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**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS
USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING**

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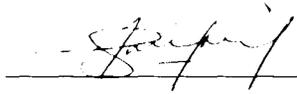
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Final Year Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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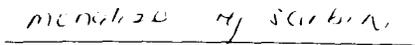
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A project entitled **Students Perceptions Towards Using Cooperative Learning In English Essay Writing:** was written by Gwendoline Raja and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science with Honours (Teaching English as s Second Language)

It is hereby confirmed that the student had done all the necessary amendments of the project for acceptance.



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ABSTRACT

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING

Gwendoline Raja

The study was conducted to find out students perceptions towards using cooperative learning approach in English essay writing among form four students. The researcher also aimed to find out the usefulness of cooperative learning on the students' group work essay writing and the problems they faced in a group work writing task or essay using cooperative learning approach.

A three-sectioned questionnaire was administered to one hundred and fifty form four students in three secondary schools in Miri. Frequency counts, percentage and mean scores were the descriptive statistics used for the study. The mean scores of the advantages and the difficulties faced by the students were compared to determine students responses towards using cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work essay writings.

The findings indicated that the students responded positively towards the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work English essay writing. The results show that the students admitted that cooperative learning approach did help them in their English essay writing. This study shows that the use of cooperative learning approach in group work essay writing does benefit the students.

ABSTRAK

PERSEPSI PELAJAR TENTANG PENGGUNAAN PENDEKATAN BERKUMPULAN (COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH) DALAM PENULISAN DALAM BAHASA ENGLISH

Gwendoline Raja

Kajian ini bertujuan mengetahui persepsi pelajar tentang penggunaan pendekatan berkumpulan (cooperative learning approach) dalam menyiapkan hasil kerja penulisan berkumpulan di kalangan pelajar dalam tingkatan empat. Selain daripada itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui keberkesanan pendekatan kerjasama dalam pembelajaran berkumpulan dan apakah masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar dalam kerja berkumpulan dalam penulisan dalam Bahasa Inggeris menggunakan pendekatan berkumpulan.

Soal-selidik yang mengandungi 3 bahagian telah diedarkan kepada seratus lima puluh orang pelajar tingkatan empat di tiga buah sekolah menengah dalam bahagian Miri. Penganalisan data kajian dijalankan dengan menggunakan pengiraan statistik diskritif yang melibatkan pengiraan kekerapan, peratus dan skor min. Perbandingan skor min di antara keberkesanan pendekatan kerjasama dalam pembelajaran berkumpulan dengan masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar dalam kerja berkumpulan digunakan untuk menentukan tindak balas pelajar terhadap pendekatan kerjasama berkumpulan dalam penulisan dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan pelajar memberi tindak balas yang positif dan menggemari pendekatan kerjasama dalam pembelajaran berkumpulan. Justeru itu, kajian menunjukkan pendekatan kerjasama dalam pembelajaran berkumpulan dalam menyiapkan hasil kerja penulisan berkumpulan dalam Bahasa Inggeris adalah sesuai di kalangan pelajar-pelajar berkenaan.

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I would also like to express my special thanks to all my friends and -not forgetting my ESL-PKPG mates who have given me support, encouragement, guidance despite their own personal responsibilities and commitments.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the Principals, teachers, and students from the schools concerned who are involved in this study directly; thank you for their precious time and kind co-operation in giving me the information, opinions, without which my study would not be successful.

May God continue to pour His blessings unto those who have helped me made it through all the toils and snares of this programme.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

English in both primary and secondary schools is taught as a second language. Under the National Educational Philosophy, the English Language Programme is incorporated with the aim to provide students with lifelong education. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four main skills that the students need to acquire under the English Language Programme from primary school to higher education.

Teachers have been interested to find out ways to improve the teaching-learning process especially the English Language. Barr and Tag (1995) claim that one positive change towards maximizing students' learning is to provide an environment like student-centred learning which can help students to master these four skills apart from building up their motivation and interest in the language. There were a few methods whereby the teaching-learning process are student-centred; cooperative learning, joint learning, peer teaching, peer learning, team learning and study groups. These methods of teaching and learning come under the communicative approach in the teaching and learning of the target language.

Hymes (1972) stated the term communicative is generally accepted to mean gearing to the competence and expectations of those participating in the learning process. In other words, a communicative approach is based on negotiation between the parties involved.

Traditionally, teachers are seen as the 'experts' who would impart their knowledge or 'expertises' to their unknowing students. But nowadays, students play a much more active role in the learning process. No longer passive recipients, they contribute to the planning and implementation of what become obvious in the classrooms.

Cooperative learning as one of the approaches introduced to enhance student-centred learning environment has been widely discussed and researched since. Teachers continually adopt and adapt strategies to accomplish immediate as well as long term goals which include and developing critical thinking and cooperative learning skills.

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy in which, teachers divide their students into group of three to five members where each group comprises students of different ethnicity, levels of proficiency and uses a variety of activities to improve their understanding of the subjects (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

According to David et al (1993) cooperative learning means students at various levels work together in activities such as discussion, brainstorming, problem-solving, debate, and other activities which are carried out in small groups or pairs to

accomplish shared goals. In cooperative learning students are responsible for each other's learning as well as their own (Gokhale, 1995). Therefore each member in the group, has the responsibility of ensuring the success of the other members, as a consequence students would feel that they are fully responsible and committed to the tasks given in order to achieve their learning objectives.

Panitz (1996) further states that when students are given the responsibility of ensuring the success of their group, they would be more willing to participate in the learning process and would end up taking up more active roles. This will not only cultivate a more positive attitude towards learning but also will promote positive interaction between members of the same group especially groups which consist of members differing in terms of cultural and socio-economic background. This will suit especially multiracial students in the Malaysian classroom.

According to Cohen (1990), cooperative learning has five characteristics:

- i) students work together on common tasks or activities that are best carried out through group work,
- ii) students are divided into small groups of two or five during the activities,
- iii) students make use of cooperative pro-social behaviour to achieve their goals,
- iv) students develop interdependence whereby they would collaborate and help each other during the activities, and
- v) students are given the responsibility to handle their own learning.

Teaching English to second language or foreign language students requires a variety of approaches. English teachers need to be more creative and may need to opt for different teaching approaches suitable to their students especially in teaching the four main skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Apart from that, language teachers especially need to make decisions at all time regarding the pedagogical matters too. The most crucial matter is that the teachers have to decide on the goal of the language instruction, the most effective teaching method and the best way to equip the students.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Teaching a second language to students remains a great challenge, because students' performance is measured not only based on their performance in examinations but also in their ability to listen, talk, read, and write in the target language in their daily lives. Among these four main skills, the ability to write well in the target language is considered the most challenging task of all for students in the primary and secondary schools. Wall, Nickson, Jordan, Allwright and Houghton (1980) state that the most difficult academic skill to acquire is in essay writing. Students need to have the ability not only in understanding the subject matter concerned, but also crucial is the skill to convey and arrange ideas coherently. Small group or pair work as well as individual essay writing are common to the students. Evaluation in writing is based on content, organization of ideas, analytical thinking, and also grammar of students' final product. These are the major challenges students face in writing even though they have been exposed to the English language since

they were in primary schools and have been writing in the target language for many years.

Even though most of the students are fluent and at the advanced level of proficiency in the target language but when it comes to writing most of them say that they do not feel confident to write well in the target language especially when it comes to the essay writing task. Studies have been done on the usage of cooperative learning approach in other fields such as in mathematics other countries.

Therefore, many teachers are interested in using cooperative learning method as it is able to promote positive outcomes on students (Balkom, 1992). It is claimed that cooperative learning is able to promote communication and increase the participant of students, improve academic achievement, improve behaviour, attitude and motivation and increase liking of school and classmates. (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1993; Slavin, 1991; Stahl & Vansicle, 1992). These benefits have attracted many teachers to advocate this method but it is not clear whether this method do benefit the students in actual ESL classrooms in Malaysia.

Therefore, this study is to find out students' perceptions on the usage of cooperative learning approach in group work essay writing.

1.2 Research Objectives

The aims of this study are:

- 1) To investigate the usefulness of cooperative learning on form four students' group work essay writing
- 2) To find out the problems the students face in group work essay writing task using cooperative learning approach.
- 3) To find out the form four students' perceptions on the use of cooperative learning in their group work essay writing.

1.3 Research Questions

I would like to conduct this study based on the following enquiries:

- a) How useful is cooperative learning in carrying out English essay writing tasks for the form four students?
- b) What are the problems faced by the students in group work essay writing tasks using cooperative learning approach?
- c) What are the students' perceptions towards the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work essay writing tasks?

1.4 Limitations of the Study

The findings of the study is restricted and confined to a total of 150 form four students in three secondary schools in Miri. Therefore, the number of the chosen subjects involved will not be the representative of the whole population of form four students and the results may not be very significant to be generalized.

Another limitation of this study is time constraint. This study was conducted towards the end of the second semester which as incidentally happened to be the final semester examinations for form four students. Due to this, the researcher had to schedule meetings with the respondents to distribute the questionnaire and get their feedback before they are busy preparing and set for their examination.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study can be of considerable use to the educational field, and the language teachers of primary and secondary schools as well as the lecturers at the tertiary levels. The study will provide some new insights in the teaching and learning of the English language especially in essay writing and at the same time provide grounds for further research on the same subject in the future. In addition the teachers can use this study to come up with new ideas or concepts and look for more alternatives in their approach to teach writing.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the given key terms are defined as follows:

1.6.1 Perception

Perception is ‘recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli based chiefly on memory’. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition 2000)

Perception is stated as ‘the complex method of obtaining information about our surrounding world, specifically through our senses, and apprehending this information as beliefs’. (Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy)

1.6.2 Cooperative Learning Approach

Cooperative learning approach is ‘the instructional use of small groups so that student’s work together to achieve shared goals’. (Roger and Johnson, 2001)

According to Brown (1994) cooperative learning approach is a diversity of techniques used in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language.

1.6.3 Writing

Writing a process of choosing of selecting and rejecting, expanding and compressing, adding, deleting and rearranging at every stage of the writing process ... The writing process is not direct or linear, but it can be divided for convenience into three stages : planning, drafting and revising'. (Kirszner and Mandell 1988)

Words that are written down as a mean of communication for the intention of this research, it applies to any writing genre. (MSN Encarta, 2002)

According to Chitrvelu, Sithamparan & Teh (1995, p.136), "writing is a system for interpersonal communication using visible signs or graphic symbols on a flat surface such as paper, cloth, or even stone slabs".

1.7 Summary

This chapter consists of the background to the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, research methodology, research instrument, and definition of terms. This chapter highlights and provides the background to the study and also some important information on what the researcher plans to do in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the study. In providing a theoretical framework, the review will touch on areas significant to the study. These areas will include discussions on the following topics:

2.1 Writing as A Language Skill

Many scholars and teachers agree that writing is one of the four main skills which is the most difficult skill or task. As stated by Nunan (1991) writing is crucial in communications following the flow of development in our modern societies. Writing is perhaps, the principal means by which you are judged. To be able to express yourself clearly requires the skills to write well. For the non-native speakers of the English language the ability to write well in the language is not easy to accomplish, even the native speakers of the language face difficulties and often stumble in their writing.

According to Chitavelu N. et. al. (1995), writing is the skill most students are least proficient in compared to other skills. She says that this may be the result of the students having little use for it in the immediate present. She also says that there are very few social needs for writing in English in the school period of a Malaysian citizen's life. Furthermore, we may pick-up the ability to speak at home without any systematic instruction; we do need, however, to be taught the rhetoric of writing for the reason that writing is not a skill as easily acquired as speaking. She further states that since writing is usually taught and learned in a formal setting and it is not produced as natural as speaking, therefore writing in the target language is far more difficult to acquire.

In addition Long and Richard (1987) stated that writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write. Writing requires thought, discipline, and concentration. Writing involves committing something to a relatively permanent form.

Throughout the years, the writing courses bare a striking resemblance to one another. Nothing much has changed since the nineteenth century. Teachers only assigned topics and themes for writing and students handed in completed papers, get a grade, perhaps a feedback from the teacher and get another writing task. Students are almost on their own when the writing processes take place. Students hardly receive any feedback on how to go about filling a blank page with thoughts and ideas and sometimes require them to be critical as well. According to Bishop (1988), the responsibility of the teachers is to guide the students throughout the writing process.

In fact, Chitravelu N. et. Al. (1995) states that students are to be stimulated and encourage to think critically, effectively and also creatively in their writings with the guidance from the teacher. In addition, Tichy (1990) claims that students can learn to write better under the guidance of good, responsible teachers. Larsen-Freeman (1986) says that teachers need to experiment and investigate each potential approach or method of teaching that they know. It is the teacher who knows her or his students best by applying the best approach or method to suit his or her students' varying needs.

2.2 Difficulties In Performing A Writing Task

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) state that one of the problems faced by writers concerns the capacity limitation the brain of each individual to construct and build ideas from the information stored in the brain. This information is stored in the brain from everyday life and these researchers claim that even though our brain can store a vast amount of information and data, there is a limit to the amount of data and information which our brain can deal with at a time.

According to another researcher, Byrne (1991), since writing is a solitary activity, the writer may face psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems which would hinder the act of writing an essay.

2.2.1 The Psychological Problem

Byrne (1991) claims that when a writer works alone, he or she might find it difficult to write, and this is how the process of writing disturbs the writer psychologically. The solitary task of writing he says would not have the benefit of feedback from another person either physically or orally. Therefore, there would be no interaction at all. By having some kind of feedback from a friend as the person writes, it would make the writing process more enjoyable for some people and when the writing is an enjoyable experience, one of the main psychological problems is already successfully moved out of the way. But, when there is nobody to give guidance and feedback, the writer has to depend on himself or herself and try as best as he or she could to make his or her target audience receive the intended message. But, Byrne further states that this would result in the writer having to second guess his target audience's every question which would require a lot of thinking and guessing on the part of the writer. This would sometimes distress the writer psychologically.

2.2.2 The Linguistic Problem

Byrne (1991) also claims that in order to come up with sentences which are grammatically correct and to produce well-structured ideas, the writer may face linguistic difficulty. Writing needs grammar, coherence, proper use of cohesive devices, appropriate choice of words and sentence structure. In addition, the writer must have mastered the writing skills in order to build and organize his ideas well, so that his message is clear.

According to Byrne (1991) cited in Fromkin and Rodman (1997), writers need to avoid ambiguities as a result of syntactic errors or discourse features which would confuse the targeted readers. Writing is different from speaking, he claims, because the act of speaking is spontaneous and would still be comprehensible and explicable through speech acts and body language even if utterances are ungrammatical.

2.2.3 The Cognitive Problem

Another problem faced by writers, according to Byrne, concerns the writers' cognitive process. Byrne claims that cognitively a writer will need to have mastered the form and structures of the language in order to organize ideas for a more effective communication in writing. Byrne adds that a writer often feels at loss for ideas which is an all too familiar an experience faced by those who are compelled to write.

As claimed by Woolfolk (1995) building comprehensible and logical sentences into paragraphs requires a mental process which involves remembering, perceiving, recognizing, and also classifying. These mental activities also demand great effort on the working memory which would hinder the process of writing (Woolfolk, 1995).

2.3 Cooperative Learning In Writing

Writing is a skill not everybody can acquire easily. It is a complex skill and many researchers and teachers agree that even native speakers of English often find themselves facing difficulties in writing. Many experts are still looking for the best way to teach writing. One of the suggestions researchers came up with is the use of cooperative learning in writing activities.

Scholars like Johnson and Johnson (1991), and Slavin (1995) suggest the use of cooperative learning in the teaching and learning writing. According to Slavin, in cooperative learning students work in heterogeneous group cooperatively adopting positive social skills which would make them participate actively in group discussions. Members in a group would distribute the task and this would lessen the group's workload. In addition, in cooperative learning members within the group would discuss the topic together and also help each other in gaining input about the topics assigned to them (Johnson and Johnson 1991; Slavin 1995).

Many experts and researchers such as Lehr (1995) and Graner (1987) promote the use of cooperative learning especially in the classroom writing activity which would help students not only to enrich their writing skills but also to enhance their writing performance. Johnson and Johnson (1994) claim that most often, students who participate in cooperative learning perceive a more meaningful learning experience and in some cases actually learn more than students in conventional learning situations. This fact would definitely be beneficial in a cooperative learning

writing activity not only for primary schools students but also students at secondary schools.

2.3.1 Group Work In Writing

Group work or learning in groups is meant to suggest that groups are not merely a valuable vehicle for learning and mastering the skills and concepts of a particular subject discipline, but also a way of learning about groups and how to develop the abilities in cooperative work at every stage in life. In a group work, students will have to take full responsibilities for the roles assigned to them as a member. They play important and significant roles in their contributions towards a successful experience. The interaction patterns and interdependencies of the students as they work towards a goal may help the students' academic achievements as well, including achievements in learning the target language.

Group works can help the students learn and acquire the writing skills easier and less burdening. Bruffe (1993) suggests that people learn while interacting with their peers through dialogues and discussions, because learning is a social rather than an individual process. Similarly, Golub and Reid (1989) acknowledge the significance of social interaction in the learning process and also recognized the influence of a peer audience on the knowledge required. It follows then that, because writing is a form of conversation, learning can be increased by writing cooperatively and collaboratively, and the peer group will exert a strong influence on the progress of writing of each member.

In addition, positive social skills can be instilled at the same time through interaction and discussion. Students learn to communicate and tolerate each other which would pave the way for better relationships among members, especially in groups which consist of students from different races and cultures. Group work can be a powerful tool to bridge people from different worlds if it is used appropriately. Two important elements in group work are group discussions and peer feedback.

2.3.1 (A) Group Discussion

According to Shih (1998) group discussion in a cooperative learning approach can facilitate ESL writing in complementary ways for the reason that it allows students to extensively explore the topics given and their ideas. Based on his study, it is believed that cooperative learning approach emphasizes the value of peer talk on writing activities.

As stated by Blanton (1987) group discussion contributes greatly towards the success of the process of writing. This shows the significance of group discussion in writing tasks. Through group discussion, students can have the opportunity to detect and correct their friends' writing errors. This will save a lot of time and less workload for the group because like the saying goes 'two heads are better than one'.

In addition, group discussions promote and stimulate active problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Millis,1996), whereby students are involved in comprehending, analyzing, making hypothesis, generalizing, disagreeing,

manipulating, producing, and interacting , focusing their attention to complete the writing tasks. Members of the group would allow members to organize and test and organize their ideas through healthy exchanges and receive feedback within a safe environment.

Blanton (1988) claims that when the students are surrounded by discussion and healthy brainstorming before they write; words, phrases and interesting new ideas ‘dance before their eyes and ring in their ears’ as they write. This means that the students would not be desperate for ideas or words since they are always discussing and sharing ideas with their friends during discussions.

2.3.1 (b) Peer Feedback

Benson and Voller (1997) state that learning can only ‘consist in the transmission of knowledge from one individual to another’. Trimbur (1985) agrees that feedback is a primary constituent of a process approach to writing. He defines feedback as input from the reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. This suggests the significance of group learning and its many advantages compared to individual learning.

Since classrooms at the tertiary level consist of students from different ages and self-forming groups, one great advantage of peer review is that it provides a context in which students can interact in socially constructive ways. A more effective communication would exist, the amount of reinforcement would double-up, and peer

group encouragement would be more motivating during peer review in a heterogeneous groups. Johnson and Johnson (1991) claim that there is an obvious deep bond of friendship between members who are helping and being helped which is beneficial for slow learners integration into the group.

A study of cooperative writing in college, conducted by McLaughlin and Fennick (1987), examine both the product and the peer review process; one finding was that students had positive feelings toward the entire process, from pre-writing to revision. Others who found cooperative writing beneficial at the college level are Gere (1987), who concentrated on the role of peer response groups; Bruffe (1984), who saw effective collaboration in peer tutoring in writing activity, and Allen et al. (1987), reported favourable results from student evaluation of the group writing process. This further reinforces the theory that cooperative learning approach would benefit the writing class.

2.4 Components Of Cooperative Learning Group

Slavin (1990) states that a cooperative learning group consists of seven main components. These components are positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small-group skills, group processing, cooperative based groups, and integrated use of cooperative learning.

2.4.1 Positive Interdependence

In cooperative learning approach the students are placed in small groups or pairs and they work together cooperatively by eliciting and sharing ideas to solve the task assigned to them. The idea is that one student's success ensures the success of the other members of a group. This means that the students will have to depend on each other in their group to ensure that the tasks assigned to the group would be completed on time. They have to work together by providing mutual support, assisting and guiding each other to accomplish their goals through mental and physical activities which require them to brainstorm, analyze, debate, explain, and other activities in completing their writing tasks. This is the difficult stage whereby they would need each other in sharing selecting the best ideas and thoughts for their essays.

2.4.2 Promotive Interaction

In cooperative learning, students work face-to-face with the others and they share their knowledge and their understanding concerning the tasks assigned to them with the others who have little knowledge about the tasks given. This would mean that the students are given the rare opportunity to help, assist, support and encourage each other during the learning process (Johnson. D.W., Johnson, R.T. and Holubee, E.J., 1994).

2.4.3 Individual Accountability

Slavin (1995) states that in cooperative learning, students make sure that he or she plays an active role to contribute to his or her group's success. Each student has to contribute in any way possible to the group such as providing critical comments or initiating the development of ideas of their friends'. There are of course certain aspects which have to be taken into consideration in order for a group to go through the discussion process successfully. These aspects are:

1. each student's contribution to the group work should be assessed,
2. there should be enough feedback to groups or individual students,
3. each group should be assisted in avoiding redundant and ineffective effort ,
4. ensure each member of the group is responsible for the final outcome.

Johnson and Johnson (1991) state that if these aspects are not carried out, the possibility that one or more members of a group become free-riders.

2.4.4 Interpersonal And Small Group Skills

Apart from learning about subject matters, cooperative learning approach also promotes positive moral values and social skills. The students would portray positive social skills and good moral values during group interaction between members, discussions, and when the students give encouragement and motivation to fellow members of the group. According to Johnson and Johnson (1991), these social skills

should be taught to the students beforehand in order to produce successful communication. These skills if cultivated successfully would endow the students not only for their immediate needs but also for their life after school.

2.4.5 Group Processing

In cooperative learning approach, students working in small groups should maintain good working relationships with each other and this is crucial because they will have to discuss their progress towards their objectives. Each member should play an active part and contribute to their group to ensure that they are on the right track towards achieving their targeted goals. Each member has to be fully committed to their group and according to Johnson and Johnson (1991) the students should:

- i) facilitate learning cooperatively,
- ii) maintain good working relationship,
- iii) receive and provide feedback and be willing to reconsider their own judgements and opinions,
- iv) think critically,
- v) appreciate and celebrate the group's success, and
- vi) reinforce positive attitudes among members.

This is also the stage where the group members discuss concerning how well the group is progressing in achieving their goals and at the same time maintain a good relationship among members. The members of the group have to make sure that they

are actually accomplishing their task and that each and every one of the group members are making contributions and playing the roles assigned to them.

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude, cooperative learning approach is essential in the writing class for it has certain advantages that are absent in individual learning. Cooperative learning emphasizes on teamwork and positive social skills apart from students engaging in creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making as a team. In addition, the development and enhancement of critical-thinking skills through cooperative learning is one of the primary goals of education. There is always a need for new, effective different approaches in the teaching and learning of writing.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology involved in the study. In this chapter, the areas that will be discussed in details are as follows:

3.1 The Subjects

3.2 The Research Instruments

3.3 Data Analysis

3.4 Variables

3.5 Research Procedure

3.1 The Subjects

The subjects for this study are 150 Form Four students from three secondary schools in Miri. The subjects are from mixed ability classes which are picked randomly regardless of gender, race and background. The subjects are selected at random from a few schools in Miri, thus there is a fair representation of the population from different schools. This can prevent any biases in the selection of good or weak students. A total of 150 Form Four students are selected at random. The

subjects' ages range from 16 to 17 years old from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and races such as Malay, Chinese, Iban, Kenyah, Kayan, and Melanau

3.2 Research Instruments

The data from this study is to be obtained through the administration of only one instrument which is a three-sectioned questionnaire namely Section A, Section B and Section C.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

All the 150 subjects participating in this study are given the same set of questionnaires. Apart from eliciting the subjects' perceptions on cooperative learning in group work English essay writing, the questionnaire is also used to elicit the subjects' general attitude towards writing essays in English.

In addition, it aims to find out the problems the students faced concerning the use of cooperative learning approach in their group work English essays writing tasks. In the questionnaire, there are three sections:

- i) Students' Background
- ii) Students' Opinions towards Writing Essays in English
- iii) Students' Perception of Cooperative Learning Approach in Group Work Essay Writing

The questionnaire consists of 21 questions and they are divided as follows:

Section: A (Students background 3 questions), Section B (Students' Opinion towards Writing essays in English 3 questions) and Section C (Students' Perceptions of Cooperative Learning Approach in Group work essay writing 15 questions).

There are two types of questions used in the questionnaire. They are specific responses and checklist responses. These types of questions are chosen to get specific answers from the subjects in this study. The data gathered will then be converted into percentages to enable the researcher to analyze the subject's responses for each question. The areas of information covered by the questionnaire are as follows:

Section 1:

This section consists of 3 items relating to student's background. The questions are based on specific responses. The purpose of this section is to get an overview of the subjects' background.

Section 2:

This section consists of 3 items concerning the subject's opinions towards writing essays in English and also their difficulties in writing tasks. The questions are worded in the form of checklist responses as well as specific responses.

Section 3:

This section contains 15 items in the form of specific responses. This section aims to investigate the subject's perception of cooperative learning approach in relation to group work essay writing tasks.

3.3 Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data for this study, it is analyzed based on the following method:

3.3.1 Quantitative Measure

The data analysis for this study is based on Quantitative Measure. Frequency Count Method (FCM) would be used to analyze the responses to the students' questionnaire. The completed questionnaire will first be numbered for identification purposes. The data will then be analyzed using the FCM method. The frequency counts will then be converted into percentage as follows:

$$x/n \times 100 = y\%$$

Where: x represents the total number of subjects that responded to a particular item, and n represents the total number of subjects in the study.

3.4 Variables

The variable for this study is 150 Form Four students from three secondary schools in Miri.

3.5 Research Procedure

The study obtained its data from the questionnaire survey from the respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to all the students separately from class to class at a time to enable the researcher to get a valid result and to avoid the respondents from discussing their responses for the questionnaire. The researcher arranged a meeting with the respondents and after explaining what the questionnaire was about, the respondents proceeded to answer the questions in the questionnaire.

The questions in the questionnaire are divided into three sections. The first section aims to seek information pertaining the respondents' background and the second section asks for information on the respondents' linguistic, cognitive, and psychological difficulties in writing English essays. The last section, which is section three, aims to find out the respondents' perceptions of the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work English essay writing. The respondents spent about fifteen minutes in answering the questionnaire which consists of specific response, checklist response, and open-ended answers. The open-ended response answers required the respondents to state their reason(s) for the answers they have decided upon.

The feedback from the questionnaire was then analyzed by the researcher using quantitative measure based on the Frequency Count Method (FCM). The analysis of the data will be discussed in details in Chapter Four.

Enquiries were made to the Principal of the targeted schools to grant the permission to carry out the study. Letters of permission from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the State Education Department were also needed in accompanying the letter of permission from the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) before any proceedings commenced. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher who went to the identified schools and approached the schools' Academic Senior Assistants and the selected teachers who would help in distributing the questionnaires to the respondents. The researcher would collect the questionnaires again either from the Academic Senior Assistants or from the selected teachers, depending on the procedure of each school.

3.6 Summary

This chapter discusses the methodology on how this study is conducted. It further develops on the specific sample and instrument used in this study. This chapter also discusses the types of questions in the questionnaire that would be used to answer the objectives of the study.

The subsequent chapter will discuss the findings of the study. This will include the discussion on every section and it will look at what other researchers say about certain things related to cooperative learning techniques in relation to the objectives of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to find out the perceptions of the Form Four students on the usefulness of cooperative learning approach in their group work English essay writing. In order to find out whether cooperative learning approach is useful, the researcher has conducted the research using questionnaires on a selected sample (see Appendix for the questionnaire)

The researcher focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the data from the subjects. All the data will be presented in using the Frequency Count Method (FCM) format. This chapter covers the following topics:

- 4.1 Analysis of data from questionnaire
- 4.2 Discussion of results from questionnaire.

4.1 Analysis Of Data From Questionnaire

The result would be dealt upon subsequently according to the items (questions). However, not all the questions in the questionnaire are selected to be analyzed. Only the questions that are seen as significant in this research are selected to be analyzed.

The data from the questionnaire was transfigured into percentages to enable the researcher to analyze the responses given by the respondents clearly. In addition, the respondents' opinions and comments on the use of cooperative learning approach in their group work English essay writing are also included in the analysis.

4.1.1 Analysis of data for Section 1(Information on Respondent's Background)

Data was collected from the questionnaire distributed to 200 students during this research. 150 questionnaires were returned and were analyzed. There were three questions in this section. These questions asked the respondents for information of their class, gender and age. Table 1 below shows the distribution and response of respondents for Section 1. The responses to each question were total and converted into percentage to enable us to compare the results of the three questions.

Table 1: Information on Respondents' Background.

Questions	Form				Total	Percentage (%)	
	Science		Art				
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Q1	Form 4	43	43	18	46	150	100
Q2	Gender	43	43	18	46	150	100
Q3	Age 16	35	38	18	37	128	85.3
	Age 17	8	3	2	9	22	14.7

Based on Table 1, it shows that out of the 150 respondents used in the study, 86 (57.3%) of them were Form 4 Science and 64 (42.7%) were Form 4 Arts. Out of the 86 respondents who were from the form 4 Science, the gender distribution is the same for both male and female which are 43 respondents, while there are 18 male and 46 female from the form 4 Art. In terms of age, the table shows that 128 were 16 years old and this figure makes up for 85.3 percent of the total of respondents in this study. Meanwhile, 22 (14.7%) were of 17 years old.

4.1.2 Analysis of data for Section 2 (Information On Writing English Essays)

For Section 2, there are three questions concerning information on writing English essays. Question 1 aims to find out the difficulties the respondents faced in writing essays in English and Question 2 requires the respondents to state the problems they faced in the form of a checklist while Question 3 seeks to identify the most preferred option chosen by the respondents to overcome the writing problems they faced. This question is also in the form of a checklist and requires the respondents to number the options given according to the degree of priority. The data

of the respondents' feedback gathered from the questionnaire for Section 2 is shown in the following table...

Table 2: Respondents' feedback on difficulties in writing English Essay

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	126	84
No	24	16

From Table 2, it can be seen that most of the respondents faced difficulties in writing English essays. One hundred twenty-six (84%) out of one hundred fifty respondents admitted that they faced difficulties and the other twenty-four (16%) indicated that they did not have any difficulties at all in writing essays in English. Consequently, a hundred twenty-seven respondents proceeded to Question 2 in Section 2 while the other twenty-three proceeded to Section 3 of the questionnaire.

Table 3: Respondents' Linguistic Problem in writing English Essays

Linguistic Problems	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Difficulties in organizing ideas	88	69.8
Lack the skills in paraphrase	43	34.1
Lack the skills in summarizing	61	48.4
Difficulties in producing coherent texts/essays	70	55.6
Difficulties in producing well-formed sentences/paragraphs	73	57.9
Lack the English vocabulary in expressing ideas/thoughts	101	80.2
Difficulties in the mechanics of writing (e.g. spelling, punctuations, cohesive devices, etc.)	72	57.1

Question 2 is divided into three categories; the linguistic, cognitive and the psychological difficulties or problems in writing essays. When the respondents were asked to state their linguistic difficulties, One hundred and one (80.2%) respondents admitted that they lack English vocabulary in expressing ideas and thoughts. Eighty-eight (69.8%) admitted that they had difficulties in organizing ideas whereby seventy-three (57.9%) had difficulties in producing well-formed sentences/paragraphs. This data clearly indicates that the subjects faced linguistic difficulties in writing English essays. In addition, the data also supports the belief that writing is very much different from speaking. Students may speak spontaneously in any situation and manage to be comprehensible as well, but it is different when they write.

Writing requires the writer to be able to produce a well-organized text and avoid being confusing in delivering the intended message. If a student has not yet mastered the writing skills, then most likely he will fail to convey the intended message that he is trying to convey to the targeted audience in his writing. Therefore it is important for a student to be able to write in the target language well by overcoming any linguistic difficulties that he or she has.

Table 4: Respondents' Cognitive Problems in Writing English Essays

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Difficulties in expressing ideas	91	72.2
Inadequate background knowledge	50	39.7
Difficulties in writing critically	67	53.2
Loss for ideas	79	62.7

Question 2.2 in Section 2 intends to find out about the respondents' cognitive problems in writing English essays. For this question, ninety-one(72.2%) of the respondents stated that they faced difficulties in expressing ideas into writing, and

fifty (39.7%) respondents faced problems as a result of having inadequate background knowledge about the topic concerned. The table also shows that sixty-seven (53.2%) respondents faced difficulties in writing critically which involves the skills to analyze, classify, debate and clarify. Meanwhile, seventy-nine (62.7%) respondents admitted having difficulties in writing because of often feel at loss for ideas when they write. This might be due to the brain to remember some information stored which tends to influence our mental activity to concentrate fully during writing (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1983).

Based on the table, 72.2% of the respondents stated that they faced difficulties in expressing ideas into writing. Writing is not simply a matter of jotting down words on a piece of paper, but the whole process of writing requires much more than the ability to produce words. Writing needs grammar, coherence, proper use of cohesive devices, appropriate choice of words and sentence structure. In addition, the writer must have mastered the writing skills in order to build and organize his ideas well, so that his message is clear.

Table 5: Respondents' Psychological Problems in Writing English Essays

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Lack Confidence	77	61.1
Prefer to receive Feedback	75	59.5

In Section 2, question 2.3 concerns the psychological problems faced by the respondents in writing English essays. In this section, there are only two questions under the psychological problems or difficulties. Seventy-seven (61.1%) respondents

claimed that they had difficulties in writing essays as a result of not having the confidence to write in English.

Another problem faced by the respondents is concerning having somebody to give them feedback as they write. For this question, seventy-five (59.5%) respondents indicated that they preferred to have somebody giving them feedback while they are writing. Learning English as a second language and as non-native speakers of English language, writers would face psychological difficulties in writing as well. Therefore, not many have the confidence to write well in the target language. One reason that could have produced such difficulty could be from the lack of exposure in the target language. Hence, the respondents in this research might not have enough exposure in the target language which is in the written form. Insufficient exposure and practice would result in students unable to write well.

Another source of this psychological difficulty could be because of the differing writing styles of each individual. Some of the respondents indicated that they prefer to have a companion while they write as they prefer to have some kind of feedback from somebody on what they are writing and by having a friend or companion to consult with, the process of writing would be lighter for them and consequently they would be more confident to write.

Table 6: Respondents' Most Preferred Options to Overcome Their Writing Problems

Respondents' Options	Total	Percentage (%)
Consult the Teacher	51	40.5
Discuss with a friend(s)	58	46.0
Do a library research	13	10.3
Search the web	3	2.4
Ignore the problem(s)	1	0.8

In question 3 under Section 2, the respondents were asked about the options they most preferred to opt for to overcome their writing problems. Fifty-eight (46.0%) respondents preferred to discuss with their friends to solve their problems. This is followed by fifty- one (40.5%) respondents opted to consult the teacher concerned to solve their problems. Meanwhile, thirteen (10.3%) respondents have chosen to do a library research, followed by three (2.4%) respondents who chose to search the web to solve their problems.

Only one respondent chose to ignore the problems he or she faced in writing. Most of the respondents preferred to discuss their problems with their friends as their first option followed by consulting their teacher concerned. This shows that the respondents prefer to consult those with the same level of proficiency or they might feel more comfortable with their peers. Peer feedback is considered beneficial in the writing activities. From peers, the students learn more since they could be free with their opinions without the risk of hurting each other's feelings. They would also be willing to correct their friend's writing errors on the spot while they write. In addition, the students would have the chance to share their experience and ideas with each other since they can also refer to a friend who is more advanced from them in the target language.

4.1.3 Analysis of data for Section 3 (Student's perception of cooperative learning approach in group work English essay writing)

This section of the questionnaire investigates the respondents' perception of cooperative learning approach in their group work English essay writing. There are fifteen questions in this section. The responses are in the form of Yes and No responses except for question 15, which concerns the respondents' problems in cooperative learning approach.

Question 15 is analyzed separately in Table 18. In addition, the other comments from the respondents in the questionnaire were also taken into account. The results of the questionnaire for each significant question are shown in the following tables.

Table 7: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped them to brainstorm ideas

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	128	85.3
No	22	14.7

The feedback for question 4 is encouraging. The respondents were asked whether cooperative learning approach has helped them to brainstorm the ideas about the topic of their essay. Table 7 shows that one hundred and twenty-eight (85.3%) respondents stated that cooperative learning approach has helped them to brainstorm ideas concerning the topic of their essays. The positive feedback for this question might be due to the reason that they carry out brainstorming session successfully because there is encouragement from the other members. Consequently, they feel more confident in their participation. Therefore this reinforces the notion that peer

feedback and group discussion as well as interdependence among the group members benefits not only a member of a group but also benefits all the members of a group. During the brainstorming session, each member of the group really take full responsibilities for the roles assigned to them as a member and the interaction between members would help them in building ideas for their essays.

Table 8: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped them to reduce their writing workload

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	121	80.7
No	29	19.3

In addition when the respondents were asked whether cooperative learning approach helps to reduce their group's writing workload, most of the respondents responded positively. One hundred and twenty-one (80.7%) said that cooperative learning approach helped them to reduce the group's workload and the reason was that the members shared the workload in completing their essays. Besides in a group work, students will have to take full responsibilities for the roles assigned to them as a member. They play important and significant roles in their contributions towards a successful experience and through group discussion, students can have the opportunity to detect and correct their friends' writing errors.

Table 9: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA provides them opportunity to share and exchange ideas

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	143	95.3
No	7	4.7

When the respondents were asked for their opinions whether cooperative learning approach provides them with the opportunity to share and exchange ideas, one hundred and forty-three (95.3%) respondents claimed that it did. According to the respondents, when there are more members, consequently they would be more ideas to be shared. Only seven (4.7%) respondents were with the opinions that cooperative learning approach did not provide them with the opportunity to share and exchange ideas. Their reason was that there were conflicts in reaching out to a consensus concerning which ideas were better for their essays. In forming a cooperative learning group, the existing problem is to group students based on backgrounds, interests or competencies. As a result, sometimes students were grouped unsuccessfully which would result in conflicts especially regarding issues of making decision. In cooperative learning group, students were empowered with the authority to decide what was best for their respective groups with less intervention from the teacher. Thus, when the authority is shifted away from the teacher, the students created a group of people who are willing to be followers and to be leaders. The problems of choosing who is best to lead the group would usually occur. Sometimes there is more than one student who wanted to lead the group and there would be conflicts in making decisions for the group.

Table 10: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA improved the content of their essays.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	131	87.3
No	19	12.7

Table 10 indicates that one hundred and thirty-one (87.3%) respondents agreed with the statement that cooperative learning approach improved the content of

their essays. Whereas, only nineteen (12.7%) other respondents disagreed that cooperative learning approach improved the content of their essays. The reason given by the respondents that agreed is that when the students are surrounded by discussion and healthy brainstorming before they write; words, phrases and interesting new ideas **‘dance before their eyes and ring in their ears’ as they write.** This means that the students would not be desperate for ideas or words since they are always discussing and sharing ideas with their friends during discussions and will enable them to decide most suitable ideas to be concluded in the content of their essays.

Table 11: Respondents’ Opinions on whether CLA helped in building and organizing ideas better compared to writing individually.

Respondents’ Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	129	86
No	21	14

Concerning the question on whether cooperative learning approach helped them to build and organize ideas better, one hundred and twenty-nine (86%) respondents further claimed that cooperative learning approach helped them in building and organizing ideas better as compared to writing individually. The reason is because group discussion promotes and stimulates active problem-solving and critical thinking skills as stated by Millis (1996), whereby students are involved in comprehending, analyzing, making hypothesis, generalizing, disagreeing, manipulating, producing, and interacting , focusing their attention to complete the writing tasks. Therefore, members of the group would allow members to organize and test and organize their ideas through healthy exchanges and receive feedback within a safe environment.

In addition, in having more heads work together will enable them to build and organize ideas better compared to writing individually. Only twenty-one (14%) respondents said that cooperative learning approach did not help them in this aspect. They claimed that there were difficulties in reaching an agreement among members of the groups when they were asked to give reason to their responses.

Table 12: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA improved their choice of vocabulary.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	112	74.7
No	38	25.3

Table 12 indicates that one hundred and twelve (74.7%) respondents admitted that cooperative learning approach improved their choice of vocabulary, whereas, thirty-eight (25.3%) respondents stated that cooperative learning approach did not improve their choice of vocabulary. Interestingly, the respondents admitted that cooperative learning approach helped them in terms of vocabulary for their group essays. This suggests that the approach has proved it benefits after all. Undeniably, a good essay requires well-chosen words, which result well constructed grammatical sentences or paragraphs. Therefore, by having peers to provide suitable vocabulary, each member would also benefit from it. This will also help them to improve their own vocabulary especially for their individual writing.

Table 13: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped in terms of the mechanics of writing.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	113	75.3
No	37	24.7

Based on Table 13, the respondents' feedback for question 10 indicates that one hundred and thirteen (75.3%) respondents said that cooperative learning approach helped them in terms of the mechanics of writing, whereas, thirty-seven (24.7%) of the respondents stated that cooperative learning approach did not help them in terms of the mechanics of writing.

The mechanics of writing is one of the problematic areas in writing essays. This problem could be overcome through cooperative learning approach. In cooperative learning approach, there is autonomous learning on the part of the students where they are free from the teacher's authority. In this stage, the students learn to learn by themselves. This can be seen when the students identify their own errors by learning to identify them in their peer's written work. Thus by minimizing errors made in their writing, the students would benefit from this advantage as they helped each other in completing their group work essays.

Table 14: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped them construct better sentences in their essays.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	124	82.7
No	26	17.3

Table 14, which is the feedback on question number 11 that concerns the respondents' opinion on whether cooperative learning approach has helped their group to construct better sentences in their essays. The result as shown in Table 14 indicates that one hundred and twenty-four (82.7%) of the respondents said yes. The data suggests that cooperative learning approach is not only beneficial in terms of the mechanics of writing, but also benefits the respondents in terms of constructing better

sentences as well. Undeniable, intended message could only be conveyed successfully through well-formed sentences that in turn would form a coherent and cohesive flow of thoughts of the writer.

Table 15: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped them to write critically.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	93	62
No	54	36

When asked whether cooperative learning approach has helped them to write critically, ninety-three (62%) of the respondents stated that cooperative learning approach has helped them to write critically, whereas, fifty-four (36%) out of the 150 respondents used in the research claimed that cooperative learning approach did not help them. The respondents that answered no when asked whether cooperative learning helped them to write critically commented that they always face conflicts in reaching a consensus. Another reason given was that they were unable to reach an agreement concerning their personal views and that sometimes the ideas from the students with low proficiency were usually rejected by the more advanced members.

According to those who claimed that cooperative learning approach has helped them to be critical writers, they said that their peers in the same group guided them to be critical in their opinions and ideas.

Table 16: Respondents' Opinions on whether CLA helped them to produce good English essays.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	125	83.3
No	25	16.7

When asked whether cooperative learning approach has helped them to produce good English essays, one hundred and twenty-five (83.3%) respondents responded by stating that cooperative learning approach did help, whereas, the other twenty-five (16.7%) respondents claimed that cooperative learning approach did not help their group to produce good English essays. Their reasons were that they faced difficulties such as lacking of cooperation among the members as well as conflicts in reaching a consensus in decision making for the group. These were some reasons given by the respondents that claimed cooperative learning approach helped them to produce good English essays.

Table 17: Respondents' Opinions on the difficulties they faced using CLA in their group work English essay writing.

Respondents' Feedback	Total	Percentage (%)
Yes	86	57.3
No	64	42.7

From the data in Table 17, it is clearly shown that eighty-six (57.3%) respondents admitted that they faced difficulties in carrying out their essay writing using cooperative learning approach, whereas, sixty-four (42.7%) respondents admitted that did not face difficulties in using cooperative learning approach in their group work English essay writing. Regardless of the difficulties faced by the respondents in using cooperative learning approach in carry out their English essay writing, the feedback given by the respondents were positive and this was justified by the respondents pertaining the suitability of cooperative learning approach in their group work in which they are able to write critically and produce good English essays,

Feedback for question 15 is analyzed in a separate table as shown in Table 18. This is because the required responses are in the form of a checklist. The question seeks to identify the respondents' difficulties in completing their group work English essays writing using Cooperative learning approach as follow-up question from question 14.

Table 18: Respondents' difficulties in completing their group work English essays writing using CLA (Cooperative Learning Approach)

Respondents Options	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Some students monopolize the group work	76	50.7
Takes longer time to complete tasks using CLA	72	48
Lack of cooperation	81	54
Conflicts in reaching a consensus	80	53.3
Conflicts in assigning roles	58	38.7
Low-ability students left behind	70	46.7
'Forced' to accept conclusion of majority	55	36.7
'Free-riders' among members	50	33.7

For questions 15, the frequency of respondents responses are counted out of 150 respondents. Eighty-one (54%) respondents responded by claiming that they faced difficulties in completing group work essay writing because of lack of cooperation from the other members of the group. Eighty (53.3%) respondents said that they faced conflicts in reaching a consensus and seventy-six (50.7%) claimed that their difficulty occurred when there were students who liked to monopolize/dominate the group work. This reinforces the notion that students with low ability in the target language were often left behind in lack of cooperation among members of the group. Another seventy-two (48%) respondents indicated that they faced difficulties in completing their group work English essays writing for the reason that completing the writing tasks using cooperative learning approach takes a longer time compared to

individual writing. Another seventy (46.7%) respondents stated that students with low ability in the target language tend to be left behind by the other members of the group. Fifty-eight (38.7%) respondents admitted that they faced conflicts in assigning roles to members in the group. This is followed by fifty-five (36.7%) respondents who responded that they faced difficulties because they were 'forced' to accept the conclusion made by majority and fifty (33.7%) respondents admitted that they faced difficulties when there were 'free-riders' in the group.

Apart from the difficulties listed in the questionnaire, another difficulty faced by the respondents was that some students were given the hardest task or role in completing their group work essays. This is significant as it is important in justifying the notion given by the respondents saying that they faced difficulties and conflicts in assigning roles among the members of the group.

4.2 Discussion Of Results From Questionnaire.

As for the overall finding, the means score for the respondents' responses in the questionnaires in Section 3 from question number 4 to 13 that consist of 10 items on the advantages of using cooperative learning approach in completing their group work English essays writing is 81.6% whereas, the means score for the difficulties that they faced in using cooperative learning approach in completing their group work English essays writing in Section 3 question 15 that consist of 9 items is 45.2%. Therefore, we can conclude that the students have positive perception concerning the

difficulty in reaching a consensus for the decisions made for the group, especially concerning the selection of ideas that were most suitable for the topics of their essays.

In addition, cooperative learning approach does help the respondents to be critical in their writing where the students with poorly developed writing skills would benefit from their peers who are more advanced students. This is the claim made by the respondents that cooperative learning approach does improve the content of their essays. Cooperative learning approach from the students' own perceptions does help them in producing good English essays as indicated by the findings.

Interestingly, the findings indicated that the respondents preferred to discuss their writing difficulties with their friends as compared to consulting the teacher concerned. This shows that the respondents prefer to consult those with the same level of proficiency or they might feel more comfortable with their peers. From peers, the students learn more since they could be free to voice out their opinions and ideas without the risk of hurting each other's feelings. They would also be willing to correct their friend's writing errors on the spot while they write.

The findings of the questionnaire indicated that the respondents responded positively towards the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work English essay writing. This is so when the respondents claimed that cooperative learning approach does reduce their writing workload, write critically, improve their sentences structures, the mechanics of writing, and choice of vocabulary especially for the students who have linguistic difficulties in writing. Consequently, the approach does improve the content of their group work essays and

help them to produce good English essays despite the difficulties faced in using cooperative learning approach in their group work English essays writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

The research is carried out to find out the perceptions of the Form Four students on the use of cooperative learning approach in their group work English essay writing. This research attempts to investigate the usefulness of cooperative learning approach in carrying out group work English essays as well as to find out the students' problems in applying cooperative learning approach in their group work English writing. This chapter discusses the following topics:

- 5.1 Summary of Findings
- 5.2 Implications of Study
- 5.3 Recommendation for Further Research or Study

A detailed discussion on the research findings based on the three research questions the researcher has constructed will also be discussed. These research questions are highlighted in Chapter One.

The research questions are as follows:

- a) How useful is cooperative learning in carrying out English essay writing tasks for the form four students?
- b) What are the problems faced by the students in group work essay writing tasks using cooperative learning approach?
- c) What are the students' perceptions towards the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work essay writing tasks?

5.1 Summary Of Findings

The findings of the research reveal interesting results. The results indicate that cooperative learning approach does benefit the students in carrying out their group work essay writing. Based on the findings, all the three research questions highlighted in Chapter One are finally answered after getting the respondents' feedback in the questionnaire survey. A close analysis of the data collected reveals the following answers to the research questions.

a) How useful is cooperative learning in carrying out English essays writing tasks for the form four students?

Based on the analysis of data from the questionnaire, it shows that cooperative learning approach is useful in carrying out English essays writing for the students as the respondents responded positively to the questions asked in the questionnaire. Cooperative learning approach has helped them in brainstorming ideas, minimizing errors in terms of the mechanics of writing, as well as providing them with the opportunity to share and exchange ideas despite the difficulties that they faced in using cooperative learning approach in their group work English essays writing. From the mean score of the advantages of using cooperative learning approach in completing their group work English essays writing which is 81.3% as compare to 45.2 % in facing difficulties using cooperative learning approach in completing their group work English essay writing, we can conclude that cooperative learning approach is useful in carrying out English essays writing tasks for the form four students. Therefore, problems such as lacking in cooperation, conflicts in reaching a consensus in making decision and having some students monopolizing the group work do not influence the students opinion on the usefulness of cooperative learning approach in carrying out English essays writing.

The respondents also claimed that cooperative learning approach has helped them to write critically, improved the content of their essays, and helped them to construct sentences, building and organizing ideas better as compared to writing individually. In addition cooperative learning approach has helped them to produce good English essays.

b) What are the problems faced by the students in group work essay writing tasks using cooperative learning approach?

The results from the questionnaire indicate that the students faced many problems in a group work writing tasks using cooperative learning approach. This is obvious based on the respondents' responses in the questionnaire. Respondents admitted that they faced difficulties resulting from lacking of cooperation among the group members. This justifies their claim that it takes a longer time to complete a group work writing essays. Besides that they are also facing conflicts in reaching a consensus in decision making.

Apart from these problems, other problems mentioned were that in the group work English essay writing the low-ability students were often left behind and some students liked to monopolize the group work or the group decision. If these existing problems are not overcome, they would bring negative effect on the writing product. Furthermore, it would not help maintain good working relationship among the group members. Even though these students agreed that through the cooperative learning approach they had the opportunity to share and exchange ideas concerning the topics concerned, there were still some students who would monopolize the group decision making process. As a result, the group's individual accountability which is one of cooperative learning approach essential components fails in its role.

c) What are the students' perceptions towards the use of cooperative learning in carrying out their group work essay writing tasks?

The findings show that the respondents have positive perceptions towards the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work essay writings. The respondents commented that cooperative learning approach has helped them in all aspects such as in improving the choice of vocabulary, as well as helping the students in constructing better sentences for their essays. Besides that the respondents also claimed that cooperative learning approach has helped them to write critically, improved the content of their essays as well as helping them to produce good English Essays.

In conclusion, the researcher finds that cooperative learning approach is an effective approach to be applied in a group work English essay writing for the form four students. As indicated by the findings from the questionnaire, the respondents gave positive feedback on the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work English essay writing.

5.2 Implications Of Study

Based on the research findings, there is an implication that the cooperative learning approach is an effective tool to be applied in group work English essay writing. This research reveals positive outcomes and encouraging results of students' perceptions concerning the use of cooperative learning approach in carrying out their group work essay writing. The results from the questionnaire done in the research show that the students responded positively to the use of cooperative learning approach as it benefit them.

Despite the problems faced by the students in using cooperative learning approach in their group work English writing, the respondents claimed that cooperative learning approach has helped them in many ways. Hence if cooperative learning is undertaken by any teacher without knowledge and experience, cooperative learning approach would not be successful. Teachers should also be aware that cooperative learning approach is not an approach which is easily accepted by students. It takes times for them to get used to the whole idea of cooperating with others in the class and it takes time to get them accustomed to positive interdependence, which means that students need to be told that the order to succeed, they must "sink or swim together". In other words they must learn to trust and help each other in getting their tasks done because success depends on their collective contributions.

5.3 Suggestions For Further Research

For further research, it is suggested that a more thorough research is carried out into the issue. A further research can be extended by looking at the effect of students' social class in perceiving the cooperative learning approach in a group work English writing essay. Another suggestion is for further research to be carried out to investigate the effect of different variables in cooperative learning process, such as by looking at heterogeneous versus homogeneous, group selection and size and looking at how students from the different levels of proficiency in the target language perceive cooperative learning approach which might be reveal useful information. In terms of the research findings, the research could be improved by taking the teachers opinion into consideration. This could ensure a more valid and applicable results in order to rate the usefulness of cooperative learning approach in a group work English essay writing.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, despite the advantages and benefits of cooperative learning approach, its potential pitfalls should also be taken seriously by the teachers. In order to have cooperative learning approach works better, the teachers needs to plan each stage of group work carefully, especially in terms of organizing students from various backgrounds and learning styles into groups. Explain to the students too how they are going to be graded as it would help because cooperative learning approach is more successful when students are graded against a set of standard than when they are

graded against each other to ensure individual accountability. Besides that, to ensure that everyone contributes to his or her group's success, a design writing tasks in which there is a clear distribution of task should be considered. The teacher should also ensure that every member's performance is assessed and that the groups know how their members are doing. They should also help students to identify who needs more assistance in completing the writing tasks and members need to be informed strictly that they cannot let others do all the work while they sit back. Hopefully, by doing this, it would help to promote positive attitudes in working together and lessen the difficulties faced in carrying out cooperative learning approach in writing essays in English.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out your perceptions of the usefulness of cooperative learning approach in your group work English essay writing. The information given is strictly confidential. It will only be used during the analysis of the data for this research so that the researcher can arrive at the accurate conclusion. Please answer all questions honestly. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Please answer all questions honestly. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

SECTION 1

Background.

Please tick (/) where most applicable to you.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Form 4: Science () | Art () |
| 2. Gender : Male () | Female () |
| 3. Age : 16 () | 17 years old () |

SECTION 2

Information On Writig English Essays.

Place a tick (/) where you think most applicable and/or write your response in the space provided.

1. Do you face difficulties in writing essays in English?

Yes () No ()

(If Yes, answer question 2 and 3. If No, go to Section 3).

2. What are your problems when you write English essays?

(You may tick more than once).

(Please number the options below according to the degree of priority, e.g. : (1) for the most preferred option you would opt for. Put (X) to the option(s) that you will not consider at all.)

- a) Seek advice from the teacher concerned ()
- b) Discuss with a friend(s) ()
- c) Do a library research ()
- d) Look for the information on the web ()
- e) Ignore the problem(s) ()

Others (please state)

.....

SECTION 3

Student's perception of cooperative learning approach in group work essay writing.

Place a tick (/) and/or write your response in the space provided.

1. Have you ever been exposed to the cooperative learning approach in your class?

Yes () No ()

2. Do you apply cooperative learning approach in your group work essay writing?

Yes () No ()

3. Do you participate actively in your group discussion in completing your essay writing?

Yes () No ()

Please state your reason(s) for your answer

.....

.....

4. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped your group to brainstorm the ideas about the topic of the essay?

Yes () No ()

5. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped to reduce your group's writing essay workload?

Yes () No ()

Please state your reason(s) for your answer

.....
.....

6. In your opinion, does cooperative learning approach provide the students the opportunity to share and exchange ideas?

Yes () No ()

Please state your reason(s) for your answer

.....
.....

7. Do you think cooperative learning approach has improved the content of your group's essays?

Yes () No ()

8. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped your group to build and organize ideas better compared to writing individually?

Yes () No ()

Please state your reason(s) for your answer

.....
.....

9. In your opinion, has cooperative learning approach improved your group's essays in terms of vocabulary?

Yes () No ()

10. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped your group to minimize errors in terms of the mechanics of writing (e.g. spelling and punctuation)?

Yes () No ()

11. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped your group to construct better sentences in your essays?

Yes () No ()

12. Do you think that cooperative learning helps you to write critically?

Yes () No ()

Please state your reason(s) for your answer

.....
.....

13. Do you think cooperative learning approach has helped your group to produce good English essays?

Yes () No ()

14. Do you face any difficulties in carrying out your group work essay writing using cooperative learning approach?

Yes () No ()

If your answer is *Yes*, answer Question 15.

15. What are the difficulties you face in completing your group work English essays writing using cooperative learning approach?

- a. there are students who like to monopolize/dominate the group work ()
- b. completing the tasks using cooperative learning takes longer time ()
- c. lack of cooperation from the other members of the group ()
- d. conflicts in reaching a agreement ()
- e. conflicts in assigning roles to members of the group ()
- f. students with low ability are left behind ()
- g. 'forced' to accept the conclusion of the majority ()
- h. 'free-riders' among members of the group ()
- i. others (specify) :

Thank you for your cooperation

2.1 Linguistic Problems:

- a) Difficulties in organizing ideas ()
- b) Lack skills in paraphrasing ()
- c) Lack skills in summarizing ()
- d) Difficulties in producing coherent texts/essays ()
- e) Difficulties in producing well-formed sentences/paragraphs ()
- f) Lack English vocabulary in expressing ideas/thoughts ()
- g) Difficulties in the mechanics of writing (e.g. spelling, punctuations, cohesive devices, etc.) ()

2.2 Cognitive Problems:

- a) Difficulties in expressing ideas into writing ()
- b) Inadequate background knowledge about the topic ()
- c) Lack skills to write critically (e.g. analyzing, classifying, debating, clarifying, etc.) ()

- d) Often feels at loss for ideas ()

2.3 Psychological Problems:

- a) Do not feel confident to write in English ()
- b) Prefer to receive feedback from somebody while writing ()

Others (please state)

.....
.....

3. When you face these problems, what do you normally do?