

IMPACT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON THE DEVELOPEMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract. A non-native speaker's ability to master a foreign language depends on practice, so teaching English to non-native speakers in a non-English speaking society makes it difficult to practice and use English. Educational institutions in Russia are seeking the ways to address this issue. Cooperative learning is one of the techniques that provides learners with an opportunity to develop communicative competence for English foreign language learners. The study aims to evaluate how cooperative learning impacts the development of communicative competence of non-native speakers of English in Russia. The author analyzed the existing research on the issue and applied cooperative learning in the education process of 60 students studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The impact of cooperative learning was assessed via a survey after the educational course was completed. The results showed that cooperative learning enhances English language learners' communicative competence. The results of the research can be used to teach English for Specific Purposes at universities.

Keywords: cooperative learning (CL), communicative competence (CC), English as a Foreign Language (FL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), university students

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ВЛИЯНИЕ СОВМЕСТНОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ НА РАЗВИТИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ В ОБЛАСТИ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА В ВУЗЕ

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Аннотация. Способность овладеть английским языком человека, для которого английский язык является не родным, зависит от практики, но обучение английскому языку лиц, не являющихся носителями языка, в неанглоязычном обществе затрудняет использование его на практике. Образовательные учреждения в России ищут пути решения этой проблемы. Совместное обучение является одной из технологий, которая дает возможность обучающимся, изучающим английский язык, развивать коммуникативную компетенцию. Целью исследования является оценка того, как совместное обучение влияет на развитие коммуникативной компетенции в области обучения английскому языку для специальных целей студентов российских вузов. Автор проанализировал исследования по данному вопросу и использовал совместное обучение в образовательном процессе 60 студентов, изучающих английский язык для специальных целей (ESP). Влияние совместного обучения на развитие коммуникативной компетенции оценивалось с помощью опроса, который проводился после завершения обучения. Результаты показали, что совместное обучение повышает коммуникативную компетентность студентов, изучающих английский язык. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы для обучения английскому языку для специальных целей в вузах.

Ключевые слова: совместное обучение, коммуникативная компетенция, английский язык как иностранный, английский язык для специальных целей, студенты вуза

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Introduction

The education system is a dynamic process that strives to enhance learners' talents so that they are prepared for the outside world. Thus, students constitute a distinct socio-demographic group characterized by adaptability to changing conditions, social mobility, and relatively quick adaptation to innovation. Students differ from other socio-demographic youth groups in that they participate in studies, which is a socially beneficial activity at this stage of social development.

The emphasis on preparing university students to learn foreign languages has resulted in a move towards a new approach of improving communicative competence. This approach enables learners to obtain basic skills and promotes active constructive learning and then actively participating in the learning system as cooperative learning. Due to the success of cooperative learning, it has become the approach that is frequently utilized as a way to encourage students to take a dynamic role in the education and learning system. Based on this, Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T. introduced cooperative learning "as a result of a shift from what the student learns to how it is done" [14, p. 4].

Cooperative learning refers to interactions between learners in small groups. According to Lewis B. "cooperative learning involves students working together on a similar task" [17]. Meanwhile, Slavin R., Eric H. and Anne C. argues that "dividing students into teams may be counterproductive if there is no purpose or goal for each group to achieve" [23, p.178].

Fabra M.L. stated that "Teamwork in university settings has traditionally been presumed to be a proficiency gained out of experience or, anticipation, and teams are often created to foster learning" [7, p. 7], so cooperative learning is a desirable and effective teaching method because of the benefits it provides to students, whether intellectually, socially, or mentally. Therefore, Salma D. and Ümmü A. pointed out the advantages of CL of English as a foreign language to be "the ability to solve difficulties and develop one's language skills, especially reading comprehension" [25, p. 91].

Johnson D.W. and Johnson R.T. defined cooperative learning as "a set of interactions in a learning/educational situation, which is based on the use of small groups of students immersed in a learning activity based on communication among themselves to achieve specific goals, and

each of them is responsible for his share of the responsibility" [15, p. 4]. Consequently, cooperative learning learners are responsible for both teaching themselves and teaching others.

While cooperative learning is currently being used in higher education, it was used widely in primary and secondary schools before being adapted to higher education [10]. Similarly, Santiago M.L. et al. asserted that "Cooperative learning initially focused largely on primary and secondary education and then in recent years has become more popular in the higher education system" [27].

Using cooperative learning as a means of developing communication alignment and other skills, learners develop their skills in a motivating, incentive-focused manner, and this is what Slavin R., Eric H. and Anne C. early identified as "motivational, social, developmental, and cognitive coherence as four major theoretical perspectives on the effects of achievement on learning" [23, p. 180]. Therefore, this research considers cooperative learning as a chance to foster the development of communicative competence for EFL students.

Basically, cooperative work focuses on common aims and builds a flexible and dynamic learning environment that positively affects the development of the communicative competence of foreign language learners. Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T. stated that "cooperative learning helps students to help each other to learn, because the students demonstrate care about the group and its members and come to derive self-identity benefits from group membership" [14, p. 4–5]. Therefore, university teachers of foreign languages are required to develop teaching procedures that develop students' ability to communicate [11, 18–20, 24].

Cooperative learning takes place in teams where learners work together to produce information, enhance cognitive processing during a lesson, or support competency development on a long-term basis. This study seeks the evidence to confirm the impact of CL in a university setting as a path to achieve the aims that stimulates higher education students to upgrade their communicative competence in the learning environment.

"Competence" according to Salganik L.S., Rychen et al "involves an individual's ability to perform a given act, skill, or activity in response to the conditions, rules, and actions that help him make good use of a particular difficult situation"

[26, p. 10]. Similarly, Jonathan W., Françoise D. and Le Deist E. defined competence as “acting effectively against a problematic circumstance based on capabilities derived from the intersection of accumulated knowledge, skills, and general experience” [13, p. 10].

Following Chomsky's N. description of the distinction between linguistic competence and performance, Hymes D. developed the concept of communicative competence. Chomsky N. argued that “linguistic theory is concerned with the ideal listener of a speaker who knows the language thoroughly in a perfectly homogeneous modern society” [3, p. 12]. Hymes D. defined communicative competence as “knowledge of the psychological, cultural, and social norms that govern the use of speech within a given society” [9, p. 282].

Canale and Swain (1980) use communicative competence “to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence... and sociolinguistic competence” [4, p. 6]. The term CC has been used by Savignon to “describe classroom language learners' ability to interact with other speakers and make meaning as opposed to their ability to recite dialogue or Perform discrete-point grammatical knowledge tests” [29, p. 3]. Thus, Gagné N. and Parks S. stated that “scaffolding in cooperative learning is a device to enhance interaction between learners that improves learners' communicative competence” [8, p. 12]. Besides, the findings of Renou J. show that “cooperative learning greatly improves fluency acquisition since the students speak more and are more focused on meaningful communicative competence” [21, p. 17]. Alghamdi R. identified “a significant difference in making background statements in the discussion, responding to others' questions, explaining with examples, interrupting positively, and supporting others” [1, p. 22].

Johnson W., Johnson T. and Santiago M. agreed that “Learning cooperatively offers a range of benefits to students, including the expectation of excellent performance from all groups, the opportunity to enhance communication skills, as well as fostering greater academic achievement and competence as a means of implementing cooperative learning for long-term success” [30, p. 10, 11]. Slavin R., Eric H. and Anne C. claimed that “the importance of team goals and individual accountability lies in providing learners with an incentive to support and promote one

another to exert maximum tension” [23, p. 178]. Dansereau F.D. discovered that “college students who work on structured cooperative texts learn the material or technical procedures more effectively than those who do so alone” [5, p. 16]. For this reason, students need to engage in learning in several ways, with cooperative learning being identified as a crucial skill for the development of communication competence among foreign language learners in higher education. As a result, universities have begun using cooperative learning as an effective means of developing skills and improving students' communication abilities. Accordingly, cooperative learning at the university is effective because: Students must be taught and encouraged to develop the communication and teamwork skills necessary for excellent cooperation. “To synchronize attempts to accomplish common objectives, participants must (a) learn to trust one another, (b) engage properly and freely, (c) accept and promote one another, and (d) resolve disputes productively” [12, p. 11]. Stephanie F., Kirk A. examined a variety of techniques to increase learners' active engagement in education process [28]. One of the techniques is the usage of dialogue in education process. Robyn G. promotes the use of dialogue as a way to gain knowledge in academia at the undergraduate level [22]. The effectiveness of CL has also been studied in Engineering [2] and Mathematics [6].

The researchers distinguish the advantages of cooperative learning to develop communicative competence. They state that cooperative learning:

1. Develops collaboration and social skills [30].
2. Makes the student remember things better [30].
3. Relieves the authoritarian or tense atmosphere in the classroom [30].
4. Increases students' sense of belonging to the group [16].
5. Increases students' motivation towards learning.
6. Develops in students the desire to accept the other.
7. Creates a favorable connection between the student and the educational institution personnel.
8. Develops positive relationships among students.
9. Improves the analytical and imaginative abilities of students.

10. Develops individual and collective responsibility among students.

11. Develop listening and speaking skills [16].

12. Develops leadership and communication skills [16].

13. Develops self-management, courtship, asking questions, managing discussion, organizing time, self-learning, summarizing.

When using cooperative learning, an instructor has some responsibilities and duties to perform before, during, and after the session. The functions of an instructor in cooperative learning are the follows:

1. The teacher chooses the subject and works to set goals, maintain order and organize all the contents of the classroom environment.

2. The teacher works to take specific actions and decisions regarding the status of the learners in the educational groups before starting the lesson.

3. The teacher works on clarifying the tasks and objectives required of the students.

4. The teacher works to prepare and equip the educational groups, in terms of materials, tools and activities.

5. The instructor motivates the kids to work in teams cooperatively.

6. The teacher follows up the interaction and sharing among all group members.

7. The teacher works on evaluating the performance of the students, by cooperating among themselves, they can discuss their performance progress.

It is common for cooperative learning to be conducted by students in small group settings, each of which includes a number of cooperative learners. Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T. stated that “Students who have participated in cooperative learning for 12–20 years and have worked cooperatively with students with varying abilities, ethnicities, genders, etc., will be better able to build interdependent relationships than those who have participated in competitive and individualistic learning for 12–20 years” [16, p. 8]. In this sense, it can be said that learning is not only a personal process, but a social and interactive process that depends on students' cooperation, and life is not about competition alone, but rather about cooperation for the most part.

Moreover, learning foreign language is not about dealing with it in the classroom, but using it in everyday life, so a learner becomes fully qualified in it. To develop four foreign language

skills, cooperative learning is a suitable method. Johnson W., Johnson T. stated that “it is very important for EFL learners to understand that their work life outside of school will involve working closely with a diverse team of people on their majors”. Therefore, it is crucial that learners comprehend that effective interpersonal and small-group skills are not something that naturally comes to them. And also Johnson W. and Johnson T. added that “we are not born knowing how to interact effectively with other people” [15, p. 8].

Overall, active learning strategies are based on cooperative learning principles. Since most active learning forms assume small groups of students working cooperatively, most forms of active learning are cooperative.

Research Methods

In this study, the aim was to investigate how cooperative learning impact on the development of students' communicative competence.

Setting and participants

The author used qualitative methods to determine the impact of cooperative learning on enhancing students' communicative competence for learners of English as a foreign language. Two research methods were used: the analysis of the literature and a feedback survey. The analysis of the literature allowed the author to define previous discussions in scope, ensuring that this study is up-to-date and addresses a significant issue.

Firstly, the study participants were given an introduction to the study aims and clarification of some terms related to the study, and then at the end of the experiment they answered a questionnaire.

Data collection

Based on the feedback survey and observation, the author is able to supply reliable and usable primary data for illustrating the benefits of cooperative learning for English as a foreign language learners in developing their communicative competence.

The respondents were 60 university students from the faculties of Natural Sciences, Architecture and Law. The study took place at South Ural State University.

The author asked the students to complete the survey during the class. 60 copies of survey were distributed and all the students agreed to participate. This strategy allows to collect information in a short period. The survey included five statements (Table 1).

Table 1

The survey on learners' satisfaction

1. Engaging in cooperative learning enhances students' social skills	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
2. Engaging in cooperative learning interferes with your' academic progress	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
3. What skills are most developed in cooperative learning	Speaking Listening Reading Writing All above
4. Using cooperative learning promotes friendship among students	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
5. Do you think working together helps you to better communicate your thinking?	Yes No Maybe

Results and discussion

Theoretical results

1. Researchers' understanding of cooperative learning.

The results of this research pointed out that CL is small groups of learners working together in a teaching/learning environment to obtain specific aims, and each manages his or her own portion of the work.

2. The significance of cooperative learning.

Prior studies that indicated the importance of motivation underlying cooperative learning to develop better competencies for foreign language learners. The initial aim of the study was to identify the impact cooperative learning to develop communicative learning.

3. The impact of cooperative learning for EFL learners at higher education.

The dimensions of the impact of cooperative learning on the educational process are (social, intellectual, and mental). The current study found that the four main theoretical perspectives on the effects of achievement on learning from cooperative learning (motivational, social, developmental, and cognitive coherence). In this study it was found that a cooperative learning experience involves learners working together in teams to create information, enhance cognitive processing in a lesson, or develop competencies over time.

4. The impact of cooperative learning on the development of communicative competence for EFL learners.

There was an interesting finding that communicative competence refers to the relationship between sociolinguistic competence and grammatical competence, that these competencies could be development by cooperative learning, by interacting with other speakers and making meaning rather than reciting dialogues or scoring discrete points on grammatical knowledge tests. These results indicate the impact of cooperative learning on the development of communicative competence of English as a foreign language for university students for specific purposes (ESP).

Practical results

This section of the questionnaire required respondents to find out the attitudes of learners to cooperative learning as the means to develop their communicative competence, by the end of the survey period, data has been collected from 60 students.

1. Engaging in CL enhances learners' social skills.

As shown by the pie chart, cooperative learning is beneficial to the development of social skills, as 49% of students strongly agree and 45% indicated that agree, and a minority of participants 7% indicated neutral (Fig. 1).

2. Engaging in cooperative learning interferes with your' academic progress.

Students' academic development is impaired by cooperative learning, depicted in the pie chart below. Similarly, to the previously presented data, this pie chart shows a dramatic gradient

Engaging in cooperative learning enhances students' social skills.

59 responses

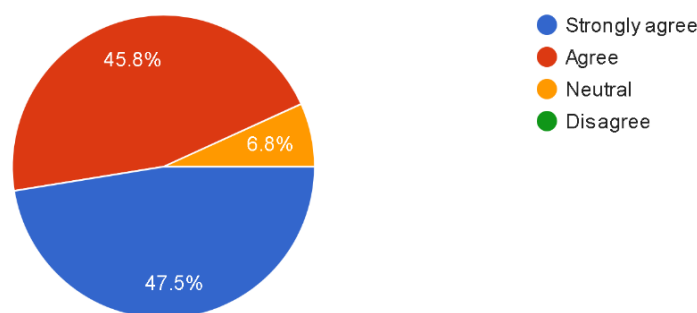


Fig. 1. The impact of cooperative learning on Social Skills

Engaging in cooperative learning interferes with your' academic progress.

59 responses

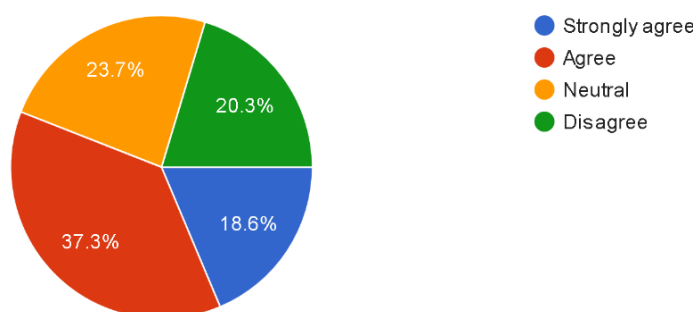


Fig. 2. Interferes with Academic Progress

between the percentages given by the respondents, so the percentage of learners (strongly agree) is around 19% and the percentage of those who are (agree) is around 23%, with an impressive persistence rate of 20% (unacceptable), and this will open up new interest in this gap (Fig. 2).

3. *What skills are most developed in cooperative learning.*

According to pie chart Fig. 3, there is a summary of the efficacy of cooperative learning to develop communicative competence, as we said before, (speaking) leads the responses at about 73%, followed by (all of the above) at approximately 13%, and then (listening) at approximately 9%. Finally, there was no response to (writing).

4. *Using cooperative learning promotes friendship among students.*

Cooperative learning demonstrated excellent results for developing social connections and establishing friendships among students according to student responses, with responses varying from strongly agreeing with 37% to agreeing with 37%. This suggests that around 74 %, or the great majority, believe cooperative education has many beneficial features that are distant from

the educational purpose, while 22 % are indifferent, and 5% disagree.

5. *Do you think working together helps you to better communicate your thinking?*

The pie chart (Fig. 4) illustrates the extent to which cooperative learning facilitates effective communication between learners; the highest percentage for answering is (Yes) around 84%, followed by about 12% (Maybe), and the lowest is (No) 7%.

In the context of the observation about the effectiveness of cooperative education to develop the communicative competence of a sample in the experiment, Canale and Swain, they already underlined that “the differences between the assessment of the met discursive knowledge of competence and the capacity to demonstrate correct use in a real communicative situation. In their reflections, they proposed the need to develop new assessment formats and criteria, which must be centered on communicative skills and their relation between verbal and non-verbal elements” [6, p. 1]. First, the verbal context refers to how well students work with their language skills within their educational environment (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) and how well

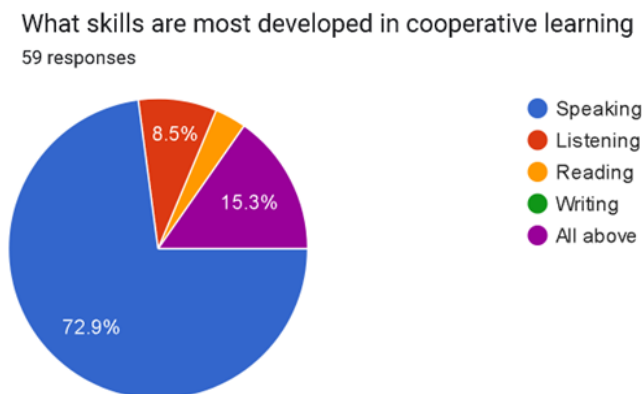


Fig. 3. Most Developed Skills

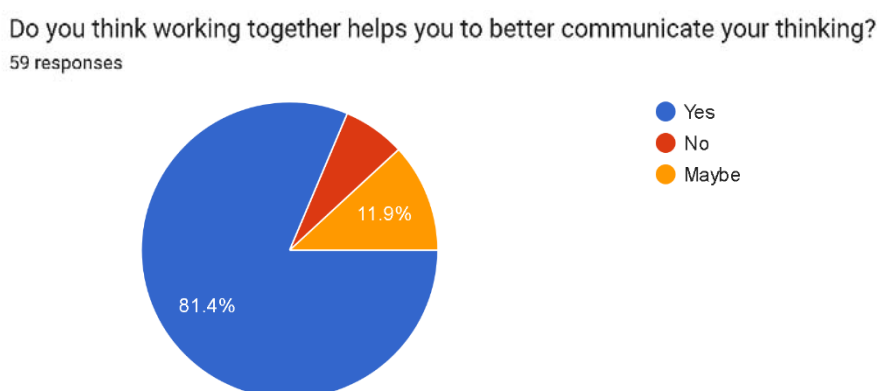


Fig. 4. Working Together Helps to Better Communicate Their Thinking

they use their language outside of it. Second, non-verbal contexts involve the use of non-verbal language in order to improve the understanding and efficiency of communication among the participants.

Several activities were conducted in this study to determine the practicality of using cooperative education to improve the communicative competence of high school learners from three distinct schools (Engineering, Law, and Mathematics). Thus, the findings demonstrated the value of cooperative education in the development of communicative ability in foreign languages. To sum up, Through English communicative activities, students were encouraged to participate with their friends during the lessons through cooperative activities. Aside from engaging in cooperative activities to improve their English cognition, students' positions and a necessity for autonomy were also improved, which could engage to long-term English learning.

Conclusion

The author discovered that cooperative learning contributes to the acquisition and growth of four skills interaction and argumentation capacities, as demonstrated by obvious enhancements in pupil cognition and interactions with others, along with the elimination of specific symptoms of aloofness and timidity, that help to create environments of interaction. In the realm of establishing good student performance. Cooperative learning and communicative competence are intimately related principles Interaction among students leads to good contributions and generates a nice atmosphere in the classroom. For life and activity based on what has been accomplished via the cooperative learning technique in generating communicative competence, with the ultimate goal of accomplishing educational goals. According to the findings and statistical data, cooperative learning promotes class interaction.

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