

Effects of Cooperative Language Learning on Preparatory School Students of EMU: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Given the benefits of cooperative learning and its prevalence in social approaches to language learning, the present study was designed to investigate 1) whether language teachers at preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative language learning in their teaching environment; 2) whether students participate in Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) activities; 3) whether language teachers implement cooperative learning activities; and 4) what challenges and benefits CLL activities might have from the students' and teachers' perspective. To this end, 15 students and 4 teachers at the preparatory school of EMU were selected through availability sampling and participated in the study. The study used a mixed-method research design including both qualitative and quantitative approaches (questionnaire and interviews) to investigate the research questions. The results of the study showed that teachers that are teaching at preparatory school of EMU had more preference for Cooperative learning styles and reported high agreement for participation in collaborative activities. The teachers also reported incorporating collaborative activities in their classes although experiencing some major challenges related to grouping the students and managing the groups. Both teachers and students found CLL as effective in promoting students' learning.

Keywords: Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), learning and teaching English, Turkish students

ÖZ

İşbirlikli öğrenimin dil öğrenimine faydaları ve dil öğrenimindeki sosyal yaklaşımların yaygınlığı düşünüldüğünde, bu araştırma şu konuları araştırmaya yöneliktir: 1) Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi (DAÜ) Hazırlık Okulundaki öğretmenlerin öğretim çevrelerinde işbirlikli öğrenimin kullanılmasının rapor edilip edilmediği; 2) Öğrencilerin işbirlikli öğrenime katılıp katılmadıkları; 3) Dil öğretmenlerinin işbirlikli öğrenim aktivitelerini uygulayıp uygulamadıkları; 4) İşbirlikli dil öğrenimi aktivitelerinin öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin perspektifinden ne gibi faydaları ve zorlukları olabileceği. Bunun için DAÜ'nün hazırlık okulundan 156 Türk öğrenciye anket yapıldı ve rapor için 15 öğrenci ve 4 öğretmen seçilerek bu çalışmada yer verildi. Araştırma sorularını yanıtlamak için hem niteliksel hem de niceliksel (anket ve rapor) yaklaşım içeren karışık araştırma metodu kullanıldı. Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğretmenlerin çoğunlukla işbirlikli öğrenmeyi tercih ettiklerini ve işbirlikli aktivitelere katılma yanlısı olduklarını gösterdi. Ayrıca öğretmenler öğrencilerin gruplanması ve grupları yönetme konularında bazı sorunlar deneyimlemelerine rağmen işbirlikli aktiviteleri sınıfta uyguladıklarını da sözlerine eklediler. Hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler öğrencilerin dil öğreniminde işbirlikli öğrenme yöntemini etkili buldular.

Anahtar kelimeler: İşbirlikli Dil Öğrenimi, İngilizce Öğrenme ve Öğretme,

To My Parents

My Father and Mother

My Brother Orhan and My Sister Derya

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL	Cooperative Learning
CLL	Cooperative Language Learning
ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides information about the background of the study states the problems under investigation and poses the research questions to be addressed in this study. The significance of the study is also explained, and finally, the key terminologies used in the study are defined.

1.1 Background of the Study

Determining the most effective learning strategies is one of the biggest challenges for the educators in English Language Teaching (ELT); therefore, identifying learning styles of students can be seen as a vital factor influencing both students' learning and teachers' teaching style. Cooperative learning (CL) is one of the most popular approaches linked with learners' learning styles since their involvement in their own learning can help teachers to realize students' learning process. Therefore, CL would result in better learning and teaching as far as language learning is concerned.

Nowadays, many teachers try to apply cooperative language techniques and try to include them into their lesson plans to meet students' learning needs because as some scholars such as Gömleksiz (2007) stated, cooperative language learning results in higher learning achievement, higher confidence and more positive relationships compared to individualistic education system. In addition, Grasha (1996) noted that cooperative language learning provides students with more interesting climate which is more fruitful than very formal learning environments. In other words, Cooperative

Language Learning (CLL) can encourage students to work together and go on the same goal to learn English.

The concept of Cooperative Language Learning is very similar to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated both of these practices were born from Humanistic Approach and aim to foster students' communicative competence. The principles of both approaches emphasize the active participation of the learners and their responsibility for their own learning. However CLL is an extended form of CLT. To sum up, CLL is a technique which enables students to work together, learn from each other and the teacher should try to facilitate this process. The many benefits of CLL has been acknowledged by many researchers, and specifically it is favored because of its potential to facilitate learning, and raising students' self-confidence (Johnson, 1991), that is why this subject was investigated in the present study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Students often face problems due to lack of motivation or communication while they are learning. These students generally think that they cannot use the language they are learning and thereby, they do not speak up in the classroom, and as a result, cannot develop language skills. To solve this problem, CLL can be encouraged where students work together and are more attentive in the lessons. However, the cooperative activities incorporated by language teachers in their classes still require more in-depth investigation.

Moreover, students' attitudes towards CLL are also of high importance. There is not yet enough information about the extent to which students participate in cooperative

learning activities and perceive these activities as useful. Above all, for successful incorporation and implementation of CLL activities, certain requirements should be met and, as seen in some research studies, CLL does not necessarily lead to positive results, and this calls for a need to further examination of this issue. The problem mentioned above is especially under-investigated in the context of Northern Cyprus. Therefore, the present study is designed to study these gaps.

1.3 Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

Reflecting on the gaps and problems identified and stated above, the present study aimed to investigate the use of cooperative language learning as a learning style by the language learners at preparatory school of EMU, and to determine whether these students participate in cooperative language learning activities. Another aim of the study was to understand whether EFL teachers use CLL as a teaching technique and, if this is so, what type of CLL activities they design and implement in their classes. The last aim of the study was to study students' and teachers' perception of the advantages and disadvantages of CLL. In other words, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do preparatory school students in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment?
2. Do preparatory school students of EMU participate in cooperative learning environment?
3. Do preparatory school teachers in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment? If so, what type of CL activities do they use and how students respond to them?

4. What are the benefits and challenges of using cooperative language from the teachers' and students' perspective?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Currently, encouraging students for autonomy in their learning environment is a vital step in English language teaching profession. If students learn by themselves, they can learn the language easily and this makes them critical thinkers in a society (Benson, 2013). Encouraging students to work together without their teachers is a step towards more autonomous and independent English language learning and the present study is significant because it is an attempt to evaluate the role of cooperative learning in facilitating language learning and promoting learner autonomy in the context of Cyprus where this topic has rarely been addressed before.

This study is also of high significance because it aims to examine whether EFL teachers adopt cooperative learning as one of their instructional practices, and if it is so, identify what cooperative strategies they incorporate in their classes. Investigating this issue is specifically important because in more traditional types of teaching, students are really dependent on the teacher and this is not only an excessive burden for teachers who are core of instruction but also prevents' student autonomy who are regarded as absorbers of information (Smith McCarthy & Anderson, 2000). Moreover, in traditional learning environments the hardworking students take the floor in the class and weak or shy students are ignored and they become silent and cannot make the best of the learning environment. In fact participation of students is a crucial point for the best language learning which is investigated in this study.

As mentioned before, investigating teachers' and learners' attitudes towards cooperative learning activities is missing in the Turkish context of Cyprus. Thus, addressing this topic can shed more light on both teaching practices as well as students learning styles, and the results can hopefully be used for improving teaching and learning practices through the use of well-designed cooperative and group work activities that help students to develop communicative competence.

1.5 Key Terminology

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

Cooperative learning is a learning situation in which two or more students are working together to complete a common task (Siegel, 2005).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The concept of Communicative Language Teaching maintains that main elements of this method are gaining significance in teaching communicative abilities and skills (Celce- Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997).

Student- Centered Learning

Student- centered learning is an approach in which the learners are active, integrate self-paced learning programs, and are responsible for their own their learning in a cooperative learning environment (Nanney, 2004)

Cooperative Learning Activities

In this research, the term refers to the activities that can be applied to cooperative language learning environment.

GRSLSS

GRSLSS stands for Grasha Reichman Student Learning Styles Scales. GRLSS was designed by Grasha-Reichman (1974) to identify and measure the learning styles of the students.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Presentation

This chapter will present an overview of research related to the use of cooperative learning in language classrooms in several sections. In the first section, cooperative learning is defined and its basic concepts are introduced. Furthermore, the principles of cooperative learning, the well-known cooperative learning activities, benefits and drawbacks of cooperative learning, students' role and attitudes towards cooperative learning environment and finally, the role of the teacher on cooperative learning in a language classroom are discussed.

2.2 Cooperative Learning and Cooperative Language Learning

As human beings are social creatures, they need to communicate in different aspects of life so learning occurs. Emphasis on cooperative learning (CL) was initiated by the advent of communicative methodology and constructivism, and more specifically, Sociocultural Theory. CL is associated with famous scholars such as Vygotsky (1978), Long (1996, cited in Brown, 2000), Krashen (1985, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2002), and Bandura (1997). Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) maintains that learning happens in the 'zone of proximal development'; in other words, in a zone where a more competent and knowledgeable adult or more-skilled children guide the less competent learners to learn. In this sense, learning is viewed as an active process in which learners take an active role in the process of learning. Similarly, communicative approaches emphasize increased oral

communication because language is used as a means of communication (Brumfit, 1984). Communication in the classroom setting can be between either student-student or teacher-student (Allwright, 1983). Moreover, constructivist theories are shaped around the idea that students should construct their own knowledge of the language and this can be done through negotiation of meaning with others (Mitchell & Myles, 2004) and it represents a learner-centered approach to language teaching. Most communicative approaches are in line with principles of constructivism because they believe that learning occurs in social settings and through collaboration among all members of that setting which together shape a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The two approaches mentioned above, i.e., sociocultural and CLT, built the foundation of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Scholars have provided different definitions of cooperative learning. According to Slavin (1980), “the term refers to classroom techniques in which students work on learning activities in small groups and receive rewards or recognition based on their group’s performance” (p. 315). According to Olsen and Kagan (1992, p.8, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2002) “Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized and the learning is based on the socially constructed exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others”. For Liang (2004), CL is a learning techniques system in which students are participating during the lesson and enlighten group members to enlarge the learning. Felder and Brent (2007) define CL as “an approach to group work that minimizes the occurrence of those unpleasant situations and maximizes the learning and satisfaction that result from working on a

high performance team” (p. 1). The common cores of all the definitions more or less consider CL as a group-work technique or approach that facilitates learning.

Closely related to the notion of CL, is the environment (including classroom) in which CL occurs. The cooperative classroom is an environment in which students work with each other; in other words, they collaborate rather than compete. Such an environment simulates the world outside of school where problems are usually solved through community efforts. Also “it is a place in which students are responsible for themselves and peers” (Nowicki & Meehan, 1996, p. 7).

In short, along with advancement of English as a global language, Turkish government emphasized the importance of English and developed and implemented new curricula mostly based on communicative approaches and student interaction which are implemented in most private educational institutions. Since the new curricula are based on the learner-centered learning, traditional teacher-centered approaches to learning have started to lose their significance. Thus, teachers have been looking for new techniques to implement the new curriculum in their classroom. Cooperative learning is selected as an alternative technique for implementing the requirements of the current English curriculum by some teachers (Bilen, & Tavit, 2015).

2.3 Principles of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative language learning is not a simple process. To work in a right way, it needs to follow certain principles. In fact, Johnson and Johnson’s (1991) identified five main principles which are explained in what follows. Positive interdependence,

individual accountability, primitive interaction, social skills, and group processing are the pillars of CL activities.

To begin with, positive interdependence, according to Kagan (1994) and Slavin (1995), suggests that the students should not only study or work individually but also be aware of others' achievement or success. Sachs, Candlin, and Rose (2003) also believe that cooperation of the group members cannot work very well unless the learners consider the value of interdependence.

The second pillar or individual accountability as described by Ning (2010) includes “assigning each member an individual role or task and randomly selecting certain students as team representatives to present teamwork” (p. 34).

The third pillar or primitive interaction refers to “students' facilitating each other's success through supportive interaction and is conducive to caring and committed relationships, psychological adjustment, social competence and low levels of anxiety and stress” (Ning, 2010, p. 34), and this requires continuous face-to-face interactions for success.

The fourth pillar is social skills which refer to interpersonal skills. These skills may include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills.

The fifth pillar is group processing which requires students to reflect on their group performance and discuss how they have achieved their goals, what member actions

could contribute to the task or was disadvantageous, and how the group members have tried to solve the problems arising while performing the task.

To complement the above concepts, Brigham, Berkley, Simpkins, and Brigham (2007) mention that communication between students in a learning environment requires a form of learning that brings not only student interdependence but also group work participation and students interaction and learning from each other. Of similar importance is equal participation that needs to be fostered in the CL environment. It means that each member of the group should have an active and unique role and contributes to reaching their goals which are linked to group processing. In fact, the goals of each team member should be in line with goals of the group (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994; Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1994). Moreover, the dialogues between the group members are multidirectional, promote thinking, and students learn how to attend to different ideas and facilitate each other's learning experiences (Gillies, 2015).

Another vital issue concerning cooperative learning is how to group learners. The learner groups in research on CL have been various in terms of heterogeneity and homogeneity (Abrami & Chambers 1996; Neber, Finsterwald, & Urban, 2001). Some researchers such as Lou, d'Apollonia and Abrami (2001) believe that mixed group (low ability students, high ability students and medium ability students) can show better student achievement. In addition, several researches have proved that weak students became more successful in heterogeneous groups while medium ability students better performed in homogenous groups. However, high ability students become successful in both groups (Lou, Abrami & d'Apollonia, 2001). Neber et al. (2001) commented on these researches and claimed that homogeneous,

heterogeneous or mixed ability students benefited from collaborative learning environment. Felder (1996) also argued that this approach gives the teacher role to high ability students and this can lead to better understanding of the subject matter. However, the problem is that high achievers may not benefit from cooperative learning. For example, Shachar (2003) examined the effect of cooperative language learning on high achievers and low achievers and concluded that successful students had less positive attitudes than low achievers.

2.4 Cooperative Learning Activities

The types of activities given in cooperative language learning are of high importance. Tasks should be engaging and encourage cooperation. According to Johnson et al. (2006), there are three types of CL.

2.4.1 Informal Cooperative Learning Groups

These group types are *ad-hoc* groups used as an aid in direct teaching. Informal groups are mainly suitable for breaking up a lecture into shorter parts spread with group activity because they save time for the lecture and on the other hand, increase the amount of material recalled by students and facilitates working with each other by the students.

2.4.2 Formal Cooperative Learning Groups

Formal Cooperative Learning Groups represent more common uses of cooperative learning. Groups are formed each session or may stay together for several weeks working on certain projects assigned to them. Students in these groups apply different techniques and work together collaboratively.

2.4.3 Cooperative Base Groups

These kinds of groups are long-term, constant groups which last for at least a year. These groups involve students with varying aptitudes and perspectives. The students

in these groups support each other in both studies as well as in other aspects of their lives. All the group members are responsible to complete their work and contribute to one another's work. Such cooperative base groups can result in provision of enduring support and assists students "to make academic progress and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways." (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 10)

As an example of group strategies used by researchers, AbuSeileek (2012) designed several assignments for language skills. The speaking part included explaining the title, asking questions, figuring out the meaning of unknown concepts, authenticity and experience to appear relevant and interesting to students. In the writing tasks, on the other hand, the groups used online text-based chat before they wrote their essays.

There are also some types of cooperative learning activities which can specifically be used for language learners. Kagan (1990) developed a three-stage cooperative learning activity for language learners. In this activity students should form groups of four students. In the first stage one person interviews the other, in the second stage, the roles are reversed, and in the third stage, the four students come together and share what they have learned about their group mate. This cooperative activity, according to Kagan, can be done in any subject and topic but it is specifically considered as an appropriate activity for foreign language learning in which oral production and communication are of high significance.

The Jigsaw (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979) is another cooperative activity in which the task is divided into small units and also students in each class are divided in small groups so that each group is responsible for one unit of the task, or each group may be given one jigsaw task so that each individual in the group is responsible for the

each unit of the task. Finally all groups (or individuals in each group) meet to share their findings and complete the task in a way that all members of the group learn the material. After the completion of the task, students can also be evaluated on what they have learned (Aronson, 2014). Many variations of Jigsaw have been developed that gives teachers a lot of choices to select from depending on the type and age of the learners as well as the subject of the study. In foreign language classes, jigsaw activities can be used for readings that require students to investigate certain content and information. Another form of jigsaw was developed by Slavin (1995) which require students to examine written texts. Students work in heterogeneous groups where every group member focuses on a different aspect of the narrative.

Group investigation as another cooperative learning activity normally contains six stages (Sharan & Sharan 1990). In the first stage the students form groups based on their similar interests and select a topic to work on. In the second stage, they raise some questions and divide the task. In the third stage, the actual investigation will start and group members try to examine resources and collect appropriate data. In the fourth stage, students produce the actual product, and share their findings with classmates for completing a report. In the fifth stage, each member should present the part of the project which has been allocated to him/her to the rest of the class. In the sixth and final stage, this group investigation and the final product is evaluated. In foreign language learning, this activity can be used for learning structural material or content, for example, investigating the content of reading material or interpreting meaning from the material (Árnadóttir, 2014).

Similar to group investigation, peer-led team learning (PLTL) (Felder & Brent, 2007) is a cooperative activity in which students in groups of six- to eight work together to

solve structured problems by the mediation of the teacher or trained peer leaders. The problems should be challenging and related to the subject matter as well as the assessment measures. The activity is designed as a two-week workshop. Students use materials which prompt them to consider different ideas, cope with misconceptions, and apply what they know to solve the problem.

Although a number of cooperative learning activities designed and tested by different researchers, teachers should know that there are an abundant number of other activities that can be incorporated in classes depending on characteristics of the learners and the subject matter because these activities have many benefits and facilitates students' learning. Therefore, the next section in this chapter is allocated to the benefits of CL.

2.5 The Positive Sides of Cooperative Learning

The positive sides or benefits of cooperative learning are reflected in a large number of the research results. The results have proved that this technique leads to more success, more social interactions and higher self-confidence than individual efforts (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Gömleksiz, 2007; McAlister, Wilson, Green, & Balswil, 2005), and also it has led to building better and more effective English learning environment (Bölükbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011). In what follows, the results of some studies addressing CL are presented.

CL has been proved to reduce learners' anxiety during classroom activities. Nakahashi (2007) administered a research to examine whether incorporation of cooperative learning environment would decrease language anxiety of freshmen students in Akita University. The findings of the study indicated that the students'

learning anxiety was reduced and their language proficiency progressed. Similarly, Wichadee and Suwantarathip (2010) observed that after the incorporation of cooperative learning environment, the students' language classroom anxiety significantly decreased and the students started viewing learning as a whole. In fact, after using cooperative language learning activities, the educators obtained higher language exam scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test. The learners also developed a more positive attitude to cooperative learning.

Another advantage of CL is that it facilitates learning. In a survey conducted by Zimbardo, Butler and Wolfe (2003), it was reported that the students held positive attitudes towards CL technique. According to them, CL makes them self-confident and relaxed so they do not tend to cheat in the exams. In Ning's (2010) study, 52 students who were studying in China could learn through group work activities. The atmosphere in cooperative learning environment provided students with social and academic progress and maintained more democratic and equal education circumstances. This type of learning environment produced both active and attentive atmosphere during the class sessions. In this line, Li and Lam (2005) also state that students educated in cooperative language learning environment will become more capable in terms of interpersonal communications compared to students engaged in traditional classroom environments. The first group of students could understand the feelings of others empathize with their friends and love their teachers more. The researchers also found that learners exposed to cooperative learning atmosphere can easily make friendship with students from different cultures and continue their friendship outside of the classroom. As they are more capable of understanding others' opinions or perspectives, they can solve the problems easier.

Cooperative learning environment can also improve students' achievement. Schellens, Keer, Valcke, & Wever (2007) argue that when students are active in the classroom with discussion groups, they can obtain higher grades because students can build a richer knowledge (Bliss & Lawrence, 2009).

Findings of a survey by Tsay and Brady (2010) administered to undergraduate students in a communication research course indicated that student's academic performance was strongly predicted by their involvement in cooperative learning. There was a significant positive relationship between the importance of grades to students and their active participation in CL, and it could strongly predict their performance on readiness assessment tests. Another survey, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2012) proved that cooperative language learning ensures better results on grades of second year college students who are entering the school with low level of success. The author also pointed to the fact that this type of learning makes students energetic and gives support with academic resources. For both teachers and students cooperative learning makes learning both feasible and fun.

Furthermore, Pan and Wu (2013) compared language learning of the students through two modes of learning: traditional versus cooperative language learning in terms of reading comprehension. The researchers found that the learners who were supported by cooperative language learning performed better in the exams. Similarly, Bayat (2004) reported that cooperative learning activities in reading classes had a positive impact on students' success and learning.

2.6 Limitations and Drawbacks of Cooperative Learning

Despite the several benefits of CL, some drawbacks are also attributed to it which, among the other things, includes the design of textbook-based team tasks, large class instruction, limited teaching time, as well as students' unfamiliarity with CL skills and learner autonomy (Ning, 2010).

Currently, cooperative language learning classrooms are popular; however, the study done by Tanh-Pham (2009, cited in Thahn, 2011) shows that 50% of the research disliked cooperative learning and supported traditional classrooms. Thanh (2011) used interview questions and examined the effects of the cooperative learning with forty university students and forty teachers. The findings indicated that 65% of the students and 60% of the teachers did not prefer cooperative learning. In this study, the researcher concluded that cultural barriers can be effective in using cooperative learning environment in the classrooms. Consistent with the results of this study, Clark (2008) also mentioned culture as a barrier to successful CL in Japan.

Michaelsen, Fink and Knight (1997) argue that, despite the popularity of CL activities, instructors and workshop leaders have identified three common problems reducing the effectiveness of small-group based learning activities. Two of the three problems are related to students' real engagement in group work. It is common that one or two vocal and more proficient students usually take control of the group and discussions at the expense of quieter members' voices being heard and their ideas getting ignored. Moreover, it is difficult for groups to stay focused on the task "because they get side-tracked on inconsequential or irrelevant details" (Michaelsen et al. 1997, p. 374). The third problem is related to the presentation of the results to

the class because despite high level of engagement, the discussions finally fail to have expected effects. These researchers consider these problems the result of “poorly conceived group tasks” (p. 374). Therefore, when designing activities, attention should be paid to the developmental level of the groups as well as the effect of the activities on the homogeneity of the groups.

Finally, Simpson (2008) argues that each learner in the group must share their learning experiences with other friends in the group so unsuccessful students can learn from the high achievers. However, even high achievers are not competent enough to teach a topic and the teacher should have these points in mind.

2.7 The Role of the Students in Cooperative Language Learning

Environment

In learner-centered classrooms, students have more responsibilities to perform compared to teacher-centered classrooms like in CL classroom. Such classroom environment is characterized by limiter teacher talk and maximized student talk, active participation of all group members, and maximized interactions among the students to produce better results and achieve their goals. Such active process of learning is more likely to foster autonomous learners. . According to collaborative learning guide published by Illinois State Board of Education, group management is also very important and can be sustained by students taking the following roles:

Facilitator: keeps group on task and verifies that all contribute.

Recorder: takes notes on important thoughts expressed in the group and writes final summary.

Reporter: shares summary of group with large group and speaks for the group, not just personal view.

Materials Manager: picks up, distributes, collects, turns in, or puts away materials.

Time Keeper: keeps track of time and reminds group how much time is left.

Checker: checks for accuracy and clarity of thinking during discussions, and checks written work and tracks points.

Cooperative learning methods have different details including group size which can be from two to several, and roles given to the students; each group member may have an individual role or task, or all members may share the same task and be evaluated on the basis of group performance or the average of individual performances (Slavin, 2011).

2.8 Teacher's Role in Cooperative Language Learning Environment

In cooperative learning environments, teachers also have certain responsibilities. Shimazoe and Aldrich (2010) have specified three stages in the life cycle of groups: a design and development stage, an operations stage, and an output and disbanding stage (Rousseau, Aube & Savoie, 2006). Each stage yields its own problems and thus requires a different kind of intervention and assistance. According to these researchers;

First, at the design and development stages, problems arise concerning goal definitions, group formation, and students' lack of social skills. Second, the problems relevant to the operation stage are designing reward systems, monitoring groups' performance, and intervening effectively to solve group problems. Third, the biggest problems relevant to the output and disbanding stage are providing effective feedback and closure (p. 53).

Concerning the above problems, it appears that although cooperative language learning is learner-centered and it modifies the nature of teacher-student relationships, teacher's role are just as significant and demanding in CL as in traditional pedagogy. Teachers may take a role as a director, facilitator, role model, and assist students both inside and outside of the classroom (O'Donnell & O'Kelly, 1994); hence, teachers' roles in assisting, mediating, framing and controlling group activities is very significant. They also need to be good motivators so they can encourage and convince students to participate in CL activities and ensures that they perform group-work activities appropriately (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010).

In cooperative classrooms, teachers usually move among the groups to control groups' progress and provide specific guidance if necessary. So, Hertz-Lazarowitz (1992) describes teacher as "the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage" (p. 77) and the language used by the teacher is more caring and personal. In fact, unlike traditional classrooms where teachers' language is authoritarian, distant and rigid (Bosworth, 1995), teachers' language in CL setting should be more spontaneous, varied, and creative because they want to convey positive affective messages to their students (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shachar, 1990). Thus, teachers often have a passive role and intervene only when there is a need to do so.

The findings of several studies suggest that the teachers using this technique in their language classes are very positive and interested in cooperative language learning. For example, Tochon and Gwyn-Paquette (2003) showed that teachers incorporating cooperative language learning solve the problems easier or in a more confident way. Another study by Horwitz, Breslau, Dryden, Yu, and McLendon (1997) also

indicates that through these technique teachers can better understand students' capacities and their needs.

2.9 Summary

The literature review presented above suggests that cooperative learning results in better outcomes that are produced collaboratively and also leads to more permanent learning. It appears that this technique fits to communicative approaches in language teaching and learning with emphasize interaction which consequently leads to development of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) and effective communication skills which is not limited to knowledge of language such as grammar and vocabulary (Zhang, 2010). CL is a learner-centered technique which enables students to express their ideas and share their opinions with others in a group in order to reach a common decision and understanding.

The studies reviewed above also suggested that not only students but also teachers can benefit from cooperative learning but they have to take different roles in CL environments which are different from the roles taken in the traditional classes. However, the new roles which increase the responsibilities of both teachers and students may be more demanding.

Despite all benefits such as increasing students' achievement (Willey, 2012), decreasing students' anxiety (Wichadee & Suwantarathip, 2010), and increasing interpersonal relationship (Li & Lam, 2005), some studies have reported the negative effects of CL, which among the other things, include no benefits or progress for high achievers in the groups (Felder, 1996), problems about homogeneity or heterogeneity of the groups (Abrami & Chambers, 1996), preference with traditional classroom

techniques (Thanh-Pham, 2009), dominance of high achievers in a group and unsatisfactory outcomes (Michaelsen et al., 1997).

As the above discussion highlights, the research on CL has yielded mixed results so the benefits of this technique is still open to question and this calls for a need for further investigation of this topic. In addition, very few studies have addressed the cooperative activities that teachers use for CL. Given the identified gaps, the present study aims to study if language teachers at preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment, if students participate in CL activities, as well as what effect CL activities might have on students' learning, and what challenges of students and the teachers may experience while using cooperative language learning.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Presentation

This chapter provides detailed information about the context, the participants, the research design, research questions and the instruments that were used while investigating the effects of cooperative learning in English Preparatory School at the Eastern Mediterranean University. The chapter also provides information on data collection and data analysis procedures used in this study.

3.2 Context of the Study

This study was conducted in English Preparatory school of Eastern Mediterranean University. EMU is the first university established in 1979 in North Cyprus. There are many international students mainly from the Middle East studying who prefer to have education in this university. There are also many Turkish students studying at this university because the diplomas granted to them are recognized by the Council of Higher Education in Turkey. One of the admission requirement at this university is to take the university entering exams, as well as the English proficiency exam if a given department`s language of teaching is in English. After the candidates pass the proficiency exam, they are able to begin their departmental studies. However, if the students cannot pass the proficiency exam, they have to take some English language courses at the preparatory school for one or two semesters before they can start their studies at EMU. The English Preparatory School is a quality institution whose aim is to help students achieve adequate competence in English and prepare them to

become successful in their future academic studies and careers. The preparatory school is also a center for international exams such as IELTS and TOEFL. English preparatory school of EMU is one of the most important part of The Eastern Mediterranean University Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS), and its accreditation by Edexcel Assured. There are four levels according to students` success. Breakthrough (A1), Waystage (A2), Waystage+ (A2+) and Threshold (B1). These levels are abbreviated as EPS 101, EPS102, EPS103 and EPS 104 in preparatory school environment.

Teachers at preparatory school try to facilitate students` exposure to English inside and outside of the classroom. The teachers also create extracurricular activities via the Students` Self Study Centre, Civic Involvement Projects and excursions. These activities provide the students with authentic and real life communication in English and such an approach to language learning contributes to the curriculum and combines teaching and learning activities with appropriate assessment procedures which improve student learning. The lecturers also provide feedbacks that are related to learning outcomes. Last but not the least, the teachers believe that the use of not only communication but also cognitive, effective and social processes in meaningful contexts are involved in foreign language teaching, and thereby, they pay heed to them.

3.3 Participants

The participants of the study are students attending preparatory school at EMU. Although the classes at prep school are comprised of international students, the available classes for the purpose of this study included only Turkish language students. The number of participants is 152 who are mainly Turkish (N =137) and

Turkish Cypriot (N =15) and one Azerbaijani student. The students are all between 18 and 25 years of age. All the participants are native speakers of Turkish and did not have adequate English proficiency, thus they were EFL learners placed at different levels of English to develop adequate English proficiency to be able to continue their studies at their departments. Most of these students possessed Basic English but could not pass the university's proficiency exam. Moreover, some of the students had already failed their English course due to lack of attendance or gaining a low score so they were taking the same English course for a second time and were studying EPS 112, EPS 113 and EPS 114. Passing criteria includes regular attendance to classes and passing two exams. The first exam which is called achievement exam is conducted in the middle of the semester, and the second exam is the final exam which takes place at the end of the semester.

3.4 Instruments

Two main instruments are used in this study which includes a questionnaire and interviews with both students and teachers which are explained in detail below:

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The Turkish version of the Grasha-Riechmann Student Learning Style Survey (1985) is used in this study (Appendix A). This survey includes 60 items and they are scored on five likert scale (1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided - 4=agree - 5=strongly agree). This questionnaire has been designed to address students' attitudes and feelings toward learning and the courses they have passed in college. In fact, it assesses six student learning styles including Independent, Dependent, Avoidant, Participant, Collaborative, and Competitive. The reason for selecting this questionnaire to be used in this study is that it fitted the questions asked in this study and also it has high reliability. The reliability of this scale as reported by Grasha-

Rieichmann & Grasha (1974), ranged from .76 to .83 across the scales. The Cronbach's Alpha of the overall scale in this study was .82, and for the subscales was: interdependence (.72), avoidance (.73), collaborative (.80), dependence (.70), competitive (.73), and participation (.80). Regarding the validity of the questionnaire, one statistician, one second language acquisition specialist, and one educational psychologist reached to the consensus about the validity of this questionnaire.

In line with the goals of the current study, four open-ended questions were also added to the questionnaire to specifically ask students' opinions about their participation in cooperative learning activities. These questions were:

Do you participate in group work activities in your language classes?

Does working in groups increase your participation in class? Why/ Why not?

Do you find you are more comfortable in working in groups after experiencing several group learning activities? Why/ Why not?

What do you think about learning from students rather than from the teacher? Which one do you prefer? Why?

3.4.2 Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews are developed by the researcher (Appendix B & C). These interviews are administered to two groups: teachers and students. To be more precise, they are administered to five academic members of staff (teachers) teaching at the preparatory school and fifteen students studying at the preparatory school who are taught by these teachers. The students are randomly selected from all the levels. The interviews with both teachers and students were performed in their native language, Turkish, so they can talk about the topic more easily. The overall theme covered during these interviews includes what teachers and students understand and feel about the usage and benefits and drawbacks of cooperative learning. Based on

the participants' responses, further questions are added during the interview although they are surrounding the general theme. The goal of the interview is to shed more light on students' and teachers' feelings and attitudes about cooperative learning as well as challenges and benefits of CL.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

In the first step of conducting the study, a research request form (Appendix D) and a permission letter (Appendix E) which includes the interview questions, the survey and consent forms for both the teachers and students are sent to the English Preparatory School of EMU to be confirmed by the head of the school. Then the researcher met the administration to learn about classes and the number of students in classes at different levels. This means that purposeful sampling is used in this study. After selection of 18 classes which include beginner elementary, pre intermediate and intermediate (2 classes were beginner, 5 classes elementary, 7 classes intermediate and 4 classes were from intermediate classes) the data collection was started by the researcher and data for this study were gathered in 2015-2016 Spring academic year.

Secondly, the survey was administered to the selected participants. It took 15 minutes for the participants to complete the questionnaire and answer the 60 items. The data was collected from 18th to 22nd of April, 2016.

Thirdly, from 25th to 29th April the interviews were conducted to both students and teachers outside the classroom, in a friendly environment where the participants' convenience was assured and the researcher tried to decrease their anxiety so they could provide right answers to the questions which is a prerequisite for a reliable

analysis. Also, the teachers participated in the interview were the researchers' colleagues and so were willing to contribute to this study and thus adding to the validity and reliability of the data collected from them. The interview sessions with the participants took between 20-30 minutes.

At the end of the process, the researcher held a meeting with the director of the English Preparatory School and thanked him.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

In order to answer the first research question, or in other words, to identify students' learning styles, the quantitative data obtained from the Grasha Reichmann Student Learning Styles Scales (GRLSS) questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14, and descriptive statistics measures including percentage, mean, and standard deviation were run for each item in relation to GRLSS concerning the first five sections of the survey, dealing with five learning styles. Next, in order to identify the learning styles of the students, the Grand Mean (mean of means) of each learning style was computed. Moreover, to identify if the difference between the mean of the five learning styles is significant, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed which is used to analyze the differences among group means.

Descriptive statistics measures including percentage, mean, and standard deviation were run to analyze the sixth section of the GRLSS questionnaire in order to provide answer to the second researcher question which aims to investigate students' participation in CL activities.

The qualitative data was obtained from the interviews. The responses of the students and the teachers were also recorded for authentication. The interview data were then transcribed translated into English and analyzed by the researcher to provide answer to the third and the fourth research questions. The interview data were analyzed to see if teachers incorporate CL activities and if so, what type of activities are used by them, and how students respond to them in order to provide answer to the third research question. The interview data also sought to understand how teachers and students understand and feel about both the usage and benefits of cooperative learning and the challenges that teachers experience while implementing them, and the learners experience while participating in them in order to provide answer to the fourth research question.

3.7 Research Design

The present study employs a mixed-method research (MMR) design. The data for this study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative instruments. On the one hand, quantitative data were collected through the questionnaires, and qualitative data were gathered by using interviews and classroom observation. The benefit of using the MMR design, as reported by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), is that it includes the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative methods and “offers great promise for practicing researchers who would like to see methodologists describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice” (p. 14).

The current study which was administered in the Preparatory School of EMU sought answer to the following research questions:

1. Do preparatory school students in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment?
2. Do preparatory school students of EMU participate in cooperative learning environment?
3. Do preparatory school teachers in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment? If so, what type of CL activities do they use and how students respond to them?
4. What are the benefits and challenges of using cooperative language from the teachers' and students' perspective?

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Presentation

This chapter will present and discuss the results of the data collected from qualitative and quantitative procedures from preparatory school students of Eastern Mediterranean University. The results of Grasha Reichmann Student Learning Styles Survey that includes six sections, provided answer to the first and second research questions about the students` learning style preferences and participation in CL activities. The interviews with teachers and students on the other hand, provided answer to the third and the fourth research questions mainly regard to teachers` uses of CL activities and the challenges that both teachers and students face while implementing and participating in these activities. The process of the data analysis were guided by the research questions which are mentioned the first glance of the research. The results of the current study based on the answers of these three research questions.

4.2 The results of Data Analysis

In this section of the thesis, the results obtained from the quantitative and the qualitative procedures obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews administered to fifteen students and four teachers are presented in appropriate tables followed by discussion.

4.2.1 Students' Use of Cooperative Learning Activities

This section shows the results of the first research question followed by discussion.

In order to answer this question, the first five sections of the Grasha Reichmann Student Learning Style Scales were analyzed and the results were presented in appropriate tables.

- 1. Do preparatory school students at preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment?*

Since the focus of this study was to investigate students' interactions and cooperation with their peers, the instructors and learning in general, the GRLSS consisting of six primary learning styles including avoidant collaborative, competitive, dependent, independent and participant were given to the students. Each learning style consists of ten items from the survey. In order to answer the first research question, only the first five styles were analyzed. Table 4.1. (Page 33) shows the results of descriptive statistics run to show the percentage, Mean, and SD to the items of the survey.

With regard to the first learning style, as Table 4.1 shows, the preparatory school students are mostly independent in their learning specifically as indicated by the higher mean of items 25 ($M = 4.01$) and 31 ($M = 3.82$) whereas the mean of other items are lower. Sixty-seven percent of the students were agreed or completely agree about "their confidence in about their ability to learn by their own" (item 25). Also sixty-six percent reported "their willingness to develop their own idea of the course content", respectively (item 31). Almost half of the students (49%) reported that if "they are interested in a topic; they try to find out more about it on their own" (item 43).

Table 4.1. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Independence Learning Style

ITEMS	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	M	SD
1. "I prefer to work by myself on assignments in my courses".	7	16	27	30	19	3.5	2.02
7. "My ideas about the content often are as good as those in the textbook".	8	20	39	23	8	3.03	1.061
13. "I study what is important to me and not always what the instructor says is important".	28	25	21	14	10	2.53	1.327
19. "I learn a lot of the content in my classes on my own".	10	18	29	25	16	3.18	1.222
25. "I feel very confident about my ability to learn on my own".	3	5	23	25	42	4.01	1.058
31. "I like to develop my own ideas about course content".	5	8	19	33	33	3.82	1.148
37. "I have my own ideas about how classes should be run".	8	14	28	32	17	3.51	1.898
43. "If I like a topic, I try to find out more about it on my own".	3	7	17	23	47	4.06	1.117
49. "I prefer to work on class projects and assignments by myself".	10	16	21	23	28	3.42	1.329
55. "When I don't understand something, I first try to figure it out for myself".	8	8	17	36	30	3.74	1.204

1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree
 The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, they may be little less or more than one hundred.

Moreover, regarding item 1, about half of the students (49%) of the students reported “preference to work individually on assignments in their courses”; however, distribution of the means was high ($SD = 2.02$) unlike the other items. Almost half of the students (49%) reported that they have their own ideas about how classes should be go (item 37) and study on class projects and assignments by themselves (51%, item 49), and if they do not understand something, first they “try to figure it out by their own”, (66%, item 55). However, students’ agreement with item 7 “My ideas about the content often are as good as those in the textbook” and item 19 “I learn a lot of the content in my classes on my own” were rather low by 31% and 40%, respectively. Similarly, regarding item 13, 53% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed that “they only study what is vital for them and not what the teacher focuses on is an important point”.

The results of descriptive statistics concerning the second learning style, i.e., avoidance are represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Avoidance Learning Style

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
2. "I often daydream during class".	14	43	17	11	13	3.23	0.732
4. "I want teachers to state exactly what they expect from students".	5	2	7	25	59	2.65	1.241
14. "I very seldom am excited about material covered in a course".	14	17	34	16	17	3.03	1.265
20. "I don't want to attend most of my classes".	19	25	17	12	25	2.99	1.485
26. "Paying attention during class sessions is difficult for me to do".	19	20	22	23	14	2.92	1.345
32. "I have given up trying to learn anything from going to class".	39	19	21	11	7	2.26	1.289
38."I study just hard enough to get by".	12	27	13	23	23	3.19	1.389
44. "I typically cram for exams".	7	8	20	31	32	3.72	1.206
50. "I would prefer that teachers ignore me in class".	39	20	25	8	7	2.20	1.217
56. "During class sessions, I tend to socialize with people sitting next to me".	7	7	18	28	38	4.03	2.669

1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided – 4=agree - 5=strongly agree
 The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, they may be little less or more than one hundred.

As Table 4.2. indicates, item 56 has the highest mean (4.03), showing that the majority of the preparatory school students (66%) agreed "tend to socialize with

people sitting next to them” though SD was higher (2.66) compared to the other items. The majority of them (63%, M= 3.42) reported that they typically “cram for exams” (item 44) but they study a lot to pass the lesson (46%, item 38). More than half of the students (58%) disagreed to “stop learning subjects from class sessions” (item 32), and (57%) disagreed that “they often daydream in the class” (item 2). Sixty percent of the students, however, did not prefer that the instructor leave them free (item 50) and this item had the lowest mean of all (2.20).

Forty-four percent of the students disagreed that they do not “want to go most of their classes” (item 20, M =2.99), and 39% disagreed that “classroom activities are usually boring” (item 8). With regard to item 14, almost the same proportion of the students were agree and disagree that they are “sometimes excited about material covered in a course”), by 33% and 31%, respectively. These findings overall suggest the low preference of the student for avoidance as a learning style.

Table 4.3. shows descriptive statistics for items of the collaborative learning style. As shown in this table, all the items had more or less the same SD (from 1.09 to 1.26) and the majority of preparatory school students were really in favor of cooperation in their language learning but the highest mean (3.99) belonged to item 21 where the majority of the students (71%) reported that “they must be motivated to discuss their ideas in the learning environment”. Moreover, 66% of the participants agreed that “they enjoy studying with their classmates” (item 3). A high proportion of the students (63%) also agreed presenting their thoughts related the syllabus course with classmates (item 9), and want to know what the mates think about the past lessons (61%, item 15). However, the majority of them reported that (item 21) but a rather small proportion (31%) preferred “studying exams with classmates” (item 27).

Despite the fact that students reported preference for collaboration, less than half of them (39%) agreed or strongly agreed that “class sessions encourage them to study together” (item 33). The majority of the students (70%) believed that “an important part of taking courses is communicating well with other students” (item 39), and “learning the material is a collaboration between students and teachers” (70%, item 45). More than half of the students agreed that “they are willing to help other students out when they do not understand something and they enjoy participating in small group activities during class” by 70% and 60% respectively, (items 51 & 57).

Table 4.3. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Collaborative Learning Style

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
3. "Working with other students on class activities is something I enjoy doing".	9	7	21	40	22	3.40	1.169
9. "I enjoy discussing my ideas about course content with other students".	7	10	29	34	19	3.49	1.116
15. "I enjoy hearing what other students think about issues raised in class".	7	11	20	40	21	3.59	1.136
21."Students should be encouraged to share more of their ideas with each other".	3	8	16	31	40	3.99	1.092
33. "Class sessions make me feel like part of a team where people help each other learn".	11	17	32	20	19	3.19	1.249
39. "An important part of taking courses is learning to get along with other people".	7	7	19	28	39	3.88	1.198
45. "Learning the material was a cooperative effort between students and teachers".	5	7	19	27	40	3.92	1.146
51. "I am willing to help other students out when they do not understand something".	5	10	16	39	28	3.74	1.134
57. "I enjoy participating in small group activities during class".	8	13	19	30	28	3.56	1.263

1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided – 4=agree - 5=strongly agree
 The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, they may be little less or more than one hundred.

Table 4.4. shows the results of descriptive statistics (Percentage, Mean & SD) for the items of the dependence learning strategy.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Analysis for Students' Dependence Learning Style

ITEMS	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	M	SD
4. "I want teachers to state exactly what they expect from students".	59	25	7	2	5	2.65	1.241
10. "I rely on my teachers to tell me what is important for me to learn".	3	4	6	28	58	4.38	0.955
16. "I want clear and detailed instructions on how to complete assignments".	5	5	10	30	48	4.15	1.096
22. "I complete assignments exactly the way my teachers tell me to do them".	7	12	25	28	25	3.54	1.204
28. "Trying to decide what to study or how to do assignments makes me uncomfortable".	19	23	23	22	12	2.85	1.296
34. "Students should be more closely supervised by teachers on course projects".	11	8	20	28	32	3.63	1.311
40. "My notes contain almost everything the teacher said in class".	11	16	29	26	17	3.24	1.238
46. "I prefer class sessions that are highly organized".	11	11	32	25	19	3.30	1.227
52. "Students should be told exactly what material is to be covered on exams".	3	5	9	22	60	4.34	1.007
58. "I want teachers to have outlines or notes on the board".	4	3	16	25	50	4.16	1.071

1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided - 4=agree - 5=strongly agree
 The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number ; Therefore , they may be little less or more than one hundred.

This section of the survey was designed to measure students' dependence from their English language teacher as a learning style. The majority of the students agreed with items 10 and 16, maintaining that "rely on their teachers to tell them what is

important for them to learn” (86%, $M = 4.38$), and they expect “beneficial instructions to complete the assignments” (78%, $M = 4.15$). Similarly, according to items 52 and 58, a high proportion of the students “need notes on the board to know the topics by the teachers” by 86% and 75%, respectively. Also, sixty percent of them expressed that “course projects should be really supervised by the lecturer” (item 34, $M = 3.63$).

However, only 7% ($M = 2.65$) agreed that “they want teachers’ explanation about what they want for the class”. Approximately, half of the students (53%) reported that they “finish their home works or exams according to their lecturer” (item 22), and less than half of them (42%) disagreed that “trying to decide what to study or how to do home works makes them stressed” (item 28). Accordingly, 43% of the preparatory school students agreed that “their notes contain almost everything that the teacher said in class” (item 40), 44% preferred planned class sessions (item 46).

Table 4.5. indicates the results of descriptive statistics (percentage, Mean & SD) for the fifth learning style, i.e., competitive learning style.

Table 4.5. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Competitive Learning Style

ITEMS	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	M	SD
5. "To do well, it is necessary to compete with other students for the teacher's attention".	18	28	22	16	14	2.79	1.315
11. "It is necessary to compete with other students to get a good grade".	28	20	19	17	14	2.67	1.413
17. "In class, I must compete with other students to get my ideas across".	28	27	21	15	7	2.44	1.254
23. "Students have to be aggressive to do well in courses".	54	20	11	7	7	1.91	1.255
29. "I like to solve problems or answer questions before anybody else can".	6	12	20	26	35	3.74	1.227
35. "To get ahead in class, it is necessary to step on the toes of other students".	55	20	8	6	10	1.93	1.331
41. "Being one of the best students in my classes is very important to me".	13	14	27	25	20	3.25	1.298
47. "To stand out in my classes, I complete assignments better than other students".	17	16	32	23	10	2.93	1.223
53. "I like to know how well other students are doing on exams and course assignments".	11	12	23	23	29	3.47	1.331
59. "I want my teachers to give me more recognition for the good work I do".	8	12	20	30	28	3.56	1.257

1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided – 4=agree - 5=strongly agree
 The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, they may be little less or more than one hundred.

As shown in Table 4.5, the preparatory school students are not generally competitive as specifically indicated from items 5 and 11. Less than half of the students agreed that "they need to compete with classmates for the teacher" (46%, M = 2.79) and "it is necessary to compete with other classmates to get a good mark" (48%, M = 2.67).

The majority of the students (75%) do not believe that “they need to pass all students to become the best student in the classroom” (item 35, $M = 1.93$) and that “they should not be fight to do well in courses” (74%, item 23). Moreover, only about half of the students (52%) liked “to know how well other students are doing on exams and course” (item 53). In fact, more than half of the students (55%) reported that “they must not feel like in a competition while they are learning the subject matter” (item 17).

However, it was paradoxical that 61% of the students reported that “they like to solve problems or answer questions before anybody else can”(item 29, $M = 3.74$), 58% of them preferred teachers to “give they more recognition for the good work they do” (item 59, $M = 3.56$), and also that “it is very important for them to be one of the best students in their classes” (45%, item 41, $M = 3.25$) which indirectly shows that students prefer competitive learning style. As for item 47, the same rate of students agreed and disagreed that “to be the best in the class, they should finish home works better than other classmates” (33%). Overall, students’ results in this learning style were rather contradictory suggesting preference both for competitiveness or its absence. It can also be observed that, all the items had approximately the same distribution around the mean ($SD =$ from 1.22 to 1.41).

In the next step in order to identify the most prominent styles of the students the Grand Mean (mean of mean) of each learning style was computed the result of which is indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. The Grand Means and SD of the Students' Learning Styles

Learning Styles	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Independent	10	2.53	4.06	3.48	.471
Avoidance	10	2.20	4.03	3.02	.575
Collaboration	10	3.19	3.99	3.60	.278
Dependent	10	2.65	4.38	3.62	.619
Competitive	10	1.91	3.74	2.86	.647
Valid N	10				

As Table 4.6 shows, Dependent (M= 3.62), Collaboration (M = 3.60), and Independent (M = 3.48) learning styles have the highest means respectively. Avoidance was a less reported learning style (M = 02) and Competitive (M = 2.86) was the least frequent styles as the results suggested.

In other to see whether the difference between the means of different learning styles is significant, the ANOVA test was performed and the results of this analysis is summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. ANOVA Test for Comparing the Student Learning Styles

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.892	4	1.223	4.262	.005*
Within Groups	12.911	45	.287		
Total	17.803	49			

*p < 0.01

According to the results of ANOVA test, the difference between the means is significant ($p = .005$) at .01 level suggesting that students most prominent learning styles are Independent and Collaborative and Dependent rather than Avoidance and Competitiveness.

4.2.2 Students' Participation in Cooperative Learning Environment

This section provides answer to the second research question as following:

2. *Do preparatory school students of EMU participate in cooperative learning environment?*

Before answering this research question, it is beneficial to be informed that the researcher also used interviews with fifteen students who were in different levels of proficiency to elicit more data about the attitudes of the students towards cooperative learning. Therefore, to answer this question the researcher both examined the results of the students' interviews as well as the last learning style, i.e., participation.

Table 4.8. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Participation

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	%	%	%	%	%		
6. "I do whatever is asked of me to learn the content in my classes".	1	6	27	41	24	3.82	0.917
12. "Class sessions typically are worth attending".	8	6	17	34	33	3.79	1.216
18. "I get more out of going to class than staying at home".	10	10	21	25	34	3.64	1.31
24. "It is my responsibility to get as much as I can out of a course".	5	9	15	25	45	3.99	1.185
30. "Classroom activities are interesting"	19	16	26	27	10	2.94	1.278
36. "I try to participate as much as I can in all aspects of a course".	9	9	25	35	20	3.49	1.185
42. "I do all course assignments well whether or not I think they are interesting".	9	10	25	30	24	3.51	1.229
48. "I typically complete course assignments before their deadlines".	14	15	20	30	19	3.24	1.320
54. "I complete required assignments as well as those that are optional".	14	21	27	25	12	3	1.227
60. "In my classes, I often sit toward the front of the room".	23	14	27	16	19	2.94	1.415

1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided - 4=agree - 5=strongly agree

The numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, they may be little less or more than one hundred.

As Table 4.8 shows, the last learning style is participation of the students which was addressed in this study as a separate research question due to its importance. The Grand Mean of this learning style was also computed as represented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Grand Mean of Participation Learning Style.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean	10	2.94	3.99	3.4360	.38733
Valid N (listwise)	10				

Overall, the results of the Grand Mean (3.44) showed that students participate in collaborative learning activities and it is one of their learning styles. Students' answers represents a high agreements specifically as represented by item 24 which had the highest mean (3.99) maintaining that "It is my responsibility to get as much as I can out of a course". The majority of the students (65%) also reported that "they do whatever is asked of them to learn the content in their classes" (item 6, M = 3.82). Moreover, 70% of the students agreed that they "interested in going to class" (item 18, M = 3.64), and "that class sessions are precious to attend" (67%, item 12). Thus, 59% of the participants preferred "it is worth to go the classroom" (item 18). However, the proportion of agreement decreased in item 30 maintaining that classroom activities are interesting by 37%. But more than half of the students (54%) and nearly half of the students (49%) of the students reported that "they try to do all home works in a right way whether or not they think they are interesting" (item 42) and they typically "finish home works before their deadlines" (item 48). However, 37% of the students agreed with item 54 maintaining that "they finish the most important assignments and also the other ones". With regard to item 60, 37% and 35%, respectively, disagreed and agreed that "they generally sit in front of the classroom" (item 60) as an indication of readiness to participate in classroom activities. Finally, almost half of the students (55%) of them reported that "they try to be active as much as they can in all aspects of a course" (item 36). However, the proportion becomes %37 when we observed.

The second source of data is students' interview which was administered to shed more light on different aspects of students' perception and cooperation in CL.

First, the result of the students' interview indicated that the students enjoyed working in group activities as they believe cooperative activities increase the class participation in the classroom environment. Student three reported that:

I like participating in cooperative learning environment. Because I can study with my friends and my responsibility become less.

Another student stated that

I like to participate in cooperative learning environments, it is so funny and I can learn more from my friends.

The above excerpt confirms the results obtained from the interviews concerning students' interest to participate in CL.

4.2.3 Teacher's Use of Cooperative Learning Activities

This section provides answer to research question two that investigates CL activities for English language classes by interviewing the teachers. The research question asked was:

- 3. Do preparatory school teachers in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment? If so, what are these activities and how do students respond to them?*

In order to answer this research question, the four teachers participated in the interview were asked four general questions, the result of which is explained in what follows.

The first question tried to elicit information about implementing cooperative learning activities in English language classrooms. All the teachers interviewed and expressed that they try to incorporate cooperative learning activities in their classes. As teacher one explained:

I am trying to implement it every day, actually in every two lessons like for example; group work or pair works because it is the best way of increasing the interaction between the students.

Teacher 3 also explained that:

I think my classes are cooperative enough. In most of the tasks I'll ask students to work in pairs, I believe that this facilitates performing the task... because students need to use this language for their studies and also in their daily life outside of the classroom, it is important that they work in pairs so they talk with each other more about the task and other problems or issues.

Although all teachers reported using CL activities, teachers believed that successful implementation of cooperative learning activities depends on some conditions. To elaborate, teacher 2 explained that:

It depends on the skills that you are going to teach your students. For example, if you are going to teach writing, some writing activities can be done in groups..., group members can brainstorm ideas together, etc.

Similarly, teacher 3 believed that CLL can be implemented if students in a class know each other and are friendly, and then they can cooperate in activities such as dialogues and discussions. As she put it:

When your class has a friendly atmosphere, the students enjoy working together, sometimes I'll give them individual work to do, but they themselves ask me to allow them doing it in pairs, it's interesting... but in classrooms where students were very competitive, even if I ask them to do something in group, they feel uneasy and want to do it individually.

The goal of the second interview question was to elicit information about collaborative learning activities performed by the teachers in their classes. However, none of the students explained well the type of activities they use in their classes. Teacher 1 provided an example of an activity like “standing up going and asking each other questions” which could hardly be called a systematic group work activity. In the same way, although teacher 2 explained that group activities can be helpful in most language skills such as listening, reading and writing, and because students are from different nationalities can contribute differently to the discussion, she did not provide the specific example of a cooperative learning activity. Similarly, teachers 3 and 4 responses to this question were limited to the name of some activities that can be incorporated in classes such as communicative activities and games.

Question three sought to understand, from the teachers perspective, whether students respond to cooperative learning. Most of the teachers expressed that students usually respond well to CL activities. For example, Teacher 2 said that:

My students enjoy group work and pair work. I feel that my classes are more interesting and my students are more active and happier when they work together to complete an exercise.

Teacher 4 argued that cooperative learning also works well in her classes but students respond to it only if they have the culture of working in groups:

In some cultures, people are used to work individually; it is true about education individually because at the end of the term also they are assessed individually. These students cannot work well in group, so it is important that first the culture of participation be fostered for those students who are used to work individually.

The goal of question four was to identify individual differences including students’ personality, gender and level of participation that may contribute to their

collaboration and participation in group or pair activities. To respond this question, teacher A mentioned that:

Actually the shy students, the ones who are more conservative prefer not to talk in group activities but they need to be encouraged more in order to increase the level of attendance. Also, the ones with different cultures have different attitudes towards those activities; especially the foreign students are more involved in such activities. The Turkish students are a bit shy because of the culture and the education system. Males ones are more confident to cooperate in these activities than the female ones.

So according to the experiences of teacher 1 in the context of this study, CL has the potential to assist more silent and shy students to speak out and become more interactive. Conversely, teacher 2 believed that group activities are the most appropriate ones for the shy students to make them more active, and she also believed that females are more productive than males. As she put it:

I think this kind of activities is a golden opportunity for the shy students who do not participate in class activities regularly and try to hide themselves behind the others or in the corners, so group work gives them the opportunity to take part in activities... in my opinion, female students produce better.

Another striking point mentioned by teacher 2 was that, in international contexts such as EMU, to have productive groups, it is important that groups be mixed:

Forming groups according to students' sex and nationality is very vital in teaching environment. For example, Turkish students should not be in the same group... groups should be internationally mixed.

In terms of gender differences, teachers 3 and 4 saw no difference between the males and females but they believed that shy students were less active than the other students in the group.

Whereas all the teachers pointed that both males and females participate in group work activities equally, only teacher 3 pointed to some gender differences.

Usually females students working in pairs, concentrate on their work and try to do it quietly but when it comes to males working together, they form some noisy groups and it is difficult to figure out what they are exactly doing. I think girls adopt them to the norms of group work better than the males.

However, two teachers (1 & 4) pointed to the contribution of group work to the reading skill. Teacher 1 expressed that:

I usually incorporate it in reading. It helps a lot for reading because before you start reading you have to activate the schema of the students, before that you can start with a conversation or with a group work or pair work activity to make them brainstorm with some vocabulary ideas, or about what they are going to read about, and they can use it as a post activity as well when you finish reading you can ask them, to produce a group work writing after the reading.

4.2.4 Challenges and Benefits of Cooperative Language Learning Based on the Participants' Perception

The two final teacher interview questions (5 & 6) and also students' interview questions sought to investigate the challenges and benefits attributed to CL, by the teachers and the students.

4.2.4.1 The Challenges

The challenges related to collaborative learning activities as reported by teachers and students are summarized in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Challenges Related to CL from Teachers' and Students' Perspective

	Teachers' Challenges	Students' Challenges
1	Lack of motivation for active learning in group work	Preference for individual work
2	Grouping and group management problems	Lack of participation of some group members
3	Lack of appropriate materials for group work activities	

Overall three major challenges were identified by the teachers regarding to CL as represented in the above table. One of the main difficulties the teachers mentioned in this regard was related to need of motivation for active learning in group work and pair work. As teacher 1 explained:

Sometimes students do not prefer to have any pair work or group work activities because they are a little bit shy to talk in front of others... also they think that they have language problems, they don't feel very confident using the language that's why I have such problems with them.

Another major problem was related to managing the groups as argued by teacher 2:

When students are working in pairs or groups, most of the group members don't take part in the activity and engage with some other things like talking on the phone or chatting in their mother tongue, and it makes the class noisy the same time and disturbs the next door neighbor classes.

In the same way teacher 3 also pointed to the fact that some students are shy and have a passive role when they are placed in a group to cooperate with other group members. The same problem was also reported by teacher 4, indicating that getting students involved in group work and pair work is a major impediment in implementing cooperative learning in English language classes.

Another major problem was related to materials. Whereas teachers 1 and 3 reported having no difficulty either with the materials, teacher 1 argued that

Finding good materials for group work and pair work is difficult because most of the activities are designed for individual practice... I think teachers should be free to change some exercises and change them so they can be done in groups.

Classroom management while implementing CL was found to be another major challenge for some of the language teachers. Teacher 2 expressed that

It is difficult, hummm... how shall I say, to keep the students quite while doing these activities... therefore, it is very important for the teachers to set some rules or classroom rules from the very beginning. With regard to materials, humm... they should be open to discussion, in other words, it should be possible to do them in groups.

On the other hand, students' also pointed to some challenges they experience while they engage in group work activities. The first main problem confronted by some students is that the other group members that are quiet and do not participate, so all the burdens will be on them. As student 12 put it:

What I don't like while we are studying cooperatively is that my classmates become silent and I have to speak or work to find the answers of the questions about the activities.

Similarly, student 8 explained that

When students work in group, only few students are active... then, the teacher gives high marks to everybody even those who did nothing... hum... it's not fair enough. Teachers should know who is more active and who is less active in each group and give marks accordingly.

The above real excerpts taken from students' interview clearly show that students' participation and engagement in group work does not of benefit for weaker students and is an extra burden for more proficient students.

The next source of problem mentioned by a few participants was their lack of interest in engagement in group work. Student 7 explains that:

I don't like work in groups. Working in groups is not in my style. I know that I should cooperate with my friends but when I work individually I feel more comfortable and I can solve my problem faster.

It can be understood from the above excerpt that group work is not simply a learning style preferred by some students, however, these findings have some implications that will be discussed in the discussion section.

4.2.4.2 The Benefits

This section presents the results of the interview questions that dealt with the influence of CL activities from the teachers and the students' perspective. The benefits of CL as reported by teachers are summarized in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Benefits Related to CL from Teachers' Perspective

	Teachers	Students
1	Improving student learning	Improving their English language
2	Creating opportunity for interaction and communication	Giving them the opportunity to interact with foreign friends
3	Promoting student autonomy	Increasing students' self-confidence

First, most of the teachers felt confident about the positive influence of CL in increasing students' learning outcomes. For example, teacher two explained that:

Because cooperative learning encourages active learning, and active participation, students are more engaged in the tasks and more engagement means better learning.

Almost all the teachers believed that CL gives the students opportunity to interact and communicate with each other and develop communication skills. Teacher 3 pointed out that:

It is only through these activities that we can maximize student interaction and learning in our classrooms and when students get sufficient practice how to communicate with each other inside the classroom, they will communicate more successfully outside of the classroom as well.

Another teacher explained that:

Today, classes are communicative so group work activities are a MUST, because it is through interaction that students can practice speaking and learn how to communicate.

The third benefit of CL as mentioned by teacher 1 and 2 was contribution of CL to the independence of students. Teacher one elaborated this point in the following way:

In the traditional teaching methods, students highly relied on each other but through these activities they come to realize that they can also learn from each other and little by little they can also learn by their own.

Teacher 2 added that:

... of course it does not mean they do not need their teacher any more, however, they learn how to be more dependent on their own capabilities than that of others.

On the other hand, students' responses also pointed to the positive effects of CL in their learning process. In all levels, students claimed that cooperative language learning environment helps them a lot in understanding the teaching materials and related issues.

I like working in groups as it gives me chance to communicate with new friends as well as I can improve my English without boring traditional methods.

Moreover, students view these types of activities as an opportunity to increase their self-confidence to speak in classroom environment and to use the authentic language.

This as can be seen in the answers of students four and six, respectively:

In cooperative language learning environment, the speaking atmosphere is like daily life conversation and I become more confident if we compare with the teacher centered classrooms.

Group work activities make students active. Because we love speaking with our friends. The thing we like most about group activities is that we can exchange our ideas with our group members and also to communicate with foreign students. And it gives is self confidence in our learning environment.

Generally speaking, the majority of the student at preparatory school of EMU liked working in groups and were aware of the benefits of it.

4.3 Discussion of Major Findings

This section in the thesis reported the results of both qualitative and quantitative data addressing the use of cooperative learning in the context of EMU. The results obtained from GRLS questionnaire as well as the Grand Mean and ANOVA highlighted a significant mean difference between the learning styles and students' preference for more active and cooperative learning activities as reported by them. The students' scores in Independence and Collaborative Learning styles favoured more agreement compared to the Avoidance and Dependence learning styles. These findings are summarized in what follows.

Students' preference for the first learning style, independent ($M = 3.48$), was specifically indicated by students' confidence in their ability to learn by their own" (item 25), and "their willingness to develop their own idea of the course content" (item 31). In fact, the preference of the students for Independent learning style is in line with the second pillar of CL which is referred to as individual accountability

which refers to giving each group member a separate responsibility which contributes to the whole task (Ning, 2010). Also, it is consistent with the principles of communicative and humanistic approaches which emphasize the active participation of the learners and their responsibility for their own learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Students' reports highlighted that avoidance was not a learning style commonly favored by the participants of this study because students had tendency to socials with their classmates and study a lot to pass the exam (item 38). On the other hand, collaborative learning style was the most common style favoured by the students ($M = 3.62$) which was characterized by students enjoying from studying with their peers and also discussing about the syllabus with them as well as trying to know their attitudes about the previous studies (items 3, 9, & 15). These two learning styles are related in the sense that preference in one may point to lack of preference for the other one. According to Karabuga (2015), "Avoidant learners are defined as the ones who have no enthusiasm towards learning and classroom activities" (p. 278). On the other hand, collaborative learners are those who "share their ideas and talents with others and enjoy cooperation" (p. 278). Similarly, the findings of this study showed that students had a high mean in collaboration learning style but a lower mean in avoidance learning style. However, students' adherence to collaboration learning style was dependent on a condition which gained the highest mean of all (3.99, item 3). In fact, the majority of the students (71%) reported that "they must be motivated to discuss their ideas in the learning environment". Motivating students as a key role in encouraging their engagement in collaborative classroom has already been acknowledged by researchers such as (Brindley, Blaschke, & Walti, 2009).

The findings also showed that dependent learning style was the most frequently reported style by the participants ($M = 3.60$) after collaboration which was mostly characterized by items 10 and 16 which indicated students' reliance on their teachers about the most important points to be learned by them and also teachers' instructions for performing the assignments. It may appear paradoxical at the first glance that students are in favour of both independent and dependent learning styles, further analysis, however, shows that these two learning styles are related or the dependent learning style is a pre-requisite for developing independence and dependence is also a basic element Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) in the sense that learning happens in the 'zone of proximal development' in which a more competent and knowledgeable adult (e.g., teacher) or more-skilled children guide the less competent learners to learn. In fact students were dependent on their teachers mostly about the most important points to be learnt and clear instructions to perform the task. In fact, the provision of this information is regarded as scaffolding whose ultimate goal is to make take an active role in the process of learning and become independent learners. In other words, as students become more competent, they move from the dependent learning style to independent learning style.

Finally, the results showed that the students did not generally have competitive learning style as mostly characterized by items 5 and 11 which indicated students' disagreement with the necessity of competing with other classmates for the teacher or to get a good mark. However, the students reported that they liked to solve the problems before anybody else can, and they expected teachers "to give them more recognition for the good work they do". According to Karabuga (2010), "Competitive learners compete with other students and learn just with the aim of performing better than other students and being the center of attention" (p. 278).

Although his definition may confirm that some students in this study are competitive, higher percentage of disagreement with the necessity of competing with other classmates for the teacher or to get a good mark highlights that students are aware of the fact that the goal of learning is not just to get a good mark or satisfy the teacher. In fact, in a healthy learning environment should cooperate rather than compete (Wheeler & Ryan, 1973). Accordingly, the higher mean of the collaborative learning style and the lower mean of competitive learning style show that students in this study were more cooperative than competitive.

Whereas the first research question aimed to realize whether Collaboration is one of the learning styles of the students, to shed more light on this issue, the second research question sought to see whether students participate in collaborative activities. The results obtained from both the survey (the sixth learning style which was analyzed separately) and a semi-structured interview administered to the students, indicated that students are willing to participate in cooperative activities ($M = 3.44$). The interview data also showed that students gathered participation because they believed that through participation they could learn better. The result of Karabuga (2015) also indicated that students learn better when they participate in learning activities compared to, for example when getting rewards or compete with others. This finding is in line with the third pillar of CL, also explained in Chapter 2, referred to as primitive interaction, maintaining “students’ facilitating each other’s success through supportive interaction and is conducive to caring and committed relationships, psychological adjustment, social competence and low levels of anxiety and stress” (Ning, 2010, p. 34) when they participate in activities and cooperate with each other. In fact, participation is more engaging and motivates students to become actively engaged in what is occurring in the classroom (Hill, 2007).

In general, the results of this study are partially consistent with the results found by Karabuga (2015) who found that the students' favored collaborative, dependent and competitive learning styles. These differences suggest that students' preference for a particular teaching style can be either more global, for example favor in dependence as a learning style, or varies from one context to the next, for example, competition may be a norm of a particular learning contexts unlike the other contexts.

With regard to question three, all the four teachers reported using cooperative learning in their classes; however they did not point to specific activities used by them unlike previous studies which pointed to three-stage cooperative learning activity (Kagan, 1994), the jigsaw (Aronson, 2014; Slavin, 1995), and group investigation (Sharan & Sharan 1990) which could be used to promote learning particularly in English classes.

This finding is of high significance because it shows that there is a mismatch between students' learning styles and the teachers' teaching styles. Similarly the results of Karabuga's (2015) study indicated that whereas the students were in favour of collaborative, dependent and competitive learning styles, teachers adhered to their personal learning styles.

The results also indicated that although teachers reported using cooperative learning activities in their classes, they are not familiar with CL techniques themselves. In fact, applying CL activities like any other teaching practices requires experience. Teachers can successfully adopt CL when they learn these new techniques and practice them. Many teachers start their teaching profession with minimal understanding of the teaching techniques.

Most of the teachers expressed that students usually respond well to CL activities. It specifically helps shy students to be more active. In fact, the results of the study by Li and Lam (2005) also confirm this fact. These researchers stated that students educated in cooperative language learning environment will become more capable in terms of interpersonal communications. This idea corresponds to the results obtained from the learners mentioning that they like CL activities and try to participate in them. However, a teacher believed that CL is effective only if the students have developed the culture of participation in CL and if they are used to this technique (Clark, 2008). In fact, many students lack an understanding of the philosophies underpinning CL. Many education systems encourage competition so language students have to take individual responsibility for their own learning and this discourages their interaction. If students are informed about the benefits of cooperative learning more, it is likely that they change their styles and develop the culture of cooperation and come to realize that they can achieve more when they work individually.

The fourth research question identified the challenges and benefits associated to using CL activities. Regarding the challenges, the most prominent problems reported by the teachers were related to lack of student participation, groupings and management problems, and lack of appropriate materials. The importance of grouping had already mentioned by several researchers (Abrami & Chambers 1996; Baer 2003; Delucchi 2006; Neber, Finsterwald, & Urban 2001; Peterson & Schreiber 2006, Springer, Stanne & Donovan, 1999). The teachers in this study believed that groups should be mixed in terms of gender and nationality to be effective. Similarly, scholars such as Lou, d'Apollonia and Abrami (2001) pointed that mixed group (low

ability students, high ability students and medium ability students) can show better student achievement.

One of the biggest weaknesses about CL is that teachers feel they lose control of the class. Poor management results in noisy groups in which only one or two high ability students doing the entire job with rest of the group performing individual affairs. In fact, this factor is related to the fourth pillar of CL which is linked to social skills or interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1991) which involves management and leaderships skills, among the other things; the development of these skills are very important for teachers to be able to implement and control group work in an efficient way. CL classes are usually different from the traditional classes because more responsibility is given to the students, and these classes are noisier. In fact the reason underlying this problem can be teachers' inexperience in handling and implementing CL and they do not have confidence to deal with these problems (Thanh, 2011).

Successful use of CL techniques also requires teachers to have materials developed for this purpose or the experience to make these activities themselves (Ning, 2010). Most of the current textbooks generally offer questions at the end of each chapter or in different activities which are answered by students individually. Problems that can be worked on in groups are limited to one or two questions and no supporting guidelines are included and this shows the need for redesigning the learning materials.

The challenges reported by the students included preference for individual work and lack of participation of some group members. These problems had already been mentioned by other researchers (Michaelsen et al. 1997). Students even showed

concern about unfair grading of CL activities. These findings show that CL activities, according to the students' experience, are not harnessed in an appropriate way to address different students' needs. In other words, CL is not an environment in which weaker students can benefit from high achievers; high achievers instead take the responsibility of doing the task while weaker students engage in their personal irrelevant activities during the group work. Some other researchers such as Simpson (2008) also argued that each learner in the group must share their learning with other friends in the group so unsuccessful students can learn from the high achievers; otherwise conducting CL activities would be in vain. Poor scoring of students in CL activities was another source of concern. It is noteworthy that CL assessment should be different from individual assessment. Teachers must realize that there is not only one method appropriate for assessing student performance. In fact, one of the major pillars of collaborative learning is interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 2010), which points to group grading and a reward system for group improvement. Teachers need to be trained in alternate assessment techniques which are fair enough and at the same time reduces weaker students taking an advantage of proficient students in terms of grading. Some of these techniques include teacher observations during group work and students' grading each other or evaluating the level of contribution made (Larsen-Freeman, 1995).

With regard to the benefits of CL, both teachers and students believed that cooperative language learning has a positive effect on students' achievement. All the teachers believed that these activities can improve students' language skills specifically their reading ability. Scholars such as Árnadóttir (2014) have also

pointed to the role of CLL activities such as group investigation in developing students' reading ability.

Both teachers and students believe that these activities results in better learning achievement and this is consistent with the findings of many scholars (Lou, Abrami & d'Apollonia, 2001; Schellens, 2007; Willey, 2012).

Both teachers and students also believed that CL promotes interaction and communication and specifically it gives students the opportunity to interact with their foreign friends in the international context of Emu. In fact, CL, as explained before is based on Communicative Language Teaching which aims to foster students' communicative abilities and skills (Celce- Murcia & Dörnyei, 1997). It is also based on constructivist theories because both teachers and students are aware of the fact that their own knowledge of the language and this can be done through negotiation of meaning with others and through collaboration and interaction with other class members (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Finally, students believed that CL can increase their confidence because they give them opportunity to communicate and as a result, build their confidence. The positive influence of cooperative learning on students' self-confidence had already been mentioned by many researchers (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Gömleksiz, 2007; McAlister, Wilson, Green, & Balswil, 2005). On the other hand, teachers believed that CL results in students' independence. This finding was in line with the findings obtained from the questionnaires because Independent learning style was found to be appreciated by the students. As explained before, the idea of Independent learning is rooted in Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory which emphasizes the role of interaction

and cooperation and making the best of scaffolding offered by the teacher or peers to facilitate students' independent learning in the future.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present chapter first summarizes the results of the current study according to the research questions posed in the study. Then the implications of the study for language teaching will be provided. Finally, the shortcomings of the study will be explained and directions for future studies will be offered.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study works to know if cooperative language learning is beneficial or not for the students who are studying in English Preparatory school of EMU. The study reflected on social and constructivist approaches to language learning in which cooperation is vital for learning to take place, used a mixed-method research approach to answer the questions under investigation. The data was collected through questionnaires, interviews with both the teachers. The study sought answer to the following questions:

1. Do preparatory school students in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment?
2. Do preparatory school students of EMU participate in cooperative learning environment? If so, what CL activities do they use and how students respond to them?

3. Do preparatory school teachers in preparatory school of EMU report using cooperative learning in their learning environment?
4. What are the benefits and challenges of using cooperative language learning from the teachers' and students' perspective?

With regard to the first research question, the results obtained from GRLS questionnaire highlighted students' preference for more active and cooperative learning activities as reported by them. To elaborate, the students' scores in Dependent, Collaborative and Dependent learning styles favored more agreement compared to the Avoidance and Competitive learning styles.

Regarding the second research question, or students' participation in Cooperative Language Learning activities as obtained through the sixth learning style of the survey as well as the interview, it was found that students are willing to participate in cooperative activities. The majority of the students reported enjoying participation in small group activities during the class. The results of the interview also confirmed these findings although few instances of preference for individual activities were also found.

With regard to question three, all the four teachers reported using cooperative learning in their classes; however they did not point to specific activities used by them, or what they mentioned about CLL activities were not systematic implementation of such activities. The teachers mostly expressed that they use cooperative learning in pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-listening or post-reading, post-listening and writing. Moreover, two instructors expressed using cooperative learning

activities for speaking exercises or communicational activities. The rationale underlying the incorporation of these activities by teachers was that CLL activities would make students more active and helps them to talk more about the topic. It specifically helps shy students to be more active. According to the teachers, students were responsive enough to the CL activities. However, a teacher believed that CL is effective only if the students have developed the culture of participation in CL. Moreover some individual differences such as gender and types of grouping were found to have an effect on the nature of CL according to some teachers' perception. For example, a teacher mentioned that females are usually more focused on the group work than the males.

With regard to the fourth research question, several challenges and benefits of cooperative learning was also reported by teachers and students. Lack of motivation for active learning in group work, grouping and group management problems, lack of appropriate materials for group work activities were the three main challenges the teachers had to deal with while implementing CL. Preference for individual work, and lack of participation of some group members were the challenges reported by the students. On the other hand, teachers and students also reported the benefits of CL. Improving student learning, creating opportunity for interaction and communication, and promoting student autonomy were the three main benefits reported by the teachers. Improving their English language, privation of opportunity to interact with foreign friends and increasing students' self-confidence were the perceived benefits of CL by the students.

5.2. Conclusion

The findings, overall, suggested that both teachers and students at the preparatory school of EMU are aware of the positive effects of collaborative learning to enhance students' learning and achievement. However, some mismatches were also found between what students prefer and what teachers perform in classes. Teachers in this study appeared to have a low knowledge of CL techniques. As CL is a MUST activity in communicative and constructivist approaches to language learning and teaching. Attempt should be made by teachers develop principles of CLL. As the findings of the present study also suggested, CL is based on the five pillars of positive interdependence, individual accountability, and primitive interaction proposed by Johnson and Johnson's (1991). These pillars can be a good base for assessing CL activities. If CL activities do not have the above-mentioned features, they are probably poorly designed or poorly implemented CL activities which need to be modified in order to be effective.

To put in a nutshell, cooperative learning is a student-centered mode of teaching and also a learning style in which the teacher's role is that of a facilitator, while students are responsible for their own learning as well as the learning of all group members. The aim is not only to solve a problem or complete a task in group but also to foster independent, long-term learning. This study is inspiring for teachers in preparatory school of EMU as well as teachers across the world not to be reluctant to implement CL in their classes to create a positive learning atmosphere which encourages active participation and promotes interactive learning.

5.3. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study have important implications which will be explained in what follows:

Given students willingness and preference for cooperative learning, teachers are suggested to incorporate more group work activities into their class to facilitate learning because as expressed by the participants of the study as well as the researchers who study this area, CL “results in greater psychological health, higher self-esteem, and greater social competencies than does competing with peers or working independently” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 73).

Moreover, the participants in this study were EFL learners, and the contribution of cooperative language learning in language learning is implied both by the findings of this study as well as with suggested by other studies because acquiring communicative competence is one of the main goals of language learning and CL activities offer many opportunities for interaction among peers and group members (e.g., Abuseileek, 2012).

Teachers in this study were found to have difficulty grouping and managing the groups in CL activities. They also did not provide a clear picture of the collaborative activities they use in their classes. In fact, for designing effective group activities, teachers need to consider the entire context in which they will be used. To this end, teachers, specially the novice ones can use cooperative learning checklists such as the one proposed by Michaelsen et al. (1997) to design and evaluate group work assignments because many failures of CL activities are because the team tasks are not designed appropriately. Moreover, teachers should note that “Cooperative

experiences are not a luxury. They are necessities for the healthy social and psychological development of individuals who can function independently” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 73). Therefore, it is important for teachers to develop competence in CL, themselves and this can be achieved through some relevant workshops and training programs should which have been set up for teachers who tend to apply CL techniques in their classrooms (Ning, 2010). “Training content should include educational philosophies and basic principles of the CL approach” (p. 178). It is highly recommended that teachers be familiar with CL techniques so both themselves and their students can make the best of them in classes.

5.4 Limitations of the study and directions for future study

The present study had some limitations which limit the generalizability of the findings and applying them to other contexts. Since the participants in this study were only Turkish students while the context of the study was international, the study sample is considered as limited; thus, future studies are encourage to investigate cooperative learning among teachers and learners from a variety of nationalities and also contexts.

As explained earlier, there is shortage of literature investigating Cooperative Language Learning in the contexts of this study to which the results of the present study could be compared. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in the context of Cyprus to confirm or validate the results obtained from this study.

Although the present study employed a mixed-method design and strived to use triangulated data from a variety of sources including questionnaire, interview, and

observations, only a limited number of teachers were interviewed ($N = 4$) compared to the large number of students ($N = 148$). Therefore, future studies are recommended to administer the study with a larger population in order to provide more valid data.

Since Cooperative Language Learning can be implemented in a variety of ways, and since the current study did not clarify enough the Cooperative Language Learning activities used by the teachers in the classes, new research can be designed specifically with the aim of identifying CLL activities implemented by language teachers at preparatory school of EMU as well as in other contexts.

Finally, as cooperative learning is a flexible form of learning that can be incorporated across different contexts and be administered to different learners, future studies can investigate Cooperative Language Learning with respect to age, gender, subject matter, as well as other variables.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Grasha Riechmann Öğrenme Yöntemi Ölçeği

Aşağıdaki anket, Grasha-Reichaman 'ın öğrenci öğrenme tarzı anketidir. Üniversitedeki almış olduğunuz derslere olan davranış ve duygularınızı netleştirmenize yardım etmek için tasarlanmıştır. Her soru için doğru veya yanlış cevap yoktur. Fakat her soruyu cevapladıkça tüm derslerinize karşı olan genel davranış ve duygularınızı dikkate alarak cevaplarınızı oluşturunuz.

Her ifadenin yanında bulunan sayılardan yalnızca bir tanesini işaretleyiniz.

Sayıların dağılımı:

1= büyük ölçüde katılmıyorum 2= katılmıyorum 3=kararsızım 4= katılıyorum
5= büyük ölçüde katılıyorum

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Derslerimde verilen görevlerde tek başıma çalışmayı tercih ederim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Ders sırasında çoğunlukla hayallere dalarım. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Sınıf aktivitelerinde diğer öğrencilerle çalışmaktan mutlu olurum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Öğretmenlerin öğrencilerden ne beklediğini açıkça belirtmelerini isterim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. İyi yapmak, diğer öğrencilerle rekabet içinde olup öğretmenin ilgisini çekmeye bağlıdır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Konuyu öğrenmek için bana verilen her görevi yaparım. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Konu hakkındaki fikirlerim çoğunlukla ders kitaplarında bulunanlar kadar iyidir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Sınıf aktiviteleri genellikle sıkıcıdır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Dersin içeriğini diğer öğrencilerle tartışmayı severim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Öğrenmem için önemli olan şeyleri öğretmenlerimin söylemesini isterim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. İyi not almak için diğer öğrencilerle yarışmak gereklidir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Dersler katılıma değerlidir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

13. Öğretmenin her zaman önemli dediği şeyleri değil , 1 2 3 4 5
benim için önemli olan şeyleri çalışırım.
14. Derste işlenen konulardan çok seyrek heyecanlanırım. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Sınıfta işlenen konular hakkında diğer öğrencilerin düşüncelerini 1 2 3 4 5
duymayı severim.
16. Görevlerin nasıl tamamlanacağı konusunda açık ve detaylı 1 2 3 4 5
açıklama isterim.
17. Sınıfta düşüncelerimi ifade etmem için diğer öğrencilerle 1 2 3 4 5
yarış halinde olmam gerekir.
18. Sınıfa gitmek, evde olmaktan bana daha fayda sağlar. 1 2 3 4 5
19. Derste işlenen konunun çoğunu kendi kendime öğrenirim. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Çoğu derslerime girmek istemiyorum. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Öğrenciler birbirleriyle daha fazla fikir paylaşımı için 1 2 3 4 5
teşvik edilmelidir.
22. Görevlerimi tam da öğretmenlerimin söylediği şekilde 1 2 3 4 5
tamamlarım.
23. Derslerde iyi olmak için öğrenciler agresif olmak zorundadır. 1 2 3 4 5
24. Bir dersten alabileceğim en fazlasını almak benim 1 2 3 4 5
sorumluluğumdur.
25. Kendi kendime öğrenme kabiliyetim konusunda kendime 1 2 3 4 5
güvenirim.
26. Ders sırasında dikkat toplamak benim için zordur. 1 2 3 4 5
27. Sınavlara diğer öğrencilerle çalışmayı severim. 1 2 3 4 5
28. Neye çalışacağıma veya ödevlerimi nasıl yapacağıma karar vermek 1 2 3 4 5
beni rahatsız eder.
29. Başkalarından önce problemleri çözmeyi ve sorulara cevap vermeyi 1 2 3 4 5
severim.
30. Sınıf aktiviteleri ilginçtir. 1 2 3 4 5

31. Ders içeriğiyle ilgili kendi düşüncelerimi geliştirmeyi severim. 1 2 3 4 5
32. Sınıfa gidip birşey öğrenmeyi denemekten vazgeçtim. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Ders saatleri beni insanların birbirlerine öğrenmek için yardım ettiği, bir takımın parçası olarak hissettirir. 1 2 3 4 5
34. Ders projelerinde öğrenciler öğretmenleri tarafından daha yakından denetimlenmelidir. 1 2 3 4 5
35. Sınıfta önde olmak için, diğer öğrencileri ezip geçmek gereklidir. 1 2 3 4 5
36. Dersin tümüne fazlasıyla katılmayı denerim. 1 2 3 4 5
37. Derslerin nasıl işleneceği hakkında kendi fikirlerim vardır. 1 2 3 4 5
38. Sınıfı geçecek kadar çalışırım. 1 2 3 4 5
39. Diğer insanlarla geçinmeyi öğrenmek, ders almanın önemli bir parçasıdır. 1 2 3 4 5
40. Ders notlarım öğretmenin sınıfta söylediği herşeyi içerir. 1 2 3 4 5
41. Derslerimde en iyi öğrenci olmak benim için çok önemlidir. 1 2 3 4 5
42. Ders görevlerimin ilginç olduğunu düşünsem de düşünmesemde yaparım. 1 2 3 4 5
43. Konuyu sevmişsem, o konuyla ilgili kendi kendime daha fazla bilgi toplamaya çalışırım. 1 2 3 4 5
44. Genellikle sınav öncesi yoğun çalışırım. 1 2 3 4 5
45. Konuyu öğrenmek öğretmenler ve öğrenciler arasındaki işbirlikli gayrettir. 1 2 3 4 5
46. Çok düzenli dersleri tercih ederim. 1 2 3 4 5
47. Sınıfta kendimi göstermek için ödevlerimi diğer öğrencilerden daha İyi tamamlarım. 1 2 3 4 5
48. Ödevlerimi genellikle teslim tarihinden önce tamamlarım. 1 2 3 4 5
49. Projelerimde ve ödevlerimde yalnız çalışmayı tercih ederim. 1 2 3 4 5
50. Sınıfta öğretmenlerin beni göz ardı etmelerini tercih ederdim. 1 2 3 4 5
51. Diğer öğrenciler birşeyi anlamadığında onlara yardım etmekte 1 1 2 3 4 5

- istekliyim.
52. Öğrencilerle sınavların tam olarak hangi konuları kapsayacağı söylenmelidir. 1 2 3 4 5
53. Diğer öğrencilerin sınavlarda ve ödevlerde ne kadar iyi yaptıklarını bilmek isterim. 1 2 3 4 5
54. Mecburi olan görevleri yaptığım gibi mecburi olmayan görevleri de tamamlarım. 1 2 3 4 5
55. Birşeyi anlamadığımda, öncelikle kendi kendime çözmeyi denerim. 1 2 3 4 5
56. Ders sırasında yanımda oturan kişiyle sosyalleşmeye meyilliyim. 1 2 3 4 5
57. Ders sırasında küçük grup aktivitelerine katılmaktan mutlu olurum. 1 2 3 4 5
58. Öğretmenlerin tahtaya not almasını veya ana başlıkları yazmasını isterim. 1 2 3 4 5
59. Yaptığım iyi işler için öğretmenlerimin beni daha fazla takdir etmelerini isterim. 1 1 2 3 4 5
60. Derslerimde sıklıkla önlerde otururum. 1 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you (are you able to) implement cooperative learning activities in your classes?
2. What are the specific activities that work especially well in cooperative classroom environment?
3. How do students respond to cooperative learning activities?
4. Do you see any difference in their attitudes / participation level / participation of shy or quiet students / male and female attitudes?
5. What challenges (if any) do you meet in implementing Cooperative Learning activities?
6. What kind of problems do you have in terms of materials / classroom management in cooperative learning environment? High achievement and low achievement students / attendance?

Appendix C: Student Interview Questions

1. Do you like working in groups? Why / why not?
2. What is it specifically you liked / did not like about working in groups?
3. Do you feel that you learnt more in groups than working by yourself?
4. What kind of problems (if any) do you experience in group work? What do you do to handle them?
5. Do working in groups increase your participation in class? Why/why not?
6. Does working in groups make you feel more comfortable to speak English? Why/why not?
7. Do you find you are more comfortable in working in groups after experiencing several group learning activities? Why/why not?
8. What do you think about learning from students rather than from the teacher? Which one do you prefer? Why?

Appendix D: The Request Form

	Eastern Mediterranean University Foreign Languages & English Preparatory School Research Request Form
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Please fill in the form below and **attach** the necessary documentation (e.g. cover letter, sample questionnaire, interview questions, and consent forms). All documentation should be error free.

Name: Hayriye Osmanlizadaeler

Contact no: 0533 866 90 16

Email: hayriye.osmanlizadaeler@gmail.com

Institution / Dept: ELT

Supervisor: Assoc.Prof.Dr.NaciyeKunt

Title of Research: The effects of cooperative language learning on preparatory school students of EMU

Proposed period of research (to be checked against the Academic Calendar): 18th -22nd of April

Research to be carried out in:

English Preparatory School (EPS) (MLD) both EPS & MLD taught at Dept. Level)

Modern Languages Division (English)

Turkish Preparatory School

Research to be carried out with:

teachers students both other (*please specify*)

Level of students:

beginners

elementary

pre-intermediate

intermediate

other (*please specify*) _____

No. of teachers required: 4 or 5
120- 150

No. of students required:

Research to be carried out by (indicate in parenthesis specific dates for data collection):

online questionnaire (.....)
questionnaire (18-22 April.)

paper based

interview (25th to 29th April)
(25th to 29th April)

classroom observation

other (*please specify*) _____ (.....)

Aim(s) of Research:

- thesis (masters) thesis (PhD) conference presentation
 other (*please specify*) _____

Any other relevant information:

Upon completion of my research, I agree to submit a copy of my findings to the FLEPS administration and do a presentation if requested. I understand the administration have the right to intervene at any time during my research period and that any further requests on my behalf may not be accepted if I violate the code of conduct and ethics of research.

Date:/...../.....

Signature

To be completed by the FLEPS Administration

- Approved Disapproved (reason):

Comments:

Date:

Signature

Appendix E: The Permission Letter

To: Dr. Ramadan Eyyam

FLEPS Director

Subject: The effects of cooperative language learning on preparatory school of EMU

Date: 11.04.2016

I am writing to request your permission to distribute a questionnaire among students at all proficiency levels in the preparatory school for my master thesis. The number of students will be around 150. The students will be all Turkish students. The study will include interviews with students and teachers as well as in-class observations of how cooperative learning is conducted to the learners. The questionnaire will be given to the students between April 18th and 22nd, 2016, interviews with teachers and students will be held from April 25th to 29th, 2016, and class observations will be made over the same period. These dates have been specified after checking with the EPS academic calendar, and they do not intervene in any period of exams or other assessment.

You can find details of these procedures below:

Questionnaire: The name of the questionnaire that I am going to use is Grasha-Reichmann student learning style survey (see Appendix 1). This survey includes 60 items with five Likert scale (1= strongly disagree - 2=disagree - 3=undecided – 4=agree - 5=strongly agree). In addition, I added 4 open ended questions to get students' feelings on the cooperative learning. Answering 60 items and open ended questions will take only 15 minutes. No optic form will be filled by the students while answering the questions. They will write their answers on the questionnaire.

Interviews: These will be carried out with two different interest groups. These groups include teachers and students. The overall theme that will be covered during these interviews includes what teachers and students understand and feel about the usage and benefits of cooperative learning. The interviews are designed as semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2 for sample guiding questions). Based on the responses of the participants, further questions can be added during the interview

although these will also remain within the general theme. Due the in-depth nature of my study, I would like to interview five members of staff (teachers) and fifteen students. I would like to randomly choose students from all levels. As a result of these interviews, I will try to see if there is a connection between how teachers, and students feel about cooperative learning.

I propose to explore the implementation of cooperative learning on preparatory school students. I believe that prospective research will be original in that to my knowledge this topic has not been investigated in relation to preparatory school of EMU by the previous MA Thesis studies. In addition, I believe that findings will provide important benefits to the preparatory school instructors regarding teaching styles of the teachers and learning styles of their students. I am prepared to report my findings to the English preparatory school of EMU upon completion of the study and would appreciate it if you could consider my request favorably.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

HAYRIYE OSMANLIZADELER

MA Candidate

ELT Department

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