

COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION

THE INFLUENCE OF COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING ON CLASSROOM  
INTERACTION

by

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Submitted to the School of Human Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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**NOTA DE RESPONSABILIDAD**

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**NOTA DE ACEPTACIÓN**

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**Resumen**

El aprendizaje cooperativo es un enfoque que tiene en cuenta las características sociales del aprendiz. El propósito general de este enfoque es motivar a los estudiantes para que trabajen juntos por una meta o propósito común. En los últimos años, la interacción en el salón de clases, ha sido una de las formas más importantes con la cual los estudiantes podrían aprender a cómo comunicarse en un idioma extranjero. Este trabajo investigativo bibliográfico pretende convencer a los lectores, especialmente profesores de idioma extranjero, acerca de la importancia de tener en cuenta el aprendizaje cooperativo de un idioma como herramienta para alcanzar y establecer la interacción en el salón de clases, como práctica común utilizando el segundo idioma. Una interacción real dentro del salón de clases podría ser aprovechable cuando los estudiantes hablan de sus experiencias personales, comparten ideas, discuten acerca de un tema y desarrollan las cuatro habilidades de la competencia comunicativa, las cuales son: leer, escribir, escuchar y hablar. La idea en este caso es que los profesores utilicen enfoques comunicativos los cuales les van a ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar dichas habilidades.

*Palabras claves:* Aprendizaje cooperativo de una lengua, segundo idioma.

# COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION

## **Abstract**

Cooperative language learning (CLL) is an approach that takes into account the social characteristics of the learner. The general purpose of this approach is to enhance students to work together for a mutual goal or aim. In the last years, interaction on the classroom has been one of the important ways in which students might learn how to communicate in a foreign language. This paper seeks to convince readers, especially foreign language teachers, about the importance of taking into account cooperative language learning as a tool to encourage and establish interaction as a common practice in the second language (L2) classroom. A real interaction inside the classroom might be profitable when students talk about personal experiences, share ideas, discuss about a topic, and develop the four skills of communicative competence, which are: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The idea in this case is that teachers use communicative approaches which are going to help students to develop those skills.

*Keywords:* Cooperative language learning, second language.

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## **Introduction**

Cooperative language learning is an approach that takes into account the social characteristics of the learner. That means that the central focus of this theory is learner-centered aspects which are working in pairs or groups. The general purpose of this approach is to enhance students to work together for a mutual goal or aim. When students work for getting this purpose, there is something that they are indirectly developing in the process of learning a second language. That is, to interact in a social context where they are giving or sharing their ideas. According to Crandall (1999) cited by Brown (2007), cooperative language learning (CLL) challenges personal learners characteristics such as personal learning styles, personality differences and cultural expectations.

This paper seeks to convince readers, especially foreign language teachers, about the importance of taking into account cooperative language learning as a tool to encourage and establish interaction as a common practice in the second language (L2) classroom. When a language is learned in a foreign language context, one of the things required to succeed in that process is the way in which students interact and practice the language they are learning. One of the things that students or learners like the most when they are in an educative environment is to talk or share their personal ideas, experiences, feelings, motivations, purposes, dreams, ambitions, achievements, and so on with other partners. So, why not implement English approaches or methods that feature such sharing and conversational topics and use them as the basis for more complex tasks? In this case, it is relevant to take into account that applying any method or approach that develop conversational topics will have a change in the learning process. In this paper the chosen approach to demonstrate the importance of cooperation was



cooperative language learning (CLL), its principles, and skills for students' interaction in the target language. Cooperative learning is related to how student groups or pairs achieve common and academic purposes. Some of the principles that CLL carries on in its process are: positive interdependence and individual accountability, Putnam, J. (2002). These tenets are explained next to enable readers to better understand where CLL comes from: Positive interdependence is related to the feeling or thought of students that they must work together as a team, to get a common purpose, they know they have to work in the same way to achieve a mutual goal. On the other side, the individual accountability focuses on the responsibility that each student has inside a group. For example, if a student is responsible about a specific topic or activity to be developed and this student does not do his or her fair, something in the group will be wrong and vice versa. There are also skills which are related to this approach. Those skills can vary according to the kind of activities that are developed in the classroom. Teachers are the main source of skills development. Some of them can be listening, speaking, reading or writing skills. Those skills are matched to the developmental level and needs of students. For example, when a language is learned in a foreign language context, there are specific settings that are essential for foreign language learners and also the roles that interaction involves in its development. Another important thing that this paper will carry on is the cooperative language approach focused on classroom interaction. When CLL is applied in a classroom, there are some processes that are developed. One of those processes is interaction. According to Kagan (1996) cited by Putnam, J. (2002). When students share their opinion, ideas, make discussions about a specific topic, make decisions, or negotiate, it means that students are developing social outcomes through interaction. Thus, in the next section, a section will be devoted to discussing the influence of CLL on classroom interaction, a topic that should be of interest for L2 teachers.

### **The Influence of Cooperative Language Learning on Classroom Interaction**

The idea of working in groups in Colombian classrooms has been used by teachers in order to teach a foreign language. According to Broughton G., Brumfit C., Flavell R., Hill P. (1980) for most teachers, the main aspect that they have to take into account is the classroom, specifically the foreign language interaction, what actually happens in the classroom and the teachers' role facilitating the learning of the foreign language. The purpose of working in groups is that students can enhance their performance in the four abilities which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In order to work with those skills, some approaches have appeared along the years to propose new ways of learning and teaching them. These approaches can be broadly classified in grammatical and communicative approaches. According to Canale (1980), grammatical approaches emphasized the learning of grammatical forms such as: phonological forms, morphological forms, syntactic patterns, or lexical items which are combined to structure grammatical sentences as the desirable goal for L2 students. On the other hand, the communicative approaches are based on developing communicative functions like: describing, inviting, promising, or apologizing as the goal of the teaching/learning process. These functions are used by a group of learners in contexts with obligatory contexts where they have to practice and place emphasis on the appropriate use of the grammatical forms. Considering the two trends in approaches above, it is fair to say that the purpose of this research paper is to explain how cooperative language learning should be an option when teaching a foreign language in Colombia. Nowadays, it is widely considered that learning a second language is very important and useful in order to get better jobs or study abroad but Colombian students are far from commanding the L2. The government wants to focus on developing communicative competence in students and these elements are relevant for students and teachers because they have a great

level of motivation for teaching and learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, in the process of learning a foreign language, it is essential to consider that this process involves different interrelated aspects like motivation, educational, and classroom interaction aspects. This research paper, however, is only going to focus on classroom interaction on the process of learning a foreign language taking into account the different aspects related to the cooperative language learning approach and how those aspects influence the foreign language learning in students. When students get in groups to develop a specific task they are committed to think that they are working for a mutual benefit, so they can interact working to their full capacity.

According to Aramayo and Armenta (2006), when a group works in a functional cooperative way, learners will get a sense of “swimming or sinking together”. In a real context, beginner learners are frightened of speaking or even answering simple or basic questions to the teacher but when they get in groups with their same level partners, they know that their partners are in the same position, so they start interacting in their own way to give their ideas. Furthermore the cooperative language learning approach will be developed to support the aspect of classroom interaction in the process of learning a foreign language. For many people around the world, learning a second language has become an important goal in their lives, some reasons that people have are: to get a better lifestyle, to communicate with other people around the world or to travel abroad. It depends on the motivations that people have for learning a second language. But there is also a fact to recognize and it is the way in which learners learn a second language specifically English. Those ways are: learn English as a second language (ESL) and acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL). The acquisition of English as a second language (ESL) and English acquisition as a foreign language EFL Brown, H. (2008) states that the acquisition of English as a second language takes place in the contexts in which the target language is

accessible. For example, learning English in the United States, Australia or England, are good examples of the way in which students acquire a second language. On the other hand, the learning of English as a foreign language consists on acquiring English in contexts in which students do not have native English contexts further than their classroom. In that case, students must find their own ways to learn the target language, those ways could be, books, speaking clubs with native speakers, interactive classes with their teachers in which they can develop their speaking skills, etc. These two settings have differences we need to acknowledge and, it is essential to know that the process of acquiring a second language is developed in an EFL context. In these kinds of contexts, teachers should enhance more motivation through CLL activities like group tasks, discussions about topics that are interesting for learners, debates where students show their abilities to defend their opinions or ideas, etc. When teachers apply those activities to the classroom, the atmosphere among teachers and students will change because students will feel that as teachers as students are responsible of the foreign language learning and the interaction will be based on real aspects that students concern. Thus, in the next section the author will explain about classroom interaction in EFL settings.

### **Strategies for Fostering Classroom Interaction in EFL Settings**

In an EFL context such as ours, it is essential to consider that students need to create or look for spaces in which they can interact in the target language. But what is interaction? According to Robinson, 1994 cited by Tuan and Nhu (2010) “Interaction is the process of referring to face-to-face action. It can be either verbal channeled through written or spoken words, or non- verbal, channeled through touch, proximity, eye-contact, facial expressions, gesturing, etc. P.30” Taking into account the ways in which interaction could be developed, it is

focused on: non-verbal and verbal interaction. Non-verbal interaction consists on the behaviors of students like head nodding, hand raising, body gestures, and eye contact. On the other hand, verbal interaction has two ways of interaction; those are written and oral interaction. Written interaction is a way of interaction in which students write down their ideas, thoughts, feelings interacting with others in written words, texts, etc. In contrast, oral interaction consists on the students' interaction with others by making comments, speaking in class, asking and answering questions, talking about real life, and taking part in discussions. However, it is necessary to recognize that there are three elemental ways that students can develop in their learning processes, according to Johnson & Johnson (1988). Those ways of interaction are: "students can *compete* to see who is best; they can work *individualistically* on their own toward a goal without paying attention to other students; or they can work *cooperatively* with a vested interest in each other's learning as well as their own P.34". In this case, when students work cooperatively in their learning process, it means that they interact in an integral way in which they work as a group to reach the same goal in a particular situation, encourage each other to work in an specific task and celebrate together their achievements or goals, but it is essential to notice that the other ways of interacting are important too. Although the other ways of interacting mentioned before are not similarly effective in the interacting process of students, they are equally important because in some cases, students will face situations in which they will need to interact according to the situation or context. When students accomplish the ways of interaction above, it is because there was a previous process that was carried out based on the process of cooperative language learning which assist students to interact to get a specific aim.

Consequently, the role of classroom interaction is very significant in the process of learning English as a foreign language because they are applying the main ways of interacting to

get a mutual benefit, and indirectly sharing an emotive point of view when they share their personal ideas. The interaction can happen between the teacher and students, and between students to student in a collective or individual way but for this purpose, it is necessary to create or motivate an atmosphere where students can develop a process to interact appropriately with the foreign language context. According to Angelo (1993), cited by LT Tuan & NTK (2010), “create an active learning environment ; focus attention; connect knowledge; help students organize their knowledge; provide timely feedback; demand quality; balance high expectations with student support; enhance motivation to learn; encourage faculty-student and student-student interaction and communication P. 31” . When the atmosphere in which interaction is being developed has a positive performance it is because the previous process was well designed. According to Brown (2007) interactive classes must follow or have aspects such as: organizing a significant pair or group work, getting real language input in real world contexts, producing own and meaningful language, having real conversations where the learners give and receive authentic information. Additionally, Van Lier (1996) cited by LT Tuan & NTK (2010) suggests that there are two types of classroom interaction which give opportunities to negotiate. When students are learning a foreign language, it is essential to take into account that they are learning different ways of using the foreign language and some of those ways are: negotiating, opining, discussing, etc. In a classroom interaction, discussing or negotiating about a specific topic involves social aspects in the learners’ interaction because they are sharing or talking about something they have as a background. In CLL when this happens, it means that the learners are relating their previous knowledge or experience with the current topic or situation they are performing. So, when they are developing those uses, they are also developing some roles in the

interaction process. Thus, in the next section there will be a description about some roles of classroom interaction.

### **Which Types of Interaction Can Teachers Use?**

It is common that in the EFL classroom, the teacher asks questions and learners answer those questions. In some cases the teacher can be involved in the learning process interacting in the learning activities. These types are named teacher-learner interaction LT Tuan & NTK (2010). Nowadays, teachers in general, apply this form of communication interacting with the class, groups in the class, or individually. In contrast, in the traditional classroom, the interaction happens in a regular way; because the teacher stands behind a desk, and spends a lot of time giving lectures and directions while the role of students are sitting and taking notes about what the teacher is saying or explaining. The focus of interaction in a traditional classroom is to control the topic, determine when the interaction has to start and stop in the classroom (Cazden, 1998; Tsui, 1995 cited by LT Tuan & NTK 2010).

Another form of interaction happens between learners. In this form of interaction the role of the teacher is monitoring the activities of interaction and learners are the main participants. There are two types of interaction in this case. The first one is when learner-learner interaction happens in groups and when learner-learner interaction happens in pair, this is called peer interaction. In these roles, it is noticeable the common way in which interaction happens. That common way is the interaction development in students groups. In that case, it emerges an integral role that students participate on. That is a cooperative role, it consists on the acceptance in a group of students the idea of working together in a specific task or situation, the focus in this

role is that students think that they sink or swim together and work cooperatively, but it is not allowed to work individually.

The roles of interaction relate the importance of output interaction in the process of learning a foreign language. When students are in this process, the output that they develop is essential to improve the whole skills in a language because they are applying and acquiring the processes learned inside the classroom. In the next section, there will be a description about the main importance of output and input interaction in the process of learning a foreign language.

### **The Importance of Output and Input in Interaction**

Some years ago, the studies of classroom interaction focused on the student's input. However, some investigations have provided another significant point to take into account which is the output of students in interaction. The output of students has four important functions: noticing, hypothesis, testing and reflection. According to Hall (2010), when students are getting the input, they do not need to know or follow all the features for understanding the content; nevertheless, when students must provide output, they notice that it is hard to change their native language system to the second language system.

Another essential point is the role of interaction in the classroom event Hall, (2000). Much of language learning occurs in the classroom in EFL settings. The interaction inside the classroom and teachers play an important role in the process of students' language learning and teachers need to be skillful when initiating, maintaining and fostering interaction. According to Krashen (cited by Hall, 2000) "meaningful teacher talk is central to the process of language learning". This statement of Krashen does not have much evidence but it has caused interest in some



authors because the teacher talk is an important aspect for making or giving a comprehensible message. According to Hall (2000), some parts of discourse like: feedback, error connection, and use of questions have been analyzed in the process of speaking development.

The role of interaction has been a central point to the second language learning study and also many studies have been made for proving this statement. For example: “SLA researchers gathered data on learners and interlocutors as evidence of language development. Extensive empirical studies of input and interaction explored the ways in which learners manipulated their inter-language resources when asked to make their messages more comprehensible.” (Susan M.G., Alison M, and Teresa P. 2011).

To talk about input interaction, it is also necessary to know the definition about what is input interaction. Input interaction refers to the need that students have in gaining input through interaction. The main aspect about input interaction is to think about the communicative teaching principles. There are two important communicative teaching principles, those are: “it is not necessary for students to understand or translate every word of reading or a listening text. If students complete the task we set answering a certain number of questions. P.45” This principle shows that when students are learning a second language, the translation of every word is not appropriate for the second language learning process. If teachers speak all the time in English, the students will assimilate English language. In the English assimilation there is something that students can extend and that is the ability of comprehend and understand the meaning of something depending on the context in which the activity was assigned. In this case, if the teacher provides a group activity in which students must interact in the target language talking and discussing about real life, it will not be necessary to translate each word or sentence, in this

situation the purpose is to express ideas or feelings. Indirectly, students will assimilate some skills like listening and speaking and social skills. In Colombian classrooms, one way in which the teacher can provide input interaction is through activities that students can develop in a group. When teachers motivate and assign to students group tasks, they also need to give a previous background to support the task. If for example, the task is related to the society and its problems; the teacher supports the task giving examples, facts, and antecedents related to the topic. After giving the information above, when the teacher assigns to the task, students will be motivated and also confident about what they have to do. In this way, they will work as a group to accomplish the purpose of the task and also they will get some advantages in their learning process. Some of them are: increase of communication of the topic through the input interaction that the teacher provided before, motivation to accomplish a mutual goal, work as a team, and also assimilation of the target language. For this assimilation process there is a role which complements it. This is the classroom discourse. In the next section, there will be a description about this role.

### **The Role of Classroom Discourse**

In the classroom interaction there are some important aspects which are the activities that are inserted inside the classroom for language comprehension. In this case, the role of the teacher is very important, especially when they want to develop cooperative learning. In this process there are some steps that teachers need to develop. According to Cohen (1998) cited by Yahya N., & Huie K., it is important that teachers think about the instructions related to group students and bring them the appropriate tasks or activities, the next step that the teacher needs to follow is the explanation of the academic activity and the explanation of the cooperative

organization. Consequently, the oral interaction between students and teachers and students-students is essential because it creates the learning environments and also the communicative interaction (Hall 2000). According to (Hall 2000, p.7) “teachers are considered to be the experts in their classrooms, their role in instructing and managing these intellectual and practical contexts in which the students learn has been shown to be especially consequential.” The process for making that development is: First, teachers create ways for appropriate communicative actions, in this step; the learners acquire those actions for their process. Second, teachers have to take into account the number of learners’ participation. It has two purposes: the first one is to know the attitudes for the classroom activity and the second one is for knowing the individual student learning. Third, through interaction, teachers do not take into account the traditional standards because the performance is measured in a different way. According to (Hall 2000, p. 7) “...it is in their interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create the intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target language as well as the processes and outcomes of individual development.”

In the next section, there will be an explanation about the centrality of interaction in the English learning process.

### **The Centrality of Interaction**

For students, to have authentic interaction means that both teachers and students are the responsible to get authentic interaction but it needs to follow a process. This process consists on: teachers design and apply activities or tasks which must be aimed to expose students to face more realistic situations where learners may be more interested and engaged, and if learners are engaged and interested in the activities that were assigned, they might take a major participation

inside the classroom interaction. That is real interaction. According to (Wells 1981: 29, 46-7 cited by Rivers) “Exchange is the basic unit of discourse...Linguistic interaction is a collaborative activity” regarding “the establishment of a triangular relationship between the sender, the receiver and the context of situation”. The real interaction is related to the ideas comprehension between two or more people, it means to share each point of view about something. These aspects must be present in the communication of students: “listening to others, talking with others, negotiating meaning in a shared context.” (Rivers, p. 4). What is the importance of interaction in language learning contexts? Students can get good communicative skills through listening and speaking activities. In interaction the students can use their previous knowledge or background. This use is going to be more meaningful for students because they are going to notice the type of knowledge that they are developing in a foreign language. “The brain is dynamic, constantly interrelating what when have learned with what we are learning, and the give-and-take of message exchanges enables students to retrieve and interrelate a great deal of what they have encountered”. Rivers (1990, p. 5) Taking into account the information above, it is important to give the description about why cooperative language learning is important in classroom interaction. In the next section, there will be a description about the approach of cooperative language learning.

### **Cooperative Language Learning**

Based on the general instructional approaches, cooperative language learning had its origins in the twentieth century U.S., specifically in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the authors of this approach was John Dewey. This approach focuses on to teach trough activities relating pairs, and small groups of students in the classroom (Richards and Rodgers 2002). According to

Olsen and Kagan (1992) cited by Richards and Rodgers (2002) “Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others”. In this approach, the central role is the social interaction in learning. One of the important aspects to consider is that students acquire communicative competence language through interaction and pedagogical planned situations. According to (Kagan, 1995) language acquisition is definite by complex interaction; critical input, and output variables. These variables show that the implement of cooperative language learning has a positive influence in the language acquisition. The main characteristics of input in language acquisition are: “comprehensible, developmentally appropriate, redundant, and accurate” (Kagan, 1995 P.1) First, when the input is comprehensible it means that students that work in cooperative groups necessary have to make understand, in this case they set their language level in an appropriate way to the listener for negotiating meaning. Second, input is developmentally appropriate. Here the developmental and proximal zone of the student plays an important role. It is necessary to establish the difference between these two zones. The developmental zone is the ability that the learner has to make something alone and the proximal zone is what the learner can do with extra help, the result of this is called the zone of proximal development. (Vygotsky, 1978 cited by Kagan 1995). Consequently, a cooperative group focuses its input on the zone of proximal development. Third, input is redundant. When a learner is exposed to acquire an understandable input in the zone of proximal development it does not mean that the learner will acquire a language, thus a cooperative learning group is a good help of redundant communication. Learners interact with their partners to discuss a specific topic and also to deduce meaning from repeated input. Finally, accurate

input. In this part, the main character is the teacher because it is the responsible of sharing and giving the appropriate speech to the classroom.

When the input characteristics have been performed by the teacher, emerges the next step which is output. In this step, the output has also other characteristics. According to (Swain 1985, cited by Kagan 1995.) Those characteristics are: Functional, communicative, frequent, redundant and consistent output. First, communicative output. When a learner develops a real communicative competence, it means that in a cooperative group the learner is able to express, has a functional output and has a meaningful language. Second, Frequent output. Traditional classrooms interaction is based on questions-answers from the teacher to the learners and the current feedback that is developed is when the teacher correct the mistakes in the answers. On the other hand, cooperative learning has a huge advantage in this case, because inside a discussion students share their opinions or make debates where they clearly can use in a real way the target language. Third, redundant output. When a topic is given to students to talk and they have the opportunity to speak about it in a cooperative group, the great advantage in this case is the fluency that each one will get. Finally, identity congruent output. Cooperative learning involves many aspects, but an important one is when a learner relates the topics with something about its personality. It is very comfortable for them to talk about something they know about and they like to.

When the teacher explains and gives a background about a topic that is needed for a consequent activity, it is also providing input to the learners. This input is then put in practice when learners have to face in a group activity. In this case, they have to show the input they got

during the teacher's explanation and also apply it for working as a group to get a common goal and also a common outcome.

In the next section the author will describe the student and teacher behavior in cooperative classroom contexts.

### **Student and Teacher Behavior in Cooperative Classroom Contexts**

In a cooperative group, sometimes the motivation that students get from their teachers are rewards for a specific task that was developed inside the classroom. There are some studies that showed there are other ways of rewarding the learners but it depends on their behaviors. For example in a study group, Sharan and Hertz-Lazarowitz (1980) decided to avoid use external rewards and they proposed and applied a way of encouraging internal motivation. They created interesting and challenging tasks to prove that learners could achieve the tasks that were asked by the teacher. As a result, it was noticeable that learners interact in more nature way and indirectly it was promoted intergroup acceptance. On the other hand the teacher behavior also plays an important role in cooperative language learning contexts. The teacher is the responsible of structuring learning, it means that the teacher is the person that enhances and encourages the students to work together for getting a mutual goal. To succeed in this purpose, it is indispensable that the teacher plans and executes in a functional way the interactive tasks to be developed in the classroom. When this process is well structured there are some benefits that as teachers as students can profit. According to (Richards & Renandya, 2002) the benefits are: "less teacher talk, increased student talk, more varied student talk, more negotiation of meaning, a greater amount of comprehensible input, a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, and a greater

motivation for learning P.50” These factors help and contribute significantly to the language acquiring process.

### **How May Cooperative Language Learning Affect Classroom Interaction?**

The main factors about cooperative language learning that were mentioned in previous sections are based on creation, analysis and systematic application of *structures*, (Kagan 2002). The activities and strategies that teachers implement in a cooperative classroom to develop interaction are varied depending on the objectives of interaction. For example, there are structures that are designed for different purposes, those are: teambuilding, classbuilding, communication building, mastery and concept development. These structures are designed for mastery. These structures allow to students to express ideas and opinions refereeing a specific topic, seeing alternative hypotheses, values and problem-solving aspects, vocabulary development in which students use communicative skills and practice role-taking abilities.

Other results about implementing cooperative language learning in classrooms, brought some benefits that were relevant in for second language learners. According to Jenkins (2003) cited by Putnam, J. (2009), for example, students got higher self-esteem, safe learning environment and comfort for being part of a group, and higher outcomes. Teachers also said that participation increased considerably.

Cooperative learning focuses on using social skills for students in which they can learn and also deal with behavior problems inside the group work. According to Johnson & Johnson (1989) cited by Putnam, J. (2009), students that are part of a group must coordinate some attempts which are: getting to know and trust in the partner(s), communicate accurately, accept it



does not matter to the partner and support one another, and resolve problems positively. These attempts are important to the teacher because with the information that students provide, the teacher will know and prioritize social skills that need attention.

### **Conclusions**

In a foreign language context, students necessarily need to have an interactive and relaxed atmosphere. When students are acquiring a foreign language, the skills and cultural aspects are essential in their language learning process. Inside a classroom, students have to face with idea of being exposed in a target language, the fact in this case is that they feel stressed and the outcome they will offer will vary in a positive or negative way, some students work in an appropriate way when they feel pressure, others work better when the atmosphere where they are, it is relaxing. In that case, working in a group or pair allows them to express their ideas more spontaneously and relaxed. Another important aspect in CLL on classroom interaction is that students get an independent way of acquiring language when they express their ideas or opinions in the target language. The process they carry on is partially free because the teacher assigns a specific task but it depends on the pair or group of students how they develop the task. Students get a sense of group work. The main aspect about cooperative language learning is that students work for a mutual goal. When students interact between themselves, they start thinking as a group because they know that each one plays an important role to succeed in the task.

In a traditional classroom interaction, the teacher is the center of interaction. The time that the teacher spends interacting with the students is in a set of questions where the only way of interaction happens when the teacher asks and student answers questions. There is not interaction about real contexts, conversations about interesting topics, or encouraging students to

communicate in the target language. When students face that kind of interaction, the process of learning a second language may be affected because there may be not the use of the target language and the learning will be focused just on grammar explanations and pronunciation of word chunks. On the other hand, if a teacher uses CLL in a task where students must interact, the results will be different for three reasons. First, activities related to CLL are focused on the real use of the target language. For example, if students are exposed to give or fight for their ideas or opinion in a debate they will enhance the ability of thinking in the target language and speaking through it. Some benefits are: less teacher talk, increased student talk and more varied students talk. Second, teachers will spend less time grading in groups than individually the students output. In Colombian classrooms the time that a teacher has to develop an English class is really limited, in some cases the English lesson lasts an hour or maximum two. So, it is important to save up time developing tasks where students can get real interaction through activities in which they feel comfortable and interested in and the atmosphere of the classroom will be more relaxed. Third, students will be developing communicative competence which is the purpose of learning a foreign language. When teachers focuses on the idea of assessing students through their writing skills, the purpose of learning a second language will not succeed, because students will get major results on writing skills, but the rest of skills will not be right based and the interaction that students might bring will be limited compared to the writing skills but if teachers apply tasks where students can develop the main skills which are reading, writing, listening and speaking in an integral way, the communicative competence will be developed in its whole way.

According to Kagan (1992) cited by Richards (2002), some tasks that can be applied are: reading in an ESL/EFL context. In this case students must be numbered to be ready when the teacher asks for the answer. In this case, students must be responsible for their information

because they know that the grade or result depends on their responsibility and also how well they develop the task. Another task is assigning speaking tasks such as jig saw activities. Here students must interact in the target language to report certain information which was given by their teacher. One of the advantages of applying this activity is that they understand what they are saying and it could be and strategy that they can apply outside the classroom.

In Colombian classrooms, large classes are difficult to handle for some teachers. When teachers have to face large classes sometimes it could be a challenge for them because students do not behave or collaborate with class. But, if teachers use CLL for these kinds of classrooms, that challenged classroom may become a potential place of English speakers. For example, some of the principles of cooperative language learning are: form groups to motivate students to work for a mutual goal, use the target language as the only way to interact inside the English lesson classroom, and get a relaxed atmosphere where they comfortable with the tasks that they have to develop. The way that students disapprove is the traditional way in which they are forced to accomplish with a task that they are not really interested in and in some cases they cheat for accomplishing it. The purpose of applying CLL is that students can learn to speak and communicate in the target language. And the way to get this is changing the traditional thoughts that teachers are the important characters in the classroom. Applying CLL, students realize that they are the main characters of the classroom because teachers are the ones that provide the input but it depends on students how and when they develop their output.

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