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THE USE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION: A SURVEY OF ESL TEACHERS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

31.3.2008

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to investigate the teachers' knowledge, implementation and reservation regarding the concept of cooperative learning in the teaching of reading comprehension. The study aimed to find out if the level of awareness was influenced by gender, academic group, teaching experience, qualification, race and age group. It was conducted on 155 English Language teachers from 21 schools in the District of Batang Padang. Questionnaires were distributed to all teachers within two weeks. The Likert-type scale was extensive employed in the questionnaires. The result of this study showed that there was no significant difference in the awareness of secondary schools English Language teachers with respect to knowledge, implementation and reservation regarding the use of cooperative learning in the teaching of comprehension. Secondly, findings from the study showed no significant mean differences between the independent variables (qualification, option/major, teaching experiences, races, age group) and the dependent variables (knowledge, implementation and reservation) regarding the use of cooperative learning. The T-test also showed there was no significant difference between gender with respect to knowledge and implementation. However, there was significant difference between gender with respect to reservation. The female teachers had more reservation than male teachers. It is suggested that in teaching reading, comprehension through cooperative learning, teachers should plan their lesson well. The size of the classroom and the facilities should be more practical. Teachers need proper and condusive classrooms before implementing cooperative learning to avoid failure of group work task and to encourage students interaction.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti tahap pengetahuan guru terhadap pelaksanaan dan kemusykilan mereka berhubungan dengan konsep pengajaran kooperatif melalui aktiviti bacaan kefahaman. Perbandingan ini adalah untuk melihat sama ada masalah penyesuaian dipengaruhi faktor kejantinaan, pengkhususan, matapelajaran, pengalaman mengajar, bangsa dan umur. Kajian ini dilakukan ke atas 155 orang guru Bahasa Inggeris daripada 21 buah sekolah di Daerah Batang Padang. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada semua guru dalam masa dua minggu. Skala Likert telah digunakan bagi mengukur soal selidik yang dijalankan.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa tidak ada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kesedaran guru iaitu di tahap sederhana dan hasil kajian-T menunjukkan tahap kesedaran guru tidak dipengaruhi oleh jantina, kelayakan akademik, pengalaman mengajar, kelayakan, bangsa dan umur. Bagaimanapun, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara jantina dalam aspek kemusykilan yang dirasai. Guru-guru wanita berasa lebih musykil terhadap penggunaan kaedah ini dalam pengajaran bacaan kefahaman berbanding dengan guru lelaki. Adalah dicadangkan bahawa dalam pengajaan bacaan kefahaman pelajar melalui pembelajaran kooperatif, guru seharusnya merancang pengajaran dengan teratur. Bagi melaksanakan pembelajaran kooperatif, saiz kelas dan kemudahan fizikal seharusnya lebih praktikal. Guru memerlukan pelaksanaan kelas yang sempurna dan kondusif sebelum memulakan sesi pengajaran kooperatif bagi menggelakkan kegagalan kerja berkumpulan dan menggalakkan interaksi antara pelajar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background of Study

Through knowledge, dedication and hard work, teachers have taught their students to be effective readers. Reading consist of two major component : recognizing and analyzing words, often referred to as decoding; and understanding words and ideas, often called comprehension (Ekwall & Shanker, 1985). Decoding means the process of talking words in point and changing them to spoken words. Reading is very important. Reading is both a visual and a mental process. In order to comprehend what one reads, the reader must read for ideas. An idea is usually expressed in group of words, seldom in a single word. Therefore, reading in phrases or phase reading increase speed and comprehension.

The importance of reading to the readers is to maintain the flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections and inferences vital to comprehension. Allen and Van Sickle (1984) mentions three purposes for reading – reading for survival, for learning and for pleasure. Reading is an essential need and the key to success. It is one of the most important basic skills which every student must acquire in order to progress well in learning.

Reading comprehension is the meaning gained from what is written on the page. However, teaching students how to comprehend is much more productive (Ekwall & Shanker, 1985). Students' ability to comprehend is likely to improve much more

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rapidly when they learn to become independent readers. We are developing a growing awareness that if we are to teach students to become lifetime readers, then the reading program must ensure the development of independent readers. The use of cooperative learning methods in the teaching of Reading Comprehension may contribute to an understanding of the reading process in which the reader and the text work together to elicit meaning.

1.1 Statement of The Problem

This study investigated the use of Cooperative Learning Method in the teaching of reading comprehension among English teachers in secondary schools.

The problem that the researcher surveyed was to what extent were the awareness of the teachers regarding the use of cooperative learning in the teaching of reading comprehension. Some of the difficulties that the teachers faced are the students lack of interest to read; students lack of comprehension due to the lack of reading skills and time constraint. This study looked at whether teachers perceived cooperative learning as a suitable method to help them to teach reading comprehension. It is also hoped that the findings will be of great help in dealing with the difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension.

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1.2 Significance of the Study

This study intended to identify the use of Cooperative Learning Method in the teaching of reading comprehension. Some of the difficulties that the teachers faced in the classroom when teaching reading comprehension were the students' lack of interest to read; students' lack of comprehension due to lack of reading skills and time constraints. Teachers' awareness of cooperative learning (CL) would help to overcome the problems mentioned above. Therefore, the information gathered in this study would provide basic consideration for the teachers to:-

(i) be more aware of the knowledge in cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

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(ii) identify how they utilize the cooperative learning method and,

(iii) identify the teacher's level of knowledge on the principles of CL, the implementation and reservation regarding the use of CL.

Hopefully, the findings of the study would provide guidance for the teachers and students to employ appropriate strategies and techniques that would benefit the learners, language learning and teaching, through cooperative learning method in the teaching of reading comprehension.

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1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the awareness of secondary school teachers regarding the use of cooperative learning method to teach reading comprehension. The study attempted to find out if the teachers were aware of the concepts and techniques, the actual implementation and their reservation felt regarding the use of cooperative learning method in e secondary schools in Batang Padang District in Perak.

Using cooperative learning can be an alternative method for teachers to promote learning among students. Thus, by adopting a student-centered approach, the students will be able to develop and master the reading comprehension skills needed without being too dependent on the teacher.

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This study will be able to provide a general framework that will act as a starting point for further research in teaching reading comprehension. Teachers who are interested can use cooperative learning as a guideline to teach reading comprehension.

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1.4 Research Questions

The following are the research questions formulated for the study:

(i) What is the extent of the knowledge of the use of cooperative learning in the teaching of reading comprehension among secondary school English teachers from different qualification, gender, experience, ethnic and option groups?

(ii) How do secondary school English teachers from different qualification, gender, experience, ethnic and option groups implement cooperative learning in the teaching of reading comprehension?

(iii) What is the extent of the reservation felt by secondary school English teachers from different qualification, gender, experience, ethnic and option groups on the use of cooperative learning in the teaching of reading comprehension?

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1.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between graduate and non-graduate teachers in the knowledge of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

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2. There is a statistically significant difference between graduate and non-graduate teachers in the implementation of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

3. There is a statistically significant difference between graduate and non-graduate teachers in the reservation felt against using cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

4. There is a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in the knowledge of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

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5. There is a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in the implementation of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

6. There is a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in the reservation felt against using cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

7. There is a statistically significant difference between English language teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience and less than 5 years teaching

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experience in the knowledge of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

8. There is a statistically significant difference between English language teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience and less than 5 years teaching experience in the implementation of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

9. There is a statistically significant difference between English language teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience and less than 5 years teaching experience in the reservation felt against using cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension.

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10. There are statistically significant differences in the knowledge of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension among teachers from different ethnic groups.

11. There are statistically significant differences in the implementation of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension among teachers from different ethnic groups.

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12. There are statistically significant differences in the reservation felt against using cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension among teachers from different ethnic groups.

13. There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge of the concept of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension between optionists and non-optionists English teachers.

14. There is a statistically significant difference in the implementation of cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension between optionists and non-optionists English teachers.

15. There is a statistically significant difference in the reservation felt against using cooperative learning to teach reading comprehension between optionists and non-optionists English teachers.

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1.6 Definition of terms

1.6.1 Cooperative Learning

Formal cooperative learning refers to students working together for one class period to several weeks, to achieve shared learning goals and complete jointly specific tasks and assignment (such as completing a curriculum unit, writing a report, conducting a survey or experiment, learning vocabulary or answering question at the end of the chapter). (Johnson, Johnson, & Hollubec 1993, 1995)

1.6.2 Reading

Manzo, A.V. and Manzo, U.C. (1990:20) define reading as the unlocking and construction of meaning from a coded message through the use of four acquired skills, namely symbol decoding, vocabulary, comprehension and reflection.

1.6.3 Reservation.

Someone who kept their feelings hidden or how they felt about something. (A Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 4th Edition, (2003)

1.6.4 Reading Comprehension.

A cognitive process where reader not only decipher written text but also interact , with the text, accepting and refusing writer's idea as he/she goes along (Anderson, 1984).

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1.6.5 Optionists

Refers to teachers of English Language who are trained to teach English and whose major or option during their pre-service teacher education is English Language.

1.6.6 Non-Optionists

Refers to teachers of English Language who do not receive any training to teach English and whose major or option during their pre-service teacher education is not English Language.

1.6.7 Graduate

Refers to someone who holds a first degree with honours from a university or college.

1.6.8 Non-Graduate

Refers to someone without a degree, but only with diploma and certificate holder.

1.6.9 Schema

Organized pattern of thoughts and behaviors that is developed as a result of interacting with object or people in the environment (Rothstein, 1990)

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