

Cooperative Learning: Theories, Principles, and Techniques

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Abstract

This paper discusses the uses of Cooperative Learning (CL) in the foreign language classroom. Some definitions of cooperative learning are discussed in the first part of the paper. Some other key areas discussed in the paper are: a. some principles of cooperative learning, b. techniques of cooperative learning that we can apply in our foreign language classroom.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Theories, Principles, Techniques, TEFL.

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning is learning in small groups where interaction is structured according to carefully worked-out principles. The method, which was developed in USA, arose among other things out of concern that the traditional school was creating far too many losers, destroying the spontaneous joy of learning in many young people and failing to develop one of the most important things one will need in later life, i.e. the ability to cooperate with others. Cooperative learning can be used at all age levels, from kindergarten to university. It is much more than just a bag of tricks to make teaching run more smoothly. It is a different way of conceiving teaching.

Research within cooperative learning shows impressive results in terms of subject knowledge. But apart from this, there is also positive spin-off from cooperative learning in the form of an increase in the individual's self-esteem and a noticeable reduction of bullying². The last-mentioned is due to the fact that the students eventually come to work together with everyone across the classroom, which breaks down prejudices and insecurity. The high level of activity also prevents boredom and off-task behavior.

Cooperative learning has not been specially developed for foreign language teaching, but can be used with advantage in all subjects. The reason why the method is relevant for us as foreign language teachers is that - apart from everything else it can do - it is an excellent way of conducting communicative language teaching. In this paper the writers try to present the theories, principles, and techniques that teachers can apply in their classroom.

DISCUSSION

Cooperative Learning is an approach that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom (Richard and Rogers, 2010). It means that in cooperative learning the students work in a group. As Olsen and Kagan stated that "Cooperative Learning is a group learning activity organized so that learning is independent on social structure exchange of information between learners in a group and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of other" (Richards and Roger, 2010).

As a learner-centered method, cooperative learning is a teaching method by which learners study by helping one another in small groups in their learning process in order to achieve a common objective. Cooperative learning is teaching strategy in which small group, each member has different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a group is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand all of the material and finish it.

Jacobs, Power, & Loh in their book "*teacher's sourcebook for cooperative learning*" explained that many principles have been proposed for cooperative learning. Below is a list of eight such principles:

Heterogeneous Grouping - This principle means that the groups in which students do cooperative learning tasks are mixed on one or more of a number of variables including sex, ethnicity, social class, religion, personality, age, language proficiency, and diligence.

Collaborative Skills - Collaborative skills, such as giving reasons, are those needed to work with others. Students may lack these skills, the language involved in using the skills, or the inclination to apply the skills. Most books and websites on cooperative learning urge that collaborative skills be explicitly taught one at a time.

Group Autonomy - This principle encourages students to look to themselves for resources rather than relying solely on the teacher. When student groups are having difficulty, it is very tempting for teachers to intervene either in a particular group or with the entire class. We may sometimes want to resist this temptation, because as Roger Johnson writes, "Teachers must trust the peer interaction to do many of the things they have felt responsible for themselves" (<http://www.clcrc.com/pages/qanda.html>).

Simultaneous Interaction - In classrooms in which group activities are not used, the normal interaction pattern is that of sequential interaction, in which one person at a time – usually the teacher – speaks. In contrast, when group activities are used, one student per group is speaking. In a class of 40 divided into groups of four, ten students are speaking simultaneously, i.e., 40 students divided into 4 students per group = 10 students (1 per group) speaking at the same time.

Equal Participation - A frequent problem in groups is that one or two group members dominate the group and, for whatever reason, impede the participation of others. Cooperative learning offers many ways of promoting more equal participation among group members.

Individual Accountability - Each member should have a good responsible to their self, it means that they have to master of their task individually and in their group. When we try to encourage individual accountability in groups, we hope that everyone will try to learn and to share their knowledge and ideas with others.

Positive Interdependence - This principle lies at the heart of Cooperative Learning. When positive interdependence exists among members of a group, they feel that what helps one member of the group helps the other members and that what hurts one member of the group hurts the other members. It is this "All for one, one for all" feeling that leads group members to want to help each other, to see that they share a common goal.

Cooperation as a Value - This principle means that rather than cooperation being only a way to learn, i.e., the *how* of learning, cooperation also becomes part of the content to be learned, i.e., the *what* of learning. This flows naturally from the most crucial cooperative learning principle, positive interdependence. Cooperation as a value involves taking the feeling of "All for one, one for all" and expanding it beyond the small classroom group to encompass the whole class, the whole school, on and on, bringing in increasingly greater numbers of people and other beings into students' circle of ones with whom to cooperate.

Slavin (2005) mentioned several techniques in cooperative learning such as: Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team Game Tournament (TGT), Team Assisted Individualization (TAI), Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), and Jigsaw II.

Student Team – Achievement Divisions (STAD) is cooperative learning that combines lecturing method, questioning and discussion. It has four members in each group who have different level, where they have to learn together in a group. The main concept of STAD is to motivate students to support and help each other to master a material from the teacher in a group. They may compare and discuss their opinions and answers and help each other if there are members who do not understand. They evaluate their strengths and weaknesses to help them success in the quizzes. Even though they learn together, they may not help each other to do the quiz. Each student has to know and master the material. This Individual responsible motivates students to give explanations well to each other. Team score is taken based on the progress that made of each member. All of students have the same opportunity to be a "star".

Team Game Tournament (TGT) is almost same with STAD, what make it different are the use of academic tournament, quizzes and the scoring system is the improvement of individual. Tutorial that organized by teacher and grouping are similarly as STAD. Game consists of questions that relevant with the material, and students answer in a group according the question on number that they have chosen. Score that they got is accumulated for weekly tournament. Tournament is structure of that games. It is usually organized at the end of the lesson weekly. Reward will be given for group that has highest accumulation scores.

Team Assisted Individualization (TAI) or **Team Accelerated Instruction** is combination between individual learning and team. Students learn in a heterogeneous team but also they learn academic material individually. Each member mutual checks their friend's assignment. Team score is taken from accumulation of the assignment that have finished by the team. The highest score can be got if the team can finish the material and assignment faster and more have a quality than other.

Jigsaw - Groups with five students are set up. Each group member is assigned some unique material to learn and then to teach to his group members. To help in the learning, students across the class working on the same sub-section get together to decide what is important and how to teach it. After practice in these "expert" groups the original groups reform and students teach each other.

Think-Pair-Share - Involves a three steps cooperative structure. During the first step individuals think silently about a question posed by the instructor. Individuals pair up during the second step and exchange thoughts. In the third step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group.

Three-Step Interview - Each member of a team chooses another member to be a partner. During the first step individuals interview their partners by asking clarifying questions. During the second step partners reverse the roles. For the final step, members share their partner's response with the team.

RoundRobin Brainstorming - Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers. After the "think time," members of the team share responses with one another round robin style. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order gives an answer until time is called.

Three-minute review - Teachers stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said, ask clarifying questions or answer questions.

Numbered Heads Together - A team of four is established. Each member is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, and 4. Questions are asked to the group. Groups work together to answer the question so that all can verbally answer the question. Teacher calls out a number (two) and each two is asked to give the answer.

Team Pair Solo- Students do problems first as a team, then with a partner, and finally on their own. It is designed to motivate students to tackle and succeed at problems which initially are beyond their ability. It is based on a simple notion of mediated learning. Students can do more things with help (mediation) than they can do alone. By allowing them to work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone that which at first they could do only with help.

Circle the Sage - First the teacher polls the class to see which students have a special knowledge to share. For example the teacher may ask who in the class was able to solve a difficult math homework question, who had visited Mexico, who knows the chemical reactions involved in how salting the streets help dissipate snow. Those students (the sages) stand and spread out in the room. The teacher then has the rest of the classmates each surround a sage, with no two members of the same team going to the same sage. The sage explains what they know while the classmates listen, ask questions, and take notes. All students then return to their teams. Each in turn, explains what they learned. Because each one has gone to a different sage, they compare notes. If there is disagreement, they stand up as a team. Finally, the disagreements are aired and resolved.

Partners - The class is divided into teams of four. Partners move to one side of the room. Half of each team is given an assignment to master to be able to teach the other half. Partners work to learn and can consult with other partners working on the same material. Teams go back together with each set of partners teaching the other set. Partners quiz and tutor teammates. Team reviews how well they learned and taught and how they might improve the process.

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) is a comprehensive program to teach reading and writing in elementary school at higher level and in junior high school. Students learn in a team to read and make a resume about the text which has given by teacher, pronunciation practice, comprehension, vocabulary, and also write a respond to the text. In this activity, students pursue a course, team practice, quiz, and scoring team. Student's contribution to the team depends on their quiz score. Students make writing independently that show there is an individual responsibility.

Benefits of Cooperative Learning

- Research shows students who participate in cooperative learning score better on tests in particular: reasoning & critical thinking skills.
- Students are more personally engaged in the content when working cooperatively.
- Cooperative learning is good for socialization, but individual reward is best used to keep motivation.
- Heterogeneous groups - students of different race, gender, learning styles.
- Deeper understanding of material
- Students more likely to ask questions or clarification from peers & teachers when participating in a cooperative learning activity.
- Cooperative learning tasks allows for students to create friends in class; to trust peers; students to have higher self-esteem.
- Teamwork is an essential skill for the workforce.
- Cooperative Learning increases language and communication skills.
- Cooperative Learning increases accountability & self-esteem.
- Cooperative Learning develops conflict management skills & lowers anxiety.

- In a study completed by Slavin, 63% of students saw an increase in their grades when using cooperative learning methods.
- Out of 10 studies, 7 studies proved that time on task in the classroom improve in cooperative learning situations.
- Cooperative Learning is beneficial to language acquisition for EAL students---we learn by speaking, and cooperative work allows for discussion, sharing, opinions and language use.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study literature above, we can see that theories about Cooperative Learning has been already studied and applied in the field of teaching English all over the world. We can also see that the principles of cooperative learning make this approach is suitable to be applied in the teaching and learning English in Indonesia. In the discussion above, we can also see that there are techniques of cooperative learning that we can apply in our classroom situation. And after doing research on cooperative learning, we recommend the English teachers to apply cooperative learning in their teaching learning process.

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