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The UAE English Teachers' perspectives on the multi-dimensional role of cooperative learning

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THE UAE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ROLE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Under the Supervision of Dr. Sadiq A. Ismail

May 2016

Declaration of Original Work

I, Khayal Al Allaq, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this thesis entitled "*The UAE English Teachers' Perspectives on the Multi-Dimensional Role of Cooperative Learning"*, hereby, solemnly declare that this thesis is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Sadiq A. Ismail, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not been previously presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and / or publication of this thesis.

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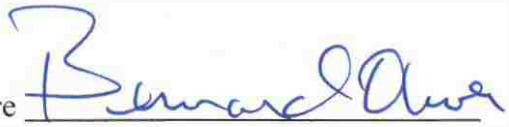
Signature  Date 25/5/16

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Abstract

This study explores teachers' perspectives on the role of the structured application of cooperative learning in enhancing ESL students' learning engagement, social awareness, and cultural responsiveness. The main objective of this thesis is to investigate English teachers' perceptions on the way cooperative learning can foster learning engagement, social awareness, cultural understanding and the application of differentiation in the ESL classroom. To answer the research questions, the researcher employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain deeper insight into the topic. The initial stage of the study involved the collection of the quantitative data from the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ) responses of English teachers (n=200). The subsequent stage featured the collection of the qualitative data through the semi-structured interviews conducted with few participants (n=8) chosen from the initial sample of the first stage of the study. The obtained results suggest that English teachers find cooperative learning an effective teaching tool in creating learning motivation and engagement, instilling social values and cultural understanding, and facilitating the implementation of differentiated instruction. The research findings will facilitate further research on cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in the UAE. The study throws light on paramount issues in the field of cooperative learning in the English classroom, and it further provides comprehensive recommendations for refining the application of cooperative learning in terms of theory and practice.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, Kagan Structures, cultural responsiveness, engagement, interaction, active learning.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

دراسة في آراء مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في الدور المتعدد الأبعاد للتعلم التعاوني في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

الملخص

ان الهدف من هذه االأطروحة هوإلقاء الضوء على آراء مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في الدور الذي يلعبه التعلم التعاوني في إثراء الصف الدراسي بالتفاعل الطلابي الإيجابي و المثمر في إطار من التآلف الاجتماعي والثقافي في صفوف اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة.

للاجابة على أسئلة البحث،قامت الباحثة باستخدام منهج بحث كمي لجمع البيانات اللازمة و ذلك عن طريق الاستبيان بالإضافة إلى منهج بحثي وصفي من خلال المقابلات الشخصية لسبر أغوار تقنيات التعلم الجماعي وفهم دورها الفعال في التعلم.

توصلت الباحثة من خلال هذه الدراسة البحثية الى أن التعلم التعاوني يسهم إلي حد كبير في إثراء الجو التعليمي بالتفاعل و التآلف الاجتماعي والانفتاح الثقافي وعليه فإن التعلم التعاوني يضفي بعداً اجتماعياً و ثقافياً للإطار التعليمي في صفوف اللغة الانجليزية كما أنه يعزز مراعاة الفروق الفردية في التعليم مما يسهم في تعميق مهارات المدرسين في التعليم.

لذلك تشير المقترحات النهائية إلى أهمية استخدام تقنيات التعلم التعاوني في العديد من السياقات لتطوير العملية التعليمية والتربوية. في ضوء ما تقدم طرحه، هذه الدراسة البحثية تضيء مفاهيم أساسية في عالم التربية والتعليم وتقدم العديد من المقترحات التي من شأنها إغناء التطبيق البناء للتعلم التعاوني على صعيدي النظرية و التطبيق.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التعلم التعاوني، تطبيقات كيجن، الانفتاح الثقافي، التفاعل الصفي، النقاش التفاعلي، التعلم النشط.

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Dedication

To my precious family who helped me make this dream come true

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List of Abbreviations

ESL	English as a Second Language
CL	Cooperative Learning
CLQ	Cooperative Learning Questionnaire
n	Number
M	Mean Score
SD	Standard Deviation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Since the earliest activities of ancient times, cooperation has been there. It is perhaps the earliest concept that shaped the reality of the world from its infancy. Since cooperation is generally perceived as "working together to accomplish shared goals" (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994, p. 4), its vibrant shades of interaction, understanding, shared goals, and combined effort in different activities has forged the emergence of communities, societies, civilizations and then subsequently cities, countries, kingdom and empires. It is cooperation that can guarantee a collective benefit and upon cooperation a collective effort can be built. Therefore, if we closely consider the overarching existence of cooperation, we will find that it can almost be considered a natural law that governs the flow of everything in the world. For this very reason, we can see that as societies evolve and develop, a dire need for cooperation become evident for the success and the continuation of any form of systematic work.

Apart from the spontaneous context in which cooperative learning takes place, ongoing research into the neurological, psychological and sociological aspects of learning has asserted that the construction of knowledge is not purely a behavioral or cognitive phenomenon; rather, it is a holistic process that also involves both social and affective elements (McCombs, 2000).

Linking the concept of cooperation to education and learning, a reality that shaped various historical eras asserts itself: Cooperation shaped the most basic and

rudimentary forms of learning. As Mullins, Whitehouse, and Atkinson (2013) contended, cooperation played a crucial role in the in ancient civilizations and in the establishment of timeless landmarks that remained eternal historical witnesses along the years, especially when we consider how humans evolved in small hunter–gatherer bands facing a challenges, hardships, and tasks (p. S142).

In modern times, the idea of cooperation started to emerge as a powerful tool at home, in the workplace and most importantly in the educational field. For example, Kagan and Kagan (2009) maintained that the ubiquitous emphasis on teamwork in more workplaces suggests that instructional approaches must also embrace learning cooperatively not just individually (p. 1.18). Thus, if we aspire to build a society that appreciates cooperation, we need to instill these values in our educational system and make these values evident to all stakeholders. In support of this notion is the growing emphasis on cooperative learning in the educational map. Cooperation in the educational context, with all its varied fields, stands out as a tremendously fundamental element for the success of various projects and plans, as such plans shape the minds and characters of generations of learners, teachers, and even school leaders. Hence, cooperation in this context helps educators form a learning environment that is friendly, collaborative, and engaging. Even college students feel safer and more involved when the task work is arranged cooperatively; as a result, students' productivity in project work will be enhanced to a great extent as Walker (1996) acknowledged. Walker in this respect explained that the benefit college students gain from practical projects and tasks relies chiefly on their ability to cooperate with others; he, therefore, ascribed the complications that students face in such projects to the tendency to work individually rather than

collaboratively (p. 327). Accordingly, adopting cooperative learning strategies will surely alter the educational context in the world, especially when the type of teaching and learning that is involved is second language learning, and when the type of students that are involved is ESL students that are taking their initial step into the world with its broad view and its countless challenges. The fact that those learners are ESL students brings to mind the emotional impediments of uneasiness, anxiety, reclusiveness, and uncertainty that many ESL students feel in learning English as a second language. To combat such negative emotions, it is highly essential to create an environment that eradicates these emotions that can drastically deteriorate students' language acquisition and social interaction with their peers and their teachers. Thus, the study aims at exploring teachers' perceptions on the positive role of cooperative learning in creating a positive learning environment emotionally, socially and culturally. Stressing the role of cooperative readiness in enhancing students' academic skills, Tsay (2010) acknowledged the prominent academic outcomes that students can get from showing the willingness to take part in collaborative activities (p. 2 10: 78–89).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In line with the growing emphasis on creating student-centered classes in the United Arab Emirates and springing from the educational tenets that the Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) consistently call for, there is an on growing need for a new approach to teaching and learning English as a second language, a method that creates engagement, gives learners the responsibility for their own learning and enhances their cultural and social awareness. In addition, it is of great

importance for educators in the UAE to combine engagement with differentiated instruction in order to meet various students' needs as well as help them develop communication skills and the sense of belonging in the classroom. To pave the way for the aforementioned approaches, this study will attempt to shed light on how cooperative learning can create an atmosphere of active learning and engagement and how it can enhance student' cultural and social skills in comparison with the conventional approaches to teaching English as a second language. For years, the traditional approaches to teaching have long been criticized in the contemporary pedagogical practices, current empirical findings, and recent literature. In response, the idea of cooperative learning has started to gain prominence worldwide and has started to be juxtaposed with the traditional methods, setting a stark contract to the often static, monotonous, and often competitive traditional learning environment (Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Alzyoud, 2013).

To respond to the pressing need of a new educational pedagogy, the UAE has embarked on a transformation in all fields, especially the educational one (Thomson, 2013). In consequence, the traditional teaching methods will be abandoned, and new strategies of active learning will be embraced (Al Subaihi, 2012). Furthermore, in the world of second language teaching and learning, a multiplicity of obstacles threaten the flow of language learning; such hindrances can take the form of student defiance, resistance to cooperative work, anxiety, solitariness, self-centeredness and most detrimentally, frustration. In his outlining of various hypotheses, Krashen (1981) stressed the role of what he called "The Affective Filter" in psychologically impeding second language learner's absorption of the comprehensible input. To combat these

negative forms of behavior and attitude, the teaching of English as a second language should be skillfully interwoven into the content that is being taught. The teaching and learning should take place in a way that makes the learning experience authentic, spontaneous, and emotionally rewarding. In the United Arab Emirates, the role of active learning and cooperative learning as one form of active learning have started to gain prominence and have started to be one of the top priorities in ADEC's and the Ministry of Education's agendas and academic goals. Former and recent studies on active learning in the UAE capitalize on the role active learning has in enhancing achievement, engagement, and cognitive processing (Goud et al. 2014). Despite that, the reality of the educational arena in the UAE still indicates that many teachers refrain from cooperative learning and active learning strategies due to several reasons that are linked to time required for the implementation (Bonwell and Eison, 1991), lack of professional guidance (Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love, and Hewson, 2010), general resistance to what is new (Akpan, 2010), and classroom management problems (Bonwell and Eison, 1991).

Another pivotal point with which cooperative learning can tremendously serve the educational context in the UAE is the fact that ADEC and different schools and academic institutions in the UAE have initiated the Anti-bullying campaigns in all schools of the UAE in order to create a more harmonious learning experience for all students. Cooperative learning in this regard can help in diminishing and combating bullying, particularly the form of bullying that is related to cultural disparities because students will be familiar with the process of interacting with their peers regardless of their background, culture, or ethnic origin. Bringing to light how cooperative learning

can have learning, social, and cultural gains, the current study aims to examine the role of cooperative learning strategies in creating an influential ESL learning and teaching experience that provides ample chances for second language learners to interact harmoniously, engage in structured cooperative learning strategies, and work collaboratively to achieve one goal: A rich learning experience.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' perceptions on the role of structured cooperative strategies followed in teaching English as a second language in creating a positive learning atmosphere that helps learners acquire English a second language within a frame that is socially, culturally, and academically enriching. Apart from the aforementioned, the study intends to investigate ways with which cooperative learning strategies give room for effective differentiated instruction that fosters student-centered learning and teachers' facilitation of second language acquisition.

1.4 Research Questions

The study tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom?
2. What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness?
3. To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively?

1.5 Limitations and Delimitations

Considering the fact that the study deals only with a purposive intensity sample, bias might be one aspect that can be brought up as a possible point of weakness; accordingly, this might affect the level of generalization that can be made. To tackle the question of bias and generalizability, the researcher must argue that the participants interviewed are representative of the study population. Consequently, generalizability of the findings might decrease and thus generalization can be applied with caution.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Since cooperative learning and second language learning are two important topics in the educational setting in the world in general and the United Arab Emirates in particular, and due to the growing interest of both private and public education in active learning and cooperative learning, the study will provide an insightful account of teachers' views on the constructive impact that cooperative learning has on students' engagement, their social awareness, and their cultural understanding. The study findings will, thus, provide more insight and depth into the scholarly research and literature in the field of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction, as it will provide relevance to theory, reflecting how cooperative learning can positively impact students' attitudes and learning; it will also bring to light the effectiveness of cooperative learning as a practice, portraying how interactive, enriching, and friendly cooperative learning activities can be. Moreover, the study will serve as a base for additional future research in the field of cooperative learning in the UAE. Accordingly, more programs, management and remedial techniques can be generated from and can be based on the study findings. With

this, the study can significantly contribute to the systematic and constructive application of cooperative learning theoretically and practically.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Cooperative learning: As contended by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1994) cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups in which students work together to positively impact each other's learning (p. 4).

Reciprocal Learning: Reciprocal learning is a cooperative, collegial method in which there is mutuality of student to student or student to faculty interaction, assistance, and benefits. Brown and Paliscar (1982) developed reciprocal teaching. Such a model encourages students to use important metacognitive techniques such as clarifying, questioning, predicting, and summarizing. Reciprocal learning embraces the idea that students can effectively learn from each other.

ESL: ESL is an acronym that is used primarily in educational settings and stands for *English as a Second Language*. It refers to teaching English to a person whose native or primary language is one other than English.

Kagan Structures: Structures are simple, step-by-step instructional strategies that encourage collaboration and student-to-student learning talk. Kagan structures are named after Dr. Spencer Kagan who has been a keen advocate of cooperative learning strategies since the 1980's. Most Kagan Structures are designed to increase student engagement and cooperation and essentially enable structured group or pair work.

Heterogeneous Groups: Heterogeneous grouping is a type of distribution of students among various classrooms of a certain grade within a school. In this method, children of approximately the same age are placed in different classrooms in order to create a relatively even distribution of students of different abilities as well as different educational and emotional needs. Advanced learners are scattered throughout the various grade level classrooms, rather than all together in one classroom.

Cultural Responsiveness: As defined by (Ponterotto, Fuertes, and Chen, 2000), cultural responsiveness is a professional's skill in working with ethnic populations. It describes the capacity to respond to the issues of diverse communities.

Active Learning: As illustrated by Wang, Bryan, and Steinke, 2013, active learning signify teaching methods by which learners actively participate in the learning process; such methods may include discussion groups, problem solving and experimentation as pivotal facets of this learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, cooperative learning will be explored in light of the conceptual, theoretical, historical, and contextual aspects. Initially, a conceptual account will be given on cooperative learning as a background to this form of pedagogy. The chapter will then explore the theoretical framework that supports this topic, the research literature on it, and various studies that provide evidence on its multifarious positive learning, social, and pedagogical outcomes. The researcher will specifically elucidate the interactive context within which language learning should favorably take place. In order to show how significantly different, traditional teaching approaches to language are from structured cooperative learning, the researcher will show how the integration of cooperative learning with the teaching of English as a second language can create a more effective and interactive environment for learning English in the English classroom. In this respect, cooperative learning will be reviewed in relation to theories of prominent scholars, such as Vygotsky, Piaget, Burner, Krashen, Hymes, and Nassaji. Numerous studies will be cited to support and emphasize the amalgam of other positive outcomes cooperative learning methods provide in shaping students' attitude towards learning, equipping them with social skills, refining their cultural understanding, and facilitating their process of language acquisition and learning. Furthermore, the researcher will give an authentic account of successful experiences of incorporation and implementation of cooperative learning in the Arabian Gulf countries in general and the United Arab Emirates in particular.

2.2 Conceptual Background of Cooperative Learning

When we contemplate Olsen and Kagan's (1992. P 8) depiction of cooperative learning, we will notice that it adroitly touches on essential elements of this form of pedagogy. Olsen and Kagan contended that cooperative learning is a group learning activity that is set so that learning relies on socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups within a context of individual accountability and motivation to enhance mutual learning. The definition illuminates the principles of communication, interaction, individual accountability, and above all cooperation. Other definitions illustrate and highlight the shared goal that learners usually have in a cooperative learning classroom. According to Ormord (2011), cooperative learning is an "approach to instruction in which students work with a small group of peers to achieve a common goal and help one another learn" (p. 443). Not only do students work together in this context, but they also enrich and complement each other's learning in a way that enhances social awareness, communication skills, and language learning competence.

Furthermore, when cooperative learning is designed and structured, students can show more involvement and higher academic achievement. Different studies and books emphasize the role of cooperative learning in improving students' motivation and engagement. (Zhou, 2012; Ara and Akter 2013; Azizinezhad, Hashemi, and Darvishi ,2013; and Thanh, 2013), the fact that adds to the constructive role that cooperative learning plays in refining and enriching teaching and learning.

Thus, the theoretical framework along with the related studies will present substantial evidence and that sheds light on the plethora of constructive academic,

social, cultural, and pedagogical outcomes of applying systematic cooperative learning in the English classroom.

2.3 Theoretical Framework of Cooperative Learning

When the Russian psychologist, Vygostsky (1988) stated that "What children can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow", he paradoxically summed up and predicted a paramount positive outcome of cooperative learning: the building of a future independent learner. It is paradoxical because it calls for the collaborative effort of learning in order to pave the way for an independent learning experience. However, the learning autonomy does not necessary mean that the future of cooperative learning is the formation of isolated learners. In fact, this very autonomy signifies the rich interaction between learners in a way that reflects uniqueness of thought and distinctiveness of characters and in turn encourages further cooperation in the future with the wider world. There are numerous of theories that underpin cooperative learning and the different facets it has and can evolve into. The researcher will discuss theories that are directly linked to the research questions and the emphasis they particularly place on the creation of a positive learning environment, the enhancement of social interdependence, and the accommodation of differentiated instruction.

2.3.1 Cooperative Learning within the Frame of Social Constructivism

When we preview theories that underlie cooperative learning, we can see that they evidently tackle shades of social, behavioral, and cognitive premises. One theory that can be cited is Social constructivism. Social Constructivism or the social construction of reality assumes that understanding and meaning are developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other individuals. The theory also contends that language is the essential medium through which communication takes place (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

Accordingly, learners should take part in the community and the society in which they exist and of which they make a significant part. They should not exist in it passively and submissively. Students, instead, should work cooperatively to reason, solve issues, reach conclusions, and construct knowledge. With this premise in mind, we an say that cooperative learning draws on the sense of social awareness that schools should promote and help learners to acquire and reflect (see Figure 1). As illustrated in Diagram 1, the classroom, the school, and the community with all the individuals that exist in them collaboratively construct the reality, the opportunities of learning, and diverse possibilities and challenges as well as the solutions that can be reached to overcome these challenges.

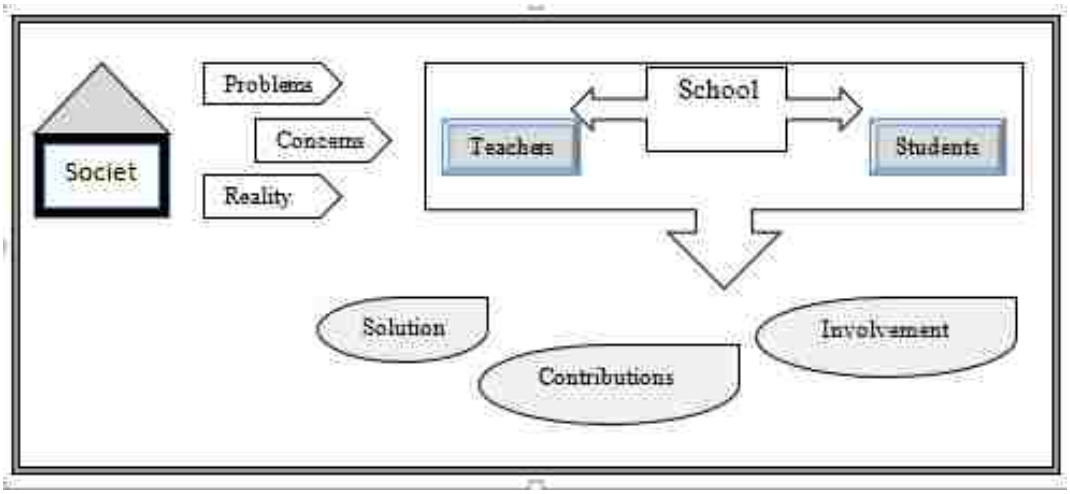

Figure 1: The Social Constructionism Theory Illustration

2.3.2 Cooperative Learning Through the Sociocultural Theory Lens

Cooperative learning is chiefly rooted in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which views learning as a social process that forms the basis of people's intelligence socially and culturally. The principal theme of this framework is that social interaction plays an essential role in the construction and development of cognition. In this frame, Vygotsky (1978) believed everything is learned on two levels: through interaction with others and then through the inner interaction that takes place within a person's mind, and her he particularly refers to the cognitive abilities that an individual exhibits to deciphers and make sense of everything around him or her. Vygotsky explained that the progress that learners can make within the frame of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is determined by the interaction that takes place between learners, teachers, or peers.

Supporting the same construct, Perry (1970) maintained in his scheme of cognitive development that peer communication helps a learner show progress from a

lower level of cognitive development into a more advanced level. Other psychologists, such as Piaget called for the active participation of learners in their own learning within a context that provides social interaction, and this is the very factor that he considered lacking in traditional teaching contexts, as Piaget (1932) severely criticized traditional educational systems that merely offer whole-class instruction, competitive assessments and individual homework, which he regarded as "contrary to the most obvious requirements of intellectual and moral development" (p. 412). On the other hand, Piaget emphasized the necessity to prepare learners cognitively as the social experience in his view does not suffice. Burner had similar view on the focal factors of socialization, which is a notion he shared with Vygotsky, Piaget, and Perry; nevertheless, he primarily contended the effectiveness of interaction in language acquisition. The views garnered by different scholars and theorists bring to mind the vast array of positive social outcomes that learners gain from working within a cooperative learning context that motivate them to grow socially, cognitively, and academically (Ashman and Gillies, 2003). Accordingly, cooperation becomes more than simply a context of interaction; it also becomes a platform for cognitive development.

2.3.3 Communicative Competence Theory and Second Language Acquisition

The close analysis of the growing number of theories and models in field of applied linguistics, curricular design, and syllabus development suggests that communicative competence has become a concept that is prominent and robust (Sung, 1998), especially in the filed of cooperative learning and second language acquisition. The discussion of communicative competence started as early as almost forty years ago

with Hymes' (1972) creation of the term communicative competence to challenge Chomsky's (1965) notion of language competence and performance. According to Hymes (1972), language learning requires a social context not an abstract one. This premise relates to the positivity of employing cooperative learning as a means of teaching English as a foreign language since it gives language its natural, spontaneous context. The essence that Hymes tried to emphasize is the communicative factor. Hymes took language learning from one dimension to a totally new one. He supported language learning that goes beyond the mere focus on the grammatical level (Chomsky, 1963) to the interactive level that creates a healthy environment for second language acquisition. Several ESL researchers and scholars reiterated the interactive nature of language and the significance of creating a context within which language can be practiced. In this regard, Krashen supported a natural approach to language learning where interaction can cause language acquisition to take place unconsciously; however, many critics and language theorists disagreed with him, as they proposed a more structured and conscious frame for language acquisition and language learning to occur. In light of this, an eclectic integrated approach has been suggested by several ESL researchers that recommended the use of form-focused and communicative approaches. Long (1991), Nassaji (2000), and Lightbown and Spada (1990) suggested teaching grammar within a comprehension-based or communicative approach to guarantee that learning does not happen in isolation and for the sake of enhancing learners' language and communicative fluency.

One challenge that hinders ESL learners' progress in language acquisition is the lack of speaking and listening opportunities. To rectify this impediment, cooperative

groups can be formed to provide a low-anxiety learning environment that caters to students' needs to reach out and interact without being under the spot light. For instance, Zhang (1010) explained that in a cooperative learning context, students and teachers are in a state of dynamic cooperation and together they construct an intimate learning and social atmosphere in the classroom, which emphasizes the role of collaborative groups in the learning process, not merely the role of textbooks and teachers (p. 81). In other words, discussion becomes the vital key in learning and teaching. Accordingly, the role shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered and, by that, the utmost levels of learning benefit can be attained. In their discussion of the interactionists' view on language learning, Lightbown and Spada (1993), explained that the mere exposure to language in the absence of one-to-one interaction and discussion is not enough for normal native language development, as interaction shows learners how to relate both form and meaning in language, how to interact, and how to appropriately put language into action (p. 16). This indicates that learner's participation in discussions, structures, and collaborative communicative tasks can enhance their language learning and language acquisition. To illustrate the premises of both theories, we can study figure 2 and reflect on the combined role that both structured language teaching and communicative language teaching have on the process of language acquisition and language learning. The structured approach provides order and structure for the frame of learning while the communicative approach opens opportunities of practical, friendly, and interactive practice. In other words, to forge an effective way to teach English effectively, both approaches as we can see from the diagram below should be wisely combined to foster language acquisition and language learning.

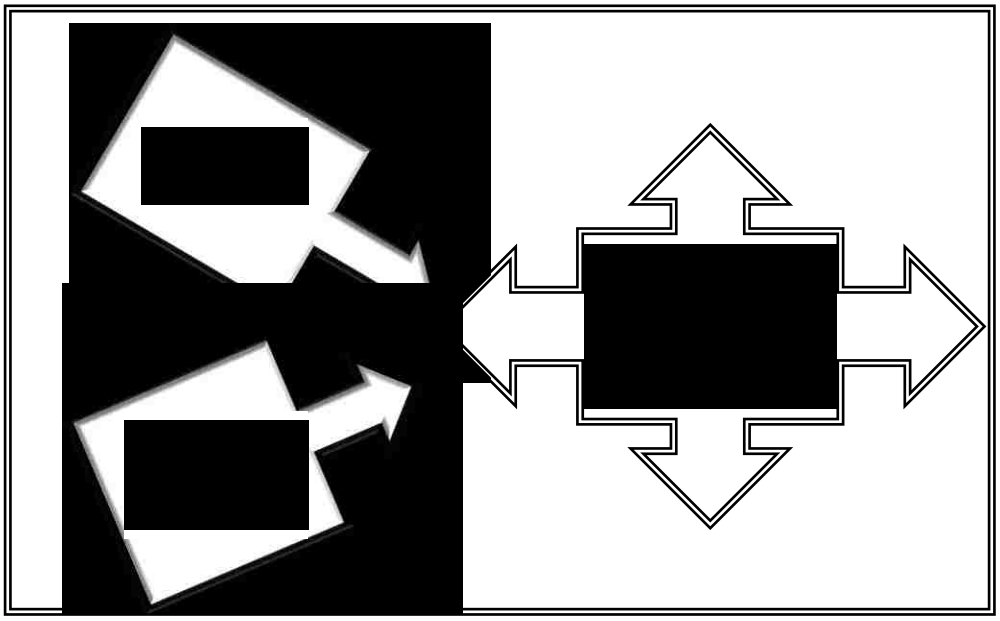

Figure 2: Second Language Acquisition Theory and Communicative Competence Theory

2.3.4 Social Interdependence Theory

The theory of Social Interdependence, which was formally formulized in 1978, was first introduced by Harold Kelley and John Thibaut in 1959 in their book; *The Social Psychology of Groups*, and they revisited the concept in their next book, *Interpersonal Relations: A Theory of Interdependence*. The social interdependence theory stems from the notion that people need each other to interact and to be socially linked with one another. In the field of education, social interdependence takes place when learners realize the importance of social interaction as part of their learning prerequisites. Students need to comprehend the need for socialization, mutual interaction and learning complementation. In order to assimilate in a learning community, learners ought to realize the tremendous role other learners have in order to provide a full picture

of learning. When this form of interaction happens, cooperation starts to flow and take place, for learners in this collaborative context know that they should depend on and support each other to achieve a learning target (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1998). Building on this construct, Johnson and Johnson and Kagan coined the principle "positive interdependence" as one pillar of structured cooperative learning. The theories that analyzed cooperative learning along with the research related to it, suggest that social interdependence positively affects individual interaction with a given situation, which accordingly influences the outcomes of that interaction (Onwuegubzie & DaRos-Voseles, 2001, p. 61). On a different note, Deutch (1949 a, 1962) conceptualized two types of social interdependence: negative and positive. The positive one embodies a context in which individuals meet their goals only when other members of their team meet their goals. On the other hand, negative interdependence signifies a competitive environment where individuals succeed only when others fail. In light of this, we can say that when cooperative learning is based on the first type of interdependence, it provides a socially, morally, and culturally rich setting for learning.

In sum, the indicated theories provide a relevant and insightful base upon which the study can be constructed and developed. The theories touched on salient notions on the social, behavioral, cognitive, learning, and pedagogical implications on cooperative learning.

2.4 Historical Roots of Cooperative Learning

When we attempt to trace the historical essence of cooperative learning, we easily realize that cooperative learning is not a new approach. According to Olsen and

Kagan (1992), it was initially brought into practice in England in the schools of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell in the late 18th century. Subsequently, a Lancastrian school opened in the U.S in 1806, the fact that started the "common school" movement, which implemented cooperation in learning. According to Kluge (1999), cooperative learning started to gain more popularity during the twentieth century, and it started to stir more interest until it reached its current focus known as cooperative learning. Kluge thoroughly depicted cooperative learning in his *Brief Introduction to Cooperative Learning*. From a scholarly point of view, he maintained that the theoretical roots of cooperative learning stem from Voygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development Theory, Wittrock's Theory of Cognitive Elaboration, and Deutsch's theory of goal structures. The aforementioned theories tackle cooperative learning in terms of the learner's role and the level of autonomy they gradually possess along the course of their learning.

David and Roger Johnson actively contributed to the cooperative learning theory. In 1975, they found that cooperative learning promoted mutual liking, more effective communication, high acceptance and support, as well as demonstrated an increase in a variety of critical thinking strategies within the members of a group. On the other hand, students who reflected competitiveness lacked the interaction, the social skills, and the emotional involvement with others. Despite the multifarious angles from which these scholars and researchers perceived cooperative learning, there has been a common aspect that combines these viewpoints which is the shared goal manifested in the experience of learning and knowledge acquisition.

2.5 The Social and Cultural Benefits of Cooperative Learning

Many scholars have tackled the concept of cooperative learning throughout the years, reflecting their own understanding, guided by studies, research, and authentic experience. Among the many student-centered instructional strategies employed in the constructivist classroom, cooperative learning has been extensively documented as an effective means for increasing learners retention, building communicative and social skills, and developing students' critical thinking ability (Johnson and Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1994; Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Since the first cooperative learning research that was published in 1898, according to Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994), there have been nearly 600 cooperative learning-focused studies that brought to light the positive outcome categories that can be achieved by cooperative learning; these categories include 1) greater effort to achieve, 2) more positive relationships among students, and 3) greater psychological health. These findings underscore numerous fruitful outcomes that learners can get from participating in and learning within a cooperative learning context that contributes to their safety, motivation, involvement and interaction.

Capitalizing on several benefits of cooperative learning, Biester's (1972) depiction of cooperative learning as an educational program in which academic and nonacademic elements are combined to provide the students with several learning benefits and opportunities that can never be realized or obtained if students work in solation indicates the benefits that cooperative learning can offer its learners (p. 585). We can see from Biester's definition that cooperative learning can take a role far richer

and more influential than any other learning strategy, as it is built on interdependent and mutual benefit among the group members. Not only do students contribute to their peer's academic success, but they also complement the "nonacademic components" manifested in the social factors with which they enrich the classroom, the prior knowledge they share with their friends, and the overall learning atmosphere they intentionally and unintentionally create just by reflecting the positive readiness to collaborate and cooperate to achieve different shared goals, group projects, collective tasks, and take part in different collaborative activities and strategies. Building on the early studies and the emphasis on the social and interactive factor, we can also refer to Olsen and Kagan's (1992), cooperative learning definition as

> group learning activities organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others

Olsen and Kagan in the above definition throw light on fundamental elements of cooperative learning, which are: interdependence, individual accountability, participation and interaction. These elements form a healthy base for potential independent learners. These theories focus on how learning gains can be maximized when learners take responsibility and active role in the learning process. Vermette (1998) presents a similar, yet more recent depiction of cooperative learning as a relatively permanent, heterogeneously mixed, small group of students who collaborate to complete and activity, produce projects or products and/or who have been asked to

individually master a body of knowledge. Thus, the spirit within the team has to mirror positive interdependence (p. 43). We can infer from Vermette's portrayal of a cooperative classroom that cooperative learning rests on solid premises of dynamic cooperation, interdependence, interaction and social responsiveness; therefore, reciprocal and interactive tasks play an essential role in this kind of learning. In a very recent explanation of its meaning, cooperative learning is defined as " a systematic instructional method in which students work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals." (Zhang, 2010, p. 81). Zhang's emphasis on togetherness in cooperative learning does not only mean the mere fact of being together; it is rather the guided and the systematic grouping of students where the utmost benefit can occur within a frame that is cooperative, constructive and friendly.

Stressing the social benefits of cooperative learning, Johnsons, Holubec and Roy (1984) contended that for students to effectively acquire social skills, they need to work collaboratively. This shows that enhanced social skills can be an immediate outcome of cooperative learning. Other studies also concurred that cooperative learning improved interpersonal skills (Johnson and Johnson, 1988), and these skills prepared learners for the modern participative workplace (Feichtner and Davis, 1991). Kagan and others perceive cooperative learning as a fundamental preparation for learners to participate in a democratic society (Kagan, 1994).

The theories that analyzed cooperative learning along with the research related to it suggest that social interdependence positively influences individual interaction with a given situation, which subsequently affects the outcomes of that interaction

(Onwuegubzie & DaRos-Voseles, 2001, p. 61). Focusing on the interdependent factor in cooperative learning, Johnson and Johnson and Smith (1991) stressed that cooperative learning is "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (a, p. III).

Apart from the social benefits of cooperative learning, a multiplicity of studies whether past or recent, has indicated the extent to which cooperative learning can greatly influence students' cultural awareness. Discussing the aforementioned notion, Salvin and Oickle (1981) stated that the interest in cooperative learning has been triggered by numerous findings that indicate its positive benefits in the field of students' academic achievement as well as students' relations with different ethnic or racial backgrounds (p. 174). Other researchers, such as Salvin (1990), have also concluded that students who learn in groups gain enhanced intercultural understanding. In her book, *Cooperative learning and cultural diversity: Building caring communities in the cooperative classroom*, Williams (1993) pictured cooperative learning strategies as tools that can enhance cultural awareness.

Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) described cooperative learning strategies as keys to culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2010) also described cooperative learning as one of the pillars of culturally responsive teaching (p. 187). In support of the cultural benefits of cooperative learning is a study conducted in New Zealand. Students in the study reiterated the social and cultural benefits of cooperative learning by stating how these strategies gave them the chance to know more about other cultures in the classroom (Baker and Clark, 2010). Furthermore, Young and Sternod (2011), Morris and

Mims (2012), and Nugent and Catalano (2015) also advocated student-centered practices and cooperative learning strategies to instill values of cultural responsiveness in learners.

In sum, the variety of studies on the social, emotional, and cultural outcomes of cooperative learning show that despite the various stages that cooperative learning has gone through since it initially blossomed, it is still marked by one prominent and unchangeable characteristic which is the collaborative aspect that prepares learners to interact and socialize in the real world, paving the way for them to be more culturally and socially responsive.

2.6 Kagan Structures: A New Realm of Cooperative Learning

Recent research studies have strengthened the cooperative learning outcomes that former studies have reached. Spencer Kagan who proposed his model about cooperative learning in 1985 in his book *Cooperative Learning Structures*, is still an active advocate of cooperative leaning. Along with his wife, Laurie Kagan, he has been promoting cooperative structures all over the world. Both of them started to give regular workshops in the school where the researcher works. Now this school is the first Kagan model school in the UAE.

In his support of cooperative learning, Spencer Kagan (1985), stated that there are several advantages that these structures provide, such as increasing the academic achievement, building ethnic relations among students, and creating mutual understanding between them. Cooperative learning in Kagan's view also increases

students' self-esteem, social skills, and study skills. It teaches students empathy and builds social relationships. It also helps learners become more responsible and effective participants in the learning process. Moreover, in working in groups, students learn to work with and understand others who differ from themselves. In addition to that, cooperative learning increases students' higher level thinking skills. Another point that we can cite as a benefit of cooperative learning is the individual accountability that will be credited. When each student's contribution will be held accountable, this will result in equal participation of all students. Cooperative learning also introduces the sense of social orientation so that students find other students someone to work with rather than someone to beat. Lastly, the students learn the workplace skills, which are a necessity in the twenty-first century, as the students need to know how to work in groups. Nevertheless, Kagan (1985) stressed that when cooperative learning is not properly structured, it can put some learners under pressure, especially those that are not sociable. Hence, creating a structured set of cooperative learning strategies can effectively accommodates various learners' needs. When we relate this to the English classroom in the UAE, we will find that cooperative learning has become a necessity for a successful, interactive, culturally responsive learning context, as the UAE is a country that has always been open to different people of different backgrounds, countries, and cultures.

2.6.1 Kagan Structures' PIES

According to Kagan and Kagan, "The emphasis on teamwork in more workplaces means that instructional approaches must also emphasize learning cooperatively not just individually." (Kagan and Kagan, p. 1.18). This quote touches on

a fundamental skill that the 21st century requires all individuals to exhibit which is cooperation. If we aspire to have a society that embraces this trait, then this trait has to be instilled, promoted, and nurtured in all learning systems in order to ensure that generations of learners will continue to reflect this skill as they develop into adults and citizens that are ready to contribute to their communities and people around them. Kagan also revisited the principles of cooperative learning and coined the word "PIES" (Kagan, 1994) as a representation the cooperative learning tenets: P = Positive Interdependence, I = Individual Accountability, E = Equal Participation, and S = Simultaneous Interaction. If we envision the pillars of cooperative learning in action, we can clearly see the various facets of benefit that students can gain from this approach. Students within a cooperative learning context know that they are responsible learners and that upon their mature cooperation the whole learning process is built. Consequently, this growing sense of responsibility will eventually take the cooperative learning activities to a more advanced level of critical thinking, creative reasoning and positive attitude. Ross and Smyth (1995) depict successful cooperative learning tasks as "intellectually demanding, creative, open-ended, and involve higher order thinking tasks". As a result, students can deal with various obstacles that can impede their learning if they possess this combination of thinking and social skills.

Apart from the social and academic gains of cooperative learning in general, the reality of the second language learning brings forth the necessity to establish a context that fosters learning and communication opportunities. For ESL learners, one challenge that hinders their progress in language acquisition is the lack of speaking and listening opportunities. To rectify this impediment, cooperative groups can be formed

to provide a low-anxiety learning environment that caters to students' need to reach out and interact with their classmates without being under the spot light. That's why we can see that most research studies, such as (Oxford and Ehrman, 1993; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995) indicated that cooperative learning it is a strategy that can lower anxiety and improve learning outcomes for different learners.

2.7 Cooperative Learning and Differentiation

Since students can be distinctly skilled in an area but not that skilled in another. These intelligences include verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal/social, intrapersonal/ introspective (Kagan and Kagan, 2009, p. 4.17). When students' individual differences and preferences are accommodated and effectively met, tailoring instruction becomes more accessible for teachers to better attend to and address their learners' needs. With the theory of multiple intelligences, structured cooperative learning can become an increasingly enriching method to differentiae instruction and provide a variety of paths for students to lead. Since " different cooperative learning structures respond to the needs of students strong in different intelligences" (Kagan and Kagan, 2009, 4.17), it has become manageable for educators to structure cooperative learning lessons that are not only student-centered but also responsive to multifarious students' learning preferences. When we discuss differentiated instruction, we do not discuss it in isolation. We examine it along with the different emotions it stirs and inevitably brings, especially emotions of anxiety in the case of struggling students. The anxiety that ESL learners experience stems from the low self-esteem that results from their constant comparison

they draw between themselves and their better achieving peers (Cassady, 2010). Therefore, the context of differentiation brings with its different levels, different self-perceptions.

To combat negative emotions within a differentiated instruction context, cooperative learning provides a friendly environment that facilitates differentiation and transforms it into a frame of collaboration, confidence, support, and friendliness. Since

cooperative learning rests on premises of social interaction and promotes social and cultural awareness, one anticipated outcome of CL is the enhancement of the self-confidence and lowered anxiety. In a cooperative learning class, learners interact within a context that is collaborative, sociable, pleasant, engaging and interdependent. In other words, there is a growing familiarity that sprouts as cooperative activities combine individuals and puts them within contexts in which they share ideas, outcomes, strategies, and thinking skills. As a result, learners gradually become less stressed out. When they start to gain confidence, they combat anxiety and stress-related issues; when they praise one another after a group activity, they foster positive reinforcement; and when they enjoy working collaboratively and feel safe, they sense that the learning environment is anxiety-free, welcoming, and friendly.

2.8 Cooperative Learning Studies

2.8.1 Cooperative Learning and Its Role in Enhancing Self-esteem and Motivation

In a quasi-experimental study by Hanze and Berger (2007) in Kassel, Germany, the researchers compared the jigsaw classroom method of cooperative learning with

traditional direct instruction on a sample of one hundred thirty-seven 12th graders. The results indicated that students with low academic self-concept profited more from cooperative learning than from direct instruction due to the increased feeling of greater competence these students experienced.

In a study conducted in Tehran, Iran on the effect of cooperative learning on emotional intelligence and self-esteem, Goreyshi, and Ajilchi (2013), investigated the psychological effects of two methods of cooperative learning and mastery teaching in a grade-skipping context of 25 middle school students. The results reflected a tremendous increase in emotional intelligence and self-esteem. In a study conducted in Wuhan University of Technology in Whan, China, Zhou (2012) carried out a survey and empirical research in an ordinary class of non-English major for 15 weeks. The results provide evidence on the role of cooperative learning in enhancing students' motivation.

Another study that documents cooperative learning impact on students' motivation is the one by Flaherty and Hackler (2010), who conducted a study in two schools located in a Midwestern state in the United States of America. The study was conducted using intervention strategies of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction. Post intervention data indicated that students reflected more involvement, improvement in class participation, and attitude toward learning. The results also pointed out that the combination of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction increased students' intrinsic motivation.

Azizinezhad et al. (2013) cited benefits on motivation and communicative competence in a study he conducted in Toyserkan, Iran. The study brought together the

fields of cooperative learning, second language acquisition, in addition to English as second/foreign language teaching to create optimal schooling experiences for students. The results reported increased motivation, communication competence toward learning English a second language.

In a study that investigated some Chinese non-English freshmen's foreign language learning anxiety, Yan-hong (2013) involved two classes in the study, one was instructed using CL and the other one using traditional teaching techniques. The study examined the participants' foreign language learning anxiety by using a classical instrument, the FLCAS (foreign language classroom anxiety scale), The analysis and comparison of the first and second FLCAS, the author contended that CL has a significant effect on reducing students' foreign language learning anxiety, which supports Krashen's theory of the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

In a quasi- experimental study by Mehdizadeh (2013), a pre-test and post-test were administered at Roodsar, the studied sample included 40 female students at first grade of secondary school. Shokrani's math anxiety questionnaire (2002) and help seeking behavior questionnaire based on Pantrich and Royan were used to collect data. The findings indicated reduced anxiety and improved academic achievement.

2.8.2 Cooperative Learning and Its Role in Fostering Social Skills, Cultural Understanding and Communicative Competence

In a study conducted by Huang (2006) in China, cooperative learning was explored in terms of its effects on students' English achievement, development of social skills and their perceptions toward classroom life on Classroom Life Measurement,

Huang (2006), administered a pretest-posttest on Forty-three six graders in one elementary school in Ping-Tung . The sample chosen received cooperative learning for twelve weeks. The results indicated improved English language achievement and social skills.

Exploring the cultural benefits of cooperative learning, Li and Campbell (2008) conducted a study in New Zealand tertiary institution where they interviewed twenty-two Asian students in a one-hour semi-structured interview. The results reflected that Asian students highly valued collaborative group discussions as they could interact with students from other cultures and backgrounds, improve their English-language skills, enhance their cultural understanding and allow them to form friendships.

Investigating students' perceptions on the benefits of cooperative learning in the University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Othman et. al (2012), used Likert scale questionnaires to year I and II college students. The data analyzed revealed that Year II students showed more interest in group work and report improved social skills, positive behavior and interpersonal relationship.

Highlighting similar benefits is a study on cooperative learning conducted by Zuheer (2008) in Sana'a, Yemen. The researcher administered a pre-post oral communication skills test, and a cooperative learning strategy STAD- based program that contains a teacher's guide and a students' handbook. The results revealed that the program helped in developing students' oral communication skills as a statically significant difference was noted between the pre and post administration of the test. The

researcher recommended a safe interactive and interactive environment can immensely help students develop their oral communication skills.

In a study conducted by Savlin and Oickle in 1981, statistics indicated improved social and cultural relations. They emphasized how marginal but positive the role of cooperative learning is in improving students' achievement and race relations. The reason behind this improvement lies in the space of discussion that cooperative learning provides; it consistently creates an atmosphere of interaction and communication that gradually builds social and cultural bonds and diminishes barriers of thought and ethnicity. As Meng (2010) mentioned, interaction instigates the production of more accurate language, which serves as a source of input for other students, making group work an effective medium in the contemporary classroom (p. 702).

Considering the fact that the UAE is rapidly becoming a cosmopolitan country with an amalgam of ethnic and cultural groups, interwoven with the local populations, further focus should be placed on the role of cooperative learning in creating an atmosphere in which students of different races and cultures can cooperatively learn, tactfully interact, and critically think. In this regard, Salvin and Oickle (1981) brought to light how cooperative learning methods positively contribute to students' achievement and race relations in addition to other outcomes (p. 174).

2.8.3 Cooperative Learning and Its Role in Enhancing Students' Achievement and Language Proficiency

In a study conducted by Marzban and Alinejad (2014) in Islamic Azad University in Oaemshar, cooperative learning effects on reading proficiency were

investigated through a pretest, posttest and the administration of a standardized proficiency test conducted on a sample of 60 pre-intermediate learners. The results indicated noticeable improvement in reading proficiency.

To study the effects of cooperative learning on General English achievement of students in Islamic Azad University. Kermanshah, Iran, Motaei (2014) followed a quasi-experimental method with a pretest and posttest design. Through choosing two classes random and cluster sampling, the researcher chose a sample of two classes that he taught and to on which he administered an objective teacher-made test of general English that measured the four elements of dictation, reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary. Comparing the results of the experimental group and the control group, the researcher found that the cooperative learning group outperformed the other group.

In a study conducted in Lebanon, Khoury (2005), used posttest experimental design to investigate whether the use of cooperative learning with case study and the critical incident technique would enhance student learning of English in listening and speaking class. The results showed that students in the experimental group scored significantly higher on the posttest than those in the control group. The implication of the study reflected positive social change that includes higher English proficiency.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Alharbi (2008) in Saudi Arabia to explore the effect of cooperative learning on students' reading comprehension skills, attitude towards cooperative learning and motivation towards reading. Alharbi based her study on sixty ESL Saudi highs school students. She employed a pretest- posttest design. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between experimental and

comparison group in the level of motivation toward reading. On the other hand, there was a significant difference between the two groups in the reading comprehension performance and in students' attitude toward cooperative learning.

Using a nonrandomized control group of high school female student, pre-test/post-test design, Abdulghani (2003) conducted her study in the UAE to investigate the impact of implementing cooperative learning on critical thinking and achievement. The results attained from the study showed no significant difference between the two methods of teaching on critical thinking or achievement in Arabic language.

In a more recent study on cooperative learning, Al Rasbi (2014) used a mixed method to investigate the Emirati students' perceptions on the role of cooperative learning in progressing their learning. The results indicated that cooperative learning improved students' learning progress.

With reference to English language teaching in the UAE, the emphasis has been increasingly placed on the effective teaching and learning of this language. The on growing need to use the English language in various fields has posed a pressure on the educational organizations whether day care centers, nurseries, kindergartens, schools and colleges or language centers. Thus, a constructive approach is needed to address ESL learners' needs, an approach that guarantees one principle factor, which is interaction. In many ESL classes, teachers have students that come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, an aspect that might ignite conflict at times and might, unfortunately be perceived as a weakening factor in the classroom where it should be regarded as an enriching element for students and for their teachers. Thus, cooperative

learning can, to a great extent, root out the gap between cultures and races. Teachers can create a culture of understanding and respect by employing and structuring systematic cooperative learning methods.

In conclusion, the basic principles of cooperative learning cater to students' various needs if implemented constructively and sincerely. It is a whole new culture, and a whole new concept that teachers should believe in and embrace before promoting it and applying it. In a cooperative learning class, students and teachers are in a state of dynamic, positive cooperation and together build up an intimate learning and social atmosphere in the classroom. The textbooks and the teacher are no longer the only source of information; they are replaced by a variety of other people with various perceptions, attitudes and emotions.

2.9 Summary

The chapter explored essential theories that give rationale for the multi-dimensional role that cooperative learning can have in transforming the learning experience of ESL students. The Social Constructivism theory, Sociocultural theory, the Social Interdependence theory along with the Communicative Competences premises stress the varied range of social and interactive shades that cooperative learning provides its learners. Former studies stress the role of cooperative learning in creating a friendly, communicative, interactive, and culturally responsive atmosphere. This paves the way for second language learning to take place in a way that addresses students' learning, social, emotional, and cultural needs. Building on the theories and former results, the present study explores how cooperative creates an intriguing and interactive learning

environment. All the studies cited in the review capitalize on how cooperative learning transforms the classroom into a dynamic context that is positive and student- centered, a context in which the teacher is a facilitator rather than simply a giver of knowledge.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The present chapter will give an overview about the design that was used in this study. The chapter will also outline the type of sampling, the sampling process, the participants, and the basis on which the participants were selected. The chapter will also illustrate the instruments and the methods that were deployed in the study. After discussing the instrumentation, a thorough description will be given about the practical procedural steps that were followed in administering the study. Then the researcher will explain how the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted, concluding the chapter with the means by which validity and reliability were established. The final part will reflect how the researcher took into account several ethical considerations in the course of conducting this study.

The researcher used a combination of quantitative and qualitative designs to conduct this study that requires thorough investigation. Since the focus of the study targeted cooperative learning, the researcher used purposive sampling to choose 200 participants from a population of 530 English teachers in different private schools that implement cooperative learning in one of the UAE cities. The two major instruments in this study are self- designed, and they consist of a close – ended questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom?

2. What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness?
3. To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively?

3.2 Research Design

After thoroughly studying the details and the multifarious circumstances that shape this research topic, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in order to yield comprehensive and thorough data (Bornland, 2001:1). The quantitative design was employed through the questionnaire in conjunction with a qualitative design through the semi-structured interview. The researcher chose the combination of these two methods, as they are the most suitable methods for the nature of this research that requires the authentic and thorough investigation of the numerous outcomes that cooperative learning yields when being properly and constructively implemented. Since this method involves more than mere collection or analysis of data, and since it combines both approaches to add strength and value to the research study (Creswell, Plano, Clark, 2007), the researcher employed this method in the present study. The initial stage of the research study started with collection of the quantitative data and then ended with the collection of the qualitative data through which the researcher explored the particular aspects of this study in more depth and focus (Creswell, 2013). The quantitative approach involved the collection of numerical data that were obtained from a large number of respondents. To explore the cooperative learning practices further and to gain more insight into teachers' perceptions on

cooperative learning, the researcher used qualitative data drawn from interviews in order to add breadth and depth to the study. This has helped the researcher reach effective conclusions regarding the application of cooperative learning. To search for confirmatory data and strengthen findings, the researcher collected quantitative data from questionnaires and also by studying the qualitative data that were gathered from interviews.

3.3 Sampling and Participants

Taking into account that cooperative learning is an approach that is not consistently used in all schools in the UAE, the researcher made sure to select schools in which teachers do use cooperative learning strategies and activities in their English instruction. Accordingly, the researcher employed purposive sampling because the setting and the focus is cooperative learning; therefore, the type of sample that is effective in this case is the one that captures this setting and that authentically represents the experience of cooperative learning. As Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2011 argued, in purposive sampling the researcher deliberately specifies criteria for the sample selection and the clarity and precision of the criteria give basis for defending and describing the purposive samples (p. 141). Considering the foregoing argument, purposive sampling was the most convenient one for this study, as the criterion is clear and concise since it focuses on teachers that implement cooperative learning. For this reason, the researcher used purposive sampling to select 200 participants from a population of 530 English teachers in different private schools that incorporate cooperative learning in their instruction. According to the purposive sampling, the researcher selects the sample

relying on his experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011, p. 141). Hence, the researcher chose purposive sampling, as she found it the most convenient for this type of research due to the fact that the researcher has already deliberately identified criteria for selecting the sample. The criteria include: the cooperative learning model. In addition, the researcher aimed at reaching strong conclusions about teachers' perceptions on the implementation of cooperative learning, and this is unattainable if the researcher didn't ensure that the participants can credibly and authentically discuss, share, and reflect on their experience in the field of cooperative learning.

The sample included 200 participants, all of whom are English teachers from 23 private schools that adopted different curricula: The ministry of education curriculum, the British or the American curriculum. One of the aforementioned schools followed both the British and the American while the rest were categorized into two schools that followed the Ministry of education curriculum, seven schools followed the British curriculum, nine schools followed the American curriculum, and three followed both the Ministry of Education curriculum along with the British curriculum. Table 1 shows the distribution of the schools according to the curriculum they follow. To obtain accurate statistical information on the approximate number of participants, the researcher requested a To Whom It May Concern letter from the UAE University (see Appendix H) to address the Abu Dhabi Educational Council to provide necessary statistics. The researcher visited the council and ADEC official provided the required information, tables and numbers of different private schools in Al Ain.

Table 1: Different Curricula in Private Schools in Al Ain

Type of Curriculum	Number of Schools
Ministry of Education	2
British	7
American	9
British and American	1
British and Ministry of Education	3

For the purpose of accurate selection of participants, the researcher investigated the schools that use cooperative learning in their English instruction and accordingly selected the English teachers from the respective schools that follow the British, the American and the Ministry of Education curricula. However, the researcher was more inclined to choose participants from private schools that adopt the American curriculum, as the researcher had extensive experience in teaching both the American and the British curricula and noticed that the American curriculum can easily accommodate cooperative learning activities and strategies.

Another fundamental reason that helped the researcher find out more about schools that implement cooperative learning is the fact that many English teachers from the schools chosen in this study have attended in-house Kagan Cooperative Learning training, which is provided annually at the researcher's school – as the only Kagan model school in the UAE - for teachers across the United Arab Emirates to attend.

Apart from the aforementioned, many professionals that used to work at the researcher's school have disseminated their expertise in using Kagan cooperative learning to new schools they subsequently joined, and the researcher made sure to involve those schools in the study.

The researcher administered the questionnaires in her school and in other private schools selected as discussed earlier. With regard to the qualitative data drawn from the interviews, the researcher was keen on obtaining first-hand information on authentic experiences in cooperative learning. Therefore, the researcher interviewed eight English teachers at her school, which implements the international American curriculum and has been systematically applying Kagan structures as a structured cooperative learning approach for more than six years. The school is the first school in the UAE to be regarded as a Kagan model school, and it is the school at which the researcher works as a teacher and a head of department.

3.4 Demographic Information of the Participants

The population chosen for this research study is multicultural, belonging to various ethnic groups and diverse cultures, reflecting the diverse cultural groups in the UAE in general. However, the majority of the pool of participants that responded to the questionnaire in this study mainly includes Arab teachers that belong to various nationalities and backgrounds. In addition, female teachers make up more than 60 percent of the participants.

The participant interviewees were members of the English department. They consisted of 8 teachers that were mainly Arab female middle school teachers, except for

one participant who was a male high school teacher. The respondents' teaching experience in cooperative learning is relatively extensive, as they teachers received training in Kagan Cooperative Learning and all of them have been incorporating cooperative learning in their regular as well as in their differentiated instruction. Teacher 1 has 13 years of teaching experience, Teacher 2, 8 years; Teacher 3, 14 years; Teacher 4, 5 years; Teacher 5, 12 years; Teacher 6, 11 years; Teacher 7, 4 years; and Teacher 8 has more than 10 years of experience. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Demographic Information of the Interview Participants

Gender	Female: 8	Male: 1		
Years of Experience	[1 – 13]: (5)	[1- 4]: 1	[5-8]: 2	
Cooperative Learning Expertise	Advanced	5	Very Good	3

With reference to the aforementioned details on the sampling process that was followed and the description of the population and the sample chosen, we can say that the participants can be considered thoughtful, varied, informative, articulate, and experienced with the research topic and setting, which makes them ideal candidates for providing credible opinions on the use and implementation of cooperative learning.

3.5 Instrumentation

To answer the research questions and to come to clear and solid conclusions about cooperative learning benefits for students' learning, a questionnaire was constructed and employed to capture the opinions and viewpoints of different English

teachers about the way cooperative learning helped refine and polish their teaching expertise in the areas of enhancing students' engagement, students' social and cultural awareness, and the implementation of differentiated instruction. In addition, a semi-structured interview was employed. Bell (1999) advocates the use of interviews alongside questionnaires as the interview can yield fruitful and rich material and can further clarify questionnaire responses (p.91). Thus, the researcher added the interview as an instrument to delve into more details about teachers' perceptions on cooperative learning and the extent to which it has shaped their pedagogical experience.

3.5.1 A Closed –Ended Likert Scale Questionnaire

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher constructed the questionnaire herself in order to effectively address the areas she intended to focus on. She used a closed – ended questionnaire that is clear, concise, visually attractive, and engaging as underscored in the guidelines that Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) included about developing questionnaires (p. 389). The questionnaire was designed to measure teachers' perceptions of various structured cooperative-learning strategies and to what extent these strategies can help students gain academic, social, and emotional benefits.

The researcher carefully selected the statements and she paid particular attention to how the questionnaire categories were arranged and structured in line with the research questions of this study. After constructing the first draft of the questionnaire, the researcher consulted specialists from the educational field to review and comment on the type of statements, the structure of sentences, the choice of words, the layout, and how strongly the statements are tied to the research questions. The initial drafts of the

questionnaire contained more statements and categories, and they also contained open-ended questions. After multiple meetings with the advisor and the panel of professors in the UAE University, several statements were revised, excluded, or modified. In addition, some vocabulary words were modified in order to make the language reader friendly. The advisor gave several guidelines on how to improve the questionnaire and ensure its clarity, practicality, depth, and relevance. This explains the prolonged period of time the construction of the questionnaire required.

After pilot testing the statements, the questionnaire was revised and shown to the advisor for approval. After the processes of revision and modification were finalized, the questionnaire was thoroughly revised with the advisor. Accordingly, the final draft of the questionnaire featured two pages that had one page for demographic information on the teachers' age, years of experience, and frequency of using cooperative learning. The second page featured twenty questions outlined in one page for the purpose of feasibility and clarity. The first section involved seven questions on the first item which is teachers' perceptions regarding the role of cooperative learning in creating engagement in the classroom. Another set of six questions focused on teachers' perceptions with regard to the extent to which cooperative learning fosters social and cultural responsiveness. The third set of seven questions underscored how cooperative learning facilitates the implementation of differentiated instruction. In terms of layout, the questionnaire was set in a visually attractive way with the categories clearly outlined and numbered. This layout was revised and modified several times until the advisor approved the final draft of the questionnaire. In this regard, the table in the first page

was added and the questionnaire table was refined and improved in terms of the font size and outline of choices.

3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Apart from the questionnaire, the second research instrument that the researcher employed in this research study is the semi- structured interview (see Appendix C). This form of interviews, as contended by Merriam (2001), gives the researcher the freedom to respond spontaneously to the situation and the to the emerging worldview and notions of the participants. Shedding light on the effectiveness of interviews as research instruments, Cohen et al (2008) recommended using interviews as a fundamental research instrument as it allows the researcher to effectively test hypotheses and solidify other research instruments in the research. Based on the foregoing, the researcher wanted to probe into depth in unfolding the cooperative learning benefits through the qualitative data obtained from the participants, emphasizing Denzin and Linoln's (1994) notion on how qualitative researchers study "things in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2).

The researcher created questions that instigate informative responses and can subsequently be thematically categorized, coded, and transcribed. The researchers also made sure that the interview questions are brief and simple (Kvale, 2007) and that the word choices makes sense to the interviewees so that the researcher would get the desired responses (Merriam, 2001). In this respect, the researcher referred to the research questions and the questionnaire statements, and in light of the foci of each set

of questions and statements, the researcher constructed the interview questions. To delve into authentic details on cooperative learning, the researcher chose the participants from her own school in order to touch on authentic experiences reflected by the teachers on their use and their progress in applying cooperative learning strategies and because teachers in that particular Kagan model school have an extensive experience in Kagan cooperative learning. Prior to conducting the interview, the researcher gave a brief introduction about the study. Then the participants were given the consent forms. The researcher made sure that the participants read the form thoroughly and then sign it. The researcher offered to clarify any point that the participants might need to be given more guidance on or information bout. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher assigned a letter code to refer to each participant in the interview.

The interview questions featured three central questions that revolve around the research questions. The first question investigated teachers' opinions about how cooperative learning can create an engaging learning atmosphere. The second question explored teachers' views on the extent to which cooperative learning can enhance students' social and cultural awareness. The third question examined how effectively cooperative learning can facilitate teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction.

The researcher used the above-stated instruments to explore teachers' perceptions of how structured cooperative learning can have tangible positive effects on students' engagement, cultural responsiveness, and social skills. Furthermore, the instruments brought to light how cooperative learning can facilitate the effective implementation of differentiation in the classroom.

3.6 Validity

With regard to the quantitative method of the study, the researcher ensured the content validity of the questionnaire through numerous ways that include pilot testing, peer reviews, referring the questions to a panel of educators and professors to evaluate the word choice and the focus of the questions and items. The professors that took part in revising and commenting on the questionnaire were six professors from the teaching faculty of the UAE University. Three of the professors were the main thesis committee members that supervised the researcher's thesis study. After the process of constructing, revising, and improving the questionnaire, the researcher pilot tested the questionnaire to ensure validity and reliability and to exclude any potential ambiguity and obscurity. The process of pilot testing involved distributing ten questionnaires to ten teachers that were part of the sample. They answered the questions within a reasonable amount of time. In response to whether the questionnaire was clear enough to comprehend and respond to, the teachers stated that the questionnaire was organized and was easy to answer, and thus, they didn't favor changing the vocabulary or the content reflected. However, one of the participants suggested changing the numbering technique of the questionnaire to insure that both page number can be easily seen and detected by participants. Accordingly, the researcher made this simple modification to the questionnaire. However, the sample wasn't included in the final questionnaire sample for the purpose of strengthen the reliability of the questionnaire.

To ensure validity for the qualitative data, a variety of guidelines adapted from Guba's (1981) classic discussion in "Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries". In addition, other guidelines were adapted from Maxwell (1992),

and Wolcott (1994). The guidelines assert the necessity of checking credibility, feedback, accuracy, effective listening, and prolonged participation at the study site. Apart from that, the researcher ensured reliability by consistently using and utilizing the instruments proposed. Other guidelines proposed by Wolcott (1994) can be followed. The guidelines stress the importance of listening, maintaining candidness, accurate reporting, seeking feedback, and accurate writing.

The researcher ensured validity through numerous ways that include pilot testing, peer reviews, referring the questions to a panel of educators and professors to evaluate the content validity through closely examining the word choice and the focus of the questions and items. The questions then were revised several times until they reached the final format and structure.

3.7 Reliability of Quantitative Data

Since Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is the most common measure of internal consistency of variables, the researcher chose to use it to establish reliability (See Table 3).

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics

Category	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Creating Engagement	.80	6
Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness	.86	7

Facilitation of Differentiation	.85	7
All items	.93	20

Cronbach's Alpha reliability degree of significance was calculated to measure the internal consistency of the instrument to judge the consistency of their answers and rubrics. Creswell (2012) defines reliability and states that the scores from measuring variables that are stable and consistent was important to stand at the degree of the reliability of participants' responses to judge the consistency of their answers. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients were calculated and showed that the scores of the scores were reliable since it was .932 that is between the degree of significance below and above one. All the categories ranged between.795and .859 as shown in the table above. Reliability was also established through pilot - testing the questionnaire as discussed under the questionnaire part of this chapter. Another way of establishing reliability was through using an additional research instrument in collecting data. In this respect, the researcher employed used an interview alongside the questionnaire.

3.8 Reliability of the Qualitative Data

With regard to the qualitative studies, reliability usually refers to the dependability of the data, and careful, systematic procedures to insure the closest possible representation from the raw data stage. That’s why the analysis and the written report are indeed necessary criteria for judging narrative work and the extent to which it is trustworthy.

To ensure reliability of qualitative data, the following steps were taken into consideration: accurate interpretation of data (Mason, 2002), focus on meaning and maintaining trustworthiness (Giovannoli, 2000), reflecting transparency, and seeking constructive feedback regarding the type of language used, the evaluation of observation reports, and monitoring research progress. Through using the interview in addition to the questionnaire, the researcher drew data qualitatively, not only quantitatively. Thus, she did not merely focus on the numerical data in generalizing the finding. The researcher also studied the perceptions, the examples, and the authentic instructional findings that the participants were eager to share about cooperative learning. Doing that, the researcher was able to receive detailed, authentic, varied, and trustworthy feedback from the participants.

3.9 Procedure

Before applying for the official approval for conducting this research study, the researcher used a letter of introduction from the UAE University (see Appendix F) to obtain the approval from ADEC to conduct the research in different private schools. The researcher started the process of collecting data after obtaining ADEC's approval letter. To ensure the cooperation of different private schools, the researcher enclosed a copy of the UAE university letter and ADEC's letter of approval (see Appendix G) with every set of questionnaires the researcher distributed to every school.

The collection of the quantitative data involved four stages. The first stage was collecting quantitative data using the questionnaire. To accomplish this, the researcher distributed the questionnaire by hand and appointed some assistants to distribute the

questionnaire to other schools. The second stage involved the collection of qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews by transcribing the interviews, annotating and coding them. The third stage involved examining and comparing themes and patterns across multifarious types of data to determine the extent to which the interviews confirm the questionnaire findings. The fourth stage accordingly led to broadening of findings by relating them to the research problem statement, the research questions and the purpose of the study.

3.10 Data Analysis

Since the researcher used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, both quantitative and qualitative data sources were analyzed separately and then compared in order for the researcher to reach clear conclusions. In light of the premises of constructivism, the information was analyzed based on how the experience is applied, examined, and deciphered in a particular context in order to reach a holistic overarching picture of the phenomenon being investigated.

3.10.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and also by using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) to find the mean and the standard deviation. After collecting the data from the questionnaire, the items in the questionnaire were coded into numbers. Then, the converted numbers were transferred into SPSS to find the mean and standard deviation. Subsequently, the series of tables obtained from

the analysis were used to facilitate the research components and back up the methodology section of this study.

3.10.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

To reach the final findings of the qualitative data, the researcher adopted the Grounded Theory premises to thoroughly analyze the data through organization, transcription, categorization, and identification of multiple different themes. Different researchers report the advantages of the Grounded Theory approach, such as its intuitive appeal, its room for creativity and conceptualization in addition to its systematic steps to data analysis and the rich data it can yield (Hussein et al, 2014). Apart from that, the Grounded Theory provides a clear intellectual explanation for using qualitative research to develop analysis (Goulding, 1998).

The process involved reviewing the recording and the interview notes. This was followed by the thorough transcription and coding of the interview. After that, the researcher preferred to use Microsoft Word Office to highlight the answers and annotate them to indicate possible themes and present them visually, as she found this approach easier for her in terms of clarity and ease of analysis, as Merriam (2001) stressed that computers and technology have become common media in data analysis whether the researcher was working individually or collaboratively.

In the process of transcription and analysis, the researcher used a focus on meaning mode of analysis (Kvale, 2007). However, she also highlighted words that were essential for theme construction. In his *Doing Interviews* guide, Kvale, 2007 outlined the steps to analysis based on meaning as meaning coding, meaning condensation, and

meaning interpretation. In the course of coding, transcribing, and analyzing the interview notes, additional themes emerged. The additional themes were added while others were excluded and combined with other similar themes. To identify well defined themes, a panel of English teachers helped the researcher in identifying the themes, refining them, and confirming them. In the course of identifying the themes, the researcher shared the coded notes and transcribed interviews with the participants to maintain trustworthiness. For the purpose of clarity and organization, the researcher used a table to outline the details of the questions, the themes these questions indicate, the quotes that reflected these themes, and the code of each teacher that articulated the answer (see Appendix I). The researcher highlighted key words, traced repetitions, and focused on the overall attitude of respondents to draw the themes and finalize them. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher used numerical codes from 1 to 8 to refer to the participants. In short, the data analysis portrayed a stage at which the researcher had to invest her intuitive and analytical skills.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

To conduct an ethically acceptable research, the researcher followed specific guidelines that include obtaining an informed consent (see Appendix D and E), giving the participants the freedom to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality, potential risk and benefits, in addition to data security (University of Texas at Austin, 2010). In this respect, the researcher started the process of obtaining approval from ADEC, by filling out detailed introductory forms and attaching formal documents that included a letter from the university to ADEC as a request to facilitate and support the research study. To

ensure the anonymity of all participants, the investigator attached envelopes with every questionnaire so that the participants can seal to ensure confidentiality. In addition, the researcher took into consideration appropriate time and place to for participants to respond to the questionnaire and the interview questions in order to ensure that teachers feel comfortable responding to the questions.

3.12 Summary

This chapter threw light on the methodology followed in this study in order to identify the learning, social, cultural and pedagogical benefits of using cooperative learning in ESL classrooms. The study deployed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of research in which 200 participants were chosen through purposive sampling from 23 different private school in Al Ain. The researcher employed a closed-ended questionnaire that was pilot tested and refined and she also used a semi-structured interview, which also underwent stages of revision and modification until it was approved by the advisor and the panel of five educators. The questionnaire was distributed by hand in to different schools. Each set was attached to ADEC's approval letter and UAEU letter to the schools. Other assistants helped the researcher distribute the questionnaire.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and thoroughly outline the results and the findings of the research study regarding teachers' perceptions about the role of structured cooperative strategies in creating a positive learning atmosphere that helps learners acquire English a second language within a frame that is socially and culturally enriching, and academically rewarding. The researcher employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods through which she reached findings through the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire to glean quantitative data and through the semi-structured interview to collect quantitative data. Based on the stages of the study, 200 teachers responded to the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ). To draw the qualitative data and to solidify the questionnaire findings, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers. This chapter presents the data collected by surveying the teachers' perception about three main themes that are creating engagement; creating social and cultural responsiveness, and facilitation of differentiation. These three themes are addressed through the following three research questions: 1) How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom? 2) What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness? and 3)To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively?

After calculating the mean scores of the responses and analyzing the interview responses, the results are displayed in tables, and presented in themes followed by detailed description. Then, the chapter is concluded by a summary of the main results.

4.2 Interpretive Measure Scale for Ranking the Scores

To analyze the responses of the questionnaire, it is beneficial to use a scale to interpret the degree of the responses as shown in Table (4). The scores of 1 -1.79 demonstrate very low responses. The scores 1.8 to 2.4 show low strategy use, the scores 2.5 to 3.4 show moderate responses, the scores 3.5 – 4.19 signify high strategy use and the scores above 4.2 are very high. This interpretive measure scale for ranking the scores has been used by some researchers like Rastakhiz and Safari (2014).

Table 4: Interpretive Measure Scale for Ranking the Scores

Degree	Mean
Very low	1 - 1.79
Low	1.8 - 2.4
Moderate	2.5 - 3.4
High	3.5 - 4.19
Very high	4.2 - 5

4.3 Results of Research Question One

Table (5) addressed the first research question that is mainly related to how cooperative learning creates a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom.

Table 5: The Mean for the Creating Engagement Category (n=200)

Statement	*M*	SD
1. creates a pleasant learning environment for my students.	4.46	.65
2. creates a learning context that is interactive and engaging.	4.40	.59
3. provides my students with opportunities for productive learning.	4.39	.59
4. enhances my students' ability to take part in different discussions.	4.30	.65
5. allows my students to learn within a context that is anxiety-free.	4.18	.74
6. helps my students make progress regardless of academic ability.	4.17	.76
The Overall Mean for the Creating Engagement Category	4.31	

Table (5) shows that the responses are high and very high and the mean scores range between 4.17 and 4.46. In addition, the overall mean score of the whole category "Creating Engagement" is (4.31) that is very high. All responses are positive in favor of the fact that cooperative learning creates a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom. The highest two mean scores are creating a pleasant learning environment for my students and creating a learning context that is interactive and engaging. The lowest two scores were allowing students to learn within a context that is anxiety-free (4.18) and helping students make progress regardless of their academic ability(4.17).

4.4 Results of Research Question Two

Table (6) addresses the second research question that is about is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness.

Table 6: The Mean for the Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness (n=200)

Statement	M	SD
1. strengthens my students' communication skills.	4.52	.62
2. is an important skill for students' academic and social success.	4.43	.62
3. develops teamwork skills in my students	4.39	.72

4. enables my students to reflect compassion and cooperation.	4.26	.68
5. optimizes students' ability to become culturally responsive learners.	4.25	.64
6. develops my students' social responsibility.	4.22	.66
7. helps my students become more sociable individuals.	4.08	.72
The Overall Mean for the Category Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness"	4.30	

Table (6) shows that the responses are very high and high and the mean scores range between 4.52 and 4.08. In addition, the overall mean score of the whole category "Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness" was (4.30) that was very high. All responses are positive in favor of the fact that cooperative learning creates social and cultural responsiveness in an ESL classroom. The highest two mean scores are strengthening students' communication skills and it is an important skill for students' academic and social success. The results of the responses are very similar to the results of the first research question regarding the role of cooperative learning in creating engagement. The overall mean scores of both categories are nearly very similar (4.31) and (4.30). The responses are also very high and positive regarding the role of cooperative strategies in "Creating Social and Cultural Responsiveness".

4.5 Results of Research Question Three

Table (7) addresses the third research question that is mainly related to what extent can cooperative learning can help English teachers implement differentiation effectively in an ESL classroom.

Table 7: The Mean for the Category Facilitation of Differentiation (n=200)

Statement	Mean	SD
1. enables me to become a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge.	4.42	.623
2. provides opportunities for differentiated activities.	4.28	.71
3. allows my students to creatively produce collaborative projects.	4.27	.71
4. allows my students to respond to activities according to their multiple intelligences.	4.24	.63
5. can positively challenge my above-level students.	4.20	.68
6. facilitates students' learning regardless of their levels and learning styles.	4.13	.75
7. enables me to provide suitable scaffolding for my below-level students.	4.08	.73
The Overall Mean for the Facilitation of Differentiation Category	4.23	

Table (7) shows that the responses are high and very high and the mean scores range between 4. 42 and 4.08. In addition, the overall mean score of the whole category "Facilitates Differentiation" is (4.23) that is very high. All responses are positive in favor of the fact that cooperative learning facilitates differentiation in an ESL classroom. The highest two mean scores are 'enabling a teacher to become a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge' and 'providing opportunities for differentiated activities'. The results of the responses are very similar to the results of the first and second research questions regarding the role of cooperative learning in creating engagement and creating social and cultural responsiveness. The overall mean score of the third categories is 4.23. The responses are also very high and positive regarding the research question three.

4.6 Results of the Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with 8 participant teachers. Prior to the interview, the participants read the consent forms and signed them. The interview was semi-structured for the purpose of allowing teachers to elaborate on their responses. The researcher used note taking and digital recording in capturing the participants' responses. After reading the interview notes and the annotated questions, the researcher used Microsoft Word to type and highlight the common themes and to categorize them in shapes and visual flow charts. She subsequently assembled them in a table that combines the participants' coded names, quotes, and relevant themes (see Table 8). In light of the aforementioned, about seven themes emerged from the interview. The identified themes covered the most prominent topics and issues in the implementation of

cooperative learning. The themes included: Cooperative learning and its role in the following: enhancing learning responsibility, creating learning engagement and involvement, fostering communication and interpersonal skills, cultivating cultural and social awareness, instilling self-confidence in different learners, effecting mutual learning benefits, and accommodating multifarious learning styles.

4.6.1 Interview Question One: How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom?

In response to the first question on how cooperative learning contributes to students' learning engagement, teachers extensively described how cooperative learning adds the element of engagement and involvement to everyday lessons. Their responses gave rise to the following two themes:

Theme One: Cooperative Learning and Enhancing Students' Learning Responsibility

The teachers underscored the sense of responsibility that cooperative learning enriches the students with. Some of the participants enthusiastically mentioned that cooperative learning gives each learner a chance to reflect a vital role in the learning process, the fact that gives them the sense of commitment to and reasonability for their own learning. Teacher 1 stated that "When working in cooperative learning groups, students know that they should all work together to solve questions, list the main events, or analyze a poem". She contented that students in this context are aware of the interdependent roles they have and are supposed to reflect. In the same vein, Teacher 3 asserted that "students gain a sense of responsibility, engagement, and involvement". Building on the same

idea, Teacher 5 expressed the aforementioned notion clarifying that cooperative learning enhances “individual learning outcomes as well as the learning outcomes of their peers”. Teacher 6 confidently added, “ Effective collaborative teams require students to take responsibility for their own learning, as each one of them would ideally be assigned a role in the group activity or project.” Teacher 7 passionately asserted that cooperative learning strengthens students’ roles by “giving chances to all students to have a part in the learning sessions”. Teacher 6 showed evident passion for cooperative learning as she maintained that cooperative learning “involves all students in the learning process”. She also drew a contrast between traditional classrooms “were students played a passive role” and the cooperative learning context that “gives all students…active roles in the learning process”. These views portray a deeply rooted interest in and knowledge of the shades of learning responsibility, and that cooperative learning offers learners. Other teachers’ responses spiraled around the same theme emphasizing how cooperative learning deepens, defines, and strengthens students’ learning responsibility.

Theme Two: Cooperative Learning and creating learning engagement and involvement

In responding to the questions on engagement, teachers touched on the pivotal role of structured cooperative learning as “an important tool” for learning involvement and engagement. Teacher 3, explained the reason students find cooperative learning activities exciting by stating that “students are interested in moving, mingling with classmates, and interacting with their group members”; thus, when a lesson is integrally related to active learning and communication, students usually do their best. On the other hand, Teacher 1 ascribed the engagement factor to the sense of responsibility that

cooperative learning cultivates in students. The teacher asserted that "students feel fully engaged when they cooperate to accomplish a task or respond to a project work that necessitates the students' positive interdependence and interaction". Teachers 4, 5, and 6 shared the same view on how cooperative learning can transform the classroom into an interactive zone of learning. They mentioned that cooperative learning builds a context that is non-threatening, positive, and motivating for learning and interaction. Teacher 6 mirrored the vibrant atmosphere that cooperative learning creates by stating that cooperative learning "helps me as a teacher in creating an engaging classroom environment that optimizes students' learning". She also added that this engagement essentially stems from the feeling of contribution that students have in the cooperative learning classroom, as they all have roles that they need to fulfill in order for learning to take place effectively. However, three respondents pinpointed that the engagement could highly depend on the teacher's attitude towards cooperative learning. Teacher 2 passionately stated that "the teacher's passion in cooperative learning can tremendously facilitate the effective application of it; when teachers embrace cooperative learning, they directly influence their students to see the positive features of this form of learning has". Teacher 5 also added " students gain full engagement when they cooperate to accomplish a task or respond to a project work that necessitates the students' positive interdependence and interaction". Hence, we can conclude that teachers in general believe in the extent to which cooperative learning creates learning engagement and involvement.

4.6. 2 Interview Question Two: What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness?

In their response to the second question on the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness, the participant teachers shared the opinion that cooperative learning does foster students' social and cultural awareness. Question Two resulted in two themes that focus on the role of cooperative learning in enhance social and interpersonal skills in addition to its role in creating social and cultural awareness.

Theme Three: The Role of Cooperative Learning in Fostering Interpersonal Skills

Drawing on their personal experience as teachers working in a Kagan model school, teachers agreed on the numerous social and cultural benefits of cooperative learning, in general and Kagan structures, in particular, as students get to work collaboratively, coach each other, and greet and praise one another" which will eventually help them acquire social and communication skills. Teachers also added that the fact that students share information, role, knowledge and feedback, which also creates a social bond that is strengthened with the application of every cooperative learning activity. T1 reported that "by working together, students learn to listen to and respect each other's ideas, explanations, and suggestions". Teacher 4 also emphasized the cultural and social maturity that cooperative learning helps students reach. She mentioned -looking away and recalling one of her classes- that "cooperative learning builds connections between academic learning and students' backgrounds", for students share ideas, discussions, cultural notions and ideas as part of their speaking, listening

and language arts lessons, the fact that empowers their social skills. Outlining the myriad social benefits of cooperative learning Teacher 6 stated:

> During cooperative learning activities, students will have to discuss, share, and negotiate their ideas. These are major skills that students will need in the future. By instilling the sense of social responsibility in students, teachers will be providing them with authentic learning experiences that would yield several gains on the short run as well as on the long run.

Similar to the above quoted opinion is Teacher 7's response in discussing the social benefits of cooperative learning. She spoke about the authentic atmosphere that cooperative learning initiates for the students as they are "exposed to different responses from different students in various situations, which will help them accept the other more and valuing others' points' of views and opinions." Other teachers also stressed the vast communication and social opportunities that cooperative learning provides learners. All of them stressed how cooperative learning builds a context of active learning, discussion, and communication.

Theme Four: The Role of Cooperative Learning in cultivating cultural and social awareness

Speaking about the cultural and the social awareness that can result from the application of cooperative learning, most participants agreed on the valuable social outcomes that students can reap from cooperative learning. Teachers cited authentic examples from their teaching and their students to support the aforementioned

assumption. T1 drew an example from his experience to support this particular outcome of cooperative learning. She stated

> From my experience, I believe that implementing cooperative learning in our school some years ago had a great impact on students' social and cultural awareness. Students used to make friends mainly with the ones of the same nationality; however, we can see students of different backgrounds and different academic level sitting happily together in the playground during their break time. When a group of mixed background students work together, they learn to tolerate the differences between their cultures and accept one another. Working together on a project, for example, will strengthen the students' relationships and develop social and cultural awareness.

From the above quote, we can sense how Teacher 1 believed in the way cooperative learning can transform learners to culturally and socially mature individuals.

Other teachers also spoke about the cultural and social awareness factor stating that

> My students in a group of different abilities and different cultural backgrounds are united to share the same information and to give the best of their efforts. As a result of this union, strong and tight social bonds will be built.

In addition to the image of the union that Teacher 2 cited above in clarifying the social and cultural awareness that cooperative learning creates , Teacher 6 gave cooperative learning an enriching role as it nurtures students' sense of cultural acceptance and cultural enrichment, as she explained:

> In classes where cooperative learning is properly implemented, each student, irrespective of the culture he comes from, has something new to offer. Here comes the role of the teacher in providing students with opportunities to share the values of their cultures with their peers. This culture of acceptance can extend to include the whole community.

Teacher 6's explanation gives cooperative learning a more profound dimension, as it throws light on how learners can eventually reflect their cultural and social skills outside the classroom boundaries and extend these benefits to the outer world. Hence, the cooperative learning classroom becomes a learning community that can reflect its values and its principles of acceptance and beyond the classroom.

Interview Question Three: To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively?

In response to the question on the extent to which cooperative learning helps English teachers implement differentiation effectively, the respondents mentioned that differentiation is effectively attainable through the context of cooperative learning. In discussing the way cooperative learning allows teachers to constructively differentiate instruction, three themes emerged from the discussion: a. instilling self-confidence in different learners, b. effecting mutual learning benefits, and c. accommodating multifarious learning styles.

Theme Five: Instilling Self-confidence in Different Learners

In exploring the role that cooperative learning has in enhancing teachers' expertise in differentiation, the teachers indirectly highlighted the low affective filter by stating how

cooperative learning complements the context of differentiation and how it paves the way for continually improved learning as it enhances emerging students' self-confidence through the low-anxiety atmosphere it creates for the learners. For instance, T2 stated that cooperative learning "creates a higher-level reasoning among students with different abilities and strengthens students self-confidence". Teacher 3 similarly stated that "low achievers feel less threatened when they work collaboratively". In addition, Teacher 4 stressed that students in a cooperative learning class "are more confident and less stressed out". On the other hand, Teacher 1 revisited Theme One and links it to Theme Five by stating that in a cooperative learning context

> students are responsible for activities that are tailored to their level, so they feel confident and relaxed when sharing their answers, and at the same time, group members, especially high and high medium achievers, can provide scaffolding to low achievers.

Teacher 8 also expressed a similar notion by asserting that "self- confidence is a always enhanced through cooperative learning activities. Students of different levels perform positively and assume different roles within an environment that is non-threatening and this "motivates them to do their best". Teacher 7 touched on the role of cooperative learning in reducing the affective filter by stating that "cooperative learning comes to fulfill tasks (writing, reading, speaking, or listening) in a less stressful atmosphere and in a more enjoyable and engaging environment". We can clearly see that Teacher 7 combined Theme Two with Theme Five in a showing us that students need to feel relaxed and confident in order for them to feel engaged and involved in the cooperative

learning environment. Accordingly, students feel ready to deal with the tasks and requirements that these English skills entail. Hence, students feel "more confident" and they start to view their tasks as "fun and engaging". Studying the other responses, the researcher concluded that the respondents mainly agree on the positive learning atmosphere that cooperative learning creates for different learners, as all of them try to contribute to the learning context within which they are interacting.

Theme Six: Effecting Mutual Learning Benefits

The theme of mutual learning benefits was clear in the respondents' answers. Many of the respondents contended that learners of different levels can always benefit from cooperative learning, as the high achievers can provide coaching, foster presentation and leadership skills, and at the same time can acquire teamwork skills. As for the low achievers, they can always receive guidance, benefit from discussions, and engage in a variety of cooperative learning activities that guarantee involvement and learning achievement. In this regard, Teacher 2 stated that "in a group context, students help one another learn the same concept, with capable and high achieving students tutoring the less capable". The same notion was expressed by Teacher 4, who stressed that the context of cooperative learning helps learners acquire "a sense of the community, which helps them achieve". Furthermore, the respondents in general shared the notion that the cooperative learning context does not deprive any learner of his or her role in the learning process. This is clearly supported in Teacher 6's response in which she asserted that

> the high achievers would not feel demotivated because they are doing most of the work. On the contrary, they will feel that they have a goal that they have to attain. At the same time, the emerging students would feel that they have to show their potentials to their peers and teacher.

In elaborating on the opportunities for differentiation, two teachers also referred to the higher-order thinking skills that structured cooperative learning helps teachers use and engage students in. Teacher 2, for example, pointed out that cooperative learning "creates a higher-level reasoning among students with different abilities". Teacher 8 also mentioned that the regular application of structured cooperative learning, such as Kagan Structures "helps teachers develop different questioning techniques that can greatly foster differentiation". In other words, the systematic application of cooperative learning activities can enable teachers to develop questioning techniques as well as critical thinking skills. Teacher 7 fleshed out an exceptional passion for using cooperative learning in differentiation, as she metaphorically depicted cooperative learning as a factor that "knocks on students' potentials, talents, and abilities, which helps them learn the way they like. Thus a long-term learning results and takes place". However, she regarded accuracy as a main condition that guarantees the benefits that cooperative learning can enrich differentiated instruction with.

As can be discerned from foregoing discussed responses, cooperative learning works as a learning frame within which learners not only mark an improvement in their own performance, but they also "help each other improve" as Teacher 2 exclaimed.

Theme Seven: Accommodating Multifarious Learning Styles

In the course of applying structured cooperative learning, respondents referred to the reasons why cooperative learning can enhance differentiation by indicating how cooperative learning helps them accommodate different learning styles. In this respect, Teacher 4 pointed out that " cooperative learning helps teachers in modifying their instructions to meet individual student's needs, readiness levels, preferences, and interests" as it provides a varied array of structures and activities that tackle a variety of learning styles and interests. Teacher 8 also mentioned that "cooperative learning structures, such as Kagan structures provide a rich context for meeting different learning styles and multiple intelligences". In support of the same idea, Teacher 6 cited an example from her teaching experience, outlining how cooperative learning provides opportunities that pertain to different learning styles and learning preferences:

> For example, I once assigned a reading project based on Paulo Coelho's novel *The Al Chemist* where students were given the opportunity to express their understanding of the novel in different ways… For example, visual learners preferred to create a chart while kinesthetic learners preferred to do role-play.

The above quote pictures cooperative learning as an opportunity for enhancing differentiation terms of learning styles and multiple intelligences. Building on the same idea, Teacher 7 also discussed the way constructive and carefully planned cooperative learning refines teachers' expertise in differentiation, as it "knocks on students' potentials, talents and abilities, which helps them learn the ways they like. Thus, a long term learning result takes place." Teacher 7also contended that "it drew my attention to

different skills, needs, and potentials students have, based on which, I had to design suitable instructional practices." In this sense, learners achieve and improve their performance through a plethora of activities that cooperative learning offers and allows them to explore and take part in. Teacher 6 concluded this part mentioning that "this approach to learning and instruction

entails expanding the learning opportunities to all students while engaging them in authentic learning situations". With this quote, Teacher 6 touched on almost all the themes discussed in this interview, as she referred to the expansion of learning opportunities spelled out in differentiation and extension of activities, the engaging atmosphere it creates through discussion and interaction, and the authentic learning situation that foster and cultivate social and cultural awareness.

As can be noticed from the interview discussion, English teachers perceive cooperative learning as a learning and teaching tool that provides essential elements of a quality learning experience. It combines engagement and active interaction, it fosters social and cultural skills, it addresses various learners' needs and preferences, and it polishes teachers' repertoire of skills and practices by motivating them to constructively differentiate instruction and to consider the varied learning styles and interests that students have.

4.7 Summary of Major Findings

Chapter four outlined the key findings of this research study that employed an a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to reach conclusions on the teachers' perceptions on the role of cooperative learning strategies in creating a positive

learning atmosphere that helps learners acquire English a second language within a frame that is socially and culturally enriching, and academically rewarding. Initially, a Cooperative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ) was completed by 200 teachers. To add breadth and depth to the findings, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers. The qualitative and the quantitative data answered the three research questions that this study revolves around. The final stage of the study involved comparing the findings to study the extent to which they two research instruments strengthen and support one another. After calculating the mean scores of the responses and analyzing the interview responses, the results were presented in tables, and coded in themes followed by detailed description.

Seven principal findings were garnered from the questionnaire and the interviews. The first and second findings answer the first research question: How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning n an ESL classroom? The analysis of the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire revealed that the overall mean of the questionnaire responses is very high (M=4.28). The category with the highest mean is Creating Engagement (M= 4.31) (See Table Five). The result indicates that teachers perceive cooperative learning as a strategy that greatly contributes to students' engagement and involvement in their own learning. Thus, this engagement is shown through the way cooperative learning creates a sense of responsibility and how it enhances students' involvement in their own learning. This is clearly supported by the interview responses that yielded the themes related to the Engagement category: Theme One: Cooperative learning enhances students' learning responsibility and Theme Two: Cooperative learning creates learning engagement and involvement. The third and fourth

findings relate to the second research question: What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness? This research question is closely related to the second highest category of the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire, which is the Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness.

This category had the second highest mean (*M*= 4.30) as can be seen in Table 6. In this category, the items with the lowest mean were "CL develops my students' social relationships" and "CL helps my students become more sociable individuals" with (*M*=4.22) and (*M*=4.08) as their means. These responses show that teachers do not strongly view cooperative learning as a tool that integrally enhances social responsibility and social awareness compared with the other benefits of enhanced interpersonal and communication skills. However, the results still point out that cooperative learning is perceived as an environment that fosters students' social and cultural growth, especially when we compare them to the interview responses that clearly indicated that English teachers are in favor of the fact that cooperative learning fosters interpersonal skills and cultural and social responsiveness, which are the third and fourth themes derived from the interview responses.

The fifth, sixth and seventh findings answer the third research question: To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively? This research question pertains to the category with the lowest mean, which is the Facilitation of Differentiation with (*M*= 4.23) as the mean for this category. The items with the highest mean in this category were "CL enables met to become a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge" and "CL provides opportunities

for differentiated activities" with (M=4.42) and (M= 4.28) as their means as illustrated in Table 7. This indicates that teachers find cooperative learning a suitable strategy for the implementation of differentiated activities as it provides a range of opportunities for differentiation. Comparatively, the item with the lowest mean in this category was "CL enables me to provide suitable scaffolding for my below-level students" with (*M*= 4.08)

as the mean for this item. The quantitative data indicate that teachers do not view cooperative learning as a context in which they can provide their emerging students with enough scaffolding. However, the interview analysis underscored the rich context of differentiation that cooperative learning provides teachers and students, as it abates anxiety, encourages collaborative effort, and fosters peer scaffolding. Hence, the interview themes 5, 6, and 7 clearly show that cooperative learning enriches differentiated instruction through instilling self-confidence in learners, effecting mutual academic gains, and accommodating different learning styles.

To sum up, the data gathered from the questionnaire and the interviews, English teachers believe that cooperative learning is a vital tool that offers a multiplicity of benefits and positive outcomes. The results of the questionnaire responses that were collected to answer the three research questions that aim to explore the role of cooperative strategies in creating engagement, creating social and cultural responsiveness, facilitates differentiation showed very positive results in all the three categories. The overall means of the each of the categories "Creating Engagement", "Efficacy of Social and Cultural Responsiveness" and "Facilitation of Differentiation" were very high with (*M*=4.31), (*M*= 4.30), and (*M*=4.23) as their means. The overall

results of the three categories are very similar, as the overall means ranged from (M=4.31) to (M=4.23). Furthermore, the overall means of the first two categories that addressed the first and second research question are nearly the same (*M*= 4.31and *M*= 4.30). As can be clearly discerned, the results are very high and are evidently in favor of the role of cooperative strategies in creating engagement, creating social and cultural responsiveness, facilitates differentiation from the perspective of English teachers at Al Ain School that using English as a medium of instruction. In addition, teachers strongly agreed with the role of cooperative strategies. The qualitative data indicated that English teachers regard cooperative learning as a strategy that engages learners in the lessons by creating a pleasant and an anxiety-free learning environment, it also refines the students' learning experience by deepening and cultivating social and cultural awareness, and it enhances teachers' application of differentiation by allowing them to create a low affective filter for their low achieving students to motivate them further to achieve better and to benefit more from their middle and high achieving team members.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the this study was to explore English teachers' perceptions on the role of structured cooperative learning in enhancing ESL students' learning engagement, social awareness and cultural responsiveness in Al Ain private schools. To obtain thorough answers for the research questions, the researcher used a quantitative method through a questionnaire supported by a qualitative method through the semi- structured interviews. The researcher initially administered a questionnaire with 200 teachers in 23 different private schools in Al Ain and by conducting 8 interviews with a sample of 8 English teachers from the researcher's school. The results of this research study have been laid out. This chapter will summarize the research study, present findings and will underscore conclusions and recommendations in light of the relevant literature. In addition, the researcher will make some recommendations for ESL teachers and researchers on the constructive implementation of cooperative learning to yield the desired learning benefits.

5.2 Question One: The Role of Cooperative Learning in Creating a Positive Learning Atmosphere That Fosters Students' Learning in an ESL Classroom

Question 1 is related to the way cooperative learning engages students in an atmosphere of interaction, communication and involvement. With reference to the questionnaire results and the responses related to research question one. The researcher tabulated the results in Table 5. The results clearly show that teachers are in favor of the

fact that cooperative learning creates a positive atmosphere for the students. Studying the tables and the results, it was noted that the highest two mean scores were 'creating a pleasant learning environment for my students' and 'creating a learning context that is interactive and engaging'. This reflects the interactive environment that cooperative learning creates in ESL classrooms as reported by Zhang (2010). On the other hand, the lowest mean scores were 'allows my students to learn within a context that is anxiety – free' and 'helps my students make progress regardless of their academic level'. Although the aforementioned statements scored lower mean scores, they still clearly indicate that cooperative learning helps student learn and make a progress in their learning. Nevertheless, the engagement component is undoubtedly more prominent as an outcome of cooperative learning than learning progress or learning achievement.

The results from the interviews yielded similar findings with regard to students' engagement. Teachers articulated how intriguing and engaging the class becomes when cooperative learning is used constructively. Teacher 3 reported that "Cooperative learning creates an atmosphere of engagement in the classroom. Accordingly, students feel motivated to interact with their classmates". Other teachers also emphasized the interactive atmosphere that CL creates throwing light on the sense of responsibility and the learning involvement that CL builds in students. Since the emphasis is on the ESL classroom, we can see that this mode of interaction and learning supports second language acquisition theories that call for interactive strategies to prompt language learning. Reflecting on the literature review, we can see that several scholars and educators depict a cooperative learning class as a context of interaction, collaboration, and interdependence; For instance, when we contemplate Johns and Johnson's findings

in this field, we'll find that they represent the umbrella under which fall all the other benefits of cooperative learning. According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1994), cooperative learning positively impacts learners in terms of creating learning motivation, building strong relationships, and providing a context for psychological health. In this regard, we'll find that the first element of the first research question 'creating a positive learning atmosphere' pertinent to the greater psychological health that is created through cooperative learning as a cooperative learning environment that involves combined effort to achieve shared goals.

The literature review also thoroughly examined the characteristics of interaction and communication that govern the principles of the social constructionism and the social interactionist theories and their impact on the instructional practices that rest on interactive communication, discussion, combined effort and collaborative construction of knowledge. Similar to the foregoing is Krashen's natural approach to language learning and the role this approach plays in making language learning unconscious and spontaneous. When interaction is an integral part of a learning strategy, then language learning occurs in a more natural and less stressful way, as it is interwoven within the strategies used. What adds to the positivity of the cooperative learning experience is the low affective filter that it provides for learners. Several research studies on CL (Oxford and Ehrman, 1993; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995) pointed that CL is a classroom procedure that can lower anxiety and improve performance.

Former studies on CL also provide support for the role of cooperative learning in fostering learning motivation and engagement. (Zhou, 2012; Ara and Akter 2013;

Azzizindeshadand M. 2013, and Thanh (2013). These studies highlight the engagement factor that students experience and feel motivated by in a cooperative learning class. This particular characteristic takes students' learning to a new dimension of involvement, responsibility and intrigue.

In sum, the questionnaire and interview results, along with the findings from former studies emphasize the role of cooperative learning in creating a positive learning experience for different students. The results indicate that using cooperative learning as a mode of instruction in an ESL classroom allows students to feel more involved and responsible for their learning, it motivates them to put more effort into their tasks, it forges an environment that is positive and safe for them to learn and make progress. Thus, CL can greatly enhance ESL learning engagement and involvement.

5.3 Question Two: The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Creating Social and Cultural Responsiveness

Question 2 focuses on the role of CL in creating social and cultural responsiveness. The results from the questionnaire indicate that teachers perceive CL as a strategy that clearly enhances students' interpersonal skills, social awareness and cultural responsiveness. As outlined in Table 6, teachers' responses were high and very high and the mean scores ranged between (M=4.08) and (M=4.52). The highest mean scores were 'develops teamwork skills in my students' and 'strengthens my students' communication skills" while the lowest means scores was the one related to cultural responsiveness 'optimizes my students' ability to become culturally responsive'. As can be seen from the results, teachers believe in the role that CL plays in positively shaping

and building students' social skills. However, they do not think that it plays the same role in creating cultural responsiveness. The interview responses strongly support the questionnaire results, as all teachers pointed out the role that cooperative learning plays in optimizing students social skills and cultural tolerance. Teacher 2 stated that "students in a group of different abilities and different cultural backgrounds are united to share the same information and to give the best of their efforts. As a result of this union, strong and tight social bonds will be built." Teacher 1 thoroughly outlined the cultural tolerance that CL helps students gain

> When a group of mixed background students work together, they learn to tolerate the differences between their cultures and accept one another. Working together on a project, for example, will strengthen the students' relationships and develop social and cultural awareness. From my experience, I believe that implementing cooperative learning in our school some years ago had a great impact on students' social and cultural awareness.

As can be seen from Teacher 1's quote, cultural responsiveness and social awareness are depicted as paramount outcomes of a cooperative learning. Not only did Teacher 1 emphasize the strong social ties that CL creates, but she also underscored how CL can instill values of cultural tolerance and openness, the trait that she clearly indicated she had not seen before the implementation of structured cooperative learning in the school's system of instruction.

Linking the questionnaire and the interview results to the literature review, we can revisit Johnson and Jonson's findings in the role of CL in creating interaction. We can also make reference to Vygostky's sociocultural theory that captures learning as a social and cultural process that embraces two forms of interaction: an external one with the society and an internal one within the person. (Vygotsky, 1978). In his explanation of this theory, Vygotsky also indicated that the progress that learners are expected to mark within the Zone of Proximal Development is highly determined by the interaction that occurs between learners and teachers or peers. Other theories including the social interactionist, social interdependent, and communicative competence theory give rationale for the social and communicative benefits that cooperative learning result in. Prominent researchers such as Savlin and Oickle (1981) also pointed out the enriching cultural outcome of cooperative learning in the way it positively enhances relations across cultures and races. A substantial body of evidence manifested in numerous studies also pointed out the social and interactive outcomes. (Biester, 1972; Olsen and Kagan, 1992; Johnson andJohnson, 1994; Kagan, 1994; Johnson and Johnson, and Holubec, 1994;Johnsons, Holubec and Roy, 1998; Vermetter, 1998). With regard to cultural benefits, Salvin 1990; Wiliams 1993; Richards, Brown, and Forde, 2007; Baker and Clark, 2010; Gay, 2010; Young and Sternod, 2011; Morris and Mims, 2012; and Nugent and Catalano, 2015) discussed the values of cultural responsiveness that cooperative learning brings about and helps students gain.

Former studies on cooperative learning also cited similar outcomes of social benefits, enhanced communication skills (Khoury, 2005; Huang, 2006; Zuheer, 2008; and Othman et. al, 2012). These studied showed how cooperative learning can craft

opportunities for social interaction and communication. Another study conducted in New Zealand by Li and Campbell (2008) supports the present research findings in terms of the role of cooperative learning in strengthening cultural understanding and responsiveness in the ESL classroom.

Overall, the results obtained from the interview, the questionnaire in addition to the body of research findings drawn from the literature review and the former studies emphasize the rich atmosphere of social interaction and cultural understanding that teachers believe a cooperative learning context can provide ESL students. This in turn complements the full picture inspired by the theoretical roots of cooperative learning from the social constructionism to the sociocultural theories and the communicative competence theory as they all nurture each other and support one another in the premises and the tenets they provide for the cooperative learning instruction.

5.4 Question Three: The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Differentiation

Question 3 explores the extent to which cooperative learning facilitates teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction. Referring to Table 7, we can see that the responses to the third research question were high and very high. All responses were positive and strongly in favor of the notion that cooperative learning facilitates differentiation. The two statements that received the highest mean scores were 'enables me to become a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge, and ' provides opportunities for differentiated activities'. On the other hand, the statements about meeting different learning styles and accommodating below-level students' needs

received slightly lower mean scores compared to the above-mentioned statements. Overall, the results of the responses about differentiation are similar to the responses that are linked to engagement and social cultural responsiveness. What strengthens the value of the questionnaire results is the fact that the interview results are consistent those attained from the questionnaire. Teachers in general expressed how cooperative learning provides opportunities for students of various levels and learning styles. To illustrate, Teacher 1 contented that through cooperative learning high achievers can "provide scaffolding to low achievers". She also asserted that when low achievers are exposed to questions and activities of higher level, they will learn from the group members how to respond to such questions. Asserting the same points on differentiation Teacher 3 pointed out that Cooperative learning facilitates differentiation as it enables students to "work in collaboration to achieve tasks, the fact that enhances their self-confidence, performance, and their interests, as many Kagan structures address different learning styles." Other teachers provided responses that support the overall perception of cooperative learning as a tool that facilitates differentiation. Other teachers reported the strengthened self-esteem that students develop being in cooperative learning groups. In this regard, emerging learners usually experience self-consciousness when it comes to participation. Thus, when their anxiety subsides within a context of collaboration and interaction, they become more ready and more motivated to take part in more advanced tasks and challenges. In this regard, a study administered by Mehdizadeh (2013) and another study conducted by Yan-hong (2013) provide support of how cooperative learning eliminates the foreign language learning anxiety that ESL students usually experience.

When we examine the literature review, we can see that Kagan and Kagn (2009) maintained that different cooperative learning structures accommodates the needs and styles of different learners. This is shown in the varied array of Kagan Structures and activities that address various learning styles and preferences. Apart from Kagan's authentic research, when we refer to Vyogtsky's portrayal of the learning process and the development that students mark within the Zone of Proximal Development as a lively, on going, interactive and responsive process, we can see how interaction in within according to Vygotsky's premises requires collaborative effort and interaction. Thus, it solidifies the fact that cooperative learning can go hand in hand with differentiated instruction when planned constructively.

To explore this notion of differentiation in depth, we can relate the differentiated context to the multifarious emotions that go with it. The differentiated context can be highly competitive if it was individualized. As a result, struggling learners can sometimes lose self-confidence and their learning becomes hindered by anxiety performance and fear of failure (Cassady, 2010). In contrast, when the differentiated context is collaborative, it lowers students affective filter, increases their self-confidence (Hanez and Berger, 2007; and Goreyshi and Ajilchi, 2013) and consequently, it motivates them to embrace different tasks. Flahertyand Hackler's (2010) study provides support for this particular notion. Their study results indicated that students showed enhanced learning involvement, increased motivation, and a more positive attitude toward learning. The results also pointed out that the combination of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction increased students' intrinsic motivation. That's

why the researchers advocated using the combination of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction with students of all grades.

Having explored the various results accumulated from the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, the literature review, and former studies on the role of cooperative learning in facilitating differentiation, we can concur that ESL teachers highly regard cooperative learning as a constructive opportunity for the implementation of differentiated instruction, as it combats feelings of anxiety that low achieving students usually experience, it fosters collaboration and peer scaffolding, and it provides a varied range of activities that pertain to various learning styles, intelligences and preferences. With this we can revisit the paradoxical aspect of the goal of cooperative learning, which is working cooperatively to pave the way for the constructive ability to work autonomously.

5.5 Conclusions

The principal aim of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions on the role of cooperative learning in creating a positive and engaging learning atmosphere for students, in fostering students' social and cultural awareness and facilitating teachers' implementation of differentiation. As an English teacher, I strongly believe in the focal role of cooperative learning in creating an intriguing learning atmosphere that motivates students to develop communication skills, social skills, cultural understanding and accommodates their various learning styles and abilities. This research study was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative designs in which both qualitative as well as qualitative data were collected. The participants were teachers

chosen from 23 private schools in Al Ain. The research employed two instruments to collect the data: a questionnaire that was distributed to 200 teachers from 23 private schools. The other research instrument was a semi-structured interview conducted with 8 English teachers.

The findings of this study proved that English teachers found the structured application of cooperative learning an effective teaching strategy that contributes to students' learning engagement, social awareness, cultural responsiveness and learning needs in general. This is due the following factors:

1. It provides a context in which students feel safe and less stressed out. Accordingly, students feel more eager to learn and take part in different activities.
2. It helps students feel responsible for their own learning, which in turn helps them gain self-confidence and feel encouraged to work hard and show improvement in their performance.
3. It fosters students' involvement in the lessons and consequently they feel more engaged and drawn to the learning experience.
4. When students regularly take part in cooperative learning activities, they develop their communication skills through class discussions, group tasks, and collaborative projects
5. Students develop their social skills due to the fact that cooperative learning allows them to interact, listen to and exchange ideas with their peers, which allows them to listen respectfully and attentively to their classmates in order to

be able to respond to tasks and report findings and synthesize opinions and discussions.

6. It trains students to become culturally responsive learners as they interact with the students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

7. It helps low achieving students to develop self-confidence and motivation to improve and take part in activities and tasks. It also motivates high achieving students to show more responsibility through peer coaching tasks and collaborative projects.
8. It helps teachers to apply differentiated activities in a way that addresses different learning styles, levels, and preferences.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the research findings of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

5.6.1 Recommendations for ESL Teachers

1. Teachers should receive systematic and regular professional development on the effective application and implementation of structured cooperative learning in teaching English.
2. Teachers should regularly incorporate cooperative learning strategies in order for them to trace its positive outcomes of cooperative learning on students' personal, social and academic growth.

3. Teachers should ensure that the environment in which cooperative learning is applied is motivating, passionate, friendly, and relaxing in order to help students interact and feel involved in the collaborative activities.
4. Students should be encouraged to apply and run cooperative activities themselves in order for them to master cooperative learning as a skill they can employ in presenting their projects and involving their peers.
5. Teachers should encourage students to take part in cooperative learning activities by reflecting a positive attitude and enthusiasm towards its systematic application.

5.6.2 Recommendations for Heads of Departments, Curriculum Developers

1. Initiating training programs that provide guidance and training for teachers on using cooperative learning in their daily instruction
2. Revising the curriculum should be always refined and revised to incorporate opportunities for cooperative learning activities and projects
3. Delegating training responsibilities for teachers who are experienced in cooperative learning application
4. Creating booklets that contain the most practical strategies of cooperative learning in teaching different English skills

5.6.3 Recommendations for Schools, Academic Organizations, and Policy Makers

1. Schools that intend to integrally implement cooperation learning into their teaching and learning system, should constructively tailor the whole educational system in order to apply cooperative learning systematically and accurately.

2. Schools should embrace and promote a culture of cooperation, active learning, and responsibility prior to the initiation of the cooperative learning program they plan to adopt and embark on. This is a paramount stage for practically, professionally and emotionally preparing the staff and the students for the regular incorporation of cooperative learning.
3. Schools need to provide systematic professional development opportunities for staff to further enhance their expertise in applying cooperative learning activities, especially in the field of differentiation.
4. Schools should promote cooperation as an integral value for students and teachers.

5.6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

In light of the present study, further research is recommended in the area of cooperative learning in teaching English as a second language and as a foreign language:

5.6. 4. 1 Research in the Field of Teaching

1. The replication of the present study in order to include other emirates, schools, and academic institutions, as few studies have been made on cooperative learning in the UAE

2. Investigating students' perceptions and attitudes on the role of cooperative learning in enhancing their learning and their engagement

3. Conducting studies that document the effect of CL on students' achievement

4. Exploring the implementation of differentiated instruction within the frame of cooperative learning

5. 6. 4. 2 Research in the Field of Curriculum Design

1. Exploring the idea of "the hidden curriculum" that is reflected in the systematic application of cooperative learning. This can be a chance for researchers to shed more light on the 'non-academic' benefits of cooperative learning

2. Investigating the effectiveness of using cooperative learning in international Examination preparation, such as the IELTS and SAT.

5. 6. 4. 3 Research in the Field of Classroom Management

Conducting studies that delve into the ways with which cooperative learning can combat behavioral problems

5. 6. 4. 4 Research in the Field of Professional Development

1. Exploring the perceptions of cooperative learning trainers and coaches on the best cooperative learning strategies for teaching the English language skills.
2. Investigating the implementation of cooperative learning in enhancing students' English skills through the systematic application of e-learning English activities.

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Appendix A

The Cooperative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ) – Page 1

The UAE English Teachers' Perspectives on the Multi-Dimensional Role of Cooperative Learning

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about your application of cooperative learning as an English language teacher. It is conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education in the United Arab Emirates University. Your opinion is highly valued, as it will help me gain insight into cooperative learning as an instructional practice, and it will further enlighten me about how to improve this practice and shape it in the best way that can benefit both teachers and students. The information that will be collected will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purposes.

General Demographic Information

Item	*Information to Be Filled out*	
Age		
Gender	Male	
	Female	
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5 year	
	6- 10 years	
	11-15 year	
	16-20 year	
	21 years & above	
Current grade level you are teaching	Elementary	
	Middle school	
	High school	
How often do you apply cooperative learning activities?	All the time	
	Often	
	Sometimes	

Appendix B

The Cooperative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ) – Page 2

The UAE English Teachers' Perspectives on the Multi-Dimensional Role of Cooperative Learning

	Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion. **Cooperative Learning**	**Strongly Agree (5)**	**Agree (4)**	**Neutral (3)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Strongly Disagree (1)**
1.	creates a pleasant learning environment for my students.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
2.	creates a learning context that is interactive and engaging.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
3	provides my students with opportunities for productive learning.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
4.	enhances my students' ability to take part in different discussions.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
5.	allows my students to learn within a context that is anxiety-free.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
6.	helps my students make progress regardless of their academic ability.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
7.	helps my students become more sociable individuals.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
8.	develops teamwork skills in my students.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
9.	optimizes my students' ability to become culturally responsive learners.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
10.	strengthens my students' communication skills.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
11.	is an important skill for my students' academic and social success.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
12.	develops my students' social responsibility.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
13.	enables my students to reflect compassion and cooperation.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
14.	enables me to become a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
15.	facilitates students' learning regardless of their levels and learning styles.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
16.	provides opportunities for differentiated activities.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
17.	can positively challenge my above-level students.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
18.	enables me to provide suitable scaffolding for my below-level students.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
19.	allows my students to respond to activities according to their multiple intelligences.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
20.	allows my students to creatively produce collaborative projects.	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

Appendix C

The Interview Questions

The study revolves around the following questions:

- **How can cooperative learning create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters students' learning in an ESL classroom?**
- **What is the role of cooperative learning in creating cultural and social responsiveness?**
- **To what extent can cooperative learning help English teachers implement differentiation effectively?**

1. In what ways does cooperative learning contribute to your students' learning engagement?

2. How can cooperative learning enhance students' social and cultural awareness?

3. How has cooperative learning enhanced your instructional practices in the field of differentiation?

Appendix D

The Informed Consent - Page 1

The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Fostering High School ESL Students' Engagement, Social Awareness, and Cultural Responsiveness

Please read carefully before signing the Consent Form!

You will be asked to provide or deny consent after reading this form.

You have been invited to take part in a study to investigate the role of structured cooperative learning in fostering high school ESL students' engagement, social awareness, and cultural responsiveness. This study will be conducted by Mrs. Khayal Al Allaq, who is the Principal Investigator. Mrs. Khayal is Master's student in Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education in the UAE University. She is also an experienced teacher and administrator. She can be reached by telephone at 050 3385758 or by email at jumanessam@yahoo.com. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Khayal at any stage of this research study.

The study will take place at [Participant's location] located at [Participant's physical address].

Your participation in our research will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Your participation will greatly assist the research community, students, teachers and your ministry/council of education in understanding the impact of cooperative learning on students' engagement and learning. There has been very little research in this area in the UAE and your contribution will help ensure that more knowledge in this area is gained for the benefit of our children's education and development.

The interview will be conducted in an office where you work.

The information you share with us will remain confidential. The information you provide will remain private. You do not have to mention your name and even if you do, your name will not be revealed and will be coded, as will all the names of the participants in this study. Evidence will be kept for the duration of the research study after which it will be shredded to preserve anonymity of the research respondents
You can withdraw at any time from the research without any penalties or minimum level of risk to you. Please contact Mrs. Khayal Al Allaq for further information or if you would have any questions about the research study.

Contact information:

Mrs. Khayal Al Allaq
UAE University
Al Ain, UAE

Appendix E

The Informed Consent - Page 2

Informed Consent

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the above information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw.
3. I understand that my data will be kept confidential and if published, the data will not be identifiable as mine. In addition, the researcher will use pseudonyms on their manuscripts or communications.

I agree to take part in this study:

(Name and signature of participant)	(Date)
(Name and signature of person taking consent)	(Date)

Appendix F

The United Arab Emirates University Letter to ADEC

UAEU College of Education

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

التاريخ: 2015/10/11

لمن يهمه الأمر

نود إفادتكم علماً بأن الطالبة/ **خيال العلاق** ، مسجله في برنامج الماجستير تخصص" مناهج وطرق تدريس" وتقوم

بإعداد بحث بعنوان:

The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Fostering High School ESL Students' Engagement, Social Awareness and Cultural Responsiveness

من ضمن متطلبات الماجستير. لذا نرجو التكرم بالموافقة على تسهيل مهمتها البحثية.

شاكرين ومقدرين حسن تعاونكم.

هذا وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والتقدير.

منسق برنامج الماجستير
د. هالة الحويرص

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
كلية التربية
مساعد العميد لشؤون البحث العلمي والدراسات العليا
UAEU
College of Education
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY

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Appendix G

Abu Dhabi Educational Council's Approval

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First التعليم أولاً

Date: 28/12/2015
Ref: 15122802

التاريخ: 28/12/2015
الرقم: 15122802

To: Private Schools Principals,

السادة/ مديري المدارس الخاصة المحترمين

Subject: Letter of Permission

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين

Dear Principals,

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students.

يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة.

You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ **Khayal Ali Gaafar Al Allaq** to complete her research on:

The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Fostering High School ESL Students' Engagement, Social Awareness and Cultural Responsiveness

ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة/ **خيال علي جعفر العلاق** ، **بعنوان:**

The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Fostering High School ESL Students' Engagement, Social Awareness and Cultural Responsiveness

Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools.

لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها.

For further information: please contact **Mr Helmy Seada** on 02/6150140

للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ **حلمي سعدة** على الهاتف 02/6150140

Thank you for your cooperation.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم.

Sincerely yours,

ونفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،

المهندس حمد علي الظاهري
المدير التنفيذي، قطاع المدارس الخاصة وضمان الجودة
Eng. Hamad Ali Al Dhaheri
Executive Director, Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector

صندوق بريد:٢٦٠٠٥، أبوظبي - إ.ع.م. هاتف: ٠٠٠٠ ٦١٥ ٢ ٩٧١+، فاكس: ٠٥٠٠ ٦١٥ ٢ ٩٧١+، البريد الإلكتروني: info@adec.ac.ae
P.O.Box. 36005, Abu Dhabi - U.A.E., Tel: +971 2 615 0000, Fax: +971 2 615 0500, Email: info@adec.ac.ae

Appendix H

UAEU Letter to ADEC to Provide Necessary Statistics

UAEU College of Education

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

Date: 02/03/2016

To whom it Concern

Education College at UAEU confirming that the graduate student Khayal Al Allaq , ID: (970127210), preparing for her research entitled:

The Role of Structured Cooperative Learning in Fostering ESL Students' Engagement, Social Awareness, and Cultural Responsiveness

Hope that you can grant Khayal permission and facilitate the necessary from your department. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Dr. Hala Alhouwaires

Master's Program Coordinator

UAEU College of Education United Arab Emirates University

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Appendix I

Table 8: Coded Teachers with Relevant Quotes and Themes

Teacher	Quote	Theme
Teacher 1	*"When working in cooperative learning groups, students know that they should all work together to solve questions, list the main events, or analyze a poem."*	Sense of Responsibility
Teacher 3	*"Students gain a sense of responsibility, engagement, and involvement"*	
Teacher 5	*"Cooperative learning enhances individual learning outcomes as well as the learning outcomes of their peers"*	
Teacher 6	*-" Effective collaborative teams require students to take responsibility for their own learning as each one of them would ideally be assigned a role in the group activity or project."* *-"I believe that cooperative learning helps me as a teacher in creating an engaging classroom environment that optimizes students' learning and involves all students in the learning process."* *-" Unlike traditional classrooms where students played a passive role, cooperative learning gives all students, irrespective of their learning profiles and abilities, active roles in the learning process"* *" Effective collaborative teams require students to take responsibility for their own learning as each one of them would ideally be assigned a role in the group activity or project."*	
Teacher 7	*Cooperative learning helps in* • *exchanging ideas and expanding students' horizons* • *triggering the learning motive which merely revolves round communication* • *giving chances to all students to have a part in the learning sessions* • *allowing students to learn freely without being judged or evaluated* •	Involvement and Engagement
Teacher 1	*"Each student has his or her part to solve and share*	

	with the group members. Some cooperative activities require discussions, scaffolding, or interpretations, which indicates students' involvement during the activity.	
Teacher 5	*" Students gain full engagement when they cooperate to accomplish a task or respond to a project work that necessitates the students' positive interdependence and interaction."*	
Teacher 7	- *"Students can enjoy this form of learning when the teacher is passionate about it."* - *"the teacher's passion for cooperative learning can tremendously facilitate the effective application of it; when teachers embrace cooperative learning, they directly influence their students to see the positive features of this form of learning has".*	
Teacher 1	"By working together, students learn to listen to and respect each other's ideas, explanations, and suggestions."	Interpersonal Skills
Teacher 4	" Cooperative learning builds connections between academic learning and student's backgrounds and develops positive relationships with students."	
Teacher 5	Students' diverse cultural backgrounds enhance and enrich their discussions and ways of communication.	
Teacher 6	" During cooperative learning activities, students will have to discuss, share, and negotiate their ideas. These are major skills that students will need in the future. By instilling the sense of social responsibility in students, teachers will be providing them with authentic learning experiences that would yield several gains on the short run as well as on the long run".	
Teacher 7	- "Cooperative learning has a role in strengthening students' relations, which is socially and culturally healthy and definitely required. -"Students will be exposed to different responses from different students in various situations, which will help them accept the other more and value others' points of view and opinions."	Social and Cultural Awareness

	- "Students share interests via cooperative learning. This helps the cultural and the social improvement for both, the individual and the society. -When students learn through cooperative learning, they subconsciously connect learning to life and life to learning. -Students use different skills in cooperative learning. This is preparation for good usage of skills in real life."	
Teacher 1	-"From my experience, I believe that implementing cooperative learning in our school some years ago had a great impact on students' social and cultural awareness. Students used to make friends mainly with the ones of the same nationality; however, we can see students of different backgrounds and different academic level sitting happily together in the playground during their break time. -"When a group of mixed background students work together, they learn to tolerate the differences between their cultures and accept one another. Working together on a project, for example, will strengthen the students' relationships and develop social and cultural awareness."	
Teacher 2	"Students in a group of different abilities and different cultural backgrounds are united to share the same information and to give the best of their efforts. As a result of this union, strong and tight social bonds will be built."	Social and Cultural Awareness
Teacher 6	"In classes where cooperative learning is properly implemented, each student, irrespective of the culture he comes from, has something new to offer. Here comes the role of the teacher in providing students with opportunities to share the values of their cultures with their peers. This culture of acceptance can extend to include the whole community"	
Teacher 1	"Students are responsible for activities that are tailored to their level, so they feel confident and relaxed when sharing their answers, and at the same time, group members 'especially high and high medium achievers, can provide scaffolding to low achievers."	Enhanced Self-Confidence
Teacher 2	It creates a higher-level reasoning among students with different abilities and strengthens students 'self-confidence	

Teacher 3	"Low achievers feel less threatened when they work collaboratively"	
Teacher 4	"students are more confident and less stressed out"	
Teacher 5	" cooperative learning comes to fulfill tasks (writing, reading, speaking, or listening) in a less stressful atmosphere and in a more enjoyable and engaging environment. In differentiated activities, a teacher can ask students to use different collaborative strategies to respond to an activity or a task so that students will be more confident and engaged and the task will be all fun and captivating."	
Teacher 8	"Self confidence is always enhanced through cooperative learning activities. Students don't feel threatened within a cooperative context"	
Teacher 2	"in a group context, students help one another learn the same concept, with capable and high achieving students tutoring the less capable".	Mutual Academic Benefits
Teacher 4	" When teachers establish a trusting relationship, a sense of community is developed and students become motivated to achieve."	
Teacher 6	"the high achievers would not feel demotivated because they are doing most of the work. On the contrary, they will feel that they have a goal that they have to attain. At the same time, the emerging students would feel that they have to show their potentials to their peers and teacher."	
Teacher 7	"Cooperative learning has made it easier for students to help each other improve."	

Teacher 6	" For example, I once assigned a reading project based on Paulo Coelho's novel "The Alchemist" where students were given the opportunity to express their understanding of the novel in different ways… For example, visual learners preferred to create a chart while kinesthetic learners preferred to do role-play. " " This approach to learning and instruction entails expanding the learning opportunities to all students while engaging them in authentic learning situations."	Accommodating Various Learning Styles and Preferences
Teacher 4	" Cooperative learning helps teachers in modifying their instructions to meet individual student's needs, readiness levels, preferences, and interests"	
Teacher 7	- "Cooperative learning – when done correctly - knocks on students' potentials, talents and abilities, which helps them learn the ways they like. Thus, a long term learning result take place." - "It drew my attention to different skills, needs, and potentials students have, based on which, I had to design suitable instructional practices."	
Teacher 8	T8: "cooperative learning structures, such as Kagan structures provide a rich context for meeting different learning styles and multiple intelligences"	