

Lecture №4

Cooperative language learning technologies in the classroom

Plan

1. What is cooperative learning?
2. Assumptions of cooperative learning
3. Strategies for group dynamics
4. Steps in teaching cooperative skills
5. Benefits of using cooperative techniques

Calderon: “cooperative learning is a technology for the classroom that is used to increase motivation and retention, to help students to develop a positive image of self and others, to provide vehicle for critical thinking and problem solving and to encourage social collaborative skills.

Cooperation technology in FLT consists in formation of skills to work cooperatively in groups or teams to get qualitative results.

Cooperating and competition have always been regarded as the most significant aspects in language learning and teaching. Cooperation with others is crucial and competition can often block progress.

Assumptions about cooperative learning

Cooperative skills must be learnt. Humans are not born instinctively knowing how to cooperate with others in this or that language. In the classroom students will not automatically start cooperating as soon as they are put into small groups unless they know what skills to use. They must be taught just like other skills. Most students have never been taught to work effectively in cooperation with other students, so they cannot do it.

The physical and special conditions of the classroom greatly affect cooperative work. If you are planning to have students cooperate with others they can't talk facing back to back or front to back. There must be face-to-face interaction.

Peer support and group dynamics are the keys to success in group work. The teacher should be able to organize support:

How well does the group function?

Does anybody monopolize the situation?

Do they respect each other?

How are groups organized? Are slow students included into the group?

Steps in teaching cooperative skills.

According to Johnson & Johnson (1975) there are 4 steps that teachers must follow in teaching cooperative skills:

Step 1: Students must see the value in group work. Traditionally students sit in rows with their teacher in front of the class. Of course, they will be confused when their expectations are not met. Students need to understand the essence of cooperative work

and how it will help them to reach their goals. There are several ways the teacher can help the students to see the value in group work:

Some teachers simply explain why they are doing it;

Other teachers do a brainstorm work on the possible value of cooperative learning. Still other teachers poster around the room to remind the learners of the benefits of CL & group work. What follows a list of ideas that were generated by the students themselves:

We can interact with our classmates;

We find out what our group mates know and think;

We hear more English (have more input);

We get more opportunities to talk;

We have more fun;

We get a chance to be a leader;

We get a chance to learn more about each other;

We can solve problems;

We can see different points of view;

We extend our vocabulary;

We can ask more questions;

It is interesting.

Step 2: Students must be aware of necessary skills for successful group work.

Step 3: Students must practice the skills in different situations. For example, in “one- centered” activity you can have 20 questions to one student on focus. A card the student chooses gives the theme on which the rest of the class asks him questions.

Step 4: Students need to know how well they are progressing on the skill under the teacher’s control.

5. Levels of cooperative skills

According to Johnson & Johnson (1975), there are four levels of cooperative skills that teachers can focus on:

Forming. Forming skills are directed towards organizing the group and establishing behavioral norms. Those teachers who claim that cooperative group work is too noisy or takes too much time deal with the students who have not been allowed to master the skill of forming.

Functioning. Functioning skills are directed towards completing tasks and maintaining good relationships within the group. Groups must understand, for example, what the time limits are and how the activity should be carried out within their groups, step by step. Activities that focus on the skill of functioning give learners a chance to ask for help, paraphrase previous comments, clarify, explain, and express support.

Formulating. The skill of formulating is directed towards helping students to develop a deeper understanding of the material being studied to develop better reasoning strategies,

Fermenting. These skills involve helping learners explore more thoroughly the material.

Benefits from using cooperative technologies

Many researchers in our country and abroad have demonstrated the benefits of cooperative work (cooperation) in the classroom:

- Higher self-esteem;
- Greater and more rapid achievements;
- Use of higher-level cognitive strategies;
- Decreased prejudice and fear;
- Increase mutual concern;
- Increased confidence and enjoyment;
- More respect for the teacher, the school, and the subject;
- Reduced anxiety;
- Greater student-student interaction;
- Tolerance and ambiguity;
- Risk-taking ability.

Problematic questions:

1. What is cooperative learning?
2. What are the assumptions about cooperative learning? What are the strategies for group dynamics?
3. What are the steps in teaching cooperative skills?
4. Describe the levels of cooperative skills
5. What are the benefits of using cooperative techniques?
6. Describe 2 cooperative techniques used at the elementary and advanced level.

Literature

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