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EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON STUDENTS’ ACHIEVEMENT AND MOTIVATION IN READING COMPREHENSION

SHEIMAH A/P NALLASAMY

A project report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

Faculty of Education
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JULY 2012
I declare that this thesis entitled "Effects of Cooperative Learning on Students' Achievement and Motivation in Reading Comprehension" is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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To my beloved Nalla and Jashi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of Cooperative Learning on students’ achievement and motivation in reading comprehension. The teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning is also examined in order to gain a deeper understanding towards the effects of Cooperative Learning. This study was conducted on one class of form four students. It consisted of 32 students of heterogeneous language proficiency level. A Sequential Explanatory Research Design was used in the study. Students were taught for four weeks of reading comprehension using two Cooperative Learning methods which were the Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures. A Single Group Pre-test and Post-test Design were used to determine students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension. The Paired Sample T-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. The effects of Cooperative Learning on students’ motivation were examined using questionnaires. Besides, interviews were conducted to elicit the teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning. The results of the study showed that the students scored significantly higher in the post-test compared to the pre-test. In addition, students’ responses from the questionnaires indicated that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, anxiety, motivational strength and high task value had affected students’ motivation in a reading comprehension classroom using Cooperative Learning methods. Moreover, the teacher and students showed positive perceptions towards the Cooperative Learning methods which were carried out during the reading comprehension lessons. Based upon the conclusion drawn from this study, Cooperative Learning is recommended to be integrated as a part of English Language Teaching because it accommodates diversity of students’ level and creates an engaging and viable environment for reading comprehension lessons.
ABSTRAK

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL  -  Cooperative Learning
ELT -  English Language Teaching
MBMMBI - Memartabatkan Bahasa Melayu dan Memperkasakan Bahasa Inggeris
SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Science
NEP - National Philosophy of Education
PBS - Penilaian Berasaskan Sekolah
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In the pursuit of having world class education, the English Language Teaching (ELT) indisputably plays a vital role, because the quality of education relies greatly on what teachers do in classroom. Reading is one of the essential skills that one needs to master in English language and the importance of reading comprehension is undeniable. Thus, the changes in the way a teacher teaches and a student learns is a continuing professional concern. According to Pandian (2002), in this new global economics, English Language Teaching is a fundamental factor in the educational environment which needs to be addressed as a cause for concern so as to allow students to communicate with the rest of the world and gain a good future. Hence, the need to interact with others regardless of race, culture or age arises for every student. Therefore, the teacher could act as a catalyst and provide a head start from within the classroom.

According to Pandian (2002), the National Philosophy of Education (NEP) emphasised that the methods and strategies used in English Language classrooms need to cater towards individual development and language learning proficiency. The English Language taught in Malaysian schools has been given immense
importance and many programs and strategies are developed to fulfil the needs of acquiring the English language. The Ministry of Education’s policy ‘to uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to strengthen the English Language’ (MBMMBI) will be implemented from the year 2012 onwards is a great example of the government’s initiative to make English a priority in schools. Thus, teachers need to adopt and adapt different ELT approaches and methods in their classrooms for a conclusive and successful learning environment.

The Malaysian Education Ministry has specified four essential skills in the Malaysia School Curriculum Specifications, which consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2003). The integration of these four skills in all aspects of the English Language syllabus is based on three areas namely interpersonal, informational and aesthetic. Reading comprehension is one of the skills which is vital for students because it is tested in the Malaysian primary and secondary public examinations. There are many approaches and methods that can be easily implemented in teaching reading especially in teaching reading comprehension. Thus, in this study Cooperative Learning methods is being thoroughly applied in teaching reading strategies and is investigated in terms of its effectiveness towards achievement and motivation.

1.1 Background of the Study

Numerous approaches in teaching and learning reading have been researched and applied by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. One of the dynamic methods recommended in teaching and learning reading comprehension is the Cooperative Learning (Kagan 1995; Kessler, 1992; Slavin, 1983). Research has shown that Cooperative Learning provides the opportunities and shows effectiveness in the second language teaching (McGroarty, 1993; Putnam, 1985; Slavin, 1995b). In actual fact, according to Nor Azizah and Chong (2000), studies on Cooperative
Cooperative Learning have been done in Malaysia since the 1990’s. Besides, the Education Ministry of Malaysia has introduced Cooperative Learning in secondary and primary school curriculum as one of the methods in teaching English (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001).

According to Block, Gambrell and Pressely (2002), one of the important aspects in improving students’ achievement in English is through reading. In addition, Harmer (2006) stated that the significant element in reading is the comprehension itself. Thus, by reading it is believed that students will increase their level of English acquisition and proficiency. It is vital to discover the effective approaches in teaching reading for students in order for them to obtain and develop skills, knowledge, attitude and strategies that lead to reading proficiency (Shabaan, 2006). Reading comprehension is an essential tool in helping learners acquire knowledge in the subject matter. Thus, appropriate approaches and methodologies in teaching reading are needed for one to be proficient in the language. As students differ in their English Language proficiency as well as their acquisition level, so teaching methods and strategies have to be diverse in order to succeed beyond the classroom environment (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1989).

Cooperative Learning when used in teaching reading comprehension, enhances students progress in reading as it enables them to gain the skills in making inferences, summarising and concluding any text (Guthrie, Wigfield and VonSecker, 2000; Stevens, 2003; Slavin, 2000). Siegal (2005) pointed out that, in Cooperative Learning students work in small groups to solve any given tasks. According to Caine and Canie, 1991), this creates critical thinkers, because students become active learners as discussion play a large part in the reading process. Therefore, this is appropriate in reading comprehension tasks because it involves discussions among group members to enable them to understand the text and answer questions. Studies have shown that the Cooperative Learning affects students’ achievement and motivation in completing tasks (Jacob et al., 1996; Kagan 1994; Slavin, 2000). This is the issue which this study addresses.
1.2 Statement of Problem

There is a large body of literature on studies conducted pertaining to the effects of Cooperative Learning in various subjects. For the past years, numerous research had been carried out on Cooperative Learning over teacher centred methods in the English Language classrooms in which the effects on students’ achievement, motivation, and attitude were investigated (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1991; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1995b).

To comprehend reading materials successfully, students require adequate background knowledge to understand and discuss the text, to be able to relate to the reading better (Spiro, Bruce and Brewer, 1980). However, not all second language learners have sufficient background knowledge when they read and if students lack in prior knowledge, they will have difficulty in comprehending the text they read. In addition, Malaysian classrooms consist of different group of students who vary in their English proficiency whereby it is common to find a classroom of students with different levels of skills and knowledge. However, many approaches and methods used currently in teaching reading comprehension tend to overlook the problems that arise related to these matters. This study on the effects of Cooperative Learning is investigated because Cooperative Learning consist methods which are active and meaningful in which students are engaged in working together to share information among them regardless their differences in their proficiency and ability and it is appropriate for reading comprehension classroom (Kromrey and Purdom, 1995).

Teachers rarely use cooperative learning in their secondary school classrooms (Baines, Blatchford and Kutnick, 2003; Zakaria and Iksan, 2007). This matter arises because teachers tend to prefer teacher centred teaching methods (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). This is especially true in secondary schools where the teacher is the main focus and output is usually from the teacher and students merely receive the input and they tend to become passive learners. This process causes students to become inactive and demotivated which can hinder them from comprehending what
they read. In Malaysia, it is a common observation in the educational practice to use teacher-centred instructional approaches (Vadiveloo and Vijayarajoo, 2004). The teacher imparts knowledge to students and they tend to receive the information without a probing mind. Thus, students generic skills development is constrained (Bossert, 1988). This is because they depend on teachers who dominate the classroom and students seldom interact with others. This causes students to seldom have the opportunity to share ideas and opinions resulting in an inability to gain sufficient background knowledge and have less motivation which affects their achievement. Rote learning and students passiveness has since emerged from this teacher centred approach (Campbell, 2008). This affects students reading comprehension because students are reluctant to ask questions and tend to complete given tasks individually without having discussion with their peers. Therefore, many scholars believe that education must go beyond the rote learning approach (Fantuzzo et al., 2003; Lee and Tan, 2004; Ismail, 2005). Researchers have confirmed that Cooperative Learning is educationally useful to be used in any classroom. Thus, the need for teachers to bring changes into the classrooms have become a necessity in order to have a successful teaching and learning process in reading comprehension classrooms.

According to Siegel (2005), numerous educators have made modifications in Cooperative Learning methods. Cooperative Learning comprises various methods therefore it is essential for every teacher to make appropriate instructional choices in conveying suitable group tasks. Besides, Slavin (1995b) emphasized that Cooperative Learning pertaining to reading comprehension must be given importance because materials used in reading comprehensions are varied. Hence in the context of this study, Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures are combined accordingly to suit each reading comprehension tasks. This enables students to be engaged with the reading material and Cooperative Learning can be fully incorporated in the reading comprehension classroom.

Therefore, the need to use a new method from the norm in this particular context which caters to all level of students has arisen. Hence, in this study, the
Cooperative Learning method will be used in a classroom for reading comprehension in which the students’ achievement, motivation and the perception towards it will be researched.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.1. This conceptual framework shows the important key concepts of this research. The main key concept is the Cooperative Learning in which it is a strategy used as an instructional method in reading comprehension classroom. Cooperative Learning comprises many methods and in this study only two methods were chosen which are Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures.

Jigsaw II is a method in which group members are given the same materials and they are required to answer different questions. Students from other groups with the same questions to answer meet and become ‘experts’ in their given tasks. Expert in this context means that the students read and discuss with members for the appropriate answer, therefore each student in the group is confident to teach other when they are back in their own groups. Kagan Structures includes methods such as Round Robin, Pairs Check, Rally Read, and Team mate Consult. These methods from Kagan Structures are selected because they are suitable to be combined with Jigsaw II method in a single task.
The next key concept is reading comprehension. The two Cooperative Learning methods which are the Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures are used by students in groups to learn and solve reading comprehension tasks. Reading comprehension in this context consisted of narrative and descriptive texts with inferential, descriptive and multiple choice questions where students discussed and shared their ideas and opinions in their respective groups. Students’ achievement level in reading comprehension from the use of Cooperative Learning was
determined to see the effects of the methods carried out in the class. The effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation in reading comprehension was examined to know whether Cooperative Learning has motivated students to learn and be engaged in their reading comprehension tasks. Perception from teacher and students is the last key concept in this research. Their perception towards Cooperative Learning is needed in this study to explore the effects of these methods in classroom teaching and on students.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. to determine students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension using Cooperative Learning

2. to examine the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation in reading comprehension classroom

3. to explore the teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension classroom
1.5 Research Questions

The research questions in which this study has been designed to answer are:

1. What are the students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension using Cooperative Learning?

2. How do Cooperative Learning methods affect students’ motivation in reading comprehension classroom?

3. What are the teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension?

1.6 Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, there are several distinct terms and concepts that are important and they are defined as follows:

1.6.1 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is an approach used in classrooms. Students work in small heterogeneous groups in a learning situation in which they are given tasks to complete and achieve a specific shared goal (Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1994; Siegel, 2005; Slavin, 1995a) and this concept was applied in this study.
1.6.2 Jigsaw II

Jigsaw II in this study is a method that students in the same group are given the same material to read but different comprehension questions to answer. Then students with the same question meet and discuss. Next they return to their original group and help teach other members in the group. This is similar to Slavin’s (1986) method of Jigsaw II in which the students will become the ‘experts’ based on their given material and questions because they have discussed with other students from different groups with the same task.

1.6.3 Round Robin

Kagan (1994) describes Round Robin as students take turns to share ideas, opinions and information with others in group. This definition by Kagan was applied in this study.

1.6.4 Pairs Check

In a group of four members, students formed two pairs. In pairs students alternated their roles whereby one solves and the other coaches. After every problems are solved the pair checks the answer with the other pair (Kagan, 1994).

1.6.5 Rally Read

Rally Read is a method by Kagan (1994) where students take turns in reading sentences or paragraphs and in which this study had adopted.
1.6.6 Teammate Consult

Teammate Consult is a method developed by Kagan (1994). In this method all members in a group place their pens in a cup. Then members discuss ideas between them and take out the pens from the cup once the members have completed discussing. Students write the answers on their worksheet without talking with each other.

1.6.7 Reading comprehension

In this context of study, reading comprehension is for students to comprehend what they have read from different reading materials. It requires skimming and scanning for main ideas and supporting details, looking for detailed ideas, key words, phrases or sentences, sharing and comparing opinions.

1.6.8 Achievement

In this study, the achievement of the students in reading comprehension were determined when students were able to complete the given task with better answers and show improvement in test results.

1.6.9 Motivation

Motivation is the interest, enthusiasm and effort one has to do something with determination to achieve goals (MacMillan English Dictionary, 2002). Thus, in this
study the students’ motivation in completing given tasks through the use of Cooperative Learning is examined.

1.6.10 Perception

Perception refers to the teacher and students’ own point of view (MacMillan English Dictionary, 2002). In the context of this study, it refers towards the understanding and views regarding Cooperative Learning used in the classroom by the teacher and students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

There are a few significance effects which can be drawn from the study. Firstly, English Language teachers will benefit from this study because they are able to make informed decisions pertaining strategies, methods or approaches to teach reading comprehension. This is useful for teacher development in ways to teach students reading comprehension. This study also provides insights into the understanding between Cooperative Learning and students’ achievement which can help teachers to discover and implement this specific teaching approach for reading comprehension.

Secondly, through Cooperative Learning students work in small groups and this increases interaction between them to communicate with each other in order to complete specific tasks. This helps them to share ideas and opinions in completing their reading comprehension tasks. Students will discover and develop new skills such as leadership and generic skills because they gain equal opportunity to participate in their Cooperative Learning groups. In addition, students are trained to
interact, making compromises and collaborating regardless of their proficiency level or individual differences. This helps them to excel academically and socially inside the school and outside world.

Specific activities used in this Cooperative learning class can be used as a platform for further studies on the effects of Cooperative Learning. The perceptions of teacher and students in this particular research would help teachers in ways to use and improvise Cooperative Learning methods in reading comprehension classroom.

1.8 Limitations

This study acknowledges a few limitations. Firstly, this study investigates the effects on students’ achievement in reading comprehension. Therefore, effects on students’ improvement in listening or speaking were not measured. In addition, there are many methods used in Cooperative Learning, however, this study only focused on two specific methods. Hence the results and findings of this study cannot be generalized to other different types of Cooperative Learning methods. Besides, the findings of this study can be only generalized to similar context which examines students of similar characteristic in related setting.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has underlined the important issues related to the study. It has demonstrated the importance and merits of exploring the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ achievement in reading comprehension. The effects of
Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation were investigated. Perception from teacher and students were explored to provide more understanding towards the effects. This study had put forward few essential issues regarding Cooperative Learning which are important to the present development in education.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part of the literature review will discuss the concepts of Cooperative Learning, the principles underpinning Cooperative Learning and the methods used in reading comprehension. This is to establish an understanding of Cooperative Learning and the effective methods used for reading comprehension. The second part of the literature review will focus on the effects of Cooperative Learning towards achievement and motivation which are drawn from past studies in order to establish a meaningful discussion.

2.1 Concepts of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is an essential approach which is being dealt in this study. It is a frequently researched teaching approach in educational research and had shown many effects toward the teaching and learning process (Graham, 2005;
Maloof and White, 2005; Slavin, Hurley and Chamberlain, 2003; Johnson and Johnson, 1999). Cooperative Learning consists of many methods and for this reason, the merits of Cooperative Learning methods in ELT need to be explored in order to provide deeper understanding on the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ achievement and motivation.

Johnson and Johnson (1994) stated that Cooperative Learning is when students are grouped together to solve tasks with a shared goal. Holding the same view, Kagan (1994) pointed out that in heterogeneous group, students work successfully and effectively. Heterogeneously grouped students are vital in Cooperative Learning because basically many classrooms accommodate not only mixed ability students but students of different background, culture and environment. There will always be differences in proficiency level. Hence the need to bring all students together through Cooperative Learning methods to accomplish a shared goal is the fundamentals of Cooperative Learning. Holding the similar view, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that heterogeneous group consist of learners with high, intermediate and low level of proficiency in which needs to be combined for a group to work productively. Productivity in work is produced when students come together by exchanging and sharing ideas, negotiating and interacting to attain a shared goal. Fathman and Kessler (1993) for instance claimed that active learning process is created when students work together. Active learning process is produced when there is engagement between students during tasks. Cooperative Learning methods do incorporate engaging methods which involves discussion and group work between group members.

Johnson and Johnson (1994) had argued that putting students in group does not define the real Cooperative Learning because the latter consists of carefully structured methods with specific steps. Since Cooperative Learning consists more than hundred techniques (Jacobs, Power and Loh, 2002), there is a need to choose appropriate Cooperative Learning methods which suits the students and tasks. Sharing the same view, Davidson and Worsham (1992) pointed out that the materials
and methods used in Cooperative Learning needs to be suitable. Reading comprehension is one of the skill that every English Language students need to master. In view of the fact that Cooperative Learning has shown the effects toward its usage in classrooms, it is a necessity to incorporate Cooperative Learning with chosen methods in reading comprehension because it addresses the merits of Cooperative Learning in ELT.

2.2 Importance of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is vital because it has many benefits in the teaching and learning process carried out in English classrooms. According to Harris and Hanley (2004), Cooperative Learning helps to answer many academic issues in the classrooms. Academic issues faced in reading comprehension classrooms such as students struggling to comprehend the text they read, their inability to share, discuss ideas and problem solving with peers and classroom domination by teacher are some crucial issues which need attention.

The important factor in determining how well students are able to comprehend the text they read depends on their level of knowledge about the topic. The knowledge is often related to prior knowledge and according to Anderson and Pearson (1984), background knowledge provides a framework for students in reading texts. This can be interpreted as, if a student is reading a text about gymnastic, he or she needs to have general knowledge of this sport to ensure comprehension in reading the text. One of the reasons for second language learners struggle in comprehending the text they read is the lack in background knowledge. Therefore, students whose knowledge of a subject matter is inadequate will have difficulty comprehending much of what they read. Uttero (1988) affirms that Cooperative Learning helps to activate background knowledge for reading comprehension. In
Cooperative Learning students work in groups, therefore, they are able to get the background knowledge from their group members when they hold discussions among themselves. Thus, background knowledge is transmitted which helps them in understanding and comprehending the reading comprehension text.

As discussed earlier, lack in background knowledge may hinder students’ understanding of the text and the inability to share and discuss ideas with peers may also cause hindrance. Cooperative Learning enables students to interact and assist each other to complete a given task (Gillies, 2006; Lin, 2006; Parker, 1985, Sahin, 2010; Slavin, 1992). In Cooperative Learning, students are required to work in groups whereby each student is given the opportunity to interact. By discussing among themselves in a group, students are able to help each other in bringing out new ideas.

In Jigsaw II students take on specific roles and they are required to execute their role in completing the tasks. A leader in a Cooperative group needs to communicate with all members and bring the group ideas together. In addition, Kagan Structures have methods in which students take turns to speak thus, this creates a platform for the group members to interact. Ghaith (2003), added that interaction between group members creates both output and input. Output in interaction refers to when students give ideas and share opinions on the text being read. Students receive input when they listen to others and gain information to answer the reading comprehension questions. According to Slavin (1993), students will adjust input accordingly to group members.

In a Cooperative Learning group there are low proficiency students, thus the other members will try to help the weaker students by giving in more information and help. Holding the same view, Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993) said that interaction in Cooperative Learning maximizes the group members learning regardless their differences in proficiency level. On the other hand, Jacob’s et al
(1996) study on Cooperative Learning in a classroom showed that even though students received both output and input they missed the opportunities to acquire academic English because the interaction between members in group is limited to correcting sentences and clarifying instructions. However, interaction through Cooperative Learning methods brings out students’ confidence in asking questions and sharing ideas which helps in reading comprehension. This is because Cooperative Learning methods provides a platform for students to build and gain knowledge. They negotiate through the opportunities provided in Cooperative Learning methods which able them to increase their proficiency level which helps to comprehend texts.

Teacher centred instructional practice is used in many English Language classrooms (Vadivello and Vijayarajoo, 2004; Zakaria and Iksan, 2007), this can be interpreted in terms of teacher dominates the teaching and learning process in English Language classroom. Teacher tends to do all the speaking by explaining to students the meaning of the words, texts and the students just listen. Students receive the input from teacher and the output is only given during the examinations. Therefore this leads to rote learning because students tend to avoid understanding the real meaning of the text. The reading comprehension questions are answered just by selecting the answers from the text without comprehending the text itself. Students transfer the information from the text directly without synthesising it to the whole text. However, a teacher who uses Cooperative Learning in classrooms becomes the facilitator and monitors the students with instructions and feedbacks. Teacher talks and commands are less in this classroom compared to teacher centred classroom. In addition, students work collectively and interact with each other in completing given tasks. They are able to think, discuss, negotiate and have their point of view across before and during the process of completing the tasks. Sharing the same view, Mc Groarty (1989), pointed out that if students have more opportunities to talk it is beneficial for them.
2.3 Principles of Cooperative Learning

Principles are the main elements in structuring Cooperative Learning and many scholars share the same views on the principles but there are minor differences in them and this will be discussed. Johnson and Johnson (1991) stated five principles and they are ‘Positive Interdependence’, ‘Face to Face Interaction’, ‘Individual Accountability’, ‘Social Skills’ and ‘Group Processing’. Kagan (1994) had also stated four basic principles in Cooperative Learning they are ‘Positive Interdependence’, ‘Individual Accountability’, ‘Equal Participation’ and ‘Simultaneous Interaction’. Each of these principles has its own speciality and differences.

The first principle is ‘Positive Interdependence’ and it stresses on the fact that the success of a group depends from the joint effort of all the group members (Johnson and Johnson, 1991; Kagan, 1994). Group members are interwoven with each other because in order for the group to accomplish their goal the members need to realise that if a member fails it will affect the whole group success. Sharan (1980) stresses that each student has two responsibilities which is to understand the material given and make sure other members understand it as well. If there is no cooperation between members there is a possibility that they will not achieve their shared goal. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994), there are three ways to structure interdependence; the first is positive interdependence as explained before, followed by role interdependence and resource interdependence. Role interdependence happens when students are assigned specific roles in a group. This can be interpreted as students are given a role like ‘leader’, ‘recorder’, ‘checker’ or ‘timer’ they need to be aware of their own responsibility in which they have to work together cooperatively. Even though they have specific roles, students still need to tutor and encourage each other to have positive correlation among the outcomes. In resource interdependence, students need to share materials, ideas and opinions because sharing enables students to develop sufficient understanding which is needed to comprehend texts. In addition, weaker students gain much knowledge and they are
motivated through interdependence because they get assisted throughout the process by their group members.

The second principle is ‘Face to Face Interaction’ (Johnson and Johnson, 1991). This principle requires members in group to interact through sharing of ideas and opinions, giving and receiving explanations, discussing, having expectations, and being supportive. In addition, this principle promotes group interaction which creates dynamic cooperation between members. Holding the same view, Kagan’s Cooperative Learning principle which is ‘Simultaneous Interaction’ correlates with ‘Face to face interaction’. However, Kagan (1995) proposed that the percentage of learners in groups of four will overtly be engaged in tasks because it creates more interactions compared to groups of five or more. Meanwhile, in ‘Face to Face Interaction’ there is no information on whether the number of students will have effects on interaction. Thus, a teacher may perceive that a group of seven students will have the same engagement level in interaction as in group of four students.

The third principle which is ‘Individual Accountability’ and it stresses on the need of each member in a group contributing equally as other member in the group (Johnson and Johnson, 1991). Each student in a group is accountable for the group success and they need to be responsible in completing the given tasks. Each member could contribute marks to the group if they succeed in a given tasks and group grades are given. However, Kagan (1994) points out that individual accountability is important but the way to structure individual accountability is through individual assessments like tests, quizzes, and even question and answer sessions in class. Even though students are required to work cooperatively in a group to achieve shared goal there are times where they need to be tested individually for the teacher to see whether the student has achieved the given tasks. There are possibilities that a few students in a group will not cooperate but gain benefits from others without putting in effort. Hence, Kagan (1995) stresses that individual grades are better compared to group grades.
The fourth principle is ‘Social Skills’, and it is a necessity for all group members to be taught beforehand these skills. Social skills are required to structure Cooperative learning because they have many benefits in facilitating interaction and communication with group members. Students are able to communicate, have good attitude, have the ability to listen and not be dominating while being in a Cooperative Learning group. Johnson and Johnson (1994) pointed out that social skills may hinder success of a group if there is no prior teaching of these skills. This is because social skills enable students to work cooperatively without having many problems in their team.

‘Group Processing’ involves the teacher and students’ analysing, discussing and reflecting on the group work that they have carried out and ways to improve. The teacher then would give feedback after each class ends so that students will be able to think and reflect on the teacher’s comments. Besides, Johnson and Johnson’s five main principles on Cooperative Learning did not emphasis on the structuring of interaction among group members in order to have equal participation. However, Kagan (1994) stresses that ‘Equal Participation’ is needed to create structured group whereby all students in a group will have equal chance to verbalize. A teacher is unable to control the contribution of a student towards a group but could create opportunities for the student to contribute.

2.4 Cooperative Learning Methods

Cooperative Learning methods were introduced in the 1970’s but only gain recognition and seen its importance in the 80 s. These methods were then substitute as an alternative methods to teacher-centred teaching and seen as an alternative to teacher centred teaching (Slavin, 1985). There are many methods used by teachers in
promoting Cooperative Learning. However, this study will only examine two Cooperative Learning methods which are the Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures.

There are various Cooperative Learning methods developed and researched in different classroom environment. These are the few common Cooperative Learning methods which are used by teachers and researchers. Firstly the, ‘Learning Together’ (Johnson and Johnson 1987), based on the five Cooperative Learning principles which was discussed in the previous section. ‘Teams Games Tournament’ (DeVries and Edwards, 1974), consist of students group competing with one another on a weekly tournaments like quizzes. Next, is the ‘Student Teams Achievement Divisions’ (Slavin, 1990), in which students work in a Cooperative Learning group but they will be tested individually and the scores will be rewarded to their respective group. ‘Group Investigative Method’ (Sharan and Sharan, 1992) is designed to lead students in group according to topic interest, researching and carrying out the plan about the topic and presenting it to the class. ‘Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition’ (Stevens et al., 1987) stresses on group works and the teacher works with one team at a time while the other groups work with their reading materials. The teams are occupied with activities and teacher’s instruction. Lastly, ‘Jigsaw II’ (Slavin, 1986) and ‘Kagan Structures’ (Kagan, 1994) are Cooperative Learning methods which will be discussed next.

2.4.1 Jigsaw II

Jigsaw was first designed by Aronson et al (1978) and Slavin (1986) modified that method and named it Jigsaw II. In this study the Jigsaw II method is used in the reading comprehension classroom and it is one of the Cooperative Learning methods. In this method students have their home group (original group) and Jigsaw group (expert group). In home group, students will be given same
materials but they have different questions to complete. Those with the same questions will join and form an expert group. In expert groups students discuss and find solution for their questions. Here students not only interact with each other but they will try their level best to find answers for the questions because they need to explain and teach their home group members later. Students tend to think critically and be prepared with questions that may arise later in home group. Discussions with expert group boost students’ level of confidence when they are explaining and answering home group questions. Jigsaw II also creates active participation through peer teaching (Sahin, 2010), in which students have two deep discussion, one with expert group and another with home group. With these it creates deeper understanding towards a text being read.

2.4.2 Kagan Structures

Structures are series of methods with prescribed behaviour for each step (Kagan, 1988). Kagan structures are easy to be used by educators with any syllabus content. These structures can also be used for reading comprehension tasks and each structure has its own different functions which suits the reading strategies.

There are over two hundred Kagan Structures (Kagan, 1994) used as Cooperative Learning methods. The four chosen ones are the ‘round robin’, ‘pairs check’, ‘rally read’ and ‘teammate consult’. These structures promote numerous skills for students, in collaborating, clarifying, and also interpersonal skills are learned. Students learn to share ideas, question each other and be patience till all members complete the given task. Moreover, these methods develop and enhance students’ skills (Kagan, 1994), because students tend to learn, follow skills from group members and eventually appreciate them. Each member is given equal opportunities to build their personal characters through the methods. This motivates
them to be engaged in the task because each individual is given attention and importance. Hence, no members will be left behind during tasks.

2.5 Effects of Cooperative Learning

Studies carried out on Cooperative Learning usually explore its effects towards students in classrooms. The effects depend on many aspects of methods used, subject and content and many more. According to Slavin (1990), the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning depends on a particular method used. Numerous researches have brought out positive outcomes. Reynolds and Miller (2003) point out that many studies on Cooperative Learning method have shown positive effects especially on students’ achievement but more needs to be explored. Besides achievement, students’ motivation too does get influenced by Cooperative Learning. There are numerous methods in Cooperative Learning. However, there is a need to combine Cooperative Learning methods in order to have better outcomes in a subject matter and in this aspect particularly in reading comprehension. Students’ level of achievement, their motivation and their views towards Cooperative Learning are significant which needs more clarification in order to develop deeper understanding which would benefit ELT.

2.5.1 Achievement

Cooperative Learning has shown positive effects towards students’ achievement. Achievement increases for all students regardless of their proficiency level in English. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2000) stated that 164 studies that
were carried out on Cooperative Learning methods had proven that students’ achievement level increased. Furthermore, heterogeneously grouped students in reading comprehension classroom using Cooperative Learning methods also show that students’ achievement level increased (Slavin, 1983; 1995b). Thus, this shows that these methods and heterogeneous grouping are essential aspects in Cooperative Learning which has effects on students’ achievement.

In addition, Slavin (1993) did a study on students’ achievement in Cooperative Learning classroom and the findings show students who were helpful and those who give many explanations were the ones who had most increment in their achievement level. Students who work cooperatively in a heterogeneous group, helping and assisting one another on a given task usually successfully achieve their goal in completing their task effectively. Besides, weak achievers will receive more explanations and benefit from this because they are able to gain insights from team members. Discussions are vital because they bring out students’ background knowledge, opinions, and doubtful questions. These are important because group members are able to share their thoughts which create better understanding in reading comprehension.

Teacher centred classrooms may hinder students’ capability in reading comprehension because students only receives input from teacher but there is no output at the same time. Output is only done during tests or question and answer sessions with teacher. Low proficiency students may have no prior knowledge about the texts being read and this may affect their reading because they are unable to relate with the text. Here Cooperative Learning is needed because students work in groups and they are able to share their background knowledge and teach each other. With the Cooperative Learning methods every member has equal opportunities to interact and share their opinions, thus there is output and input.
Slavin (1983) claimed that students regardless of their race, culture and ethnicity when placed in a Cooperative Learning group will gain knowledge. Sharing the same view, Peterson and Miller (2003) claimed that a large body of research showed students’ achievement level increased even though they come from mixed ethnicity and background. Therefore, this shows that Cooperative Learning methods are good in bringing the gap between high and low achievers closer because in a typical Malaysian classroom usually comprises of different level of students. For this reason, Cooperative Learning does accommodate the solution for mixed ethnicity and mixed ability students.

2.5.2 Motivation

Motivation has impact on reading (Shabaan, 2006; Slavin, 1984) and according to few scholars one main effects of Cooperative Learning is on students’ motivation (Johnson et al., 1981; Slavin and Cooper, 1999). To begin with, this shows that Cooperative Learning could be used in reading comprehension classes and it does bring effects towards students’ motivation.

Sharan and Shachar (1988) conducted a study on secondary school students and found that low achievers talked more in a Cooperative Learning based classroom compared to those in teacher centred classroom. Cooperative Learning methods provides students with equal opportunities to interact among themselves. Methods like in Kagan structures require students to talk during group works. When these types of opportunities are provided in these methods, students have no choice but to interact with others. Sharing the same view, Davidson and Worshan (1992) investigated Cooperative Learning in a heterogeneous class and found that low proficiency students showed improvement because they were motivated during the group work. It shows that low proficiency students are provided with a platform for them to talk using the language thus this automatically motivates them to interact with the rest of the members. Besides, it also boosts their self confidence in getting
them to talk. These students usually face lack of confidence in them due to lots of surrounding factor for example broken family, shy of being laughed at or afraid of making mistakes. Thus, with this Cooperative Learning method, these students are motivated to have the courage to speak and fear no one. Cooperative Learning methods require direct involvement from students. It also provides multiple opportunities for students to expand their knowledge and help them in comprehend their reading. Thus, when students interact through opportunities created in Cooperative learning methods, they will be motivated and this will help them in their reading comprehension tasks.

In contrast, in teacher led classrooms students do not have equal opportunities to interact. This is because high proficiency students tend to dominate the class discussion as they have the language and those low achievers will be overshadowed. Moreover, students compete for individual goal because there is no need in helping their peers. However, in Cooperative Learning students with different ability levels are able to work together without overriding each other because they work in groups and share a common goal. This is supported by Slavin (1987) whereby he states there is no competition when Cooperative Learning is used as students learn to help each other because they perceive themselves as one unit.

Studies on Cooperative Learning methods showed that students tend to project good social behaviour like being supportive, helpful, encouraging with praises, giving positive feedbacks when they are motivated to achieve their shared goal (Aronson et al., 1978; Johnson and Johnson, 1992; 1994; Slavin, 1987; 1995a). This can be perceived as, students work cooperatively in groups do feel motivated because they have peer support from group members and when one is unable to complete the given task, other members will help because they depend on each other to attain mutual goal. Similarly, numerous scholars mostly states that Cooperative Learning creates active learning which rings positive effects towards students’ motivation (Bowen, 2000; Levine, 2001; Lin, 2006). Active learning happens when students receive input from group members, which helps them in their tasks hence,
reducing their anxiety level. Students feel comfortable in communicating and participating in group tasks and here their motivation level increase. Giving feedbacks and seeking clarifications are important skills in reading comprehension thus through Cooperative Learning they are able to do those as it motivates them to be engaged in the tasks.

However, there is also a negative impact when Cooperative Learning was being carried out. A study conducted by Jacob et al (1996) on Cooperative Learning in an English classroom, showed that some students did not ask questions during group tasks and a few low achievers were looked down by their own group members. Besides, the findings also showed that the students did not follow instructions because they were engrossed in completing the given tasks. Here it shows that motivation to complete the task was there but it did not fulfil the objective of Cooperative Learning to cultivate motivation among the students because students were not engaged in their group. This shows that teacher needs to intervene in order to carry out a Cooperative Learning based lessons, and the teacher should be well verse with the requirements of conducting this Cooperative Learning. By forgoing one requirement, the whole process fails to provide good results and unable to achieve the Cooperative Learning objectives.

2.6 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension needs to be accomplished by language learners starting from the young age because it is beneficial for one in order to acquire and be proficient in the language (Stevens, Slavin and Farnish, 1991). Success in reading comprehension is vital because it is the basic foundation for all academic endeavours. Reading comprehension not only requires students to read but also it integrates writing, listening and speaking.
Cooperative Learning is an active process because the students take on active role in it. Students in groups discuss and share ideas thus this brings out and build their background knowledge which is an important aspect for them to be able to relate to the reading text. Through the Cooperative Learning methods students discuss and resolve their own doubts on the reading comprehension text with group members because they are given opportunities. These opportunities are produced by the methods for students to interact with each other and solve their tasks. Holding the same view, Radebaugh and Kazemek (1989) stated that Cooperative Learning does benefits reading comprehension.

Block and Pressley (2007) suggested that all students need to have a goal, be active readers and use their prior knowledge to be good in reading comprehension. Through Cooperative Learning methods this is achievable because students work in group and they share a common goal. Since Cooperative Learning group consists of low, intermediate and high achievers there is a possibility that a few students may not have sufficient background knowledge to relate with the text. Therefore, they are able to get that knowledge from their group members while on discussion.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter had emphasized the merits of Cooperative Learning methods in ELT in general and reading comprehension lesson in particular. Cooperative Learning has potential in second language classrooms especially in reading comprehension skills. The sections had discussed the principles and methods of Cooperative Learning and explored the merits of Cooperative Learning in language classrooms to make it successful.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used in the study. There are four main sections which consist of research design, participants and sampling, research instrument, research procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The research design used for this study is the quasi experimental design. Figure 3.1 shows the design of this research. One class (A) was used in this study, which the students were given pre test (O) to test their reading comprehension skills before the Cooperative learning methods were used in their reading comprehension classroom. Then the treatment (X) which incorporates both Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures’ as Cooperative Learning methods were used during the reading comprehension lessons. This was followed by post test (O).
This study employed mixed methods design because it is to expand the understanding and perspective by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). The overall research design for this study is shown in Figure 3.2. It describes the Sequential Explanatory Design whereby the research focuses more on quantitative. Creswell (2009) pointed out that weighting in mixed method study is important because it influences the design. In this study, quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The qualitative data were collected to provide information for quantitative data. Quantitative data collections were from students’ tests and questionnaire and the qualitative data collection were from the interviews conducted.

(McMillan, 1990:202)

Table 3.2 The overall research design

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<tr>
<th>QUAN</th>
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(Creswell, 2009:209)
3.2 Participants and Sampling

The selection of the students for this study included one teacher and one secondary four classroom students taught by that particular teacher. The students were drawn from one secondary four classroom which consisted of 32 students. The selection process used for this study was purposive sampling. In the context of this study, Cooperative learning involves heterogeneous grouping, and according to Kagan (1994) a Cooperative Learning group must consist of mixed ability students. Hence this is the appropriate method to be used because it will identify the specific characteristic needed for this study. In this sample 32 students were chosen based on their Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) English results. The sample consisted of 8 grade A students, 16 grade B students and 8 grade C students. These 32 students were divided into 8 groups whereby each group consisted of 4 students. Four students were selected for each group because according to Kagan (1989), in a group there should be four students to have equal participation in tasks. In this study there was an activity (Rally Robin) in which students had to work in pairs in their group of four members so it was appropriate to have four member group because they were able to divide themselves equally. The teacher selected for this study has 12 years of experience in teaching English especially Form Four students.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instruments used in this study comprised of tests, questionnaires and semi structured interview questions. Table 3.1 shows the instruments that were used in relation with specific research questions. Tests were the instrument chosen to address research question one, which is to determine students’ achievement level in their reading comprehension. Questionnaire was used to investigate students’ motivation. Information was elicited from the interviews to provide more information. For research question three, semi structured interviews were conducted
to explore the perception of the teacher and students. In addition the answers drawn from the questionnaires helped in giving better understanding towards teacher and students’ perception relating to the Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension lessons.

Table 3.3 Methods on how research questions are addressed

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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<td>RQ 1 : What are the students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension using Cooperative Learning?</td>
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<td>Paired Sample T-test</td>
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<td>RQ 2 : How does Cooperative Learning methods affect students motivation in reading comprehension classroom?</td>
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<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
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<td>RQ 3 : What are the students’ and teacher’s perception towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension?</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
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<td>Narrative Analysis</td>
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3.3.1 Tests

In this study, students were given two tests which are the pre-test and post-test. These tests were used to determine students’ level of achievement in reading
comprehension. The students were tested individually on their reading comprehension before they started using Cooperative Learning methods in reading comprehension tasks. After four weeks of using Cooperative Learning methods students were tested again individually in the post-test. The format for the reading comprehension tests were adapted from the format of Sijil Penilaian Menengah (SPM) examination paper 2 Section C which comprises open ended questions. Both pre-test and post-test had the same level of difficulty. The tests were conducted for an hour. The class materials for students given during their treatments were a mixture of multiple choice questions from revision books and open ended questions. All test papers were checked for validity by two English Language teachers. (Appendices B1 and B2)

3.3.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used to examine the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation in reading comprehension classroom. This questionnaire was adapted from Schmidt, Boraie and Kassabgy (1996) and Schmidt and Watanabe, (2001). Permission was sought from the author pertaining to the use of the adapted questionnaire (Appendix A). This questionnaire consists of 20 items developed into 6 points Likert scale and was given to students at the end of treatment. The questions used were to investigate whether Cooperative Learning has affected their motivation in the reading comprehension classroom. (Appendix C)

3.3.3 Interview

In this study, semi structured interviews were conducted to explore teacher and students’ perception on Cooperative Learning. Face to face interviews were carried out at the end of the study. For this qualitative data the interviewees consisted of the teacher and six students. For the students’ interview, two sessions were held whereby each session consisted of 3 students and the researcher. A list of
questions was developed to draw the teacher’s and students’ perception and views relating to Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension. This was to gain extra information, and it is intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. The questions consisted of open ended questions for both teacher and students. The researcher audio recorded and transcribed the group interviews. (Appendices D1 and D2)

3.4 Procedure of Research

The research procedure for this study is shown in Figure 3.1. The first step in this research procedure is the researcher briefed the teacher on Cooperative Learning methods in conducting reading comprehension lessons. The session included briefing on Cooperative Learning methods which are Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures. This session was essential because the teacher was able to ask questions and clarify doubts about the methods. Teacher’s knowledge on Cooperative Learning is important in this study because the teacher is the one who handles, facilitates and gives instruction to the class during reading comprehension lessons.

In week 1, pre-test was given to each student to test on their reading comprehension level. Then in team building, students were divided into their respective heterogeneous groups and they were required to introduce themselves and name their groups. Besides, students were assigned specific roles namely, leader, recorder, timer and checker. This study adapted Kagan (1989) role description, a ‘leader’ leads the group in discussion and makes sure all members contribute in the discussions. The ‘recorder’ jots down notes from the discussion made in the group and the ‘timer’ makes sure the group members complete all their tasks in the given time. Lastly, the ‘checker’ makes sure all the members complete their answers in the given handouts. These roles were rotated each week hence every student in the group had the chance to be in each specific role.
The teacher gave reading comprehension texts and explained the texts in general. The handouts consisted of Reading Comprehension and Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ). Students used the Jigsaw II method in which they got into their expert groups and discussed about one specific question. Then the ‘expert’ group returned to their original group and took turns in explaining the answer to group

**Figure 3.1** Research procedures for this study
members. Kagan Structure which consisted of Round Robin, Pairs Check, Rally Robin and Teammate Consult were also used to discuss and answer the questions. Table 3.4 shows the use of these methods specifically during treatments.

Table 3.4 Cooperative Learning methods used in the reading comprehension lessons

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<tr>
<th>Cooperative Learning</th>
<th>Open ended questions</th>
<th>MCQ’s</th>
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<td>Jigsaw II</td>
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<td>Round Robin</td>
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<td>Pairs Check</td>
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<td>Rally Robin</td>
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<td>Teammate Consult</td>
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Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension lessons were conducted for four weeks. For each week there were four lessons in which each lesson was for forty minutes. In week five each student were given questionnaire to examine their motivation towards Cooperative Learning which were used in their reading comprehension classroom. Then each student sat for their post-test individually to determine their reading comprehension level. Interview was the last research procedure in the data collection process.

3.5 Data analysis

The data from the pre test and post test were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The Paired Sample T-test was used for pre-test and post-test to determine whether there is any significance gain in which mean scores, standard deviation, margins of improvement and decline are tested. The
questionnaires on motivation were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics where percentages were measured. The semi structured interviews were analyzed in a narrative manner to describe the teacher’s and students’ perception regarding Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension classroom. The themes were elicited from the students and teacher’s responses were used as the analysis of Cooperative Learning effects.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter had discussed the methodology of this study. The effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ achievement in reading comprehension were investigated through tests analyzed using SPSS. The effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation were examined using questionnaire. Perceptions towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension classroom were explored with semi structured interviews and analyzed in a narrative manner. This chapter had discussed the process and procedure for the research which had been carried out.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In the pursuit of having world class education, the English Language Teaching (ELT) indisputably plays a vital role, because the quality of education relies greatly on what teachers do in classroom. Reading is one of the essential skills that one needs to master in English language and the importance of reading comprehension is undeniable. Thus, the changes in the way a teacher teaches and a student learns is a continuing professional concern. According to Pandian (2002), in this new global economics, English Language Teaching is a fundamental factor in the educational environment which needs to be addressed as a cause for concern so as to allow students to communicate with the rest of the world and gain a good future. Hence, the need to interact with others regardless of race, culture or age arises for every student. Therefore, the teacher could act as a catalyst and provide a head start from within the classroom.

According to Pandian (2002), the National Philosophy of Education (NEP) emphasised that the methods and strategies used in English Language classrooms need to cater towards individual development and language learning proficiency. The English Language taught in Malaysian schools has been given immense
importance and many programs and strategies are developed to fulfil the needs of acquiring the English language. The Ministry of Education’s policy ‘to uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to strengthen the English Language’ (MBMMBI) will be implemented from the year 2012 onwards is a great example of the government’s initiative to make English a priority in schools. Thus, teachers need to adopt and adapt different ELT approaches and methods in their classrooms for a conclusive and successful learning environment.

The Malaysian Education Ministry has specified four essential skills in the Malaysia School Curriculum Specifications, which consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2003). The integration of these four skills in all aspects of the English Language syllabus is based on three areas namely interpersonal, informational and aesthetic. Reading comprehension is one of the skills which is vital for students because it is tested in the Malaysian primary and secondary public examinations. There are many approaches and methods that can be easily implemented in teaching reading especially in teaching reading comprehension. Thus, in this study Cooperative Learning methods is being thoroughly applied in teaching reading strategies and is investigated in terms of its effectiveness towards achievement and motivation.

1.1 Background of the Study

Numerous approaches in teaching and learning reading have been researched and applied by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. One of the dynamic methods recommended in teaching and learning reading comprehension is the Cooperative Learning (Kagan 1995; Kessler, 1992; Slavin, 1983). Research has shown that Cooperative Learning provides the opportunities and shows effectiveness in the second language teaching (McGroarty, 1993; Putnam, 1985; Slavin, 1995b). In actual fact, according to Nor Azizah and Chong (2000), studies on Cooperative
Learning have been done in Malaysia since the 1990’s. Besides, the Education Ministry of Malaysia has introduced Cooperative Learning in secondary and primary school curriculum as one of the methods in teaching English (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001).

According to Block, Gambrell and Pressely (2002), one of the important aspects in improving students’ achievement in English is through reading. In addition, Harmer (2006) stated that the significant element in reading is the comprehension itself. Thus, by reading it is believed that students will increase their level of English acquisition and proficiency. It is vital to discover the effective approaches in teaching reading for students in order for them to obtain and develop skills, knowledge, attitude and strategies that lead to reading proficiency (Shabaan, 2006). Reading comprehension is an essential tool in helping learners acquire knowledge in the subject matter. Thus, appropriate approaches and methodologies in teaching reading are needed for one to be proficient in the language. As students differ in their English Language proficiency as well as their acquisition level, so teaching methods and strategies have to be diverse in order to succeed beyond the classroom environment (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1989).

Cooperative Learning when used in teaching reading comprehension, enhances students progress in reading as it enables them to gain the skills in making inferences, summarising and concluding any text (Guthrie, Wigfield and VonSecker, 2000; Stevens, 2003; Slavin, 2000). Siegal (2005) pointed out that, in Cooperative Learning students work in small groups to solve any given tasks. According to Caine and Canie, 1991), this creates critical thinkers, because students become active learners as discussion play a large part in the reading process. Therefore, this is appropriate in reading comprehension tasks because it involves discussions among group members to enable them to understand the text and answer questions. Studies have shown that the Cooperative Learning affects students’ achievement and motivation in completing tasks (Jacob et al., 1996; Kagan 1994; Slavin, 2000). This is the issue which this study addresses.
1.2 Statement of Problem

There is a large body of literature on studies conducted pertaining to the effects of Cooperative Learning in various subjects. For the past years, numerous research had been carried out on Cooperative Learning over teacher centred methods in the English Language classrooms in which the effects on students’ achievement, motivation, and attitude were investigated (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1991; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1995b).

To comprehend reading materials successfully, students require adequate background knowledge to understand and discuss the text, to be able to relate to the reading better (Spiro, Bruce and Brewer, 1980). However, not all second language learners have sufficient background knowledge when they read and if students lack in prior knowledge, they will have difficulty in comprehending the text they read. In addition, Malaysian classrooms consist of different group of students who vary in their English proficiency whereby it is common to find a classroom of students with different levels of skills and knowledge. However, many approaches and methods used currently in teaching reading comprehension tend to overlook the problems that arise related to these matters. This study on the effects of Cooperative Learning is investigated because Cooperative Learning consist methods which are active and meaningful in which students are engaged in working together to share information among them regardless their differences in their proficiency and ability and it is appropriate for reading comprehension classroom (Kromrey and Purdom, 1995).

Teachers rarely use cooperative learning in their secondary school classrooms (Baines, Blatchford and Kutnick, 2003; Zakaria and Iksan, 2007). This matter arises because teachers tend to prefer teacher centred teaching methods (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). This is especially true in secondary schools where the teacher is the main focus and output is usually from the teacher and students merely receive the input and they tend to become passive learners. This process causes students to become inactive and demotivated which can hinder them from comprehending what
they read. In Malaysia, it is a common observation in the educational practice to use teacher-centred instructional approaches (Vadiveloo and Vijayarajoo, 2004). The teacher imparts knowledge to students and they tend to receive the information without a probing mind. Thus, students generic skills development is constrained (Bossert, 1988). This is because they depend on teachers who dominate the classroom and students seldom interact with others. This causes students to seldom have the opportunity to share ideas and opinions resulting in an inability to gain sufficient background knowledge and have less motivation which affects their achievement. Rote learning and students passiveness has since emerged from this teacher centred approach (Campbell, 2008). This affects students reading comprehension because students are reluctant to ask questions and tend to complete given tasks individually without having discussion with their peers. Therefore, many scholars believe that education must go beyond the rote learning approach (Fantuzzo et al., 2003; Lee and Tan, 2004; Ismail, 2005). Researchers have confirmed that Cooperative Learning is educationally useful to be used in any classroom. Thus, the need for teachers to bring changes into the classrooms have become a necessity in order to have a successful teaching and learning process in reading comprehension classrooms.

According to Siegel (2005), numerous educators have made modifications in Cooperative Learning methods. Cooperative Learning comprises various methods therefore it is essential for every teacher to make appropriate instructional choices in conveying suitable group tasks. Besides, Slavin (1995b) emphasized that Cooperative Learning pertaining to reading comprehension must be given importance because materials used in reading comprehensions are varied. Hence in the context of this study, Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures are combined accordingly to suit each reading comprehension tasks. This enables students to be engaged with the reading material and Cooperative Learning can be fully incorporated in the reading comprehension classroom.

Therefore, the need to use a new method from the norm in this particular context which caters to all level of students has arisen. Hence, in this study, the
Cooperative Learning method will be used in a classroom for reading comprehension in which the students’ achievement, motivation and the perception towards it will be researched.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.1. This conceptual framework shows the important key concepts of this research. The main key concept is the Cooperative Learning in which it is a strategy used as an instructional method in reading comprehension classroom. Cooperative Learning comprises many methods and in this study only two methods were chosen which are Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures.

Jigsaw II is a method in which group members are given the same materials and they are required to answer different questions. Students from other groups with the same questions to answer meet and become ‘experts’ in their given tasks. Expert in this context means that the students read and discuss with members for the appropriate answer, therefore each student in the group is confident to teach other when they are back in their own groups. Kagan Structures includes methods such as Round Robin, Pairs Check, Rally Read, and Team mate Consult. These methods from Kagan Structures are selected because they are suitable to be combined with Jigsaw II method in a single task.
The next key concept is reading comprehension. The two Cooperative Learning methods which are the Jigsaw II and Kagan Structures are used by students in groups to learn and solve reading comprehension tasks. Reading comprehension in this context consisted of narrative and descriptive texts with inferential, descriptive and multiple choice questions where students discussed and shared their ideas and opinions in their respective groups. Students’ achievement level in reading comprehension from the use of Cooperative Learning was
determined to see the effects of the methods carried out in the class. The effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation in reading comprehension was examined to know whether Cooperative Learning has motivated students to learn and be engaged in their reading comprehension tasks. Perception from teacher and students is the last key concept in this research. Their perception towards Cooperative Learning is needed in this study to explore the effects of these methods in classroom teaching and on students.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. to determine students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension using Cooperative Learning
2. to examine the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation in reading comprehension classroom
3. to explore the teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension classroom
1.5 Research Questions

The research questions in which this study has been designed to answer are:

1. What are the students’ level of achievement in reading comprehension using Cooperative Learning?

2. How do Cooperative Learning methods affect students’ motivation in reading comprehension classroom?

3. What are the teacher and students’ perception towards Cooperative Learning in reading comprehension?

1.6 Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, there are several distinct terms and concepts that are important and they are defined as follows:

1.6.1 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is an approach used in classrooms. Students work in small heterogeneous groups in a learning situation in which they are given tasks to complete and achieve a specific shared goal (Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1994; Siegel, 2005; Slavin, 1995a) and this concept was applied in this study.
1.6.2 Jigsaw II

Jigsaw II in this study is a method that students in the same group are given the same material to read but different comprehension questions to answer. Then students with the same question meet and discuss. Next they return to their original group and help teach other members in the group. This is similar to Slavin’s (1986) method of Jigsaw II in which the students will become the ‘experts’ based on their given material and questions because they have discussed with other students from different groups with the same task.

1.6.3 Round Robin

Kagan (1994) describes Round Robin as students take turns to share ideas, opinions and information with others in group. This definition by Kagan was applied in this study.

1.6.4 Pairs Check

In a group of four members, students formed two pairs. In pairs students alternated their roles whereby one solves and the other coaches. After every problems are solved the pair checks the answer with the other pair (Kagan, 1994).

1.6.5 Rally Read

Rally Read is a method by Kagan (1994) where students take turns in reading sentences or paragraphs and in which this study had adopted.
1.6.6 Teammate Consult

Teammate Consult is a method developed by Kagan (1994). In this method all members in a group place their pens in a cup. Then members discuss ideas between them and take out the pens from the cup once the members have completed discussing. Students write the answers on their worksheet without talking with each other.

1.6.7 Reading comprehension

In this context of study, reading comprehension is for students to comprehend what they have read from different reading materials. It requires skimming and scanning for main ideas and supporting details, looking for detailed ideas, key words, phrases or sentences, sharing and comparing opinions.

1.6.8 Achievement

In this study, the achievement of the students in reading comprehension were determined when students were able to complete the given task with better answers and show improvement in test results.

1.6.9 Motivation

Motivation is the interest, enthusiasm and effort one has to do something with determination to achieve goals (MacMillan English Dictionary, 2002). Thus, in this
study the students’ motivation in completing given tasks through the use of Cooperative Learning is examined.

1.6.10 Perception

Perception refers to the teacher and students’ own point of view (MacMillan English Dictionary, 2002). In the context of this study, it refers towards the understanding and views regarding Cooperative Learning used in the classroom by the teacher and students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

There are a few significance effects which can be drawn from the study. Firstly, English Language teachers will benefit from this study because they are able to make informed decisions pertaining strategies, methods or approaches to teach reading comprehension. This is useful for teacher development in ways to teach students reading comprehension. This study also provides insights into the understanding between Cooperative Learning and students’ achievement which can help teachers to discover and implement this specific teaching approach for reading comprehension.

Secondly, through Cooperative Learning students work in small groups and this increases interaction between them to communicate with each other in order to complete specific tasks. This helps them to share ideas and opinions in completing their reading comprehension tasks. Students will discover and develop new skills such has leadership and generic skills because they gain equal opportunity to participate in their Cooperative Learning groups. In addition, students are trained to
interact, making compromises and collaborating regardless of their proficiency level or individual differences. This helps them to excel academically and socially inside the school and outside world.

Specific activities used in this Cooperative learning class can be used as a platform for further studies on the effects of Cooperative Learning. The perceptions of teacher and students in this particular research would help teachers in ways to use and improvise Cooperative Learning methods in reading comprehension classroom.

1.8 Limitations

This study acknowledges a few limitations. Firstly, this study investigates the effects on students’ achievement in reading comprehension. Therefore, effects on students’ improvement in listening or speaking were not measured. In addition, there are many methods used in Cooperative Learning, however, this study only focused on two specific methods. Hence the results and findings of this study cannot be generalized to other different types of Cooperative Learning methods. Besides, the findings of this study can be only generalized to similar context which examines students of similar characteristic in related setting.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has underlined the important issues related to the study. It has demonstrated the importance and merits of exploring the effects of Cooperative Learning towards students’ achievement in reading comprehension. The effects of
Cooperative Learning towards students’ motivation were investigated. Perception from teacher and students were explored to provide more understanding towards the effects. This study had put forward few essential issues regarding Cooperative Learning which are important to the present development in education.