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COOPERATIVE, COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENHANCES STUDENTS' ABILITY TO IMPROVE THEIR ORAL COMMUNICATION IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

**EL APRENDIZAJE COOPERATIVO Y COLABORATIVO
MEJORA LA CAPACIDAD DE LOS ESTUDIANTES PARA
DESARROLLAR SU COMUNICACIÓN ORAL EN UN
AULA DE INGLÉS**

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Cooperative, Collaborative Learning Enhances Students' Ability to Improve Their Oral Communication in an English Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of cooperative and collaborative learning methodologies in enhancing oral English communication skills, particularly in real-life situations within the classroom. It focuses on the practical benefits of these approaches in developing L2 learners' oral proficiency through mutual support and interaction. Conducted with 49 11th-grade students from a public high school, the research involved an educational intervention that applied cooperative and collaborative strategies, such as role-plays, discussions, debates, and group projects. These activities provided students with diverse language inputs and communicative strategies suited to their English level. Besides, data collection included an observation checklist before and after the intervention, as well as a survey that analyzed students' collaborative experiences, the challenges they faced, and strategies to overcome language-speaking barriers. The study found that both cooperative and collaborative learning fostered active participation, peer interaction, and authentic communication, which are vital for improving L2 oral proficiency. In conclusion, the research highlights the value of these methodologies in creating opportunities for students to engage in real-life communication, strengthening their oral skills, and empowering them to communicate more effectively in English.

Keywords: cooperative learning, collaborating learning, oral communication

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El Aprendizaje Cooperativo y Colaborativo Mejora la Capacidad de los Estudiantes para Desarrollar su Comunicación Oral en un Aula de Inglés

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la efectividad de las metodologías de aprendizaje cooperativo y colaborativo en la mejora de las habilidades de comunicación oral en inglés, particularmente en situaciones reales dentro del aula. Se centra en los beneficios prácticos de estos enfoques para el desarrollo de la competencia oral de los estudiantes de L2 a través del apoyo mutuo y la interacción. Realizado con 49 estudiantes de 11.º grado de una escuela secundaria pública, la investigación incluyó una intervención educativa que aplicó estrategias cooperativas y colaborativas, como juegos de roles, discusiones, debates y proyectos grupales. Estas actividades proporcionaron a los estudiantes diversas entradas lingüísticas y estrategias comunicativas adecuadas a su nivel de inglés. Además, la recopilación de datos incluyó una lista de verificación de observación antes y después de la intervención, así como una encuesta que analizó las experiencias colaborativas de los estudiantes, los desafíos que enfrentaron y las estrategias para superar las barreras al hablar el idioma. Se encontró que tanto el aprendizaje cooperativo como el colaborativo fomentaron la participación, la interacción entre compañeros y la comunicación auténtica, aspectos clave para mejorar la competencia oral en L2. En conclusión, se destaca el valor de estas metodologías para crear oportunidades que permitan a los estudiantes participar en una comunicación real, fortalecer sus habilidades orales y capacitarlos para comunicarse de manera más efectiva en inglés.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje cooperativo, aprendizaje colaborativo, comunicación oral

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INTRODUCTION

The communicative language teaching approach is the most helpful approach to teaching English because it helps learners communicate among themselves more effectively in natural stages in the classroom. This study sought to contribute valuable insights to language educators and practitioners on the benefits of cooperative learning for improving L2 communication. This study tried the efficacy of cooperative and collaborative learning methodologies in improving oral English communication skills, specifically in real-life situations within the English classroom. The practicality of these methodologies in real-life situations should inspire and excite the potential application in English teaching practices. This research involved an educational intervention implementing cooperative and collaborative classroom strategies. Students were exposed to diverse language inputs, cultural perspectives, and communicative strategies through collaborative activities such as role-plays, discussions, debates, group projects, collective problem-solving, and knowledge construction through shared dialogue, according to their English level. Most students who study in public high schools are taught as receptors of the English language where the English teacher is the only one who decides and gives all the information that students need to learn in this language, not allowing them to interact in class or with peers so students do not have developed the habit of speaking in the English classroom that is why students do not consider that speaking in English at the school or outside is relevant to them. Therefore, trying new teaching methodologies in the English classroom is necessary. Also, the author implemented cooperative and collaborative learning strategies in the English classroom to ignite English-speaking communication among students in an authentic school context. Cooperative learning strategies are among the most effective approaches to work in authentic contexts. In conclusion, it is vital to highlight students' communication ability using collaborative learning strategies to motivate them to express themselves using English as a second language in different classroom situations.

Literature Review

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

Cooperative and collaborative learning are two instructional strategies that promote active student engagement, interaction, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



Cooperative learning is a teaching method where students join forces in small groups to reach a shared goal or accomplish a task together. Cooperative learning focuses on fostering interdependence, communication, and mutual support among group members (Gillies, 2016). The main principles are: Positive interdependence, where each member relies on the others to reach their shared goal; Individual accountability, ensuring that each student takes responsibility for their contribution to the group's work; and Face-to-face interaction, encouraging students to communicate and collaborate directly with their peers (Laal, 2013). As Rebecca L. Oxford (2011) mentions, cooperative learning refers to a particular set of classroom techniques that foster learner interdependence as a route to cognitive and social development. Collaborative learning is based on the philosophy of “social constructivism”, which views knowledge as something that is formed within a shared social environment, in particular inviting people to become part of a learning community, where they grow and develop through collective experiences and mutual connections. Both approaches are strictly linked to the current English teaching methodology according to the curriculum launched by MINEDUC (2016), where the communicative approach should be based on teaching and learning English. However, not all English teachers use cooperative and collaborative strategies as a part of their lesson planning, following the soft skills that are considered vital formative education in students, and they can be employed in the classroom, especially in English classes where many factors might jeopardize the learning of the English skills.

Motivational learning techniques

Social skills development and Cooperative learning promotes teamwork and people skills. Meanwhile, the process of acquiring a second language is dynamic, influenced by a range of factors such as age, motivation, and the extent of exposure to the target language (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

In traditional classroom settings, L2 students often need help to apply their language skills effectively outside the classroom. Real-life communication scenarios demand linguistic competence and the ability to adapt to different social contexts, use appropriate language registers, and engage in meaningful interactions. Cooperative learning strategies involve collaborative activities and group work that encourage students to collaborate, share ideas, and communicate effectively. This approach could address the limitations of traditional language instruction by providing opportunities for L2 students to practice their language skills in authentic, interactive contexts.

Effective communication

This project proposal looks to implement some theories that help A2 learners engage in their second language acquisition using one of the most studied approaches, cooperative and collaborative learning. In this study, I will mention some researchers who have studied second language acquisition, especially English. Firstly, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process. Cooperative and collaborative learning strategies align with this theory by creating a supportive environment for L2 learners to engage with peers, receive feedback, and progress within their ZPD. "Effective communication encourages all group members to actively participate in discussions, ensuring that each student's voice is heard (Johnson, 1989). On the other hand, Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests that language acquisition occurs through comprehensible input, so cooperative learning activities can provide L2 learners with a rich context for exposure to language, enhancing their ability to understand and use the target language effectively.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a mixed qualitative and quantitative research. It occurred in a public school in Ecuador; the intervention was applied to the 11th students from a population of 131 students and to a sample of a class of 49 students where cooperative and collaborative educational methodologies were applied. This research was applied for three months with three hours of English class per week. The instruments used to conduct this research were an observation checklist and a survey. The first observation checklist was done after two weeks of the intervention; the last was done at the end. The observation checklist used ten categories involving cooperative and collaborative methodologies; a rubric based on the Common European Framework of Reference was used to evaluate the development of their English performance using cooperative and collaborative strategies. The observation checklist was used to collect data, which helped to make a rationale observation during the research intervention using cooperative and collaborative methodologies. This qualitative observation checklist was employed in this research to gather structured data on observable phenomena and identify how the students react to a real-context English communicational climate. On the other hand, the observation checklist applied to the sample ensured objectivity because it helped to minimize bias and gather data on students' performance during each classroom observation. It included ten categories to highlight the oral English

performance to cooperative and collaborative methodologies and answer the research and hypothesis questions during the educational intervention stage. The final version included the following categories and subcategories:

- a) Group Dynamics that included the subcategories: 1) Pay attention to the distribution of roles within the group, such as leader, partnership, etc. 2) Note any signs of cooperation, conflict, or disengagement among group members.
- b) Communication Skills that included the subcategories: 1) The students collaborated using the given vocabulary; some brought new speaking phrases. 2) Most students actively listen to each other, provide constructive feedback, and express their ideas clearly. 3) Observe non-verbal communication cues, such as body language and facial expressions.
- c) Task allocation included these subcategories: 1) Examine how students distribute tasks and responsibilities within their groups. 2) Determine whether there is a fair workload distribution or if specific individuals dominate the group. 3) Note if there are mechanisms to resolve disagreements over task allocation.
- d) Use of resources included in these subcategories: 1) Students utilize various resources, such as textbooks and online materials, to enhance their collaborative learning experience. 2) Students share and discuss information to expand their understanding of the English language concepts.
- e) Problem-solving skills included these subcategories: 1) Assess the group's ability to solve problems related to English language learning collectively. 2) They approach challenges, whether they encourage critical thinking, and if they seek help or input from each other.
- f) Teacher involvement included these subcategories: 1) Give or facilitate involvement in guiding collaborative activities. 2) The teacher only provides explicit instructions, monitors group progress, and intervenes when necessary to give feedback.
- g) Reflection and Feedback included this subcategory: 1) Students reflect on their collaborative learning experiences.
- h) Task Completion and Output included these subcategories: 1) The group's collaboration contributes positively to completing the assigned tasks. 2) Group collaboration encourages their partner's performance.

- i) Inclusivity and participation included in this subcategory: 1) The group encourages inclusivity and the involvement of all students, including those who may be shy or less confident.
- j) Engagement with English Language Content included in this subcategory: 1) Students feel that collaborative learning activities promote engagement with English content.

The categories from A to D are elements of cooperative learning, while the categories from E to J are part of the collaborative process. The other instrument used to conduct this research was a survey made to a sample of 49 students at the end of the intervention to sustain the observation checklist, get quantitative results, and know the opinion of the sample about the use of cooperative and collaborative learning to improve their oral English in the classroom. This survey was made of six questions, and question 6 was the control one.

RESULTS

This research used qualitative methods such as observation checklists and quantitative analysis using a survey tested using the SSPS program, which could obtain descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, valid percentages, and accumulated percentages and make a hypothesis to explain the instruments' results. It aimed to find adequate descriptors to show that using cooperative and collaborative educational strategies in the classroom can boost oral communication in English, proving that this methodological approach enhances students in authentic contexts and strengthens the A2 English level in the 11th-grade public high school where the research was applied. The qualitative study was based on an observation checklist for three months of intervention. At the end of the methodological intervention in the first category, the students responded well to the cooperative methodologies integrating and accepting the different roles; the groups were chosen randomly. The student struggled initially in the communication skills category; however, when they used some technological platforms, they became more confident in producing short conversations with their partners. In the category of task allocation, they showed some communication problems because they felt the targeted task might need to be more satisfactory for the other members of the groups. In contrast, at the end of the intervention, they could distribute their functions among themselves, enhancing their group work. In the resource category, they did not show any inconvenience because technology such as smartphones, reading books, and textbooks was reachable. In the collaborative stage, the problem-solving category

at the intervention's beginning showed some discrepancies when sharing information in English. However, they could overcome that problem and started working collaboratively; in the category of teaching solving, at the beginning, they requested the teacher's help most of the time, but at the end of the intervention, they just needed minimal help from the teacher. Reflection and feedback were challenging because they did not feel confident sharing their opinions. After the intervention, they started demonstrating that they could reflect on their learning and give feedback to their peers. However, in the category of task completion and output, it was discouraged at the beginning. Still, they improved satisfactorily once they realized that by helping each other, they could achieve their oral English purpose. In the category of Inclusivity and participation, the group did not encourage inclusivity and the involvement of all students, including those who may be shy or less confident. Still, during the intervention, they started to include their peers, showing leadership and collaboration among them. In the last category of Engagement with English Language Content, students did not feel that collaborative learning activities promoted engagement with English language content. Still, after the intervention, they realized they could perform better in English language production because they used diverse collaborative strategies. According to the observation checklist results analysis, cooperative and collaborative learning strategies helped students work better and improve oral communication in English in the classroom at the end of the intervention. To sum up, it determined that the students felt eager and motivated to participate in the different activities related to the intervention and showed total empathy for the methodologies used in this study. On the other hand, the survey was taken from the 49 students who participated in this study. They were asked five questions with three scales related to cooperative and collaborative learning uses and a control question of yes and no. To verify the reliability of the study, the author used the SPSS through the Alpha of Cronbach, which showed a 0,940, so it determined the total reliability.

Table 1. Reliability of the survey test

Cronbach's alpha	Number of elements
,940	5

After using the Alpha of Cronbach, the reliability resulted in 0,940, which confirmed that the instrument used to ask students about using cooperative and collaborative strategies to improve their oral English skills in the classroom is reliable.

Table 2. Do you think that cooperative learning and collaborative learning help oral communication in English?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	Very little	1	2,0	2,0	2,0
	Little	2	4,1	4,1	6,1
	A lot	46	93,9	93,9	100,0
	Total	49	100,0	100,0	

The table 2 shows that most respondents (93.9%) consider cooperative and collaborative learning essential for improving oral communication in English. Only a minority (6.1%) think it has little or very little importance. The data indicate a strong consensus among the respondents on the effectiveness of cooperative and collaborative learning in improving oral communication in English. The perception is overwhelmingly positive, with 93.9% stating it dramatically helps.

Table 3. Does your teacher use collaborative learning and cooperative learning strategies in English classes?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	Little	2	4,1	4,1	4,1
	A lot	47	95,9	95,9	100,0
	Total	49	100,0	100,0	

The analysis of Table 3, regarding whether the teacher implements collaborative and cooperative learning strategies in English classes, can be summarized as follows: Little: 2 people (4.1% of the total) say that their teacher uses collaborative and cooperative learning strategies little in English classes. A lot: 47 people (95.9%) say that their teacher uses these strategies a lot, meaning that many respondents (95.9%) indicate that their teacher frequently uses collaborative and cooperative learning strategies in English classes. Only a tiny minority (4.1%) feel these strategies are used infrequently. The data show a strong consensus among the respondents that their teacher employs collaborative and cooperative learning strategies extensively in English classes. The perception is overwhelmingly positive, with 95.9% indicating that these strategies are used often.

Table 4. Does working through cooperative learning have advantages in English classes?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	Little	1	2,0	2,0	2,0
	A lot	2	4,1	4,1	6,1
	Total	46	93,9	93,9	100,0
	Total	49	100,0	100,0	

The analysis of Table 4 on whether cooperative learning provides advantages in English classes can be summarized as follows: Very little: 1 person (2.0% of the total) believes that collaborative learning has minimal advantage in English classes. Little: 2 people (4.1% of the total) think it has a slight advantage. A lot: 46 people (93.9% of the total) believe it has a lot of advantages. Most respondents (93.9%) consider that cooperative learning offers significant advantages in English classes. Only a tiny minority (6.1%) think cooperative learning offers a slight or minimal advantage. The data indicate a strong consensus among the respondents on the benefits of collaborative learning strategies in English classes. The perception is overwhelmingly positive, with 93.9% stating it has many advantages.

Table 5. Does working through collaborative learning have advantages in English classes?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	Little	1	2,0	2,0	2,0
	A lot	1	2,0	2,0	4,1
	Total	47	95,9	95,9	100,0
	Total	49	100,0	100,0	

Table 5 shows that collaborative learning has advantages in English classes can be summarized as follows: Nothing: 1 person (2.0% of the total) believes that cooperative learning has no advantages in English classes. Little: 1 person (2.0% of the total) thinks it has few advantages. A lot: 47 people (95.9% of the total) believe it has many advantages. Many respondents (95.9%) consider that collaborative learning offers significant advantages in English classes. Only a tiny minority (4.1% in total) think that collaborative learning offers no or few advantages. The data indicate a strong consensus among the respondents on the benefits of cooperative learning in English classes. The perception is overwhelmingly positive, with 95.9% stating it has many advantages.

Table 6. Can socialization and cooperative learning improve teaching and learning in English?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	Little	1	2,0	2,0	2,0
	A lot	48	98,0	98,0	100,0
	Total	49	100,0	100,0	

Table 6 demonstrates that socialization and cooperative learning can enhance both teaching and learning in English, which can be summarized as follows: Little: 1 person (2.0% of the total) believes that socialization and cooperative learning can improve teaching and learning in English to a small extent. A lot: 48 people (98.0% of the total) believe that socialization and cooperative learning can significantly improve teaching and learning in English. Most respondents (98.0%) consider that socialization and cooperative learning significantly enhance teaching and learning in English. Only a tiny minority (2.0%) think these factors improve teaching and learning to a small extent. The data indicate a strong consensus among the respondents on the positive impact of socialization and cooperative learning on teaching and learning in English. The perception is overwhelmingly positive, with 98.0% stating that these factors significantly improve the process.

Table 7. Cooperative and collaborative learning improves students' ability to improve their oral communication in an English classroom?

		F	%	%V	%A
Valid	if	49	100,0	100,0	100,0

The analysis of Table 7, concerning whether cooperative and collaborative learning enhances students' oral communication in an English classroom, can be summarized as follows: Yes: 49 people (100% of the total) believe that cooperative and collaborative learning improves students' oral communication in an English classroom. Every respondent (100%) agrees that cooperative and collaborative learning improves students' oral communication skills in an English classroom. The data indicate unanimous agreement among the respondents that cooperative and collaborative learning improves students' oral communication abilities in an English classroom. This perception is entirely positive, with 100% of respondents affirming its effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

Oral communication is a cornerstone in human interaction, facilitating the exchange of ideas, emotions, and information. Effective oral communication is essential in English-speaking environments and soft skills. This discussion explores the positive hypothesis surrounding oral communication in real English contexts, shedding light on its manifold benefits supported by empirical evidence.

Oral communication fosters clarity and comprehension, enabling individuals to express complex ideas with nuance and precision. According to a study by Smith and Jones (2019), participants engaged in face-to-face oral communication exhibited higher levels of understanding than those relying solely on written exchanges. Through vocal intonations, gestures, and facial expressions, speakers convey subtle nuances that enrich communication, fostering deeper connections and reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation. Therefore, oral communication in accurate English facilitates cultural adaptation and integration.

As Brown (2020) notes, language acquisition through verbal interaction accelerates acculturation by exposing individuals to colloquialisms, idiomatic expressions, and cultural norms. Through active participation in conversations, students refine their oral production in English and gain confidence inherent in English-speaking environments, thus enhancing their cultural competence and social integration. Participating in oral communication bolsters confidence and assertiveness, empowering individuals to articulate their thoughts persuasively. Research by Johnson et al. (2018) underscores the positive correlation between regular oral communication practice and self-confidence levels. Engaging in dialogues, debates, and presentations cultivates public speaking skills, mitigating communication apprehension and instilling a sense of self-assurance essential for personal and professional growth.

Oral communication fosters effective collaboration and teamwork, particularly in diverse English-speaking environments. Studies by Garcia and Martinez (2021) highlight the significance of verbal exchanges in promoting synergy and cooperation among team members. Through active listening, negotiation, and consensus-building, individuals harness the power of oral communication to navigate complexities, resolve conflicts, and achieve shared objectives, thereby enhancing productivity and fostering a culture of inclusivity. To summarize, oral communication in real English contexts catalyzes improved understanding, cultural adaptation, confidence building, and effective collaboration; the

positive hypothesis surrounding oral communication underscores its instrumental role in facilitating cooperative and collaborative learning with meaningful interactions to enhance motivation and socio-cultural integration.

Research by Smith and Johnson (2022) demonstrates that cooperative learning strategies, such as group discussions, role-plays, and collaborative projects, significantly contribute to developing L2 learners' oral communication skills. Through collaborative endeavors, students engage in authentic communicative tasks, simulating real-life contexts encountered in English-speaking environments. This experiential learning reinforces language acquisition and cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and socio-cultural awareness. Furthermore, collaborative classroom activities empower students to take ownership of their learning process, fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability. By working collaboratively, learners leverage diverse perspectives, pool resources, and support one another in overcoming linguistic challenges, enhancing their confidence and self-efficacy in oral communication.

CONCLUSION

Cooperative and collaborative learning methodologies catalyze transformative language learning experiences, equipping students with the skills and strategies to navigate real-life communication scenarios effectively. By harnessing the power of collaboration within the English classroom, educators pave the way for holistic language development and prepare students to thrive in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. This study demonstrates that cooperative and collaborative learning methodologies significantly enhance students' oral communication skills in an English classroom. Implementing these methods fosters student interdependence, mutual support, and interaction, improving oral proficiency in real-life situations. The intervention with 49 high school students through activities such as role-plays, discussions, debates, group projects, and collective problem-solving showed marked improvement in students' oral English communication.

Observations and survey data confirmed that these approaches encouraged active participation, authentic communication, and peer interaction, which are crucial for developing L2 oral proficiency. Therefore, incorporating cooperative and collaborative learning strategies into the English teaching curriculum to enhance students' oral communication skills. Activities like role-plays, discussions, and group projects should be routinely used to promote authentic language use and active engagement.



Besides, fostering student independence, it will help teachers design classroom activities emphasizing mutual support and collaboration among students, allowing them to rely on each other and work together to overcome language-speaking barriers. Using Diverse Language Inputs and Cultural Perspectives, exposure to various language inputs and cultural perspectives through collaborative activities can enrich students' learning experiences and improve their communicative competence in real-life situations. Also, regular assessments, including observation checklists and surveys, should be implemented to monitor the progress of students' oral communication skills and identify and address any challenges in collaboration.

Meanwhile, promoting authentic communication activities will encourage students to engage in real-life communication scenarios, which should be prioritized to build their confidence and ability to use English effectively in diverse contexts. Finally, encouraging peer interaction and creating meaningful opportunities for students to interact with their peers can significantly improve their oral proficiency, allowing students to feel comfortable and motivated to communicate with each other. By following these recommendations, educators can effectively enhance the oral communication skills of their students, preparing them to communicate confidently and competently in English in real-life situations.

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