

Cooperative Language Learning as a Positive Influence on Large Classes in EFL Settings

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NOTA DE RESPONSABILIDAD

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Nota de Aceptación

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Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my baby daughter Maria Antonia and my Mother.

Resumen

Este documento habla de las notables ventajas que tiene el aplicar el aprendizaje de idiomas cooperativo como un enfoque de los métodos para la enseñanza de inglés a hablantes de otros idiomas. Por eso, el propósito de este trabajo es mostrar que tan efectivo y productivo es el uso del aprendizaje de idiomas cooperativo en ambientes donde se aprende una lengua extranjera y que cuentan con clases numerosas. Así, los fundamentos del aprendizaje de idiomas cooperativo, su importancia, sus objetivos y sus características son discutidos a través de las siguientes páginas. Además, el concepto y la teoría importante detrás de las clases numerosas y de los contextos de lengua extranjera son mencionados también, ya que estas son dos de las condiciones más comunes cuando se trabaja con la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas. Como resultado este documento también propone algunos pasos y estrategias importantes con el fin de llevar a cabo una clase de inglés usando este enfoque. Finalmente, los profesores son animados para que se concienticen acerca de los beneficios que otorga el aprendizaje de idiomas cooperativo puesto que este enfoque puede traer mejores resultados tomando en cuenta un contexto de lengua extranjera específico.

Palabras Claves: Aprendizaje de idiomas cooperativo, clases numerosas, aprendizaje, idioma.

Abstract

This paper discusses the remarkable advantages of applying CLL as an approach from TESOL methods. Hence, the purpose of this work is to show how effective and productive is the use of Cooperative Language Learning in EFL settings that count on large classes. So, CLL foundations, its relevance, its objectives, and its characteristics are discussed throughout the next pages. Furthermore, the concept and relevant theory behind large classes and EFL settings are mentioned too since they are some of the most common conditions when working in EFL learning and teaching. As a result, this document also proposes some steps and important strategies in order to carry out an English class by using this approach. Finally, teachers are encouraged to be aware about the benefits CLL provides for it may bring better results while taking into account a specific foreign language context.

Key words: Cooperative Language Learning (CL L), large classes, learning, language.

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Introduction

Throughout the years, foreign language learning and teaching has been influenced by a communicative rationale. It can be seen in the use of several teaching methods and approaches which evolved gradually depending on the learners' needs. Thus, language learning started with the use of several methods and approaches which were focused on the specific skills and that compose a determined language: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Therefore, some of the most used ones were the Grammar Translation method and the Audiolingual Method. The former was merely focused on accuracy without involving the learner's participation. The latter created a sense of discontent due to its persistent focus on the listening skills without involving the rest of abilities (Richards & Rogers, 1986). The evident lack of student mastery of the language led to the invention of new approaches which took into account the communicative part of language learning. Some of the most remarkable ones are Communicative Language Teaching, Community Language Learning, and Cooperative Language Learning.

The purpose for Communicative Language Teaching was to let learners use the target language in a communicative way in order to express their ideas and thoughts. Community Language Learning tried to foster interaction by means of making students feel comfortable in the classroom. This normally included translation, transcription and recordings of the student's final output (Richards & Rogers, 1986).

Cooperative Language Learning is an approach that promotes the interaction of learners by using the target language in order to fulfill a purpose. For this reason, the importance of this method lies in the fact that students develop several abilities and skills while they work in a foreign language task, and become active members of a learning team. Large classes in Pasto are often characterized by numerous

constraints such as the number of students, the lack of available resources, and time limits that present a challenge for teachers. Hence, this paper is aimed to provide some meaningful ideas for EFL language learning and teaching by using CLL in large classes in order for teachers to manage with the most typical problems during an English lesson, and make these limitations become an advantage for the full process.

Cooperative Language Learning as a Positive Influence on Large Classes in EFL Settings

Cooperative Language Learning has its foundations at the beginning of the twentieth century. At this point John Dewey was seen as one of the main promoters of fostering cooperation in language learning. Cooperative Language Learning appeared as an extended option for the already known CLT approach (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Johnson and Johnson and Holubec (1994 as cited in Richards and Rogers, 2001) stated that it focuses on the possibility to ensure certain criteria such as:

- The accomplishment of linguistic mastery of the complete number of students in a class: the ones who are skillful and the ones who have academic difficulties.
- Cooperative Language Learning provides the teacher the possibility of building encouraging relationships among learners.
- Providing the learners with enough experiences for social, cognitive and psychological improvement.
- Swapping the competitive organizational creation of the majority of classrooms and schools, where a team-based, high-performance, organizational structure is reflected.

Relevance of Cooperative Learning

Weidner (2003 as cited in Fehling, 2008) stated that cooperative learning is important for the cultural, economic and social changes in western societies. These changes are expected in single-parent and one child families since children from these places tend to use media and technological resources to improve their interpersonal skills. Consequently, schools have to offer cooperative learning environments.

On the other hand, cooperative learning is linked to constructivism which is based on the children's cognitive skills developed thanks to the relationship between an individual and his/her setting. Thus, in the constructivism theory there are two principles for an efficient learning: autonomy and cooperation. So, learning can be also improved when students are accountable for their individual learning, in spite of cooperative work is also necessary to connect and adapt their own concepts.

Besides, CLL is an approach that brings several benefits as in the case of EFL settings, including large classes. In order to understand them, it is important to make a review about its main objectives as a communicative approach in language learning and teaching.

Objectives of Cooperative Language Learning

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is characterized by several objectives which describe the main goals to be reached in a lesson. According to Richards and Rogers (2014) these are:

- To give opportunities for a natural second language acquisition through team tasks.
- To provide teachers an appropriate methodology to be used in a variety of settings.

- To focus attention to particular lexical items and language structures through interactive activities.
- To give opportunities for students to develop learning and communication strategies.
- To improve learners' motivation and reduce stress in a positive atmosphere.

The previous objectives present an approach to language learning which is especially focused on learner-centered group work. In the case of EFL settings like the ones that can be found in Pasto, there are some drawbacks for the application of these strategies. Normal high schools are comprised by numerous classes, limited time and poor resources which affect enormously the natural flow in the learning and teaching process. For this reason the inclusion of Cooperative Language Learning allows teachers and students to create a closed bond between the target language and their expectations towards the course itself.

Another important issue in CLL is to keep in mind the main characteristics that surround this approach. In Pasto's high schools for instance, it is common to find numerous amounts of students in every classroom and deadlines in the case of time which have led teachers to work with traditional teaching methods that do not include active participation or interaction from the student's part. CLL characteristics present a new way of teaching that may be the first step to make a change in language learning and teaching. These aspects are indicated as follows.

Characteristics of Cooperative Language Learning

Cooperative Language Learning counts on many aspects and elements to be applied. One of the main characteristics of this approach is setting a group work in order to achieve a common objective. Another practical feature emerges from the fact that students who learn individually do not have the

same advantages on issues such as “encouraging inherent motivation, intensifying self-esteem, producing gentle and humane relationships, lowering concern and predisposition” (Oxford, 1997, p. 445 as cited in Brown, 2007).

Cooperative Language Learning is not only a matter of collaboration in which learners and teachers work together to achieve the objectives proposed. It is also a more constructed and stricter approach to teachers about classroom procedures. Besides, it helps to rule students in regard to how they have to work in organized teams. (Oxford, 1997 as cited in Brown, 2007)

Another important aspect is that this approach provides interactive learning. This is important since negotiation of meaning and the concept of “give and take” are an essential part of a communicative environment. Communication goals of a conversation depend on how a person transmits his or her message, and on the abilities that a listener has when this interaction is happening. Thus, Brown (2007) claimed that an interactive learning environment can be recognized due to the presence of the following factors:

- Doing a remarkable quantity of pair work and group work.
- Receiving trustworthy language contribution in real life circumstances.
- Generating language for concrete and significant communication.
- Carrying out tasks in the classroom which engage students for real language in an English speaking context.
- Practicing oral communication using “give and take” and impulsiveness of authentic conversations.

- Writing to and for factual listeners, not biased ones.

For this reason, one of the first steps to be followed is to learn how to learn in a cooperative way. Sometimes teachers may forget that this discipline is connected to some of the most accurate means for linguistic accomplishment. Learners are, as a matter of fact, traditionally focused on assumptions without regarding the communicative skills used on real-life situations (Canagarajah 1993, 2005; Cohen 1994 Kumaravadivelu 2001, Li 1998 as cited in Hammond, 2009). There are some traditional elements that show how English learners can cooperate in teams while counting on the awareness that learners should have with these rules:

- Cooperative Language Learning emphasizes social communication as a way of interaction. In addition, CLL allows to develop communicative competence since performing in social interaction permits to see how structural and advised knowledge can be acquired by carrying out a task. Second, it helps to develop accurate thinking abilities, and it is one of the advantages while learning a second language. The benefits are reflected on all skills where critical abilities are performed. (Kagan, 1995).
- Another important element when working with CLL is that students can achieve individual aims while helping the members of a group to reach a common target in which a team gets a reliable outcome. Sometimes it may be compared with competitive learning in which students compete in order to obtain a high grade. (Johnson *et al*, 1994 as cited on Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Considering Second Language Instruction (Mcgroarty, 1989 as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) suggested six learning benefits for ESL students in a class where instructional knowledge is taught through CLL. They are supposed to increase the regular use of the target language in open ways. These are:

- It allows teachers to get a considerable amount of work in a classroom in which there is a great variety of tasks. There, it must be taken into account that in a daily life situation, learners are not expected to work only with one possibility.
- It gives the chance of developing, or using language in different ways while encouraging their cognitive progress and amplified language abilities.
- It considers the aid of another instructional approach which is Content-Based Instruction along with integrated language.
- It is strictly connected with materials. That is to say, the variety of curricular tools, motivating language use, and conceptual knowledge.
- It provides the teachers with freedom that leads to an innovation of skills; mainly those which engage communication.
- It creates some opportunities for students to perform roles when interacting with each other. In this way, students assume a more dynamic position in their learning process.

Yet, organization is another element that should be taken into consideration when implementing CLL in classrooms. Olsen and Kagan (1995) proposed the following elements which are crucial for a successful team in CLL:

- Positive interdependence
- Group formation
- Individual accountability
- Social skills

- Structuring and structures.

One of the components that a class should include is real-life tasks. Real-life tasks are mostly characterized by some facts such as:

- Students working with the same resources.
- The development of the class can be guided by a traditional model like the presentation of new material created by the teacher.
- Everyone in the group knows how to participate and how to solve the task.
- Allowing everyone in the group to participate, and to engage with the possibility of showing the final outcome. This is a handy tool in order to check or to assess if the students are able to work together in a group. Moreover, the student has to be able to demonstrate that the main goals of the task were achieved. This last technique is very effective in conditions where the organization of the groups is not stable, or where learners are frequently divided into new groups.

As it is noticed, the previous aspects require certain conditions in order to include some specific criteria and tasks. EFL settings from Pasto normally count on a great amount of students and lack of resources which represents a challenge for teachers, and the way they choose to teach their lessons. Consequently, these settings have different constraints which hinder the teacher's work when trying to foster interaction among students. As a result, students' attention and motivation is dispersed and it generates a tough environment between the teacher and the students. For this reason, teachers may be knowledgeable about the different roles and functions that CLL proposes in order to carry out a lesson based upon its interactive principles.

Teachers' and Students' roles in Cooperative Language Learning

An effective use of CLL tasks and activities takes into account the following roles for both students and teachers:

In this model, students work in a collaborative way on the activities proposed with different group members. Students in this case are expected to develop group work skills, and they also have to be monitoring their own progress. They are supposed to be provided with necessary directions in order to plan, check and assess their outcome while developing lifelong learning abilities. Thus, the role that students perform in this process must be active and clear (Johnson et al. 1994 as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001). CLL composition provides a considerable amount of time for learners to carry out a task. Learners, in this case, are in charge of monitoring, checking, recording, and they have to be able to share information.

According to Apple (2006), CLL provides great opportunities for learners to take a special role within their own groups. So, if any member does not fulfill his or her functions, the task development may fail in its objective. Some of the most important learner roles as suggested by this author are:

- *Facilitator*. Someone who makes sure that everybody is working on the task.
- *Recorder*. Someone who takes notes on his or her group's general work.
- *Summarizer*. Someone who summarizes the group's answers or work.
- *Reporter*. Someone who presents the group's work to another one.
- *Time-keeper*. Someone who is attentive to the amount of time that is left to finish the whole task.

The role that the teacher has to perform in CLL differs remarkably from the roles they had in traditional teacher-fronted lessons. CLL demands the teacher to create an environment which is strictly

organized and structured. Furthermore, he or she has to set the aims, design tasks, prepare the physical environment of the classroom, design and create groups of work, choose the appropriate materials, and design the time frame. The teacher, in this case, is the provider of learning. He or she is in charge of checking, moving around the class and aiding the groups. (Johnson et al. 1994 as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001)

There are some other roles which depend on the task itself (Apple, 2006). Furthermore, the instructor may be the person in charge of assigning the roles to each student, or allow them to choose their functions freely. An important issue to be taken into account is that the same student does not work in the same role when roles are changed in the group. The teacher has to make sure that all students have been able to work on the different roles, or at least on most of them when a task is given.

An important distinction to be done is the one between Traditional Small Groups and Cooperative Learning Teams. In Traditional Small Groups, the teacher simply asks the students to work in groups in order to solve a specific task. Thus, there is not any structured interdependence between each member nor individual accountability; consequently, communication skills are not emphasized, or they are taken for granted. The instructor may sometimes resort to choose a leader in the group. However, much more importance is given to the task to be done rather than in the group processing necessary for developing it. At the end of the task, each person is responsible only for themselves. The teacher may also abandon the groups until the time for the task is finished.

In contrast, Cooperative Learning Teams require positive interdependence among all members in the groups, and they are of course responsible for the group's success in the

development of the task. It is expected that learners reach individual accountability on their work. Great importance is given to communication skills which are directly taught or promoted as a useful tool in the group's work. Different roles are assigned, and there is exchangeable leadership in the groups which are continuously monitored by the teacher. All group members work together in order to adjust their behaviors to the advantage of getting a successful task. There is emphasis in both the task and the students' roles in the task. So, the instructor may sometimes intervene in the group's performance in order to guarantee the appropriate fulfillment of the process.

On this account, it is necessary to reconsider the concept of CLL's basic pattern since it introduces the main way in which students are supposed to work within this approach, and some of the most advisable activities to be carried out in an EFL classroom.

The Basic CLL Pattern

Apple (2006) suggested some examples for CLL activities, and in the same way, he proposed the basic pattern of general CLL activities. This basic pattern is characterized by a group of learners who are organized in a square-shape form. The learner who is sat next to another one is called his or her "shoulder partner" while the classmates who are sat behind him or her and or in front of him are named "face partners". This pattern is advised in classes where there are large numbers of students, and also for rooms where there is not enough space for the teacher to move around the class.

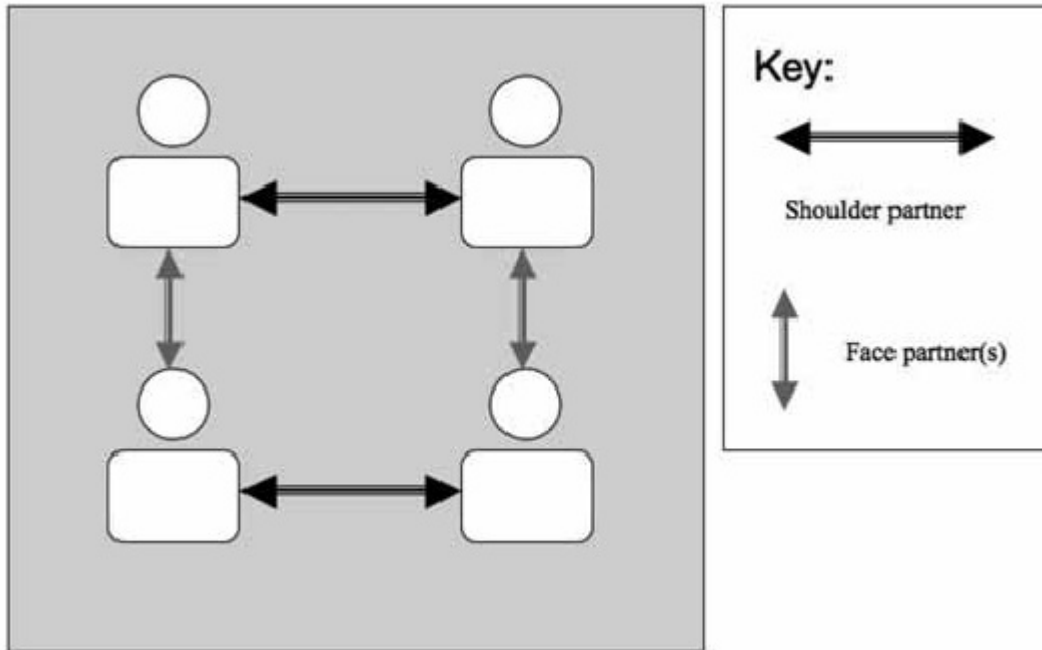


Figure 1. The basic CL pattern (Apple, 2006, p. 289)

On the other hand, there are some clues that can be taken into consideration so that CLL presents positive and meaningful results for the learner. In this way, the teacher can follow some guidelines on implementing CLL tasks which are adapted to several EFL conditions, and the different teaching practicums.

Guidelines on Implementing CLL Tasks

EFL settings are commonly characterized by several conditions which may affect the execution of the activities that this approach proposes. Large classes as can be seen in Pasto include disruptive behavior, lack of attention and disinterest from the part of the students. These factors make the teacher focus his or her attention on solving this problem rather than on keeping the continuity of the topic being explained. In regard to this, it is important to compare both

teaching methodologies to make the teacher notice these differences before applying the upcoming techniques.

| | Traditional Language Teaching | Cooperative Language Learning |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Independence | Negative | Positive |
| Learner roles | Passive receiver and performer. | Active participation and Autonomous learning. |
| Teacher roles | Controller of the teaching pace, learners' judgment and source of assistance. | Counselor and facilitator of the communication groups. |
| Materials | Complete materials for each learner. | A group shares materials. |
| Types of Activities | Role plays, translations and listening, etc. | Information sharing and negotiation of meaning. |
| Interaction | Teacher-student interaction. | Students-Students and Teacher students. |
| Room arrangement | Separate desks | Collaborative small groups. |
| Students expectations | Be a winner or loser | Contribute to the group success. |
| Teacher-student relationship | Teacher – superior Student- inferior | Cooperating and equals |

Table 1. Comparison of Cooperative Language Learning and Traditional Approaches

From Zhang (2010 as cited in Richards & Rogers, 2014)

Having a clear understanding of these differences between both methodologies is an important issue in order to modify each teacher teaching styles and classroom management in

search of more interaction. In this sense, Sachs, Candlin and Rose (2003) presented the most important stages to be followed when talking about tasks in CLL. These are:

Pre-Task Phase: Pre-Task Activities

Pre-task activities can be used to incorporate all students to examine the task, and to arouse their interest in the proposed activity. For this, teachers can talk about the topic, or use a similar experience, brainstorm with the help of the student's doubts in regard to the situation being presented, use a picture about the task, and foster learners' participation about what they already know.

- ***Identifying topic language.*** It is important that teachers remind students about some useful language that they will be using when developing the task. Students may try to come up with related words by means of brainstorming, and from the teacher's explanation. There, the teacher can also mention some necessary words or phrases that learners may not be supposed to know.
- ***Giving task instructions.*** Teachers should make sure that the task is clear for all students, that is, what it requires to be developed, its main purpose, and the final outcome that they are to get. This is advisable since not all students are used to work with task-based exercises. Students who know the methodology can be cheered up to read the instructions on their own.

During Task Phase: Facilitating Tasks

- ***Allowing preparation time.*** It is recommended to give students some time for them to prepare before involving themselves in the task. Research has proved that this allows

them to use the target language in several aspects such as vocabulary, syntax and fluency in a more complex and natural way.

- ***Balancing target language and mother tongue use.*** When this methodology is used for the first time, teachers should clarify that if learners want to communicate effectively in the target language, they need to practice. Teachers should also be aware of the fact that weaknesses in the target language use are not important since the task presents relevant opportunities to practice. To do this, teachers can talk about how people learn, the conditions that surround this learning, and the usefulness of speaking to reach this purpose. Besides, rules can be given in the mother tongue and/or created with the help of the students so that everybody can agree on them.

Feedback Phase: Concluding Tasks

- ***Reporting after the task.*** When the task is already finished, it is common to see that all students want to know about how the rest of their classmates fulfilled the same goals. Thus, the teacher can make students present their results, or the things they found surprising either in a written or oral way to the whole group. This will also help them in the improvement of their own language scope. However, it is necessary to provide enough time to prepare this presentation.
- ***Feedback on the task.*** The last step to be carried out is to talk openly with the students about how they felt while developing the task. This includes its design, its difficulty level, the language that was used, the time that was given to accomplish it, and the communicative and related problems they could have experienced with it. It can be

possible for learners to use their mother tongue to express their opinions, and give feedback on their work since it will make them feel more comfortable.

Yang (2009) includes some other activities that teachers may use for improving English language skills such as:

- ***Real Life Learning Tasks.*** Enright and McCloskey (1985 as cited in Yang 2009) asserted that teachers may design some real life activities in order to expose students to real life questions, arguments or conversations to be used in their daily lives.
- ***Task-Based Interactions.*** According to Swain (1985 as cited in Yang 2009), learners should be exposed to social interactions and negotiation of meaning with their peers since it helps them acquire comprehensible input.
- ***Learning Strategies and Skills.*** From the point of view of Smith, Cudaback, Goddard and Myers-Walls (1994 as cited in Yang 2009), there are many learning skills and strategies to improve English proficiency. For example, teachers can use questions in discussion groups of CLL so that learners feel more comfortable and willing to speak more.
- ***Creating an Authentic and Supportive Environment.*** Philips (1992 as cited in Yang 2009) pointed out that learners should be involved in a supportive atmosphere which helps them communicate orally in the language to be learned. Hence, CLL groups are useful to promote students' interchanges in order to encourage them to speak more, and in this way, reduce anxiety in the classroom.

- ***Real World Materials.*** It refers to the importance that authentic materials have (e.g. videos, newspapers) for providing a more adequate environment. Moreover, teachers need to take into consideration learners' interests, learning abilities and needs to enhance their oral skills in the target language. On the other hand, it is important to mention that integrating real-life experiences in each class gives opportunities to practice real communication in students' lives.
- ***Intensive Oral Practice.*** According to Postovsky (1974 as cited in Yang 2009) the first step to be proficient in the target language is based on intensive oral practice. So, it is important to develop the listening and speaking skills in students. Listening is related to the perception and processing of information by the learners in order to construct meaning. On the contrary, speaking requires student being aware of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation since it allows them to clarify confusions, to negotiate ideas and to solve problems. After this process, they may be able to receive appropriate feedback.

Besides, CLL uses a wide range of activities that help the learner interact with his or her peers in a more communicative atmosphere. These activities present a variety that may arise interest and motivation in learners from Pasto's high schools since they usually enjoy working in groups in order to share what they did and get meaningful feedback from their peers. This is the next aspect to be mentioned.

Cooperative Language Learning Techniques

There are many language learning techniques that can be used while implementing CLL in any subject matter and with learners of any age. According to Kagan (1994 as cited in Jacobs & Loh, 2003), the process to do this is to choose a specific CLL technique and add more content to it

so that it can be called a CLL activity. The following techniques are useful since they are practical and do not need that students move around the whole classroom. Besides, the examples were also taken from elementary school taking into account that they can be used with all types of learners:

- ***Rally Robin.*** (Kagan, 1994 as cited in Jacobs & Loh, 2003). This technique is performed in pairs. Each student gives an idea without stopping. The teacher calls just one student who is identified with a specific number to share his or her classmates' ideas to the rest of the group. Another way of applying this activity is to make students write down their own ideas while they pass a sheet of paper around every two students.
- ***Review Pairs.*** (Johnson & Johnson, 1991 as cited in Jacobs & Loh, 2003). This activity involves groups of four people that work in pairs with the same amount of work. Number 1 (the thinker) reads aloud, and thinks about the first situation proposed. Number 2 (the coach) is in charge of listening, watching, and directing the activity. The coach's role may also need some suggestions, asking and encouragement without doing the assigned work of the other classmates. These roles are exchanged regularly, and the four group members join together to talk about their conclusions. After this, they thank each other for the information obtained, and they continue with the rest of the activity.
- ***Question-and-Answer Pairs.*** (Johnson & Johnson, 1991 as cited in Jacobs & Loh, 2003). For this technique, students are asked to work in pairs in order to write some questions or problems. These questions can be related to topics that were already covered, or they can be about more difficult topics. Students are then asked to provide an answer for their own

questions, and eventually exchange them with their peers to help them with their answers.

The final step is to compare the solution to these questions.

Still, there are three important techniques which are based on the basic CLL pattern (Kagan, 1994 as cited in Apple, 2006). These are:

- ***Write-pair-switch.*** In this activity, each learner starts working alone at his or her own place. First, learners are normally asked to answer some determined questions. Second, each learner works in pairs, and shares his or her answers with the “shoulder partner”. Finally, learners “switch” partners to talk to their “face” classmates. While doing this, learners are able to summarize the ideas that they got from their previous partners. Another way to use this technique is to assign some individual work to be done outside class to the learners. Thus, when the next class comes they can be asked to work in pairs in order to socialize what they have done.
- ***Numbered Heads Together-Traveling Heads.*** This technique proposed by Kagan (1994) promotes the organization of four-person groups. Here, after the groups are created, the teacher assigns a number for each group member. When the groups have finished working on the activity, the teacher calls a number so that the students named with it stand up, and give a report on their own group’s work to the rest of the classmates. Numbered Heads Together can also demand the students to move to a different group instead of giving a general report to the class. In this way, the report should be presented to the new group to which the student moves. This last technique promotes the involvement and the active participation of all students in the final report. Besides, it reduces the anxiety that generates the possible fail in an oral presentation idea to the whole class.

- Jigsaw.** Jacobs, Power, & Loh (2002 as cited in Apple, 2006) asserted that this technique is centered in the participation of the entire class in the creation of new groups. In the same way, the teacher assigns a determined number to each student for their “home team” group. When in the groups, each student works on a different question, or aspect of the task. A short time later, each learner creates a new group with those peers who were given the same number as him or her. This new group is called “expert” or “ad hoc” (Shimo & Apple, 2006 as cited in Apple, 2006). In large classes, the teacher may resort to make two or three “expert” groups in order to ensure the four-person pattern’s use in the class. After comparing their answers in the “expert” group, the students come back to their “home team”, and they share this new information with their first peers. This technique is useful in order to engage students into convergent activities that demand learners to work on the same product.

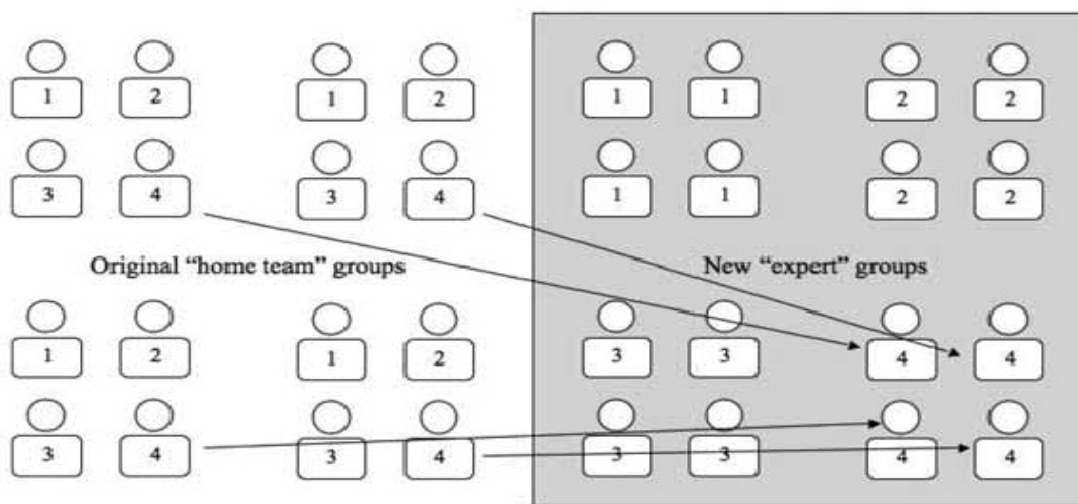


Figure 2 .The “Jigsaw” technique (Based on Jacobs, Power, & Loh, 2002, pp. 34-35).

- Carousel.** This is a common example of the spinning wheel of wooden or plastic horses which are generally seen at carnivals, and amusements parks. The technique also known

as “Merry-go-round” may be used with presentations as in the case of posters. Thus, each group is asked to create a poster and attach it to any of the classroom’s walls. The other groups go around the classroom while taking a look and evaluating their classmates’ work (Nicoll n.d. as cited in Apple, 2006). There are some other samples of Carousel, and also several ways in which a learner can make his or her group presentations such as oral, written, on paper, on computer and recording a video. The way to assess this may include simple notes, long summaries, special forms that the learners fill in, etc.

Stenlev (2003) also suggested some tasks that have to do with the use of CLL in language learning:

- **3- Step Interview.** *Step 1.* Pair- work: student A interviews student B

Step 2. Partners switch roles

Step 3. Team work: Round Robin: students explain in turn what their partner said.

This task is considered as an information-sharing structure which is used to manage material in several ways. For example, learners interview each other about two different novels taking into account important characters and settings.

- **Inside-Outside Circle.** *Step 1.* Students work in groups on a specific material.

Step 2. Students form two circles on the floor, one inside the other. The inner circle looks outwards and the outer circle inwards. The students discuss with their partner and exchange material.

Step 3. Students from the inner/outer circle move four people to the left or right in order to exchange material with a new partner.

This task gives students the opportunity to use the target language and feel relaxed with each other in a new class. It is also useful to keep the discipline in the classroom because the whole group stays together instead of spreading out into corridors.

On the other hand, this activity can foster performance skills for an oral presentation in the following way: Each student of the two circles make a presentation for their partner. The other student must pay attention to all the aspects involved in the presentation such as structure, grammar use, and some improvements. After this, students exchange roles, and give new feedback. Next, they go back to their groups to analyze the feedback received and to try to make a better performance later.

Nevertheless, Pasto's settings may have some limitations related to the students' number, available materials and time allowed for each class among others. These aspects may be dealt by the teacher successfully by taking into account some useful pieces of advice as explained by Apple (2006).

Potential Problems with CLL and Some Solutions

The methodology proposed by CLL may have some obstacles when working in EFL large classes. In this regard, authors such as Jacobs et al. (2002 as cited in Apple, 2006) stated that the main problems in these settings include excessive noise, the teacher-centered pedagogy, little individual attention to students by the teacher, and classroom organization problems. In this case, they advised some possible solutions:

- Setting up some patterns in order to reduce student's anxiety in class.
- Giving students more autonomy when making task decisions.
- Being more prepared and providing clear instructions to avoid confusion.

- Helping students enhance their collaborative skills in order to ensure that they can monitor each other effectively later.
- Using special groups in order to keep good classroom management and attendance, and to ensure the catching up of absent students.
- Making sure that students know their peers will be able to provide useful feedback apart from the teacher's one.

On the other hand, CLL is thought to help learners improve their confidence and motivation towards the second language (Jacobs et al, 2002 as cited in Apple, 2006). It is also a good tool when working with learners who have different proficiency levels. First, they can take some roles according to their proficiency, and then, they can be assigned some other functions implying more difficulty. What is more, EFL teachers may work with CLL techniques to build different linguistic fields. For example, groups may work with set phrases to work on vocabulary, include dialogues for group discussion, reading and vocabulary in simple homeworks, and written tasks matching listening exercises. There can also be some "Permission Tickets" for learners feel free to speak in their native language when there are many drawbacks to communicate in the L2. Some other advantages of working with CLL are:

- When in groups, students may be able to practice the phrases they will need for their reports.
- Roles usage allows one learner to act as a "Language Monitor". He or she cheers students up to use the L2 while working in groups.
- Some CLL techniques such as the "Write-Pair-Switch" provide students some time to prepare their speeches for the rest of the class before they begin.

Cooperative Language Learning techniques give students the chance to work on tasks that require the active participation of a learner in a group in order to get a particular purpose. By doing this, learners are able to use their personal perceptions of the world for creating strong links between their classmates, define their individual identities, and their sense of membership in their learning community. Besides, according to Murphey and Asaoka (2006 as cited in Apple, 2006), CLL makes students feel less isolated since they start to become a significant part of a collaborative atmosphere. This makes them develop emotionally and linguistically as important members of a learning group. CLL is a teaching methodology that encourages students to include cooperation in the classroom and in their daily routine activities within the society.

On this regard, the variety and different conditions found in the language learning and teaching contexts around the world lead to consider two important issues when planning to work with group-based communicative approaches. In this case, it is advisable to review some information about classroom management in EFL settings, and the characteristics of EFL teachers since they are an important part of dealing with large classes and the conditions they present.

EFL Classroom Management

Good classroom management may benefit the learning and teaching process since it produces a positive atmosphere. Classroom management involves three important aspects such as discipline, control and punishment. Thus, this concept is focused on “achieving class control and order” (Doyle, 1979 as cited in Fan, n.d). This control and order consists of the management of time, materials, place and learners.

Another important part of classroom management has to do with the physical environment of the classroom itself (Brown, 2007). For this, there are different aspects that need to be mentioned:

1. ***Sight, sound, and comfort.*** Since students are directly influenced by what they see, feel and hear, it is advisable that the teacher makes sure that the classroom is neat, the board is erased, the chairs are arranged, there is not any greatly disturbing noise from outside, and heating and cooling devices are working well if available.
2. ***Seating arrangements.*** It is of great importance to assure that students are sitting in a way in which they can see and talk to each other (in the target language). This can be done by making semicircles, U-shapes or concentric circles. In order to avoid they sit according to their own selection, it could be feasible that the teacher assigns the way they are going to sit if they are to work in small groups.
3. ***Chalkboard use.*** The chalkboard gives student great visual input, so the teacher should erase it appropriately and write on it as neatly as possible.
4. ***Equipment.*** When using electrical equipment, the teacher should make sure that all the necessary conditions for it to work are right. Some of them are related to trying the gadgets in advance to check any possible problem, allowing all students to see or hear these materials, knowing how to operate the machines and having any spare parts if they are needed at any point.
5. ***Voice and body language.*** A teacher needs to be heard by all students in a class. He or she should also try to articulate his or her words in order to guarantee that all students are

able to get her as much output as possible (Brown, 2007). Some other considerations are related to adapting the delivery rate to the types of learners and using good non-verbal clues. Besides, teachers need a confident posture, showing optimism and warmth with facial gestures, making frequent eye contact with all students, moving around the class during the lesson and dressing according to the students' cultural expectations.

In addition to this, when the teacher encounters a difficult situation to deal with as in the case of indiscipline there are some patterns to follow. Harmer (2001) advises to follow the next ideas when there is disruptive behavior:

- ***Act immediately.*** It is important to follow some steps at once, such as speaking with the student about his or her behavior after class.
- ***Stop class.*** The teacher may stop the class since this is an indication that something wrong is happening.
- ***Reseating.*** In order to stop or avoid the trouble, it is advisable to make some students sit in a different place or move them to the front of the class.
- ***Change the activity.*** An effective way of controlling learners is changing the task in which they are involved in.
- ***After class.*** The teacher explains the learners the possible consequences if the antisocial behavior continues.
- ***Using the institution.*** Many institutions carry out some programs focused on the help of learners and their parents.

In contrast, Littlewood (1984 as cited in Fan, n.d) identified some characteristics related to an appropriate EFL learning setting:

- The student needs oral interaction when using the foreign language in the classroom.
- Appropriate opportunities are given for the students in order to use the target language.
- Students like participating in the classroom in which there is an easy-going atmosphere.

The learner must have a clear need with regard to oral communication in order to acquire the target language easily. For this reason, EFL classes have to be student-centered giving them the opportunity to produce their own ideas. Learners' lack of communicative competence can cause anxiety, nervousness and fear of interacting with other people.

- **How to establish a good environment in the classroom?**

The teacher should consider some elements in order to establish a learning environment (Fan, n.d):

- **Motivation.** Learners should be motivated and be able to interact with their partners in the target language.
- **Involvement.** Activities in the classroom should attract learners' attention involving them into oral communication. Tackson, (1968 as cited in Fan, n.d) and Bloom (1976 as cited in Fan, n.d) stated that there is a positive relationship between achievement and involvement. It is important to challenge the learners to infer the meaning of some words based on the context, so that they can solve problems using the target language.
- **Relaxed atmosphere.** In order to create a positive atmosphere, teachers must be "over – critical" for reducing anxiety in the classes. However, some researchers have demonstrated that making mistakes is necessary for appropriate EFL learning.

- ***Fluency prior to accuracy.*** Littlewood (1984 as cited in Fan n.d) claimed that language fluency is more important than language accuracy. Learners always make mistakes in the learning process. Hence, the teacher should understand them, and do not push them into the fear of being wrong.

The function of punishment in EFL classes

It is important to avoid students' punishment in class because it may produce anxiety and tension between the other learners. Punishment should be classified into 3 Levels.

- A threat of resorting to certain punishment.
- Verbal rebuke.
- Physical punishment

In regard to verbal rebuke, it is important to mention how this process is carried out. Thus, the teacher rebukes the learner; the learner accepts the rebuke, and the problem ends there. In the same way, the teacher can inform the parents about the students' misbehavior instead of a rebuke in order to achieve a positive effect.

Finally, punishment is not a way of controlling order in a classroom or even to keep discipline. Good EFL classroom management establishes a more positive and peaceful atmosphere during the learning process. This environment must offer students opportunities of practicing, interacting and expressing their own ideas with their peers. Hence, the teacher should have a clear idea of the learners' needs in order to manage time and useful materials.

As well as EFL settings' characteristics and classroom management, a remarkable element when learning a foreign language is clearly the teacher. When teachers are aware of their

personal characteristics and teaching styles, he or she may focus on analyzing his or her own teaching practicums in order to improve them and get better results at the end of the courses. For this reason, it is important to mention the most common features that can be seen in EFL teachers as suggested by Chen (2012).

Favorable and Unfavorable Characteristics of EFL Teachers

Chen (2012) developed a study with Thai students in order to check the influence of EFL teachers' characteristics in foreign language learning and teaching. His findings have to do with two main evaluated aspects: Personal trait-related characteristics, and classroom teaching-related characteristics.

- ***Personal trait-related characteristics:*** This included emotion, kindness, fairness, lenience and responsibility, among others. The participants in the study showed great concern in regard to these aspects which demonstrates their importance in language teaching.
- ***Emotion:*** It referred to some teacher's aspects such as his or her sense of humor, temper, patience, etc. It was noticed that students preferred teachers that were able to come up with jokes while teaching. This made them feel more relaxed and enthusiast towards learning. They also claimed that having a good temper, that is, not getting angry easily, was a positive characteristic. It was also found that they did not like a teacher who tended to scold them all the time. They stated that a teacher had to help them correct their mistakes instead of complaining about them.
- ***Kindness:*** It was related to a teacher's friendly, polite and kind behavior towards students. The research' participants stated that it was important that an EFL teacher avoids being

cruel, and on the contrary, starts being easy-going and friendly. For them, it was nicer when a teacher talked to them with smiles. Besides, they affirmed that a language teacher should try to understand students' feelings, thoughts, social context, linguistic skills and abilities towards the target language. Some other aspects included being able to entertain and care for students, and respecting them in the same way as the learners did. The teacher having the opposite characteristics to these ones was certainly disliked by the participants.

- *Fairness:* It clearly referred to the fact of treating all students in an equal and impartial way. The participants claimed that a good teacher had to pay attention to all the students, and not only to the ones having better results in regard to the subject matter. This means that a teacher should avoid having preconceptions towards all students. A teacher who had some kind of preference to certain students was considered to be an unfavorable one.
- *Lenience:* Some students claimed that they liked teachers not being so strict or serious during all the lessons. A favorable EFL language teacher was required to be flexible towards students. They expressed that a teacher who was so strict about scores, mistakes and homework made them feel unmotivated to study.
- *Responsibility:* It referred to the teacher's preparation and the willingness in regard to teaching. It was clearly seen that a language teacher needed a strong intention to perform a class. A teacher also needed to be hard-working, enthusiastic and responsible in his or her work. Success in the lessons involved having a clear teaching plan. It was also required that a teacher shows patience when explaining the subject. Moreover, students

claimed that they preferred a teacher who tended to teach students individually. Some students strongly disliked a teacher who showed a lazy attitude, very little preparation or no patience at all. They also feel unmotivated with teachers who assigned tasks without providing a clear explanation for them.

- ***Classroom teaching-related characteristics:*** These aspects were mainly related to the lesson delivery, the language used in the lessons, the organization of every activity, and the classroom atmosphere.

- ***Lesson delivery:*** It took into account the different ways of presenting the topic, the techniques used for that purpose, the ability to make it clear for the learners, and the techniques used to accomplish that goal or to evaluate students' performance either written or orally. Having good lesson delivery techniques was certainly preferred by the participants. This also included being flexible with students since it was the teacher who could make the topic look interesting and understandable. Some favorable techniques included using appropriate teaching aids, providing clear examples, and going from the easiest topics to the difficult ones. It was also important that the teacher makes students discover knowledge by adapting his or her teaching speed to the students' abilities.

The participants also claimed that they preferred a teacher who did not focus just on the textbook. They found useful when a teacher included real-life situations during the class and did not divert the topic to irrelevant issues. They claimed that they strongly disliked when a teacher made the topic look more confusing and consequently made them get lost.

A teacher who spoke fast was also unfavorable for them. It was also good for students when the teacher praised their achievements.

- *Language used in teaching:* The participants claimed that they liked when a teacher was able to communicate in both English and Thai since it made them understand the topics in an easier way. It was also found that some students had a strong desire to learn with a native speaker due to the appropriate language exposure it would bring. In regard to Thai teachers, they preferred the ones that had a good L2 native-like pronunciation. It was also noticed that they disliked a teacher who only used the language during the lessons. Teachers who did not speak Thai were not favorable since it was more difficult for them to understand the students' needs.

- *Classroom activity organization:* Activities were given a great importance for it was claimed that they made them feel motivated and willing to learn. They stated that they expected their teacher to prepare activities that facilitated their learning so that they could learn the topics without much effort. They liked teachers who were able to prepare different activities such as games, reading stories, singing songs, etc. Teachers who worked in their own way without preparing any other type of activities were seen as old-fashioned and traditional. That was due to the fact that this method was not student-centered and did not give them enough freedom.

- *Classroom atmosphere creation:* The participants stated that they enjoyed working in a comfortable, entertaining, relaxing and pleasant atmosphere. This type of environment

made them avoid stress during the lessons. They also claimed their dislike towards strict teachers who made the lesson boring and produced nervousness in them.

These aspects and elements surrounding the teaching and learning process, direct the purpose of this paper which is focusing on one of the most common factors being present in Pasto's high schools as an example of EFL settings. This idea has to do basically with the amount of students that are commonly part of a single class. Based upon this, the concept of large classes is included below in order to explain its main features, the difficulties they may bring to a foreign language class, and how to deal with them to accomplish the goals in each one of the foreign language courses.

Large Classes and Cooperative Language Learning in EFL Settings.

Definition of Large Class

According to Hayes (1997 as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2011) the concept of a large class may vary because it depends on the person's point of view and the setting. For instance, in some western schools a class with 20 students is considered as a large one.

In the same way, Ur (2005) makes a distinction between two important concepts such as homogenous classes and heterogeneous classes. The latter are the most common ones since they present several differences between each learner that composes them, and difficulties for the students and the teacher.

On the other hand, large heterogeneous classes show certain differences between learners that should be taken into account (Ur, 2005). The most remarkable ones are: language-learning ability, language knowledge, cultural background, learning style, attitude to the language, mother tongue, intelligence, world knowledge, learning experience, knowledge of other languages, age

or maturity, personality, confidence, motivation, interests, independence, self-discipline, educational level and gender.

Ur (2005) also states that there are some important constraints in regard to large classes. In this way, he also suggests some ways to deal with them in a better way. These are:

- a. **Discipline:** Ur (2005) asserts that this problem is mainly due to boredom and lack of challenge in the class itself. This can be solved by adding variety and interesting points to the tasks to be presented.
- b. **Correcting written assignments:** Ur (2005) advises involving the students in the correction of their own classmates' work in order to lessen the work load that this represents in a large class.
- c. **Interest:** This aspect is also enhanced by adding meaningful tasks, open-ended cues and the students' personal ideas for the class' development.
- d. **Effective learning for all:** It is important to include compulsory plus optional tasks in order to ensure that the students are able to decide their own challenges and goals in the learning process.
- e. **Materials:** When using textbooks, it is advisable to adapt them by adding interesting details to the tasks they present. In that way, students are more willing to participate and improve what they are learning.

On this account, Ur (2005) includes two concepts as possible exercises to be done in large classes:

- **Compulsory + Optional strategy:** This strategy involves the assignment of a task or activity in which the learner has to solve a specific part of it and the rest can be done

voluntarily. Some phrases used to introduce this type of tasks are ‘do at least’, ‘if you have time’, ‘do as much as you can of ’... (Ur, 2005).

- **Closed- and Open-ended exercises:** Closed-ended exercises are those in which the learner is required to choose among several options the most appropriate answer to a specific exercise. On the contrary, open-ended exercises give learners a determined cue for the task development, but that accept a potentially unlimited number of responses (Ur, 2005).

| |
|---|
| <p>Closed-ended Choose the most acceptable alternative A good teacher _____ to class on time. a) Come b) is coming c) comes d) came</p> <p>Open-ended A good teacher comes to class on time. Can you suggest other things a good teacher does? Acceptable learner responses: A good teacher makes the lessons interesting, a good teacher smiles, a good teacher explains well, etc.</p> <p>© Cambridge University Press 1996</p> |
|---|

Table 2. Closed-ended exercises vs. Open-ended exercises (Ur, 2005)

What is more, Ur (1996 as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2011) stated that a class may be large if the teacher perceives a problem in a specific situation, for example, in the available resources. This insight is related to the fact that there are some specific difficulties and advantages that may be encountered by teachers if they are to work with large classes in EFL settings.

Problems and Advantages of Teaching in Large Classes

Some researchers claimed that there might be some problems with the classes' size since this may affect the learning and teaching process. These disadvantages are related to the learners' communication and the class management. In this way, Hayes (1997 as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2011) classified the difficulties of teaching in large classes into five categories:

- Physical Constraints
- Discipline Aspects
- Lack of Individual Attentions
- Difficulty on Assessment
- Learning Effectiveness

Harmer (2000 as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2011) concluded that a large class can alter the students' organization and the teachers' dynamic in each class. For this reason, Locastro (2001 as cited in Wang & Zhang, 2011) suggested that it is necessary to count on well-prepared teachers to manage these "pedagogical disasters".

In addition, Ramjibhai (2012) explained the main challenges that teachers face when teaching in large classes. Some of these are: teachers have more students to know, and more names to remember, students' attention wanders more easily than in other settings, and students are more influenced by their classmates, so discipline is affected. Moreover, teachers have much more to prepare in order to meet each one of the learners' needs without leaving out their individual ways of learning. They also cannot be able to give attention to each one of the students, and they may not have enough materials to teach them. Finally, they have also more

students' works to grade, and they have to try hard to prepare a multi-level evaluation for all kinds of students.

Nevertheless, all of this drawbacks may also present some positive things of large classes such as great opportunities for creativity, more interaction, and an atmosphere of cooperation which involves innovation.

Principles and Strategies of Teaching in a Large Class

According to Wang & Zhang (2011), these are some strategies that teachers may take into account when working in large classes:

| | Teaching Principles and Strategies in a Large Class |
|------------------|---|
| Affective | <p>1. Establishing an interpersonal relationship with the students.</p> <p>Example: Asking students by their names to answer questions in class.</p> <p>2. Establishing a good connection with the students.</p> <p>Example: Creating a relaxing environment.</p> <p>3. Being concerned for strong and weak learners.</p> <p>Example: Providing equal chances by giving different tasks.</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Management Related</p> | <p>1. Managing class discipline. Example: Establishing class standard practice.</p> <p>2. Arousing group work. Example: Grouping students with mixed abilities.</p> <p>3. Making homework assignments. Example: Returning assignments by giving group feedback.</p> |
| <p>Pedagogical</p> | <p>1. Enhancing learner-centered teaching philosophy. Example: Promoting students autonomy.</p> <p>2. Avoiding traditional teaching Example: Organizing cooperative learning activities and setting up different teaching goals.</p> |

Table 3. Principles and Strategies of Teaching in a Large Class.

It is generally known that most EFL high schools have a vast number of students and that Cooperative Language Learning is a useful method in order to deal with this type of settings since this approach introduces several activities that reduce anxiety and nervousness in students,

and work load is also lessened for the teachers who have the opportunity to focus their attention on the students' final product. Therefore, the following information is centered in the use of CLL in large classes.

Using Cooperative Language Learning in Large Classes

The implementation of CLL requires careful planning, preparation and follow-up. Thus, Jacobs and Loh (2003) tried to come up with some possible solutions in order to deal with the most common constraints found in large classes. Their ideas are based on their discussions with teachers from Southeast Asia, their personal experience, and books on CLL.

- *“Our classrooms are too small”*

In classes that count on twenty-five students, implementing CLL does not represent major problems. When being in a large class, the teacher should plan the activities that he wants his or her students to perform. The authors suggested some guidelines in order to develop a class with CLL: (1) Students should sit close one to each other. In that way, they can share their materials as important parts of the groups, and speak quietly so that they do not disturb the rest of the class. (2) There must be enough space for the teacher to be able to walk around and direct all the groups. (3) The teacher should try to organize the groups in small amount of students so that it is easier to arrange them. The authors stated that pairs are more advisable since large groups members may prefer to work alone, and they may try to avoid involving themselves in the task. (4) It is preferable to give students a specific number, and make them sit in the same way in regard to the other groups. Thus, the teacher can monitor each student's participation without any trouble.

- *“It will waste a lot of time for students to get into groups”*

It is very common to see that students take a lot of time in order to arrange themselves into groups. If teachers want to avoid this, it is useful that students belong to a specific group for a long time. In that way, they will know who to work with more easily. Then, students should try to create a collaborative atmosphere with their peers. Students should try to sit as close as possible to their group mates. Their desks should also be arranged even if they are not working as a group so that no moving is necessary. When moving is supposed to be done, the teacher should help students do it quickly and quietly. In the case of having to move chairs and desks, it is recommended to mark the floor for students to find their groups in less time.

- *“How can we possibly monitor so many groups?”*

In large classes, teachers have to deal with more students. In regard to this, it is seen that when using Cooperative Learning, this responsibility starts to be taken by the students too and not only by the teacher. For this, it is important to make quick tours in the class to make sure that all students are working. Then, the teacher can focus on a specific group that may have some more difficulties than the others, or he or she can choose to take the best group into account in order to share their success patterns with the whole class. When too much help is being asked from the teacher, students should be encouraged to use the TTT (Team Then Teacher) autonomy policy, that is, first turn for help to the group members. Teachers' advice is necessary when this principle does not work.

- *“A class of fifty students is hard enough to control already. Won’t there be chaos if they start working in groups?”*

When developing the lessons, it is common to see there are many surprises on it which are not often good. This is related to the idea that lessons might go wrong, and they are to be quickly repaired. In order to avoid this when working with large classes, it is important to provide very clear instructions to the students. Thus, it is useful to get students’ attention before saying out loud the steps to be followed. A common attention signal is RSPA in which the teacher claps and raises his or her hand. When students see this they:

“Raise their hand. When they raise their hand, they Stop talking at the end of the sentence they are speaking. Students Pass the signal to groups or classmates who have not heard or seen it. Finally, students give their Attention to the teacher or whoever else has given the signal.” (Jacobs and Loh, 2003).

Another important issue to take into account is that students should understand very well the objectives and the reasons behind the lesson, and how they are going to be graded. When students know this, they can see the real usefulness of the task. Instructions may be also written on a place where they can be referred to by all students such as on slides, a board, etc. Sometimes, the teacher can give each instruction step by step, and it may be also important to demonstrate the task. Before starting the activity, students can repeat the set of instructions to their members, or one of them can be asked to share them back to the entire class. One student per group can work as a facilitator who is supposed to check and ensure that his or her group works efficiently. Another idea is giving students the opportunity to make suggestions to the activity itself, and change some aspects with a whole agreement.

- *“Won’t discipline suffer?”*

Discipline is generally affected in large classes. When teachers apply CLL in this type of settings, they are encouraging social elements that give students more opportunities to succeed (with the help of their group mates). Thus, students will enjoy more the class and will be more willing to participate in the task. Consequently, the chosen tasks should be doable and interesting to avoid frustration, boredom and misbehavior. There is also more responsibility for students in class which can be managed by using certain policies, and rules about how to behave during the activities. These rules can be: everyone should participate, everyone helps the group members understand, everyone should ask for help if it is necessary, everyone speaks quietly, everyone obeys the Attention Signal: “Together is Better”, and “We > I.

- *“The noise level will be too high.”*

In group activities, students can be able to brainstorm, plan their ideas, explain, discuss, ask questions, and summarize their work. Nevertheless, in large classes there are more voices participating in the task which means more noise in the class. Jacobs and Loh (2003) gave some ideas in order to avoid this. First, students should know the reasons why they should speak lowly, but the teacher should tolerate some high level in the voices if it means they are participating actively. In this sense, students can use two types of voices: a 6 inch voice level, or a class adapted voice if they have to say something to the whole group. Students should be seated in small groups, and be closer to each one of the members so that they do not need to shout or speak up if they want to communicate. Moreover, one of the students in the group can be in charge of controlling the noise in his or her group, and the teacher can use the signal "Please continue

discussing, but do so more quietly.” Another way for avoiding noise is making students work with writing (by hand or in a computer), a task that may be used with the Rally Table technique.

- *“Young children are too self-centered to work in groups.”*

Some teachers prefer not to use CLL activities with young children, a fact that can be due to the kids’ impulsiveness and or self-centeredness. However, implementing CLL with this type of audience is advisable in order to promote their sense of identity, and the care and support for another classmate rather than for themselves. Besides, it can teach them to restrain their behavior when working in class. To start with, it is recommended to make students work in pairs, and then move to larger groups. One task can be solving a shared puzzle (each student should have different parts of it), dressing a doll with each student taking turns for this, or working on a collage. These activities can teach them to take into account another person’s point of view while they improve their self-confidence.

So, as it can be seen CLL is an approach that helps the teacher deal with different situations that may bring some difficulties for the lesson’s development if he or she is working with a large class. The previous comments and explanations are focused on leading to a better use of time and resources in the case of EFL situations, and on getting a better use of the target language by the students. This clearly shows that Cooperative language Learning is one of the most suitable approaches when it comes to teach a foreign language as English in Pasto’s high schools.

Conclusions

As it is clearly stated along this document, teachers are supposed to face several challenges in order to succeed during their lessons. The very specific conditions found in large classes, and the objectives proposed for each language course represent demanding circumstances for both members of the language learning process. However, these situations can be dealt through the use of communicative approaches such as Cooperative Language Learning.

Cooperative Language Learning has vast advantages when applying it. Thus, this approach would be very efficient when it comes to work in an EFL setting like high schools from Pasto which have many students. CLL is an approach in which the teachers should consider materials, and connect them to the teaching model which implies high preparation from their part, and as a result, more meaningful learning for the student.

One of the most important advantages of applying CLL into large language learning groups is that students are asked to work on their own in order to complete a big task. This means that their achievements or their mistakes are closely related to the group's entire success or failure. So, students in large classes are able to develop their autonomy and responsibility for their actions, not only in language classes but also for the rest of subjects they are studying.

Moreover, the application of Cooperative Language Learning in EFL schools is advisable since most of the time, teachers do not have enough time to cover the assigned topics. Thus, one of the best ways to ensure that learners engage in language learning is to use cooperative strategies. In this case, students feel more confident and more willing to work in groups with their partners since they receive appropriate feedback without feeling any fear of being scolded. Dividing learners in groups would help

not only the teacher, but also the students while involving the roles and skills students are expected to develop in English lessons.

Besides, CLL activities introduce beneficial and dynamic changes to the lesson itself. English teaching has generally centered its attention in old-fashioned methods since they are thought to give teachers more ease to control numerous classes. Consequently, this traditional way of teaching has seen the teacher as the center of the class and has made students feel inhibited because they lack students' participation. However, thanks to the use of Cooperative Language Learning, students have the opportunity to express their ideas with more confidence while they work on activities that make them get to know their peers skills, and to develop creative and useful strategies in order to succeed in a task. This is because this approach provides a set of steps that leads them to get better results in the end.

Finally, the model proposed in this paper if applied in the type of settings mentioned above may benefit the teacher due to the monitoring and assessment abilities it requires from the part of students. Students are most of the times asked to come up with outcomes that involve the work and active participation of the class as a whole group. Thus, CLL makes learners use all their abilities depending on the different roles in order to improve their learning and their classmates' one too.

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