

**COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION IN A LITERATURE CLASS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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To my beloved wife and sons

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to reach a common goal. Its effectiveness had been documented through numerous research studies. However, very few published materials have been done on the relationship between the use of cooperative learning as a teaching method to increase students' achievement in learning English literature in secondary school. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover the relationship between cooperative learning and achievement in English language acquisition in a literature class in a secondary school. It is hoped that this study could help overcome the problems of students who have low English language proficiency in secondary schools. This study was conducted in a rural secondary school. A total of 59 respondents from Form 4 classes have participated. The experimental group received teaching method using cooperative learning strategies, while the control group received traditional lecture method. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered in this study using four types of instruments: pre-test and post-test questions, questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 9.0 program. It was found that all respondents showed a low and moderate performance in English Literature before the treatment. However, after the treatment, respondents from the experimental group showed a significant improvement. Those from the control group did not show similar improvement. Thus, the use of cooperative learning played an important role in acquiring English language in an English literature class. Furthermore, the qualitative data showed that cooperative learning could enhance students' social development as well as interest in the learning of English literature. In conclusion, this study had proven that cooperative learning enhances students' achievement in learning English literature.

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran koperatif adalah usaha mengelompokkan pelajar yang terdiri daripada pelbagai kebolehan ke dalam kumpulan kecil demi menuju ke arah sasaran umum. Keberkesanannya telah didokumentasikan melalui beberapa kajian. Walau bagaimanapun, hanya sedikit kajian telah dijalankan tentang penggunaan pembelajaran koperatif sebagai salah satu pendekatan untuk meningkatkan pencapaian pelajar dalam Kesusasteraan Inggeris di sekolah menengah. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat kolerasi antara pembelajaran koperatif dengan pencapaian pelajar dalam penguasaan Kesusasteraan Inggeris dalam sebuah kelas di sebuah sekolah menengah. Diharapkan kajian ini juga dapat membantu menandatangani masalah kelemahan pelajar dalam penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di sekolah menengah. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di sebuah sekolah menengah luar bandar. Sasaran kajian terdiri daripada 59 orang respondent tingkatan empat. Respondent kumpulan kajian melalui proses pembelajaran koperatif manakala kumpulan kawalan hanya diberi kepada pengajaran tradisional. Data kualitatif dan kuantitatif telah dikutip dengan menggunakan instrumen seperti soalan pra dan pos ujian, soal-selidik, pemerhatian dalam bilik darjah dan temubual. Penganalisan data diskriptif dibuat dengan menggunakan program SPSS Versi 9.0. Kumpulan sasaran menonjolkan tahap sederhana dan rendah dalam penguasaan Kesusasteraan Inggeris sebelum pembelajaran koperatif. Selepas intervensi kajian, tahap penguasaan respondent dalam Kesusasteraan Inggeris bagi kumpulan kajian telah menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan berbanding dengan kumpulan kawalan. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan pendekatan pembelajaran koperatif memainkan peranan yang penting dalam penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di dalam kelas. Di samping itu, data kualitatif telah menunjukkan bahawa pembelajaran koperatif dapat mempertingkatkan perkembangan sosial dan minat respondent dalam pembelajaran Kesusasteraan Inggeris. Secara kesimpulannya, dapatan kajian ini membuktikan bahawa penggunaan pembelajaran koperatif dapat mempertingkatkan pencapaian respondent dalam mata pelajaran Kesusasteraan Inggeris secara berkesan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Academic Controversy
ALM	Audio-lingual Method
CALT	Communicative Approach to Language Teaching
CIRC	Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
Co-Op Co-Op	Cooperative Learning Strategy
EST	English for Science and Technology
Etems	English for the teaching of Mathematics and Science
GI	Group Investigation
KBSM	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah
L2	Second Language
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
LT	Learning Together
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
STAD	Student-Team Achievement-Divisions
TAI	Teams-Assisted-Individualization
TGT	Teams-Games-Tournaments

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English language is considered as a very important subject in secondary schools in Malaysia. However, the standard of achievements amongst the students is still very poor especially in rural secondary schools. Results from the Government Exams such as PMR and SPM have shown that students in secondary schools perform poorly in English subject. Because of this, numerous efforts have been taken by the ministry of Education to overcome it. Several programs like 'Extra English Tuition', 'Class Tuition Albukhary', 'Etems' and 'EST' have been introduced.

Despite all these efforts, the results were still not very encouraging. The Minister of Education, Dato 'Hishamuddin Tun Hussein (2005) stated that the levels of achievement among the secondary schools students in English language were still unsatisfactory. Many students were still facing problems in speaking and writing in English due to the lack of interest and exposure in using the language.

The problems faced by the students affect the students' English results in the PMR and SPM examinations. Hence, it is hoped that by introducing a strategy like Cooperative learning will help to enhance students' achievement in English language acquisition in secondary schools.

Cooperative learning is described as a large group of instructional strategies in which students collaborate in order to reach a common goal. Cooperative learning has been practiced throughout human history and is a part of educational practice. Its effectiveness has been documented through numerous research studies (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Kagan, 1986; Slavin, 1988).

Daniel et al (1991) stated that cooperative learning is now widely recognized as one of the most promising practices in the educational field. Olsen & Chen (1998) also pointed out that many of the originators of cooperative learning emphasized on the importance of heterogeneity in forming groups in the classroom where non-English speakers and native English speakers were members of the same group.

Based on Sapon-Shevin's study (1994), he found out that Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy at all levels, from pre-school to post secondary. He further stated that Cooperative learning groups do not separate students on the basis of class, race, or gender and the goals of middle schools are consistent with the goals of Cooperative learning theories. Cooperative learning is a peer-centered pedagogy that can promote academic achievement and build positive social relationships (Sapon-Shevin, 1994).

Because of the significant achievement in using Cooperative learning in the classroom by many researchers, this study will focus on the relationship between Cooperative learning and students' achievement in English language acquisition in a literature class in secondary school. Students need to acquire the skills of learning English literature so that they can answer the questions in the PMR and SPM English papers.

1.2 Background of the Study

Secondary school students, especially from rural areas in Sarawak, always face major difficulties in acquiring English. They come from different backgrounds, cultures, education and language proficiency. Based on the researcher and his colleagues' experiences, it was found that the exposure of rural students in English language occurs mainly in the classroom. They hardly speak English outside the classroom. Instead, they speak in their mother tongue to their family members at home and to their friends in their communities. They do not like learning English because they think that English language is a very difficult subject and they do not have the interest to learn and acquire it. This affects the students' English performance in the PMR and SPM examination.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Students in Secondary schools face a lot of problems with their English in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The level of their English proficiency is low. Continuous observation revealed that this situation existed due to the lack of exposure to English in their daily life, as well as lack of interest in learning and using English. Furthermore, they do not have much interest in reading materials in English language because they do not understand what is being read. Therefore, they perform badly in their public examinations like PMR and SPM. Furthermore, recent statistics from the education department showed that the secondary school was the beginning of a high rate of dropouts. Therefore, it is hoped that cooperative learning can enhance students' achievement in their acquisition of English language.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the relationship between cooperative learning and achievement in English language acquisition in a literature class amongst Form 4 students in a secondary school.

1.5 Objective of the study

This study is to find out whether cooperative learning can improve the students' English language acquisition in a literature class in a secondary school.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions to be answered in this study are as follows:

- i. Is there any relationship between cooperative learning method in an English literature class and students' achievement in acquiring English Language?
- ii. If there is relationship, is this relationship positive or negative?

iii. In what aspects does the positive or negative relationship affect students' learning of the English language?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study benefits the participating school, the subject teacher as well as the subjects of the study.

The participating school will benefit because the results will be a guideline for the teachers to determine the specific difficulty encountered by the students in acquiring English. The teachers can find ways to improve their teaching methods. The subject teacher will benefit since he is actively involved in the study. He can discover some of the problems faced by the students and continue to rectify the problems.

The students can gain a lot of benefits because cooperative learning approach can give students the chance to develop positive and productive relationships. It gives students opportunities to learn from one another rather than receive information from the teacher or text alone.

It was also hoped that by discovering this relationship, the students would benefit in terms of English language acquisition. There is a possibility that the success of those

few could be extended to the others in the same circumstances. Therefore, this could help overcome the problem of students having low English language proficiency in secondary schools.

1.8 Limitation of the study

The study is limited in several factors. Firstly, the size of the sample is small. The research was conducted only in one Form 4 class in a secondary school. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is also limited by the small scale of the study.

There might be extraneous variables that can invariably affect the findings such as the cultural and educational background of the students, thus affecting the reliability of the findings.

Time constraint was another limitation. It is impossible for the researcher to carry out an extensive study in such a short period of time. The respondents were not able to get enough practice in the class especially the interpersonal and small group skills. Due to the time-constraints, the actual time needed for each activity had to be shortened and this might have effects on the outcome of the lessons conducted.