THE EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENLISH READING COURSES AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH READING COURSES AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of cooperative learning activities on student attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. Possible differences in attitudes in terms of gender and achievement level of students were also investigated.

The study was conducted with one control and one experimental group. In total, 40 students participated in the study. Following a work shop on the implementation of cooperative learning activities, the teacher taught the experimental group using cooperative learning activities. The control group was taught using traditional whole class methods. Questionnaires were given to both groups before and after the four-week treatment. Interviews were also conducted with the teacher and randomly selected students.

Questionnaire data were analyzed by *t*-tests and ANOVA tests. According to the results of these tests, no significant differences after the treatment were found between the control group and the experimental group responses related to their attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. In within-group comparison, however, the experimental group's attitudes towards the English reading course was significantly more negative, whereas no change was found in the control group. Gender and achievement level were found to have no significant influence on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. Data collected in teacher and student interviews, however, suggested that cooperative learning had positive effects on attitudes towards English reading courses. In addition, both the teacher and the students reported positive attitude towards cooperative learning.

Key Terminology: Cooperative learning, cooperative language learning.

ÖZET

İŞBİRLİKLİ ÖĞRENME AKTİVİTELERİNİN ÖĞRENCİLERİN İNGİLİZCE OKUMA DERSLERİNE VE İŞBİRLİKLİ ÖĞRENMEYE YÖNELİK TUTUMLARI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ

Bayat, Özlem

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi

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Temmuz, 2004

Bu çalışmanın amacı, işbirlikli öğrenme aktivitelerinin öğrencilerin İngilizce okuma derslerine ve işbirlikli öğrenmeye yönelik tutumları üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmaktı. Cinsiyet ve başarı düzeyinden kaynaklanabilecek olası farklılıklar da araştırılmıştır.

Çalışma bir deney ve bir kontrol grubu üzerinde yapılmıştır. İşbirlikli öğrenme aktivitelerinin uygulanmasına yönelik çalıştaydan sonra ders öğretmeni deney grubunda bu aktiviteleri kullanarak ders işlemiştir. Kontrol grubu, öğretmenin önceden de kullandığı geleneksel öğretim yöntemi ile öğrenmeye devam etmiştir. Dört haftalık uygulama öncesi ve sonrasında her iki gruba anket verilmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmen ve rasgele seçilen öğrenciler ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Anketlerden toplanan veriler *t*-testi ve Varyans testi ile analiz edilmiştir. Test sonuçlarına göre deney ve kontrol grubu arasında uygulama sonrasında İngilizce

okuma derslerine ve işbirlikli öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlar bakımından fark bulunmamıştır. Deney grubunun kendi içinde ilk ve son anket sonuçları karşılaştırıldığında ise İngilizce okuma derslerine yönelik tutumlarda anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur ve bu farklılık olumsuzdur. Cinsiyet ve başarı düzeyleri bakımından öğrencilerin İngilizce okuma dersleri ve işbirlikli öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlarında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmamıştır. Öğretmen ve öğrenciler ile yapılan görüşmeler sonucu elde edilen veriler, hem öğretmenin hem de öğrencilerin işbirlikli öğrenmeye yönelik olumlu tutum sergilediklerini ve işbirlikli öğrenmenin İngilizce okuma dersine yönelik tutumları olumlu etkilediğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar terimler: İşbirlikli öğrenme, işbirlikli dil öğrenimi.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is an approach currently used in language classes for the purpose of creating a more learner-centered atmosphere in which students' learning pace is supported by the students themselves. Reading, which is one of the skills in language learning, is challenging for learners because they are required to cope with new vocabulary, information, culture, and language structures written in the target language. Thus, the improvement of reading skills needs to be supported in as many alternative ways as possible. Cooperative learning activities (CLA) integrated in reading courses are among these alternatives. However, understanding learners' views about cooperative learning activities in reading courses is clearly important to its success. This study investigates the effects of the use of cooperative learning activities on attitudes of learners who are not used to learning cooperatively in reading classes.

Background of the Study

Traditional methods in language teaching were teacher-centered and often created classroom atmospheres in which learners competed with each other. Today, educationalists' opinions about effective teaching have shifted from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As Nunan (1992) states, students are able to improve their language skills while interacting with other learners in learner-centered language classrooms. One of the ways of creating a learner-centered classroom is using Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) (Crandall,

1999). Because creating a learner-centered atmosphere is essential in CLL, it may be useful to refer to language teaching approaches briefly in order to identify the approach's origins.

The concept 'learner-centeredness' was first emphasized in the Humanistic Approach in language teaching (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The Humanistic Approach has made two contributions to learner-centeredness. First, it emphasizes teaching language according to the personal concerns of learners. Second, it encourages learners to take an active and effective role in their own learning processes (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Tudor, 1996).

Under the influence of the Humanistic Approach, educators tried to answer questions related to the communicative competence of students. They observed that students who knew the rules of the language were often unsuccessful in communicating outside of the classroom. Educators sought to create a language environment in which students could use the target language in order to communicate and express their ideas and opinions. These needs and observations led to the development of a new teaching approach known as the Communicative Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the desired goal is assisting learners in acquiring the ability to use the linguistic system of the target language effectively. In order to realize this goal, learners are supposed to interact with other learners in the classroom through pair and group work (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) may be defined as an extended version of CLT. Like CLT, it is a learner-centered approach and emphasizes learner interaction. CLL provides this interaction among learners in the classroom and helps students acquire the target language in a naturalistic way. Because learners are able to

work with other learners cooperatively, a classroom atmosphere is created in which learner stress is reduced and learner motivation is supported (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

There are different models and activities for cooperative learning such as Learning Together (Johnson & Johnson, 1994), the Structural Approach (Olsen & Kagan, 1992), Student Team Learning (Slavin, 1994), Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1994), and Asking Together, Learning Together (Açıkgöz, 2002). Although there are differences among these models of cooperative learning, all cooperative learning activities share basic properties which have an influence on creating a positive affective classroom climate (Crandall, 1999). First, cooperative learning activities provide positive interdependence for learners, since in a cooperative group success depends on the efforts of all individual members. Second, there is face-to-face group interaction in which each learner is assigned a different role. Another feature of cooperative learning is that it introduces individual accountability, which means learners are not only responsible for their own success but also for all group members' success (Crandall, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1994), where "each student's contribution to the group's efforts can be identified" (Gillies, 2003, p. 38). Next, cooperative learning activities build social skills such as helping each other, listening, encouraging, leadership, and problem solving, as well as providing linguistic skills. Finally, learners need to reflect on the group process by evaluating their experiences, identifying problems they had during the group task or appraising the contributions of each member of the group to improve their functioning in group activities (Crandall, 1999).

Cooperative learning activities and methods such as Think-Pair-Share, Numbered-Heads Together, Jigsaw, Jigsaw II, Teams-Games-Tournaments, and Group Investigation (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Kagan & Kagan, 1994; Sharan &

Sharan, 1994; Slavin, 1995) can be used in language classes to effectively teach all skills in language learning. Turnbull (1996) adapted two cooperative learning activities, Timed Pair-Share and Round Robin, to use for all language skills and received positive feedback from his students. Morley (2001) suggests that Jigsaw listening, in which students in small groups listen to different pieces of given information and then share it with group members so that they complete a task, is an effective strategy. Murray (1992) utilized types of writing cooperatively and noted their positive effects in a language classroom.

Within the area of teaching reading, cooperative learning has also attracted a great deal of positive attention. For instance, Grabe (1991) listed cooperative learning as one of his seven guidelines for reading instruction. He noted that cooperative learning activities should be used regularly in reading instruction to discuss reading texts, work with the given information or explore solutions or answers. Coelho (1992) stated that using the Jigsaw method is one of the effective ways of teaching reading in a language classroom. Klinger & Vaughn (2000) investigated the frequency and means that bilingual students used to assist each other's learning in collaborative strategic reading. They reported that students assisted each other in understanding word meanings, asking and answering questions, understanding the main idea of the text, and recycling their previous knowledge. They also noted that students' vocabulary test scores improved greatly when compared to their previous scores. Jacob, Rottenberg, Patrick & Wheeler (1996) found that second language learners had more opportunity to acquire academic English when cooperative learning activities were used to teach reading. Cooperative learning activities also motivate students, support instruction, and enhance learning in reading classes (Readence, Moore & Rickelman, 2000). In addition, Gersten and Jimenez (as cited in Freeman & Freeman,

2003) found that efficient teachers in reading courses are those who encourage collaborative interactions.

Researchers have noted that the successful implementation of cooperative learning depends upon teachers' and learners' attitudes towards cooperative learning activities, as they are the ones who will have active roles in their use. Research in the field has shown that teachers and students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. Teachers using cooperative learning "value collaboration and encourage cooperation among the students within their classroom" (McDonell, 1992, p. 165). In their study Bailey, Dale, and Squire (1992) used a questionnaire to research teachers' reactions to statements about cooperative teaching. They concluded that teachers supported the use of CLA. This investigation examined only teachers' attitudes. However, in the same questionnaire the teachers were also asked about their students' attitudes towards CLA. According to the results of the questionnaire, teachers had the opinion that their students appreciate cooperative learning activities.

As previously mentioned, one of the most important elements of Cooperative Language Learning is that it is learner-centered. Students' attitudes towards learner-centeredness may also help us to predict students' attitudes towards cooperative learning activities. Lea, Stephonson, and Troy (2003) investigated higher-education students' attitudes towards student-centered learning. According to the survey they conducted, they stated that a great deal of participants in the survey perceived student-centered learning as an effective approach. Wilhelm (1997) also reported that students viewed learner-centeredness positively after implementation of cooperative learning activities in their courses.

All language teachers want to help their students in their learning process. Cooperative learning activities (CLA) may help both teachers and students in

language classes. Knowing about the attitudes and perceptions of learners about CLA and effects of CLA in reading classes may help teachers and institutions arrange better reading classes in which learners achieve effective learning.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is one of the four skills to be taught in language teaching. During the reading process, language learners have to cope with new vocabulary, structure, culture, and information written in the target language. A number of studies (Ediger, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Weinstein, 2001; Ur, 1996) suggested activities to empower learners in this process. One type of promising activities is Cooperative Learning Activities (CLA), in which learners work and learn together in groups. Although there has been some research about teachers' attitudes towards CLA, and the effects of CLA on the teaching process (Bailey, Dale, and Squire, 1992; Baloche, 1998; Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon, 2003; Kauchak & Eggen, 1998), there is a lack of studies regarding students' attitudes towards CLA and the effects of CLA in reading in a foreign language.

In preparatory classes of the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University, there are three class hours weekly for reading lessons, with different course books for different levels. Students are given reading quizzes each month, mid-term exams, including a reading section, six times a year, and a proficiency exam, including reading questions at the end of the educational year. In all these exams, students are supposed to apply the knowledge and skills which they acquire during reading lessons. Because of the intensive curriculum to be followed, teachers concerned with keeping up with the schedule find it challenging to teach the necessary knowledge and skills needed for effective reading in class. As a result, learners may see themselves as responsible for developing their own reading expertise. In fact, if

teachers are informed and encouraged about using CLA in reading lessons, they may be able to both follow the schedule and promote an effective reading instruction by empowering students in the reading process. Investigating the attitudes of students to CLA and the effects of CLA in reading lessons may contribute to the creation of a classroom atmosphere in which effective reading is promoted.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses?
2. What are the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?
3. Is there a significant difference between female and male students in their attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning?
4. Is there a significant difference between high-achievement and low-achievement students in their attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning?

Significance of the Study

Because there is a lack of research in the field of foreign language instruction concerning learner attitudes towards CLA and the effects of CLA on learners' attitudes towards reading, the results of this study may contribute to the literature in these areas. In addition, since the research will be carried out in reading classes in which CLA has not been previously used, the results may provide information to compare teacher-centered and learner-centered techniques (Tudor, 1996), as learner-centeredness is a key element in Cooperative Language Teaching.

The study may also contribute to improving the reading courses held in preparatory classes of the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University.

The teachers who have not used CLA in their reading classes may be encouraged to use CLA after seeing that carefully designed cooperative learning activities may be used in reading instruction while following the schedule. If there is a positive response to CLA the teachers who see an influence of CLA on learners' attitudes to reading courses may want to design their own cooperative reading activities.

Key Terminology

The following terms are repeatedly used in the following chapters:

Cooperative Learning: A set of teaching strategies used to promote face-to-face interaction among students and help them reach specific learning and interpersonal goals in structured groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Slavin, 1997).

Cooperative Language Learning: Cooperative Language Learning is utilizing strategies that group students within the classroom and have them engage in specific assignments cooperatively which provide opportunities for each team member to practice the target language while interacting with each other (Kessler, 1992).

Conclusion

In this chapter, a summary was provided to outline the scope of the study. Background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions of the study, significance of the study, and key terminology were explained. In the second chapter, detailed information related to the review of the literature will be presented. In the third chapter methodology of the study is examined by giving information about the participants, instrument, and data analysis procedures. The fourth chapter presents analysis of the data and findings of the study. In the fifth chapter, an overview of the study, discussion of the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study investigates the effects of cooperative learning activities on the attitudes of students towards English reading courses and cooperative learning activities in language learning settings. In order to clarify the use of cooperative learning activities in language classes in reading instruction, the rationale for using cooperative learning activities in classrooms and well-known cooperative learning activities will be examined. Next, the objectives of cooperative language learning, its advantages and its distinguishing characteristics will be discussed. Research on the role of the teacher and the students in cooperative learning as well as attitudes towards use of cooperative learning activities will be reviewed. Finally, use of cooperative learning activities in reading instruction will be explored.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a set of teaching strategies used to promote face-to-face interaction among students and help them reach specific learning and interpersonal goals in structured groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Slavin, 1997). While most cooperative learning approaches share this definition, cooperative learning strategies employed within them may vary in a number of ways. Cooperative learning strategies may be informal groupings to allow students to work together. They may be structured, with students having specific tasks in their group and assessing their group and individual performance. While cooperative learning groups generally involve four members, the number of students may be greater or

fewer. Groups may work together for a few minutes, a couple of weeks or for many months (Slavin, 1997).

Johnson and Johnson (1994) describe three types of cooperative learning groups: Cooperative base, informal cooperative learning, and formal cooperative learning groups. Cooperative base groups are long-term "heterogeneous learning groups with stable membership" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p: 196) which may last a year or more. This type of grouping is established to provide support, encouragement, and assistance among students to achieve shared academic goals. The students in these groups are also responsible to check their team members' attendance to lessons and completion of assignments. They may also discuss their personal problems in learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Informal cooperative learning groups are short-term groupings in which membership is usually random. The main purpose of informal cooperative groups is to focus student attention on the material and facilitate learning during direct teaching. Short pre- or post-lecture discussions, Round Robin, and Think-Pair-Share are among the activities that can be used in this kind of cooperative learning groups. In formal cooperative learning groups, students work together on specific tasks to achieve shared learning goals or complete a given assignment. These groups may last from one class period to several weeks. The activities in which students can improve their reading skills or practice problem solving and decision making, such as Jigsaw, Jigsaw II, and Numbered Heads Together, are among the activities which can be used in this kind of grouping.

Rationale for Using Cooperative Learning

The research on cooperative learning clearly suggests that no matter what form cooperative learning takes within classrooms, when well-structured, it offers many benefits for both teachers and students. Cooperative learning helps teachers in

classroom management and provides an alternative instructional practice while creating a more learner-centered atmosphere (Cangelosi, 2000; Sharan, 1994). For students, cooperative learning seems to improve their management (Baloche, 1998; Good & Brophy, 2000), social (Kagan & Kagan, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1992), and academic skills (Jacob et al., 1996; Stahl, 1995; Wohl & Klein-Wohl, 1994).

Research suggests that cooperative learning provides benefits for teachers. Orlich et al. (1998) stated that cooperative learning helps classroom management and instruction. Cangelosi (2000) states that use of cooperative learning activities provides student engagement in lessons, helps students develop intrinsic motivation, contributes to solutions for conflicts among students, and reduces disruptive behaviors of students. Thus, he suggests that language teachers should organize cooperative learning groups to have more efficient classroom management. The study conducted by Gwyn-Paquette and Tochon (2003) has shown that teachers who include cooperative learning activities in their teaching plans have fewer classroom management problems.

In addition, the use of cooperative learning activities provides an alternative instructional practice for teachers by creating more learner-centered classes and focusing on students' learning needs (Nunan, 1992). Teachers using cooperative learning activities concentrate on engaging students in the learning process rather than concentrating on the presentation of instruction through direct teaching. During cooperative learning activities teachers have opportunities to observe each student's difficulties in learning, strengths, and learning styles. This information helps teachers in organizing and presenting the instruction to be taught (Sharan, 1994).

Cooperative learning offers benefits for students as well as teachers. Research has pointed to cooperative learning's positive effect upon student's self-management

skills. Good and Brophy (2000) suggest that cooperative learning teaches management skills to students since it encourages student responsibility for each other. Each student has a task in the group and without completing each task and coordinating with others, group work cannot be completed. Several tasks associated with cooperative learning such as organizing materials, keeping the group working, watching the time, and following directions also seem to be factors that help improve the management skills of students (Baloche, 1998; Orlich et al., 1998).

Kagan and Kagan (1994) have shown that students acquire social skills with cooperative learning. They state that when cooperative learning is used, students learn to understand, respect, and support one another. In addition, other studies in the field have shown that cooperative learning improves students' self-esteem, enables them to establish positive interpersonal relationships, and fosters positive interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1992).

Cooperative learning assists students in developing higher level academic skills in different academic disciplines. In language arts Wohl and Klein-Wohl (1994) suggest that cooperative learning activities assist students in acquiring skills for effective communication by creating learning environments similar to real life situations. Stahl (1995) noted that cooperative learning encourages students to interact, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and make decisions. Stahl (1995) also stated that because it improves academic skills of students in language arts such as synthesizing, generalizing, summarizing, drawing conclusions, and determining relevant and irrelevant ideas, cooperative learning activities may be useful in teaching reading. In their study Jacob et al. (1996) also reported that second language learners had opportunities to improve their academic skills while cooperatively studying on reading texts.

Well-known Cooperative Learning Activities

Cooperative learning builds on the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, who stated the importance of discussion and problem solving among peers in the learning process. In the 1970s, cooperative learning began to be used as a structured method of learning. Initially, cooperative learning was used mostly in elementary and secondary schools in North America (Slavin, 1997). However, current studies show that cooperative learning activities may be successfully used both in colleges (Ghaith, 2003; Zimbardo, Butler & Wolfe, 2003) and universities (Fox-Cardamone, 2003; Morgan, 2003).

A variety of models and activities have emerged in the field of cooperative learning which are used both in schools and higher levels of education. The Learning Together Method (Johnson & Johnson, 1994), Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1994), Teams-Games-Tournament, Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (Slavin, 1994), Jigsaw (Aranson as cited in Good & Brophy, 2000), Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1994), Asking Together, Learning Together (Açıkgöz, 2002), Think-Pair-Share (Olsen & Kagan, 1992), and Numbered Heads Together (Stone & Kagan, 1995) are among the best-known and widely researched cooperative methods and activities.

The Learning Together model of cooperative learning was developed by Johnson and Johnson (1994). In this model, heterogeneous groups of four or five learners work on assignment sheets. A main aspect of this model is having students who differ in achievement, gender or ethnicity work together to achieve shared learning goals and to complete the group assignments.

Group Investigation was developed by Sharan and Sharan (1994). Students form groups and study subtopics of a unit studied by the whole class. The group

members determine the subtopics, plan their investigations, carry out individual tasks, plan and make presentations. Eventually, the teacher and the students evaluate their projects together.

In Slavin's (1994) Teams-Games Tournament (TGT) model, students work together in heterogeneously grouped teams to compete against other teams. After the teacher presents the instruction, groups discuss and work on the material. Finally, they compete with other teams to answer questions prepared by the teacher. The tournaments may last for several weeks. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) is a simpler version of TGT. Students are grouped and work as in TGT; however, in STAD tournaments are replaced by quizzes. After cooperative group work, students are given quizzes to be answered individually. Both individual and group quiz scores are used for evaluating student learning.

Jigsaw was developed by Aronson and his colleagues (as cited in Good & Brophy, 2000). Each member of the group studies his/her own piece of material in an expert group and returns to the home group to discuss this material. In order to complete the group's task, each member must participate in the activity. At the end of the activity students may be given individual quizzes (Clarke, 1994; Good & Brophy, 2000).

Jigsaw II, developed by Slavin (1994), is a modified version of the original Jigsaw. In this version, students work on common material first and then are given separate topics to become experts on. Having worked on their topics in the expert groups, students return to their home groups to explain the materials that they have studied.

In the activity, Asking Together, Learning Together, developed by Açıkgöz (2002), students study reading texts in their cooperative learning groups. Each group

prepares high consensus questions for the reading assignment, writes them on pieces of paper, and gives them to other groups and the teacher. Answers to the questions are discussed in groups and the teacher elicits the answers from randomly chosen students.

Apart from the cooperative learning models above, there are brief, informal or formal cooperative structures such as Blind Hand, Pens in the Middle, Round Robin, Think-Pair-Share and Numbered Heads Together that can be applied in classroom teaching (Baloche, 1998). In Think-Pair-Share (Olsen & Kagan, 1992), for instance, students are given a question or problem. They think about the answers individually and share it with a partner. Answers can then be shared with the whole class. In Numbered Heads Together (Stone & Kagan, 1995), students number off in their groups with each student having a different number. The teacher asks a question to be discussed by the group members together. The teacher calls out a number, and each student who has that number from each group stands up. The teacher chooses one of them to answer the question.

Cooperative Language Learning

Cooperative Language Learning is grouping students within the classroom, having them study on specific assignments cooperatively and providing benefits for each team member to practice the target language while interacting with each other (Kessler, 1992). In language teaching cooperative learning has five major objectives:

- to provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities
- to provide teachers with a methodology to enable them to achieve this goal and one that can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings (e.g., content-based, foreign language classrooms; mainstreaming)
- to enable focused attention to particular lexical items, language structures, and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks

- to provide opportunities for learners to develop successful learning and communication strategies
- to enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 193)

Although cooperative learning enthusiasts have advocated its use in teaching a variety of subjects and its successful use has been widely researched over a number of years (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), it has only recently gained importance in language instruction (Dörnyei, 1997). The failure of cooperative learning to be an area of major interest may result from its similarity to typical group work activities in communicative language teaching.

Cooperative learning versus group work

Because group work does not necessarily describe each learner's task and promotes peer tutoring, it may differ from cooperative learning. Cooperative learning activities are well-structured tasks which involve "genuine information gap, requiring learners to both listen to and contribute to the development of an oral, written or other product which represents the group's efforts, knowledge and perspectives" (Crandall, 1999, p. 227). In typical group work activities, the tasks are usually not as well and clearly designed as cooperative learning activities. Besides, as students are responsible for both their own learning and their group member's learning in activities such as Jigsaw, students practice peer-tutoring (Bruffee, 1993) which is not necessarily a part of group work. Putnam (1998) states that one of the other differences between typical group work and cooperative learning group work is the heterogeneous nature of cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning groups are usually intentionally mixed in terms of ability and achievement level of the students, gender, culture, and language characteristics.

Several problems often occur in the implementation of typical group work. Some group members may not contribute equally to the success of the group, so members who complete most of the work may feel abused. High-achievement students may benefit from the work more than the low-achievement students. In addition, responsibility within the group cannot be divided equally (Açıkgöz, 2002). Dörnyei (1997) also confirmed that these possible problems in typical group work activities are directly addressed in well-structured cooperative learning groups.

Johnson & Johnson (1994) introduces five essential elements to be structured in cooperative learning groups to make them work well and overcome the problems faced in typical group work. The most important element is positive interdependence. Students must be aware of the fact that they must support and assist each other in completing every single phase of the assigned task, since the output of cooperation will be the success of each individual in the group. The second important element is face-to face promotive interaction. Students need to help, assist, and encourage each other to learn by problem solving and discussing items that are learnt. Individual accountability is one of the other elements of cooperative learning groups. Each group member needs to perform well and assist in their team members' performance, since they are assessed both individually and as a group. Incorporating the teaching of social skills to students is also an essential element for structuring effective cooperative learning groups. Leadership, organization, decision-making, trust-building, and communication are among the skills that should be taught to students. Group processing, which is the last element includes the discussions by group members on how each member contributed to the group product, what problems they encountered, and what to do in the next cooperative group learning activity to avoid

similar problems. These discussions are performed after completion of each group work.

The advantages of cooperative language learning

Cooperative learning offers many advantages in language classroom settings, such as reducing anxiety, increasing motivation, and assisting in the development of the language skills of learners. Cooperative language learning helps teachers create a positive affective classroom atmosphere in which psychological barriers, such as student anxiety, are lowered and self-confidence and self-esteem are increased (Crandall, 1999; Dörnyei, 1997; Oxford, 1997). As Crandall (1999) states, students' anxiety results from the fear of making mistakes, especially when they are asked a question to be answered individually. When students are allowed to study together, they have more time to think, to share their opinion with other students, receive feedback from them, and correct any mistakes. As a result, their anxiety level is reduced, and they become willing to participate in answering the questions of the teacher. This often results in enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem (Crandall, 1999; Dörnyei, 1997).

One of the other reasons of anxiety is interpersonal competition among students. Interpersonal competition may take place in traditional classes and causes high anxiety, poor communication among students, a sense of uselessness. However, in intergroup competition, which is provided by cooperative learning, anxiety is reduced, interaction among students increase and student confidence is enhanced. In interpersonal competition, the goal is winning whereas in intergroup competition the goal is group success (Johnson & Johnson, 1994).

In language classrooms where student anxiety is lowered and self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced, it is not surprising that motivation increases. More

motivated students in the language classroom tend to use the target language more which helps them improve their language proficiency. In cooperative learning groups, students assist their classmates in learning. Because each member of the group is responsible not only for his own learning but also for other members' learning, students support each other. With support, shy, insecure or uninterested students are often motivated (Crandall, 1999; Dörnyei, 1997). In addition, because the groups have specific goals to achieve and sometimes a reward to win, cooperative learning activities are enjoyable for students. Enjoyable activities encourage learners to participate in lessons; hence they contribute to motivation (Crandall, 1999). Cangelosi (2000) concluded that engaging students in cooperative learning activities, especially those which focus on problem solving, promotes intrinsic motivation which is crucial in learning.

Cooperative language learning also empowers learners to acquire increased language skills (Crandall, 1999; Jacob, Rottenberg, Patrick & Wheeler, 1996; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Because cooperative language learning promotes interaction, learners have more opportunities to listen to, talk and produce the language (Crandall, 1999) which means more practice in the target language (DeVillar, 1991).

Other research has suggested improvement in specific language skills through the use of cooperative learning. In her study, Bejarano (1987) implemented two small-group cooperative techniques in two different EFL classrooms and compared their effects with another classroom in which the traditional whole-class method of instruction was used. Her research showed that cooperative learning techniques helped students improve their listening comprehension in both classes more than

with the whole-class method of instruction. Total achievement test scores of these students were higher than the students exposed to whole-class method.

Another study conducted by Jacob et al. (1996) has shown that the implementation of cooperative language learning helps L2 learners acquire language skills while improving their academic English. Their study explored whether cooperative learning influenced opportunities for acquiring academic English. The participants of the study were 625 K-6 grade elementary school students from different ethnic backgrounds, including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The teacher in the classroom implemented The Learning Together Method in her classroom instruction. The class was observed for one year and 6 cooperative learning groups were videotaped. In addition, regular interviews with the teacher and the students were conducted throughout the year. The students were observed while assisting each other in explanation of meaning and correct pronunciation of words. They also helped each other succeed in learning difficult academic concepts. It was also observed that even the most silent students were invited to produce more language and contribute to the group task. At the end of the study, it was concluded that use of cooperative learning activities provide significant opportunities for L2 learners to acquire academic English and improve language skills.

Cooperative learning and the teacher

The role of the teacher in the classrooms where cooperative language learning is implemented is significantly different from the traditional teacher-centered classrooms (Bejarano, 1987; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Cooperative learning allows teachers to create more learner-centered classes and focus upon students' learning needs instead of the manner in which instruction is presented by the teacher.

The teacher is "no longer a lecturer or transmitter of material, but rather a facilitator of learning who focuses on the learning process by encouraging cooperation among the students" (Bejarano, 1987, p. 485). In the role of facilitator, the teacher gives students the opportunity to learn the material by themselves while helping them if need arises. Teachers interact with students, encourage them to solve the problems they encounter by using thinking skills, give feedback, clarify difficulties, and empathize as a facilitator (McDonell, 1992).

Teachers in cooperative language classrooms are also observers. They listen to learners while they are studying in cooperative groups to discover the needs, interests, problems, and strengths of learners. These observations help teacher gather information about the learning process of the students, and organize plans and activities according to this process (McDonell, 1992). Teachers as observers also may intervene in the cooperative group activities if students in the group need assistance or redirection towards the objectives of the given tasks (Sharan, 1994).

In order to achieve the objectives of cooperative language learning and provide maximum benefit, teachers have to create well-structured tasks, set the goals of activities clearly, organize groups and assign students to different roles, and select suitable materials to be taught (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The success of all these preparations and effectiveness of cooperative language learning depend on the belief and the attitude of the language teacher towards cooperative language learning.

The research in the field shows that language teachers who utilize cooperative learning in language classes have positive beliefs and attitudes towards it. Gwyn-Paquette and Tochon (2003) asked four final year pre-service language teachers to include cooperative learning activities, namely Think-Pair-Share, Snowball, Learning Together, Cooperative Review, Jigsaw, and Group Investigation, into their

planning. These teachers were observed in classrooms over one year during their teaching period. The conversations between the supervisors and the teachers and between the students and the teachers were reported. According to the results, all teachers were enthusiastic about using cooperative learning activities in their lessons. In spite of the problems they encountered, such as noise, they developed the confidence to implement those activities and tried to solve the problems that emerged.

Another study conducted by Horwitz, Bresslau, Dryden, McLendon, and Yu (1997) also supports the idea of teachers' having positive attitudes towards cooperative language learning. The participants of the study were class members of a graduate course that helps language teachers prepare for language instruction. The topics in the course were learnt by the participants in cooperative learning groups. At the end of the course they were asked to reflect on their ideas about collaboration. Most of the participants stated that they would increase the amount of cooperative learning activities in the classes they taught. They also reported that cooperative learning activities enabled them to understand the needs and abilities of the learners better and offered them a chance to see the perspectives of language learners.

In the study conducted by Bailey, Dale, and Squire (1992), several EFL teachers were asked to reflect on their opinions about using cooperative learning activities in instruction. The questionnaire results showed that the language teachers had a positive attitude towards the implementation of these activities. In the same questionnaire most of the teachers also agreed on their students' positive reactions towards use of cooperative learning activities.

Cooperative learning and the student

The roles of the students in cooperative language classes are significantly different from their roles in the traditional teacher-centered classrooms. The students in cooperative language learning classrooms are "no longer trying to impress their teacher but are busy learning actively" (Bejarano, 1987). The primary role of the learner is to contribute to the completion of the group tasks while collaboratively working with the members of the group. Because they are taught how to organize their study to keep their group working and to monitor and assess their learning process, they become the directors of their own learning (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Students organizing their own learning become autonomous learners (Dörnyei, 1997; Jacobs, Power & Inn, 2002).

There are several studies on student attitudes towards use of cooperative learning activities in teaching subjects other than language. Morgan (2003), for instance, investigated student reflections on cooperative written examinations for group grades. One hundred fifty university seniors from method classes in the School of Education were chosen for the study. The students were given a writing exam which had to be done in cooperative groups. After the exam they were asked to reflect on their experiences about the implementation of the exam. All students who participated in the study reported that cooperative examinations were less stressful than individual examinations. Almost all the students reported that the feeling of support from the group members helped them feel more relaxed and confident. Many students said that they learnt more information while answering the questions in the exam compared to their self-study for the examination. In a similar study conducted by Zimbardo, Butler, and Wolfe (2003), the participants experienced cooperative team testing and were asked to report their experiences. The participants reported

largely positive attitudes towards this implementation. According to the participants, cooperative team testing reduced anxiety, built self-confidence, prevented cheating, and created more positive attitudes towards the course and the subject matter.

Although there are several studies on attitudes of students towards cooperative learning, the attitudes of students towards cooperative language learning has not been widely studied. The research on cooperative language learning including students is mostly about its effect on achievement (Bejarano, 1987; Ghaith, 2003), anxiety, self confidence, and motivation (Crandall, 1999; Dörnyei, 1997; Ghaith, 2003; Oxford, 1997). However, achievement, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation may be a directly related to attitudes. For instance, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994) found a correlation between student attitudes and their achievement, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation. According to the results of the questionnaires, students who had positive attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language were those who had low anxiety, high achievement, and motivation. Since the use of cooperative language learning reduces anxiety and may increase achievement, self-confidence, and motivation, students are likely to have positive attitudes towards use of cooperative learning activities in language learning settings.

There are also studies on the relationship between achievement level of students and their attitudes towards their courses and cooperative learning. In eight experimental studies reported by Shachar (2003), both high achievers and low achievers in classes where cooperative learning methods were used developed positive attitudes towards their courses, teachers, school, and cooperative learning. A decline was observed in positive attitudes of high achievers and low achievers in the control groups, where traditional whole class instruction was used. It was also

reported that low achievers positive attitude change was more significant compared to high achievers. In an earlier study (Ghaith, 2001) which was conducted with participation of sixty-one Lebanese EFL learners, one of the cooperative learning models, STAD, was used for instruction. After a twelve-week treatment, both high and low achievers considered the STAD experience useful for their learning. They also recommended the use of the strategy for their future classes. In addition, none of the low achievers reported that they did not learn, and only 3% of high achievers reported that they did not learn a lot.

The gender difference in attitudes towards cooperative learning has not been widely researched in the field. In one study (Ghaith, 2001), male students found cooperative learning experience more useful, less frustrating, funnier, more interesting, more worthwhile, and clearer than their female classmates. In addition, 83% of the male students reported that they learnt a lot whereas the percentage of females who reported that they learnt a lot was 49%. This difference might arise from grouping the students for the cooperative learning experience. As Webb (as cited in Gillies, 2003) confirmed, in gender-balanced groups achievement level of males and females are almost the same and they are equally interactive. However, in majority male groups, females are not as interactive as they are in gender-balanced groups. Males' showing more positive attitude towards cooperative learning activities may result from groupings of students. As Johnson and Johnson (1994) and Putnam (1998) have stated, in order to benefit from cooperative learning groups and help learners develop positive attitudes towards cooperative learning, heterogeneous groups, including gender balance, should be formed.

Reading in L2 and Cooperative Learning

Alderson (1984) states that reading in a foreign language is both a reading and a language problem, especially for lower proficiency students. Students who have problems in reading in their L1 have problems in reading in L2, too. Students who have fewer problems in reading in L1, read slower in L2 than they read in L1. They also may have comprehension problems which result from difficulty with understanding syntactic structures, grammar, vocabulary, and reading strategies in a foreign language. A number of research studies suggest that use of cooperative learning activities assists lower-level students in solving their language problems in reading. Klinger and Vaughn (2000), for example, found that bilingual students helped their limited English proficient peers in understanding meanings of vocabulary, main idea of the texts, asking and answering questions, and activating previous knowledge as they experienced cooperative learning activities in reading. The results of the English vocabulary tests also proved that students significantly improved their vocabulary knowledge compared to their previous test results.

Grabe (1991) urges the regular use of cooperative learning activities in reading instruction "to promote discussions of readings and to work with information from the readings, exploring different solutions for complex activities" (p. 396). Jacob et al. (1996) found that the Learning Together form of cooperative learning allowed students to ask questions to one another and discuss answers to understand the academic language in the reading materials. As a result, cooperative learning activities assisted learners in understanding the information in the texts while they were studying the difficult academic terms and concepts in the reading material.

An experimental study (Ghaith, 2003) conducted with the participation of 56 Lebanese high school learners of English as a foreign language has shown that the

Learning Together form of cooperative learning improved the EFL reading achievement of students. Both experimental and control group students were given the same reading exam before the treatment. During the 10-week-study, the same reading material was taught in both experimental and control groups. In the control group the material was taught according to the procedures in the text book, whereas the experimental group was exposed to the Learning Together model of cooperative learning. At the end of 10 weeks, both groups were given another reading exam. When the exam results were compared, it was seen that there was a significant difference between two groups in achievement in favor of experimental group.

Research also reports that Jigsaw, another form of cooperative learning, is effective for teaching reading in second language classrooms (Bejarano, 1994; Coelho; 1992). Coelho (1992) found that the activity provides "an excellent learning environment" (p. 137) for students to learn the language through meaningful tasks while developing academic skills. The use of Jigsaw in reading activities develops students' "cognitive skills of analysis, comparison, evaluation, and synthesis of information" (Coelho, 1992, p. 137). The students improve these skills in two phases within the Jigsaw method. In the first phase, the students study their parts in the texts to become experts on that piece of material. In the second phase, students teach the content of their part to their group members and help them comprehend the reading material. By teaching their piece of material the students "further internalize both the content and the process of their own learning" (Bejarano, 1994, p. 203).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature about cooperative learning in general, the rationale behind its use, well-known cooperative learning activities and the use of cooperative learning activities in second language classrooms have been discussed in

detail. The importance of using cooperative learning activities in reading lessons was emphasized by giving examples studies from the field. Further it was seen that most of the studies in the field found positive effects of cooperative learning activities on student achievement in EFL reading.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigated the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. The study also investigated if there was a significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students and high-achievement and low-achievement students towards the reading courses and cooperative learning.

In this chapter, participants, instruments used to conduct the study, data collection procedures, and data analysis will be discussed in detail.

Participants

Since this was a quasi-experimental study, the participants were divided into two groups: a control and an experimental group. In order to determine these groups, three instructors teaching two different English reading classes were chosen. These six classes were given the pre-questionnaire in order to choose the most appropriate control and experimental groups. After data analysis of the questionnaire, the two classes in which students' responses to the questionnaire items were most similar were chosen as the control and experimental groups.

Students in both groups were in intermediate English level classes. There were 3 females and 15 males in the control group. In the experimental group, there were 4 females and 18 males. In total, 40 students participated in this stage of the study. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants in Terms of Gender

Groups	Male	Female	Total
Experimental	18	4	22
Control	15	3	18

The participants' achievement levels were also important to investigate one of the research questions of the study. There were 12 low-achievement and 10 high-achievement students in the experimental group. In the control group there were 7 low-achievement students and 9 high-achievement students. Students were asked to indicate their first semester grades on the questionnaire to find out their achievement levels. Since a passing grade at the institution is 70 or more, students who reported 70 or above were considered to be high-achievement level students. Students who indicated below 70 were considered as low-achievement students. Two of the students in the control group did not answer the question related to their achievement level. Their responses were excluded in the analysis conducted to answer research Question 4. Table 2 presents characteristics of the participants in terms of their achievement levels.

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants in Terms of Achievement Levels

Groups	Low achievement	High achievement	Total
Experimental	12	10	22
Control	7	9	16

Note: Two participants from the control group did not answer this question.

The participants were chosen from Dokuz Eylül University. There were two reasons to choose these participants. First, it was important for the researcher to

investigate the effects of cooperative learning activities on foreign language university students since there were few studies about the effects of cooperative learning on university students. Second, Dokuz Eylül University was chosen for its accessibility to the researcher.

The instructor who implemented cooperative learning activities in her reading course was chosen among a group of instructors who taught two reading classes of the same level. The instructor had 19 years experience in her job, and she had been teaching reading for seven years. She had no previous experience in implementation of cooperative learning activities in teaching any language skills. Before the implementation, she was given a one-day workshop. Cooperative learning activities adapted to the course material by the researcher were explained to the teacher and she was given different packets for each unit, as well as explanations of activities. Information about how to group students and assign tasks and procedures for each activity were explained in detail.

Instruments

A pre-questionnaire and a post-questionnaire were used in this study. In addition, interviews were conducted with the instructor and students from the experimental group.

Questionnaires

The questions in the pre-questionnaire and the post questionnaire were the same for both groups. Participants in both groups were asked questions to evaluate their attitudes towards reading, reading in English, the reading course they attend, and cooperative learning activities.

In both questionnaires, the participants were asked thirty-six questions. Five questions were related to the participants' attitudes towards reading in general, four

questions were related to their attitudes towards reading in English, fourteen questions were related to their attitudes towards the reading course they attended, and thirteen questions were related to students' attitudes towards the basic properties of cooperative learning and its classroom implementation.

Prior to completion of the pre-questionnaire, the participants were informed about the study and asked to sign an informed consent form to participate in the study. In the first section of the questionnaire, all the participants were asked to write their names, surnames, classes, and departments. The reason for this information was the need to compare the pre-questionnaires with the post-questionnaires in order to clarify the effects of cooperative learning activities. In this section, participants' gender and their first semester grades were also asked to help determine whether there was a significant relationship between these properties and their attitudes.

Because of its versatility and reliability (Dörnyei, 2002), a six-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaires. There were 36 statements to which participants indicated their opinions by marking "strongly agree", "agree", "slightly agree", "slightly disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree".

Although the questions were initially written in English, they were translated into Turkish for the participants. The Turkish versions of the questions were given to two native speakers of Turkish, who are also English instructors, to translate back into English. After this process, necessary adjustments on the questions were made.

The pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted at Anadolu University Preparatory School with 25 preparatory class students. Anadolu University was chose for the pilot study since reading courses held there are similar to the courses at Dokuz Eylül University. After the pilot study, necessary adjustments and corrections were done with problematic questions.

A Cronbach's Alpha Test was run to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability of the pre-questionnaire was 0.79. For the section in which students' attitudes towards reading were investigated the reliability was 0.73, and 0.79 for the section in which students' attitudes towards cooperative learning and its classroom implementation. In the post-questionnaire the reliability of the whole questionnaire was 0.80, with the section about students' attitudes towards reading 0.77, and the section about students' attitudes towards cooperative learning and its classroom implementation 0.82.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the instructor and six randomly chosen students from the experimental group. The purpose of the interviews was to gather more information about the effects of the use of cooperative learning activities. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Written notes were taken by the researcher. A content analysis was conducted on these data to determine emerging patterns.

After implementation of cooperative learning activities in the reading courses of the experimental group, the instructor was asked questions about her perceptions related to the use of these activities. These included the effects of cooperative learning activities on classroom management, student motivation, students' attitudes towards the reading courses, and issues related to the classroom implementation of cooperative learning.

After collecting post-questionnaires of both groups, six students were chosen randomly from the experimental group for interviews. Two high-achievement females and one high-achievement male, and one low-achievement female and two low-achievement males were chosen for the interview. These students were asked

about their feelings related to use of cooperative learning activities in their reading courses, their opinions about the use of cooperative learning activities in their other courses, and problems they encountered while doing these activities.

Interviews were completed with four of the participants since two of the participants could not answer the interview questions related to the implementation of cooperative learning activities. These two participants reported that they did not attend the courses regularly after the distribution of the pre-questionnaire. Their responses related to their reasons for not attending the course, however, were included in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

On December 20, 2003, permission was received from the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University to conduct the study. In the third week of March 2004, the first questionnaire was given to 112 students in order to determine the control group and the experimental group. On March 22, 2004, based on the data analysis of the first questionnaire, the control and the experimental groups were chosen.

On March 25, 2004, the instructor was given a workshop by the researcher. With the instructor, the cooperative learning activities were adapted according to the reading course book which had been used. Asking Together, Learning Together, Jigsaw II, Numbered Heads Together, and Think-Pair-Share were the cooperative learning activities which were adapted to four units of the course book. The instructor was given all necessary handouts for the activities. Beginning April 2, 2004, the instructor began to implement these activities in the experimental group for 4 weeks. None of the lessons were observed by the researcher in order not to affect the internal validity of the study. However, the instructor communicated with the

researcher about progress of the implementation. On May 10, 2004, both groups of students were given the post-questionnaire. Interviews with the instructor and the students were completed by May 14, 2004.

Data Analysis

In order to choose the control and experimental groups, the answers of 112 participants were calculated by using *t*-test from the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). In calculation of the answers, the scales for Questions 4, 5, 8, 9, 19, 20, 24, 28, 33 were reversed as these questions were stated negatively. Two groups whose SPSS results were the closest to each other and whose reading teacher was the same were chosen as control and experimental groups. These two groups' pre-questionnaire results were kept to be compared with the post-questionnaire after the treatment.

After the post questionnaire, the answers of students from the control group and the experimental group were compared. First, answers of both groups for the questions related to their attitudes towards reading courses in the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire were compared. Then, the same comparison was completed for the section related to students' attitudes towards cooperative learning and its classroom implementation. Within comparison was also conducted to find out the differences after implementation of cooperative activities. In order to determine the significance of the results, a *t*-test was used. Male and female and high achievers' answers and low achievers' answers for each question were also compared to see if there was a significant difference in terms of gender and achievement level of the students. ANOVA test was used to compare the groups in terms of gender and achievement.

The interviews with the instructor and students were reported separately. The data from the teacher's interview was organized into five categories and the students' interviews into six categories. These categories were determined according to the content of the interview questions, research questions, and common issues raised by the participants. The raw data was presented in order to present detailed information about the findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. The study also examined differences between female and male students and high-achievement and low-achievement students in their attitudes towards cooperative learning. In order to answer these questions, both a control group and an experimental group were given a pre-questionnaire. After the implementation of cooperative learning activities in reading courses for 4 weeks in the experimental group, both groups were given a post-questionnaire.

The questionnaires consisted of three sections. The first section included questions about students' identity, gender, and grades. In the second section, questions were asked about students' general attitudes towards reading, towards reading in English, and towards reading courses at Dokuz Eylül University. In the third section, questions related to students' attitudes towards cooperative learning were asked. In answering all these questions, students were asked to mark a six-point Likert scale ("strongly agree", "agree", "slightly agree", slightly disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree") to indicate their level of agreement with each statement.

Following collection of the data from the questionnaires, the teacher and six randomly chosen students were interviewed. The aim of interviewing the teacher was to gather information about her observations during implementation of the

cooperative learning activities. Students were also interviewed to ascertain their attitudes in more detail. Although six students were selected, two of the students had not regularly attended the reading courses. Only partial interview information was collected from these two students.

Data Analysis Procedure

There were three sections in the questionnaire. In the first section, students were asked supply personal information, including their names, classes, departments, gender, age, and course grades. In the second section, 23 questions were asked about students' general attitudes towards reading, reading in English, and the reading courses they attended. The third section contained 13 questions meant to gather information about students' attitudes towards cooperative learning activities (See Appendix A).

Several statistical tests were used to look at differences in students' attitudes. To determine changes in attitudes towards reading, students' responses to questions from the second section were compared on both the pre-questionnaires and the post-questionnaires. *T*-tests were used to determine whether significant changes occurred in the control group and in the experimental group. Similar statistical tests were conducted to determine important changes in students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. *T*-tests were also run to detect any significant changes in attitudes in the control group and the experimental group.

To compare male and female students' attitudes and high-achievement and low-achievement students' attitudes before and after the treatment ANOVA tests were also run for section two questions concerning reading and section three questions concerning cooperative learning.

The taped interviews with both the teacher and students were transcribed for analysis. After repeated reading and analysis, the data were sorted in topical categories. These categories were then matched with the research questions as a source of additional information.

Data Analysis

In this section, data from the pre-questionnaires and post-questionnaires and from the teacher and student interviews will be discussed separately.

Questionnaires

For each question in section two and three of the questionnaires, students were asked to select from six possible responses ("strongly agree", "agree", "slightly agree", slightly disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree") to indicate their level of agreement with the statement. A value of 1 was assigned to strongly disagree, 2 to disagree, 3 to slightly disagree, 4 to slightly agree, 5 to agree, and 6 to strongly agree. Questions involving negative statements were reversed. Using these values, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each question and for the questions concerning reading and those addressing cooperative learning as groups. Changes in students' responses from the pre-questionnaire to post-questionnaire were then examined for both the control and experimental groups using a *t*-test.

Research Question 1: What are the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses?

The questions in section two of the questionnaire gathered information about student's attitudes towards reading, reading in English, and reading courses. Table 3 presents the comparison between groups before and after implementation of cooperative learning activities in the experimental group. It presents the calculated means for the 23 questions for the control and the experimental group on the pre-

questionnaire and the post-questionnaire. Although there was no significant difference between groups in both pre- and post-questionnaires, the calculated mean of the experimental group in the post-questionnaire was less than the control group's calculated mean. For a further analysis, a within group comparison was conducted.

Table 3

Effects of cooperative learning activities on reading attitudes (between groups comparison)

Questionnaire	Groups	N	M	Sd	*t*
Pre-questionnaire	Experimental	22	93.73	9.03	.477
	Control	18	92.05	13.08	
Post-questionnaire	Experimental	22	87.95	11.17	-1.145
	Control	18	92.05	11.37	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard deviation, *t*: *t*-test value

Table 4 presents the analysis of within group comparison of the experimental and the control group. As the table presents, changes in attitudes towards reading in the experimental group were notable. Interestingly, students expressed less positive attitudes after exposure to cooperative learning as measured by the pre- and post-questionnaires. The change in the attitudes was significant in the experimental group. As expected, for the control group which received no exposure to cooperative learning, there was no change.

Table 4

Effects of cooperative learning activities on reading attitudes (within group comparison)

Groups	Questionnaire	N	M	Sd	*t*
Experimental	Pre-question	22	93.73	9.03	2.844*
	Post-question	22	87.95	11.17	
Control	Pre-question	18	92.05	13.08	.000
	Post-question	18	92.05	11.37	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard deviation, *t*: *t*-test value, p<.05

Research Question 2: What are the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?

The thirteen questions in the third section of the questionnaire were designed to learn about students attitudes towards cooperative learning. When pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire of two groups are compared, it can be seen from the Table 5 that there is a non-significant difference between groups.

Table 5

Effects of cooperative learning activities on attitudes towards cooperative learning (between groups comparison)

Questionnaire	Groups	N	M	Sd	*t*
Pre-questionnaire	Experimental	22	56.68	9.66	.288
	Control	18	55.83	8.77	
Post-questionnaire	Experimental	22	55.00	10.05	-.332
	Control	18	56.00	8.68	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard deviation, *t*: *t*-test value

Table 6 presents a within group comparison of experimental and control group in terms of their attitudes towards cooperative learning. When mean scores of thirteen questions on the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire were compared, there was a slight change in both groups. The data suggest that attitudes in the control group became marginally more positive while attitudes in the experimental group became marginally more negative.

Table 6

Effects of cooperative learning activities on attitudes towards cooperative learning (within group comparison)

Groups	Questionnaire	N	M	Sd	*t*
Experimental	Pre-question	22	56.68	9.66	.762
	Post-question	22	55.00	10.05	
Control	Pre-question	18	55.83	8.77	-.100
	Post-question	18	56.00	8.68	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard deviation, *t*: *t*-test value

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between female and male students in their attitudes towards the reading courses and cooperative learning?

Table 7 presents the test results between female and male learners in their attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning after implementation of cooperative learning activities. As it is seen in the table, male students' means are higher than female students in the experimental group before and after implementation of cooperative learning activities, but the difference is statistically non-significant. Male students' means were higher than the female students in the control group for both the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire. Overall, there was no significant difference between groups, so further analysis which may be used to find the group causing a significant difference was not needed.

Table 7

Gender difference in attitudes towards reading after implementation of cooperative learning activities

Questionnaire	Groups	N	M	Sd	F
Pre-Q-Reading	Exp-male	18	94.44	9.12	.310
	Exp-female	4	90.50	9.11	
	Con-male	15	91.40	13.60	
	Con-female	3	95.33	11.84	
Post-Q-Reading	Exp-male	18	89.34	10.89	1.031
	Exp-female	4	81.50	11.59	
	Con-male	15	91.53	12.38	
	Con-female	3	94.67	3.78	
Pre-Q-CoopLearn	Exp-male	18	57.28	9.97	.242
	Exp-female	4	54.00	8.83	
	Con-male	15	56.33	9.55	
	Con-female	3	53.33	2.08	
Post-Q-CoopLearn	Exp-male	18	55.22	9.90	.058
	Exp-female	4	54.00	12.45	
	Con-male	15	55.87	9.49	
	Con-female	3	55.67	3.05	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard Deviation, F: Variance

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference between high-achievement and low-achievement students' in their attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning?

Table 8 presents the results of ANOVA tests showing that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of high-achievement and low-achievement in the experimental group after the implementation of cooperative learning activities. There is also no significant difference in the attitudes of the high-achievement and low-achievement students in the control group. Further analysis was not conducted since there was no significant difference between groups.

Table 8

Achievement difference in attitudes after implementing cooperative learning activities

Questionnaire	Groups	N	M	Sd	F
Pre-Q-Reading	Exp-lowach	12	93.21	6.93	.141
	Exp-highach	10	94.60	12.91	
	Con-lowach	7	91.28	7.82	
	Con-highach	9	92.11	16.23	
Post-Q-Reading	Exp-lowach	12	87.57	8.80	.369
	Exp-highach	10	89.50	13.79	
	Con-lowach	7	91.28	9.03	
	Con-highach	9	92.44	14.27	
Pre-Q-CoopLearn	Exp-lowach	12	56.36	10.19	1.138
	Exp-highach	10	57.11	8.59	
	Con-lowach	7	60.43	5.71	
	Con-highach	9	52.11	9.87	
Post-Q-CoopLearn	Exp-lowach	12	55.43	9.60	.446
	Exp-highach	10	54.50	10.12	
	Con-lowach	7	59.00	9.02	
	Con-highach	9	53.78	9.23	

N: Number of the participant groups, M: Mean, Sd: Standard deviation, F: Variance

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with both the teacher and six randomly selected students to provide opportunities for more detailed analysis of attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning.

Interview with the teacher

A structured interview was conducted by the researcher with the reading course teacher who implemented cooperative learning activities in her reading course. The interview was transcribed from audiotape and read numerous times to identify patterns and themes. These five major themes to be discussed separately are:

1. Comparison between her previous teaching style and using cooperative learning activities in her teaching instruction.

2. Problems encountered in the implementation.
3. Positive effects of implementation on students observed by the teacher.
4. Specific activities that worked better than others.
5. Other opinions about use of cooperative learning activities in language teaching.

Changes in teaching

The teacher stated that her previous teaching style was completely teacher-centered. She was doing all the work in the class such as explaining sentences or vocabulary in the texts and all questions were answered by individual students. She had developed this teacher-centered style in response to students' attitudes. The teacher noted:

> While I was using my own method, our lessons were teacher-centered, because...you know students. They hate getting ready for a unit at home. They expect everything from their teacher.

According to the teacher, the most important difference between her previous teaching style and using cooperative learning activities in her course was related to her role in the lesson. While she was doing all the work in the class previously, during the implementation of cooperative learning, she became a monitor and a guide in the classroom:

> ....but after you gave me the activities, I just monitored. So, I tried to see what they were able to do on their own. But what I noticed was that they were at a loss. They needed a guide. Sometimes they clearly stated it.

It is clear from this comment that the teacher realized cooperative learning required new roles both for her and her students. In another quote, she said:

> You know, you gave me little pieces of paper for each student. I gave (them) their papers, I explained again and again, but I think they preferred someone else to teach them.

She noted that students felt at a lost, since they were not used to studying by themselves. They saw the teacher as responsible for teaching them. When they were asked to study together and be active participants of the lesson, they did not know what to do.

Problems encountered

When the teacher was asked about the problems she encountered in implementing the activities, she mentioned that students were often not so enthusiastic about completing the task in the cooperative activities. However, she emphasized that this problem was not caused by the activities by the materials used in the course. The teacher offered her evaluation of the materials in the following way:

> .....not only me but all my colleagues who teaches those books in the same series, we hate those books. Our students do, too. Because the topics are not really attractive...There is no climax in the units. So, mostly our classes were a kind of torture because of the material. This is what I and my students share mutually. I know it, I know it. It is nothing to do with me, nothing to do with something else. It is directly related to the material.

Because of the strict schedule followed in the reading classes and the need to cover the required content, the cooperative learning activities were based on the course books used in the class. The teacher, herself, believes that the activities would have worked better if they had been used with a different material.

> Although the whole study was a failure in my opinion, it is because of the reason I mentioned earlier. I really enjoyed your activities, the techniques you have suggested. So, I really would like to use them in the future if I have reading classes.

Positive effects

At least two notable positive effects of cooperative learning were identified by the teacher. She mentioned that she had few problems in classroom management in

implementing the cooperative learning activities. In addition, she mentioned that students enjoyed taking part in cooperative group activities:

> I think, they enjoyed the freedom of studying cooperatively and I think they enjoyed this part of activities.

Another positive but limited effect was observed on shy and quiet students' participation level in the course. In talking about two students who did not previously participated much, she said:

> To be specific I can say, names are not important for you I think, two of my students became more relaxed and active. That's true. But only for two.

Successful cooperative learning activities

While the teacher expressed her satisfaction with most of the cooperative learning activities, she observed that the most successful activity was Asking Together, Learning Together. The students also enjoyed it more than the others:

> The activity in which they prepared their own questions. That really worked well. They enjoyed preparing questions.

Other opinions

At the end of the interview, the teacher was asked to express any additional opinions about the use of cooperative learning activities in teaching instruction. She said she generally believed the activities were valuable and useful, and that she was planning to keep the materials prepared by the researcher and her to use in her reading lessons for the following educational year.

Interviews with students

Six students participated in the interviews. These participants were randomly chosen. In selection of these students low-achievement and high-achievement students and male and female students in the experimental group were determined and random selection was conducted to choose three females and three males. Three of the

participants were high-achievement students and three of the others were low-achievement students. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and then translated into English by the researcher. Although six students were chosen to be interviewed, only four interviews were completed since two participants did not regularly attended the course after the pre-questionnaire was distributed.

As with the teacher interview data, the interviews were repeatedly read and six major themes identified. These were:

1. What the participants liked about studying in cooperative groups.
2. What the participants did not like about studying in cooperative groups.
3. Comparison of individual learning and learning in cooperative groups.
4. Problems encountered in cooperative group work and how they were handled.
5. Preference between learning from a classmate and learning from the teacher.
6. Complaints about the reading course material.

What the participants liked

When all student statements are considered, it can be concluded that they generally liked studying in cooperative groups. In their words, they emphasized concepts such as responsibility, sharing, confidence, relaxation, and contributing to each other's learning, all of which are supposed to emerge in classroom atmospheres in which cooperative learning is used.

> (Participant A) Studying in groups is more enjoyable compared to studying by yourself. I do not know, compared to sitting and memorizing all vocabulary by yourself, group work is more enjoyable. You learn sharing. We will have a business life in the future. We have to share life in the future, too. You share something. This is very important. As I said before, you learn faster and better by studying in group.
>
> (Participant B) I liked studying in group; there is a more sincere atmosphere. I do not know. You feel shyness when you talk with the teacher, but with your class-mates, you do not feel so. When you do not understand something you read,

> you can directly ask it to your class-mate. You may ask only three or five questions to your teacher, then you think you have asked too much questions so you stop asking. However, you may ask questions to your class-mate as many as you want. He also asks questions to you.

> (Participant C) Studying in group is useful. You can ask vocabulary to your classmates. You do not understand the paragraphs when you study alone, so you ask your classmate. He/she helps you. You also help them. I especially learnt vocabulary more easily.

Participant D emphasized another positive effect of cooperative learning on learners. She expressed that she felt relaxed about the learning process and more confidence in herself:

> It made me relax. It brought me confidence. I said to myself 'so I can do it myself, too'. I realized that I was able to teach my knowledge to my classmates. I saw that I had the ability to teach something. I want to do the same thing in my other courses in my department.

What the participants did not like

When the participants were asked to report what they did not like about studying in cooperative groups, only two of them mentioned problems they encountered. These problems were related to organizational problems within the groups. Participant A noted a problem that occurred early during the implementation of cooperative learning activities:

> Of course we had problems, but only in my first group work. Maybe, my friends did not realize the seriousness of the work or maybe I had an adaptation problem with the group. But later, I did not have any problems.

Resistance by group members to actively engage in group work was identified as a problem mentioned by participant D. Like the previous problem, however, this too seemed to be resolved as students became accustomed to group work. In her

second group experience, she did not have these problems since all members were willing to participate in the work:

> When I am the only one who studies on the paragraph, then I do not like working in groups. In my first group work, I said my team-mates "Let's do it, let's look up the unknown words in the dictionary." When they did not contribute, I also did not want to do anything. I am easily affected by this kind of thing. However, it was better in the last week. It was very nice. All group members studied together, so I did, too. I mean...it depends on who you work with.

Individual learning and cooperative learning

When the participants were asked to compare individual learning and learning in cooperative groups, all of them mentioned the benefits of learning cooperatively, especially the effectiveness of learning in cooperative groups. Participant A compared individual learning and cooperative learning with these words:

> There are a lot of differences. You have to handle problems on your own when you study alone. Nobody helps you and says "you may do it like this". But in group, you discuss some of the things...your friend may show you positives and negatives. ...Much better than studying alone. ...It also increased my participation in the lesson. I liked English and reading courses beforehand. However, after studying in groups I wanted to show the teacher that I did a lot of things in the lesson. I wanted to show that I was successful. Studying in groups caused me to do so.

Participant B used a different example to emphasize how much he learnt during cooperative group work. His comment also suggests that students were encouraged to interact in the target language:

> You learn language easily in a foreign country. People around speak that language. It is the same with your classmates. You speak the language that they speak. You feel obliged to speak the language they speak.

Participants also emphasized that information learnt in cooperative groups was more permanent than information learnt individually. They also said that when they study alone they prefer skipping parts that they have difficulty in understanding.

However, when they experienced studying in groups, they asked their classmates' help when they had difficulty in understanding. Participant D expressed her ideas in these words:

> There were some sentences that I had difficulty in understanding. One of my groupmates helped me translate it. Then I understood. If I were alone, I would skip some of those sentences without understanding.

Problems encountered and how they were handled

In experiencing cooperative group work in the reading courses, participants met only a few problems which they themselves handled successfully. These problems were related to adaptation and organization problems which occurred in the first group work activity, but reportedly disappeared when participants and their group mates got used to working in groups. Another problem which occurred in Participant B's group was related to a conflict they faced in choosing the best questions to be asked to the other groups. In the Asking Together, Learning Together activity, they could not decide on group questions because everyone in the group thought that their questions were better than the others. Here is the solution found by the all group members, in the words of participant B:

> While we were preparing our questions, some of my mates insisted on that their questions were better than the other questions. Some members said sentences like "Your question has nothing to do with the reading text."*(Here, he laughs)* Thus, we decided on reading the text carefully again and then decided on our group's questions.

This comment suggests that studying in cooperative groups improves students' management skills, such as problem solving and organizing group work. When faced with difficulties, students organized themselves to complete the task within the time frame. They used a variety of strategies to address problems that arose, such as

deciding on the best question, encouraging group members to keep on working, and prioritizing tasks to be completed.

Preference between learning a classmate and learning from a teacher

When asked about their preferences about learning from classmates or learning from the teacher, all the participants said that although learning from a classmate had many advantages, learning from the teacher was better; however, they recognized that both had district benefits. The students said they preferred learning from the teacher because she provided more correct information, was a professional, knew different ways of explaining and teaching.

> (Participant A) In the lesson, I think teachers contribute to your learning more than your classmates. Because this is his/her job. He/she focuses on this job for his/her entire life. I prefer a teacher teaches me rather than one of my classmates. But this does not mean that I do not ask my classmates' contribution.

> (Participant B) Learning from your classmates is reasonable. It's a kind of interaction to learn information. You have some strength and so does your friend. Something like 'you know this but I know that'. But the teacher knows everything. He/she is superior to you... Thus, learning from your classmates is nice. However, there is a risk that your classmate may be mistaken unlike the teacher. I do not know. Not exactly the teacher and not exactly my classmates.

Participant C and D preferred that a teacher taught them rather than their classmates. They said that teacher was the most reliable source and what he/she taught was correct. Participant D especially emphasized the grammatical correctness of the sentences produced by the teacher:

> ...her sentences are grammatically correct, we can understand easily. We take them as examples. I say 'Well, then this is the formula, I should use it in the same way' to myself.

Complaints about the reading course material

Although the participants were not asked about the material used in the reading course, all of them complained about the material. The Participants E and F, with whom the interviews were not completed, stated that their non-attendance to lessons were because of the material used in the course. For this reason, the researcher found it significant to report their opinions about the material.

Participant E, who had the highest grades in the course, thought that it was unnecessary for her to attend the lessons, since it was very easy for her to memorize the vocabulary in the texts by herself at home. She explained her opinions as follows:

> It is unnecessary to attend lessons to memorize the vocabulary. I study them at home. They only ask vocabulary in the exams. The book is too boring. Why should I spend my time on it?

Participant B focused on another point related to vocabulary taught in the material. He compared the vocabulary used in the material with his native language use. He also compared the book with one of his other course books which he believed was more useful for him especially in writing essays. He preferred a reading course book which recycled the vocabulary which had been taught in other courses. Specifically, he noted:

> Vocabulary is useless in the reading book. I read once, and then I forget. ... They have nothing to do with the real life. I used these words in Turkish once or twice in my whole life. The vocabulary used in the book "X" *(he tells the exact name of the book here)* is all about real life, I use them in writing lesson, too.

Participant C said that it would be better to study in groups if the material was different. Unlike the other participants, he wanted to learn new information from readings, not only new vocabulary. He commented:

> The reading book is boring. It would be more enjoyable if we had a chance to read more interesting topics. I do not talk

> about the vocabulary; I mean it would be better if I had a chance to learn something new. These stories are nonsense because they are useless. They do not teach anything so they are not meaningful for me.

The other participants also stated that the material which was used in the reading course was not useful for their learning. They mentioned that their unwillingness to participate was caused by the material, not by the teacher or the instruction used by their teacher.

Conclusion

There was not seen a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of the participants towards English reading courses and cooperative learning when experimental and control groups were compared. There was a significant difference in the attitudes of experimental group towards English reading courses after implementation of cooperative learning activities which was reported as a negative change. There was not a significant difference in terms of gender and achievement in both the experimental and the control groups. However, interview results provided clear information about what participants felt about cooperative learning experience. The opinions of the participants were generally towards positive and all participants were willing to learn and teach cooperatively in their future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

This study investigated the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. It also examined possible differences in attitudes of female and male students and high-achievement and low-achievement students towards the reading course and cooperative learning activities. The study was carried out at the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University. Using the results of the pre-questionnaire the two most similar groups were selected with one randomly assigned as the experimental group and the other the control group. The same teacher taught both groups to reduce teacher effects on the study.

The teacher implemented cooperative learning activities in the experimental group for four weeks. These activities were adapted to the reading course book with no additional material used. The teacher did not change her previous teaching instruction in the control group. When the treatment ended, both the control group and the experimental group were given the post-questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with the teacher and six randomly chosen students from the experimental group.

The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire results were analyzed by using *t*-test and ANOVA test. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in relation to the research questions and other common issues raised by the participants.

Discussions of the Results

The First Research Question

The first question of the study explored the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses. After implementation of the activities, the attitudes of the students in the experimental group were changed slightly towards negative. However, the change was not statistically significant compared to the control group's responses. In the within group statistical analysis, the responses of the students in the experimental group to the pre- and post-questionnaires after the implementation of the cooperative learning activities indicated that their attitudes became significantly negative towards reading and the reading courses.

In the interviews, however, participants who attended the class regularly during the treatment had a positive attitude towards the reading courses after the implementation of the activities. In particular, they stated that they felt more comfortable in the reading courses, especially in answering questions from the teacher. They also said that they felt they had more opportunities to ask and answer questions with their classmates in groups and so practice the language. The findings of this study were consistent with the findings of Jacob et al. (1996) who found that cooperative learning activities allowed students to ask questions to their group members and discuss the answers of these questions to understand the academic language and concepts in the reading materials.

A second positive effect of cooperative learning in the reading course also appeared in the interviews but not in the questionnaires. Students' comments suggested that cooperative learning seemed to reduce anxiety and develop students' self-esteem and self-confidence in reading course. This is consistent with the

advantages of cooperative language learning cited by Crandall (1999) and Dörnyei (1997).

The difference in findings of the statistical analysis and interview analysis may arise from two reasons. In the interviews, two of the respondents explained that they had not attended the reading class regularly since the pre-questionnaire. They did, however, fill in the questionnaire like the other students present on the day of administering of the post-questionnaire. There may have been others in the experimental group who also did not regularly attend class, but who filled out the post-questionnaire. Their lack of experience with the cooperative learning activities might have affected the results of the study.

In the interviews, all participants including the teacher, complained about the reading course book. These observations reinforce the literature in highlighting the importance of course materials in students' learning and perceptions of their learning (Coelho, 1992). Students' attitudes towards reading as seen on the questionnaire may be more a reflection of their dissatisfaction with the material rather than with cooperative learning.

The Second Research Question

The second research question was related to the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. Statistical analysis of the experimental group's responses on the pre- and post-questionnaire showed that there was not a significant change in students' attitudes towards cooperative learning after the implementation of the cooperative learning activities. In the interviews, however, participants' responses were generally positive about their experience in cooperative learning activities. They emphasized that the activities encouraged them to take responsibility in their own learning process, to

share their knowledge with other learners, and to feel more confident. They also said that studying with their classmates was more enjoyable and useful than studying alone.

It seems that cooperative learning experience also helped learners improve their management, social, and academic skills. This is consistent with Baloche (1998), who found that management skills of the students improved with the use of cooperative learning. Students in the interviews mentioned independent management strategies that they used during cooperative learning activities. They tried to organize group work and complete the given task in a limited time. When they met a problem in their groups, such as deciding on the best questions of the group, they handled the problem in a manner that respected all team members' opinions. Such behavior suggests that the activities also helped them in improving their social skills, which is one of the most important benefits of cooperative learning according to Johnson & Johnson (1992). Stahl (1995) noted that cooperative learning activities improved students' academic skills by encouraging them to interact, ask and answer questions of each other, solve problems, and make decisions. In the reading courses, the participants had great opportunities to interact with each other. In particular, interviewees said that they asked questions of their team members about the structures and concepts they had difficulty in understanding in the reading texts. The findings also showed that the students who had avoided asking the teacher questions during class began to ask questions of their classmates during cooperative learning activities.

Problems identified during the interviews were mostly related to students' becoming accustomed to cooperative learning groups. As the teacher of the course mentioned, the students were not used to studying in groups and taking an active role

in the reading courses and they had difficulty in adapting themselves. This dramatic change in the learning environment and the role of the teacher and students was perhaps more difficult for the students to adjust to than had been anticipated. This adaptation process might have affected their responses in the questionnaires.

The difference between information collected in the interviews and the questionnaire results about cooperative learning might have also been because of students who had not attended class responding to the questionnaire as four participants with whom interviews were completed expressed positive opinions about the use of cooperative learning activities.

The Third Research Question

The third question of the study sought to identify the difference between male and in attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning. Statistically, no significant difference was found, though after implementation of cooperative learning activities, female students' attitudes were more negative. Male students' attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning also were more negative after the treatment, but less than female students. Only one of the respondents in the interview was female since the two other females selected for the interviews did not attend the course during the treatment. The only female respondent of the interviews generally shared the same opinions as the male respondents.

Since there were only four female students in the experimental group, no generalization can be made from the results that were found to answer the research question of the study.

The Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question of the study looked at any possible difference in the attitudes of high-achievement and low-achievement students towards cooperative

learning. Based on the pre- and post-questionnaires both type of students' attitudes became more negative after the treatment. This difference between the two groups, however, was small and not statistically significant.

In the completed interviews, there were two high-achievement and two low-achievement students. There was little difference in their opinions. All expressed positive opinions about cooperative learning and identified similar problems they encountered during the experimental treatment. Both the questionnaires and interviews suggest then that there was not a difference between high-achievement students and low-achievement students in their attitudes towards the reading and cooperative learning.

Limitations of the Study

In interpreting the results of this study, there are several limitations to be considered. These limitations are related to the participants, the length of the study, and the material used in the course.

The participants of the study were chosen from the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University. In the pre-questionnaire, three teachers and their two reading classes were given the questionnaire. It was difficult to find teachers who taught two reading classes with the same level of students. Had more classes been available, groups that resembled one another more closely might have been chosen for the study. In addition, in both the experimental group and the control group, the number of the female participants was small. This situation limits the ability to generalize the findings for the third research question.

Two of the participants in the interviews and the teacher stated that absences were a problem. No mechanism was put in place to prevent students who did not

attend the courses during the treatment from answering the questions in the post-questionnaire, too. Their answers might have affected the statistical results.

Another limitation of the study was the length of the treatment. Although a six-week implementation of cooperative learning was planned with the teacher, she could only implement activities for four weeks. For one of the six weeks, classes were not held at the university. The instructor also finished one unit earlier than anticipated. A longer treatment might have affected the results.

The instructional materials which were used in the reading courses during the study were not changed and no supplemental material for the cooperative learning activities were used; instead, the cooperative activities were based on the existing readings in the course textbook. This was done to accommodate the strict course content schedule followed at the school. As respondents expressed in the interviews, the course book is very negatively viewed by the students and appears to have had a negative effect on students' attitudes towards reading and cooperative learning activities, as well.

Pedagogical Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. Possible differences in attitudes among male and female students' and high-achievement and low-achievement students were also sought. As a part of the study, the researcher gathered information about students' attitudes towards the reading courses held at the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University. These findings may be used to redesign the reading courses at the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University. Furthermore, complaints related to the reading material may be reported to the material development committee.

The findings of the interviews may be used to suggest teachers use cooperative learning activities in their courses since participants' attitudes were positive towards participating in cooperative learning activities. The teacher's opinion about the further use of the activities and her willingness to implement them in spite of the problems she encountered may serve as an important example for other teachers in the institution. All these findings may encourage teachers to use cooperative learning activities in their teaching instruction.

As Açıkgöz (2002) stated, in education systems in which traditional methods such as lecture and dictation are used, students easily forget what they have learnt during lectures. The reason for this problem is caused by the roles of the teacher and the student in the class. In classes where traditional whole class methodology is used, the teacher is the expert and the decision maker, whereas students are passive listeners and note-takers. Students generally memorize information presented by the teacher, review it, and then forget it after the examination. However, in classes where cooperative learning is used teachers are facilitators. Students are investigators and discoverers. They ask questions, make predictions, analyze, discuss, assess their strengths and weaknesses, interact, and try to learn. For teachers and students in Turkey, where traditional whole class methods have been used for a number of years, changing these roles might be very difficult. The findings of this study may also be important since they give clear evidence about the difficulties that the teacher and the students in the experimental group encountered during the implementation. Knowing about the possible problems related to adjusting to new roles beforehand may help teachers who plan to use cooperative learning activities in their instruction.

In order to prevent the problems which may result from the difficulty in adapting new roles, both teachers and students may be given training on cooperative

learning. In these training sessions, they may be informed about how to work effectively in cooperative groups, how they can handle difficulties, and other cooperative learning group skills.

Suggestions for Further Research

Several suggestions for further research emerge from the findings of this study. First of all, for more meaningful results–negatively or positively–treatment should extend over a longer period of time. Positive attitudes towards unfamiliar ways of learning may need longer than four weeks to develop. In addition, the students' adaptation problems in this study might have become less severe during a longer treatment.

Another suggestion is related to the numbers of the groups. Having more experimental groups in a study in which effect is sought may provide more reliable findings. Having identical numbers in gender and achievement level of the students may also affect further studies in significant ways.

In this study, students' attitudes towards cooperative learning after implementation of cooperative learning activities were sought in the reading courses. In a further study, their attitudes may be sought in different language skills such as writing and speaking, in which the effect on students' attitudes may be different.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of cooperative learning activities on students' attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning. Although no statistically significant differences were found between the control group and experimental group, there was a significant negative change in attitudes of experimental group towards reading. However, interview data suggested positive changes in students' attitudes towards both the reading courses and

cooperative learning after a four-week exposure to cooperative learning activities. The findings did not indicate any difference among students in terms of gender or achievement level.

This study may be considered as an initial step to encourage learners to have active roles in their learning process by examining their attitudes towards cooperative learning. The study also aimed to identify effects of cooperative learning on learners. The findings at least partially confirmed previous studies on the same field that found positive effects on students. Language teachers seeking to implement innovations in their teaching instruction may also look to the findings of the research to encourage them in their efforts.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Dear students,

My name is Özlem Bayat and I attend MA TEFL Program at Bilkent University. I am conducting a survey about student views of reading and the reading course. The following questionnaire has been prepared for this survey. I would appreciate it if you would answer the questions in the questionnaire. Another version of the same questionnaire will be distributed later this term.

Although I ask your name for the questionnaire, it is only to match your answers on the questionnaire with the second questionnaire. No information about your identity will be included in any reports derived from this research. No one including your teacher will be able to associate your names with your answers to either questionnaire.

Please read the questions carefully and answer all of them. Your answers will contribute to my study. Thank you for your participation.

Özlem Bayat

MA TEFL Program
Bilkent University
Ankara

I read the information in the form and I accept participating in the study. I know that my name will not be included in any reports by the researcher.

Name and surname:

Signature:

Date:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section I

Please fill in the following information.

Name : .....

Surname : .....

Class : .....

Department : .....

Sex : Male (.....) Female (.....)

Age : .....

First semester grade: 0-20 (.....), 20-50 (.....), 50-60 (.....), 60-70 (.....), 70-100 (.....)

Section II

Please place an "**X**" in the most appropriate box.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. One can learn a lot by reading.						
2. Reading in English is difficult for me.						
3. Reading helps me in learning new English vocabulary.						
4. Reading is a waste of time.						
5. In my reading class, the teacher's instruction is boring.						
6. In my reading class, the teacher's instruction helps me learn the material.						
7. I look forward to coming to my reading class.						
8. I have difficulty in learning new vocabulary in the reading course.						
9. The reading course is difficult.						
10. My reading class makes me want to learn more English.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. The reading course helps me improve my reading in English.						
12. I like learning new vocabulary in the reading course.						
13. I like the reading course.						
14. Reading helps me improve my English.						
15. I enjoy reading.						
16. Reading helps me improve my English grammar.						
17. I like reading outside of school.						
18. The reading course is enjoyable.						
19. I often feel anxious about answering a question in the reading course.						
20. I am afraid of making mistakes in my reading class.						
21. The activities in my reading class give me opportunities to improve my reading skills.						
22. The reading course is one of the most important courses that I have.						
23. I like reading for school.						

Section III

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24. I think other students **CANNOT** contribute to my English.						
25. I think I feel more relaxed if I work on an answer with other students.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26. Working with other students on a problem gives me confidence to answer a question in the class.						
27. I prefer that the teacher rather than another student teaches me.						
28. I think it is difficult for me to concentrate if I study in a group.						
29. I think sharing information about different readings helps me learn.						
30. I think working on questions with other students helps me learn.						
31. I think studying in class for an exam with other students is better than studying alone.						
32. I think studying with other students can improve my English in the reading course more than studying alone.						
33. I think learning from other students is a waste of time.						
34. I think working with other students in class gives me more opportunities to practice newly learned vocabulary.						
35. I think reading the texts is easier if I study within a group.						
36. I think teaching another student can help improve my English.						

Thank you ☺

APPENDIX B

BİLGİ VE KABUL FORMU

Sevgili öğrenciler,

Adım Özlem Bayat ve Bilkent Üniversitesi'nde İngilizce'nin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretimi Yüksek Lisans Programında öğrenciyim. Öğrencilerin okuma ve okuma derslerine yönelik görüşleri ile ilgili bir araştırma yapıyorum. Elinizdeki anket bu araştırma için hazırlandı. Anketteki soruları cevaplarsanız memnun olurum. Bu anketin başka bir versiyonu bu dönem içinde size tekrar dağıtılacak.

Anketi cevaplarken adınız istense de, bu yalnızca cevaplarınızı ikinci anketteki cevaplarınızla karşılaştırmak içindir. Kimliğinizle ilgili hiçbir bilgi bu araştırma sonucunda hazırlanan hiçbir raporda kullanılmayacaktır. Ders öğretmeniniz dahil hiç kimse verdiğiniz cevaplarla birlikte adınızı bilmeyecektir.

Lütfen soruları dikkatlice okuyun ve hepsini cevaplayın. Cevaplarınız araştırmaya katkıda bulunacaktır. Katılımınız için teşekkür ederim.

Özlem Bayat

MA TEFL Programı
Bilkent Üniversitesi
Ankara

Bu formdaki bilgileri okudum ve araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum. Çalışmanın sonunda hiçbir raporda araştırmacı tarafından adımın kullanılmayacağını biliyorum.

Adı ve soyadı:
İmzası :
Tarih :

ANKET

Birinci Bölüm

Lütfen aşağıdaki bilgileri doldurunuz.

Adı :

Soyadı :

Sınıfı :

Bölümü :

Cinsiyeti : Bay (.....) Bayan (.....)

Yaşı :

Birinci dönem başarı notu: 0-20 (...), 20-50 (...), 50-60 (...), 60-70 (...), 70-100 (...)

İkinci bölüm

Sizin için uygun olan kutuyu "**X**" ile işaretleyiniz.

	Tamamen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kısmen katılıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
1. İnsan okuyarak çok şey öğrenebilir.						
2. İngilizce okumak benim için zordur.						
3. Okumak yeni İngilizce kelimeler öğrenmeme yardımcı oluyor.						
4. Okumak vakit kaybıdır.						
5. Okuma dersinde öğretmenin anlatımını sıkıcı buluyorum.						
6. Okuma dersinde öğretmenin anlatımı konuyu öğrenmeme yardımcı oluyor.						
7. Okuma dersine büyük bir istekle geliyorum.						
8. Okuma dersinde yeni kelimeler öğrenmekte güçlük çekiyorum.						
9. Okuma dersi zor bir derstir.						
10. Okuma dersi bende daha çok İngilizce öğrenme isteği yaratıyor.						

	Tamamen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kısmen katılıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
11. Okuma dersi İngilizce okuma becerimi geliştirmeye yardımcı oluyor.						
12. Okuma dersinde yeni kelimeler öğrenmeyi seviyorum.						
13. Okuma dersini seviyorum.						
14. Okumak İngilizce'min gelişmesine yardımcı oluyor.						
15. Okumayı seviyorum.						
16. Okumak İngilizce gramerimin gelişmesine yardımcı oluyor.						
17. Dersler dışında okumayı seviyorum.						
18. Okuma dersi zevkli bir derstir.						
19. Okuma dersinde sorulara cevap verme konusunda sık sık endişeli hissediyorum.						
20. Okuma dersinde hata yapmaktan korkuyorum.						
21. Okuma dersindeki aktiviteler okuma becerilerimi geliştirmede bana olanak sağlıyor.						
22. Okuma dersi en önemli derslerimden biridir.						
23. Dersler için okumayı seviyorum.						

Üçüncü bölüm

	Tamamen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kısmen katılıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
24. Diğer öğrencilerin İngilizce'me katkıda bulunamayacağını düşünüyorum.						
25. Bir sorunun üzerinde diğer öğrencilerle çalışırsam kendimi daha rahat hissedeceğimi düşünüyorum.						
26. Sınıftaki diğer öğrencilerle bir soru üzerinde çalışmak soru cevaplamada bana güven veriyor.						

	Tamamen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kısmen katılıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
27. Bir öğrencidense öğretmenin öğretmesini tercih ederim.						
28. Grup içinde çalışırken konsantre olmamın zor olduğunu düşünüyorum.						
29. Farklı okuma parçaları ile ilgili bilgilerimizi paylaşmanın öğrenmeme yardımcı olacağını düşünüyorum.						
30. Sorular üzerinde diğer öğrencilerle birlikte çalışmanın öğrenmeme yardımcı olacağını düşünüyorum.						
31. Sınıfta diğer öğrencilerle birlikte sınava çalışmanın tek başına çalışmaktan daha iyi olacağını düşünüyorum.						
32. Okuma dersinde diğer öğrencilerle çalışmamın İngilizce'mi yalnız çalışmaktan daha çok geliştirebileceğini düşünüyorum.						
33. Diğer öğrencilerden öğrenmenin vakit kaybı olduğunu düşünüyorum.						
34. Sınıfta diğer öğrenciler ile çalışmamın yeni öğrenilen kelimelerin pratiğini yapmak için daha fazla fırsat vereceğini düşünüyorum.						
35. Grup içinde çalışırsam okuma parçalarını anlamamın daha kolay olacağını düşünüyorum.						
36. Başka bir öğrenciye benim öğretmemin İngilizce'min gelişmesine yardımcı olabileceğini düşünüyorum.						

Teşekkür ederim ☺

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for the Students

1. Did you notice a difference in your teacher's strategies in the last several weeks? If so, what were these differences?
2. Did you like working in groups? Why / why not?
3. What was it specifically you liked / did not like about working in groups?
4. Did you feel that you learnt more in groups than working by yourself?
5. What kind of problems (if any) did you experience in group work? What did you do to handle them?
6. Did working in groups increase your participation in class? Why/why not?
7. Did working in groups make you feel more comfortable to speak English? Why/why not?
8. Did you find you were more comfortable in working in groups after experiencing several group learning activities? Why/why not?
9. What did you think about learning from students rather than from the teacher? Which one do you prefer? Why?

Interview Questions for the Teacher

1. To what extent were you able to implement cooperative learning activities in your reading course?
2. What were some major differences between your previous teaching style and using cooperative learning?
3. What problems (if any) did you meet in implementing CLA?
4. What kind of problems did you have in terms of materials / classroom management?
5. How did students respond to cooperative learning? Did you see any differences in attitudes / participation level / participation of shy or quiet students / male and female attitudes / high achievement and low achievement students / attendance?
6. Were there specific activities that worked especially well?
7. Do you think CLA are useful and valuable to teach reading? Why / why not?

APPENDIX D

Öğrenciler ile görüşme soruları

1. Son haftalarda okuma dersi öğretmeninizin ders anlatma tekniğinde / stratejilerinde bir farklılık gözlemlediniz mi?

2. Grup içinde çalışmayı sevdin mi? Neden?

3. Grup içinde çalışmakta özellikle neyi sevdin /sevmedin?

4. Kendi başına çalışmana kıyasla grup çalışmasında daha çok öğrendiğini hissettin mi?

5. Eğer olduysa grup çalışmasında ne tür sorunlarla karşılaştın? Bunlarla başa çıkmak için ne yaptın?

6. Grup içinde çalışmak derse katılımını artırdı mı? Neden?

7. Grup içinde çalışmak İngilizce konuşurken daha rahat hissetmeni sağladı mı? Neden?

8. Bir kaç grup içinde öğrenme aktivitesinden sonra kendini grup içinde çalışma konusunda daha rahat hissettin mi? Neden?

9. Bir öğretmendense bir öğrenciden öğrenme konusunda ne düşünüyorsun? Hangisini tercih edersin? Neden?