



Cooperative Language Learning Approach

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Abstract: *in this article we describe in cooperative learning, students work together in small groups on a structured activity. They are individually accountable for their work, and the work of the group as a whole is also assessed. Cooperative groups work face-to-face and learn to work as a team.*

Keywords: *cooperative language learning, common goal, proposals.*

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is part of a more general instructional approach also known as Collaborative Learning (CL). CLL refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another and to accomplish shared learning goals. This means that interaction within one heterogeneous group can lead to a maximum of language learning, if the students work collaboratively. To do so, they have to use the L2 and share the idea of achieving a common goal, which is not on the first side the learning the language, but solving the exercises.

Cooperative Learning has antecedents in proposals for peer-tutoring and peer-monitoring that go back hundreds of years and longer. The early twentieth century U.S. educator John Dewey is usually credited with promoting the idea of building cooperation in learning into regular classrooms on a regular and systematic basis (Rodgers 1988). It was more generally promoted and developed in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the forced integration of public schools and has been substantially refined and developed since then. Educators were concerned that traditional models of classroom learning were teacher-fronted, fostered competition rather than cooperation, and favored majority students. They believed that minority students might fall behind higher-achieving students in this kind of learning environment.

Educators were concerned that traditional models of classroom learning were teacher-fronted, fostered competition rather than cooperation, and favored majority students. They believed that minority students might fall behind higher-achieving students. The paper tries to show the definition, characteristics and techniques of cooperative language learning on foreign language learning and teaching. In second language teaching, CLL has been embraced as a way of promoting communicative interaction in the classroom and is seen as an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching.

The approaches of this methods are from the theory of language is that communication as a primary purpose of language and cooperative nature of language, and the theory of learning is that learners develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills.

Collaborative learning is a method of teaching and learning in which students' team together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project. A group of students discussing a lecture or students from different schools working together over the Internet on a shared assignment are both examples of collaborative learning. Cooperative learning, which will be the



primary focus of this workshop, is a specific kind of collaborative learning. In cooperative learning, students work together in small groups on a structured activity. They are individually accountable for their work, and the work of the group as a whole is also assessed. Cooperative groups work face-to-face and learn to work as team. In small groups; students can share strengths and also develop their weaker skills. They develop their interpersonal skills. They learn to deal with conflict. When cooperative groups are guided by clear objectives, students engage in numerous activities that improve their understanding of subjects explored.

In order to create an environment in which cooperative learning can take place, three things are necessary. First, students need to feel safe, but also challenged. Second, groups need to be small enough that everyone can contribute. Third, the task student's work together on must be clearly defined. The cooperative and collaborative learning techniques presented here should help make this possible for teachers.

Cooperative language learning is based on the idea that second language learning can be best done in heterogeneous groups, when all students work collaboratively and cooperatively for one common goal. It replaces the idea that students have to work competitively against one another. On the contrary, it rather supports the idea Vygotski claimed in his Sociocultural (S-C) Theory, which states that "Interaction not only facilitates language learning but is a causative force in acquisition." Vygostki was of the opinion that social interaction is seen as the only way of learning a language sufficiently and therefore he came up with his idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), "an area of potential development, where the learner can achieve that potential only with assistance" (Saville-Troike 2006: 112).

Taking Vygotski's idea where language learning is done with social interaction, cooperative language learning focuses on language learning in natural settings through the use of interaction in pairs or/and group work. This means that interaction within one heterogeneous group can lead to a maximum of language learning, if the students work collaboratively. To do so, they have to use the L2 and share the idea of achieving a common goal, which is not on the first side the learning the language, but solving the exercises. This means that the actual language learning process can be seen as a side effect of the task, because students have to use the foreign language just as a means of communication. That also lowers the anxiety of talking in a foreign language and therefore it encourages students to make use of it, but being less afraid of making mistakes.

As already stated, the theories of Vygotski and Piaget can be seen as setting the base of cooperative language learning. As shown in the premise, social interaction is maintained to be necessary for language learning and thus corresponds perfectly with the principles of cooperative language learning. In working cooperatively, students share the idea of working together and achieving a common goal.

Every member of the group has different ideas and skills and in sharing them with the others, the group can take a maximal profit out of it all. Furthermore, different skills mean that every member of the group has the chance to participate and so every group member is important for the success of the group work. The emphasis of this approach is on cooperative work rather than on competitive work.

Cooperative language learning also encourages students in their critical thinking, because in cooperative environments, different approaches to certain topics occur and the students have to think and consider the whys and hows. Therefore they have to analyse possible solutions, which is another reason why heterogeneous groups are an advantage rather than a disadvantage in cooperative language learning environments.

The teacher's role in this method differs from normal classroom settings. While frontal teaching may be the norm in some other methods cooperative language learning uses this form of teaching



only on selected occasions. One feature of this method is the great mixture of teaching styles. A lesson can easily consist of frontal teaching sequences, as well as pair and group work phases where the teacher is more or less left out, depending on the activity (e.g. Gallery walk, Jigsaw etc.).

The teacher's task is to provide the material, to set the classroom settings, to set goals for the students, to structure the classroom and the activities and to help and monitor students in the work phase. However, the bulk of the work has to be done before class starts and so it can be said that in cooperative language learning classrooms are much less teacher-centred than some other methods.

The learner's role is primarily to work collaboratively with each other and develop and practice social skills. It is important to accept new ideas from other students, because the students have to share ideas (not compete to see who has the best), accept criticism and they have to learn to make use of the foreign language also when the teacher is not around.

The field of language teaching has experienced great change during the past fifty years. In spite of all changes abroad, foreign language teaching in China remains mainly traditional. Thus comparing cooperative language learning (Cooperative language learning is to apply cooperative learning techniques to the language learning either for the native or foreign language) with traditional language teaching may help us deeply understand its principles and superiority. Here, traditional language teaching refers to the teacher-centered method in which many ingredients of Grammar-translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method are used in the language teaching and learning.

Teaching has traditionally concentrated on making the students aware of certain aspects of the code without providing adequate practice. Language learning is viewed as memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. Most interactions in the classroom are teacher-to-student or teacher-to-students, and student-initiated interaction. Student-student interaction is minimal. Students are seen as acquiring knowledge of language rather than communicative ability directly and they simply passively acquire the new knowledge. The table lists some main differences between cooperative language learning and traditional language teaching.

Cooperative language learning provides much more opportunities for learners to comprehensible input and output and the processes of negotiation. Jia (2003) holds that effective language learning depends on structuring social interaction to maximize the needs of communication in the target language. For example, students divided into six groups in a class can get six times as many opportunities to talk as in full-class organization.

Cooperative language learning creates natural, interactive contexts, where students listen to each other, ask question, and clarify issues. Group interaction assists learners in negotiating for more comprehensible input and in modifying their output to make it more comprehensible to others (Crandall, 1999; kagan, 1995). In cooperative group settings, when communicating in group work, students need to make them understood so they adjust their language to suit the members of that group. As a result, there is a much higher proportion of comprehensible input. A survey of research on pair/group work conducted by Long and Porter (1985, cited in Ellis, 1999), indicate that learners produce more, use longer sentences, and do not speak any less grammatically in group work than they do in teacher-fronted lessons. Students will speak in different way on the same topic, ensuring students to listen to and comprehend language from various sources and to obtain modeling and feedback from their peers. There is a principle that interaction drives learners to produce more accurate and appropriate language, which itself provides input for other students. Therefore, cooperative language learning is valuable in the oral practice and listening comprehension



Cooperative language learning allows learners more chances to produce language in a functional manner. In traditional classroom, discourse is usually initiated by the teacher in an artificial setting, but cooperative learning can be used to create a mimic real-life social settings in which language is normally used. For a specific purpose in accomplishing the group task, cooperative groups can be helpful to students in developing their social abilities. In the study of Michael Long and his colleagues (1976, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999) with adult learners of English as a foreign language in Mexico, they found that the students produced not only a greater quantity but also a greater variety of speech in group work than in teacher-centered activities. Students may find themselves involve in requesting, clarifying, making suggestions, encouraging, disagreeing, negotiating of meaning, exchanging conversation during group work. Working in cooperative learning groups will foster learner discourse control and thereby ensures opportunities for language learning. D. Fostering Learner Responsibility and Independence the final aim of cooperative learning is to make each student a stronger individual through doing work cooperatively. Cooperative learning, therefore, emphasizes individual accountability. It places responsibility for action and progress on each of the members of the group somewhat equally. Positive role and goal interdependence help students become more autonomous and self-controlled and less dependent upon outside authority, and over time, they will gradually move from interdependence to independence (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). There are additional important benefits of cooperative language learning. Cooperative activities around the curricular content can provide more opportunities for use of the new items and lead to the development of both academic language and social language. In addition, studies indicate that there are beneficial effects of cooperative learning in more higher level reasoning, more frequent generation of new ideas and solutions, and greater transfer of what is learned within one situation to another than did competitive or individualistic learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). IV.

CONCLUSION Cooperative learning, compared with traditional instruction, tends to promote productivity and achievement and providing more opportunities for communication. When connected with foreign language learning, it shares the same basic set of principles with the widespread Communicative Language Teaching. It makes clear that the objective of foreign language teaching is not only to teach students some grammatical rules and vocabularies, but also how to use the knowledge in practice to express or narrate thoughts and ideas. Cooperative language learning responds to the trend in foreign language teaching method with focusing on the communicative and effective factors in language learning. It is not surprising that cooperative language learning is beneficial in foreign language learning and teaching. It is worthwhile for teachers and scholars to introduce this method to language learning classroom.

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