

**THE USE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES IN
LITERATURE CLASSROOM**

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A project entitled The Use Of Cooperative Learning Techniques In Literature Classroom was written by Anita Awing Sigau and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Honours (Teaching English as a 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

THE USE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES IN LITERATURE CLASSROOM

Anita Awing Sigau

This study is conducted to find out the use of cooperative learning techniques in literature classroom among the secondary school English teachers in Miri, Sarawak. The researcher focuses on whether the secondary school English teachers in Miri used cooperative learning techniques (group works), how they use these techniques and the problems they encountered in conducting the techniques in their literature classroom. There are five sections in the questionnaire that were administered to 100 English teachers from 10 secondary schools in Miri. The result gathered from the data indicates that the teachers did use or conduct cooperative learning in their literature classroom. They support that cooperative learning techniques motivate their students to learn literature although, sometimes teachers find it difficult to control the class during group work activities. This is because by conducting cooperative learning, students are bound to make noise and moves around to discuss the answers with their friends. These can be seen from the results shown in the respondents' responses in the questionnaires. Therefore, teachers should be creative enough in making cooperative learning activities more interesting and fun for the students. The finding shows that there are positive feedbacks from the teachers in using cooperative learning in their literature classroom.

ABSTRAK

PENGUANAAN TEKNIK PEMBELAJARAN BERSAMA DALAM PENGAJARAN SASTERA

Anita Awing Sigau

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan teknik pembelajaran bersama dalam pengajaran matapelajaran Sastera dalam bahasa Inggeris di kalangan guru-guru sekolah menengah di Miri, Sarawak. Selain daripada itu, fokus kajian ini ialah untuk mengetahui sama ada guru-guru di Miri menggunakan teknik pengajaran ini di dalam pengajaran Sastera, bagaimana cara mereka menggunakan teknik tersebut dan apakah masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru tersebut apabila mereka menjalankan teknik pembelajaran bersama di dalam pengajaran Sastera.

Kajian ini menyediakan lima bahagian kaji selidik untuk diedarkan kepada 100 orang guru sekolah menengah di Miri. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru sekolah menengah di Miri menggunakan teknik tersebut di dalam matapelajaran Sastera. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru tersebut menyokong penggunaan teknik pembelajaran bersama di dalam pengajaran Sastera. Dengan menggunakan teknik ini, murid-murid dijangka akan membuat bising di dalam kelas kerana mereka berbincang mengenai tajuk yang diberikan kepada mereka.

Walau bagaimanapun, dapatan dari tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan responden berstuju dengan penggunaan teknik pembelajaran bersama ini di dalam matapelajaran Sastera di sekolah menengah di Miri.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This section discusses the background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study and key terms (definition of terms).

1.1 Background of the study

English has been an important second language taught in Malaysian schools since the British colonial era. It was used in the government administrations, organizations, public sectors, commerce and used as a medium of instruction in schools. The English schools during this era have provided education to both primary and secondary levels. Students were given examination at the end of the secondary level and those who hold a certificate in English were easily employed in government offices or in private institutions (Ganakumaran, 2003). After independence, English was still used but second importance only to the national language, the Malay language. English is important, as it is a crucial reference language. In other words, most of the references for the institutions of higher education are in English.

Today, English language is still used as an important second language learns in primary, secondary and tertiary levels in our country. As specified in the Curriculum Specification 2003, the education ministry has allocated five English periods per week in order to cater to the needs of learning English in the secondary schools. Its aims are to extend the learners' English Language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition and for their future workplace needs. Moreover, one needs to be proficient in the language in order to access to technological skills such as accessing information from the

internet to gain knowledge. Asmah (1982) points out that English is a language of international diplomatic and commercial relations as well as a world language for dissemination and for exchanging of knowledge and technology. Therefore, the ministry had realized the importance of English in various contexts, it was decided that the medium of instruction for mathematics and science at all levels of the Malaysian education system are to be taught in English start from the year 2003. Teachers teaching these subjects need to be prepared and confident in using the terms in English and able to create their own pedagogical tools that suit the students' ability levels.

The English Language curriculum for the secondary school covers three main areas of language use, which is the language for personal use, language for informational use, and language for aesthetic use. Among the three areas, language use for aesthetic use is mainly for the study of literature components. This is to enable learners enjoy learning literary texts at their own level of language proficiency and to develop in them the ability to express themselves creatively in the language (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan 4, 2003). These can be done by imposing activities such as retelling story in groups, reciting poems, role-playing, recognizing elements in a story and many others. Lazar (1993) added that literature is a useful tool that enables learners to use their own experiences such as feelings and their opinions or reactions towards literary texts learned in the classroom.

Therefore, literature plays an important role in making the teaching and learning strategies or techniques adapted in the teaching and learning of English a success in the classroom. It became apparently literature-based reading programmes in the 1980s and 1990s. Literature was acknowledged in the English language teaching when it was officially inducted into the ELT

syllabus in 2000 and included as a tested component in the Malaysian secondary syllabus. In fact, the inclusion of literature components in the secondary school syllabus is to enhance students' proficiency in English language through the study of prescribed literary texts (Ganakumaran, 2003). To make the teaching and learning of literature more interesting, the use of cooperative learning techniques should be incorporated into the literature classroom.

Cooperative learning improves students' performance in literature, as it instills the spirit of collaboration or teamwork in their routine activities such as, group discussions, completing projects and other teamwork activities. Take for instance activities involving group discussion to decide the theme or themes of a short story read by the students. The teacher explains and discusses the story together with his or her students before they go into their respective group to discuss the theme of the story. Cooper, Robinson and Mckinney (2004) explained STAD (Student-Team- Achievement-Division) a cooperative learning strategy that describes how students learn by helping each other in the group and every student has the opportunity to contribute to their group's success. Thus, there is a sense of belonging and responsibility created within the students themselves. It also provides students' positive interaction among the members of the group to produce equal participation and avoid negative perceptions.

Glassman (1989), Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne (1986), cited in Lampe (1996) stated in their study that, in cooperative learning groups, students tend to equalize their status and respect among the group members regardless of gender. Dezune (2000) added that learners in cooperative learning group should remember that they sink or swim together. In other words, each group member plays different roles and to maximize their contribution for the success of their group. Nattiv (1994), cited in Whicker et al (1998) agreed that students preferred

receiving immediate help from their teammates rather than raising up their hands for teacher's respond.

Meyers (1991) cited in Panitz (1996) claims that cooperative learning derives from the American philosophical writings of John Dewey, which is related to social structure of learning. However, collaborative learning comes from British word, which is base on English teachers who explore ways of how students should respond effectively to literature by putting active roles in their own learning.

In cooperative learning strategies, a teacher acts as a facilitator and provides guidance when necessary, while the students are cooperatively helping each other in understanding literary texts read. Studies have shown its effectiveness on students' social communication and academic achievements. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2000) emphasized that cooperative learning is one of the most effective techniques in improving the students' achievement. It involves students learning together in groups by helping one another to achieve specific goals. Therefore, it is important that the teacher assign students in heterogeneous group so that the weak students are able to get help from the high ability students in the group.

Wooley et al, (1990) cited in Blosser (1992) said that cooperative learning technique has been used successfully in science curriculum projects. The curriculum developers explained that the cooperative learning promotes academic achievement facilitates classroom, materials management and enhances students' self-esteem. They mentioned four types of cooperative learning method that promotes cooperative and collaborative learning among students.

1. Jigsaw

2. Student-Teams-Achievement-Divisions (STAD)

3. Team-Game-Tournament (TGT)

4. Group Investigation (GI)

Slavin (1988) cited in Blosser (1992) agreed that cooperative learning techniques such as, Team-Game-Tournament (TGT) is used appropriately in Science subject. He said that Team-Game-Tournament could be conducted in two to three days a week in order to learn basic concepts in Science and two days doing laboratory activities. At this age, students enjoy the challenge of the tournaments because they are competing with other group members who are of the same ability level with them. He further emphasized that, Student-Teams-Achievement-Divisions (STAD) method also can be used in Science subject by involving students compete among heterogeneous groups. It also involves students learning Science materials in teams and take quizzes as individuals. Individual scores will be added into their group scores. Therefore, it increases students' participation and improves their academic achievement as a whole.

Sharan and Sharan (1990) cited in Blosser (1992) emphasized that Group Investigation (GI) is an interesting and effective cooperative learning method used in teaching and learning Science because it involves more of student choice and control compared to other methods. It enables students to plan what they are supposed to study and how to conduct investigation in groups. First, the students form groups of common interest in the topic chosen. Take for instance, students chose a topic on living things. After that, they discuss in groups how to they go about research this topic before they divided the work among their members. Then, every group members will carry out their own part of investigation according to what had been discussed and agreed. When the students have completed their investigations, they will analyze and

evaluate the information obtained. Finally, they discuss how they could present the summary of the results of its investigation.

Another cooperative learning strategy that successfully used in Science subject is the Jigsaw method. This method promotes leadership skills among the students, as every group member needs to discuss with other group members (expert group) who have the same information. By doing this, students are more responsible in doing their work because they need to understand clearly the information given to them before they explain it to their original groups (Knight & Bohlmeier (1990) cited in Blosser (1992)).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Cooperative learning has been successfully used in other areas or fields and in other countries. Blosser (1992) stated that the used of cooperative learning in Science Education enables students sharing their responsibility to inform or help each other about the procedures and progress of their Science activities such as Science experiment in the lab. Whicker and Nunnery (1998) explains that students who studied general Mathematics in cooperative learning groups performed better than those working individually. Therefore, this study aims to find out the use of cooperative learning techniques in the literature classroom in Malaysia. Moreover, the inclusion of literature in our curriculum syllabus is an important element that promotes English proficiency among secondary school students. Carter and Long (1991) stated that the teaching of literature is a body of texts that provides students with language enrichment, to promote personal growth and development, as well as greater sensitivity and self awareness towards a better understanding of the world around them. It is meant to find out

whether teachers conduct cooperative learning in their literature classroom or not and the problems faced in conducting this technique in literature classroom.

Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to implement variety of strategies such as cooperative learning techniques in order to make literature more meaningful for the students to learn. Most important is to find out how teachers use the techniques in improving students' performances in literature. Generally, the teaching and learning of literature in English is not that easy for teachers and students.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to find out:

- i. whether teachers use cooperative learning techniques in their literature classroom
- ii. how teachers conduct/use cooperative learning techniques in their literature classroom.
- iii. the problems faced by teachers and students in using cooperative learning in literature classroom

1.4 Research Questions

This study will be carried out based on the following questions;

- i. Do teachers use cooperative learning techniques in their literature classroom?
- ii. What are the types of cooperative learning techniques used?
- iii. What are the cooperative learning activities included?
- iv. When and at what stage of the lesson do they use cooperative learning?
- v. What are the perceived benefits and problems faced by teachers and students in conducting cooperative learning techniques in literature classroom?

1.5 Significance of the study

The focus of this study is on whether English teachers use/conduct cooperative learning techniques/strategies in their literature classroom or not and problems they faced in conducting cooperative learning. It is hoped that, this study will provide some new insights for teachers on how cooperative learning can be used in the teaching and learning of literature. Besides that, this study will provide some important ideas for further research on conducting cooperative learning in literature in the future.

1.6 Key terms (Definition of terms)

a) Cooperative learning

Slavin (1990,p.2), cited in Macmanus & Gettinger (1997) stated that, cooperative learning is a process that involves students working together in groups to master material initially presented by the teacher. He said that the goal of cooperative learning is to help each other to perform successfully in their academic. Vaughan (2001) added that, cooperative learning refers to the instructional use of small heterogeneous groups of students working together and to maximize each other's learning in the group.

Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec (1987), cited in Vaughan (2001) mentioned five basic elements of cooperative learning;

- i) **positive interdependence** – Each student must commit to the success of other group members and one cannot succeed without others
- ii) **promotive interaction** (preferably face to face) – learners need to encourage and support each other's effort in the group

- iii) **individual and group accountability** – the entire group held accountable for achieving its goals, and each group member must be held accountable for making his or her contribution to the group
- iv) **collaborative skills** – the teaching of various social, leadership, decision making, and communication skills
- v) **group processing** – group members discuss how well they are doing and what group decisions are helpful. They can make changes when necessary.

b) Literature

Gurnam (2003) as cited in Ganakumaran (2003) stated that literature is a mirror of life where it engages learners intellectually, emotionally and linguistically. Carter and Long (1991) argued that literature is the most significant ideas and sentiments of human beings and it represents a means by which students can be put in touch with a range of expression. It often concerns about the universal value and validity over a historical period or periods. They further stated that the teaching of literature within a cultural model enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies, which is different from their own. However, literature can be a special resource for personal development and growth that aims to encourage greater sensitivity and self-awareness, and greater understanding of the world around us. Thus, literature is also considered a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching. Lazar (1993) stated that the general aim of using of literature in the classroom is meant to improve the students' proficiency in English language. It should be a fruitful way of involving the students as a whole person.

c) Literature in English

Carter and Long (1991) stated that literature in English refers to the use of literary text as a resource for the teaching of English language in the classroom. It includes the considerable diversity of literature that produced in the English language, which is not in the more obvious context of America but, also in other contexts such as in New Zealand and South Africa. Meaning that, some authors who are non-native speakers of the language preferred to use English as a medium of creative expression in their literature. Moreover, the study of literature in English refers to the reading of literature in English within an academic setting just for obtaining qualifications in literary studies.

1.7 Limitation of the study

This study is only limited to selected secondary school teachers who are teaching literature in English Language from both urban and rural secondary schools in Miri, So, this will not be able to represent the whole population of teachers teaching literature in English.

1.8 Summary

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the early stages of this research. This section consists of the background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, and the limitation of the study. The following chapter will discuss about the literature review related to this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is to review related studies carried out concerning how cooperative-learning techniques are conducted in literature classroom. The focus of this chapter is to discuss the cooperative learning techniques, differences between cooperative and collaborative learning, benefits of cooperative learning and possible problems faced by teachers in conducting cooperative learning. Besides that, it looks into the techniques of cooperative learning used by other researchers in other learning areas such as in Mathematics and students' behavior. These will be described in detail in this chapter.

2.1 Literature in Malaysia

Literature has been introduced in Malaysian schools even since the early periods of independence. However, in the year 1970s there was a change in the medium of instructions in schools from English to Malay language. This affects the teaching and learning of literature, as there was a declining in the standard of English. As mentioned earlier in this study that starting from the year 2000, literature was a compulsory subject learned in secondary schools and it has been officially included as a tested component in the secondary school ESL (English as a second language) syllabus.

2.2 Benefits of literature

The teaching and learning of literature in English provides personal enrichment as literature is a tool that encourages students to express their feelings and opinions towards literary text read.

In order to do these students need to use appropriate words such as adjectives that describe their feelings and opinions clearly and meaningfully. Therefore, acquisition or learning takes place as they are exposed to effective used of language structure in English.

Carter and Long (1991) identified three main areas of literary texts which could be beneficial for the teaching of literature. These are explained in the three models; cultural model, language model, and personal growth model. In cultural model, the teaching of literature is to enable students to understand and appreciate other peoples' cultures whose ideologies are much different from theirs. Whereas, the teaching of literature in language model is to put students in touch with more subtle and varied creative uses of language. As for personal growth model, the teaching of literature is to help students to have an engagement with the reading of literary texts and to engage with literature throughout their lives. Ganakumaran (2003, p.5), added that he turned his attention to use literature in English because this phenomenon has been recognized as a major contributor for the development of English as a world language.

2.3 Problems of teaching and learning literature

In spite of the benefits of teaching and learning literature, there are some problems encountered by learners. Firstly, the literary texts in the poems, short stories and novels are very difficult for the students to understand. Lazar (1993) agreed that there are indeed difficulties in learning literature because sometimes poetry and other genres depart from linguistic norms and contains multiple ambiguities of metaphorical language that caused students difficult to understand. Secondly, students are learning English as a second language in our country and as non-native speakers of English, they are sure to have trouble in learning the language. Ganakumaran