

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL SUPPORTED BY COOPERATIVE
LEARNING STRUCTURES

by

Leidy Johana Escobar Coral

Submitted to the Faculty of Human Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of B.A. in English and Spanish
in the Linguistics and Languages Department University of

Nariño

October, 2013.

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

Las ideas aportadas en el Trabajo de Grado son responsabilidad exclusiva de los autores, artículo 1° acuerdo #324 del 11 de octubre de 1966 del Honorable Consejo Directivo de la Universidad de Nariño.

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

Nota de aceptación:

Firma del presidente del jurado

Firma del jurado

Firma del jurado

San Juan de Pasto, Octubre del 2013

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

Table of Contents

Developing the English Speaking skill supported by Cooperative Learning Structures	7
Teaching Speaking.....	10
Characteristics of a Successful Speaking Activity.....	11
Origins of Cooperative Language Learning	12
Cooperative Learning basis.....	13
Premises of CL.....	16
Cooperative Learning Structures	17
The principles (PIES) of Kagan Structures.....	24
Advantages of Cooperative Learning structures.....	27
Role of the teacher in Cooperative Learning	28
Role of the student	30
Types of CL groups	30
Cooperative learning in foreign language teaching	31
Implications for EFL classrooms	34
Conclusion for the Colombian context	36
References.....	38

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación presenta ideas para trabajar con grupos grandes en las escuelas públicas de Colombia con el fin de desarrollar la habilidad del habla. También, da a conocer las razones por las cuales se debe enseñar la habilidad del habla en inglés. Muestra los orígenes y definiciones de uno de los nuevos enfoques de la comunicación: Aprendizaje Cooperativo. Además, explica los principios de las Estructuras del Aprendizaje Cooperativo, las cuales pueden ser utilizadas por los profesores en el día-a-día no solamente para mejorar la habilidad del habla en inglés en el aula de clases, sino también para fomentar la cooperación entre los estudiantes, consiguiendo así una mayor interacción y participación entre los compañeros de equipo. Al mismo tiempo, se describe el rol del profesor y el rol del estudiante dentro del aula cooperativa, como también los tipos de grupos que existen dentro del Aprendizaje Cooperativo para hacer a los estudiantes trabajar juntos durante un debido tiempo con el fin de explorar sus valores, su pensamiento crítico y sus habilidades de habla. Del mismo modo, este trabajo pone de relieve cómo las dimensiones del Aprendizaje Cooperativo pueden ser utilizadas no sólo como un nuevo enfoque, sino también como un modelo para el desarrollo de las relaciones de cooperación entre los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: CL, estructuras, la cooperación, la interacción, negociación de significados.

DEVELOPING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

Abstract

This research paper presents ideas to work with large groups in order to develop the speaking skill in Colombian public schools. In addition, it gives reasons why teachers should teach speaking skill in their classroom. Therefore, it provides the origins and definitions of one of the new communication approaches; Cooperative Learning. Besides, this research paper explains the principles of Structures, which can be used by teachers in the day after day, not only to improve the English speaking skill in their classroom, but also to encourage cooperation among students, thus achieving greater interaction and participation among classmates. At the same time, it describes the teacher's role and student's role. As well, it mentions the types of groups that exist inside cooperative learning for making students work together in groups to explore their values, their critical thinking and their social skills. Besides, it highlights how dimensions of cooperative learning can be used not only as a new approach but also as a model for developing cooperative relations between EFL students.

Keywords: CLL, structures, cooperation, interaction, speaking, negotiation of meaning.

Developing the English Speaking skill supported by Cooperative Learning Structures

According to Harmer (2007), Non-native English speakers need to be prepared to speak in different genres and situations, which mean that all the students including public and private schools must be able to speak English in any context, any field. EFL students must learn to get used to use the second language every day. Students have to be able to use a range of conversational strategies, strategies that might be taught by the teacher and learned by the students on order to get engaged in the classroom. Students need to be able to survive in typical functional exchange, for example, if students go to a country where the language learned is the target language, students will be able to communicate with each other fluently. However, what happens in Colombian public schools? Taking into account the setting where Colombian students feel there is no need to learn a foreign language, because they have no need to communicate in English due to few opportunities to speak with native English speakers. Demotivation in speaking classrooms due to boring classes, or the teacher does not have an appropriate method to teach. Students are not aware of the world that they are going to face, they do not know the great importance that learning to communicate in English has, and the believe that there will never be an opportunity to travel abroad. So, what should teachers do to encourage students to speak English in a classroom where there are more than 35 students, that lack teaching materials, including a class that has not been designed naturally for speaking, causing lack of motivation to speak English?

Based on my short teaching practice and on a reflective analysis upon my personal experience as a language learner and user, what I think teachers should do first, is make students aware that the English language has become a dominant language in the world. That way a student will be more interested and motivated to learn a foreign language, a language which is

being standardized due to globalization. As Ammon (2001) claims “English is known as the language of science, thought and communications”. So, people need to be aware of this and start learning it. Thus, this is the obligation of the teacher to let students know about this important fact, and make students aware of the real world that they are going to face. As it is stated in McCafferty, Jacobs, and Dasilva (2006) “educators have a responsibility to help students develop not just in subject area but as active citizens of their school, country, and of the world” (p.17). Second, teachers must know that there is an approach where these 35 students can get engaged and practice what is being taught, cooperatively towards group goals, thinking critically and developing their interpersonal and social skills, which will help them succeed.

According to Jacobs & Farrell (2001) “Cooperative Learning is defined as a range of concepts and techniques for enhancing the value of student - student interaction”. Techniques or Structures that will be discussed later. It refers to the use of small groups in which students work together to accomplish a meaningful school task. In other words, when students work cooperatively, they do not just give and receive information but they also develop new understandings and communicate with their classmates in an acceptable manner through interaction, which will take them to improve their speaking skill.

As previously stated, being aware of languages has taken a very important place in society. According to the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN) in Colombia, students are required to communicate in English with competence as it permits them to express themselves, understand and share their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, values, feelings, and culture. Again, people must know about the importance of foreign language in order to face challenges such as globalization, opening economies, intercultural communication, and technological and scientific progress. These aspects allow Educational Institutions to have future

students with an adequate and effective approach. (Calvache, 2001). Actually, as McCafferty et al. (2006) claims “many students are receptive to developing intercultural understanding as well as eager to talk about and work on global issues topics” (p. 137). So, teachers should take advantage of these interests in students, students may typically enjoy the global topics activities and find them meaningful, but it is necessary to globalize the language, allowing them to explore various aspects of knowledge, taking into account that one of the most important skills students must develop is the speaking skill so they are able to communicate successfully in any field.

Some strategies that encourage the development of the speaking skill in group work have no doubt been experienced in a great variety of forms by students and teachers in language learning. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) declared “Cooperative Language Learning has become a popular and relatively approach which has not cause controversy to the organization of classroom teaching in many parts of the world” (p. 151). In Colombia, there might be cases in private schools where teachers set a structured plan to guide the functioning of groups as teams cooperating to achieve success. Conversely, in public schools students might work in groups without any specific principles structuring their interaction, just being aware of a task that they are expected to complete in their own groups, to be more precise, conditions that take students to do traditional group work.

Following the previous idea, the main purpose of this research paper is to give experienced and novice teachers theoretical and practical ideas about one of the current approaches; Cooperative Learning (CL), which may lead teachers to implement some CL structures in the classroom to make students speak in groups in an interesting and encouraging way.

In addition to reading this research paper, teachers will have a view about using CL structures to increase student-talking time in the classroom. Based on CL structures for instance, speaking classes will be more effective than in traditional classrooms by helping teachers to manage some problems like classroom size. CL will help the teachers find the solutions to their own problems in speaking classes in order to make it really effective and interesting for the students. Teachers will become aware of the importance and the advantages of cooperative work with respect to students English speaking performance.

Teaching Speaking

Harmer (2007b) points out three main reasons for getting students to speak in the classroom. The first reason is that speaking activities provide opportunities to practice real-life conversations, if teachers go back to their experience, they will remember the way how they learnt English, they may remember that all what they knew was grammar but not how to produce it, it might be happened because they did not have the opportunity to practice it. Consequently, teachers might not want this happens to their students. The second reason is that in speaking tasks, students try to use L2 to provide feedback. So, the students can realize by themselves how successful they are, and what language problems they are experiencing. The third reason is that students have opportunities to activate the various elements of language they have stored in their brains. As a result, he claims that students will become autonomous language users without very much conscious thought. Additionally, Thornbury (2005) (as cited in Harmer, 2007) suggest that the teaching of speaking depends on having a classroom culture of speaking, and that classrooms need to become talking classrooms. It means that students need to get used to speak English in their English subject, and also teachers must not expect to have a quiet classroom but a talking classroom. So, students will then be much more confident speakers.

Characteristics of a Successful Speaking Activity

In order to meet what the latter authors claimed, teachers should provide activities focused on real-life speaking, meaning that activities have to be designed to foster better speaking according to the level of the students, rather than having students speak only to focus on a specific language construction. The TESOL Training Manual provides five characteristics teachers must take into account in a speaking classroom and for the structures of Cooperative learning.

1. **Students talk a lot:** The student must speak for most of the activity. Teachers should just give clear instructions in a few minutes and let students speak for the rest of the class. Naturally, teachers must provide feedback when students need it.
2. **Participation is even:** “Classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative students”. It is said that the students should be grouped and organized to maximize the amount of student talk for each student.
3. **Motivation is high:** Interesting topics will make students eager to speak and to contribute to the achievement of a task.
4. **Language is appropriate:** The teacher must supply activities which the students are comfortable with. In addition, they are to be designed according to their level of English.
5. **Teacher monitoring and modeling:** The teacher must walk around the class and make sure that the lesson is meeting its objectives. (Tesol/Tefl, 2009)

According to personal experience, teaching speaking skills in a foreign language context is not an easy task, it places heavy demands on both the teacher and the students who learn this skill to communicate with the target language, but it is a great satisfaction of the teacher to know

that their students are acquiring it with their help. Once more, learning to speak or better said acquiring a foreign language requires more than just knowing its grammatical and semantic rules, students must also have knowledge of how native speakers use the language in context, have knowledge about the cultures that use that language. These are the reasons why activities must involve real life context, and teachers must use L2 during the whole class, in this way students will get used to use the target language.

Taking into account the considerations above, later, it will be shown how these activities can be performed through cooperative learning structures processes.

Origins of Cooperative Language Learning

There is a need to know where and why Cooperative Learning (CL) was implemented in developed countries such as the United States. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) CL appeared in the early 1900s when John Dewey, a U.S. educator, promoted “the idea of building cooperation in learning into regular classrooms on a regular and systematic basis”. (p. 192).

Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, it was deeply developed in the U.S. as a response to the forced integration of public schools. Educators believed that traditional models of classroom learning fostered competition instead of cooperation. So, it has been used successfully since then.

Additionally, Axford et al, (2012) also declared that the strategy of cooperative learning was developed as a means to reduce competition in American schools. As Agarwal & Nagar (2011) showed in a study before implementing Cooperative learning in an American school, they realized students work against each other in any activity of learning to achieve a goal that only one or a few can attain. The same is happening in Colombia, It is not a secret that students in public schools of Colombia also have adopted a competitive and individualistic way of learning. There is a negative interdependence among goal achievements. Students perceive that they can

obtain their goals if and only if the other students in the class fail to obtain their goals. It is said, “The more competitive a person is, the less chance he or she has of being successful” (Kohn, 1996). It can be seen from the above analysis that teachers must start encouraging students to cooperate in learning, so then they will better learn in a speaking classroom. To apply Cooperative learning might provide good results in Colombia also, acknowledging that the teaching materials that the U.S. may provide to students may differ, but considering that the development of CL depends on the teachers and the students’ knowledge and ability to accomplish their goals.

Cooperative Learning basis

Nowadays, teachers are preparing students for a job in the world of the future, so it is essential to know the importance of starting working in groups since school. “Some researchers have reported that, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats”. (Davis, 2009. p. 21). From observing students, it is possible to argue that when students work individually on their own worksheets, they always have questions for the teacher or their classmates and spend a lot of time to finishing them, but when they work in pairs or groups, they do not need the teacher’s help much, their knowledge increases, and they are getting used to work effectively with others and to communicate with others. Students explore their skills through communication, which nowadays has become an important fact, as stated in Richards and Rodgers (2001) CL is an approach designed to develop critical thinking skills, and communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities. Something very important in this approach is that while students are in groups they need to think about the activities – content given by their teacher, it will help them to develop their thinking and critical

skills while they discuss it with their teammates. Besides, Johnson and Johnson (2010) states that Cooperative Learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize the learning of each other, this means that each student is responsible for his/her own learning, and responsible for the group as well as the others. Students are also motivated to increase both their own learning and the learning of others. In short, working in groups under Cooperative learning basis, will make students experience and increase a variety of social skills, they become more able to solve problems, which demand cooperation for solutions, better able to take the role of the other, and be generally more cooperative on a variety of measures such as willingness to help others. Kagan (1994).

On the other hand, Panitz (1996) defines Cooperative Learning as a set of processes, he means activities or CL structures which will help students interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product given by the teacher. According to Abdullah (2002), CL has to be implemented in the class in order to increase the amount of interaction among students. He says that when students interact with their team classmates, it is hoped that students increase their speaking skill, help each other, learn, and become less dependent on teachers. In other words, the more interactions among students, as well as between the teacher and students, the better the language learning is achieved. Furthermore, Jacobs & Hall (2002) claim that Cooperative Language Learning principles and techniques are tools which teachers use to encourage mutual help in the groups and the active participation of all members. All these authors agree that implementing CL in classrooms gives them good results in students' interactions, so it is important that the teacher knows and applies those principles and techniques or structures that will be discussed below, in order to accomplish the goals of the students.

Moreover, here is one more example of Cooperative learning application. Liang, Mohan, & Early (1998) consider that students have more opportunities to practice using English and engage in direct interaction in groups than in teacher-fronted discussions through taking more turns, producing more samples of the target language, and receiving more feedback from other group members". Freeman (1992) cited in Liang, Mohan, & Early (1998) conducted research in a school teaching French as a second language, and he described how the teacher and her students worked through cooperative interactions to understand French. After this research, he showed that the subject matter was not the French language itself, but the interactions, which generated it. So, from here it can be said that interaction produces speech among students which is transformed into learning, this could happen at the beginning when CL structures are implemented in speaking classrooms in Colombia. Students are not going to just speak English, but the interactions among them will generate learning and they will make an effort to speak English. A concrete example about how to use Cooperative learning structures in speaking classrooms will be shown later.

As with learner autonomy, Slavin (1995) states that the use of group activities places students at the center of attention, offering them one means of taking on more rights and responsibilities in their own learning. CL helps teachers not to focus just on five or six students, but focus on all their students. The process is also emphasized, as students do not just show each other their answers, but they explain to one another how they got the answers. In addition, when students are working in groups with structured activities, they spend more time negotiating the meaning through questioning and explanation, they are interacting all the time. Besides, this could be one of the reasons why organizing a class within group work, may be one of the best ways for students to practice their speaking skill.

Premises of CL

CL is based on five premises that underline the interactive and cooperative nature of language and language learning, it explains how people can learn a language effectively. As you will see, the first four premises agree that speaking is the most important in the life of everyone, and the fifth that students need some structured activities in order to achieve the last four premises. The first premise says that we were born to talk and also that communication is the primary purpose of language. The second one states that a great part of the lives of human beings are spent on speaking in order to engage in conversation. The third premise points out that, conversation works when there is a set of cooperative rules, it means; when people talk to each other they have a cooperative communication that takes into account the context of the situation, with particular attention paid to the assumed knowledge and expectations of the person or people on the other side of the exchange. The fourth premise emphasizes that we learn conversational rules because people need to communicate with others every day. And the fifth premise states that students learn a second language when the cooperative rules are followed in a cooperatively structured interactional classroom. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The importance of all these premises is that they state that communication is the most important aspect when learning a language. I have seen how in our Colombian context, most of the students laugh at others when they speak in a foreign language. It happens because some of them do not know that if they want to learn a language, communication is the key. So, students have to be aware they are learning a foreign language and that they need to communicate with their classmates. It helps that when teachers use Cooperative Learning in a classroom, they provide a naturalistic second language acquisition process by interactive pair and group activities and these premises are carried out.

Cooperative Learning Structures

According to Kagan (2001) there are several structures to organize the interaction of individuals in a classroom, some regulate interaction between pairs, and some are best for teamwork. As Kagan (2003) says, structures are ways to shape student interaction over any content. These strategies are not tied to any specific content, they are content-free. This means that Cooperative teachers can use any structure with any English topic.

It is the task of the cooperative learning teacher to choose suitable structures in relation to aim and content. If teachers want to have more equal participation and learning, teachers need to structure the interaction among teammates. For example, if teachers structure the interaction of students so each teammate in turn contributes an idea, more equal participation will be ensured.

Kagan (2002) provides an example with one of the CL structures which is called **RallyRobin**; this is, students form pairs within the team and take turns with their partner sharing ideas back and forth. Afterwards, the pairs discuss which ideas came up in both pairs and which ideas were unique to one or the other pair. Continue with the example, this is in a CL classroom the teacher had students sitting in groups. The classroom was highly structured. The teacher gave directions to the group: “In your groups, turn to your classmate next to you and do a **RallyRobin** (already explain before), take turns naming some of the items we find in the produce section of the market.” Then he provides the explanation why the classroom succeeded. He starts saying that Juan, one of the students became engaged in the activity when his partner named an item, then it was his turn and Juan was hesitant, but his partner patiently waited. When he named an item his partner smiled. Each time it was his turn he got encouragement and support from his partner and was able to name a number of items. As it can be seen, the students

already knew how to work within the “**RallyRobin**” structure, and both students are encouraged to speak naming the items.

After giving this example, it is worthy to present some of the Cooperative learning structures, which can be used by teachers in order to have students interact and develop the speaking skill. According to Kagan (2001) these are:

- **Circle the Sage**

1. The teacher forms groups of four students.

2. The teacher polls the class to see which students have a special knowledge to share.

For example, in Colombia the teacher may ask who in the class has visited Ecuador, who knows about Chinese religion, and so on.

3. Those students (the sages) stand and spread out in the room. The teacher then has the rest of the classmates each surround a sage, with no two members of the same team going to the same sage.

4. The sage explains what they know while his/her classmates listen, ask questions, and take notes.

5. All students then return to their teams. Each in turn, explains what they learned.

Because each one has gone to a different sage, they compare notes.

5. If there is disagreement, they stand up as a team.

6. The disagreements are aired and resolved.

- **Corners**

This is designed to allow students to get to know and accept themselves and others more.

1. The teacher announces the corners by asking a question, for example, which country would like to visit -Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Paris. Which is your favorite season, -

Winter, spring, summer, and fall. What profession would you like to do? d) What type of bird would you be?. Usually there are four corners, in Colombia three or more corners would be appropriate, depending on the number of the students.

2. Teachers give students a bit of silent think time to clarify for themselves their preference. Have them write number of their preferred corner on a piece of paper.

3. Students go to their corners and pair up to express the reasons for their preferences.

They then form groups of four within the corner, and students in the group paraphrase their partner from the paired listening. The teacher calls on students from one corner to announce to the class reasons for that choice.

4. This last sharing and paraphrasing is repeated for each corner. They make sure everyone can name reasons supporting each choice.

- **Guess-the-Fib**

It can be used as a review of information structure. It can be played either within teams or within the class.

1. Students state two unbelievable facts and one believable fib.

2. They announce all three as facts, they try to fool their teammates or other teams, and it is their job to guess which one is fib.

3. Finger responses can be used, students simply hold up one, two, or three fingers, depending on which statement they believe is the fib.

- **Inside-Outside Circle**

This structure allows students to become very good at presentations, students get naturally little training in it.

1. Teachers form students into a team of four.

2. Teachers choose a topic to make a presentation.
3. The students work in teams on certain material.
4. The students form two big circles on the floor, one inside the other. If, for example, there are 6 teams of 4 students, 3 teams form the inner circle and the other 3 the outer circle. The inner circle looks outwards, the outer circle inwards. Each person in the inner circle has a partner in the outer circle.
5. The inner circle teams give their presentation to their partner team on the outer circle.
6. Students have a **Roundrobin** (explained below) of specific appreciations by the partner team. They are to each say what they liked about the presentation and what they learned.
7. The outer circle teams present and their partner teams give a **Roundrobin** of specific appreciations.
8. Everyone returns to their teams to discuss how the feedback they have received may help them improve their presentations. Perhaps the introduction ought to be clearer, etc
9. When the agreed time has passed, everyone returns to the circles once more
10. The students in the outer circle (or inner circle) move 4 persons to the right (or left), so that everyone is now facing a new partner. Material is exchanged with the new partner.

- **Line-ups:**

It can be used in a variety of ways to promote communication and to develop certain concepts. Students line up in order of height, birthdays, alphabetical order, number of blocks form school. Then you can use it to make small groups and then they discuss a topic with a specific objective.

- **Numbered Heads Together**

It is used to have students review information and make sure all students can solve problems.

1. The teacher poses a question and gives individual think time. For example, it is about grammar, teacher writes down a wrong sentence with the first conditional on the board. Then, he/she questions, “Where is the mistake?”
2. All students have to write down their personal answer (individual accountability and equal participation).
3. The students are seated in teams of four, each student on the team has a different number, and the next stage is for them to ‘put their heads together’ and arrive at a team answer. This allows simultaneous interaction as well as equal participation.
4. The answer arrived at has to be a team answer and everyone in the team needs to be able to explain it as the students do not know at this stage who will be called on by the teacher. This creates an opportunity for peer coaching, establishing a positive interdependence among the team’s members, as it is in everyone’s interest for everyone to be able to answer.
5. Once sufficient time has been given for everyone to agree on an answer, the teacher uses a spinner to select who will respond from each team, example, numbers 2 of each team will answer, they will have to write down the answer, all at once and then tell it to the teacher. That way teachers will determine if the other teams knew the right answer or not.

- **RoundRobin**

This structure is designed to give everyone in the group an equal chance of participation. Starting with one student, each person gets 1 to 3 minutes going clockwise to present his or her point of view. For example, teammates sit in a circle. One student introduces a person to the rest of the group by saying “This is my friend Mario”, raising his friend’s hand as he does so. The friend introduces the person on the left, and around they go. The person who began is the last to be introduced, and at that point everyone is holding everyone’s hand up. Students also can talk about ideal vacation, or say whom they would be if they had to be an animal. Etc.

- **Talking Chips**

Each member in the team is given two or three chips paper clips, buttons, or pens will do fine. When one person talks, he/she places one chip in the center of the table. He/she cannot talk again until everyone has placed his or her chips in the center of the table.

When all the chips have been used and the group still feels the need to talk, the chips can be retrieved and they can start the process all over again. This structure takes care of the free-rider and bully problems all at once. It ensures that everyone will talk, but also that no one will do all the talking. After using it for some time, students internalize the principles of universal and equal participation.

- **Think-Pair-Share:**

It serves as a simple powerful thinking skills structure.

1. Students are in groups of 4
2. A problem is posed by the teacher.
3. Students think alone about the question for a specified amount of time.
4. Students form pairs to discuss the question.

5. During the Share time, students are called upon to share the answer with the class as a whole. Sometimes, they are held accountable for listening to their partners because during the Share time, they are called upon to share the answer they heard from their partner. An example could be, “Imagine it was a hot, humid day and you were thirsty...”

- **Three Step Interview**

It is another simple information sharing structure. It consists of three steps and works best in groups of four, but can be adapted for larger or smaller groups.

1. Students are in pairs; one is the interviewer, the other is the interviewee.
2. the students reverse roles.
3. Students do a **Roundrobin** (explained before), each one in turn sharing with the team what they learned in the interview.

The content of the interview can be anything. Often interview is used to have students relate personal experiences or learning more about something of interest. For example, interview on favorite characters, books, stories.

- **Three-minute review**

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

- **Rallyrobin**

Students form pairs within the team (formed before) and take turns with their partner sharing ideas back and forth. Afterwards, the pairs discuss which ideas came up in both pairs and which ideas were unique to one or the other pair.

All the Cooperative learning structures discussed before have a specific purpose in the classroom, being that students interact and help each other in an activity by learning what they

are doing. Considering these structures are very relevant when using CL. Speaking classes will be more interesting and enjoyable because teachers will be using a new way to make students interact. According to the principles (PIES) that these structures have, students will be challenged when they have to stand up, and practice their English. As a student, I can say it is always a great satisfaction to know that the teacher has an active and different way to teach and that assures it will help us not just to acquire a language but to improve our social and communication skills, it motivates to stay in classes. Therefore, it is important to know that there are over 150 Structures with different functions, interested teachers may find them on a book called *Cooperative Learning* (Kagan 1994).

The principles (PIES) of Kagan Structures

Some principles that make cooperation in most daily situations when students learn a new language are mechanisms that form the structures to make students interact in a foreign language. According to Kagan (1994) Structures are content –free ways of structuring group interaction; structures may be used repeatedly with a variety of curriculum materials, at various places in the lesson plan, and across a wide range of grade levels. Kagan & High (2002) suggest that all the Cooperative learning structures are carefully structured and designed to implement four basic principles of Cooperative learning (PIES). They ought to be observed by teachers when using these structures, if teachers do not apply the PIES in their classrooms, they will just be doing traditional group work. Kagan (2002) proposes to make one question in each principle to determine if teachers have satisfied in their activities each principle. They are:

Positive Interdependence. *Is it a gain or benefit for one associated with a gain for others, and is help necessary?* The answer has to be positive, Kagan (2002) Positive Interdependence places students on the same side, so a gain for one is associated with a gain for

another and students cannot succeed alone. For example, there is not positive interdependence when the teacher is working with the whole-class, the teacher makes a question, and student responds it, students are not on the same side, they are competing for the attention of the teacher. According to Kagan (2002) when one is called on, the others lower their hands in disappointment. A gain for one is a loss for the others. Further, no help between students is necessary, it is not good because they are not working cooperatively. On the other hand when working with Cooperative learning Structures, students have to cooperate and help is necessary. The structure not only places them on the same side, working together, but it also does not let just one person do all the work. Kagan & High (2002). Besides, Jacobs (2006) asserts that positive interdependence is a perception among group members, he explains it with a good phrase “What helps one group member helps all, and what hurts one group member hurts all”. Andrusyk & Andrusyk, (2003) add that positive interdependence exists when students believe that the team cannot succeed unless every member of the team succeeds. Positive social interdependence may also promote solidarity among learners. Cooperative learning may be one way to promote social support within classrooms, as learners work together to maximize the learning of each other through positive, rather than negative forms, of interdependence. Teachers can create positive interdependence by having a rule that a group cannot progress to a new learning until all the students have completed an assignment.

Individual Accountability. To see if this principle is satisfied teachers must answer yes to this question. *Is individual public performance required?* Students must perform on their own in front of at least one another. (Kagan & High, 2002). No one can opt out without this having consequences for the others. Individual accountability is one of the most important motivating factors in cooperative learning. Everyone likes to feel that they know something

others can use, and everyone gets the chance of showing this precisely via the structures. Jacobs (2006) defines individual accountability as the “team’s success” he says that it depends on the individual learning of all team members. In other words, students are responsible of the contribution of their classmates, their fair share to the success of the group. (Andrusyk and Andrusyk, 2003). The element of individual accountability teaches the students to perform higher as individuals by learning as a team. For example, if the teacher lets students know that following a discussion they will be asked to list ideas they have heard from others, then there is individual accountability for listening and the group will be less likely to have everyone talking and no one listening. Kagan (1994).

Equal Participation. The question here is: *How equal is the participation?*. When Kagan structures are used, the interaction is very carefully designed so there is far more equal participation. (Kagan & High, 2002). As a rule, the structures are constructed so that everyone can contribute equally, with no one being forgotten or opting out. (Stenlev, 2003).

Simultaneous Interaction. *What percent of the students are overtly active at any one moment?* When the teacher calls on one student in a whole-class, the teacher has only one of thirty students producing language, this is a little over 3% of the class. When teachers use Kagan structures 50% of the class is producing language. Kagan & High (2002). For example, when the teacher makes a question, instead of calling on 3 students and each one giving one answer, with one of the structures everybody is participating. Most students ought to be ‘on’ at the same time. The optimal form is pair work, which is very frequently included as a stage in various structures.

As it is apparent, the structures constantly clarify the task of each student in the interaction with the group, and they make each student feel the need for communicative interaction. This completely changes the patterns of activity in a class.

Advantages of Cooperative Learning structures

Cooperative learning is a unique format, with different expectations for teachers and for students, compared to traditional activities such as whole class discussion, teacher presentation, or individual work. According to Kagan (2002), besides implementing the Cooperative learning structures principles (PIES), the following are some of the benefits of using cooperative learning structures in the classroom:

1. Greater Comprehensible Input. Kagan states that when students work together within one of the structures, they adjust their speech to the level of their group work. That way there is a great and comprehensible input.

2. Natural Context. He says that language is used in real-life, with functional interaction, and reducing problems of transference. In other words, a group of students with different functional ideas work together toward a common goal in a real life context.

3. Negotiation of Meaning. He refers to students adjusting their language output to make sure they understand each other.

4. Lowered Affective Filter. Here, he asserts that students are more frightened when they have to speak in front of the whole class rather than in a supportive teammate. In addition, when a student represents the group and reports to the whole class, he/she will feel more support, because the answer is not just from one student alone, but from the whole group

5. Peer Support. Kagan declares that students encourage each other in language use.

6. Enhanced Motivation. Again, when working with the structures, students are engaged to work through interaction so, students need to understand each other, and as Kagan, (2002) states there is a high motivation to speak and listen for understanding.

7. Greater Language User. He affirms that while working with the structures, teachers are giving students more time to speak out in the classroom. In contrast, while using whole-class question-answer, teachers would take more time because the teacher is asking a question and responding to each student, one at a time.

It can be said from the above analysis that cooperative learning structures create opportunities for students to actively interact, encourage and help others, negotiate meaning around a task, and appropriate new ways of thinking and doing.

As it has been said before Cooperative learning emphasizes active learning through interaction, where students act as partners with the teacher as well. So, the role players in cooperative learning are therefore teacher and students.

Role of the teacher in Cooperative Learning

According to Kagan (2008), teachers will have an extra work to learn the structures, but once they know them, teaching will be easier. However, Gillies (2007) states that teachers play a critical role in its implementation. To start, preparing relevant group tasks, and to taking into account that success depends on how to help, motivate, and promote the student –to – student interaction. Likewise, Johnson et al. (1994), as cited in Richards and Rodgers (2001) also suggest that “the cooperative learning teacher has to create a highly structured and well-organized learning environment in the classroom, setting goals, planning and structuring tasks, establishing the physical arrangement of the classroom, assigning students to groups and roles, and selecting materials and time”. (p. 199). In Colombia, this could be a difficult role for

teachers, due to many of the students might not want to work in groups because many schools come from educational backgrounds where classes are largely teacher-fronted, with the teacher transmitting knowledge and students memorizing what is being transmitted. They tend to take it for granted that this is the only, or at least the best way to learn. When they are placed in cooperative learning settings, their past experience may come into conflict with their new experience. In addition, when working in groups students might get off task, put each other down, and get noisy. According to Kagan (1994), one of the solutions to these kind of difficulties, is to make students aware that in their life they will be in many relationships, relationships with teammates, loved ones, friends, and in the workplace, and one thing that will determine the success of all those relationships, is how much they show the other person that they know and understand what they are communicating, this is why to work in groups cooperatively is the vital importance. He also suggests choosing a skill-of-the-week. This means that when teachers see this is happening, they will not be able to teach all the skills at once. So, the teachers choose the skill-of-the-week. For example, the first week tell the students you will work on "Praising"; week two, inner voices; week three, staying on task; and so on. For this, teachers can post a chart, which contains the a) social skill of the week b) what to say and c) what to do. One example could be work on "Helping" So, a) social skill of the week: Helping; b) what to say: -do you understand? Let me explain! You do it like this because... c) what to do: eye contact, learning toward the other, etc. It is important to underline that it is not the teacher's job but the student's job with the teacher's help.

Nevertheless, teachers in cooperative learning are a resource who have the responsibility of keeping students on task. They become a guide and a source of encouragement. Cooperative teachers have numerous materials and necessary information, from which students in cooperative

learning will drop upon to achieve their objectives. Teachers are motivated to assist students to be creative, to engage in critical thought, and to identify and solve problems cooperatively.

Kagan (2008)

Role of the student

When Cooperative Learning is used in classrooms, students become more active role players in learning, they become experts and act as instructors or tutors, they become responsible for each other and the group. Kagan (1994) contributes that in the process of teaching teachers learn more about the topics they teach, as they try to determine the easiest way to convey understanding to students, so what he recommends is not to forget their experience and let students teach and do what they most want to do – interact with their peers. Students always want to question, discuss, argue, and share. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) “students are taught to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning” (p. 199). In other words, they play an important role as the teacher, they have to make sure their classmates give examples, or alternatives to the group, ensure all members have achieved the goals, and propose task or procedures. This is carried out when students know that their performance depends on their teammates, they make sure their teammates stay on task.

Types of CL groups

CL also provides three types of groups to be formed in the classroom, taking into account that when students are put into the right teams, they feel strong, capable, and committed to work in their learning activities. The students group will depend on the teacher, being the person who knows their students more than anyone. Johnson et al., (1994) (cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001) describes three types of Cooperative Learning groups. First, formal CL groups, which are

for a short time periods, from one class period to several weeks. They are established for a specific task, and students work together. Second, informal CL groups, which are for just one class period, when the teacher wants the student to focus his or her attention. Third, CL base groups, which are for long time periods of at least one year where students give each other support and encouragement to succeed academically. Being prepared for this will help teachers organize their CL classrooms, and also having the groups set up will make it easier when they prepare their lesson plans.

Cooperative learning in foreign language teaching

In our context, it is particularly interesting how Cooperative learning structures can contribute to attaining better learning results in foreign language teaching. Bearing in mind that teachers can work in large classes with or without materials that public schools in Colombia are not provided such as VIDEO BIN, DVD, TV, etc. With Cooperative Learning structures, teachers need just their knowledge and the ability to create great activities and make a speaking classroom.

Here, there are some suggestions for the teachers before starting with the activity. First, when cooperative learning is new for your students, you as a teacher may have to explain to them why group work is a good idea, and then give clear directions carefully about what you want the group to do, sometimes you may write the instructions or steps on the board.

Second, move your students from rows into teams. It depends on the structure you choose, if it is a Think-Pair-Share structure, you can say “Turn to the person next to you, so you are all in pairs”. If it is a Numbered Heads Together structure, you can say, “Boys and girls,

there are some index cards with your names on each card. You are then to quietly collect your books, and move to the table, which has your name. We will see how quickly and quietly you can find your new team and sit down” According to Kagan (1994) it will not take more than two minutes.

Third, after the groups are formed, teachers may give a quiet signal. For example, a raised hand, when a teacher raises his/her hand, the students are to do the same and to give full attention to the teacher.

Fourth, introduce the chart of the Skill-of-the-week. Tell students that they will work on a special skill every week, for example the first week the skill-of-the-week is “Equal Participation”, ask students what would you do in your team? And what would you say to your team classmates? The first time teachers can help, but then, bear in mind that this is student’s job with teacher’s help. So, teachers may help by saying and writing down on the chart. “What would you do?” You may –“Look at person” – “Motion for others to wait” – “Turn to person and hold palm up”. “What would you say?” You may say “Do you agree, Milena?” – “Pablo, what do you think? – “I would like to hear your idea, Mary.” It will let them know that they will be developing one skill that they need, in order to improve their cooperative work.

LESSON PLANNING	
Lesson Topic: Adoption	Date:
Level: Tenth grade	Time: 1 hour
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review information about Adoption. 2. To develop communicative skills. 	

Cooperative Learning Structure: Inside-Outside Circle
Materials: Board, marker, eraser
Procedure: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teachers form students into a team of four.2. Teachers write down on the board 5 questions about Adoption.3. The students work in teams on certain material, in this case; Adoption. (15 minutes)4. The students form two big circles on the floor, one inside the other. If, for example, there are 8 teams of 4 students, 4 teams form the inner circle and the other 4 the outer circle. The inner circle looks outwards, the outer circle inwards. Each person in the inner circle has a partner in the outer circle.5. The inner circle teams give their presentation to their partner team on the outer circle. (5 mins)6. Students have specific appreciations by their partner team. They are to each say what they liked about the presentation and what they learned. (2 mins)7. The outer circle teams give their presentation. (5 mins)8. Their partner teams give specific appreciations. (2 mins)9. Everyone returns to their teams to discuss how the feedback they have received may help them improve their presentations. Perhaps the introduction ought to be clearer, etc (6 mins)10. When the agreed time has passed, everyone returns to the circles once more. (1 min)11. The students in the outer circle (or inner circle) move 4 persons to the right (or left), so that everyone is now facing a new partner. Material is exchanged with the new partner and all students get a new chance in this way to practice presenting. (14 mins)
Notes: 1. Questions on the board

What is adoption?

Do you know anyone who has adopted a child?

What are some of the reasons people choose to adopt?

What are the views of adoption in your country?

Would you want to adopt a boy or a girl? Why?

2. To bring material about Adoption in case that some students do not know about it.

Let us look at the amount of time consumed: in the presentation training described, 32 students, each group did 2 presentations of 5 minutes, 35 five-minute presentations total.

The feedback process was also good, if each feedback session lasted 2 minutes, this meant a total of 8 minutes for feedback.

Students have an opportunity to improve and are likely to conclude that with practice they can give great presentations.

So, now we have time for some learning. We have the teams pull apart and spend five minutes working on their presentations to improve them. They have just gotten specific feedback and have just experienced giving the presentation so they are motivated to improve.

Implications for EFL classrooms

The application of cooperative learning structures to EFL teaching at Colombian public schools might innovate for many teachers, due to all the advantages students might have when teachers use these structures. With regard to this, one of the main advantages is teachers are preparing students for a competitive world, it is hard to imagine a job today, which does not

involve some cooperative interaction with others. So, teachers might take into account that we are facing a complex world and students need to adapt to cooperative social interaction situations.

Cooperative learning can be a feasible alternative to the teacher's role change, from being the main source of teaching process to that of facilitating, encouraging, guiding, and managing.

Teachers must make sure of giving clear instructions to their students, and expect excellence from all students, letting them know that they believe in them, and their ability to produce excellent work. If they sense that their teacher believes that they all are able to learn English and everyone in the class is enabled to learn, students will feel more confident.

In the cooperative learning context, teachers should be prepared for seeing that students are active participants instead of passive recipients and listeners to the teacher's explanation of grammatical rules. Therefore, teachers must expect a talkative classroom.

In a cooperative learning classroom, teachers must be aware that students are allowed to construct learning based on their past/current knowledge. That way, students will be able to progress at their own pace and at the same time, contribute to their peers' learning.

Teachers should assess how much effort each member is contributing to the group's work, provide feedback to groups and individual students, and check students' learning outcome randomly to ensure that students are individually accountable to do their fair share of the group's work.

Last, in this research paper there are provided some Cooperative learning structures, it does not mean that teachers need all of them to be very successful, to make a profound difference

in their classrooms; to start implementing this approach, with one or two structures, they can make a tremendous difference.

Conclusion for the Colombian context

Cooperative Learning is a viable option to apply in our context in order to start changing traditional ways of teaching English. It is important that teachers know how to apply it in a correct way by using the appropriate CL structures and group works. It is important to know about all the advantages that this approach has, when it is to teach Speaking skill.

Teachers might develop speaking to conduct future cooperative experiences, encouraging their students to grow academically and to be society members who build new knowledge and experience together. Many difficulties may appear as a natural part of the process, which involves leaving aside the kind of traditional classroom work. In order to avoid these difficulties teachers might try cooperative learning in a very limited way at first. After they have mastered the art of managing a classroom of teams and feel competent in one structure, they may well begin to include other structures. The best place to start is with simple structures like Roundrobin or Think –Pair Share.

Using cooperative learning leads teachers to consider and take actions about the importance of their roles as mediators among themselves and their students in establishing a cooperative environment. It is necessary to construct and develop cooperation abilities since it is not easy to change our mentality if, traditionally, teachers have been working in isolation.

Moreover, through the paper it was clearly shown that by working with the Cooperative Learning structures, students have more chances to speak in the target language. According to their principles; the learning task promotes teamwork and students experience themselves as

being on the same side, each student is held accountable for their individual contribution, students participate equally, and many students are engaged at once. In addition, it makes students active most of the time which lets students develop their oral skills, giving them opportunities to interact, to participate, to talk, and to feel more confident.

Besides, CL provides students with the relaxing positive teaching and learning environment, responsibility for learning and more positive relationships, which help them to develop the speaking skill. It connects students with their own personal life experiences, and thus, makes learning more realistic to them. It is through interacting with each other when students learn to use language differently to explain new experiences and new realities.

Cooperative learning has been the subject of much research that continues today. Cooperative learning structures challenge students to have higher amounts of oral English language usage. It allows students to actively listen and participate in groups and learn at the same time. The belief among prominent researchers is that Cooperative learning will close the achievement task so that all students will be able to succeed in school and then go on to become successful members of the community. Cooperative learning structures teach students not only how to increase English speaking skill, but also social skills, acceptance and tolerance of others, increasing student responsibility, and gains in self-esteem.

References

- Abdullah, M. (2004). Promoting Cooperative Learning at Primary School. Teaching English as a second or foreign language. *TESL –EJ*, 7(4). Retrieved from <http://tesl-ej.org/ej28/a1.html>
- Agarwal, R., & Nagar, N. (2011). *Cooperative Learning*. India: Kalpaz Publications
- Ammon, U. (2001). *The dominance of English as a language of Science*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co. KG.
- Andrusyk, D. & Andrusyk, S. (2003). Improving student social skills through the use of cooperative learning strategies. (ERIC document Reproduction Service No. 481 015). Retrieved from ERIC Database.
- Axford, M., Ferguson, C., McCall, A., Smith, E., & Valentin, Y. (2012). Tangient LLC. *Edison Educators*. Retrieved from <http://edisoneducators.wikispaces.com/Cooperative+Learning+MA>
- Calvache, J. E. (2002). El aprendizaje cooperativo una estrategia de trabajo en la clase de inglés como idioma extranjero. *Hechos y proyecciones del lenguaje*. 11. 61-81.
- Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Gillies, R. M. (2007). *Cooperative Learning Integrating Theory and Practice*. California: Sage publications.
- Harmer, J. (2007a). *The practice of English language teaching*. Essex. Pearson Longman
- Harmer, J. (2007b). *How to teach English*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.

- Jacobs, G., & Farrell, T. (2001). Paradigm Shift: Understanding and Implementing Change in Second Language Education *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. TESL –EJ 5(1), 1. Retrieved from <http://tesl-ej.org/ej17/a1.html>
- Jacobs, G. M., & Hall, S. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobs, G. (2006). *Cooperative Learning and Second Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2010). Introduction to Cooperative Learning. *Cooperative Learning Institute And Interaction Book Company*. Retrieved from http://www.cooperation.org/?page_id=65
- Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative Learning*. Kagan Cooperative Learning: Kagan Cooperative Learning
- Kagan, S. (2001, May). Cooperative Learning Structures Can Increase Student Achievement. *Kagan*. Retrieved from http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/increase_achievement.php
- Kagan, S., & High J. (2002, August). ESL Magazine: Kagan Structures for English Language Learners. *Kagan*. Retrieved from http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/356/ESL-Magazine-Kagan-Structures-for-English-Language-Learners

- Kagan, S. (2003, Spring). A Brief History of Kagan Structures. *Kagan*. Retrieved from http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/ASK20.php
- Kagan, S. (2008, summer). Kagan Structures Simply. *Kagan*. Retrieved from http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/ASK38.php
- Kohn, (1996). In time Cooperative language learning. Retrieved from http://www.intime.uni.edu/coop_learning/ch3/default.htm
- Liang, X., Mohan, B.A., & Early, M. (1998). Issues of cooperative learning in ESL classes: A literature review. *TESL Canada Journal*, 15(2), 13-23. Retrieved from <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/view/698>
- McCafferty, S. G., Jacobs, G. M., and Dasilva, A. C. (2006). *Cooperative Learning and Second Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panitz, T. (1996). A Definition of Collaborative vs Cooperative Learning. *deliberations*. Retrieved from <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/collaborative-learning/panitz-paper.cfm>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Tesol/Tefl. (2009). TESOL/TEFL CERTIFICATION COURSE TRAINING MANUAL. (Oxford University Press ed., Vol. 3.1, pp. 186-187). Location: Canada.

Thornbury (2005). How to teach English. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.

Chapter 5 - Implementing Cooperative Learning pp. 52-58