



THE COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING – FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT

EL APRENDIZAJE COOPERATIVO EN EL DESARROLLO DE LA FLUIDEZ AL HABLAR EN INGLÉS

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Abstract

The present research is based on cooperative learning in the English-speaking fluency development. Taking into account the students' English level from the language center at Universidad Technical de Cotopaxi; group work activities are proposed to encourage students to produce the language orally without fear of making mistakes while speaking. In addition, the application of this teaching method provided confidence, reliance, and support enough to reach their personal goals and improved their linguistic competences, social skills and the use of the English language. The use of dynamic activities in class showed the students' abilities to solve problems among them, providing mutual respect and interaction while working and learning together. A survey was applied to carry out this research and it was analyzed through the Cronbach Alfa. In addition, a pretest and posttest were applied at the beginning of the semester and after of the implementation of cooperative learning activities that helped students to work in groups and to communicate between classmates in a better way.

Keywords: Fluency development; cooperative learning; oral communication; interaction; group work activities

Resumen

La presente investigación está basada en el uso del aprendizaje cooperativo para el desarrollo de la fluidez al hablar. Tomando en cuenta el nivel de conocimientos en el idioma Inglés de los estudiantes del Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi; se han propuesto actividades grupales que motiven al



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estudiante a producir oralmente el idioma sin miedo a equivocarse. Adicionalmente, la aplicación de este método de aprendizaje brindo seguridad, confianza y apoyo a los estudiantes para alcanzar objetivos personales y mejorar competencias lingüísticas, destrezas sociales y el uso de la lengua extranjera. La aplicación de actividades dinámicas en clase, permitieron demostrar la habilidad de los estudiantes para resolver problemas entre ellos, brindándose respaldo mutuo mientras trabajan y sobre todo interactúan aprendieron juntos. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación se aplicó una encuesta a los estudiantes la cual fue verificada a través del alfa de Cronbach. Se aplicó una prueba previa antes de poner en práctica las actividades y metodologías relacionadas al aprendizaje cooperativo las cuales ayudaron a los estudiantes a relacionarse y comunicarse con sus compañeros de mejor manera. Después de aplicar las actividades para desarrollar la fluidez al hablar, se aplicó el post test el cual sus resultados ayudaron para contrastar el progreso de una enseñanza tradicional con una dinámica.

Palabras clave: *aprendizaje cooperativo; actividades grupales; desarrollo de la fluidez; hablar en inglés; interacción*

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Introduction

After revising academic articles, dissertations and thesis on websites and libraries at Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi, useful information was found as tangible supporting evidence for this research in process, which has the main goal to find the correct methodology to improve the speaking fluency in the English language.

This investigative work is focused on A1 English Level students at the Language Center of Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi in Latacunga city, Cotopaxi Province. Then, the most representative works are pointed out to the current work under study. There are some scientific researches that determine similar characteristics with the present research about the Cooperative Learning in English speaking fluency development. Vygotsky (1896) says that humans learn through their environment, culture, interaction, and language where they are involved. So, it means that humans develop their skills in the place where they grow up and surrounds them.

Also, he states that knowledge is cultural. Human beings learn from their own environment and they behave as similar as their society does. In the article Cooperative Learning on the Promotion of Oral Production written by Martinez & Gomez (2014) state that “English oral skills requires the articulation of activities within the classroom in which learners active their oral production skill since being competent in a foreign language entails being able to communicate ideas orally and being able to interact with others” (p.7).

The main problem that they faced in this study was the isolated classroom activities into the language development, so that, there was not a suitable connection with the activation of oral production and the rest of activities applied in a foreign language scenario. To carry out this study, the researchers took into account



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some pedagogical principals such as meaningful context: games, interactions, role-plays, and exercises. Authentic material: to expose learners to real life. No grammar terminology: grammar was implicit. Immediate feedback and reward: the facilitator was around giving feedback to the learners.

Language via Social Interaction and Participation: learners learn the language by using it with other people. Such a result of this, the implementation of Cooperative Learning in the teaching and learning process created an innovative environment for learning by articulating a cooperative approach to develop learners' oral skills in the classroom. The human being acquires knowledge every single day and education mainly has been the path by which leads people to discover themselves and discover the world. Pestalozzi, a Swiss pedagogue, defines education as "the harmonious and progressive development of all the innate powers and faculties of man – physical, intellectual and moral" (Kumar, 2007). This definition is linked to an internal and external process in which people develop social and mental skills.

Normally, speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four language skills (Malmir, A. & Shoorcheh, S., 2012). Hence, Cabaysa and Baetiong (2010) pointed out that considerable knowledge of learning strategies could further improve students' speaking abilities. Taking into account this point of view Tsay and Brady (2010) agreed that many educators are using active learning strategies, such as cooperative or team-based learning.

Cooperative learning is a method by which interaction and social communication are promoted among peers. A large body of research indicates that students gain both academically and socially when they have opportunities to interact with others to accomplish shared goals (Lou et al., 1996; Slavin, 1996; Johnson and Johnson, 2002; Gillies and Boyle, 2010). Furthermore, in the article Co-Operative learning in enhancing the speaking skills of students: a Phenomenological approach Lucena & San Jose (2016) concluded that: "learners bring with them their own negative attitudes and prejudices.

Population diversity is becoming more of the norm in many places. When there is a mix of learners in the same class there is a potential to diminish negative attitudes and develop positive ones depending on how interaction is structured" (p.71). The author analyzes the Cooperative learning method based on the philosophy that every professional in teaching should manage to transmit his or her knowledge to the receiver ones. The problem of this research was that students were aware and generally felt strongly that anxiety was a major hurdle to be overcome when learning to speak.

The method used in this investigative work was a qualitative – phenomenological approach. Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2010), stated that the primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person or a group of people around of a specific phenomenon. It refers to provide clear instruction in order everyone understands it and reaches the same goals.

Materials and methods

The present research was carried out at the Language Center, La Matriz Campus of Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi based on a quantitative approach. It is quantitative due to researcher used tools, such as surveys, pre-test, and post-test to get the data to prove the hypothesis. It is based on numbers to research, analyze and to prove the information and data. In addition, quantitative research offers a complete description and analysis



of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant's responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

It was focused on bibliographic – documental. This type of research needed to understand, analyze, comprehend and contrast the authors' point of view. The information collected was taken from trusted and authorized sources such as thesis, journals, articles, websites, books and so on. The direct observation helped to make the field research in order to get the required information in the place where the research was carried out in the academic period October 2018 – February 2019, which was based on the English language skills development, the use of TEFL, students' motivation and students' background. It provided useful help because it looked for a solution explained in advance.

This research used the analytical – experimental level, with the purpose of analyzing the data; at the same time, it allowed having a possible solution to the lack of speaking fluency development applied to A1 English Level students at "Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi"

The research variables are aligned between them and they are studied in depth to know the relation between one another and determine the possible problem solution in the independent variable "Cooperative learning" to the application of the dependent variable "The English speaking fluency development".

Results and discussion

This research applied the Cronbach's alpha to validate measure reliability and internal consistency of the instrument from the sample group. The results showed that the items in the survey are highly correlated. It has an alpha of 0,807 which is excellent and reliable.

The survey applied was based on a questionnaire of 10 questions which was applied to 20 students of the language center at UTC; the results are shown in the table number 1 that are coming next.

Table 1. Results of the survey

Questionary	Always / %	Sometimes / %	Never / %
1. Do you like to work in groups?	20%	0%	0%
2. How often do you work in groups?	15%	5%	0%
3. Do you feel encouraged to learn English by your teacher?	11%	5%	4%
4. When you work in groups do you learn better?	11%	6%	3%
5. When you argue with someone else does your teacher help you to solve it?	14%	5%	1%
6. Do you speak English in the classroom?	13%	6%	1%
7. Do you like to speak in English?	10%	6%	4%
8. Do oral activities in the class help you to develop the speaking skill?	12%	8%	0%
9. When you speak in English do you feel comfortable?	12%	4%	4%



Analysis and interpretation.

Once having analyzed the collected information, it is confirmed that 20 students that represent the 100% affirm that teacher applies group work activities in the classroom in order to develop the interaction among students. This shows that teacher applies group work activities while teaching. And most of them like to take part of collaborative learning.

In question two, it was observed that 15 students that represent the 80% expressed that they always work in groups which reflects that teacher promotes interaction through group work and collaborative activities they are asked to develop in the class. In the other hand, 5 students represent the 25% indicated that sometimes they do group work activities they are not motivated enough about methodologies applied into the teaching and learning process.

According to question three, 11 students that represent the 55% expressed that they are always motivated to learn English by their language teacher, they are motivated to enhance their language skills and its production. In the other hand, 5 students that represent the 25% indicated that they are sometimes motivated to produce the language in the classroom but not all the time. 4 students that represent the 20% of the results show that they are not pushed by anything to learn English. They do not consider their English teacher motivate them to produce the foreign language.

In question four, 11 students, which represent the 55% expressed that they learn much better working in groups. They like to get in groups in order to learn from others and share thoughts, criteria and knowledge. Moreover, 6 students that represent the 30% indicated that get in groups is not positive at all because learning is not significant as working alone. However, 3 students that represent the 15% said that they do not learn well working in groups due to it causes distraction and learning is not meaningful. They prefer individual working. In the other hand, question five says that 14 students that represent the 70% agreed that their English teacher helps them when they argue with someone else. Teacher is always pending on their needs and he is there when they need him. Also, the 5 students that represent the 25% said that teacher sometimes helps them. They need their instructor a little bit closer into group work problems. 1 student that represents the 5% claimed that teacher does not help at all and student is responsible to solve the arguments by himself.

In question six, 13 students that represent 65% expressed that they use the English language to communicate in the classroom they are motivated enough to produce the foreign language even though they present oral communication struggles at use the language but they try to do their best. On the other hand, the 30% represents to 6 students and they said that they do not use the English language at all and they use Spanish and English to talk to teacher and classmates in the classroom. They use sometimes their L1 to ask, to interact and to communicate between teacher and classmates. The 10% that represents just 1 student said that English is never used to express ideas and requirement he or she needs. This student use always Spanish to work in class.

In this question, 13 students that represent the 65% said that they use always English to ask favors, to make questions to the teacher and to interact with the teacher. English is used constantly and they skills are developing in all foreign language class. Also, 6 students that represent to 30% showed that English is used but not all the time, they use Spanish as a way of communication in their English class. 1 student that represents 5% said the L1 is more important for him or her to express ideas instead of L2.



In question eight, the 50% that represents to 10 students showed that learners are interested in learning the English language and they like to be immersed into a foreign language context. They like to use English always to communication and interaction. 6 students that represent 30% they do not like to use the English language at all, they do not feel comfortable using L2, they tent to mix both languages. 4 students that represent 20% they do not like to use English, they use prefer just the L1 to communicate in class.

According to the nineth question the results show that 12 students that represent to the 60% said that oral activities applied in class have helped them to develop the their oral skills. They like to be encouraged in this way to enhance their receptive and productive language skills. Nevertheless, the 40 % in this case 8 students said that they have developed their speaking skills through other activities but not through those ones applied in class.

And finally, in question ten, 12 students that represent the 60% said that they feel comfortable when they have to use English to speak and interact with others. English language is very important to learn for them and they feel good expressing their ideas in the L2. According to the 20% that represents to 4 students said that they are still afraid using the L2 in class but they are able to use it when it will be necessary, they do not present big struggles with the language, just a few mistakes that they can take control of. In the other hand, 4 students that represent the 20% said that they do not feel good using L2, they are more suitable in a foreign language when L1 takes control of any activity.

Pre and post test result analysis

As it was exposed a pre-test and post-test were applied to the experimental group in order to measure the learning before and after of using cooperative learning in the English language speaking fluency development in A1 level students at Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi.

To verify the influence of cooperative learning into the speaking fluency development, students were assessed through a pre-test and after applying the cooperative learning activities, the posttest. It was applied a speaking fluency rubric to know the students' English speaking, skill production. There were taken into account five speaking fluency parameter such pronunciation, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and interaction communication.

Table 2: Data by parameters.

No.	Pre-test						Post-test					
	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Interactive Communication	Grade	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Interactive Communication	Grade
1	2,0	1,8	1,2	1,2	1,3	7,5	1,8	1,6	1,8	1,6	1,5	8,3
2	1,5	1,4	1,2	1,2	1,5	6,8	1,5	1,6	1,2	1,3	1,6	7,2
3	1,4	1,2	1,2	1,1	2,0	6,9	1,4	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,5	6,5



No.	Pre-test						Post-test					
	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Interactive Communication	Grade	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Interactive Communication	Grade
4	0,8	1,0	0,8	1,2	1,6	5,4	1,3	1,4	1,3	1,2	1,6	6,8
5	1,3	1,5	1,8	1,4	1,2	7,2	1,5	1,5	1,8	1,5	1,2	7,5
6	1,3	1,5	1,6	1,2	1,0	6,6	1,3	1,6	1,6	1,4	1,1	7,0
7	1,2	1,4	1,5	1,5	1,4	7,0	1,3	1,4	1,6	1,6	1,4	7,3
8	0,9	1,4	1,4	1,2	1,1	6,0	1,2	1,5	1,4	1,5	1,4	7,0
9	1,2	1,0	1,3	1,0	1,3	5,8	1,2	1,1	1,3	1,3	1,3	6,2
10	1,5	1,7	1,4	1,6	2,0	8,2	1,5	1,6	1,2	1,6	2,0	7,9
11	1,3	1,4	1,8	1,5	1,5	7,5	1,4	1,8	1,6	1,7	1,6	8,1
12	1,5	1,5	1,7	1,4	1,8	7,9	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,4	1,8	7,7
13	1,4	1,1	1,4	1,2	1,1	6,2	1,5	1,3	1,4	1,6	1,2	7,0
14	0,8	1,0	1,5	1,0	0,9	5,2	1,0	1,1	1,5	1,4	0,9	5,9
15	1,5	1,7	1,6	1,4	1,2	7,4	1,6	1,7	1,6	1,5	1,2	7,6
16	0,9	1,1	1,7	1,6	1,3	6,6	1,2	1,1	1,7	1,8	1,3	7,1
17	0,9	0,8	0,6	1,1	1,5	4,9	1,5	1,1	0,9	1,6	1,6	6,7
18	1,7	1,5	1,3	1,5	1,5	7,5	1,9	1,6	1,3	1,7	1,5	8,0
19	0,9	1,2	1,4	1,0	1,3	5,8	1,4	1,3	1,4	1,1	1,5	6,7
20	1,5	1,3	1,5	1,1	1,0	6,4	1,5	1,6	1,5	1,5	1,1	7,2
MEAN	1,28	1,33	1,40	1,27	1,38	6,64	1,43	1,43	1,44	1,48	1,42	7,19
SD	0,326	0,269	0,303	0,20	0,309	0,919	0,207	0,220	0,226	0,186	0,260	0,634

Source: Test applied to students.

Each assessment criteria in the pre-test and the posttest was graded over 2 marks giving a total of 10 as a maximum. The pre-test results and posttest are detailed below and each one shows the influence of cooperative learning into the speaking fluency development. In addition, they show how speaking activities helped students to improve one of the most important skills in the English Language.



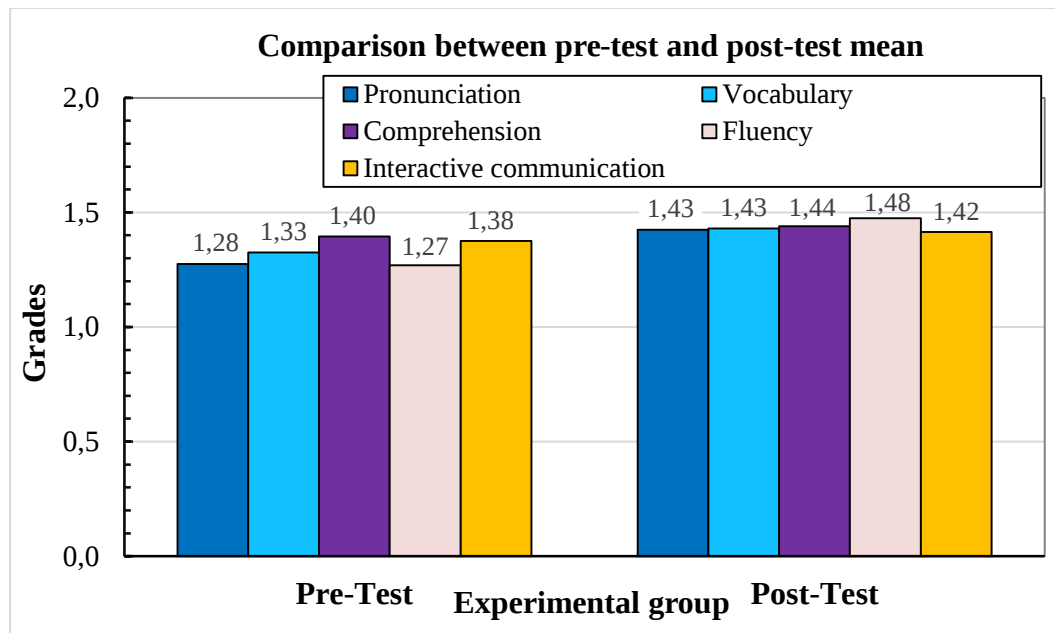


Figure 1. Mean comparison between parameters.
Source: Test applied to students.

The use of cooperative learning activities into the speaking fluency development have been useful to enhance the students' social skills, problem solving and push them to use the L2. Furthermore, each activity has allowed getting a motivated group of students to learn together without fearing of making mistakes.

After collecting the data, there were analyzed with parameters included in the rubric for speaking fluency; from all the parameters assessed, it is remarkable the students' performance from pre-test and the posttest. The grades have been increased from one to another. Being speaking fluency one of the strongest skills developed through the use of cooperative learning activities.

Conclusion

The present investigative work helped to know the relevance and the importance of cooperative learning into the speaking fluency development of A1 English level students at the Language Center of Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi, La Matriz campus. The study of this method was analyzed and leads to the next conclusions.

The Cooperative learning method determined that interaction is a suitable way by which students get encouraged to develop certain English language skills, causing them the desire to produce the language orally without being afraid of making mistakes. The student's level of speaking fluency has been improved and it has increased by the use of Cooperative learning method in EFL. The use of interactive activities into the teaching and learning process encouraged students to build their self-confidence, positive relationship between teacher and students.





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