ABSTRACT

The Effects of Cooperative Learning on English Reading Skill and Attitudes of the First-Year Students at Bangkok University

A new approach called "Cooperative Learning" is based on a theoretical framework that provides general principles on how to structure cooperative learning activities in a specific subject area, curriculum, and setting. As it decreases competitiveness and individualism, teachers can use this approach to stimulate students to acquire the knowledge as well as interpersonal and team skills. Moreover, considerable research demonstrates that it produces higher achievement and more positive relationships among students. The study investigated the effects of cooperative learning on English reading skill of the first-year students, surveyed their attitudes towards cooperative learning, and examined their cooperative learning behaviors. The subjects of this research were one EFL first-year class containing 40 students at Bangkok University. They were selected through the purposive sampling. A Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) program was used with the subject group over a 12-week period. The instruments were reading comprehension test, the questionnaire of attitudes towards cooperative learning, the cooperative learning behavioral assessment form, and the interview. The researcher administered English reading comprehension test before and after teaching. The pre-test and post-test scores of the group were compared using a t-test dependent measure. After twelve weeks of treatment, it was found that the students obtained higher reading comprehension scores for the post-test than the pre-test scores at the .05 level of significance. Regarding the students’ attitudes towards cooperative learning, the findings indicated that most students rated cooperative learning moderately positive. Also, assessment forms showed they performed good cooperative learning behaviors in their tasks.