tested using kuder-Richardson-20 formula with a reliability co-efficient of 0.89. Six research questions and six hypotheses showed the effectiveness of the co-operative learning strategy in teaching and learning composition writing, followed by the project-based learning strategy. The experimental groups' mean difference is statistically significant from the control group. The mean and standard deviation answered the research questions while the analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to test for hypotheses. From the findings of the study, the co-operative strategy was found effective for improvement of English composition but the Joint use of Cooperative and Project-based strategies was more effective in practicing composition writing. Therefore, it is recommended that both strategies be used in the teaching and learning of composition writing with special attention given to the co-operative strategy. This should be taken seriously in order to bring back the glory of English language and education in Nigeria, especially the writing skill that is currently being neglected.

Keywords: cooperative, project-based, reciprocal, design, sample

1. Introduction

Education is crucial and indispensable for national development. It is widely recognized as a necessary instrument for the development of any human society. A good and quality education is the bedrock of sustainable development in any nation. It is the primary force that facilitates the overall socio-political and economic transformation of any society. The educational system equips individuals with requisite knowledge, skills, values, competencies and attitudes that will enable them to be functionally relevant and responsive to the present and emergent societal



challenges and changes. The value of education cannot be over emphasized as the link between education and a nation's development is very strong. Human capital development is necessary for a sustainable development in economy, politics, industries etc. A nation that aspires to achieve an overall national development in all spheres of the geo-political entity must as a matter of utmost necessity pay attention and improve on the quality of its educational system. Hence the place of education as a harbinger for national development is highly ranked.

Language has existed for as long as humans have, and its definition can vary based on one's interest in dialects and speakers, words and their origins, the formal characteristics of language systems, the distinctions between languages spoken in different nations, language as an artistic medium, and other topics.

According to Azikiwe (2007), proficiency in English and other foreign languages is for the country's industrial growth. As a developing nation, Nigeria, no doubt depends on other well-developed countries for her technological take off and growth for breakthrough in technology. Therefore, the industrial personnel must be proficient in English to be able to read text and literature and equally write. When an individual cannot read and write, it is assumed that such a person did not attend school or does not have a good level of educational attainment. Learning a second language such as the English language has been felt to be of cultural value. It is hoped that the second language will give the learner greater insight into languages in general and consequently help improve the learner's power of expression of the mother tongue in the area of clarity and precision.

English is the language of science and technology, a passport to higher education and prominent jobs, a language of administration and business, and a communication tool both domestically and internationally, according to Echetebeh (2015). Therefore, it is crucial and essential that our school children be fluent in the English language in all domains, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. They should deal with the order of words. According to Rao (2019), English Language has rules concerning the order of words.

Writing, according to Cushman (2011) is a medium of human communication that represents language with signs and symbols. In other words, writing is a tool that is used to make languages readable. It involves using symbols, including alphabetic letters, punctuation, and spaces, to convey ideas and concepts in a comprehensible way. To write clearly, one must be well-versed in syntax, punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary, as well as good paragraphing. Eco (2021), asserts that a good paragraph not only sticks to a subject but develops it sufficiently to create a rounded and reasonably complex picture to the reader.

Composition writing is a complex activity, it does not just mean handwriting and it includes all types of written expressions in which meaning is recorded or made Obiokoye (2008).

It tends to be represented in the Nigerian Education system as English composition or the essay, but it is much more than that. Writing is one of those educational activities that lack a consensus and neat definition therefore, valid definition of writing abounds, a composition is a piece of writing organized on related issues or ideas arranged and expressed in an orderly manner, it is written on a topic which is broken into different parts. The parts which must relate to the topic are developed into paragraphs that form the body of the composition topic. Composition writing is a practice exercise in writing in the technique of saying a thing in a manner that will best convey the message to the receiver. They are isolated accounts of events, experience, processes, ideas etc.

Learning Strategies are strategies used to help learners become independent strategic learners. Students independently select the appropriate ones and use them effectively to accomplish tasks or meet goals. The Strategies under consideration in this work are the co-operative learning strategy and the project-based learning strategy. One of the best methods for fostering active interest in the teaching and learning process is cooperative learning. It is a method that makes it easier to investigate problem-solving techniques.

Lozano (2022), writing on the importance of cooperative learning strategy said “This pedagogical approach has gained relevance and prominence, and has been transferred to different area and institutions in the belief that the educational system, cannot and should not be oblivious to the changes posed by the climate emergency taking place on our planet.

According to Nwafor (2022), cooperative learning is enjoyable and motivating for students; it is interactive, so students are engaged and active participants in the learning process; and it allows for discussion and critical thinking, which helps students learn more and remember what they have learned for a longer period of time. Students that participate in cooperative learning must develop teamwork, which is a critical life skill. Pranjol et al (2024), assert that Project based learning has been found to deepen learning and employability skills for students through active engagement with learning materials.

According to Markhan (2011), Project-based learning strategy otherwise known as (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogy which involves a dynamic classroom approach in which students acquire the information or knowledge, challenges and problems. In this type of learning, what the teacher does is to direct the learners on what to do. When students are given an assignment, they conduct research on the subject, gather data or knowledge to present to the class, overcome exam difficulties, or work through other academic issues.

It is against this background that the researchers in the quest to check the decline in performance and success in English Language specifically composition writing deemed it expedient to find out the influence of Cooperative learning strategy and project-based learning strategy on Senior Secondary School (SS1) In English Composition Writing.

2. Materials and Methods

The vast majority of our students essentially learn by rote, according to multiple studies, which is why they seem to struggle with composition and writing in general.

Again, failure or poor performance in English language suggests failure in every other subject. This is because when a candidate credits every other subject apart from English, such a candidate is bound to repeat such an examination till there is the assurance that credit is equally obtained in the English Language.

According to the senior school certificate syllables (2016 – 2021) the paper I of the English Language consists of tests in writing (composition or essay) which carries 50% which is half of the marks for English language, others are Multiple Choice Assessment which carries 35% and the oral English which carries 15%. This simply means that failure in English composition or essay writing especially in external examinations like W.A.E.C, G.C.E and N.E.C.O suggests failure in English examination and even in the knowledge of other subject in the contemporary society. English language results in most certified examination bodies like the West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C) and National Examination Council (NECO) have not been satisfactory. This is evidenced by 2018, 2019 and 2020 WAEC results in English language where 45.18%, 43.2% and 44.5% of students respectively credited the subject (Source: WAEC Chief Examiner, 2018, 2019 and 2020). The unimpressive performance of secondary school students in writing which is symbolized by poor mastery of the grammatical structures, student's inability to construct sentences, poor use of proper sentence pattern, Loss of interest in writing due to much use of phone etc, failure in W.A.E.C, terrible hand writings, poor writing outcome, inability to identify correct grammatical forms in both speech and writing, etc, is an indication that there are underlying factors that that need to be investigated.

On this note, this study is motivated by the fact that students do not retain for long or understand what steps should be taken, the strategies that should be used and the material that should be used. Students are gradually losing the writing skills owing to the fact that they carry out most of their tasks through typing text messages, WhatsApp messages, telegram, snapchat and other social media platforms. Learners/students find it difficult to write properly important and regular correspondence such as letters, essays, memo, articles for publication and other things that are essential which are likely to help them in life, some learners who have graduated from secondary school even find it difficult to write applications for jobs. It therefore becomes clear that they either do not know how to write or that they know less of what to write and since writing is indispensable, and no learner can prove his or her own knowledge without knowing much about writing, this issue calls for urgent and necessary attention.

2.1. Aim and Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of a cooperative learning approach and a project-based learning strategy on secondary school students' academic performance in composition writing. The objectives are to

1. Find the average difference between the scores of students who were taught composition writing through the cooperative learning strategy and those who were taught using the lecture method.
2. Calculate the average difference between the scores of students who were taught composition writing using a project-based approach and those who were taught using the lecture method.
3. Examine how students who were taught composition writing using cooperative and project-based methods differed on average in their scores.
4. Find out the mean score difference between male and female students who were taught composition writing through the cooperative learning approach.

2.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. What is the difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the cooperative learning strategy and those taught using the conventional method?
2. What is the difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the project-based learning strategy and those taught using the conventional method?
3. What is the difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the co-operative learning strategy and those taught using the project-based learning strategy?
4. What is the difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught composition writing using the cooperative learning strategy?

2.3. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. The mean scores of students who were taught composition writing using the cooperative learning strategy and those who were taught using the traditional method did not differ significantly.
2. The mean scores of students who were taught composition writing using the project-based learning technique and those who were taught using the traditional method did not differ significantly.

3. The mean scores of students who were taught composition writing using the project-based learning approach and those who were taught using the cooperative learning approach did not differ significantly.
4. The mean scores of male and female students who were taught composition writing through the co-operative learning approach did not differ significantly.

The design for this study is Quasi –experimental pre-test posttest research design. The present study is quasi experimental because it is a control design involving three groups. That is two experimental groups and one control group. The two experimental groups were subjected to treatment (i.e. students in the experimental groups were exposed to lessons developed using co-operative strategy and project-based learning strategy. The control group was not treated to any innovative learning strategy and was exempted from the treatment.

The study was conducted in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Obio/Akpor is a Local government area in the metropolis of Port Harcourt and one of the major centers of economic activities in Nigeria. The Local Government Area covers 260km² and as at 2006 census had a population of 464,789.

The population for the study comprises students in Senior Secondary School selected from 24 public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State (source: Rivers State Senior Secondary School Board). The population of S.S. 1 students for 2021/2022 academic session was 14,227.

Considering the population, 14,227, 3 secondary schools and 210 senior secondary school students were used for the study. In one of the three schools, SS1 Classes A and B were used to assess the use of cooperative learning strategy (experimental group 1), in another school, classes A and B were used for assessing the use of the project-based learning strategy (experimental group 2) and in the last school, classes A and B were used to assess the control group (conventional method). The above were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Names and types of schools were written on pieces of paper and was folded. The schools used were the first three schools picked.

In each school, 70 students were picked making a total of 210 students from the selected schools, only the SS1 students participated in the study. While the control group received instruction in composition writing using the illustrated technique (traditional method), the experimental groups were taught composition writing employing the cooperative learning strategy and the project-based learning strategy. The English Composition Writing Performance Test (ECWPT), created by the researchers, served as the data gathering tool for this investigation.

2.4. Experimental Procedure

The three groups in the study's participating schools were initially assigned to the cooperative strategy group, the project-based learning strategy group, and the control group by the researchers. The pretest, the study's instrument, was given to each student prior to the experiment starting. Under the researchers' supervision, the regular English language teachers at the schools carried out the experiments. The teachers received sufficient guidance on how to organize the cooperative group and control group, teach the lessons using the lesson plans created by the researchers, and present the projects that involved the students in planning in order to give them a sense of ownership of the project (for project-based learning strategy). Each school was taught four lessons over the course of four weeks.

Regarding the project-based learning approach (PBL). The four lessons were taught to the students by their regular teachers, who were trained to choose activities specifically for the students, such as instruction on how to create a timeline for project components, assist students who might not understand time constraints, establish benchmarks, provide guidance for time management, teach students how to schedule their tasks, assist these students in setting lead hints, keep the key questions as straightforward as possible, and start projects that will enable all students to succeed. Additionally, the instructor gave the students a supportive environment, let them explore new avenues, and offered guidance when they seemed to stray from the assignment. In this sense, discussions with the subject matter's learning materials were made available in the classroom. Students took a test at the conclusion of the lessons, and those who performed better were congratulated. During this lesson, the learners worked on compositions given as projects. They took these home and had time answering the questions.

As part of the cooperative learning approach, regular English language teachers delivered four lessons to the students, with researchers overseeing the process. The students were divided into smaller groups of four to five, and after introducing the topics, the teacher allowed them to discuss it while monitoring their progress. Teaching aids and charts specific to the lesson were also used to enhance learning. At the end of the class, students took a test. Those who performed well received praise, while those who struggled were encouraged to improve. During this procedure, the learners selected a leader who marked out relevant question and were allowed to interact with and co-teach one another.

Students in the control group were taught the four lessons by their regular teachers using the lesson plans provided by the researchers. This group did not receive any special treatment, teaching aids and charts were displayed within the learning environment. The conventional method sometimes utilized in teaching the senior secondary students in Rivers state to teach English which is the illustration method (story telling) was used. To make sure that the guidelines of the lesson plans are carefully followed and that the required resources are provided, the researchers periodically oversaw the lessons in every class at the several schools

that were used. They also kept an eye on the teachers. Four lessons totaling four weeks were taught during the study, and the teachers received sufficient guidance on how to deliver the lessons using the lesson plans created by the researchers. The groups were given the identical subjects. The English teachers gave the post-test at the conclusion of each 45-minute lesson, which was taught twice a week. The items on the post-test were identical to those on the pretest, but they were rearranged such that students were unaware that they were the same questions that had been given to them on the pretest. The post-test results were obtained by giving the test to every student at the conclusion of each of the four lessons.

2.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study was examined using the following approaches:

1. Research questions were addressed through the calculation of the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation.
2. Hypotheses were evaluated using a two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

3. Results

Following the testing of each research question or hypothesis, data analysis and research findings are given as follows.

Research Question 1: How do the mean scores of students who were taught composition writing through the cooperative learning strategy differ from those of students who were taught using the traditional method? Table 1 provides a summary and presentation of the data analysis and research findings pertaining to research question 1.

Table 1. Performance Gain scores of students in composition writing based on Instructional strategies

Groups		Pre-test		Posttest		Gain Scores
		Mean	St d	Mean	Std	
Cooperative	70	61.23	11.62	67.36	10.72	6.13
Conventional	70	44.94	12.69	48.43	13.42	3.49

Data analysis in table 1 indicates that the students taught using cooperative learning strategy have the higher performance gain of score of 6.13 in composition writing, while the students taught using conventional method had the gain score of 3.49. This implies that cooperative learning strategy is superior to conventional method in enhancing students' performance in composition writing.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the project-based learning strategy and those taught using the conventional

method? Data analysis and research results related to research question 2 are summarized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Performance Gain scores of students in composition writing based on Instructional strategies

Groups	N	Pre-test		Posttest		Gain Scores
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std	
Project-based	70	56.67	13.64	60.50	13.24	3.82
Conventional	70	44.94	12.69	48.43	13.42	3.49

Table 2 shows that the students taught using project-based learning strategy have the higher performance gain score of 3.82 in composition writing, while the students taught using conventional method had the gain score of 3.49. This implies that project-based learning strategy is superior to conventional method in enhancing students' performance in composition writing.

Research Question 3: What is the difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the co-operative learning strategy and those using project-based learning strategy? Data analysis and research results related to research question 3 are summarized in table 3. Table 3 indicates that the students taught using cooperative learning strategy have the higher performance gain of score of 6.13 in composition writing, while the students taught using project-based learning strategy had the gain score of 3.83. This implies that cooperative learning strategy is superior to project-based learning strategy in enhancing students' performance in composition writing.

Table 3. Performance Gain scores of students in composition writing based on Instructional methods.

Groups	N	Pre-test		Posttest		Gain Scores
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std	
Cooperative	70	61.23	11.62	67.36	10.72	6.13
Project-based	70	56.67	13.64	60.50	13.24	3.83

Research Question 4: What is the difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught composition writing using the cooperative learning strategy? Data analysis and research results related to research question 4 are summarized and presented in table 4. Table 4 indicates that male students had a mean gain score of 6.26, while the female students had a mean gain of 6.00. This implies that gender influences students' performance; male students performing better than their female counterparts.

Table 4. Performance gain scores of composition writing based on Gender

Gender	N	Pre-test		Posttest		Gain
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std	
Male	35	61.31	12.73	67.57	12.14	6.26

Hypothesis 1: The mean scores of students who were taught using the traditional technique and those who were taught using the cooperative learning strategy did not differ significantly. Table 5 displays the summary of testing hypothesis 1 (HO1). The mean score of students who were taught using the conventional technique and those who were taught using the cooperative learning strategy differed significantly in their composition writing performance ($F(1,137) = 17.669$; $P < 0.05$; partial eta square = 0.114), as Table 5 demonstrates. As a result, both approaches rejected the hypothesis.

Table 5. Analysis of Covariance of students' performance by instructional strategies, using Pre-test as a covariate in composition writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	22925.246 ^a	2	11462.623	157.382	.000	.697
Intercept	2763.979	1	2763.979	37.949	.000	.217
Pre-test	10385.067	1	10385.067	142.587	.000	.510
Methods	1286.888	1	1286.888	17.669	.000	.114
Error	9978.147	137	72.833			
Total	502125.000	140				
Corrected Total	32903.393	139				

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students taught composition writing using the project-based learning strategy and those taught using the conventional method. The summary of testing of hypothesis 2 is presented in table 6. Table 6 shows that there is significant difference in the mean score of students taught composition writing using the project-based learning strategy and those taught using the conventional method on students' performance in composition writing, ($F(1, 137) = 4.149$; $P > 0.05$; partial eta square = 0.023). Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected across the two methods.

Table 6. Analysis of Covariance of students' performance by instructional strategies, using Pre-test as a covariate in composition writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	17915.250 ^a	2	8957.625	104.713	.000	.605
Intercept	2600.444	1	2600.444	30.399	.000	.182
Pre-test	12815.071	1	12815.071	149.806	.000	.522
Methods	354.958	1	354.958	4.149	.044	.029
Error	11719.572	137	85.544			
Total	444925.000	140				
Corrected Total	29634.821	139				

Hypothesis 3: Students who were taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategies and those who were taught using project-based learning strategies did not significantly differ in their mean scores. Table 7 provides a summary of the testing of hypothesis 3 (H03). The mean scores of students taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategies and those taught using project-based learning strategies differ significantly, as indicated by Table 7 ($F(1,137) = 6.802$; $P < 0.05$; partial eta square = 0.047). Consequently, the theory was rejected using both approaches.

Table 7. Analysis of Covariance of students' performance by instructional strategies, using Pre-test as a covariate in composition writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	12549.625 ^a	2	6274.812	94.057	.000	.579
Intercept	3102.494	1	3102.494	46.505	.000	.253
Pre-test	10903.911	1	10903.911	163.445	.000	.544
Methods	453.770	1	453.770	6.802	.010	.047
Error	9139.661	137	66.713			
Total	593850.000	140				
Corrected Total	21689.286	139				

Hypothesis 4: When composition writing is taught utilizing the cooperative learning approach, there is no discernible difference in the mean scores of male and female students. Table 8 provides an overview of the testing of hypothesis 4. The mean scores of male and female students who were taught composition writing utilizing the cooperative learning technique did

not differ significantly, as indicated by Table 8 ($F(1, 67) = 0.031$; $P > 0.05$; partial eta square = 0.000). As a result, the hypothesis is approved.

Table 8. Analysis of Covariance of performance of male and female students in composition writing based on gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4254.279 ^a	2	2127.139	38.709	.000	.536
Intercept	1619.057	1	1619.057	29.463	.000	.305
Pre-test	4251.064	1	4251.064	77.359	.000	.536
Gender	1.711	1	1.711	.031	.860	.000
Error	3681.793	67	54.952			
Total	325525.000	70				
Corrected Total	7936.071	69				

4. Findings of the Study

The following findings were derived from the results:

1. Based on students' performance in composition writing, there is a notable difference between the mean scores of students taught using the cooperative learning strategy and those taught using the traditional method.
2. The mean scores of students who were taught composition writing using the project-based learning strategy and those who were taught using the traditional technique varied significantly in terms of their composition writing performance.
3. Students who were taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategies and those who were taught using project-based learning strategies had significantly different mean scores.
4. The mean scores of male and female students who were instructed in composition writing using the cooperative learning approach did not differ significantly.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the cooperative learning strategy enhances students' performance in composition writing. This aligns with the assertion of Azikiwe (2007), who stated that cooperative writing fosters meaningful discussions and learning, promoting an effective writing process. Similarly, the results corroborate the findings of Anagrolia and Mussa (2020), who reported higher mean scores for cooperative learning groups in their research.

Students taught using a project-based learning strategy outperformed those taught through conventional methods (control group). For instance, this is consistent with the findings of Weke and Ogunnia (2016), who investigated, with an emphasis on academic achievement, how project-based learning affected secondary school students in Kenya's performance in classifying species.

Another key finding reveals that students taught using the cooperative learning approach scored higher in composition writing compared to those taught with the project-based learning strategy. The cooperative learning strategy employed in the experimental group had a significant impact on composition writing, underscoring its role in enhancing students' writing skills.

These results are consistent with Min Han's (2015) study, which showed that cooperative learning significantly improves learners' communicative competence and is highly effective in English learning classes. Additionally, this study found that male students initially performed better than their female counterparts in composition writing when exposed to the cooperative learning strategy. However, the hypothesis confirmed no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught with this approach. This supports the notion of gender equality in performance and highlights the effectiveness of cooperative learning in bridging gender disparities in academic outcomes.

The study revealed that male students outperformed their female counterparts in composition writing when taught using the project-based learning strategy. However, the hypothesis indicated no significant difference in the mean performance scores between male and female students using this strategy. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which stated no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught composition writing through project-based learning, was not rejected. This suggests that both male and female students equally benefited from the project-based learning strategy.

Additionally, the study showed that both male and female students taught with the cooperative learning strategy performed better than those taught using the project-based learning strategy and conventional methods. It was also observed that male students taught using the project-based learning strategy outperformed those taught with the conventional method, while female students in the conventional method performed better than those in the project-based learning strategy. This indicates that male students excelled more with cooperative and project-based learning strategies, whereas female students performed better with cooperative and conventional methods.

Further analysis confirmed a significant combined effect of cooperative learning, project-based learning, conventional methods, and gender on students' performance in composition writing. These findings align with Nwagbo and Chukelu (2012), who reported a significant interaction between teaching methods and gender in science process skill acquisition among secondary school students in Abuja Municipal Area Council, Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions of this study, the following conclusions were made:

Cooperative learning strategy and project-based learning strategy enhanced students' performance in composition writing more than the conventional method. Gender had no significant influence on students' performance in composition writing when students are exposed to cooperative learning strategy and project-based learning strategy.

7. Recommendations

These suggestions were offered in light of the study's findings:

- 1 Curriculum review by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should be made to accommodate the dynamism of cooperative and project-based learning strategy, applying them at all levels of composition writing teaching in secondary schools. This will motivate student-centered instructional approach, students' autonomy to knowledge acquisition, and student self-discovery learning.
- 2 English Language teachers should be given training by government and non-governmental organizations on the basic skills of applying cooperative and project-based learning strategy. In-service trainings, seminars, and workshops should be organized for the teachers of English Language.
- 3 The curriculum planners should ensure that they incorporate cooperative and project-based learning strategies as a basic method of teaching composition writing, as it will help to promote students' performance.
- 4 Cooperative and project-based learning strategies were found to be student friendly, Thus, it should be encouraged among English language students at all levels of secondary schools in Rivers state and Nigeria at large.
- 5 Enough time should be allotted to writing since it is more practical than any aspect of the English skills. Learners should be taught to continuously practice writing.
- 6 Teachers who did not study English should not be allowed to teach the subject as has been observed in many schools in Rivers State especially volunteer teachers, student teachers, youth service corps members and even permanent teachers in some private schools.
- 7 Teachers should learn to vary methods/strategies in teaching to maximize performance they should equally be taught to build on learners' strength to motivate them.
- 8 Many of the public schools were discovered to be over-populated, this calls for the attention of the government to ensure an enabling environment for learners.

References

- Azikiwe, U. (2007). *Language teaching and learning*. Africana – First publishers limited.
- Cushman, E, (2011). *The Cherokee Syllabus* “A writing system in its own right, written communication, 28 (3), 255-281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088311410172>
- Echetebeh, S. B. (2013). *General English studies, a text for the undergraduate*. Coskan Associates.
- Eko, E. (2021). *Studies in English Language, a book of reading*. Retrieved from research gate on 13/05.23.
- Faustino, A., & Muneja, M. (2020). Effect of cooperative learning on students’ achievements in literature in English subject: A case of Dodoma City, Tanzania. *EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 1(3), 68–76. <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2020v01i03.0044>
- Lozano A, Roberto L, Fernando J, Caroline B, Percira (2022) *Impact of Cooperative learning and project-based learning through emotional intelligence: A comparison of methodologies for implementing SDGs*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192416977>
- Markhan, T. (2011). Project-based learning teacher. *Librarian*, 39(2), 38-42. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.12968/prtu.2011.1.1.38>
- Min, H. (2015). An empirical study on the application of cooperative learning to English. Listening to English listening classes. *Journal of English language teaching* 8(3), 1916 – 4742. Published by Canadian center for science and education retrieved online 22/07/2022. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n3p177>
- Nwafor, C. K. (2022). *Effects of cooperative learning methods on interest in English reading comprehension* in Nsuka Educational zone of Enugu state Nigeria. (ISSN: 1735-2022-webology, Eng).
- Nwagbo and Chukelu (2012). “*The interaction effect of method and gender in science process skills acquisition* retrieved. Online on 3/07/2022.
- Obiokoye, A. F. (2008). *Teaching and learning English composition via the modern writing process approach*. From theory to practice. Freefabaga Investment Ltd.
- Pranjol, Z, Paolo. O and Sara W. (2024). Project based learning in Biomedical sciences using the collaborative creation of revision resources to consolidate knowledge, promote cohort identity and develop transferrable skills. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00219206.2022.2147576> Journal of Biological Education. 58(5)
- Rao, P.S. (2019). *The Significance of writing skills in the environment*. Academia. An International multidisciplinary Journal 9 (3), 5-17. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7137.2019.00035.1>

Weke, S. N. W. and Ogunnia, R. O. (2016). Project-based Learning on students' performance, the concept of classification of organisms. *Education and practice*, 16.