

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN DEVELOPING GRAMMAR SKILLS

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The article presents the results of the experimental enquiry aimed at studying the impact of cooperative learning on improving grammar skills. The research focused on two interaction modes – pair work and group work, which were compared in terms of their potential to address accuracy. The experiment was carried out in the first term of the 2020-2021 academic year (September-October). The participants included 23 third-year students of the Foreign Philology Faculty of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University and constituted two academic groups, with one being offered pair-work activities and the other working in small groups. The experimental study comprised three phases: pre-experiment testing, teaching, post-experiment testing. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The results demonstrate the validity of the assumption about the efficacy of pair work and group work in promoting accuracy, at the same time indicating no statistically significant difference between the two modes. The presented evidence suggests that grammar instruction can clearly benefit from incorporating both pair work and group work into classroom practices, however further research might be advisable to maximize the effectiveness of these interaction patterns by refining the procedure involved and improving students' cooperative learning skills.

Keywords: cooperative learning; pair work; group work; accuracy; grammar skills.

Introduction

The primary task of present-day English language teaching (ELT) methodology is to ensure that the teaching-learning process enables students to engage in meaningful communication. To that end, teachers are encouraged to regularly employ pair work (PW) and group work (GW) in the ELT classroom. Extensive research has been carried out on the effects of PW and GW in relation to language fluency. By contrast, accuracy is not generally associated with these interaction patterns. In this paper, we endeavour to find out whether PW and GW are conducive to practising grammar and if there is any noticeable difference in terms of the impact each interaction mode exerts on students' grammar performance.

The issue of using PW and GW in foreign language classes has been attracting the attention of methodologists and teachers for a number of decades now. The fact can be explained by certain reasons, the most fundamental of which is that both patterns of interaction are called to realize cooperative learning that is “doing with others” (Herrmann, 2013; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018). The main conception of cooperative learning is cooperation which “exists when individuals work together in a group in order to promote both their individual learning outcomes as well as the learning outcomes of their peers” (Herrmann, 2013, p. 175). Cooperative learning is strongly associated with the Communicative Approach to teaching foreign languages and has some considerable advantages in comparison to learning a foreign language by doing activities individually.

One of the most important characteristics of cooperative learning is its ability to provide a natural environment, which contributes to the development of interpersonal skills (Gilbert, 2021; Hsiung, 2012; Zarrabi, 2016). It is claimed that “higher level thinking skills are developed by cooperative learning” (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012, p. 488) because when working in groups, students learn how to solve problems, receive immediate feedback and respond to questions and comments (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

The primary condition that contributes to the realisation of cooperative learning is the involvement of two or more participants in the solution of the same task, which allows one to consider PW and GW to be the main tools that build cooperation. “Both pair work and group work promote meaningful communication” (Rakab, 2016, p. 82). Group work enables students to exercise different types of speech interaction, thus helping create a stress-free and cooperative atmosphere in the classroom (Raja, 2012, p. 157). Moreover, it is reported that teachers frequently use GW and PW in order to increase students' talking time (Byram & Hu, 2013). As a result, more students gain an opportunity to speak, to improve their interpersonal skills and to develop their communicative competence.

The interaction patterns of cooperative learning have a great potential to create social interdependence in the foreign language classroom. Social interdependence – emerges when attaining goals by a person is influenced by contributions from others (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 11), which as a rule takes place in the GW and PW

modes. Considering that language is a social phenomenon and learning it makes sense only if it is or was used by a social group, providing social interdependence is a strong factor in making foreign language classes effective. It should be noted that there is positive and negative social interdependence. Positive interdependence is associated with cooperation and exists when people become aware that they will achieve their goals only on the condition that other people, participating in the same activity, also achieve their goals. Consequently, they encourage each other in the pursuit of their common objectives (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 11) and both sides benefit from the process. It is believed that positive social interdependence results in higher achievement and greater productivity (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). At the same time, negative social interdependence is associated with competition and “exists when individuals perceive that they can obtain their goals if and only if the other individuals with whom they are competitively linked fail to obtain their goals” (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 12). Negative interdependence can promote language learning if it forms the basis of communicative games such as guessing or debates. Both positive and negative types of interdependence can be fostered by assigning complementary roles, modifying group composition and providing deliberate fragmentation of information (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 19) and both should be incorporated in language education in order to facilitate the acquisition of communicative skills by learners.

Despite considerable scientific attention given to cooperative learning in general and to separate methodological devices that promote it, a literature review of the topic leads to the assumption that there is a tendency to regard PW and GW as one and the same phenomenon in opposition to individual efforts in learning (Mayo & Zeitler, 2017; Raja, 2012; Rakab, 2016). PW and GW are rarely compared. Moreover, “pair work is often seen as a subset of group work” (Byram & Hu, 2013, p. 290). However, PW and GW have a number of characteristics that differ them from each other.

First of all, the existence of two separate terms clearly suggests that interaction in pairs is opposed in our consciousness to interaction in clusters that include more than two participants. The fact can be explained by the different sensations that we have while communicating in pairs and in small groups. When we interact in pairs, we do not need to ‘compete’ for a chance to participate in the conversation: *if my partner is talking at the moment, I will always be the next to speak up when he/she finishes*. When we are communicating in a group (no matter whether there are three or five participants), we often have to wait for the right moment when we can change our role from ‘the listener’ to ‘the speaker’ and we should be quicker than the other members of the group to speak or we can miss our turn and thus lose the topicality of the idea we want to express. On the other hand, there is always a possibility in a group that a participant may stick to the listener’s role without saying a word during the whole conversation. That cannot happen in pair interaction which can be sustained on the condition that there is at least a small contribution from both partners. These distinctions are typical for real-life conversation and are definitely in evidence in language classes.

Besides, it is believed that PW is easier to manage in the classroom in pedagogical terms (Byram & Hu, 2013). “The obligation to contribute is much more strongly marked when only two people are involved” (Byram & Hu, 2013, p. 290) because “the smaller the size of the group, the greater the individual accountability” (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 23) which appears “when the performance of each individual member is assessed” (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 22). It is also claimed that to organise PW we need to use materials that presuppose fewer actions on the part of both the teacher and learners to ensure that activity of some sort takes place (Byram & Hu, 2013). At the same time, GW is described as more viable than PW as it creates more interaction opportunities for learners. It is also claimed that GW is a more effective classroom management device in large classes in comparison to PW (Otienoh, 2015). There being both similarities and differences between PW and GW, the question arises as to whether the two patterns of interaction have the same potential to create social interdependence in the ELT classroom that can stimulate higher academic achievement.

The review of the literature on the topic of cooperative learning also raises the question of the effectiveness of PW and GW in terms of addressing accuracy. Whereas most researchers agree on the benefits of cooperative learning when it comes to acquiring fluency due to an increase in student talking time and the focus on meaningful communication (Namaziandost, Homayouni & Rahmani, 2020; Renou, 2001; Rakab, 2016), there seems to be lack of data indicating that PW and GW can promote accuracy as researches that bring into focus accuracy development through cooperative learning are quite scarce. Hampshire and Anoro (2004) argue that PW and GW activities are not conducive to focusing on grammar. Moreover, some scholars point out the fact that in the case of students’ sharing the same first language, there is a risk of the fossilisation of their incorrect interlanguage (Ammar, Lightbown & Spada, 2010; Lightbown et al., 2002; Simard & Wong, 2004). We believe that both PW and GW can be successfully used to address grammatical accuracy if certain conditions are fulfilled. Firstly, PW and GW activities should be designed in such a way that students will feel the need to repeatedly use the target grammar. Secondly, students should be closely

monitored by the teacher (or in the case of GW by one of the students who can be assigned the role of ‘monitor’). Finally, PW and GW activities should be accompanied by a grammar focus follow-up, with the teacher (or the group monitors) providing feedback on students’ mistakes. As for which interaction mode (PW or GW) is more conducive to grammar practice, it is difficult to make valid assumptions because each mode has its own advantages and disadvantages. PW offers more chances of involvement and thus more talking time per student. Besides, in some academic settings, e.g. in Ukraine, it is easier to organise due to the typical seating arrangement in the classroom and the fact that students are more used to working in pairs than in groups. On the other hand, GW may be easier to monitor as there are fewer groups than pairs and, as has been mentioned above, during GW one of the students can act as an observer and keep a note of their group mates’ mistakes. The bigger number of students in a group also increases the chances of peer correction in the course of doing an activity. Thus it becomes evident that the issue of promoting accuracy when using PW and GW in the ELT classroom calls for empirical enquiry. The current paper is an attempt at such an exploration. The **aim** of this study is to explore and assess the impact of PW and GW on the acquisition of grammar skills. To achieve this aim, it was necessary to carry out the following tasks: to examine the nature of cooperative learning, to determine the distinctive features of PW and GW, to design a set of grammar activities for PW and GW, to try out the designed activities via experimental teaching, to interpret and discuss the results.

The detailed study of the nature of cooperative learning in general, and the peculiarities of PW and GW in particular, enabled us to propose two **hypotheses**:

Hypothesis A: cooperative learning in the form of either PW or GW can prove effective when addressing accuracy with no considerable difference between the two specified modes.

Hypothesis B: cooperative learning in the form of either PW or GW can prove effective when addressing accuracy, with one of the two specified modes yielding substantially better results.

The suggested hypotheses were to be tested out in the course of an experiment.

Method

Research Design

The implementation of the experimental enquiry necessitated a mixed research design as both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. The former were used to assess the target grammar skills (pre- and post-experiment tests), interpret and statistically analyse the test results (Bespalko’s proficiency quotient, Fisher criterion). The latter included systematic observation carried out by the teacher conducting the experiment and a survey carried out among the students participating in the research.

Participants

The subjects of the research included 23 third-year students of the Foreign Philology Faculty of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. The students constituted two academic groups – 32 (10 students) and 33 (13 students). Both groups were given instruction by the same teacher during the same period of time – the first term of the 2020-2021 academic year (September-October).

Instruments and Procedure

The experimental study took place within the course of Practical Grammar. At the time the participants were receiving instruction on using modal verbs. To determine the level of their expertise at the starting point of the research, the students were offered a pre-experiment grammar test, which consisted of 20 items: 10 error correction questions and 10 gapped sentences. The means of the two groups were calculated and statistically compared. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the students’ grammatical competence in terms of using the modal verbs CAN and MAY.

Over the next five sessions, group 32 were offered activities to practise CAN and MAY in pairs, while group 33 were working in small groups. Both the GW and PW took up 50% of the class time. The activities were semi-communicative and communicative in nature and consistent with the specific character of PW or GW correspondingly. For PW there had been designed such activities as dialogue, interview, information-gap activity, role play/simulation, game; for GW – discussion, group interview, information-gap activity, problem-solving activity, role play/simulation, game.

To establish whether the students had acquired the target grammar skills and whether PW or GW proved to be more effective, the participants were given a post-experiment test similar in nature to the pre-experiment one. The results of both tests will be presented in the next section of the article.

Throughout the course of the experiment, the teacher completed an observation sheet during and after each PW or GW activity. The teacher’s observation sheet consisted of seven questions that covered the students’ response to the PW or GW activities they were offered, the degree of the students’ participation

and the students' language production as well as the teacher's on-action reflection about monitoring the pairs/groups, achieving the task objectives and the difficulties experienced (see Appendix A).

At the end of the experiment, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which consisted of seven questions and had them reflect on their attitude to PW or GW, the degree of their participation in performing the suggested tasks, the teacher's monitoring, the grammar skills they had acquired and the difficulties they had encountered (see Appendices B1, B2).

Data Analysis

The data collected throughout the experiment were processed in two stages. During the first stage, the pre- and post-experiment tests were marked, the proficiency quotients were calculated, and the results were analysed statistically by means of Fisher criterion (Sidorenko, 2000). In the second stage, the teacher's and students' responses to the questionnaires were examined and interpreted in percentage terms. Subsequently, the conclusions were drawn and the experimental results were used to formulate methodological recommendations.

Ethical issues

Prior to the experiment, the participants were informed of its aims, voluntary nature and the fact that their names would not be made public. All 23 students freely consented to take part in the research.

Results

Testing out the hypotheses about the effectiveness of PW and GW in terms of developing accuracy entailed comparing the results of the pre- and post-experiment tests. Tables 1 and 2 show the proficiency quotient before and after the experimental teaching.

Table 1. *The results of the pre- and post-experiment assessment (Group 32)*

	Proficiency quotient	The mean	Proficiency quotient	The mean
	Pre-experiment test		Post-experiment test	
Student 1	0,38	0,34	0,75	0,71
Student 2	0,30		0,60	
Student 3	0,35		0,75	
Student 4	0,35		0,55	
Student 5	0,30		0,60	
Student 6	0,25		0,70	
Student 7	0,40		0,73	
Student 8	0,25		0,78	
Student 9	0,45		0,85	
Student 10	0,40		0,80	

Table 2. *The results of the pre- and post-experiment assessment (Group 33)*

	Proficiency quotient	The mean	Proficiency quotient	The mean
	Pre-experiment test		Post-experiment test	
Student 1	0,45	0,36	0,75	0,75
Student 2	0,40		0,70	
Student 3	0,35		0,65	
Student 4	0,45		0,60	
Student 5	0,43		0,73	
Student 6	0,40		0,80	
Student 7	0,25		0,78	
Student 8	0,38		0,85	
Student 9	0,35		0,70	
Student 10	0,35		0,80	
Student 11	0,25		0,78	
Student 12	0,43		0,85	
Student 13	0,25		0,78	

From the tables above it can be seen that before the experiment neither of the groups was thoroughly familiar with all the communicative functions of the modal verbs CAN and MAY – the pre-experiment results, which are not significantly different in the two groups, do not reach the satisfactory proficiency quotient – 0,7 (Bespalko, 1989). After the experiment, the means of both groups exceeded the satisfactory level, with 70% of the results being satisfactory in group 32 and 84,6% in group 33. The difference in figures was analysed statistically and proved to be insignificant. Thus hypothesis A was confirmed: cooperative learning in the form of either PW or GW can prove effective when addressing accuracy with no considerable difference between the two specified modes.

As has been mentioned above, apart from the quantitative there were collected qualitative data – through questionnaires completed by the students and the teacher. The students' questionnaire was reflective in nature and was distributed among the students at the end of the experiment. Overall, the response to both PW and GW was quite favourable. The overwhelming majority – 20 students (86,9%) described the experience of practising grammar in pairs/groups as *enjoyable and useful*; 18 students (78,2%) stated that they had had *enough opportunity to practise the target grammar*; 16 students (69,5%) rated the teacher's monitoring as *quite sufficient*; 17 students (73,9%) claimed that *they had acquired the target grammar skills*, with the rest being not sure. It is worth noting that most students were satisfied with the given mode of work (PW or GW) and expressed no strong wish to have worked differently (e.g. in groups instead of pairs or vice versa). However, in both groups, the students experienced certain *difficulties*. Those who had been working in *pairs* mentioned such problems as differences of opinion, having to negotiate an agreement, mixed-ability partners, lack of time, ensuring equal participation, remembering to use the target grammar. GW seemed to present similar challenges having to do with cooperative learning in general and lack of the corresponding experience, while imposing additional limitations due to the larger number of participants – limited opportunity for individual expression, limited speaking time.

The teacher's questionnaire entailed both in-action observation and on-action reflection and was completed during and after each activity. According to the teacher's observations, in group 32 (PW) the students' *response* to the tasks was fairly enthusiastic – in most cases (62%) the students found the suggested tasks exciting, while in the other cases the students seemed either mildly interested, indifferent or even clearly unwilling. It should be mentioned that in the course of doing certain activities the initial excitement turned to indifference or reluctance. As for group 33 (GW), only 50 % of the tasks appeared to get the students excited. The response to the other activities ranged from mildly interested to clearly unwilling. Of special interest are the teacher's observations in terms of the students' *participation*. The students working in pairs seemed to be equally active most of the time (92,3%), whereas during GW there prevailed groups with certain students dominating (83,3% of the time). Another crucial point in terms of this research was the students' *language production*. In group 32 (PW) the students either used the target grammar with a clear focus on accuracy (38%), used the target grammar but paid less attention to grammatical correctness than usual (24%) or ignored the target grammar using instead other language means (38%). In group 33 (GW) the students' language behaviour was basically similar – in most cases, the students seemed to use the target grammar – either with a clear focus on accuracy (42% of the time) or paying less attention to grammatical correctness (42%). However, the students were sometimes heard to resort to their native language.

While observing the pairs and the groups, the teacher also noted the *difficulties* encountered by the students: having to stick to the target grammar, organising various ideas into a logical whole, running short of time, working in a mixed-ability pair/group, assuming and performing a certain role in role-play activities, establishing a rapport with the 'random' pair/group mates sufficient to discuss sometimes personal issues (if it is required by an activity), sharing responsibility and working as a team. It should be pointed out that most of these difficulties were also mentioned by the students themselves.

The results of the teacher's on-action reflection are as follows: the *objective* of the most tasks was accomplished in both groups with the teacher having *enough opportunity to monitor* all the pairs and groups. In answer to the question about the *difficulties* experienced when facilitating PW or GW, the teacher pointed out the following: having to remind the students to use the target grammar/to speak English, being pressed for time, getting the students to talk. Interestingly, when reflecting on the PW, the teacher most frequently mentioned the students' tendency to ignore the target grammar, whereas the biggest problem with GW was time management. The latter can be explained by the larger number of people and, accordingly, ideas in groups in comparison with pairs, while the former may have been due to the fact that both interlocutors in a pair got distracted by fulfilling a task and there was no third person to hear them and remind them to stick to the target grammar.

All in all, the qualitative data allow a considerable insight into the way grammar can be practised in pairs or groups and enable us to rightly interpret the results, the latter being the subject matter of the next section.

Discussion

The experiment yielded positive results, namely, developing the participants' grammar skills, and as a consequence, our assumption about the effectiveness of cooperative learning in terms of grammar instruction was confirmed. It transpires that both PW and GW can provide an environment conducive to practising grammar and the described above differences between these two modes do not appear to be substantial enough to have a noticeable effect on the final outcome. Still, the absence of a statistically significant difference between the effectiveness of PW and GW seems to be a point in favour of GW. As practice shows, PW is generally preferred to GW for the reasons mentioned above– the seating arrangement and the students' language learning experience. Thus the fact that GW can be no less effective than PW may inspire teachers to regularly use GW to help students develop grammar skills.

The results of the experiment being overall positive, one cannot overlook the fact that the means of both groups only slightly exceed the satisfactory threshold. It can be accounted for by a number of factors. First of all, the experiment took place at the initial stage of studying modal verbs and although the uses of CAN and MAY were explored in detail, there may not have been enough opportunity to practise them thoroughly. Secondly, one must take into account occasional absences. Missing even one session out of five is bound to make an adverse impact on the end result. Thirdly, the students clearly lacked experience in cooperative learning, which was commented upon by both the students and the teacher and which is of crucial importance to this research. Sharing responsibility proved to be especially difficult in groups – according to the teacher's observations, most groups were dominated by certain students. Lack of experience was also evident in terms of doing communicative tasks. As was pointed out by the teacher, on several occasions it was difficult to get the students talking because they were either too reserved to discuss personal matters or not imaginative enough to play the suggested roles. On the other hand, if an activity did engage the students' interest, they tended to get carried away by conversation and forgot to use the target grammar (or paid little attention to grammar correctness). To remedy the situation, the teacher had to repeatedly remind them to focus on the modal verbs in question. One can only assume to what degree the above-mentioned factors may have influenced the outcome of the experiment, however, all things considered, it is self-evident that for students to fully benefit from cooperative learning, they need to engage in PW and GW on a regular basis, thus gaining the necessary experience.

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained during the experiment are consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), whose advocates stress the importance of meaningful communication taking place in the ELT classroom, which entails using PW and GW for students to interact with each other and designing activities that involve information sharing and negotiation of meaning (Baydikova & Davidenko, 2019; Celce-Murcia, 2013; Kasumi, 2015; Rambe, 2017; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). It should be noted that although our experimental teaching was aimed at the acquisition of grammar skills, the primary focus was on the communicative functions of the target grammar, which complies with the basic postulates of CLT (Brown, 2014; Celce-Murcia, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Our findings are also in agreement with the research into the use of PW and GW in vocabulary learning. The studies conducted by Fernandez Dobao (2014) and Teng (2017) demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative tasks in terms of vocabulary accuracy. However, both studies indicated that GW was more effective than PW (Fernandez Dobao, 2014; Teng, 2017), with the latter yielding better results than individual work (Teng, 2017).

In combination with the results of the previous research, our own conclusions allowed us to produce methodological recommendations on using PW and GW for grammar instruction. First and foremost, care should be taken to ensure that when working in pairs or groups, students are practising the target grammar. It may prove rather challenging if one aims to promote meaningful communication within a pair or a group, as students are likely to choose their own linguistic means to perform the suggested communicative functions. To channel students into using the target grammar, the instructions for activities should be formulated in such a way that the use of a certain grammar point seems the most natural and the best possible option. In the case of modal verbs, it was sometimes enough to specify their typical functions (e.g. expressing permission, possibility, etc.) for students to use the intended grammar patterns. Providing examples or sentence beginnings might also prompt students to adhere to the target language. Besides, if need be, students could be reminded by the teacher (or the group monitor) about the necessity of practising the target grammar structures. Still, if students decide to use alternative language means, these and the target ones could be

compared and analysed during the follow-up grammar focus. It must be admitted that all this detracts from the communicative nature of students' interaction, yet such interference appears necessary if our ultimate purpose is for students to master certain grammar points.

As has already been pointed out, monitoring PW and GW is of special importance when it comes to addressing accuracy. By closely observing students at work, the teacher can not only make sure that they are performing the task in question, speaking solely English and using the target grammar, but also note down the most common mistakes and, if necessary, offer students guidance and even suggest corrections to avoid fossilisation. One of the mentioned earlier advantages of GW is that due to a larger number of participants in comparison with PW, it offers students more favourable opportunities in terms of monitoring the other students' language use, which can consequently boost peer correction. It is advisable that students be encouraged to make use of this opportunity as such peer monitoring fosters students' language awareness and, on a broader scale, increases learner autonomy.

The principal focus on accuracy often requires that a pair or group activity be accompanied by a follow-up, which allows students to analyse their mistakes in the use of the target grammar and get additional practice. Such a follow-up can take different forms: from writing the faulty sentences on the board for the students to offering corrections and their own examples of the pattern involved to, preferably, giving students extra activities for further practice of the problem points.

It should be noted that the essential prerequisite for students successfully learning grammar by engaging in PW or GW is their experience of cooperative learning or, in case of lack of it, the corresponding training. Working together with a partner or partners requires certain skills, such as sharing responsibility, negotiating solutions, managing one's talking time, etc. These skills should be developed in the course of regular practice in pairs or groups. The importance of training prior to cooperative learning has been repeatedly highlighted by researchers (Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Teng, 2017).

On the whole, our empirical enquiry demonstrates that cooperative learning has considerable potential with regard to developing grammar skills. The obtained results can benefit both university and school teachers who are willing to consider increasing the amount of PW and GW in the ELT classroom. At the same time, this study indicates possibilities for further research into the ways of raising the effectiveness of PW and GW. For one, the effects of different types of activities and tasks in terms of addressing accuracy could be examined in more detail. Ways of monitoring PW and GW as well as providing effective feedback on students' grammar mistakes are also worthy of exploring further. Investigating these and other matters related to the impact of cooperative learning on grammar accuracy will enable teachers to use PW and GW more efficiently and extensively.

Limitations

As is frequently the case with empirical research, our study may have been affected by certain limitations, the most crucial among them being time constraints and the small sample size. Both factors can be accounted for by the circumstances under which the experiment was conducted. As the experimental teaching took place within the course of Practical Grammar, we had to abide by the corresponding syllabus and could not devote as much time as we might have deemed necessary to practising the modal verbs in question. Regarding the number of participants, it was determined by the workload of the teachers involved in the experiment, with only two groups of third-year students being available for the research.

Conclusions

The current paper documents our endeavour to explore the impact of cooperative learning on developing grammar skills. By means of experimental teaching, it was proved that both PW and GW can be effectively used to address grammar accuracy. Despite obvious distinctions between the two interaction modes, the difference in the results (quantitative data) was not significant enough to recommend giving preference to either one.

The qualitative data obtained by means of questionnaires indicated a number of difficulties encountered by the students, which can be attributed for the most part to their lack of experience in terms of cooperative learning and engaging in communicative language practice.

The value of our study lies in the fact that it supplies data in favour of cooperative learning as one of the approaches to practising grammar. The results might encourage teachers who are hesitant to use PW and GW to reconsider their views and incorporate these interaction modes into their classroom practices.

Taking into consideration the described above limitations of the research, it might be advisable to conduct a similar study for a longer period of time and with more students involved. To verify the results, the current enquiry should be replicated with different student age groups and by varying both the target

grammar material and the suggested activities. The focus could also be shifted onto vocabulary learning. One of these directions could become the subject of our future research.

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Received: 11 September, 2021

Accepted: 15 February, 2022

**APPENDIX A
TEACHER'S OBSERVATION SHEET**

Group _____ GW /PW (Circle)
Session _____ Task _____

For questions 1-5 tick the most appropriate option. Questions 6 and 7 are open-ended.

In-action observation

- 1) How would you describe the students' response to the task? (If the response is varied, specify the number of students):
 - excited
 - mildly interested
 - indifferent
 - reluctant
 - clearly unwilling
- 2) Which of the following is true in terms of the students' participation?
 - there are more pairs/groups with all the students being equally active than those dominated by certain students
 - there are more pairs/groups with certain students dominating than those where the students' participation is equally active
- 3) Which of the following best describes the students' language production?
 - most students are using the target grammar with a clear focus on accuracy
 - most students are using the target grammar but pay less attention to grammatical correctness than usual
 - most students ignore the target grammar by using instead other language means
 - most students resort to speaking their native language

On-action observation

- 4) Do you think the objective of the task was accomplished?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure
- 5) Did you have enough opportunity to monitor all the groups/pairs?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure
- 6) What difficulties (if any) did you experience (e.g. maintaining discipline, time management, placing students into pairs/groups, etc)?
- 7) What difficulties (if any) did the students encounter (e.g. seating arrangement, personal issues affecting performance, etc)?

APPENDIX B

Appendix B1: STUDENT'S SELF-REFLECTION SHEET (PAIR WORK)

For questions 1-6 tick the most appropriate option. Question 7 is open-ended.

- 1) How would you describe the experience of practising grammar in pairs?
 - enjoyable and useful
 - enjoyable but not particularly useful
 - a waste of class time
- 2) Were the instructions clear enough?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure
- 3) Was the teacher's monitoring helpful? Give your answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 – not helpful at all, 5 – really helpful.
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
- 4) How would you estimate the degree of your participation in performing the suggested tasks?
 - I had enough opportunity to practise the target grammar
 - I didn't get enough chances to practise the target grammar
 - I had no opportunity to practise the target grammar
- 5) Do you think you have acquired the target grammar skills?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure
- 6) Would you have preferred to work in groups (instead of pairs)? Give your reasons.
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure
- 7) What difficulties did you experience during pair work?

Appendix B2: STUDENT'S SELF-REFLECTION SHEET (GROUP WORK)

For questions 1-6 tick the most appropriate option. Question 7 is open-ended.

- 1) How would you describe the experience of practising grammar in groups?
 - enjoyable and useful
 - enjoyable but not particularly useful
 - a waste of class time

 - 2) Were the instructions clear enough?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure

 - 3) Was the teacher's monitoring helpful? Give your answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where **1** – not helpful at all, **5** – really helpful.
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5

 - 4) How would you estimate the degree of your participation in performing the suggested tasks?
 - I had enough opportunity to practise the target grammar
 - I didn't get enough chances to practise the target grammar
 - I had no opportunity to practise the target grammar

 - 5) Do you think you have acquired the target grammar skills?
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure

 - 6) Would you have preferred to work in pairs (instead of groups)? Give your reasons.
 - yes
 - no
 - not sure

 - 7) What difficulties did you experience during group work?
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