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Cooperative Learning in Acquisition of the English Language Skills *

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to reveal the effect of cooperative learning on language skills in an English course. The study was carried out for 5 weeks with 66 students studying at the 10th grade at an Anatolian high school in the district of Karadeniz Ereğli in Zonguldak during the fall term of the 2015-2016 academic year. The design of the study was 'nonequivalent control groups pre-test post-test' which is one of quasi-experimental designs. Data were gathered using an achievement test measuring students' vocabulary knowledge, grammar knowledge, reading comprehension and listening skills. Results showed that cooperative learning had a larger effect on vocabulary knowledge, grammar, listening and reading skills compared to traditional method.

Keywords: *Cooperative learning, vocabulary knowledge, grammar, listening, reading comprehension, English Course, high school.*

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Introduction

Learning begins with the feelings of curiosity (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). The interaction between the personal, environmental and behavioral factors exists in every kind of learning (Bandura, 1989). Information is acquired by means of the interaction of the individuals in the society. However, it is not possible to limit this complex period within the borders of society alone itself. As Bandura (1989) suggests, learning and formation of behaviour cannot be explained only with behaviorism and society, but the period includes a cognitive structure, as well. In other words, learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge through cognitive phases (Stadjkovic & Luthans, 1998).

According to the social-cognitive learning theory, knowledge coming from one's surrounding gains meaning thanks to mental phases and, thence, learning happens (Fetsco & McClure, 2005). They pick the stimulators reaching them in the present social condition, perceive the essential ones, evaluate and try to attach a reasonable meaning to them. Hence, learning does not happen as a result of the Stimulator-Reaction relationship as it is with the behaviorism, but, rather, it is the result of the correlation of Stimuli-Organism-Reaction (Ormrod, 2006, p.18-21).

Lev Vygotsky (1986), one of the social-cognitive learning theorists, emphasizes environment in the development of cognitive phases and focuses particularly on cognitive development and language development. In his perspective, when the individual is alone, they have a restricted potential; the learning occurs on a low level. Nevertheless, the individual's cognitive development and learning potential reaches at its real potential during interaction with their surroundings. Therefore, according to Vygotsky, adults have a crucial role in the individual's learning. The cognitive development of individuals' flourishes when there is cooperation between the individual and adults or other kids.

From infancy, language is the medium which conveys information and provides social interaction (Krauss & Chiu, 2016). Individuals internalize the language rules of the society they are born in. The eminent linguist Noam Chomsky defines the system of internalized rules as "competence", and understanding of this language capability and turning it into behaviour as "performance" (Sahin, 1995). That is, in order for communication to take place, the internalized rules ought to be turned into performance. As a consequence, social interaction and assistance from others construct a significant part of learning. In this phase, which Vygotsky names as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the person is assisted by an adult or a peer. The individual assisted and reacted by his environment reaches at the phases leading to mental development with the support they receive; hence, they increase their mental potential (Vygotsky,

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1998). Vygotsky also names this period, during which the individual becomes an expert thanks to an adult, an expert or a peer, as a cognitive apprenticeship (Slavin, 1990).

Cooperative Learning

The learning models in which students can share their opinions and emotions in a social environment where they re-construct their knowledge and where learning exists as a part of life are the invaluable principle of the contemporary education system. The main point considered in the contemporary approaches in education is to bring individualism and active participation forth. Personalized education makes it possible for the individual to realize their potential; to reform the knowledge in their minds by comparing the previous and the newly acquired information (Ozden, 2004). Recent research indicates that individuals acquire knowledge most effectively when they are aware of their needs and take the responsibility of their own learning by determining their own strategies. In other words, effective learning takes place when the person is active in the learning period. Instead of the traditional teaching methods in which the teacher is active, cooperative learning activities help students shape their own learning period by the help of their active participation.

One of the teaching methods in which the students maximize both their own and other individuals' learning by participating actively is cooperative learning model. In this model, students ought to take the responsibility of the activities presented to them. Students are aware that only if they achieve their personal goals, will they reach the defined learning goals of their groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). In cooperation process, individuals acquire the abilities of both helping and realizing the group unity (Saban, 2005). These abilities are actually the life-long needed abilities such as listening, empathy, negotiation, leadership, constructive argument, transferring their abilities and knowledge of others.

Cooperative learning is different from traditional group works. In cooperative learning classrooms, *positive interdependence and individual responsibility* are the properties which are the distinguishing features when compared with traditional classrooms. Students in cooperative learning study to reach a mutual goal and each member of the group is responsible for the group achievement. That is, members have to internalize the idea of "We either swim together or sink together." Group achievement is more important than the individual achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Thus, it is required that each member of the group helps, supports and encourages each other in order to not only to contribute to the tasks but also to have the motivation required for learning as well (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991). So, feedback, in other words, *evaluation of group process* is essential to enhance the group achievement (Stahl, 1994). So as to obtain the best possible group work, each individual needs to possess an *opportunity for equal success*. Since, individual success helps the group reach the goals. This can only be realized with cooperative prize and work structure (Cohen, 1986). Cooperative prize structure stimulates members of the group to support each other to reach the goal. Cooperative learning, on the other hand, includes conditions in which attempts of the members to finish a work are encouraged or required (Slavin, 1984). Studying in small groups may also help students learn life skills. Since, in cooperative classes, groups are constructed in a heterogeneous way. So, by means of interaction, they can develop their *social and small group skills* and work cooperatively (Slavin, 1990).

Foreign Language Teaching and Cooperative Learning

Use of a common language plays a crucial role in commercial, social and cultural interactions of the nations. If a society asks to learn any common language, it means that this language is regarded as a superior language of science. In recent years, European languages, especially English, is acknowledged as an international language.

In the Common European Language Program, there are five language skills scales, namely listening, reading, productive-effective speaking, communicative-face to face speaking and writing. The evaluations for the target language are conducted by using these scales (Cetintas, 2010). The reforms which took place in the field of language teaching in Turkey in 2006, and subsequently "the Instructions for Foreign Language Education and Teaching" published by the Ministry of Education (MNE) in 2015 were revised to improve above mentioned skills in the most effective way. This program is based on constructivist approach (MNE, 2015). In the constructive learning, the student is not a passive listener, but an active learner. Learning happens through active participation such as defending ideas, constructing hypothesis, questioning and sharing ideas. Interaction between individuals is quite crucial (Kauchak & Eggen, 2003).

Foreign language teaching program, put into practice in 2015-2016 education year, is divided into units for the purpose of improving the above-mentioned skills. However, it is considered that rather than the mechanical exercises and dialogues resulting from the question-answer method, the assistance and interaction between small groups would make language acquisition more effective. As Gaonach (1991) states, students may have the knowledge of grammar, but, they can only gain an experience of language by communicating with others. It is not possible to include all students in all activities in crowded classes with limited hours (Bozavli, 2012). Consequently, small groups make language acquisition more effective by enabling individuals to learn together.

Recent research (Batdi, 2013; Fekri, 2016; Ghait & Malak, 2004; Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Hsiung, 2012; Tsay & Miranda, 2010; Webb, 1989; Zarrabi, 2016) have indicated that curricula based on constructivism and collaboration make

learning more effective in all fields. In classes where teaching based on collaboration is practiced students work in small groups and help one another's learning. This process both motivates students more and socially empowers them. In other words, small group works improve social relations besides increasing academic success at the same time (Hancock, 2004).

It is not possible to achieve goals if attempts in foreign language teaching are restricted to quantitative initiatives such as revision of course hours and textbooks. As, learning the rules of a language is not enough to learn that language. Language is a skill acquired through experience and practice. Only if learning experiences are created, is it possible to dominate the target language. As Celebi (2006) states, language acquisition has two directions: perception and expression. People talk or write by taking advantage of grammar rules while communicating with others. Nevertheless, in conversation individuals does not focus on the rules of that language, but they concentrate on what he or she wants to say (Isik, 2008). Therefore, the curricula should be planned in such a way as to improve the functional use of the language. As Guneyli and Demirel (2006) mention, it is essential that basic skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing be acquired rather than just learning language rules.

It has been observed that the majority of previous studies on cooperative learning focus on science and social sciences. Studies based on cooperative learning and English teaching, on the other hand, are both limited and centered on the acquisition of only one skill compared to other fields. In foreign language teaching, a holistic approach should be taken to teaching reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing and speaking skills. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the relationship between vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening skills, which are important in cooperative learning and English language teaching.

That is why the purpose of this research is to determine the effect of cooperative learning on the achievements of high school students in an English course.

Methodology

Design

The study employed "non-equivalent control group pre-test and post-test design," which is one of the quasi-experimental designs to identify the effect of cooperative learning on grammar, reading, listening and vocabulary learning in English courses. In this model, two groups of the existing groups are matched according to pre-tests and randomly assigned. (Buyukozturk et al., 2014). One group was utilized as the experimental, and the other one was utilized as the control group. Cooperative learning was adopted in the experimental group; while a traditional method was used in the control group. The achievement test was applied as pre-test and post-test in both groups.

Participants

This study was conducted on 66 students attending two different classes of the 10th grade of an Anatolian High School in the 2015-2016 spring term in Zonguldak Province. While the courses were instructed by using the traditional teaching method with the control group (N=33), "the Present Perfect Tense" grammar subject was taught to the experimental group (N=33) by means of Cooperative Learning- Learning Together technique. In order to determine whether both groups were equal or not, academic achievement was applied as pre-test. The academic achievement pre-test indicated that there was no significant differences ($t_{(64)}:0,156; p>0,05$) between the experimental group students' pre-test scores ($M =21,24; SD=5,06$) and the control group students' pre-test scores ($M =21;48; SD=7,33$).

Instruments

In this study, the data for academic achievement of the students was collected by the "Academic Achievement Test", which was developed by the first researcher. While developing the trial test, a question pool of 75 questions was created. To measure the student's grammar -vocabulary knowledge and their comprehension skills both on reading and listening, four sub-dimensions were formed. The trial test was piloted with 227 students attending 11th and 12th grades after the views of experts in the field were obtained. In the light of the results of the reliability analysis of this application, 22 items were removed because of the low discrimination value, and 53 questions were used in the final test. Sub-dimensions of test were presented in below.

Table 1. Subdimensions of the Academic Achievement Test

Sub-Test	n	Mean of Pj	Mean of rjx	α
Vocabulary	10	0,47	0,63	0,66
Grammar	22	0,43	0,53	0,77
Listening	12	0,70	0,73	0,78
Reading Compr.	9	0,48	0,59	0,47
General	53	0,49	0,43	0,85

In the final form, mean of item difficulty index of test items was 0,49; mean of item distinguishing index was 0,43. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found as 0,85, which indicates that reliability and validity of the test results are high.

Process

The aim of this study was to compare the levels of the grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening skills of the experimental group and the control group. While learning together method was applied in the experimental group, the control group was taught in the traditional method as suggested in the curriculum. An achievement test was applied as a pre-test on both groups.

Before the experiment, students in the experimental group were informed about the cooperative learning and learning together method. The students were divided into 6 groups. The groups were formed heterogeneously. In order to be able to create team spirit and provide positive interdependence, each group is required to identify a name, logo and a slogan that represents them.

During the experiment, firstly, a video containing the new grammatical item was watched. At the end of the activity, the groups translated the given sentences based on the new grammatical item. The teacher distributed the answers to different groups to check the translations. The group with the most right answers got 10 points for the first activity. Then, the students were shown pictures of different and interesting vacation places on the smart board and they were asked to imagine, write and present "where they are, what kind of activities they can do, how much it costs". Next, students were provided with a listening text called "Crazy Holidays". The task was to find the same sentences they heard in a reading text. As for the next task, the groups were asked to prepare a holiday diagram which would be used to form the original diagram of the class. It consisted types of vacation, the activities to be done, places to visit. Then, the groups filled out the missing information on a postal card. They checked out the original card and listened to it. The groups wrote their own cards presenting interesting holiday resorts. Next, the teacher presented the whole grammar knowledge of the new subject by asking them to distinguish it from "Simple Past Tense". The students answered questions in groups which were evaluated by the other group members. In the next activity, the students asked questions about the feelings of the individuals and reasons of the mood. The main aim was to make the students use the new structure. Then, after talking about the pictures of the holiday places in the cold regions, the students translated and listened to two texts. As for the next activity, the students were asked to write a paragraph about living in a new country and culture. Then, they formed a letter by imagining that they were at an amusement park. After that, the groups listened to a dialogue and found the missing sentences in the text. For the last two lessons of the course, the groups presented interesting places to accommodate. The best presentation was determined in the light of the evaluations of the other groups. At the end of each course, the groups filled out the group evaluation and individual evaluation forms throughout the application process. At the same time, each student wrote their own diary and made both individual and group evaluations.

At the end of the study, the same achievement test was applied as a post test on both groups.

Analysis

Analyses were conducted with SPSS 20.0 software. In order to determine whether the data were normally distributed or not, Kolmogorov Smirnov test was applied.

A normal distribution of achievement scores was identified both for the experimental and the control group. Thus, the analyses were conducted via parametric t-test. Test and control group measurements were analyzed using a paired samples t- test and ANCOVA statistics. The statistics used to compare the means of the groups reveal whether there is a significant difference or not. Yet, they do not put forward the exact effect size. Moreover, test results do not provide information on how much of the total variance observed in the scores of the dependent variable results from the independent variable. For this, the size of the statistical significance must be known (Buyukozturk et.al., 2014). That is why in this study, as a measure of effect size eta square (η^2) was utilized to be able to comment on how much of the variance in the test scores is dependent on the independent variable or group variable. Considering the eta square (η^2) indexes, 0,01 is considered to have a small, 0,06 a moderate and 0,14 a large effect (Green & Salkind, 2005; Buyukozturk et.al., 2014).

Findings

Paired samples t test was performed for the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the experimental and control groups. Moreover, covariance analysis method was performed for comparison of experimental and control groups. The value of the eta square (η^2) was calculated for the effect size of difference.

Table 2. Paired Samples t test

	Test	Experimental					Control				
		M	SD	t	p	η^2	M	SD	t	p	η^2
Voc.	Pre-test	3,57	1,58	8,62*	0,00	0,70	3,66	1,68	3,58*	0,00	0,29
	Post-test	7,48	2,03				5,27	2,13			
Grammar	Pre-test	7,26	2,14	10,35*	0,00	0,79	8,23	2,88	2,82	0,00	0,22
	Post-test	15,03	2,61				10,33	3,34			
Reading	Pre-test	4,27	1,84	5,20*	0,00	0,46	3,93	2,09	1,12	0,26	-
	Post-test	6,24	1,29				4,45	1,60			
Listening	Pre-test	5,96	1,45	13,17*	0,00	0,87	5,32	1,09	8,61*	0,00	0,73
	Post-test	10,89	1,39				9,07	1,86			
Total	Pre-test	21,24	5,06	12,48*	0,00	0,82	21,48	7,33	4,33*	0,00	0,37
	Post-test	39,18	5,16				28,87	6,00			

*p<0,05

Table 3. ANCOVA Results

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial η^2
Vocabulary	Pre-test	0,679	1	0,679	0,154	0,696	0,00
	Group	81,096	1	81,096	18,371*	0,000	0,22
	Error	278,109	63	4,414			
	Total	359,530	65				
Grammar	Pre-test	9,359	1	9,359	1,013	0,319	0,01
	Group	296,331	1	296,331	32,059*	0,000	0,37
	Error	489,891	53	9,243			
	Total	885,125	55				
Reading	Pre-test	0,182	1	0,182	0,08	0,772	0,00
	Group	51,829	1	51,829	23,998*	0,000	0,27
	Error	136,060	63	2,16			
	Total	188,985	65				
Listening	Pre-test	0,512	1	0,512	0,186	0,668	0,00
	Group	45,978	1	45,978	16,688*	0,000	0,24
	Error	146,024	53	2,755			
	Total	192,982	55				
General	Pre-test	48,089	1	48,089	1,545	0,218	0,02
	Group	1739,529	1	1739,529	55,904*	0,000	0,47
	Error	1960,335	63	31,116			
	Total	3759,939	65				

*p<0,05

Vocabulary Knowledge

The effect of cooperative learning on vocabulary knowledge of the students was yielded with 10 questions in the achievement test. Analysis results indicated a significant difference between pre-tests and post-tests in favor of post-test of experimental group ($t_{(32)}=8,62$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,70$) and of control group ($t_{(32)}=3,58$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,29$). These values suggest that cooperative learning and traditional method had a large effect on vocabulary knowledge of the high school students. At the same time, it implies cooperative learning increased vocabulary knowledge of the students at the ratio of 70% while traditional instruction increased at ratio of 29%. ANCOVA analysis method was conducted for comparing post-tests of two groups. When the vocabulary knowledge pre-test points were controlled, vocabulary post-test means of experimental group students was significantly higher than vocabulary post-test means of control group students ($F_{(1,65)}= 18,371$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,22$). Eta square values indicate cooperative learning has a large effect on vocabulary knowledge of the students compared to traditional instruction.

Grammar Knowledge

Grammar knowledge of the students was measured using 22 questions in the achievement test. The grammar knowledge pre-test and post-test scores of experimental and control group students were compared with paired samples t test. Analysis showed that there was a significant difference between grammar pre-tests and post-tests in favor of post-test of experimental group ($t_{(29)}=10,35$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,79$) and of control group ($t_{(29)}=2,82$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,22$). These findings indicate that cooperative learning and traditional method had a large effect on grammar knowledge of the high school students. At the same time, it implies cooperative learning increased grammar knowledge

of the students at the ratio of 79% while traditional instruction increased at ratio of 22%. ANCOVA analysis method was conducted for comparing post-tests of two groups. When the grammar knowledge pre-test points were controlled, grammar post-test means of experimental group students was significantly higher than vocabulary post-test means of control group students ($F_{(1,55)}= 32,059$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,37$). Eta square values indicate cooperative learning has large effect on vocabulary knowledge of the students compared to traditional instruction. At the same time, this eta square value implies that cooperative learning has contributed to at ratio of 37% more than that of the traditional instruction.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is another language skill used as a dependent variable in this study. This property of language was measured with reading comprehension questions. The reading comprehension pre-test and post-test scores of experimental and control group students were compared with paired samples t test. At the end of the analysis, it was found that there was a significant difference between reading comprehension pre-tests and post-tests in favor of the post-test of the experimental group ($t_{(32)}=5,20$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,46$). But there was no significant differences between reading comprehension pre-test and post-test of control group ($t_{(32)}=1,12$; $p<0,05$). These findings indicate that cooperative learning had a large effect on grammar knowledge of the high school students. Traditional instruction did not increase the reading comprehension level of high school students. At the same time, it implies cooperative learning increased reading comprehension of the students at the ratio of 46%. ANCOVA analysis method was conducted for comparing post-tests of the two groups. When the reading comprehension pre-test points were controlled, reading comprehension post-test means of experimental group students was significantly higher than reading comprehension post-test means of control group students ($F_{(1,65)}= 23,998$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,27$). Eta square values indicate cooperative learning has a large effect on reading comprehension of the students compared to traditional instruction. At the same time, this eta square value implies that cooperative learning has contributed to a ratio of 27% more than that of the traditional instruction.

Listening

The students were made to listen various texts and 12 questions were asked to measure listening skills of the students. Paired samples t test was used to analyze the listening pre-test and post-test scores of experimental and control group students. According to the analysis results, there was a significant difference between grammar pre-tests and post-tests in favor of post-test of experimental group ($t_{(27)}=13,17$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,87$) and of control group ($t_{(27)}=8,61$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,73$). These findings indicate that cooperative learning and traditional method had a large effect on listening skills of the high school students. At the same time, it implies cooperative learning increased listening skills of the students at the ratio of %87 while traditional instruction increased at ratio of %73. ANCOVA analysis method was conducted for comparing post-tests of the two groups. When the grammar knowledge pre-test points were controlled, grammar post-test means of experimental group students was significantly higher than vocabulary post-test means of control group students ($F_{(1,55)}= 16,688$; $p<0,05$; $\eta^2=0,24$). Eta square values indicate cooperative learning has large effect on listening skills of the high school students compared to the traditional instruction. At the same time, this eta square value implies that cooperative learning has contributed to at ratio of 24% more than that of the traditional instruction.

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of cooperative learning on students' grammar, reading, listening and vocabulary achievements in an English course. Results indicate that cooperative learning was more successful in the development of students' vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening skills when compared to activities that were conducted in the traditional teaching method. As cooperative learning creates non-stressful environment both for learning and practicing English, it helped students to learn in collaboration, have fun and develop their language skills in an integrated way. It was observed that student-student interaction allowed them to build healthy relationships with each other and take more responsibility. This kind of intimacy in learning and relaxed atmosphere encourages students to practice the language in a communicative way. While studying in groups, they had the chance to make suggestions, request, agree/ disagree and clarify meaning which exists in real life discourse. While reading, they also comprehend the vocabulary and the listened texts as well. Besides, while writing they made use of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Thus, this integration of the skills ensured the opportunity for practicing all the skills and language learning.

Studies conducted using cooperative learning techniques revealed the effectiveness of the technique on academic achievement. However, studies in the field of foreign language generally treat all skills as a whole in language learning or just focus only on certain skills. With this research, grammar, reading, listening and vocabulary required in language learning were studied separately and the effect of the technique on academic achievement was examined in the mentioned skills. It was observed that the experimental group made a great progress regarding with the newly studied subject when compared with the control group's academic achievement post- test scores. Studying within small groups, helping each other's learning, tackling with the problems together with the members of the groups enhanced the academic achievement of the experimental group. In a study by Zarrabi (2016), it was reported that cooperative learning produced more successful results on students' academic achievement in English course when compared to traditional teaching methods. Similarly, Tuan (2010) reported that in the groups applied cooperative learning, the

students are more open to progress and they are more successful in the studied subject. Steams (1999) supported the effectiveness of cooperative learning as cognitive levels of the students are raised by the help of the interaction using the group work process. Klimovienė and Statkevičienė (2006) revealed a similar result on the effect of the cooperative learning that the technique helped the students obtain “academic, social and attitude benefits from the CL practices.”

In this study, firstly it was found out that cooperative learning technique on the development of students’ vocabulary knowledge demonstrated positive results. The studies by Pala (1995) and Gaith and Malak (2004) conducted to investigate the effect of Jigsaw on vocabulary supported the positive effect of the technique. Yastrebova (2007) suggests that when the students interact in an environment which provides them to use the target items meaningfully, they can acquire pronunciation, vocabulary knowledge in an effective way. So, the activities requiring collaboration support the students’ to use the necessary vocabulary for communicative purposes, which help them internalize both pronunciation and vocabulary. As Gu and Johnson (1996) indicate, vocabulary learning can be achieved better if it is integrated in a discourse; thus, it shouldn’t be considered as a separate item.

The second finding of the study related with the grammar achievement indicates that cooperative learning is more efficient for the development of grammar knowledge, compared to the traditional teaching method. Meteetum (2001) carried out a study on cooperative learning by using the jigsaw technique to investigate the students’ grammar competence. He found that especially during the discourse phase, the students’ use of linguistic features and grammar competence raised and the technique developed the social skills and personal qualities of the students as well.

In his study Bibi (2002) proved that collaboration of the students during the activities while learning English grammar had a positive effect on their grammar competence. In the same way, Bejarano’s study (1987) which was based on Discussion Group and Student Teams and Achievement Divisions demonstrates the influence of the techniques in terms of the academic achievement in EFL. In another study conducted by Ozdemir (2014), it was proved that Jigsaw IV technique had a positive effect on students’ English grammar and other skills competences.

The findings of the present study indicate that cooperative learning was effective in development of students’ reading skills as well. In their study Ghaith and Malak (2004) revealed that cooperative learning promotes cognitive reasoning. This finding is also supported by those of (Endeshaw 2015; Hadyan 2013; Jalilifar (2009); Keshavarzi and Nejad 2015; Marzban and Alinejad 2014; Phiwpong and Dennis 2016). Interaction in small groups, as discussed in the paper, provides a basis for language acquisition. Cooperating with their peers, students learn different reading methods, acquire new vocabulary, gather information together and work out the meaning of the text. Carrying out the task in pairs and groups leads them to deal with the language problems systematically, develop new ideas and speak effectively. As is seen, cooperation not only results in effective reading skills but it also helps the development of language skills as a whole (Meng, 2010). Sittilert (1994) aimed to assess the effects of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) on English reading comprehension. According to the obtained results, the English reading comprehension achievement of the experimental group was higher than the control group and it also affected the classroom atmosphere in a positive way. Another study conducted by Thupapong (1996) revealed that the Students Teams–Achievement Division (STAD) had a positive impact on English reading achievement. In his study, Almanza (1997) used the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) during reading and he revealed that cooperative learning in small groups enhanced the students’ reading comprehension. Siriratana (1999) and Tang (2000) studied the effect of cooperative learning activities on English reading comprehension and the findings indicated that the techniques they used improved the reading comprehension. Khan and Ahmad (2014) aimed to assess the effects of cooperative learning on the reading achievement of students in the subject of English. According to the obtained results, reading comprehension of students of experimental group is higher than that of students of control. In the same way, Seetape (2003) revealed that cooperative learning has increased students’ English reading skill. However; unlike the results in which cooperative learning has a positive effect on reading competence, Hampton and Grundnitski (1996) found out that the technique conducted on college business students had partial effect. In other words, the low achieving students benefitted most from cooperative learning rather than the other diverse students.

In addition to these findings, in this study it is clear that cooperative learning enhances the listening skills of the students more effectively compared to the traditional learning applications. Listening is a crucial aspect in an effective communication so, it should be definitively taught (Jolliffe, 2007). As it is indispensable both in communication in the L2 and acquisition of the L2, Kawamura studied on the effective ways of enhancing the listening skill. In his study, he found out that Jigsaw technique can successfully facilitate classroom interaction and comprehension. Pinkeaw (1993) assessed cooperative learning method in upper–secondary English classes and he revealed that students’ interaction led a satisfactory improvement on all students’ listening and speaking achievements. In his study, Zhang (2010) suggests that cooperatively designed activities provide the students an authentic environment in which “they request, make suggestions, clarify, encourage, disagree, and negotiate of meaning, exchange conversation during group work”. Thus, cooperative language learning not only enhances the oral practice but also listening comprehension.

The results of this study revealed that cooperative learning has increased grammar, vocabulary knowledge, reading and listening skills of the students. So, cooperative learning can be applied in language classes to improve these language skills.

Data of this study were collected only by means of academic achievement test measuring language skills. However, the study can be supported by the help of interviews and observations. This study was conducted on the 10th grade students in an English course. However, similar studies can be conducted in different courses and grades. Besides, the effect of cooperative learning on speaking skills can be searched in different studies.

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