The Use of Cooperative Learning to Enhance Communication Skills

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Abstract

The use of groupwork in EFL classrooms is beset with challenges. Group formation, motivation, group dynamics, collaboration, and willingness to communicate are among the numerous issues that teachers must face when implementing groupwork. Cooperative learning can alleviate many of these issues by providing the framework to make groupwork both successful and enjoyable for teachers and students alike. Cooperative learning uses small groups to get students to work together in order to maximize each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2002). The student-centered approach of cooperative learning allows students to become more autonomous in their language learning, develop critical thinking skills, and foster social skills. This paper shares the experiences that two teachers have had while utilizing cooperative learning to help students get the most out of their language learning while providing them with communication skills for their future careers.

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges that university instructors face when teaching

English communication classes in Japan is to break students from the form-based approach to language instruction that has been drilled into them by the Japanese school system. This style of language teaching in the Japanese education system has been detailed by a variety of scholars (Anderson, 1993; Guest, 2000; Harumi, 2011; Mayer, 1994; Ozasa, 2001; Sato, 2004). The result of this education is students with "weak English communication ability and low motivation to learn the language" (Nakata, 2006, p. 166). It can become frustrating when an instructor is tasked with developing the communication skills of students but is faced with a classroom of students with little to no motivation for achieving that goal.

With this in mind, university instructors must find ways to pique the interest of students to kindle their motivation to learn English. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in the ability to succeed in a specific situation or task (Bandura, 1997). Bandura believed that those with high self-efficacy believe that they can perform well and approach tasks as something that can be mastered rather than avoided. Based on social-cognitive theory, which takes into account social interactions and experiences, self-efficacy is a significant component of language learner motivation in many different L2 contexts (Lamb, 2017). To promote self-efficacy, it is, therefore, necessary to provide students with social interactions which allow them to succeed in English and find motivation from their own success. Positive classroom experiences compose a large source of self-efficacy beliefs (Wang & Pape, 2007) so creating an atmosphere conducive to this should be a primary factor for instructors when designing a communication class.

One way to establish a learning environment beneficial to raising self-efficacy is by incorporating cooperative learning in the classroom. Cooperative learning "involves students helping each other learn and helping each other become more skillful in the learning process," (Jacobs & Rendaya, 2019, p. 7). Furthermore, cooperative learning has "been embraced as a way of promoting communicative interaction in the classroom and is seen as an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 193).

More concretely, cooperative learning is designed to get students more actively engaged in the learning process through discussion and inquiry in small groups with their peers (Davidson & Worsham, 1992). The use of cooperative learning can give students the opportunity for positive classroom experiences that can boost self-efficacy.

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how cooperative learning can be used in university classrooms to raise student self-efficacy by providing students with opportunities to successfully complete tasks through social interaction in the classroom. This paper describes how two instructors implemented cooperative learning into their classrooms and the outcomes they achieved through different teaching situations and methodologies.

Cooperative Learning

While many teachers incorporate the use of groups in their classrooms, not all group work activities achieve the success that a teacher has intended. Largely developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, widely considered the leaders of cooperative learning, defined cooperative learning as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize each other's learning" (2002, p. 9). Cooperative learning developed in second language learning is an attempt to address the problems often found in group learning such as members not participating, groups not getting along, or some members unable to completes tasks in addition to trying to facilitate interaction among students (McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva Iddings, 2006). Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994) use the analogy of comparing students to mountain climbers: heights are more easily scaled when part of a cooperative team.

McCafferty, Jacobs, and DaSilva Iddings (2006) stated that the two most critical elements of cooperative learning are positive interdependence and individual accountability. Positive interdependence is the feeling of a group that realizes that "each person's efforts benefit not only that individual, but all the other group

members as well" (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994, p. 9). In other words, in order to be successful, each person's efforts are needed, or each person needs to feel that his or her efforts are needed, so success is determined by the success of the group, not by individual success.

Jacobs (2006) described individual accountability by explaining that "every member must feel a responsibility to learn and participate in the group, and students must demonstrate their learning" (p. 42). All members of the group must contribute or the group cannot successfully complete its task. Each member can "add to the overall knowledge of the group, reveal areas of weakness that group mates can attend to" (McCafferty, S.G., Jacobs, G.M., & DaSilva Iddings, 2006, p. 5). The principle behind cooperative learning groups is that working together makes each member a stronger individual learner (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). While positive interdependence and individual accountability tend to overlap, they are not always present together. An example of such an activity would be a writing assignment in which each student must write an essay but the grade is based on the overall performance of the group without the mechanism of feedback or assistance within the group. This would give students individual accountability of completing their essay to help the group, but may not give them positive interdependence because they would not necessarily be receiving any assistance or feedback from their group.

With the two elements of positive interdependence and individual accountability in mind when doing cooperative learning, the next hurdle is group formation. There are basically four different options for teachers when forming groups. The four options are: 1) Students can decide the groups 2) The groups are formed randomly, 3) The teacher can decide, 4) The groups are formed based on a commonality such as being born in the same season, favorite food, hairstyle, etc. Of the four, the literature on cooperative learning favors heterogeneity (Jacobs, 2006), which can be achieved by forming the groups randomly or the teacher choosing which members to group together. Ruddock (1978) states that

the benefit of heterogeneous grouping is a useful way to have students see a variety of perspectives. Freeman and Freeman (1994) stated that the diversity of students adds to their learning potential since they bring different experiences, knowledge, and interest. It is of great benefit to students to be able to hear the ideas and opinions of their peers so a random or teacher selected formation of groups works best for cooperative learning.

Critics of heterogenous groups claim that if higher-level students are mixed with lower-level students, the higher-level students may feel compelled to do most of the work and feel bored while lower-level students could feel intimidated (Allan, 1991; Slavin, 1991). Jacobs (2006) refuted this however, by saying that that high achievers can help themselves by enjoying greater feelings of "belonging, acceptance, and caring as they work for group rather than individual success" in addition to the concept that "teaching others may also aid their memory and deepen their understanding" (p. 33). Johnson and Johnson (1991) claim that lower-level students benefit as well by receiving help not only from the teacher but from their peers and may find more motivation to try because if they fail, the entire group suffers. To avoid the potential problem of high-level students always being in the position of being the "teacher", creating tasks that use multiple intelligences should be used. In their study, Bassano and Christison (1992) used music and drawing tasks in their language lessons to give students who were weaker in L2 abilities the chance to change their status from receiver to helper because of their higher abilities in the arts. As a result, while heterogenous groups can be beneficial to cooperative learning, it is also essential, when pairing higher and lower level students, to distribute tasks so the role of "teacher" is constantly shifting.

Cooperative learning can help create a learning environment advantageous to language development. Students learn best when they are motivated and can obtain a working knowledge of a language with sufficient motivation, regardless of their language aptitude (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). When many university

students begin their English communication classes, their low motivation to improve their communication ability can be a result of the form-based language instruction that is often the way of teaching English in Japanese secondary schools. Cooperative learning takes students away from the traditional teacher-centered classroom that students have become accustomed to and puts them on a continuum from teacher-lectures to self-study, cooperative learning provides students with a greater reliance on themselves and their peers (McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva Iddings, 2006). With proper group formation and the elements of positive interdependence and individual accountability present, cooperative learning can provide students with the motivation they need to raise their self-efficacy to become more motivated language learners.

Methods

Participants in Application One of Cooperative Learning

The first author's course for this study was a compulsory course for non-English majors. The class was an Integrated English course for second-year university students at a private university in central Japan. The 15-week course met once a week with each class being 90 minutes in length. The classes generally consisted of 20–30 students with most students around the intermediate CEFR level B1, which is having the ability to express themselves on a wider range of topics that can be understood by a native speaker. Though some students were in the basic range of A2 and some fell in the B2 range of upper intermediate, the majority of students were at B1. Classes were not streamed by level, and the instructor taught both sections of the course.

Application One of Cooperative Learning

The outline of the Integrated English course was to integrate the language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The primary goal of the class was to increase student's communication skills and ability. During the 15 weeks,

the students had three five-minute timed conversations, which were recorded and graded, in the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth week. The timed conversations were in groups of three or four students and each conversation was worth 15 percent of the student's grades. The topics of the timed conversations were based on the topics covered in the class textbook, *Reading Pass 1*. Every week, the students were assigned a reading on the topic from the textbook for homework. Their written homework was a worksheet (see Appendix 1) which included a pre-reading question, student research about the topic from the Internet, a writing section based on their experience with the topic, and a short reflection about the topic. The homework was done individually and was used for cooperative learning tasks the following week in class.

The purposes of using cooperative learning in class were to increase the amount of interaction time for the students in order to build communication skills and group dynamics within the classroom, and to prepare students for the timed conversations by having them talk to their partners about the topics in a variety of ways. The student-centered focus of cooperative learning allowed students more speaking time with their peers with the hope that the more opportunities the students had to speak with each other, the more comfortable they would be when they had their timed conversations. The class format started with a five to ten minute warm up discussion on the topic, where students would first answer discussion questions on the topic a partner or partners before joining an overall class discussion. That was followed by a five to ten minute slideshow which contained information relevant to the topic but not included in the reading passage the students had for homework. The slideshow included discussion questions for students to talk about in relation to the content being presented. Finally, the students were broken into groups to begin their cooperative learning tasks.

The groups were determined randomly every week so that the students would have the opportunity to talk with many different classmates. The groups were composed of three to four students to replicate the format for the timed conversa-

tions. Station work was used to incorporate cooperative learning. There were eight different stations, which were numbered to help students navigate, set up around the classroom. The students were told and reminded each week that the tasks at the stations were to be completed while speaking in English. To enforce this, the teacher walked around the classroom to keep the use of Japanese to a minimum. Students were also aware that their use of Japanese in the classroom would negatively affect their participation grade, which accounted for 20% of their overall grade. Each station had a different task for the students to complete within a five-minute time period. The five-minute time period was determined to parallel the time constraints of the timed conversations, so students could get used to completing tasks within five minutes. Each group worked at a station for five minutes before moving to the next numerical station. To avoid the problem of higher-level students doing most of the tasks, Kagan and Kagan (1998) suggested that the use of tasks involve a wide range of intelligences. The students were assigned a station to start at and then moved sequentially through each station until they went through every station. The eight stations were:

Station 1 – Listening Station

Station 2 – Reading Comprehension Station

Station 3 – Research Sharing Station

Station 4 – Activity Station

Station 5 – Discussion Station

Station 6 – Vocabulary Station

Station 7 – Experience Sharing Station

Station 8 – 5-Minute Conversation Station

Students were given an In-Class Worksheet (see Appendix 2) to complete each station's task. At Station 1 students were asked to listen to a short conversation between two people. The listening passage had five comprehension questions. Each member in the group randomly selected questions on strips of paper that they had to answer based on the listening to give each person in the

group a specific listening task and their own responsibility for contributing to the group. After listening to the passage together twice, the members shared their information with the rest of the group. The person responsible for comprehension question one read the question to the group and then gave the answer to the rest of the group members. This continued until all five questions were answered. If any of the comprehension questions were unable to be answered, the group worked together by listening to the passage again until they were satisfied that they answered all five questions correctly. The main purposes of this station were to increase listening comprehension and to have students rely on each other to complete the task.

At Station 2, the students were asked to come up with the three key points of the reading passage that was assigned for homework. A copy of the reading passage from their textbook, between 200–300 words, was at the station and the students had to discuss the reading and negotiate with each other what they thought the three key points of the reading were and give reasons why they thought so. The primary goals of this station were to get students to negotiate with each other by defending their reasons for selecting their key points and then working together to write down their agreed upon key points and reasons.

Station 3 required students to utilize their homework by explaining to their partners some of their Internet research they did on the topic. For homework, the students were asked to research two new pieces of information on the topic that was not mentioned in the reading passage that was assigned for homework. One of the pieces of information needed to be a statistic on the topic. For their homework, students were asked to write down the information they researched, the website they retrieved the information from, and the reason why they thought the information was important. At Station 3, each group member was asked to explain one of the things that was researched to the rest of the group. The Station included phrases that they could use to help explain their research, such as, "According to…," "I researched on the website…" and "I researched…"

After explaining their research, the other members of the group summarized what they heard on the In-Class Worksheet. At this station, the main goal for cooperative learning was to set up one student as the "expert" on their research to establish both positive interdependence and individual accountability among the students. The additional goals were to give students practice at explaining information which would help their timed conversations and provide students with more information to use in their timed conversations.

The activity at Station 4 varied from week to week depending on the topic. There were a variety of different activities: cloze exercises, trivia questions, poster creation, fill-in the dialog cartoon pages, role play exercises, and research tasks. All of the activities required participation from all of the members in order to complete the task at each station. One example is from the topic on Artificial Intelligence (AI), where each group's task was to design an advertising poster for a new robot. One person was assigned to draw a picture of the robot on a piece of A4 paper. Another person was asked to come up with a name and catchphrase for the robot. A final task was to write up the features and functions of the robot on a small piece of paper. If there were four members of the group, then usually two members worked on this part together. Because there was only five minutes to complete the advertisement, the students needed to quickly delegate and then complete their tasks. Because this unit on AI was towards the end of the course, the students had become proficient at making quick decisions on task delegation in order to complete the task within five minutes. The goals, in addition to time management, were to make each student individually accountable for a specific task in order for the group to experience success by completing the task.

The discussions at Station 5 were largely designed to help students prepare for the timed conversations, but also provided opportunities for the students to develop communication strategies since they need to be able to explain and justify their answers to the rest of their group. There were questions and statements on a piece of paper at the station and students were reminded to use follow

up questions and conversation strategies while talking about the questions or statements. For instance, during most of the units there were five open-ended questions followed by five statements which students had to either agree or disagree with and give their reasons. Also at the station were conversation strategies to involve others in the conversation such as, "What do you think about that?" and "Do you agree with me?"

Station 6 was a vocabulary station which checked the student's comprehension of the vocabulary from the reading passage. There were three pairs of questions which focused on word forms, as students were required to fill-in the blanks to the sentences using either the adjective, adverb, noun, or verb form. There were six additional sentences where students needed to choose from a word bank which had the vocabulary words from the reading passage. To complete the task at this station, the students worked together to try to select the correct vocabulary word for the sentence. The cooperative learning goal for this station was to maximize the student's learning by working together to solve the tasks. While the activity wasn't specifically designed to ensure cooperation, students were encouraged, in the instructions, that working together would help them complete the tasks in the five-minute time period.

At Station 7, the students once again used their homework to complete the work at the station. For their homework, the students were required to write a minimum of 30 words about their experience with the topic. The students were to write on a first-hand experience about the topic. Alternatively, if the students did not have any actual experience with the topic, then they were asked to write about what they knew about the topic. The in-class work at the station had students sharing their experiences with their group members. The group members were required to ask at least one question each to the student who shared his or her experience. After this discussion, the other members of the group had to write a one sentence summary of each group member's experience. Thinking and sharing experiences by engaging with others is one of the primary purposes

of cooperative learning.

Station 8 was designed to give students the opportunity to explain their knowledge of the topic by having a 5-minute conversation. The purpose of this station was to help students prepare for the 5-minute timed conversations. Unlike the graded timed conversations, students were able to use any notes they had on the topic. If the students reached this station toward the end of the station work, then they had their homework as well as their in-class worksheets to assist them in the conversation. If the students were assigned this station at the beginning of the station work, they still had their homework to help guide them through the conversation. Unlike the graded timed conversation, this conversation was not recorded.

Outcomes and Discussion

During the 15-week semester, the students completed the station work eight times. In addition to the three weeks of timed conversations, there were also three review weeks in the class that preceded the timed conversations to help students review the topics and prepare for the timed conversations. During the last few minutes of every class, the students completed a short reflection about the day's lesson. From their reflections several themes emerged on their feelings about the station work.

Ruddock (1978) stated that one of the benefits of heterogeneous grouping is that students are able to see a variety of perspectives. Several students commented that they enjoyed listening to the opinions of their classmates on the topics.

I could enjoy the conversation because they often tell me their opinions.
I enjoyed my partner's experience and enjoyed conversation. I used a lot of vocabulary.

| *We have different opinions and experiences, so it's interesting.* |
| *Group member had research well the topic. I could get new information. It's very good for me.* |
| *I can get other partner's ideas and answers so I enjoyed.* |

Additionally, students were happy to receive help from their peers while doing the station work. Because this was a mixed-level class, the use of heterogeneous groups put students in the position to receive assistance from their peers.

| *I can help members of group when they don't understand the sentence meaning.* |
| *I could enjoy talk with my partner. My partner helped me when I couldn't say what I want to say.* |
| *I could do the listening exercise more than usual. Everyone taught me kindly when I don't know what to say in English.* |
| *We help each other. We speak a lot of the time, We enjoyed group work.* |

In addition to building language skills, the students were able to expand each other's knowledge on the topics through their work at the stations.

| *We could share our opinions so I can learn about new things.* |
| *They gave me some new information so I was excited.* |
| *They told me many information. They talked positively.* |
| *I knew things that I don't know until now so I could learn and more clever a little.* |
| *This topic is difficult for me. I heard many opinions so it is good for me.* |

Through their work at the stations, some students found motivation in trying to improve some of the skills they realized they needed to improve on during the station work.

> *In group work, vocabulary quiz is perfect!! But listening is bad so I want to grow listening ability.*

> *I can't understand a lot of word, so I want to study a lot of word. I want to become to understand the readings.*

> *I could speak deeply about this unit! But I couldn't do listening so I want to listen and write smoothly.*

> *My understanding has deepened because I have focused more on preparatory than last week.*

> *I need to prepare more next time. Then, I will enjoy the conversation more than today.*

Students were also able to find motivation based on their successful completion of tasks at different stations.

> *Today's topic is so fun. And today, I could get correct the vocabulary in the class. That was today's good point.*

> *I could answer them correctly at Station 1. I'm happy! I think there are good things today!*

> *For the first time, I completed Station 6's vocabulary. I was glad!*

> *We can complete the word section! And we caught good information.*

> *I could participate positively than before. I enjoy to discuss with group members.*

Finally, group members found motivation to study English harder as a result of working with partners with a higher level of English ability.

> *He tried speaking English always! I enjoyed working with him.*

> *Her English is very native. I want to speak well.*

> *Our group members were very fluent in English. I want to be like them.*

> *He always tried English in his answers!*
>
> *Everyone tried to speak English. I enjoyed this class.*

The main purposes of doing the station work in the course were to provide students with more chances to interact with their peers, give them multiple activities to complete together, and use cooperative learning to increase their motivation to improve their English. The focus was not to measure an increase in fluency or overall English ability but to encourage students to find motivation through their successes in completing the stations, having enjoyable interactions with classmates, and discovering or rediscovering that learning English can be exciting. If a student can find this motivation, it can continue to benefit them throughout the rest of their English education as well as their lives.

Participants in Application Two of Cooperative Learning

The second author's course for this study was similar to the first author's course in many aspects. It was also a compulsory course for non-English majors, offered to second-year students over 15 weeks, and followed an integrated English curriculum. The course consisted of 97 students divided between four classes (32, 33, 15, & 17), with most students near a CEFR B1 level. This course differed in that it met twice per week for 90 minutes each and was part of an online semester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary mode of participation was 12 weeks of synchronous online learning via Zoom. Also, students participated in three weeks of on-demand learning at various stages throughout the semester. The two smaller classes (15 and 17) were taught co-taught by the author and another lecturer. As a result, these classes had fewer interactions using the cooperative learning tasks described below.

Application Two of Cooperative Learning

The second-year course blended content-based learning and communicative

English teaching to improve speaking, listening, reading, writing, and students' overall fluency. The 12 weeks of the course spent participating in synchronous online learning covered four units lasting five classes. Since students were joining class via Zoom, breakout rooms were used regularly for small group work. Students prepared and participated in debates at the end of each unit. Also, students researched and gave presentations after studying two units. The students selected the presentation topics, which had to be related to the units covered in the textbook.

A typical class started with a 5 to 10-minute warm-up in which students were able to get back into an English mindset by participating in discussions. These warm-ups varied between small groups and whole-class discussions. Following the warm-up, the teacher would present a short slideshow covering class announcements, the class schedule, and brief information connected to the topic. The teacher would then guide students through the various tasks they would be completing, modeling participation behaviors and expectations. Students were then organized into small groups and given 40 minutes or more to complete the tasks. After the time was up, students would return to the main meeting room, where the class would debrief about what they learned and accomplished that day.

Students were divided into small groups of 3–5 students and put into breakout rooms to maximize their speaking time and opportunities to use English. There were usually 8–10 breakout rooms open during one class period. Consequently, time was limited for the teacher to join and assist each group. Cooperative learning tasks were thus used to help students improve communication skills and group dynamics while also helping students become more autonomous. When groups were more independent, it allowed the teacher to spend more time with groups that needed assistance. Throughout the semester, groups were divided in two ways. In about half of the classes, students were divided randomly. In the other half of the classes, students were given a choice of which style of breakout room they wanted to join. The three style options were based on English use

expectations: All-English, mostly-English, and no-requirement. The decision was entirely up to each student and was only temporary as they had the freedom to move between styles daily. The decision was not made as a way of tracking but was offered to give students more flexibility in their group roles and more control over their learning. It also freed up the teacher from "policing" students' English use to a facilitator or guide.

When readings from the textbooks were reviewed and discussed in groups, the teacher provided a Google Jamboard with various tasks. While students could not move physically through a room as they would with stations, this allowed them to move through a series of tasks in a virtual space. Google Jamboard is an interactive whiteboard system similar to a slideshow application, but it is simplified to make simultaneous interaction and collaboration more efficient. Users can draw, write, type, add shapes, add sticky notes, and post images with ease. The activities used varied between individual, group, and class-oriented, allowing cooperative learning to occur on different levels within one class. Once opened, the Jamboard becomes part of each student's Google Drive so that the content can be accessed and reviewed at any time. Google Jamboard was chosen because it was interactive and simple for students to master because of its limited options and functions. When maximized to its fullest potential, all students in the group could simultaneously work on the same task while communicating about what they were doing via their breakout room. Once objects are on the Jamboard, they can be manipulated instantaneously by anyone on the Jamboard, which created a form of connectedness that often was missing from breakout room discussions.

Cooperative learning tasks done in Zoom breakout rooms through Google Jamboards varied to match the topics, but a few of the activities remained consistent throughout many units. The following tasks were used on multiple occasions:

1. Bilingual lists
2. Explain to a 5-year-old

3. Student-created discussion questions
4. What surprised you? sticky notes
5. Video response
6. DAE images

There were no set times for task completion, and groups could choose to complete the tasks in any order. Students were instructed that it would be better to spend more time on a few tasks than to rush through everything as quickly as possible. The goal was for students to have deeper and more meaningful interactions with the content. Each group likely had different interests and study preferences, and this system allowed them to choose what was of most importance. The following paragraphs will explain each of the six cooperative learning tasks.

The bilingual list is a task that focuses on vocabulary acquisition. Students make a T-chart of words related to a topic. On one side, they would write the words in English. If they did not know a word in English, they could then write the Japanese word on the other side. After they were happy with the list, they work together without dictionaries to complete the lists on both sides. Lists that were not completed were then discussed during the debriefing session at the end of class. Because this task relies on students' background knowledge but not English ability, it allows each student to participate and foster group interdependence.

Explain it to a 5-year-old is another task focused on vocabulary acquisition and understanding. Students are asked to type a vocabulary word and then type how they would explain it to a 5-year-old. As a group activity, the students negotiate the meaning of the word and whether a 5-year-old could understand it. The purpose is to get students away from dictionary definitions and start thinking about and using words in different contexts and forms.

The next task was connected to a group reading. After reading from the textbooks, students would post their discussion questions using sticky notes on the Jamboard. Groups were often required to write one per group member. This

particular Jamboard was shared with all groups. Later in the class, they were asked to come back and discuss any of the questions. To make sure they did not rush through this part of the activity, they were given an amount of time they should talk as a goal, and all students in the group were expected to answer.

Throughout the year, students were practicing how to read nonfiction critically. One of the questions associated with this was, "what surprised you about the reading?" For this task, students were asked to discuss this question in groups and then post their ideas to the Jamboard using the sticky note tool. To encourage more discussion, they had to explain why this piece of information was surprising. It was also expected that other group members would ask follow-up questions and respond to opinions.

The video response activity provided a link to a video that groups could watch together. This activity was done via Zoom by having one student play the video while sharing his or her screen in the breakout room. After watching the video, students discussed how it connected to the readings, how it connected to their lives, and how they felt after watching it.

Describe, analyze, and evaluate (DAE) is an intercultural communication exercise in which students are given an image and asked to answer the following questions:

D: What is happening in the picture?

A: Why is it happening?

E: How do you feel about it?

The exercise is "intended to foster self-awareness of personal and cultural assumptions, promote the appreciation of cognitive complexity, and the importance of frame-shifting when encountering the familiar" (Nam & Condon, 2010, p. 81). The images used in this class were connected to the topics covered in the readings. Often, these images exhibited a culture or situation with which students were unfamiliar. Answers to the first question are often similar and can be agreed upon when discussed. In contrast, the second question's answers are

open to multiple interpretations, and the final answers may be the most diverse.

The role of the teacher during these classes was dynamic. At times, students needed encouragement to use more English or conversation strategies. The teacher could also elicit information with follow-up questions if a discussion lacked depth. At other times, students required clarification of instructions or support with the understanding of words and phrases. If groups were homogenous in their answers, the teacher might share alternative information to help them see another perspective. As students became more familiar with the technology and expectations, their need for help declined. This development allowed the teacher to spend more time with the groups who still needed assistance. At the end of each class, the whole class would debrief on the class activities. At this time, the teacher would go through some of the Google Jamboard activities and call on group members randomly to share information. Because they were called on randomly, all group members had to participate in the discussions and help each other to summarize their discussions. The objective was to facilitate group interdependence further.

While some of the activities seem similar, the multimodal differences offer students multiple entry points to connect to the material. Combined with the breakout rooms and Google Jamboard, it was possible to balance student learning preferences with promoting the essential elements of cooperative learning.

Outcomes and Discussion

The Google Jamboard cooperative learning activities were used 12 times during the 12 weeks of synchronous learning for the larger classes (32 and 33) and six times for the smaller classes (15 and 17). At the end of the semester, students completed a survey consisting of open-ended questions about their experiences with the cooperative learning tasks. The general impression of the tasks was overwhelmingly positive. Students specifically promoted the tasks as enjoyable or useful 41 times, while students only commented that they disliked the tasks

three times. Despite having a large sample size, only 33 students completed the surveys. From these responses, the following themes emerged.

Several students felt that the cooperative learning activities helped them improve their English and learn something valuable.

> *I could try to speak all English because of this group and I think my English skills have improved.*

> *I learned a lot of things because we were able to share the opinions or ideas of others in the breakout rooms.*

> *It was difficult for me to complete Jamboard in English, but it helped me with studying and understanding about each unit.*

> *It was enjoy solving it. There are questions don't appear in textbook. We could consider to these again so I think we might develop an ability to consider on the scene.*

Similarly, many students mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity to exchange ideas and see things from multiple perspectives, specifically using Google Jamboard. Even when students were working in groups, they were able to see other groups' responses simultaneously.

> *It was great to be able to hear a lot of opinions from other groups.*

> *It was interesting because I could see the opinions of people from other groups and use them as a reference.*

> *I very enjoyed working with classmates in breakout rooms, because, my classmates gave me a lot of opinion and advice.*

> *I could see the opinions of people from other groups and use them as a reference.*

Some students commented that the learning environment was conducive to their learning. They felt more comfortable working in smaller groups, and this allowed them to use more English than they would have in larger groups.

> *I like it. Jamboard has a lot of talking topics, so I had a lot of chances to speak English.*

> *It was like assuring me to practice English with my classmates. They were also willing to speak English so that I could talk with them in English freely.*

> *Even if there are a large number of people and it is difficult to talk, a small number of people will make it easier to talk*

> *At first, I was nervous about break rooms because I am not good at English. But I was happy when my opinion was conveyed to my friends.*

This author has used cooperative learning in face-to-face classes as well, but the need to offer more student interactions during synchronous online learning was the primary drive for this study. The main concern was how to recreate a similar learning environment online so that students could benefit from cooperative learning. Students were able to develop small-group skills and interdependence that will be useful beyond university. The multiple paths to learning provide more opportunities for language use and development. Students spent an entire academic year studying online. Thus, there was a need to help students maintain motivation and to foster enthusiasm for English.

Conclusion

The authors' purposes for using cooperative learning activities in ESL class-rooms are to facilitate student talk time and increase English use, help students move away from a focus on grammatical form and structures to a focus on meaning, and provide multiple outlets for student participation and development. This transition away from a teacher-centered classroom shifts the onus of learning to the students, improving their learning autonomy. From this perspective, the potential for cooperative learning was evident in this study, and it is effective in both traditional face-to-face and online environments. Multiple students claimed that they could speak more during the small group activities, they were able to

exchange ideas and learn from each other, and the activities created a comfortable learning environment—these aspects aid in improving motivation, which students also discussed. Finally, through reflections, students demonstrated that they had started to think about and take responsibility for their learning.

There are obstacles to implementing cooperative learning effectively. Johnson and Johnson (1994) warn that assigning students to work together in small groups does not magically create cooperative learning. Students need to be guided towards being supportive and interdependent group members. Furthermore, to be effective, cooperative learning needs to represent most of the class activities to reinforce its relevance to students and improve teacher expertise. Additionally, how students learn in other classes may affect the effectiveness of this learning approach. If students are consistently being asked to compete with each other for grades, it may be more challenging to help them see the significance of working together toward a shared goal. In such a situation, teachers may have to spend more time teaching interpersonal and small-group skills and reflecting on what has been learned.

The authors advocate using cooperative learning; however, the generalizability of this study's results should be considered cautiously. Even though the students in this study are not English majors, they are language majors. Meaning, many of them may be highly motivated to participate in ESL classes. As second-year students, many of them have had multiple communicative ESL classes making them ideal participants for cooperative learning. Finally, this study was concerned with students' perceptions rather than learning outcomes. While the authors care about language development and grades, the primary concern is to promote student interaction, small-group skills, and autonomy. Further research into the learning outcomes, both short and long-term, may be necessary to evaluate the overall effectiveness of this study's activities.

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Appendix 1

<div align="center">

Integrated English

Homework Sheet

Unit Title _____
</div>

Pre-Reading Question

Write down the discussion question and answer it <u>before</u> you do the reading. Give reasons for your answer(s).

_____

_____?

Key Points of the Reading

1.
2.
3.

Research- Information

Research one thing about the topic and explain why it is important.

<div align="center">Research- Information</div>

Information

_____

_____

_____

Source (website)

_____

Why it's important

_____

_____

_____

Research- Statistic

Research one statistic (number data) about the topic and explain why it is important.

Research- Statistic

Information

_____

_____

_____

Source (website)

_____

Why it's important

_____

_____

Your Experience

Write at least 30 words about some of your experience with this topic (either your own experience or something that you've heard about).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Reflection

Answer the questions below.

    1. What is something new you learned about the topic?

    2. What was most interesting about the topic? Why?

    3. What did you not like about the topic? Why not?

Appendix 2

Integrated English

In-Class Sheet
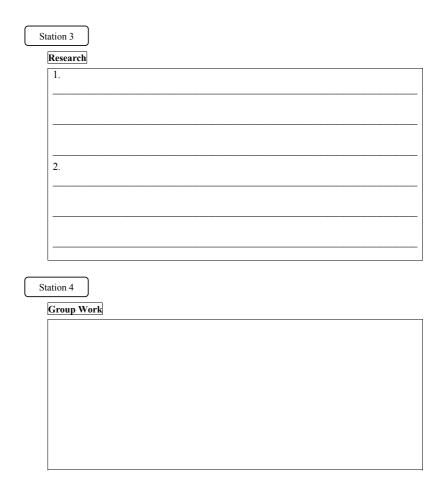
Unit Title _____

Station 1

Listening Activity

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Station 2

Key Points

1. _____ Why? _____
2. _____ Why? _____
3. _____ Why? _____

Station 3

Research

1.
_____

_____

_____
2.
_____

_____

_____

Station 4

Group Work

Station 6

Vocabulary

1.	2.	3.	4.
5.	6.	7.	8.
9.	10.	11.	12.

Station 7

Experiences

Name _____
Experience (in about 15 words)

_____
_____

Name _____
Experience (in about 15 words)

_____
_____