Exploring the Implementation of Cooperative Learning in EFL Classrooms: A Comparative Multiple Case Study in Public and Islamic Boarding Schools

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

ABSTRACT

This study examines the enactment of Cooperative Learning (CL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at SMPN 1 Turen and MTsN 1 Malang. Cooperative Learning has been widely promoted as an effective pedagogical approach to enhance student interaction and communicative competence; however, its implementation is often shaped by institutional and cultural contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore how English teachers implement Cooperative Learning, how strategies are adapted across different educational settings, and how institutional norms and cultural values influence pedagogical practices. Adopting a qualitative multiple case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that both institutions implement key elements of Cooperative Learning, including positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, and group processing, although their enactment varies contextually. In the public school, Cooperative Learning is mainly aligned with curriculum objectives and academic achievement, whereas in the Islamic boarding school it is integrated with religious values, collective discipline, and communal identity. The study reveals that institutional culture significantly shapes classroom interaction, participation patterns, and collaborative practices. Despite contextual differences, Cooperative Learning in both settings supports communicative competence, learner autonomy, and social interaction. These findings suggest that Cooperative Learning should be understood as a context-responsive pedagogical approach that can be adapted to support culturally grounded and collaborative EFL instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization and digital communication has significantly increased the importance of English proficiency across educational contexts (Li & Zhang, 2023). As English functions as a global lingua franca, educational institutions are increasingly encouraged to adopt instructional approaches that develop not only linguistic competence but also communication and collaboration skills (Nguyen & Tran, 2022). Consequently, recent educational reforms emphasize student-centered pedagogies that promote interaction and active engagement in language learning (Lee, 2023). These approaches are particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where opportunities for authentic communication are often limited. Previous studies have demonstrated that Cooperative Learning (CL) is an effective approach for improving English language learning outcomes. Research by Gillies (2023) found that structured group work enhances students' participation and promotes meaningful interaction in language

classrooms. Similarly, Wang and Sun (2023) reported that Cooperative Learning significantly improves students' communicative competence and increases their willingness to communicate in English. Another study by Rahman and Abdullah (2022) showed that collaborative learning environments help reduce language anxiety while simultaneously increasing student motivation. These findings suggest that Cooperative Learning provides both cognitive and affective benefits in EFL instruction.

In addition, recent research indicates that Cooperative Learning supports the development of higher-order thinking skills and learner autonomy. Ballinger and Sato (2023) found that collaborative activities encourage students to negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge through interaction. Likewise, Johnson and Johnson (2022) emphasized that positive interdependence and individual accountability are essential elements that promote effective collaboration and deeper learning. Chen (2024) further highlighted that in EFL contexts where exposure to English is limited, structured peer interaction provides meaningful opportunities for language use and social communication. These studies collectively indicate that Cooperative Learning is a promising approach for fostering both linguistic development and 21st-century skills. However, the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning is influenced by contextual and institutional factors. Ahmad and Ningsih (2024) found that differences in school culture and classroom norms affect how teachers implement collaborative learning strategies. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2024) reported that assessment systems and curriculum demands influence the structure of group work and student participation. Nguyen and Tran (2022) also emphasized that collaborative learning approaches must be adapted to local socio-cultural contexts in order to be effective and sustainable. These findings suggest that Cooperative Learning cannot be implemented uniformly across educational settings, as institutional environments shape both teaching practices and student interaction patterns.

In Indonesia, public schools and Islamic boarding schools represent two distinct educational environments with different pedagogical traditions and organizational structures (Fauzi & Lestari, 2023). Public schools typically follow standardized national curricula that emphasize measurable academic achievement (Kurniawan & Sari, 2022). As a result, English learning is often limited to classroom instruction and supported by extracurricular activities such as English clubs or competitions (Pratama et al., 2024). In contrast, Islamic boarding schools provide a communal learning environment in which students live together and participate in structured daily activities (Hidayat & Hasanah, 2022). This environment allows for continuous peer interaction and collaborative learning beyond the classroom (Nurhayati et al., 2024). English learning in these settings is often integrated into daily communication and group-based language activities (Auda, 2023). Despite the growing body of research on Cooperative Learning in EFL contexts, several gaps remain. First, most previous studies have focused primarily on the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in improving language skills, motivation, or classroom interaction (Gillies, 2023; Wang & Sun, 2023; Rahman & Abdullah, 2022). Limited attention has been given to how institutional culture influences the implementation of Cooperative Learning practices. Second, previous research has generally examined Cooperative Learning within a single educational context, without comparing different types of institutions. As a result, little is known about how Cooperative Learning is adapted and practiced across distinct educational environments. Third, few studies have explored Cooperative Learning from a socio-cultural perspective that considers how institutional norms, daily routines, and social interactions shape collaborative learning experiences. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by conducting a comparative multiple case study of Cooperative Learning implementation in public schools and Islamic boarding schools. By

examining how institutional culture shapes collaborative learning practices, this study seeks to provide deeper insights into context-responsive Cooperative Learning implementation in EFL settings. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical applications of Cooperative Learning in diverse educational contexts.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative multiple case study design to explore the implementation of cooperative learning in two different institutional contexts: SMPN 1 Turen and MTsN 1 Malang. A multiple case study design was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of similarities and differences across settings with distinct instructional structures, namely extracurricular-based English learning in the public school and boarding-based English immersion in the Islamic school. This approach enables contextual comparison while maintaining the uniqueness of each case and producing analytically transferable findings (Yin, 2022).
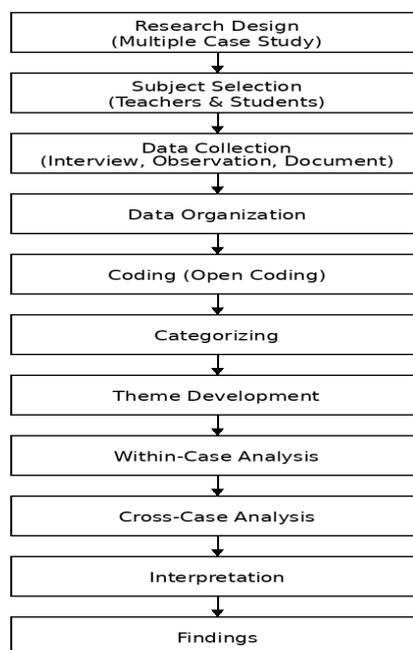
The flow of this research is:

Figure 1 Research Procedures

The research subjects consisted of two English teachers and twenty-four students, with twelve students selected from each institution. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their active involvement in cooperative learning activities during English lessons. The teachers were chosen because they regularly implemented cooperative learning strategies, while the students were selected based on their participation and engagement in group-based learning activities. Data were collected using three main techniques is semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. These techniques were used to obtain comprehensive and triangulated data regarding the implementation of cooperative learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teachers and selected students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and roles in cooperative learning activities. Interviews explored instructional strategies, student participation, and the perceived benefits and challenges of cooperative learning. Non-participant observations examined classroom implementation, focusing on learning structures, interaction patterns, task organization, and teacher facilitation, while

document analysis reviewed lesson plans and language policies. Data were collected over eight weeks to ensure contextual understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2023). Data analysis used thematic cross-case analysis, beginning with within-case analysis to identify patterns in each school, followed by cross-case comparison to determine similarities and differences. Coding was conducted iteratively through open coding and categorization, with themes refined through constant comparison (Saldaña, 2021). Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail (Yin, 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

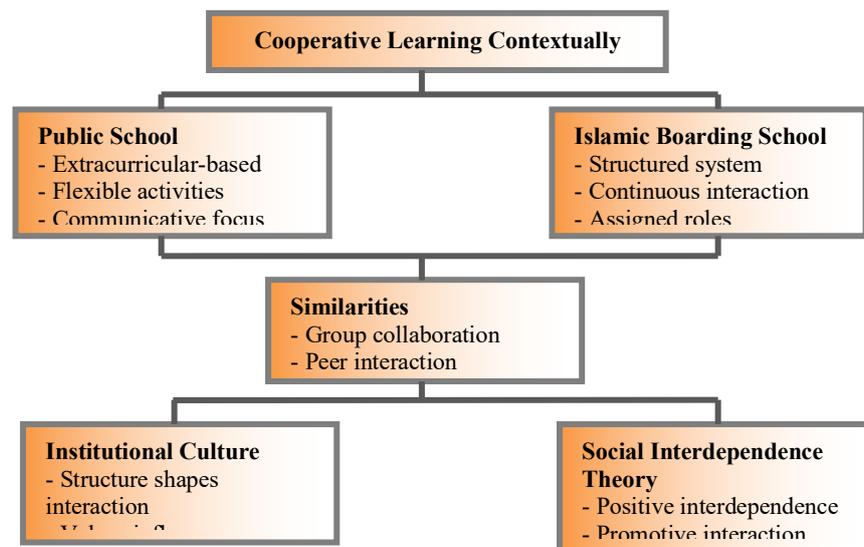The findings of this study can be seen in the following chart.

Figure 2 Research Findings Diagram

3.1 Implementation of Cooperative Learning in Public Schools and Islamic Boarding Schools

3.1.1 Cooperative Learning Implementation in Public School Context

The findings reveal that English teachers in SMPN 1 Turen implemented Cooperative Learning primarily through extracurricular English programs. This structure enabled teachers to design interactive and communicative learning environments that were less constrained by formal curriculum demands. Students were organized into small heterogeneous groups and engaged in role-plays, collaborative storytelling, and problem-solving tasks designed to enhance speaking skills and confidence. Such extracurricular formats often provide flexibility and support student-centered learning, which is essential in EFL contexts where classroom time is limited (Nguyen & Pham, 2023). Moreover, the cooperative activities in this setting emphasized communicative competence and real-life language use. Teachers encouraged students to negotiate meaning, share perspectives, and engage in peer interaction to develop fluency. These practices align with recent research highlighting that cooperative learning enhances communicative engagement and promotes active language use in informal learning spaces. Through these activities, students experienced reduced anxiety and increased motivation, which are crucial for successful foreign language learning (Zhang & Rahimi, 2024).

In addition, teachers adopted facilitative roles by monitoring group interaction and providing scaffolding when necessary. Rather than dominating the learning process, they guided students to

construct knowledge collaboratively. This approach reflects contemporary EFL pedagogy, which emphasizes learner autonomy, peer support, and interactional competence. Cooperative Learning in this context thus functioned as a pedagogical strategy to foster student agency and collaborative skills (Li & Edwards, 2022). However, several challenges emerged due to the voluntary nature of extracurricular participation. Irregular attendance, time limitations, and differing levels of commitment among students affected the continuity of group interaction. Some students participated actively, while others showed limited engagement, which reduced the effectiveness of positive interdependence. These findings are consistent with studies indicating that cooperative learning outside formal curriculum structures often faces sustainability issues (Tran & Nguyen, 2023). Despite these constraints, the public school context demonstrated flexibility and innovation in implementing cooperative learning. Teachers adapted strategies based on student needs, interests, and available resources. This adaptability suggests that Cooperative Learning can be effectively integrated into extracurricular programs to complement formal English instruction, particularly in contexts where classroom interaction is limited.

3.1.2 Cooperative Learning Implementation in Islamic Boarding School Context

In contrast, Cooperative Learning in MTsN 1 Malang was implemented in a more structured and sustained manner due to the boarding school system. English learning extended beyond classroom instruction into dormitory life, allowing students to engage in collaborative activities throughout the day. This immersion environment facilitated continuous interaction and strengthened peer collaboration, which are central to cooperative learning principles (Hidayat & Widodo, 2022). Furthermore, teachers systematically assigned cooperative roles such as group leaders, peer tutors, and presenters to ensure accountability and balanced participation. These structured roles fostered responsibility, discipline, and sustained engagement in group work. Research shows that role distribution enhances positive interdependence and individual accountability, two key elements of cooperative learning effectiveness (Gillies, 2023). Another important aspect was the integration of cooperative learning with character education and moral values. The boarding environment promoted collective responsibility, mutual respect, and shared goals, which naturally supported cooperative interaction. English learning activities were frequently combined with values such as discipline, respect, and teamwork, reflecting the broader educational philosophy of Islamic boarding schools (Rahman, 2024). In addition, collaboration between teachers and dormitory supervisors strengthened the implementation of cooperative learning. Supervisors monitored student interaction and supported peer learning outside formal instruction. This extended supervision created a stable learning ecology that enhanced collaborative culture and language practice. Such institutional support is recognized as a key factor in sustaining cooperative learning practices (Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Overall, Cooperative Learning in the Islamic boarding school context functioned not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a cultural and social practice. The integration of academic learning, communal living, and value-based education contributed to deeper student engagement and long-term collaborative competence.

3.1.3 Cooperative Learning as a Contextually Adaptive Pedagogical Practice

Across both educational settings, Cooperative Learning emerged as a contextually adaptive instructional approach rather than a fixed model. Teachers modified strategies based on institutional structures, time allocation, and student characteristics. This adaptability reflects current perspectives that emphasize the importance of contextual sensitivity in EFL pedagogy, especially in culturally diverse learning environments (Kayi-Aydar, 2023). In the public school, cooperative learning was shaped by flexibility, communicative goals, and extracurricular dynamics. In contrast, the Islamic boarding school demonstrated a more structured, immersive, and value-

driven approach. These differences illustrate how institutional norms influence the depth and sustainability of cooperative interaction. Educational structures and cultural values significantly shape classroom collaboration and student participation (Hofstede, 2022). Despite contextual differences, both institutions shared a commitment to fostering communicative competence, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Cooperative Learning promoted interaction, confidence, and peer support in both settings. These outcomes are consistent with recent studies demonstrating that cooperative learning enhances language skills, social cohesion, and student engagement across diverse contexts (Gillies, 2023).

Importantly, the findings also highlight the role of institutional culture as a transformative force rather than a passive background variable. Cultural values, leadership orientation, and educational philosophy influenced how cooperative principles were interpreted and enacted. This supports the argument that Cooperative Learning should be viewed as a culturally responsive and context-sensitive pedagogical framework (Widodo, 2024). Therefore, the study contributes to the growing body of research advocating for adaptive and localized models of cooperative learning. In the era of globalization and collaborative intelligence, contextually grounded Cooperative Learning offers a strategic pathway for developing future-oriented EFL instruction.

3.2 Similarities and Differences in Strategies, Challenges, and Adaptations
3.2.1 Similarities in Cooperative Learning Strategies

The findings indicate that both SMPN 1 Turen and MTsN 1 Malang shared several fundamental cooperative learning strategies despite differences in institutional contexts. Teachers in both settings organized students into small heterogeneous groups to encourage interaction, peer support, and collaborative problem solving. Group work was commonly used to develop speaking, vocabulary, and communication skills. These practices reflect the core principles of cooperative learning, particularly positive interdependence and promotive interaction, which have been widely recognized as effective in EFL classrooms (Gillies, 2023). In both institutions, teachers emphasized student participation and active engagement. Activities such as peer discussion, collaborative tasks, and group presentations were frequently implemented. These strategies aimed to create opportunities for students to practice English in meaningful social contexts. Research shows that cooperative interaction supports language development by providing authentic communication and scaffolding opportunities among peers (Li & Edwards, 2022). Another similarity was the facilitative role of teachers. Rather than delivering content directly, teachers in both contexts guided group processes, monitored interaction, and provided feedback. This learner-centered orientation aligns with contemporary EFL pedagogy that prioritizes collaboration and autonomy. Such facilitation also supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and social skills, which are essential for 21st-century learning (Kayi-Aydar, 2023). Furthermore, both institutions integrated communicative and affective objectives in cooperative learning. Teachers reported increased student confidence, reduced anxiety, and improved motivation as outcomes of collaborative learning. These findings are consistent with recent studies highlighting the positive impact of cooperative learning on learner engagement and emotional support in foreign language learning (Zhang & Rahimi, 2024). Overall, the similarities demonstrate that cooperative learning can be effectively applied across diverse educational contexts when teachers prioritize interaction, collaboration, and student-centered instruction. This suggests that the foundational elements of cooperative learning are transferable and adaptable to various institutional environments.

3.2.2 Differences in Strategies and Instructional Adaptations

Despite shared principles, significant differences were observed in how cooperative learning strategies were adapted in each context. In the public school setting, cooperative activities were characterized by flexibility and creativity. Teachers often designed communicative tasks based on student interests, such as games, role-play, and project-based speaking. The extracurricular format allowed innovative strategies that emphasized fluency and communicative confidence rather than formal assessment. In contrast, cooperative learning in the Islamic boarding school was more structured and systematic. Activities were aligned with both academic and character-building goals. Teachers emphasized discipline, responsibility, and sustained collaboration through structured group roles. This structured approach ensured individual accountability and long-term engagement. Studies indicate that structured cooperative roles enhance participation and improve group effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Another difference involved the learning environment. In the public school, cooperative learning was limited to scheduled extracurricular sessions. Meanwhile, in the boarding school, collaborative interaction occurred continuously in both classroom and dormitory contexts. This immersion created more opportunities for peer learning and language practice. Continuous exposure is known to enhance language acquisition and strengthen collaborative competence (Hidayat & Widodo, 2022). Additionally, instructional adaptation in the Islamic boarding school reflected cultural and moral values. Teachers integrated cooperative learning with character education, emphasizing mutual respect, teamwork, and shared responsibility. This integration contributed to deeper student engagement and social cohesion. Such value-based approaches are increasingly recognized as important for culturally responsive pedagogy (Rahman, 2024). These differences highlight how institutional structure, time allocation, and educational philosophy influence the enactment of cooperative learning. The findings support the view that cooperative learning is not a uniform method but a flexible framework adaptable to different contexts.

3.2.3 Challenges and Contextual Constraints in Implementation

Both institutions experienced challenges in implementing cooperative learning, although the nature of these challenges differed. In the public school, the main constraints included limited time, irregular attendance, and varying student motivation. Since participation in extracurricular programs was voluntary, maintaining consistency in group collaboration was difficult. These challenges are commonly reported in informal or non-compulsory learning environments (Tran & Nguyen, 2023). Another challenge in the public school context was balancing communicative activities with students' differing proficiency levels. Some students actively participated, while others remained passive. Teachers needed to continuously adjust group composition and provide additional scaffolding to ensure balanced interaction. Differentiation and strategic grouping are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of cooperative learning (Gillies, 2023). In the Islamic boarding school, challenges were more related to institutional demands and workload. Students had structured daily routines and academic responsibilities, which sometimes limited flexibility in cooperative activities. Teachers also needed to balance language learning with character education and religious programs. Such competing priorities required careful planning and coordination among teachers and supervisors. Another constraint involved maintaining student motivation over time. Although the boarding system provided continuous exposure, repetitive activities could reduce engagement if not varied. Teachers therefore adapted strategies by incorporating games, competitions, and interactive tasks. This adaptation reflects the need for innovation in sustaining cooperative learning effectiveness (Widodo, 2024). Despite these challenges, both institutions demonstrated resilience and adaptability in implementing cooperative learning. Teachers continuously modified strategies to address contextual limitations and student needs. These

findings reinforce the importance of institutional support, teacher creativity, and contextual sensitivity in sustaining cooperative learning practices in EFL classrooms.

3.3 Institutional Norms and Cultural Values Influencing Cooperative Learning
3.3.1 Institutional Structure and Learning Ecology

The findings demonstrate that institutional structure played a central role in shaping the enactment of cooperative learning in both SMPN 1 Turen and MTsN 1 Malang. In the public school context, cooperative learning was influenced by national curriculum demands, competency standards, and measurable learning outcomes. As a result, teachers tended to design cooperative activities that focused on communicative performance and skill development. The extracurricular nature of English learning allowed flexibility but also limited the duration and continuity of cooperative interaction. This reflects how institutional policies and curriculum structures shape the scope and sustainability of collaborative pedagogy (Gillies, 2023). In contrast, the Islamic boarding school environment provided a more comprehensive learning ecology that extended beyond formal classrooms. The integration of academic, social, and residential life enabled continuous cooperative interaction among students. English learning was embedded in daily routines, peer communication, and dormitory activities. This immersive structure strengthened positive interdependence and group cohesion. Research indicates that sustained social interaction significantly enhances collaborative learning and language acquisition in EFL contexts (Hidayat & Widodo, 2022). Furthermore, leadership and organizational support influenced the effectiveness of cooperative learning. In the boarding school, institutional leaders promoted collaboration as part of the educational vision, while teachers and dormitory supervisors worked collectively to maintain cooperative practices. In the public school, cooperative learning depended more on individual teacher initiative rather than systemic policy. This difference highlights the importance of institutional alignment and support in sustaining cooperative learning innovations (Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Overall, these findings suggest that institutional structure does not merely provide a setting but actively shapes learning interaction, collaboration patterns, and student engagement. The availability of time, supervision, and integrated learning environments determines the depth of cooperative learning implementation.

3.3.2 Cultural Values and Collective Orientation

Cultural values emerged as a powerful factor influencing how cooperative learning principles were interpreted and enacted. In the Islamic boarding school context, collective orientation, discipline, and communal responsibility were deeply embedded in the learning culture. Students were accustomed to working together, sharing responsibilities, and supporting peers. These cultural characteristics naturally strengthened positive interdependence and promotive interaction. Such findings align with the view that cooperative learning is more effective in collectivist educational cultures (Hofstede, 2022). Moreover, cooperative learning in the boarding school was closely linked to character and moral education. Teachers integrated values such as mutual respect, cooperation, and accountability into language learning activities. Group tasks were not only aimed at linguistic competence but also at fostering ethical and social development. This value-oriented approach contributed to deeper student engagement and long-term collaboration. Research highlights that value-based education enhances student motivation and social cohesion in collaborative learning environments (Rahman, 2024). In contrast, the public school context reflected a more mixed orientation between collaboration and individual achievement. Students were motivated by academic performance and assessment outcomes, which sometimes encouraged competition alongside cooperation. Teachers needed to balance collaborative learning with individual accountability and performance standards. This hybrid orientation illustrates how institutional culture mediates the dynamics of cooperation and competition in EFL classrooms

(Kayi-Aydar, 2023). These findings confirm that cultural values shape the nature of interdependence among learners. Cooperative learning in collectivist environments tends to be more sustainable and socially embedded, while in more individualistic or performance-oriented contexts, cooperative practices require deliberate scaffolding and reinforcement.

3.3.3 Social Interdependence Theory as an Interpretive Framework

The differences and similarities identified in this study can be interpreted through Social Interdependence Theory. According to this theory, the way goals are structured determines the nature of interaction and learning outcomes. Positive interdependence leads to cooperation, while competitive or individualistic goal structures influence interaction patterns. The findings show that both institutions fostered positive interdependence, but the intensity and sustainability varied depending on institutional and cultural contexts (Johnson & Johnson, 2022). In the Islamic boarding school, positive interdependence was reinforced through shared living, communal routines, and collective identity. Students relied on one another not only academically but also socially and emotionally. This environment created natural opportunities for collaboration and peer support. Such sustained interdependence strengthened both linguistic and social competencies, supporting the theoretical assumption that social interaction enhances learning outcomes (Gillies, 2023). In the public school, cooperative learning depended more on structured activities and teacher facilitation. Since interaction was limited to scheduled sessions, teachers played a crucial role in designing tasks that promoted interdependence. This context required explicit scaffolding to ensure collaboration and reduce passive participation. These findings support the argument that cooperative learning effectiveness depends on goal structure and interaction design (Li & Edwards, 2022). Therefore, this study contributes to the conceptual understanding of cooperative learning as a culturally adaptive and context-sensitive framework. Social Interdependence Theory provides a useful lens to explain how institutional norms and cultural values shape collaborative learning practices. In the evolving landscape of global education, contextually grounded cooperative learning can support inclusive, culturally responsive, and future-oriented EFL instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Cooperative Learning in SMPN 1 Turen and MTsN 1 Malang demonstrates both contextual similarities and distinctive adaptations shaped by institutional structures and cultural values. While both settings share fundamental cooperative principles such as positive interdependence, peer interaction, and learner-centered facilitation, the public school context emphasizes flexibility, communicative competence, and extracurricular engagement, whereas the Islamic boarding school environment supports more structured, immersive, and value-based collaboration. These differences highlight that Cooperative Learning functions not as a universal procedural model but as a culturally responsive and context-sensitive pedagogical framework. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that English teachers should adapt cooperative strategies to align with institutional norms, learner characteristics, and sociocultural contexts. Institutional support, sustained interaction, and integration of collaborative values are crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in EFL classrooms. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts, digital cooperative environments, and broader institutional comparisons to strengthen the theoretical and practical contributions of contextually grounded Cooperative Learning in global EFL education.

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