

The Effects of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in Teaching Subject–Verb Agreement among Rural Sarawak Learners

Chong Xin Txin

Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Malaysia

Melor Md Yunus

Department of Innovation in Teaching and Learning
Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Malaysia

Abstract

Even after undertaking years of formal education to acquire the language in schools, having a poor command of English remains a problem faced by most Malaysians, especially students in rural schools of Sarawak. Based on the error-analysis carried out by recent research, subject–verb agreement (SVA) is one of the most frequent errors committed by students. To overcome this problem, teachers should significantly improve students' mastery of SVA in the English language through effective teaching methods. Therefore, this research was conducted to explore the effects of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in teaching SVA among rural Sarawak learners. In this study, 35 Form 4 students were selected from a secondary school in the Belaga District, Sarawak as the research participants. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools. Overall, findings demonstrated that students showed positive feedback after the intervention was implemented. Results of this research will hopefully provide insights to secondary school students, teachers and the community in the cooperative teaching and learning of grammar.

Keywords: Kagan cooperative learning structures, subject-verb agreement, teaching English

Cite as: Chong, X. T., & Yunus, M. M.(2019) The Effects of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in Teaching Subject–Verb Agreement among Rural Sarawak Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (2) 151-164.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no2.13>

1.0 Introduction

After Mandarin and Spanish, the English language has the third largest number of native speakers, approximately 378 million worldwide (Simons & Charles, 2018). English language is often referred to as the lingua franca of the modern world given its usage as the dominant language in international affairs, especially in the prospects of science and technology (House, 2014; Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012). In Malaysia, apart from the Malay language as the national language of the country, the second most important language is English; such ranking is explained by the latter being broadly used in various fields, such as business, medicine, engineering and so on (Abdullah, Rahman & Lina, 2010). Although the Malaysian Education system has emphasised the significance of English teaching and learning in schools, poor English proficiency among fresh graduates has been one of the top concerns faced by Malaysian employers (Ministry of Education, 2012). Since 1970, the English language proficiency among Malaysians has not shown considerable improvement (Yunus & Saiful, 2017).

Literature is essential to guarantee students' personal growth and contributions to society (Ien, Yunus & Embi, 2017). However, unsatisfactory results remain despite efforts to elevate the students' performance in English. Many students continue facing difficulties, especially in writing simple grammatical sentences. After years of studying the English language from primary to secondary education, students still tend to make repeated mistakes in dealing with the subject and verb agreement (SVA) patterns in writing their sentences owing to a lack of interest and exposure in using the language (Nurjanah, 2017). Hence, incorporating a strategy, such as the Kagan cooperative learning structures in the English lesson, is hoped to facilitate students' enhanced grammar skills, especially in mastering the SVA pattern.

Unlike the traditional English classrooms, which practise teacher-centred learning, cooperative learning allows autonomy among learners. In the latter, learners can monitor their own learning and could seize the opportunity to express themselves with their peers as well as the teacher who assumes the facilitator role (Schineke-Llano, 1983). In addition, learners' proficiency in the English language can be improved through collaborative learning (Kwan & Yunus, 2014). Hence, conducting cooperative learning is relevant in a language classroom as students are trained to communicate and share ideas with other learners in the language learning process inside and outside the classroom (Oxford, 1990; Littlewood, 1992). Yunus (2018) asserted that ineffective conventional methods should be replaced, and educators should attempt to make a difference. Thus, this study aimed to fill the research gap by exploring the effects of Kagan cooperative learning structures in teaching SVA among rural Sarawak learners. This study intends to address the following research questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions regarding the use of Kagan Structures in their mastery of SVA patterns?
2. What challenges do the students face whilst using Kagan Structures in their mastery of SVA patterns?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Cooperative Learning

As described by Kagan (1994), cooperative learning is a type of active learning students tackle in small groups to complete specific tasks assigned by the teacher. Correspondingly, Azizineshad et al. (2013) defined cooperative learning as a system of teaching and learning techniques. In the process of learning, students are active agents instead of passive receivers of the product of any given knowledge. Rewards or recognition will be given to boost students' motivation to learn when they successfully complete an assigned task.

The current educational system advocates learning models, which allow students to convey and express their opinions and views in a social context as it is significant to restructure their knowledge when learning is a major part of life. The main agenda of these learning models in education is enabling students to recognise their potential and enhance knowledge acquisition by comparing their schemata with the newly absorbed information (Ozden, 2004). As discovered by recent research, the most effective state to acquire knowledge is when a learner is aware of his needs and acts autonomously in his own learning. He should also independently identify his own learning strategies. In short, effective learning occurs when the learner is actively engaged in the process of knowledge acquisition.

Unlike traditional group tasks, cooperative learning emphasises on the principles of positive interdependence and individual responsibility. The idea of group achievement being more significant than individual achievement is instilled in every group member as students in a group exert efforts towards a shared goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Members in a group must assist, support and encourage one another to achieve their learning target, thereby allowing everyone to contribute to the task whilst simultaneously being motivated to learn (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991).

Olsen and Kagan (1992) and Johnson and Johnson (1999) described cooperative learning as a series of prepared group learning activities, making learning dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups. Each learner is accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Therefore, numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of cooperative learning and have consequently obtained positive outcomes. Koppenhaver and Shrader (2003) claimed that cooperative learning increases the level of understanding and reasoning. At the same time, it develops critical thinking as well as increase the accuracy of long-term retention. Through cooperative learning, active participation in learning is believed to be promoted and thus lead to improved academic achievement (Panitz, 1996).

Different scholars may have their own respective definitions of cooperative learning. However, cooperative learning generally involves students working together or cooperating in small groups. They are responsible for their own as well as others' learning. Teachers act as a facilitator in a cooperative learning classroom whilst students become active learners. Cooperative learning aims to maximise the students' learning through the social support they obtained from their group members (Slavin, 1989).

2.2 Benefits of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures

Various advantages of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures are identified via research (Kagan, 1995; Kagan & McGroarty, 1993). Firstly, Kagan Structures allow students to gain substantial comprehensible input. This target is achieved as students adjust their speech to the level of their partner because they are working together as a team. Secondly, learning is conducted in a natural context. In a real-life scenario, language is used for functional interaction. Thirdly, negotiation of meaning takes place to ensure that students comprehend one another. Students have the opportunity to alter or modify their language output. Fourth, the affective filter is lowered. Students who are often frightened to speak in front of the whole class no longer have to feel that way. Instead of talking to the crowd, students talk with a supportive teammate. Fifth, peer support is present. When completing a task using Kagan Structures, students are encouraged to assist and support one another in a team. Sixth, motivation in learning is enhanced because the structures are engaging interaction sequences. Lastly, Kagan Structures promote greater language use.

Apart from the aforementioned benefits of Kagan Cooperative Structures, recent research also proved that these structures can increase students' learning outcome. In an action research conducted by Yusri, Mantasiah and Jufri (2018) entitled *The Use of Two Stay Model in English Teaching to Increase Student's Learning Outcome*, one of the Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures was implemented. To investigate the effects of Two Stay and Two Stray (TS-TS) in English learning, data were collected through observation, tests and questionnaires. Accordingly, the use of TS-TS Cooperative Learning Structure increased student's learning outcome in English learning. Notably, cooperative learning structures produced active learners in the classroom as the social interaction between learners was present and teamwork was fostered.

Another action research was employed to improve the students' reading ability through Numbered Heads Together (NHT), which is also one of the Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures. Fanolong et al. (2016) selected a classroom of secondary students from SMA Negeri Wawalesi as the research participants; they found that NHT was successful in improving students' reading ability as an increment in students' mean reading scores was observed. Students' mean reading score has increased from 65% in the first test to 80.3% in the second test. The finding also indicated that NHT technique was effective in enhancing the students' participation because students willingly raised their hands to answer the questions during the answer-checking session.

Sabbah (2016) used a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the effect of using jigsaw cooperative strategy, a Kagan cooperative learning structure, on ESL students' achievement in reading comprehension. The participants were female students enrolled in Level 4 reading classes in the Foundation Program of the Community College of Qatar during the fourth quarter of AY 2013–2014. The statistical analysis of the acquired data showed a positive effect of jigsaw strategy on ESL students' reading achievement.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the mixed-method research design, which involved both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in the process of data collection and data analysis. It was divided into two parts to answer the two research questions. The first part of this study focused on

quantitative method. Survey questionnaires were administered to obtain the students' perceptions on the use of Kagan Structures in their mastery of SVA patterns, thereby answering the first research question. The survey method was suitable for a large sample administered within a limited time, and generalisation can be done. The results from the questionnaires were then described in the form of descriptive statistics.

The second part of this study applied the qualitative method, using semi-structured interviews to gather data, and subsequently discovered the challenges faced by the students whilst using Kagan Structures in their mastery of subject–verb agreement. The interview sessions were recorded and analysed using thematic analysis.

3.2 Research Population

The participants for this study were from a secondary school in Belaga District, Sarawak. The research objective is to explore the effects of Kagan Structures on rural Sarawak students' mastery in subject–verb agreement. The research participants selected for this study were based on purposive sampling. They were chosen on the basis of the predetermined characteristics extracted from the requirement of the study. The participants were from different socio-economic backgrounds but of similar language background as they were non-native speakers of the English language.

3.3 Research Instruments

Two instruments were constructed to collect the required data. The instruments for this study comprised a survey questionnaire on the students' perceptions of cooperative learning and a semi-structured interview.

The survey questionnaires aimed to identify the students' perceptions on the Kagan structures implemented. After the implementation of Kagan structures in the classroom, a set of questionnaire was given to the participants. The questionnaire which was adapted from Hung et al. (2010) consisted of 20 items on a four-point Likert scale from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' to 'strongly disagree'. It discovered the students' perceptions on the use of cooperative learning in learning English.

Interview sessions were conducted individually with the selected participants. Five participants were randomly selected to be interviewed using the hat and draw method to offer all participants an equal chance to be selected for the interview. The five interview questions focused on the challenges students' face whilst using Kagan Structures in their mastery of SVA patterns.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Students' Perception on the Use of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures

After the participants were exposed to the lessons conducted using Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, participants were instructed to complete a set of questionnaire. This questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely, Section A: Respondent's background and Section B: Students' perceptions on Kagan structures. The data collected from Section B of the questionnaire were analysed using frequency and percentages. Table 1 displays the participants' responses based on the questionnaire.

Table 1. *Students' perceptions on Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures.*

The Effects of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in Teaching Subject-Verb Agreement					
No.	Questions	Participants' Responses			
		Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)
B1	I like the small group activities.		1 (2.8)	20 (57.1)	14 (4)
B2	In small group activities, I believe that if I try my best, my group will perform better.		1 (2.8)	17 (48.5)	17 (48.5)
B3	In small group learning, I feel learning English is more effective whenever I help my friends.			18 (51.4)	17 (48.5)
B4	Learning in a small group makes me feel more confident and energetic while learning.		2 (5.7)	17 (48.5)	16 (45.7)
B5	Learning in a small group helps me to learn English better.		1 (2.8)	15 (42.8)	19 (54.2)
B6	Learning in a small group enhances my motivation towards learning English.			19 (54.2)	16 (45.7)
B7	I am more interested in learning when my group performs well or gets rewards.		1 (2.8)	19 (54.2)	15 (42.8)
B8	I consider that learning in a small group is interesting and makes learning enjoyable.			18 (51.4)	17 (48.5)
B9	Hereafter, I hope to keep learning in small groups in the English classes.			19 (54.2)	16 (45.7)
B10	I have more opportunities to practise English in small group learning		1 (2.8)	25 (71.4)	9 (25.7)

B11	My group members perform well in small group learning.	1 (2.8)	22 (62.8)	12 (34.2)
B12	The noise of group discussions would affect me in learning English.	6 (17.1)	13 (37.1)	4 (11.4)
B13	The cooperation and interaction among group members help me to understand the learning materials more easily.	2 (5.7)	15 (42.8)	18 (51.4)
B14	In a small group, I learned how to get along with classmates, interact and cooperate with them, and develop my social skills.	1 (2.8)	15 (42.8)	19 (54.2)
B15	There are classmates who seldom participate in a group discussion or learning, and this affects my learning as well.	2 (5.7)	7 (20.0)	20 (57.1)
B16	I think small group tasks help everyone learns to be responsible for our own learning and motivate us to study hard.		19 (54.2)	16 (45.7)
B17	I am easily distracted when talking to my classmates in a small group. I did not feel nervous at all while playing this game.	3 (8.5)	9 (25.7)	20 (57.1)
B18	It is good that students with different levels are assigned to a small group because higher-level students could help other students in learning English.		3 (8.5)	13 (37.1)
B19	I prefer learning in a small group rather than learning individually. I think I am pretty good at this game.		1 (2.9%)	16 (45.7)
B20	I Learning in a small group could enhance the atmosphere of working together in the class, which is better than learning alone.		2 (5.7%)	18 (51.4)

To support the quantitative data obtained in the survey, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to investigate the students' perceptions on the use of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in teaching subject-verb agreement. Five participants were interviewed, and Tables 2 and 3 present some of the interview responses.

Table 2. *Participants' Interview Responses (Question 1).*

Question	Participant	Interview Response
What do you think of learning the English language by using cooperative learning structures? Do you like it? Why? Or, why not?	Epraim	I like it because it's fun. We can... there are games so that we can play while learning. It helps me in learning.
	Fiviana	Yes, I would like it because we get to share our knowledge. There are some of us who are better in English while some of us who are weak. Those who understand the lesson can help those who don't.
	Lydia	I like it because if I am to do the task alone, I don't feel confident. In a group activity, I have friends with me. I feel more confident that way and I feel braver to answer all the questions asked by the teacher.
	Sally	I don't really prefer the activities because I feel shy to work with the others. I feel shy talking to people. I prefer a normal classroom lesson because I feel more comfortable.
	Jacqueline	Yes, I like it because I'm able to understand the lesson better when we share and learn together as a group. I would not be able to achieve that if I study alone.

Table 3. *Participants' Interview Responses (Question 2).*

Question	Participant	Interview Response
What are your favourite cooperative learning activities during the English lesson?	Epraim	My favourite game was when we traded the yellow cards with each other because it's fun to exchange cards and seek for our partners.
	Fiviana	The activity which requires us to search for a partner because it is challenging. We were using the SVA formula and some of us were still confused. Some of us found the wrong partner as we did not match it properly following the rule of the formula.
	Lydia	I like Flashcard game the most because if I get it wrong, my partner can correct me and I don't feel shy or embarrassed.
	Sally	My favourite is the Flashcard game so that we learn to identify subject and verb.
	Jacqueline	Mix-N-Match because we get to apply what we have learnt and involves movement.

Based on the findings in Table 1, most of the participants can be observed to display positive responses on the use of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in teaching subject–verb agreement. For example, 5 out of 20 items of the questionnaire achieved a 100% agreement. These items were Item B3 *‘In small group learning, I feel learning English is more effective whenever I help my friends’*, Item B6 *‘Learning in a small group enhances my motivation towards learning English’*, Item B8 *‘I consider that learning in a small group is interesting and makes learning enjoyable’*, Item B9 *‘Hereafter, I hope to keep learning in small groups in the English classes’* and Item B16 *‘I think small group tasks help everyone learn to be responsible for our own learning and motivate us to study hard’*. Mahmoud and Mohamed (2014) reinforced the finding that students show positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning approach in developing language skills.

The interview responses supported the above statements, given that an increased motivation to learn can be observed in the respondent’s (Epraim) expressed feelings towards the use of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures. He stated that *‘I like it because it’s fun. We can... there are games so that we can play whilst learning. It helps me in learning’*. Purnomo (2015) has also concluded that Kagan structures not only enhance students’ motivation towards learning but also lead to positive social behaviours because fun learning and healthy competition are promoted. If students enjoy whilst studying, it will directly contribute to a better academic achievement. Both students’ motivation and confidence level to respond to questions were improved as Lydia mentioned the following: *‘I like it because if I am to do the task alone, I don’t feel confident. In a group activity, I have friends with me. I feel more confident that way, and I feel braver to answer all the questions asked by the teacher’*.

In addition, the highest number of participants (71.4%) agreed with Item B10 *‘I have more opportunities to practise English in small group learning’*, whilst 25.7% strongly agreed to the same statement. This finding is implied when Lydia described that when Timed Pair Share was conducted, *‘everyone was speaking English’*, thus providing other opportunities for students to practise the target language. The second highest is Item B11 *‘My group members perform well in small group learning’*, with 62.9% of the participants agreeing to such statement. Although the amount of noise produced in a cooperative learning classroom may be a concern to certain teachers and students, the result in the questionnaire showed that 54.4% of the participants disagreed with Item B12 *‘The noise of group discussions would affect me in learning English’*. Thus, the noise may not be an issue to a majority of the students in a cooperative learning environment.

Among all 20 items, 54.3% of the participants strongly agreed with Item B5 *‘Learning in a small group helps me learn English better’*, Item B14 *‘In a small group, I learned how to get along with classmates, interact and cooperate with them and develop my social skills’* and Item B18 *‘It is good that students with different levels are assigned to a small group because higher-level students could help other students in learning English’*. This idea is also seen in Jacqueline’s response when she expressed her appreciation concerning the implementation of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures because *‘(she is) able to understand the lesson better when (they) share and learn together as a group. (She) would not be able to achieve that if (she studies) alone’*. Yusri, Mantasiah and Jufri (2018) also mentioned that the social interactions among students can nurture students in becoming active learners whilst simultaneously fostering teamwork.

Fiviana's response was also on par with Item B18 '*there are some of us who are better in English whilst some of us who are weak. Those who understand the lesson can help those who don't*'. Hence, the students can be concluded to prefer learning SVA of the English language in a small group using Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures as the positive feedback outweighs the challenges.

4.2 Challenges of Using Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures

Despite the positive responses from the students obtained in the questionnaire and the interview, a part of the interview responses continued displaying some of the students' encountered difficulties and challenges in learning English via the Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures. Hence, analysing the data collected is needed to identify the challenges faced by the students. Tables 4 and 5 illustrated participants' interview responses based on Questions 3 and 4, respectively. According to the analysis of data, the challenges identified can be divided into four main themes, namely, 1) Lack of Communication Skills, 2) Burdening Tasks, 3) Noise Distraction and 4) Passive Teammates.

Table 4. *Participants' Interview Responses (Question 3).*

Question	Participant	Interview Response
What are your least favourite activities during the lesson? Why don't you like them?	Epraim	I don't like the last game that we played. The paper that you gave me that had six pictures on it. Because we need to construct words so my teammates they doesn't know how to do it so I need to help them while I need to think for my own answer so that makes me busy. It feels like a lot of burdens.
	Fiviana	The one which we need to produce a paragraph because the group is not active. My friends... did not participate. They did not give any opinion and they did not help to construct the sentences. I asked for their help but they just kept quiet.
	Lydia	The first activity, Timed Pair Share, because we need to teach our friends about what we have learnt. Because everyone was speaking English, I find it hard to communicate with them. I tried to speak in English but my English is broken.
	Sally	The activity which requires us to find the correct match. It is Mix-N-Match. It's hard to understand and I don't feel comfortable because it involved too many people. I feel too shy to find the correct partner.
	Jacqueline	The writing activity because I'm not really good at writing and it's challenging to translate from Malay to English. My friends helped me but there were also other words they did not know how to translate.

Table 5. *Participants' Interview Responses (Question 5).*

Question	Participant	Interview Response
Is there any problem that you face while you are working in a group during your English lesson?	Epraim	When I don't know the person, I need to have courage to talk to them. That is also another challenge to me.
	Fiviana	It's noisy because discussions are carried out. It is especially noisy during the activity which requires us to match with the correct partner.
	Lydia	Difficulty to communicate with the others. I feel afraid to speak in English because I'm afraid of making mistakes. It's not because of my friends. I, myself, feel afraid and shy to ask.
	Sally	(Described in Q4)
	Jacqueline	I also have problem interacting with my friends because I'm not confident to speak in English.

4.2.1 Lack of Communication Skills

4 out of 5 participants indicated that Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures involved several interactions among students and caused discomfort at a certain point. When the participants were asked to state the challenges they faced, Epraim stated that he had difficulties communicating with his teammates because he was not comfortable with them at that time. Consequently, he was compelled to muster the courage in starting a conversation and completing the tasks assigned by the teacher. Lydia experienced the same situation when Timed Pair Share was conducted. All participants were required to take turns and share regarding what they had learnt in the lesson with their friends in the classroom. She felt inferior communicating with her friends, especially when she needed to converse in the English language because she could not speak proper English. Moreover, she was afraid to make mistakes in front of her friends. Similarly, Jacqueline also had problems interacting with her friends because she lacked confidence in speaking English.

The same thing happened to Sally. In the activity Mix-N-Match, Sally felt uncomfortable because the activity involved all 35 participants. Apart from being too shy to participate, Sally further explained that she was someone who preferred to study alone than in a small group. This idea is also portrayed in Item B19 '*I prefer learning in a small group rather than learning individually, I think I am pretty good at this game*'. One of the participants disagreed with the statement, which indicated that she was not fond of learning in a small group. Thus, the lack of communication and social skills is one of the main barriers the students must overcome in a cooperative learning classroom.

4.2.2 Burdening Task

Apart from the lack of communication skills, two of the participants raised the issue regarding the presence of burdening tasks. When asked about the least favourite activity, Epraim mentioned that he disliked the writing activity, which involved one of the Kagan Structures, Flying Carpet. He

considered helping his friends whilst simultaneously having to complete his part of the task a burden. Jacqueline's least favourite activity was also writing because it was her weakness, and translating from Malay to English was challenging for her. Although her friends actually attempted to help her, her friends had their limitations as well.

4.2.3 Noise Distraction

As expected in a cooperative learning classroom, noise is inevitable as discussions are constantly carried out among students to share their views on a certain topic or an assignment. The classroom environment was slightly noisy to Fiviana, especially when it involved activities, such as Timed Pair Share and Mix-N-Match. The latter involved several movements from the students in the classroom. However, noise may not be a major shortcoming of cooperative learning as most of the students did not see it as a threat.

4.2.4 Passive Teammates

Another challenge pointed out by one of the participants, Fiviana, is having passive teammates. She described her experience in the writing activity in which the students were required to produce a paragraph with the correct usage of subject-verb agreement. During the activity, her teammates were not actively participating. They did not contribute any opinion and did not help construct sentences as well. She added that even after she asked for her teammates' assistance, most of them only remained silent. This scenario is also shown in Item B15 '*There are classmates who seldom participate in a group discussion or learning, and this affects my learning as well*', with 74.28% of the participants agreeing to such statement.

5.0 Conclusion and Implications

This study investigated the effects of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures in teaching subject-verb agreement. Accordingly, the findings provide a better understanding of how these structures work as well as their effects towards language learning. Based on the findings, Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures are beneficial to students because they can improve the students' language skills. As shown in the findings, they have significant effects on the students' SVA test achievement. Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures can also promote students' teamwork and interpersonal skills as students are required to communicate and discuss with one another to solve problems or complete the tasks assigned. Every team member plays an important part in the learning process.

Undoubtedly, this study will benefit English teachers who are teaching either in primary or secondary schools. Considering that the study took place in a rural district of Sarawak and involved participants who were studying in a rural school, this study suitably serves as an example for further consideration. The lack of amenities and poor Internet connection have constantly been a problem for teachers who are teaching in the rural area. Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures can be utilised to overcome this problem as these structures require no substantial amenities to conduct an engaging lesson.

Moreover, educators are constantly searching for effective teaching methods and approaches to enhance students' learning. The findings of this study have shown that Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures can be proposed as one of the effective teaching methods for

teachers. An interactive learning environment is created through the use of these structures. Specific steps or procedures in conducting the structures can be easily obtained and integrated into the lesson at any point in time. Hence, it can lessen the teachers' burden as time spent on lesson planning can be reduced.

Both school teachers and educators at the tertiary level can benefit from this study. Employing cooperative learning in colleges and universities is highly suitable, especially during tutorials. As tertiary education involves mostly adults, they should be afforded with extra autonomy in their own learning. Using Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures is relevant because lecturers will only act as facilitators to monitor the students' learning.

Based on the findings, Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, as described in this study, evidently provided positive effects on the acquisition of various language skills. Positive attitude towards the learning of the English language is also promoted through these structures. Therefore, cooperative learning is seen as a viable option for educators to deliver English lesson to among students. However, the results of this study cannot be generalised given its limitations.

About the Authors

Chong Xin Txin is a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She works as a secondary school English language teacher in Sarawak, Malaysia. (ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1294-985X>)

Dr Melor Md Yunus is an Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She is best known for establishing the integration of ICT in teaching and learning English as a Second Language research. (ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7504-7143>)

References

- Abdullah, K. I., Rahman, A., & Lina, N. (2010). A study on second language speaking anxiety among UTM students. *A Study on Second Language Speaking Anxiety among UTM Students*, 1-6.
- Azizinezhad, M., Hashemi, M., & Darvishi, S. (2013). Application of cooperative learning in EFL classes to enhance the students' language learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 138-141.
- Fanolong, F., Bugis, R., Azwan, A., Hanapi, H., & Handayani, N. (2016). The students' reading ability improvement through Numbered Head Together (NHT) technique. *Jurnal Jupiter*, 14(2), 67-78.
- House, J. (2014). English as a global lingua franca: A threat to multilingual communication and translation?. *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 363-376.
- Hung, M. L., Chou, C., Chen, C. H., & Own, Z. Y. (2010). Learner readiness for online learning: Scale development and student perceptions. *Computers & Education*, 55(3), 1080-1090.
- Ien, L. K., Yunus, M. M., & Embi, M. A. (2017). Build Me Up: Overcoming writing problems among pupils in a rural primary school in Belaga, Sarawak, Malaysia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora*, 5, 1-7.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson R. T. (1999). *Learning together and alone cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning*. (5. ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K. (1991). Cooperative learning: Increasing college faculty instructional productivity. *ASHEERIC Higher Education Report*, No. 4, Washington, DC: The George Washington University.

- Kagan, S., & McGroarty, M. (1993). Principles of cooperative learning for language and content gains. In D. D. Holt (Ed.), *Cooperative learning* (pp. 47–66). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative Learning*. San Clemente: Kagan Publishing.
- Kagan, S. (1995). We can talk: Cooperative learning in the elementary ESL classrooms. *Elementary Education Newsletter*, 17(2), 3-4.
- Koppenhaver, G.D., & Shrader, C.B. (2003). Structuring the classrooms for performance: Cooperative learning with instructor-assigned teams. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 1(1), 1-21.
- Kwan, L. S., & Yunus, M. M. (2014). Group participation and interaction in ESL Wiki collaborative writing among Malaysian gifted students. *Asian Social Science*, 11(2), 59.
- Littlewood, W. (1992). *Teaching oral communication: A methodological framework*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Mahmoud, A., & Mohamed, M. (2014). The effectiveness of using the cooperative language learning approach to enhance EFL writing skills among Saudi university students. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, 5(3), 616.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2012). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025*. Putrajaya.
- Nurjanah, S. (2017). An analysis of subject-verb agreement errors on students' writing. *ELT Echo: The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context*, 2(1), 13-25.
- Olsen, R. E. W. B., & Kagan, S. (1992). About cooperative learning. In C. Kessler (Ed.), *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book* (pp. 1-30). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know?* New York: Newbury House.
- Ozden, Y. (2004). *Ogrenme ve ogretme [Learning and teaching]*. Ankara: Pegem A.
- Panitz, T. (1996). A definition of collaborative versus cooperative learning, <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/collaborative-learning/panitz-paper.cfm>.
- Purnomo, S. (2015). Improving the students' reading comprehension through Numbered Heads Together technique. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 2(2), 37-44.
- Sabbah, S. S. (2016). The effect of Jigsaw strategy on ESL students' reading achievement. *Arab World English Journal*, 7(1), 445-458.
- Schinke-Llano, L.A. (1983). *Foreigner talk in content classrooms*. In *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 146-164). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Simons, G. F., & Charles, D. F. (2018). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 21st Edition. Texas: SIL International. <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/most-spoken-languages>
- Slavin, R. (1989). Cooperative learning and student achievement. In R. Slavin (Ed.), *School and classroom organization* (pp. 129-156). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Thirusanku, J., & Yunus, M. M. (2012). The many faces of Malaysian English. *ISRIN Education*, 2012, 1-14.
- Yunus, M. M., & Sukri, S. I. A. (2017). The use of English in teaching Mathematics and Science: The PPSMI Policy vis-à-vis the DLP. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(1), 133-142.
- Yunus, M. M. (2018). Innovation in education and language learning in 21st Century. *Journal of Sustainable Development Education and Research*, 2(1), 33-34.
- Yusri, Y., Mantasiah, R., & Jufri, J. (2018). The use of Two Stay Two Stray Model in English teaching to increase student's learning outcome. *Journal of Advanced English Studies*, 1(1), 39-43.