



## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH IN ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' SKILLS.

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates and compares the effectiveness of two instructional methods—Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) and the Whole Language Approach (WLA)—in developing the language skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Conducted with 15 intermediate students at a private language center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the study was implemented over four weeks and twelve lessons. Data were collected through classroom observation, student task performance, and reflection. Results revealed that CLL significantly enhanced listening and speaking, while WLA improved reading and writing. The paper concludes that combining these methods can balance communicative competence and academic literacy among EFL learners.*

### Introduction

The modern shift in language pedagogy from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction has given rise to a variety of communicative and integrative methodologies. Among these, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) and the Whole Language Approach (WLA) have gained attention for promoting meaningful learning and learner autonomy. Both aim to replace rote memorization and grammar-translation methods with authentic interaction, though they differ in focus and structure.

CLL emphasizes social interaction and collaboration as the foundation of learning. According to Karim (2018), learning in cooperative settings encourages peer negotiation, task-sharing, and mutual scaffolding, which are essential for developing communicative competence. Conversely, Fukada (2018) describes the Whole Language Approach as holistic, where reading, writing, listening, and speaking are taught together through meaningful content. While CLL thrives on group interaction, WLA focuses on contextual integration and individual reflection.

This study aims to explore how these two approaches function in the same learning environment and which skills each approach enhances most effectively among intermediate EFL learners.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The research involved 15 intermediate students aged 17–19. They were divided into two groups: CLL group (8 learners) and WLA group (7 learners). All participants were university freshmen with prior experience in grammar-translation-based instruction.

### **Setting and Duration**

The study took place at a private Language Learning Center in Tashkent over four weeks (12 lessons). Lessons were conducted three times per week for 90 minutes each.

### **Instructional Design**

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL): Lessons incorporated group-based activities such as listening for information, pair discussions, and collaborative summarization using authentic materials from BBC Learning English. Learners supported each other through peer correction and negotiation of meaning.

Whole Language Approach (WLA): Lessons integrated reading, writing, listening, and speaking using authentic texts from IELTS training websites. Activities included multiple-choice comprehension, summarizing passages, and matching headings to paragraphs.

### **Data Collection and Assessment**

Pre- and post-observations were conducted to measure skill improvement across four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Student journals and teacher reflection notes were analyzed qualitatively.

Both groups showed measurable improvement; however, the nature and focus of their progress differed. The CLL group's progress was reflected in oral communication, whereas the WLA group advanced in academic comprehension and writing.

Listening and Speaking (CLL focus): CLL students improved fluency, turn-taking, and pronunciation accuracy. They actively participated in discussions and were able to negotiate meaning more effectively. This aligns with Richards (2003), who highlights communicative interaction as key to developing oral competence. In contrast, WLA students spoke less during lessons, as the tasks were more text-oriented. However, their speaking showed improved coherence due to integrated exposure to academic texts.

Reading and Writing (WLA focus): The WLA group demonstrated better comprehension and academic writing ability. Learners became more confident in identifying main ideas, summarizing, and structuring written responses. This supports Isaacson (2017), who notes that integration of reading and writing tasks fosters critical thinking. The CLL group, however, exhibited fragmented writing structure because of the focus on oral communication and less emphasis on textual organization.

Learner Interaction and Motivation: Both groups displayed higher motivation compared to the pre-course stage. CLL learners benefited from social energy—peer encouragement and teamwork—while WLA learners valued the academic independence and clear progress in literacy. These findings echo McCafferty (2006, as cited in Karim, 2018), who emphasized that cooperation increases engagement, while Fukada (2018) argued that holistic learning enhances internal motivation.

**Theoretical and Practical Comparison:**

Aspect	Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)	Whole Language Approach (WLA)
Core Principle	Learning through collaboration and social interaction	Learning through integrated and meaningful contexts
Focus Skills	Listening and speaking	Reading and writing
Teacher Role	Facilitator and group organizer	Guide and content integrator
Learner Role	Active collaborator, peer helper	Independent meaning-maker
Strengths	Enhances fluency, motivation, and confidence	Improves comprehension, vocabulary, and academic literacy
Weaknesses	Less focus on writing accuracy	Limited oral practice and interaction
Best Use	Communicative tasks, discussion-based lessons	Integrated reading-writing lessons

**Table 1**

**Quantitative Summary:** At the end of the four-week cycle: CLL group: Listening improved by 25%, Speaking by 30%, Reading by 18%, Writing by 15%. WLA group: Reading improved by 28%, Writing by 32%, Listening by 16%, Speaking by 18%. These results suggest complementary strengths: oral communication improved more in cooperative contexts, while literacy developed more under the holistic method.

**Conclusion**

Both Cooperative Language Learning and the Whole Language Approach are highly effective in EFL classrooms, yet they serve different pedagogical purposes. CLL fosters communicative fluency, teamwork, and motivation, while WLA develops academic literacy and deeper comprehension. For optimal results, teachers should integrate both—using cooperative techniques to build speaking confidence and holistic reading-writing integration to strengthen academic performance.

The study’s implication is that combining these two approaches forms a balanced communicative-analytic model, supporting the development of both interpersonal and academic aspects of language competence. Future research could expand this comparison across longer periods and larger learner groups.

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