



Received: 15-09-2022

Accepted: 25-10-2022

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Application of Cooperative Learning Strategy in English as L2 Classroom

Dr. Ibrahim Aisha Abdullahi

Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ibrahim Aisha Abdullahi

Abstract

This paper focuses on the relevance of the cooperative learning approach. The approach in the foreign language classroom is believed to increase language use, improve communicative skills, build confidence and stimulate learner autonomy. It also looked at the meaning of cooperative learning seen as a communal activity in which learning is carried out through the mutual exchange of information. Within the framework, group members are responsible for their own construction of knowledge as well as for facilitating the learning of the group members, strategies for cooperative learning, principles through creating conditions for language learning and knowledge of the learners, advantage cooperative learning in allowing interdependency and cooperation within the group giving opportunities to

group member to accept the ideas and thought of other group members and disadvantages not all students may participate equally in collaborative activities, with the more serious students shouldering the responsibilities for the assigned task., disadvantages; It expensive in that learning environment that will allow positive interdependence and cooperation is needed in cooperative learning as well recommendation Teachers must be properly trained in the field of cooperative learning as well as Remediate package by making teachers in cooperative learning to be properly guided to serve as a pivot to students in organizing and formulating objective though the approach is learner-centred. A conclusion is also drawn.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Strategies, Grouping, Interaction

Introduction

English language learning develops through different methods and techniques over time. But the development of the learning process has always been positive or met the expectation of language learning. The initiation of a cooperative learning strategy has come to change the learning process. The approach is concerned with group learning in which interdependence and interaction surface. Based on the understanding that the purpose of education has undergone a dramatic change moving from the surface level, role instruction a teacher from a text frame to a learner-centred context-grounded approach in which the goal is to foster the ability of learners to communicate with others, find relevant and accurate information in the task at hand and be co-learners with teachers in a diverse setting. Fer (2009) ^[1] explained that teaching methodologies are increasingly formulated around a constructivist approach, where learners are expected to actively create new understanding by integrating their existing knowledge with new experiences. Among many students centred instructional techniques employed in the constructivist classroom, cooperative learning has been extensively documented as an effective means for increasing learner retention, building communicative and social skills as well as developing students, and critical thought ability (Jonson & Johnson, 1994) ^[2].

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning has been described by Kagan (1994) ^[3] as a communal activity in which learning is carried out through the mutual exchange of information. This learning activity is from the framework of a group. The group members are responsible for the construction of knowledge as well as for facilitating the learning of the group members. It is a kind of approach where learners are allowed to exchange ideas or thought among themselves with the guidance of a teacher. Salavin (1994) ^[4] believed that “cooperative learning is particularly beneficial for any student learning a second language; the activities in this approach promote peer interaction which helps the development of language learners (ELLs) in different groups or teams so that they can benefit from English language role models. Learners express themselves with greater confidence when working in small teams.

Rational behind Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is drawn from the work of socioculturalists such as Vygotsky, and psychologists such as Piaget. These proponents concentrated on the role of community and social interaction in all aspects of learning. They believed in fostering a positive learning environment for all group members as well as developing important social skills, improving communicative ability, and providing a positive model for lifelong learning (Kagan, 1994) ^[3]. In another development, the practice of cooperative learning has been critically shaped by the sociocultural theory of education (Singh & Richards, 2006) ^[5]. Singh and Richards (2006) ^[5] believed that language is an instrument of communication through which individuals share ideas and feelings with others; a logical instrument and primarily a social one. Hoidn and Reusser (2020) ^[6] criticized the traditional approach in that it makes learners passive instead of active. They believed that learners are to construct knowledge by active engagement with lesson material through social interactions. Hoidn and Reusser (2020) ^[6] stated that the active side precedes the passive in the development of learners' nature. They sum it up that is learner is a member of society, one of several individuals who work together towards a common cause and schools should be transformed into forms of social life.

Features of Cooperative Learning

Considering the role and position of cooperative learning as an interactive teaching and learning strategy, Johnson and Johnson (1994) ^[2] outline five features of cooperative learning. Thus:

1. **Positive interdependence:** In this feature, each member of the group is responsible for the success of the group as a whole and assigned a fair share of work.
2. **Face-to-face interaction:** In this feature, students work in close physical proximity, which enables them to communicate easily and provides opportunities for oral practice.
3. **Individual Accountability:** This is a feature where every student is accountable for carrying out his or her assigned task, all members are aware that every individual member has a role to play in completing the activity.
4. **Group Processing:** This is a feature whereby students throughout the activity, group members are aware of their learning at a metacognitive level. Group processing provides students with a chance to give and receive feedback and enhance the skill of group members.
5. **Social skills:** This is a feature of group learning activities that provide opportunities for communication and interaction, leadership, decision-making, and conflict management that encourage students to use these skills in the classroom.

It is important to emphasize that these should be carefully examined before setting the target group. Singh & Richards (2006) ^[5] emphasized that learners in a cooperative context are encouraged to take charge of their learning by being active participants in the practice, integration, and negotiation of meaning. This can be done throughout the stages of the instructional process: individual, pairs, small group, and whole-class discussion. They noted that learning is something that requires students' direct involvement and participation.

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Cooperative learning is carried out through the use of some strategies. These strategies can be used with all students to learn content (language and another field). However, these strategies are particularly beneficial to students learning English Language skills and content knowledge. Calderon (1990) ^[7] identified the following as strategies for effective cooperative learning.

1. **Round Robin:** present a category (such as "names of mammals") for discussion. Have students turn going around the group and name items that fit in the category. In the current practice of using another approach, teachers do not take this procedure; instead, they only request students to name some mammals without a cooperative learning style.
2. **Round Table:** in this strategy, the language instructors present categories (such as words that begin with ("Sh")). Have students take turns writing one word at a time. Most teachers encourage students to write words in categories instead of one category in other instructional methods. The difference here is that Language learners work in groups and enjoy communal freedom.
3. **Writer Around:** this is a strategy in which the language teacher gives a starter. For example, when teaching comprehension, creative writing, or summarization, teachers can give an example of a worked-out solution, sentence starters, or lead-in items to the students. This guides the students in the direction to take to conquer the task ahead. For example: if Chike did not go to the river... The teacher can ask students in each team to finish the sentence. Then they share their answered script with the next group, they read the one they received and make a sentence to that one. After a few rounds, four great stories or summaries emerge. The teacher gives learners time to add a conclusion and add/or edit their favourite one to share with the class. In this practice, Teachers will only read a story to students and ask them to make summaries and in turn make students perform some tasks. Teachers revisit their work and identify where the learners have problems and provide necessary intervention.
4. **Number Heads Together:** The language teacher asks the students to number off in their teams from one to four (depending on his demand). He then reads the question and gives a time limit. The students cooperate and lock their heads together to negotiate an answer. The evaluation goes through the process of calling all the students with a common number to tell them their answers to the question. They listen and comment thereafter. This promotes discussion.
5. **Team Jigsaw:** This is a strategy in which language teachers assign students to a group and each member of a group has a part of a whole task to perform. Each group member works out their task independently. For example, a teacher groups students and assign each student in a group one-fourth of a passage to read from the text. When each student completes his/her assignment, the teacher helps to put together a team product a piece of the puzzle to solve. This kind of strategy is used as gamification in language learning.
6. **Tea Party:** This is a strategy whereby a language teacher leads the students to form concentric circles or queue up facing each other. The teacher poses questions

(on any content) and asks students to discuss the answer with other students facing them. After one minute the outside circle or line one moves to the right so that students have new partners. Then poses a second question for them to discuss and continues to a little variation, students can write questions on cards to review for a test through the “tea party” method.

After each cooperative learning activity, you will want to brief the children by asking such questions as; what did you learn from this activity? How did you feel working with your teammates? If this is done again, how will you improve working together?

Principles of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning can be conducted under the following principles. For instance,

Principle 1: Knowledge of the Learners

The language teacher has to have basic information about the students. This includes the students’ families, language learning styles, cultural affiliations, and linguistics backgrounds among others to engage them in the language classroom. This informs the teachers’ preparation, grouping, lesson delivery, and assessment. For example,

Teachers gain information about their learners.

Teachers collect information about their students’ linguistic and educational backgrounds to determine the correct placement for students. They also seek to learn a new student’s cultural and geographical background as a resource for classroom learning.

Teachers embrace and leverage the resources that learners bring to the classroom to enhance learning.

Teachers tap their learners’ prior knowledge purposefully in their teaching. They try to determine what gifts and talents students bring to the classroom, what interests motivate them, what life experiences they have had that are curriculum-related, and what else in their backgrounds has influenced their personalities and beliefs.

Principle 2: Create conditions for language learning

Teachers build a unique classroom culture that is comfortable to students irrespective of their individual differences. They take proper management of all the physical, materials, and the social environment to promote language learning. For example,

Teachers demonstrate high expectations of success for all language learners in the classroom.

The success of students in language learning is affected by teacher expectations. Therefore, the teachers’ expectations must be communicated to students for them to exert effort in meeting their instructors’ expectations. This can motivate them to perform at a high level.

Teachers include motivational strategies at every step of language learning.

The teacher tries to prove students’ performance in the course of language learning. This feedback is essential in making students shoulder the responsibility of their learning process and spend more time and energy.

Principle 3: Lessons for Language Development

Teachers plan their English language according to the curriculum objectives respecting students learning strategies. This promotes language learning and makes students develop critical thinking skills.

Teachers prepare lessons with clear objectives, instructional steps, and evaluation criteria where feedback is communication for immediate corrections.

Teachers shall exhibit the skill of guide to students learning. This is essential English language learning where students’ experience and active participation in learning the content are demonstrated. Interaction and negotiation are keys to group discussion.

Teachers engage language learners in the use of the English language in the context of the situation. Regular practice and the authentic use of the language prove effective in the learning process.

Democratize language classroom. This is done through increased student interaction. In many classrooms, some students tend to be silent, quiet, and unproductive while group activities are in session. This behaviour can be handled by proper engagement of every group member with a task be listening, speaking, reading, or writing.

Principle 4: Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed

Teachers assess students regularly in their language instructions. This can be in form of observation, eliciting a response, reflecting on the previous records and correlating them with previous performance towards achieving the goals of the instructional program. For example, Teachers check students’ comprehension ability frequently for the adjustment of the instruction when and where necessary.

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