

**A STUDY OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE
OF THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH FOR THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE
SELECTED SCHOOL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND**

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Abstract: This study mainly determines the students' perceptions of using the cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. And to determine whether there were any significant differences between students' perceptions of the use of cooperative learning approach for English teaching and learning and students' gender and achievement (GPAX). The respondents were 130 grade 12 students and two English teachers at the selected school in 2020. The data were collected by questionnaire and two interview forms. Descriptive statistics analyzed the data (mean and standard deviation, independent sample t-test, and ANOVA) and content analysis.

The findings of this study indicated: (1) the grade 12 students' perceptions were positive in all areas of cooperative learning activities in English language teaching and learning at the selected school; (2) there were no significant differences between students' gender and perceptions of the use of cooperative learning, there were also no significant differences between students' achievement (GPAX) and perceptions of the use of cooperative learning; (3) the students found that the effects of cooperative learning include great communication, increased motivation, and interest while sometimes the class would be noisy; the teachers found that the effects of cooperative learning include improvement of contribution and discussion between students, decreased problems of teaching while group work would spend more time.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning Approach, Students' Perceptions, English Language Teaching, and Learning.

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Introduction

English plays a vital role in Thailand (Baker, 2009). According to Foley (2005), a learner-centered approach should be used in the English curriculum to give students opportunities to connect with globalization. Cooperative learning as a learner-centered approach has been identified as a key teaching strategy in many classrooms worldwide due to its' ability to enhance student motivation and improve overall academic achievement (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993). Cooperative learning encourages many 21st-century related characteristics, such as improving the communication skills of students, developing their sense of responsibility, molding learners' teamwork capabilities, enhancing their engagement and leadership skills so that they might be more organized in their academic and eventually their professional life (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, students should be active in the process of learning, so it's necessary to understand students' attitudes in acquiring a foreign language so that they might be engaged and benefit from instructional lessons.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the grade 12 students' perceptions of the Cooperative Learning Approach in English Language Teaching and learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To determine whether there are significant differences between the grade 12 students' perceptions of the Cooperative Learning Approach in English Language Teaching and students' gender at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.
3. To determine whether there are significant differences between the grade 12 students' perceptions of using the Cooperative Learning Approach in English Language Teaching and students' achievement (GPAX) at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.
4. To determine the grade 12 students' perceptions of the effects and barriers of the cooperative learning approach in English learning and teaching at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.
5. To determine the teachers' perceptions of the effects and barriers to using a cooperative learning approach in English learning and teaching at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Literature Review

Cooperative Learning

Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2014) noted that "cooperative learning is characterized by positive interdependence, where students perceive that better performance by individuals produces better performance by the entire group

(p.1). Quinn (2006) defined cooperative learning to include “working in small groups; peers recognized that their rewards are dependent on the success of their teammates and are more likely to provide support for each other’s learning” (p. 4).

Elements of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning includes five elements: (1) *positive interdependence*, which states that team members depend on each other to move towards achieving the goals set out by the team; (2) *accountability*, which refers to each members’ sense of responsibility to undertake their fullest potential to complete their duties; (3) *interaction*, refers to the two-way communication between various members in order to engage in feedback and discussion on the groups progress and to challenge each other’s understanding or reasoning; (4) *utilization of social skills*, which states that students are empowered and motivated to take part in various key-roles within the team (such as leadership, management, and decision-making); and finally (5) *group processing*, which states that team members’ work together as a group to reflect on their progress, make necessary adjustments as appropriate to the context, and undertake a routine assessment of their efforts individually, and as a group (Johnson & Johnson, 2005).

English Language Teaching and Learning in the Thai Context

English plays a vital role in Thailand (Foley, 2005). English language teaching and learning has been conducted in Thailand for more than a century from King Rama III (1824-1851) until now (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005; Darasawang, 2007) because English is a medium to connect with the world. King Rama VI further promoted teaching and learning by establishing English compulsory. During his reign, King Rama VII launched a policy to offer equal education to all Thais that promoted the development of English language teaching and learning at the tertiary level. English language teaching was based on memorization and grammar-translation during King Rama VI and King Rama VII (1910-1932) (Debyasuwan as cited in Wongsothorn, 2000). To meet the challenges of globalization, the National Education Act was enacted in 1999. The National Education Act influenced the policy of English language teaching in Thailand (Darasawang, 2007; Foley, 2005). The implementation of the National Education Curriculum in 2002 brought a significant development in English language teaching and learning, which placed English at the forefront of national intellectual development (Wongsothorn et al., 2003). English language learning and teaching go through an important transformation: teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching methods. (Baker, 2008). Daraswang (2007) stated that this transformation promoted learners’ communication in intercultural

communication contexts and lifelong learning. Cooperative learning is a learner-centered method that could engage students' communication and social skills, which should be used widely in teaching and learning English.

Background of the Selected School

The selected school is a top government high school that caters to students from Grade 7 to Grade 12 in the metropolitan area of Phaya Thai district in Bangkok. It has a long history of high achieving students and consistently ranks highly within Thailand. While the school's population is roughly 3,600 students, it is a very select school for many Thai children and hopeful parents. The research found that it is also well-known that the school receives three applications for admission per every student vacancy in each academic year. In fact, "the school has a highly regarded reputation for graduating its students with scores higher than the average national standard" (Sawatsupaphon, 2017, p. 11). The school has a Thai and an English program, which caters to students with different needs. In particular, a cooperative learning approach was utilized in this school to improve students' learning.

Conceptual Framework

The main purposes of this study are to identify 12th-grade students' perceptions of using the cooperative learning approach for English language learning and teaching at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand, during the academic year of 2020; to compare the students' perceptions of the Cooperative learning approach in English. Thus, the conceptual framework undertaken for this study is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Source of Data Independent Variables Dependent Variables

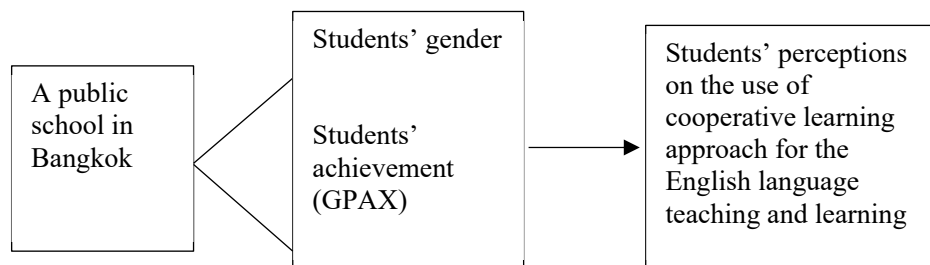


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Independent variables were the students' gender and achievements(GPAX), the dependent variable was the students' perception.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach. The purposes were to identify grade 12 students' perceptions of the use of the cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning and to determine whether there were differences in their gender and achievement (GPAX); to determine the students' and teachers' perceptions on the effects and barriers of the use of cooperative learning approach at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand during the academic year of 2020. Two independent variables and one dependent variable were included in this study for the first purpose, as aforementioned. This includes identifying whether or not there was a difference between the variables. A questionnaire was given to students. Two interview forms were given to students and teachers to determine the results for the second purpose.

Research Instrument

There were three instruments in this study. The first one was a questionnaire for students. The second was an interview form for students, while the third was for teachers. An adapted version of an existing questionnaire by Neo et al. (2012) was utilized as the main instrument of this study to determine quantitative findings.

Furthermore, its reliability was attested by the previous author, George, and Mallery (2003), and it was 0.932 on Cronbach Alpha Test. The interview forms adapted from Bayat (2004) were also be utilized. The following was the interpretation scale of the questionnaire.

Table 1. *Questionnaire Interpretation Scale*

Agreement Level	Score	Scale	Interpretation Level
Strongly Agree	5	4.51-5.00	Very Positive
Agree	4	3.51-4.50	Positive
Neutral	3	2.51-3.50	Neutral
Disagree	2	1.51-2.50	Negative
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.50	Very Negative

Sample

The sample of this study was 136 grade 12 students and two teachers at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. The valid responses of this study were 130 students and two English teachers at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand, during the academic year of 2020. The response rate was, therefore, 95%. The demographic information of students was as the following:

Table 2. *Students' Gender*

Gender	N	Percent (%)
Male	57	44
Female	73	56
Total	130	100

Table 2 showed that most students were female, illustrated as N = 73 (56%), but male students were 57 (44%). Table 2 shows the grade level of students.

Table 3. *Students' achievement (GPAX)*

Grade Level	N	M	Percent (%)
4.00	5	4.00	3.85
3.50-3.99	20	3.81	15.38
3.00-3.49	42	3.26	32.31
2.50-2.99	51	2.76	39.23
2.00-2.49	12	2.38	9.23
Total	130	3.24	100

Table 3 illustrated that most students had a GPAX between 2.50 and 2.99 (39.23%), the number of students was a total of 51, 42 students had a GPAX between 3.00 and 3.49 (32.31%), 20 students had a GPAX between 3.50 and 3.99 (15.38%), 12 students had a GPAX between 2.00 and 2.49 (9.23%), while a few (5) students had a GPAX of 4.00 (4%) throughout their studies.

Findings/Results

Research Objective One

This objective determined grade 12 students' perceptions of using a cooperative learning approach in English language teaching and learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. Frequency and Percentage have been used to illustrate the details. Table 4 shows the results of students' perceptions of using a cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning. The researcher used *Mean and Standard Deviation* to do the analysis. The following are the results:

Table 4. *Students' Perceptions of Cooperative Learning Approach*

Question	N	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
Positive Interdependence	130	4.14	.60	Positive
Individuality & Group Accountability	130	4.13	.65	Positive
Face to Face Promotive Interaction	130	4.16	.59	Positive
Interpersonal Skills	130	4.03	.61	Positive
Group Processing	130	4.14	.64	Positive

Question	N	Mean	SD.	Interpretation
Total	130	3.98	.65	Positive

Table 4 showed that the total mean was 4.12, and the standard deviation was .65; the interpretation was *positive*. It indicated students' perceptions of all area of cooperative learning was *positive*. They enjoyed learning in groups. It was found that Face to Face Promotive Interaction scored the highest out of all the other dimensions by the $M = 4.16$ and $SD = .64$. It showed that students prefer face-to-face interaction because it could help them understand knowledge better. This was followed by Positive interdependence and Group Processing. Both $M = 4.14$, then Individuality and Group Accountability followed with the $M = 4.13$ and $SD = .65$. Finally, Interpersonal Skills attained the lowest rating with the $M = 4.03$ and $SD = .61$. The table showed that students believed cooperative learning could engage their understanding and learning; improve their learning skills, communication skills, and skills of solving problems; motivate their interest in learning; decrease stress. They felt enjoyable when learning in groups.

Research Objective Two

Research objective two was to determine whether there is a significant difference between the grade 12 students' perceptions of using a cooperative learning approach in English Language Teaching and students' gender at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. First, the researcher has established the mean and standard deviation for each question, and then second, a comparison between independent and dependent variables was made. The result was as the following:

Table 5. *Differences between Students' Gender and Perception of Cooperative Learning*

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Male	57	4.01	.60			
Female	73	3.85	.65	1.85	73	.06
Total	130	4				

The independent samples t-test in Table 5 illustrated that there were no significant differences between students' gender and students' perceptions of the use of the cooperative learning approach in English Language Teaching and students' gender at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand, since the significance level $p = .06$ was larger than .05 level of significance.

Findings from Research Objective Three

Research Objective Three

Research objective three was to determine whether there is a significant difference between the grade 12 students' perceptions of using a cooperative learning approach in English Language Teaching and students' achievement (GPAX) at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. The ANOVA was used to compare five-group students' GPAX and their perception. The result is shown in table 6.

Table 6 *Difference between Students' Achievement (GPAX) and Students' Perceptions of Cooperative Learning*

Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	p	
Group A	Between Groups	2.455	4	.614	.568	.68
	Within Groups	136.196	126	1.081		
	Total	138.652	130			
Group B (3.50 - 3.99)	Between Groups	.258	4	.065	.059	.93
	Within Groups	137.621	126	1.092		
	Total	137.880	130			
Group C (3.00 - 3.49)	Between Groups	2.096	4	.524	.564	.68
	Within Groups	117.011	126	.929		
	Total	119.107	130			
Group D (2.50 - 2.99)	Between Groups	3.844	4	.961	1.063	.77
	Within Groups	113.956	126	.904		
	Total	117.801	130			
Group E (2.00 - 2.45)	Between Groups	3.417	4	.854	.911	.80
	Within Groups	118.178	126	.938		
	Total	121.595	130			

In Table 6, there were no significant differences between students' GPAX and their perceptions of using a cooperative learning approach in English Language Teaching and students' gender at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. The significance value of group A (4) was illustrated by $p = .68$, it was larger than $.05$; the significant value of group B (3.50 - 3.99) was illustrated by $p = .93$; the significant value of group C (3.00 - 3.49) was illustrated by $p = .68$; the significant value of group D (2.50 - 2.99) was illustrated by $p = .77$; and the significant value of group E (2.00 - 2.45) was illustrated by $p = .80$. The GPAX of each group was no significant difference with students' perceptions of the use of cooperative learning because the significant values were larger than $.05$.

Research Objective Four

Research Objective Four was to determine the grade 12 students' perceptions of the effects and barriers of using a cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning. The result was based on the interview of two randomly selected students.

Students' perceptions of the effects of the use of cooperative learning for English language teaching and learning

Based on the interview, students thought cooperative learning activities were valuable and efficient for some reasons: 1) *Help each other/ prefer group work*. Students thought group work was better than individual work because they could help each other finish the tasks, and the class was fun and enjoyable. They believed that they could learn more knowledge, learn communication skills, understand tasks better and learn easier and faster from their group members in group working; 2) *Share/ Contribute to the group work*. Students thought group work helped them learn to share ideas with others in the process of discussion. In addition, they also could contribute to the group work because they had their roles and responsibilities in groups; 3) *Motivating*. Students feel motivated by group work. In the group working process, if some students were not focused on work, others would encourage them to finish their parts of group tasks; 4) *Less nervous*. Through group work, students were in a relaxing learning atmosphere to speak English comfortably and were not afraid to make mistakes.

Students' perceptions of the barriers to the use of cooperative learning for English language teaching and learning

Noisy and More time needed for explanations and helping others

The students thought it was sometimes loud when discussing based on the interview. Some students were gossiping rather than working. In addition, they also found that they needed to spend a long time explaining the activities and helping others finish work.

Research Objective Five

Research Objective Five was to determine teachers' perceptions of the effects and barriers of using a cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning. The result was gathered and analyzed the answers of two teachers.

Teachers' perceptions of the effects of the use of cooperative learning for English language teaching and learning

The teachers frequently utilized cooperative learning activities like think-pair-share and jigsaw based on the interview. They divided students into small groups and gave them tasks to achieve. They found that the approach had the following effects: 1) *Minimal problems*. Cooperative learning activities decreased class problems: students did not rely on teachers only; they discussed and interacted to learn better; 2) *Improved contribution*. Working in groups could improve students' assistance and participation in class. Some quiet students could participate in group works actively because of the relaxing atmosphere. Students understood their duties in groups; they had to finish them. It improved their contribution; 3) *Improved discussion and interaction*. The teacher found that students who were more interested in the class were more likely to discuss with others to share different ideas with other groups. Furthermore, they learned to interact with other students because of more efficient group work.

In conclusion, the teachers thought the cooperative learning approach was valuable and useful. It decreased problems, improved discussion and interaction between students, improved students' contribution and participation.

Teachers' perceptions of the barriers to the use of cooperative learning for English language teaching and learning

The proportion of time for group tasks required lengthening and Classroom management

There was a common barrier among teachers from the interview: activity time. They found the time needed more because the teachers explained the rules and assigned activities. Furthermore, the teachers sometimes found a barrier to managing the classroom because some students did not focus on work.

Discussion

The findings of research objective one illustrated the grade 12 students' perception of using a cooperative learning approach for English language teaching and learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand. The results were similar to the study on 'students' perception on cooperative learning in English course at a private school in Thailand' by Piwchai (2015). The positive outcomes of this research were also in line with the findings of Wichadee (2014), who also noted positive results on perceptions of cooperative learning.

The findings of objective two indicated there were no significant differences between students' perceptions and students' gender. It showed that gender did not affect their attitudes. The results were the opposite of the study of Siebert

(2003). However, the results are supported by Arroyo and Tindall (2005). The study was also supported by Rahimi, Riazi, and Saif (2008) with similar results.

In conclusion, some studies supported significant differences between students' gender and language learning strategy, while some argued. It's necessary to do more research about it.

Research objective three indicated no significant difference between students' perceptions of cooperative learning and students' achievement (GPAX). It showed that students' achievement (GPAX) did not affect their perceptions of using the cooperative learning approach.

Research objective four indicated that students obtained the effects of cooperative learning such as interesting class, communication skills, a sense of responsibility and contribution, a rise in classroom attendance, and interaction. The results were supported by Faryadi's (2007) statements that a cooperative learning approach could improve students' self-confidence and attendance in the classroom.

While there were barriers to students' perceptions of the use of cooperative learning: a little bit noisy during the students were discussions, they needed to spend more time explaining tasks to others, and they did not have enough time for learning individually. The result is supported by the study of Wei and Tang (2015).

Research objective five indicated teachers' perceptions of the use of cooperative learning. The teachers used the cooperative learning approach frequently. They found that the cooperative learning approach was valuable and helpful because it could decrease class problems like students would not excessively depend on teachers in learning. In addition, cooperative learning engaged class efficiency and improved teachers' participation and contribution.

While there were some barriers to teachers using the cooperative learning approach, the proportion of time for activities and classroom management, the teachers should overcome the barriers to cooperative learning and change approaches in terms of environment and context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the students' perceptions of cooperative learning activities in English language learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand.

However, it was discovered that on the differences between students' gender and perception of cooperative learning at the selected school in Bangkok, Thailand, there were no significant differences observed. In addition, no significant differences were observed regarding the differences between students' GPAX and perception of cooperative learning. It was also found that the students found it challenging to converse together during cooperative learning activities because the noise level would often increase. At the same time, they felt that it was also necessary to give lengthier explanations. On the other hand, teachers believe that the amount of time for group tasks needs to be lengthened. Thus there is a level of time consumption that could be problematic.

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