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1. **TIPO DE DOCUMENTO:** Artículo reflexivo para optar por el título de licenciadas en educación básica con énfasis en lengua inglesa.
2. **TÍTULO** Cooperative Learning in the Classroom: A General Overview for EFL Teachers
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6. **PALABRAS CLAVES:** Aprendizaje Cooperativo, Trabajo de grupo, roles de estudiantes y profesores.
7. **DESCRIPCIÓN DEL TRABAJO.** Tomando en cuenta nuestros sitios de practica como punto de partida, hemos observado en algunos colegios que los profesores confunden la manera en que puede ser implementado el aprendizaje cooperativos en las aulas, en orden de abordar esta problemática, hemos escrito este artículo con el propósito de clarificar el concepto de aprendizaje cooperativo y proveer a los profesores con componentes básicos para una implementación exitosa, el aprendizaje cooperativo es una herramienta esencial en el aula ya que permite al estudiante aprender de otros, evitando relaciones competitivas e incrementando habilidades sociales como son respeto, responsabilidad y tolerancia. Este documento discute diferentes puntos de vista teóricos y subraya la importancia de la distribución de grupos y los roles por el profesor y el estudiante, ya que estos elementos brindan motivación y aprendizaje efectivo. El aprendizaje cooperativo hace que los docentes reflexionen sobre el hecho de que los estudiantes trabajen en grupos y sean responsables de sus tareas y contribuyan a lograr metas comunes. El aprendizaje cooperativo es importante para nuestra sociedad porque promueve la comunicación y se enfoca en la cooperación y no en la competencia.
8. **LÍNEA DE INVESTIGACIÓN:** Formación y Práctica Pedagógica
9. **CONCLUSIONES:** Teniendo en cuenta este artículo teórico y reflexivo, podemos concluir que el aprendizaje cooperativo nos ayuda, como profesores en formación, para implementar nuevas estrategias que permitan a los estudiantes mejorar su proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas ya que la interacción y el conocimiento construido con los otros genera un ambiente propicio para el desarrollo del lenguaje, el respeto, la tolerancia hacia la diversidad. La cooperación y los objetivos comunes son el núcleo fundamental de cualquier clase que se considera como el micro sistema de la educación.

Los profesores deben tener en cuenta que el aprendizaje cooperativo puede ser aplicado en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera siempre y cuando primero trabajen aspectos sociales para mejorar la relación entre los estudiantes. Así mismo, se pueden tener estudiantes que reflexionen sobre la importancia de abordar los conflictos que ellos pueden enfrentar con sus compañeros creando un ambiente de aprendizaje óptimo y evitando que los temas personales influyan en el rendimiento académico. Nosotros, como profesores de idiomas no sólo deberíamos preocuparnos sobre QUÉ enseñar, sino también revisar el CÓMO y el POR QUÉ del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje, ya que el contenido no proporciona el conocimiento *per se* sino las dinámicas de clase.

Cooperative Learning in the Classroom: A General Overview for EFL Teachers

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Abstract

Taking our practicum settings as a point of departure, we observed at some schools that teachers misunderstood the way Cooperative Learning may be implemented in the classrooms. In order to tackle this problematic situation, we wrote this article with the purpose of clarifying the concept of Cooperative Learning (CL) and providing educators with its basic components for a more successful implementation. CL is an essential tool in the classroom because it allows students to learn from others, avoids competitive relationships and increases social skills such as respect, responsibility and tolerance. This paper discusses different theoretical points of view and highlights the importance of group distribution and the roles assumed by both the teacher and the students since these elements result in motivation and learning effectiveness. Cooperative Learning makes educators reflect upon the fact that students working in groups are accountable for their tasks and contribute to the achievement of common goals. CL is important for our society because it promotes communication and focuses on cooperation rather than competition.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, group work, teacher and students' roles

Introduction

As pre-service educators, we have noticed during our practicum that Cooperative Learning (CL) has not been widely used to improve students' learning mainly because educators tend to implement other types of strategies such as individual work and drilling techniques. Some teachers at the schools observed seem to be reluctant to use CL since they state that the implementation of this strategy may result in students' misbehavior, intolerance and teachers' stress when losing class control. In addition, teachers claim that the number of students is so large that it is difficult to handle CL strategies. Hence, we consider it necessary to understand what CL actually embraces, how it can be implemented and why it is important to use this method in the classroom. The following article brings to light a broad discussion about CL since it may be a useful means to change traditional practices and maximize learning.

Educators will find this article advantageous now that most of us want to implement different strategies that not only let students learn more about the subject but also improve their relationships generating respect, tolerance, mutual learning and patience. CL helps to create a non-competitive society, and teachers can take this article as a reference to fully appreciate its concept and advantages. CL is an important method because it has been implemented in more than 600 experimental studies and in more than 100 correlative studies which provide positive outcomes that determine that CL is distinguished from other teaching methods as it does contribute to more guaranteed and better student performance (Burder, 2000).

Based on previous studies by Johnson (2009), Kagan (1994) and Holubec (2000), we can state that CL is a useful strategy that lets teachers and students have a good relationship, learn from one another as well as promote respect and tolerance. This article discusses some important

theoretical concepts of CL in order to have a clear idea of what it is and how it works. We can find a solid theoretical framework that allows us to know the concept of CL and how it may be applied to real settings. Also, this framework divides the roles of this strategy for both teachers and students to have better outcomes at the moment of applying it, thus making it possible to see the process of forming groups inside the classroom as well as the advantages that lead to an effective CL implementation.

What does Cooperative Learning mean?

Johnson (1994) states that cooperative action can be understood as the fact of working together to achieve specific objectives. In all cooperative duties, the individual is looking for some results that could be good for him and for all the members of the groups he is working on. Consequently, CL is based on the organization the group has, and more specifically, on the motivational aspects of the relationships with other people. Additionally to this, Kagan (1992) points out that there are a lot of ways to create a lesson in which students feel close and involved with the new language. If a teacher creates activities using CL, the learners can get excited because CL activities produce enthusiastic, intense involvement and learning among students. Moreover, Jolliffe (2007) remarks that CL essentially requires “pupils to work together in small groups to support each other to improve their own learning and that of others” (p. 3).

CL can be used inside the classroom to accomplish a goal by making students work together to do a better job. Therefore, it is necessary that teachers promote participation within the group due to the fact that the cooperative work guides students in such a way that their opinions are valuable and essential. Teachers can adduce that this strategy allows students to support their relationships with their partners and create a better learning environment because it

increases students' motivation and learners can work together to achieve a goal effectively. When a teacher implements CL strategies, she/he must take into account that groups can work better since students can improve their learning process and avoid misbehavior and boredom.

As CL encourages students to work cooperatively, they are the center of the learning process since they are allowed to unitedly learn about issues that are not clear enough only with the teacher's explanation and give support for mutual learning. This strategy promotes students' individual responsibility because each student contributes and plays an important role inside the groups to achieve the desired goal. This strategy also allows students to learn not only subjects, for example, mathematics, physics, and English, but also to promote values such as tolerance, patience and respectfulness, among others, since these values can help students develop social and communicative skills.

What are the CL Main Components?

CL allows teachers and students to have different points of view about the learning process and group work taking into account different opinions; CL also helps students improve their learning as they increase self-confidence to express their standpoints to carry out their tasks. To achieve a correct use of CL, it is necessary to know some components that allow teachers to have a broader view of the proper use of this method. Johnson (1994) and Kagan (1992) propose 5 essential components in the cooperative work:

1. Positive Interdependence

It has to do with the double responsibility students have when working in groups: to learn the proposed material and to make sure their peers do it too. Positive interdependence is only possible when students know that they are directly related to their classmates in such a way that

they cannot succeed unless their partners also succeed and vice versa. Therefore, they must coordinate their efforts with their classmates' to be able to achieve the corresponding goal. This component can be correctly performed when the members of the group are aware that the success of everyone depends on the success of the others; no one can achieve such goals if the other members of the group do not reach them too.

2. Individual Accountability

It is about the responsibility that each member of the group has for the task accomplishment. Each student plays a role inside the group and it is critical that the entire group works with the very same objective to achieve a particular goal. As Johnson (1994) states, it is related to the individual responsibility each student has with himself, his groups, and with the task they are carrying out. Besides, this commitment has to do with the value given to the student's performance, work, and skills since each learner's ideas or strategies to work in groups are important to obtain the best results. This component takes the individual work performed by each member of the group; no one can take advantage from the other members. As each student must take responsibility for a part of the task, this work will promote not only individual learning but also group success.

3. Stimulating Interaction

As Johnson (1994) states, it is managed like a supporting learning system in which students can help improve the learning process of their partners. Students must accomplish a task together in which each person promotes the success of others by sharing existing resources, encouraging and congratulating each other for their efforts to learn. This component refers to the interaction among group members and the development of social and communicative skills that

help students to accomplish together a task in which each member of the group promotes the success of others.

4. Group Processing

It has to do with teaching students some interpersonal and group practices necessary to conduct a task effectively inside the group. Retrieving Johnson's (1994) words, students learn both school subjects (task execution) and interpersonal and group practices necessary to function as a group (teamwork). In this regard, teachers are in charge of teaching the practices of teamwork with the same seriousness and precision they teach the school contents. That is, teachers should promote social skills necessary for the success of the group such as leadership, trust among members, decision making, communication between the members, and conflicts management (30).

5. Group Evaluation

It helps students analyze the process of the group and increase group effectiveness. Johnson (1994) points out that this evaluation occurs when "group members discuss to what extent they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships; groups should determine which actions of its members are positive or negative, and make decisions about which behaviors to conserve and modify" (p. 23). With this component, each individual member has to evaluate the extent to which he or she is helping to achieve the goal, check what actions are useful and revise what actions are performed incorrectly so as to make future changes.

These five basic components allow the teacher to have a clear idea about the CL strategies that need to be used inside the classroom in order to have better results in connection with the process of students. Hence, the use of CL requires a disciplined action by teachers since they are

the ones who establish the objectives of the class and monitor the effectiveness of this method in the learning process, not only in specific areas but also in the development of social and communication skills. These five basic elements are not only characteristic of the good features of CL groups; they also represent a discipline to be applied rigorously to produce conditions leading to effective cooperative action.

Traditional Groups Vs CL Groups

Burden (2000) states that in a traditional learning group, students indicate that they work together but the areas assigned to them are structured in such a way that the work does not require a true partnership. Students think they will be evaluated and rewarded as individuals, not as members of the group; they only interact to clarify how the tasks should be carried out. Peers exchange information but do not feel motivated to teaching what they know to their teammates. According to the author, students in traditional groups work alone, have short conversations just to exchange some information and think that they will be evaluated based on the individual work rather than on the teamwork.

Conversely, Cooperative Learning Groups encourage students to work together and they do it willingly because they know that their performance depends on the efforts of all members of the group. According to Slavin (1987), groups of this type have five distinctive features:

1. **Learning as a Goal:** Students are expected to maximize learning since students are motivated to work hard and get results that exceed the individual capacity.
2. **Responsibility:** Each group member is responsible for doing a good job and contributing to the group success.

3. Partnership: Group members work side by side in order to accomplish common goals.
4. Interpersonal skills: Members are taught certain forms of interpersonal skills and are expected to employ them to coordinate teamwork and task performance.
5. Analysis: The group analyzes how effectively they are achieving their objectives and to what extent the members are working together to ensure sustained improvement in their learning and teamwork (p. 38).

In CL groups, students are conscious about the fact that the work has to be performed collectively and that all group members are active participants. Also, they know that the work is assessed in groups, i.e., each member gets the same grade and members can rely on each other's knowledge. Students that have some strength can help the others that are in trouble with the activity or the topic being taught.

Taking into account that traditional groups turns into individual work in which the student works on their own to achieve the target given by the teacher, students in these groups are not usually motivated to encourage their classmates to work together towards a goal. Conversely, within a CL group it is likely to find that students are motivated to work in groups now that all members will work together to achieve the same objective, thus generating good relationships among themselves as well as respect for others' opinions. To achieve this, it is necessary that the teacher provides some interpersonal skills for students to solve problems that may arise inside the group; educators should also promote spaces where students can talk about the work of the group members in order to make agreements and improve their own learning process.

What are the Roles within a CL Group?

In order to make CL work more productively, it is important to understand that each member of the group has a specific task inside the group to be completed as well as to learn effectively the topics taught in class. Before implementing CL, the teacher needs to provide students with certain CL roles that eventually will allow each group member to perform the assigned task successfully. Retrieving Holubec's (2000) words, the easiest way to present the concept of group roles to students is to use the analogy of a sports team. In soccer, for example, four roles are the goalkeeper, defender, midfielder and striker. First of all, the teacher writes these roles on the board and asks the students to explain why each role is important and what if one or two of the players do not do their job. Then, the teacher informs the students that the class will be organized into CL groups in which each member will have a key role to play. For teachers, this presentation of roles is critical because it provides a good understanding and a better development of each role assigned. Providing students with an interesting and contemporary explanations and using simple materials are decisive for them to fully comprehend the importance of the roles.

When using CL, there are some roles that cannot be correctly understood. Accordingly, it is important that the teacher does not present the whole notion of CL directly because students can feel confused. Holubec (2000) states that it is important to gradually introduce the CL dynamics to students as they begin to work in CL groups: (a) Have students meet in small groups of CL a few times, without assigning roles, to get accustomed to working together; (b) Assign only simple roles to students, as the reader, responsible for keeping a record or responsible for promoting participation; (c) Rotate the roles so that each group member plays each role several times; (d) Periodically, introduce a new more complex role, for instance, someone responsible for

checking understanding; (e) Assign roles related to performance; (f) Over time, add roles in connection with training and incentives not given spontaneously in the group (p. 46)

These steps can help teachers have clear ideas about the use and management of CL since they are provided with a structured way to gradually introduce this strategy to students. Every step allows to explore different types of complexity in the use and implementation of roles in CL because students need to assume some roles leading them to promote relationships among students, respect others' opinions and standpoints achieve common goals. Such roles let students increase self-confidence toward group work while developing social and communicative skills. Students must meet specific objectives in the classroom as well as promote many responsibilities inside group work. Consequently, proper distribution of roles given is necessary so that CL, as a bottom-line strategy, promotes a good environment, respectfulness, responsibility and tolerance concerning other group members' opinions.

When thinking about the distribution of roles, it is essential to know what the objective of the class is in order to implement roles for each student within group work. It is also necessary that teachers plan their activities to maximize the learning process of the students in a cooperative way. Distributions of roles are crucial when planning a class since the teacher has to consider what actions should be made to maximize students' learning. The roles suggest what you can expect from each member of the group as well as what others do and, therefore, what is required from each peer. The teacher can help to solve and prevent these problems because each member is given a specific role to be performed within the group.

Besides giving a structured cycle to implement CL in the classroom, Holubec (2000) mentions several advantages of assigning roles since this strategy: (a) Reduces the likelihood that

some students adopt a positive or dominant attitude in the group; (b) Ensures that the group uses basic group techniques and that all members learn the required practices, (c) Creates interdependence among group members. This interdependence occurs when members are assigned complementary and interconnected roles.

These advantages make students play a pivotal role in the process of CL since such gains assure that students acquire and develop behaviors that eventually help them to create techniques to work with others, take an independent stance and responsibility inside the group and use different types of roles that, in all truth, stimulate cooperative group work.

Students' Roles

Holubec, (2000) states that assigning roles to students is one of the most effective ways of assigning members of the group trouble-free tasks to be performed productively. The author proposes the following roles within CL groups:

- **Tone of voice Monitor:** This student controls that all members of the group speak in low tones.
- **Noise Monitor:** This person makes sure that all classmates move between groups without noise.
- **Shifts Monitor:** This monitor controls that group members take turns to perform the assigned task. This student is responsible for promoting participation, making sure that all group members participate.
- **Note Taker:** This member is responsible for keeping a log (writing down the decisions and writing the reports of the group).

- Observer: This learner records the frequency with which members of the group adopt desired attitudes
- Synthesizer: This student restates the main conclusions of the group or what has been read or analyzed as complete and accurate as possible.
- Corrector: This person corrects any errors in the explanations of other members or summarizes and complements any important data that has been omitted.
- Answer generator: This learner produces and puts into consideration other feasible answers besides the first given by contributing members.

These roles allow all students to complement one another, make different agreements, respect others' opinions and individual responsibilities and create a good work environment. This is crucial for students to achieve the objectives established since these roles promote good relationships, respect and tolerance among peers. However, it is fundamental to implement roles that help students solve difficulties which can arise when working in groups under the CL model. Consequently, it is important that the teacher promotes roles that help cooperative group work because learning inside a CL group permits to reinforce the previous knowledge in a real context outside the classroom, how to implement it, what they know and what they learn from the use of specific roles assigned to each student.

Teachers' Roles

In CL not only students have a role inside the group to facilitate and learn different communicative and social skills; teachers also have an important role in the use of this strategy to help students in the learning process. When teachers decide to implement CL inside the

classroom, they need to have thorough knowledge of the use of CL because teachers play multifaceted roles (Holubec, Johnson, & Johnson, 1999):

- To explain to the students the task of learning and cooperation procedures.
- To supervise the work of the teams
- To assess the level of students' learning and to encourage them to determine how effectively they are working with their learning groups.
- To tell students how cooperative procedures operate, how they can work cooperatively, what the rules are, how students can divide the roles inside the groups, the goal of the activity, among others.
- To explain to students the activity that they are going to perform.
- To walk around the classroom solving and checking students' progress.
- To oversee and intervene when necessary to help students improve their competence to write and to work cooperatively.
- To guide students to improve their skills, making them understand that CL is not an individual competence (p. 18).

As we mentioned previously, the role of the teacher is decisive when implementing CL given that teachers will take clear steps to guide students and take proper use and handling of this learning strategy. Taking into account the author's proposal, it is important to highlight that teachers should comprehend what they do and how to carry it out appropriately. Thus, it is important to consider the rules that teachers need to identify before using CL when they decide to make the groups. Ashman and Terwel (2008) established three previous decisions that educators

need to make before implementing the cooperative learning method: (a) how many members will take part in each group; (b) how students will be distributed and (c) how long the groups will last.

As there are no perfect dimensions regarding group size, the appropriate number of members depends on class goals, students' age, their group work experiences, the materials and the time available for class. CL groups usually have 2 or 4 members per group. The empirical rule to apply is "The smaller the group, the better". In case of doubt, the teacher should form pairs or trios. When teachers need to determine the dimensions of the groups, we, as teachers, should consider several factors such as: the context where we will work, the objectives to achieve, group age, level and time of the project.

Holubec (2000) states that "when the number of members of a learning group increases, the range of skills and capabilities present also expand as does the number of minds willing to acquire and process information and diverse points of view (p. 39)". In some cases, the higher the number of students, the more opportunities to learn among them because each member has different opinions and skills that will help to achieve better group results. On the other hand, Holubec (2000) clarifies that "the smaller group, the easier it will be to detect any difficulties students may have when working together" (p.40). Size can help to determine the level of interaction and responsibility of the students and performance within the group; using CL with small groups promotes responsibility, respect and participation of the members inside the groups.

What Types of CL Groups are there?

Holubec, Johnson, & Johnson (1999) state there are 3 types of Cooperative Learning groups: formal, informal and cooperative-based groups; each one establishes paths and specific

class objectives, improves students' previous knowledge and promotes good relationships among students.

1. Formal Groups

They consist of students working together, for one class period to several weeks, to achieve shared learning goals and complete jointly specific tasks and assignments. When teachers are willing to implement formal groups inside the classroom, they should take into account factors such as the time of the activity, the number of members as well as the objective of the group work. Students should work together in order to reach common objectives, making sure that every team's member completes the task provided by the teacher; the objective is to guarantee the contents of the class. In these groups, the teacher must specify the objectives of the class, make previous teaching decisions, explain the task and the positive independence of students, supervise the students learning process and give support to the groups.

According to these authors, we can see the advantages of working in formal groups. It is essential to determine the time to apply some tools inside group work; however, not all students work in the same way, and every student has individual responsibilities inside the group to achieve set objectives. Teachers basically guide the groups since they promote the learning process, permit that students have a specific role, create good relationships among them and motivate students to work with others. All these aspects are really necessary to improve student learning.

2. Informal groups

The informal groups in CL work from a few minutes to one hour, that is why it can be implemented in a direct activity such as movies, videos or theoretical classes to call the attention

and promote a positive learning environment. It consists of a short chat between a pair of students after a theoretical class. According to Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (2008) Informal CL consists of “having students work together to achieve a joint learning goal in temporary, ad-hoc groups that last from a few minutes to one class period” (p. 50).

Taking these opinions into account, we can say that is type of group is aimed at having students work in a short time since it is decisive that students reinforce their previous knowledge via different activities that teachers implement inside the classroom to achieve set class objectives through videos, worksheets, debates, journals, among other activities. This type of group also aims at recognizing the effectiveness of students when explaining topics since teachers can make sure that students are able to explain, summarize, organize and integrate the contents of the class during a specific activity.

3. Cooperative-based groups

They are heterogeneous groups of students with permanent members who work for a long term, at least for one year, whose objectives are to help one another in order to get a good performance at school. Cooperative-based groups allow us to create responsible and lasting relationships as well as a good cognitive and social development. It is important to know that in this type of group cooperation is permanent and group members work for a long time - a pair of months or all the year. In these groups members support one another and every student is accountable for the success of the group. When teachers are willing to implement this type of group, it is important to know the level of students, the objective of the project, the students' roles, how they will carry out the process to achieve the objectives of the project as well as how they will create a good environment and proper relationships among themselves.

What should Teachers consider to implement CL?

Basic Elements

In order to make any CL group work properly, Burden (2000) proposes three essential elements that must be explicitly incorporated by the teacher: knowledge, responsibility and skills. In relation to the first element, knowledge, it is essential to take into account that the teacher needs to have a solid knowledge of the use and management of CL. For this reason, the author points out that teachers must “propose a clear and objective group for students to know whether they are to sink or swim together. This positive interdependence creates a commitment to the success of others, besides their own, which is the basis of CL” (p. 54). Teachers have to clarify the class objective, and give clear instructions; this helps students to accomplish tasks in the right way avoiding that participants misunderstand the goal of the activity.

The second essential element of CL is individual and group responsibility because the group must take responsibility to achieve their goals, and each member will be responsible for carrying out the task assigned. For this reason, assigning roles within the CL groups is a foremost element that leads to group success given that students have to accomplish an individual task and work as a team to reach the objective assigned by the teacher.

In regard to the third element, skills, it is essential to highlight that the development of social and communicative competences allow students to create strong links with their partners and, at the same time, learn about important subjects. Burden (2000) claims that “CL is inherently more complex than competitive or individualistic because it requires students to learn about school subjects (task performance) and interpersonal and group practices, both necessary to function as part of a group (teamwork) (p. 54). CL allows students to create learning strategies in

which they can learn not only about subjects assigned at the school but also about how to work in group and how to solve problems inside the group. It is important to mention that social and communicative skills are spread progressively because students who master and use these skills can help others to learn them, creating a more cooperative environment rather than a competitive one.

Distribution of Students

The main focus of CL is group work; hence, it is essential to determine how to distribute students inside teamwork. The distribution of students in groups promotes the productivity of a group because it is determined by the ability of its members to work in teams; groups formed by students with different levels and different interests allow students to access to diverse perspectives and problem-solving methods, thus producing higher cognitive imbalance necessary to stimulate learning and cognitive development of all students (Holubec, 2000). Students' skills are the first aspect to take into account since group work involves students' various interests and perspectives regarding work itself. Consequently, it is essential to have the ability to solve problems and difficulties that may arise in the process, but, at the same time, this fact promotes curiosity in students in connection with their own learning and cognitive development inside the group.

Holubec (2000) points out that randomization is the easiest and most efficient way to distribute students when forming groups because it simply divides the numbers of students in a class by the number of members intended in each group. This method allows students to interact with other peers while learning about their perspectives and approaches; it also promotes

tolerance and respect for others' opinions and points of view. But all this depends on the distribution that teachers make when using this randomization technique.

Randomization allows teachers to decide who will work with whom. This ensures that no group has a majority of students who work little or two students who tend to mutually alter group behavior. This permits teachers to control group work while making sure that all students working in that specific group are responsible and work in the same way to achieve the outcome expected.

Weinsteinidy (2011) affirms that "the groups selected by students themselves are least advisable because when selected by students they tend to be homogeneous, the members of groups are all good students, or all white, all men or good friends" (p. 275). In different opportunities we can see that groups formed by students themselves are likely to show misbehavior and transgression because not all students work in the same way; in some cases only one or two students carry out all the work. Depending on the class objective, teachers can use the type of group distribution desired, but definitely group selection by students themselves is not advisable.

Students' Feedback

To make a correct use of CL, it is necessary to know that there are many ways to form groups, but this is not the only fact that teachers have to deal with; they also have to consider feedback. Johnson (1994) points out that feedback is a kind of group-assessment among students, in which they can talk about their process and how they are achieving the results depending on the strategies they use to achieve a specific objective. Teachers need to give parameters in connection with students' feedback including time, interest, and collaboration, among others. By

giving these parameters, teachers avoid *sharp and drastic* feedback; students can follow these instructions to have better mutual feedback as well as feedback from the teacher. In this process, it is important that students reflect upon the positive and negative comments that their peers make in order to improve and, eventually, have better results.

Thanks to feedback, students perform better and can overcome the obstacles that do not allow them to successfully achieve the desired objective. With this in mind, it is possible to achieve better results through cooperative work activity and enhance group effectiveness. Burden (2000) states that “students should receive feedback from their work, thus reflecting upon the possible ways to increase effectiveness of their actions and planning how to work even better in future group sessions” (p. 132). To perform better in the future, students should consider both the job that each member of the group accomplishes and how group work was completed. Students can attain reflective feedback in which they give positive and not so positive outcomes in order to make adjustments within the group and be more successful.

Classroom Dynamics

As it is quite important to think about teams more than about students when using CL, teacher should also pay attention to the class environment and layout to promote motivation. Chan (2004) states that classroom layout is the way in which teachers manage the classroom, that is, the way in which students and teachers are involved in educational activities and create forms of communication. The objective of classroom management is to improve the time of students engaged in a task, so that classroom configuration is important and basic when managing student behavior since it promotes individual responsibility and creates better relationships between and among others.

In addition, the author states that when teachers decide to organize the classroom in a cooperative way, they should think that they are helping students not only to join efforts in a particular subject but also to help them engage in better social relationships both within and outside the classroom, thus improving, by all means, their social and communicative skills. In addition, good classroom arrangement facilitates movement and interactions in the classroom, guides the work students are accomplishing and avoids certain discipline problems. To avoid classroom disruption, teachers must maintain a clear classroom layout so they can move freely around the classroom helping students to solve doubts and witnessing their learning process without disturbing them.

All of these perspectives help teachers implement CL since others' points of view are valuable inside the cooperative learning group and students enhance communicative and social skills with others. In this regard, Cooperative Learning becomes a necessary tool in the classroom because learners maximize their language acquisition process as their lacks, needs and wants can be supported by peers who are accountable for achieving their group objectives.

Conclusions

Taking into account this theoretical and reflective article, we can conclude that cooperative learning help us, as pre-services teachers, to implement new strategies that let students improve their language learning process since interaction and knowledge are constructed with others in an environment where language development, respect, tolerance toward diversity, cooperation and common goals are at the core of the class seen as the microsystem of education.

When we as teachers decide to use cooperative learning, we have to observe our students from a critical stance and thus have a clear idea about their needs and the way CL may be used

inside the classrooms to enhance learning and reduce competition. We as pre-service teachers have to create a cooperative environment among the students by implementing a positive interdependence inside the class which may lead students to reflect upon the fact that success depends on team work rather than selfish accomplishment.

It is important to clearly state the roles that are assumed within the groups by both the teacher and the students because the implementation of Cooperative Learning inside EFL classrooms break monotonous practices and encourages social learning. Besides, this method brings along different advantages since it makes learners more responsible, promotes respect for others' opinions, creates a cooperative environment in which each student is important, promotes interpersonal relationships, increases self-esteem and strengthens meaningful learning.

Cooperative Learning leaves room for new learning experiences because the teacher takes into account students' needs, enhances social skills, creates a motivating and better environment for learning and provides the participants with a space not only to communicate with freedom but also to make emphasis on the resolution of conflicts.

When students notice that the work of each member is indispensable for the group to achieve the objectives, their learning process is enhanced as they take advantages of others and gather efforts to achieve common goals. Considering that each student has an important role inside the group, cooperative work may lead students to help others not only in the classroom but also outside the school making them construct the cooperative society that our country demands.

Taking into account that we observed at the practicum settings that teachers continue misunderstanding the implementation of Cooperative Learning, educators might use this article to improve their lessons in such a way that students can identify weaknesses and maximize

strengths. We should incorporate this method into the teaching practice because students are provided with the opportunity to interact, learn from others, assess their performance and become open-minded to criticisms.

We also conclude that cooperative learning develops students' communicative competence because learners need to work in teams and have the necessity to communicate their opinions, ideas and thoughts in an oral and written way. This is likely to happen given that students listen, respect and understand the others member of the team while making a good use of the language, either in Spanish or English for achieving the team's goal.

Teachers should keep in mind that Cooperative Learning may be successfully implemented in EFL classrooms if they first work on social aspects for improving relationships among students. Having learners reflect upon the importance of dealing with conflicts they may face with their teammates creates an optimal learning environment and avoids that personal issues affect academic performance. We as language educators should not be so worried about *What* to teach but we had better revise the *How* the *Why* in the teaching-learning process because the content does not provide knowledge but classroom dynamics do.

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