

EFL Learners' Attitudes towards the Use of the Cooperative Learning Method in Learning Speaking

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to probe the EFL learners' perceptions of learning the speaking skill within the scope of the Cooperative Learning (CL) method. Moreover, the study pursues to illuminate the classroom practices embraced by the teachers and learners of English as a foreign language to develop speaking and considers the compatibility of these practices with the Cooperative Learning basic tenets. To attain the set goals, a questionnaire has been designed and administered to 69 first year (licence) English Language university learners at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University-Jijel. The findings revealed the learners' inclination to espouse CL while learning the speaking skill albeit they did not sufficiently apply all its five elements. In addition, teachers' practices were not fittingly aligned with the CL method principles.

Keywords Cooperative learning - Speaking - Perceptions – Practices-speaking skill.

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Résumé

Le but de cet article est d'examiner les avis des apprenants de la langue anglaise comme langue étrangère sur l'apprentissage de la compétence orale dans le cadre de la méthode d'apprentissage coopératif. En outre, l'étude cherche à éclairer les pratiques en classe adoptées par les enseignants et les apprenants pour développer la compétence orale et considère la compatibilité de ces pratiques avec les principes de la méthode d'apprentissage coopératif. Pour atteindre les objectifs de l'étude, un questionnaire a été formulé et administré à 69 étudiants de première année de licence, département d'anglais à l'Université Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia -Jijel. Les résultats ont révélé la propension des apprenants à adopter la méthode d'apprentissage coopératif tout en apprenant la compétence orale, bien qu'ils ne soient pas suffisamment informés sur ses cinq éléments sur lesquels se base la méthode. Par ailleurs, les pratiques des enseignants n'étaient pas parfaitement compatibles avec les principes de la méthode d'apprentissage coopératif.

Mots clés: Méthode Coopératif d'apprentissage – pratiques – avis- compétence orale.

ملخص

يهدف هذا المقال إلى معرفة آراء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تعلم المهارة الشفهية وفق منهجية التعلم التعاوني. كما يسعى لتسليط الضوء على الممارسات التي يتبناها الأساتذة والمتعلمون على حد سواء لتطوير المهارة الشفهية والنظر في ارتباط هذه الممارسات مع المبادئ الأساسية لمنهجية التعلم التعاوني. لتحقيق الأهداف المرجوة، تم صياغة استبيان وتسليمه إلى 69 طالباً سنة أولى جامعي (ليسانس) -لغة إنجليزية-جامعة جيجل. كشفت النتائج عن ميل المتعلمين إلى تبني منهجية التعلم التعاوني أثناء تعلم المهارة الشفهية، بالرغم من أنهم ليسوا على دراية كافية بجميع عناصرها الخمسة. كما عكست الدراسة عدم توافق ممارسات الأساتذة مع المبادئ الأساسية لمنهجية التعلم التعاوني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منهجية التعلم التعاوني؛ المهارة الشفهية؛ الممارسات؛ آراء؛ المهارة الشفهية.

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I- Introduction :

The emergence of communicative competence in the 1980's led to fundamental shifts in the teaching methodology and syllabuses of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Richards, 2008). An ever-growing interest and an ongoing focus on developing communicative competence in the EFL classroom urged researchers, practitioners in the field of education, and teachers alike to think of group activities as one of the best alternatives to foster communication. Nevertheless, to many teachers, setting learners to work in groups was not as convenient as it was expected. Countless problems related to group work such as the withdrawal of some members from participation, and the difficulty to cope with other teammates made group activities troublesome. Therefore, an urgent need to frame group tasks has ultimately led to the appearance of the Cooperative Learning (CL) method (McCarfferty, Jacobs and DaSilva Iddings, 2006).

Learning to speak within the scope of Cooperative Learning emerged as a framework intended to facilitate learners-learners interaction. It was embraced to instruct all subjects among which is English as a Foreign Language. Thus, the development of the speaking skill within the scope of the Cooperative learning entails the full adoption of its basic principles while performing an oral task. Assuring the learners' full engagement in the task, sensitising each member with the held responsibility to make it successful, stimulating them to produce output and ensuring that everyone is listening cautiously, accepting divergence in perspectives and positive criticism and reflecting on the whole group oral performance are all necessary ingredients to make the speaking group work activities truly cooperative.

I.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is the product of an ongoing investigation grounded in theory, research and practice about how to maximize the positive outcomes of learners-learners interaction (McCarfferty et al. 2006). Leaning towards a learner-centred paradigm in teaching and learning, CL has predominantly prevailed as an alternative to the lecture-based paradigm (ibid). Though CL is fully founded on social interactional processes, it has proved efficient in teaching many subjects as it promotes acquiring knowledge through successful interaction between group members (Cohen, 1994). Cooperative Learning is different from competitive and individualistic learning. In contrast to CL, competitive learning sets the learners to compete in order to achieve an academic goal by one or a few learners. Cooperative Learning is similarly divergent from individualistic learning because learners are set to accomplish learning goals unrelated to those of the other learners (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 1993). Thus, CL basic premise is to ensure and promote acquiring knowledge on any given subject through inducing group members' cooperation with the intent of achieving the same pre-set learning goal.

Cooperative Learning is predominantly distinctive from the other alternative learning methods as it gives precedence to the achievement of learning goals by the same group members, whose ultimate leading principle of learning is to 'sink or swim together' (Jacobs, 2004). Hence, to make CL work efficiently, learners are

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appealed to consider their own learning goal achievement along with their peers' one as highlighted by Slavin (1995, p. 2):

Cooperative learning refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content. In cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's understanding.

To cooperate in the classroom context potentially, learners need to be emotionally and socially interconnected to reinforce the sense of belonging to the group. Nevertheless, arranging learners in groups and setting them to work cooperatively is not an easy task. Succeeding at applying CL in classroom denotes the very strict adherence to its five core components.

Elements of Cooperative Learning:

Unless the elements listed subsequently are established fittingly, CL can be unproductive.

- **Positive Interdependence**

As a focal tenet upon which CL is based, positive interdependence is what makes it different from the existing conventional group work. Positive interdependence is fostered when learners are utterly induced by 'swim or sink together' principle (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 2002). Being interdependent denotes that learners perceive themselves linked to their groupmates in such a way that makes it impossible to succeed unless the entire group succeeds and vice versa (Johnson et al, 2002). To be interdependent positively urges learners to pursue the best ways of maximising not only their own learning outcome but their groupmates' as well.

- **Individual Accountability**

Being interdependent positively enhances the feeling of responsibility amongst the learners. Thus, the higher learners are held accountable of a given part of a task, the more responsible they might feel (Johnson and Johnson, 2008). Individual accountability is posited to enhance as long as the teacher assesses the performance of each individual first and then the group's one. Individuals are held accountable when classroom tasks are apportioned into smaller parts and each member is assigned a share to accomplish. Hence, so focal is individual accountability to increase learners' positive interdependence and to establish the group cohesiveness (Johnson& Johnson, 2008).

- **Face to Face Promotive Interaction**

Face to face promotive interaction emerges as learners cooperate to do tasks, exchange positive feedback and encourage one another along the interaction process (Gillies and Ashman, 2003). Experiencing the feeling of commitment and the sense of belonging to the group makes learners fully-fledged to address constructive criticism aiming at polishing the final achievement. Being engaged in interactional process impels learners to discuss how to solve problems, to learn and teach one's knowledge to groupmates, to do their best in order to promote each other's learning, and thereby to develop their cognitive aptitude (Johnson and Johnson, 2004).

- **Interpersonal and Small Group Skills**

The fourth element of CL, namely interpersonal and small group skills, is focal to make group work efficient. Urging learners to cooperate competently denotes the learning of not merely the academic subject matter (task work); learning interpersonal and small group skills are also called for to aptly function as part of a group (teamwork) (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). As cooperation skills are not intuitive, learners need to be well-trained as to the use of those skills and invest them productively while functioning as part of the group. Accordingly, Holliday (2005) stated that: “teachers need to teach the appropriate communication, leadership, trust, decision-making, and conflict management skills to students and provide the motivation to use these skills in order for groups to function effectively” (p.5). Interpersonal and small group skills may be fostered by stimulating learners to listen to one another actively, state ideas freely and exchange constructive criticism (Gillies, 2007). As to small group skills reinforcement, teachers need to teach their learners communicative leadership, trust, decision-making, and conflict management (Holliday, 2005).

- **Group Processing**

Relevant to the efficient implementation of CL is the group processing that entails the ongoing and consistent reflection on teamwork achievements. Learners need to be constantly committed to analyse how well the group functioned while using cooperative skills (Holliday, 2005). Given its significance to render CL thriving, learners need to overtly state the adopted actions and behaviours deemed expedient to the teamwork. Beyond that, they may even take decision to adjust the behaviours regarded unhelpful and keep espousing valuable ones (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Thus, upholding group processing encompasses careful analysis to determine group effectiveness.

Cooperative Learning and Foreign Language Learning Theories

Fostering peer interaction in a foreign language classroom and urging learners to interact verbally to develop their oral communication is one of the basic CL tenets. Albeit it seems to have no interconnection with Krashen's 'Comprehensible Input' theory, CL seemingly overlaps with the aforementioned theory. Compliant with CL is the Comprehensible Input theory as the former underscores input production and acknowledges its significance in the process of foreign language acquisition (FLA). Likewise, CL gives precedence to peers' verbal interaction in the learning process. In an analogy made by McCafferty et al (2006), the scholars highlighted that along the process of their verbal interaction, learners generate input encompassing the 'i+1' notion. The latter stands for the language that is read or heard and which is just beyond what the learner has acquired (McCafferty et al, 2006). Though learners may hear incorrect forms of the second language (L2) while interacting with each other, still language production is a pondered prerequisite in language learning as argued by Krashen & Terrell (1983). Both researchers further asserted:

our experience is that interlanguage [intermediate forms of the L2] does a great deal more good than harm, as long as it is not the only input the students are exposed to. It is comprehensible, it is

communicative, and in many cases, for many students it contains examples of $i+1$ [language slightly above students' current level of competence]

(as cited in Jacobs, 2004)

The Interaction Hypothesis (Hatch, 1978a; Long, 1981) stressed the prominence of social interaction in increasing the amount of comprehensible input learners receive (Jacobs, 2004). Learning a foreign language, as suggested in the Interaction Hypothesis, encompasses the full engagement in negotiation meaning processes that are likely to increase and bring about comprehensible input. Thus, as the aforementioned theory aligns successful FLA with the amount of comprehensible input learners receive in the classroom, CL seems to be efficient enough as a paradigm to promote meaning negotiation as worded by Zhang (2010): "Cooperative language learning creates natural, interactive contexts, where students listen to each other, ask questions, and clarify issues. Group interaction assists learners in negotiating for more comprehensible input and in modifying their output to make it more comprehensible to others" (p.82).

In formulating the Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) put into plain words the magnitude of producing output in the learning of an L2. Swain (1985) postulated that output is as much important as the input to which L2 learners are exposed. The scholar put output production at the heart of FLA and asserted that as long as learners are speaking or writing (producing output), they are on the right path of learning the foreign language. Likewise, CL paves the way for foreign language learners to produce considerable amount of output and intensifies the opportunities of speaking for every individual in the group. Cooperating efficiently with other peers to achieve common pedagogical tasks embraces an ongoing verbal interaction and denotes on each individual to negotiate meaning and ask for clarification, thereby 'maximizes the quality of peer interaction' (Jacobs, 2004).

Impinged on by the socio-cultural theory (1978) pioneered by Vygotsky, CL is relevant to the basic tenets of the Vygotskian doctrine. Based principally on the 'social constructivism' orientation, Vygotsky (1978) associated the learning process with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The latter concept is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more knowledgeable others" (Vygotsky, 1978) (as cited in Doolittle, 1995,p.3). Similar to positive interdependence, as a focal component of CL, Vygotsky (1978) valued and prioritized the presence of other individuals for novice learners in the learning environment to achieve development. Hence, CL considers learners as interdependent and so does Vygotsky's theory that viewed children and adults developmentally dependent and thus interdependent (Doolittle, 1995). As to second /foreign language learning, Vygotsky perspectives and CL principles are, in effect, interwoven as they both consider the significance of peer interaction in which learners have no alternatives than collaborate and assist one another to achieve a common task goal.

1.2. The Speaking Skill

As a crucial language skill, speaking is attributed miscellaneous definitions, among which is the one worded by Bailey (2003): “a productive oral/aural skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning” (p.48). As to its exclusive aspects making it discrete from the other language skills, Thornbury (2005) and Bailey (2003) elucidated that speaking is typically a planned process that is time-limited. Put differently, speaking is a distinctive skill as the speaker is compelled to interact and react to another interlocutor within a very-precise and determined period and has no time to edit and revise what to say.

The complexity of the speaking skill nature lies in the fact that the speaker of a foreign language needs to receive speech, to process information, and then to produce speech in an immediate interactive process attempting to construct meaning altogether (Burns and Joyce, 1997) (as cited in Florez, 1999). Hence, speaking a second/foreign language is significantly intricate as learners are expected not only to know the grammar rules and semantic features of the foreign language, they further need to fittingly make use of these rules in relevant social contexts to perform language functions as well.

Teaching Speaking in the EFL Classroom: an Overview

Though highly solicited, speaking was not granted the worthy position it occupies today in the teaching of EFL. It continued to be conceived secondary compared to the other skills until the end of the nineteenth century. Henceforth, the speaking skill started to gain an important place in ESL/EFL classroom context (Hughes and Reed, 2017). Within the scope of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), speaking, alike to listening, was marginalised and regarded as a medium of providing input to teach grammar structures (Hughes& Reed, 2017). Nevertheless, with the advent of the ‘Reform Movement’ in the 1880’s, the prevailing teaching methods then were revisited. Thereby, new teaching/learning methods appeared on the scenery (Richards and Rodgers, 2001a).

In the late nineteenth century, speaking was deemed of paramount importance as it was no more subordinate in the teaching/learning of ‘ESL/EFL’. Consequently, there was an upsurge need to communicate orally instead of focussing on grammatical accuracy. Nonetheless, the teaching/learning of speaking was confined to the instruction of pronunciation components, as it was the case of the Direct Method, whose ultimate foreign was to teach accurate pronunciation (Richards& Rodgers, 2001a). As to the Audio-lingual Method, speaking was restricted to the teaching of conversations, dialogues and then setting ESL/EFL learners imitate the proposed models (Thornbury, 2005).

Drastic changes and innovations in the teaching methods took place during the late 1970’s and the 1980’s, with the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Within the latter, speaking started to gain a strong position in language teaching more than in any other foregoing era. Hence, there was a growing tendency to focus on fluency rather than accuracy as an attempt to elaborate ESL/EFL learners’ abilities to engage in real-life communicative conversations (Hedge, 2000). Fluency became ultimately a primacy and a fundamental foreign even with the

introduction of the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Within the scope of the latter, speaking is instructed through authentic communicative tasks aiming at enabling ESL/EFL learners to speak fluently and effortlessly when coming across similar real situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001a).

Features of the Speaking Skill

Triadic features characterize second/foreign language learners' speech: *accuracy*, *fluency* and *complexity*. Thus, the three aspects portray the proficiency of foreign language speakers. It is noteworthy to state that the extent to which ESL/EFL learners focus on each relates to the task's objective as elucidated by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). These three aspects are explained subsequently.

- Accuracy is defined as “speech where the message is communicated with correct grammar. The notion of accuracy can also be expanded to include correct pronunciation according to foreign language norms” (Goh and Burns, 2012, p.43). Thus, learner's speech is deemed accurate when grammar structures and pronunciation components conform to the foreign language system.
- Fluency, as highlighted by Goh & Burns (2012), correlates to the learner's ability to communicate messages coherently with few pauses and hesitations and convey them smoothly with few miscomprehension problems.
- Complexity exhibits when foreign language learners demonstrate the ability to compose long utterances comprising subordinations and clausal embeddings to provide additional information (Goh & Burns, 2012).

II– Study:

II.1. Statement of the Problem

Teaching the speaking skill in the Algerian classroom context is by and large challenging, especially at the first year university level. Coming with different language abilities, first year (licence) university learners of English find themselves urged to produce constantly oral output in the Oral Expression (OE) module classes as the latter is principally sketched to enhance the speaking skill.

Given its complex nature, learning speaking is likely to be challenging to some first year learners, as English remains a foreign language in the Algerian context. Thus, in considering its significance and efficacy to promote the EFL learners' speaking skill, CL as a method, seems to be convenient to adopt in the teaching of the skill, an idea revealed in many studies (Altamimi and Attamimi, 2004); (Namaziandost, Neisi, Kheryadi, and Nasri, 2019). This, however, calls for the learners' commitment and full engagement to appropriately espouse the basic principles underpinning the method while interacting verbally with peers. More importantly, it requires good command of the relevant classroom practices on the part of the teachers and learners alike. Above all, the present study comes as an attempt to investigate

first year learners' readiness to study the speaking skill within the framework of the CL method.

In the light of what has been stated, the present study addresses the two focal research questions listed subsequently:

1. What attitudes do First year learners of English hold towards the implementation of the Cooperative Learning method to learn the speaking skill?
2. To what extent are Oral Expression teachers' practices compatible with the principles of the Cooperative Learning method?

II.2. Research Methodology

The procedures adopted to gather the data relevant to the issue under investigation, the sample, the data collection tool and the analysis of the overall findings are elucidated in this section.

II.3. Participants

The sample involved in this study were 69 First year (licence) English language university learners at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University-Jijel, Algeria. They were selected randomly from the overall population (258). The study took place in the first semester of the academic year 2019- 2020 and the participants' age ranged between 18 and 22.

II.4. Instrument

The aim of the study is to illuminate the participants' perceptions of implementing the CL method in developing speaking abilities. Thus, one of the widely used data collection tools to shed light on attitudes and beliefs is the questionnaire (Richards and Richards, 2001b). Therefore and given its descriptive inclination, a questionnaire was formulated and distributed to the participants. It comprised 35 questions arranged in five sections. The first section attempted to elicit background information relevant to the participants, while the second related to the application of the CL method in the classroom. The third section was concerned with the investigation of the speaking practices in the EFL classroom while the fourth one was designed to probe the participants' perceptions and embrace of CL precepts. The fifth section was set to elicit further suggestions and comments pertaining to the issue under investigation.

III- Data Analysis :

The gathered data were calculated using the SPSS; they were reported and analysed, respectively in accordance with the questionnaire sections.

III.1. Background Information

More than half of the participants (52.2%) deemed their speaking skill level as good. The findings denote that a considerable number of them are expected to be apt enough to hold conversations and to communicate with less difficulty with other speakers of the language. As regards the attendance of Oral

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Expression (OE) module classes, 87% of the participants reckoned their interest in attending them. This indicates that they were ready to make efforts to develop their speaking abilities. It is noteworthy to state that OE is instructed exclusively to develop these abilities through granting first year learners of English more opportunities to practise speaking.

III.2. Cooperative Learning Classroom Practices

To apply CL successfully in the classroom, it is necessary to consider the practices that the teachers and learners alike adopt. It is not sufficient to know the principles upon which the method is set to make it efficacious. The know how to put this knowledge into classroom practices is also focal to make it prominent.

With reference to the learners' practices, the findings demonstrated that 44.9% of the respondents expressed their willingness to work with a partner on the oral presentations and only 20.3% voiced their preference to work in a group. Moreover, 92.8% of them deemed CL beneficial in the classroom. They believed so, as it allowed them practise the language and drew their attention to the committed errors, it decreased their anxiety, it developed their cognitive abilities and it promoted their motivation to learn. As to the significance of the method in boosting social interaction and reinforcing relationships, 69.6% of the participants viewed it significantly, if not extremely, important.

With regard to language abilities enhancement, 66.7% of them confirmed that working in pairs/ groups was advantageous. As far as the types of group works the participants were assigned, 43.5% stated that they worked sometimes in pairs and most of these pair/group works- as claimed by 53.6% of them- were conducted in classroom context.

As far as teachers' practices of the CL method principles are concerned, more than half of the participants (53.6%) asserted that their teachers explained how the task ought to be performed to the whole class whenever they arranged group/pair works. Corroborating these findings, 49.3% of the respondents stated that their teachers instructed them how to work cooperatively. With reference to role distribution, 71% of the participants affirmed that their teachers never distributed roles on the team members. In addition, 85.5% reported that their teachers gave them the opportunity to select their peers in the group to perform oral tasks. In considering the role of the teacher, which is supposed to be minor compared to the learners' one in a CL classroom, the greatest majority (72.5%) claimed that their OE teachers did play a minor role.

Table 1 demonstrates the extent to which the population applied fittingly the skills and the principles of the CL method. It highlights also the commonly adopted behaviours by the participants

Table 1

Frequency of Learners' Adherence to the basic CL Behaviours in the Classroom

The most frequently Adopted CL behaviours	Parentage	The least frequently adopted CL behaviours	Percentage
1. Learners constantly encourage their partners (s) by addressing positive feedback.	31.9%	1. Learners do not tolerate the others' opposing perspectives.	0.9%
2. Learners help their partner (s) whenever they find difficulty in understanding the task.	62.3%	2. Learners feel marginalized and isolated due to some peers' manipulation and control of the group discussion.	1.8%
3. Learners challenge their partner (s)'s conclusions and contributions for promoting the whole group performance.	39.1%	3. Learners shift away from the foreign of the task and discuss other irrelevant issues.	0.9%
4. Learners listen to their partner(s) to understand each one's perspectives.	48.7%		
5. Learners communicate with their partner(s) to accept differences in standpoints.	37.2%		
6. Learners reflect on the whole process of the task performance.	92.8%		

Reflecting on the whole process of task performance and helping partners to comprehend the content of the task seems to be the most espoused behaviours by the participants as statistically displayed in the table above (92.8%, 62.3%, respectively). Conversely, shifting away from the central foreign of the task and resorting to discuss irrelevant issues and not tolerating the others' opposing standpoints were the least adopted conducts among the participants.

III.3. Speaking Practices in the EFL Classroom

As far the participants' attitudes towards the process of speaking are concerned, 55.1% of them regarded it as an easy process. Thus, the results of this question positively and reasonably correlates with the ones yielded from the first section as more than half of the respondents (52.2%) pondered their speaking performance as very good. Furthermore, 65.2% of them reported that the factors likely to lead to the development of their speaking skill were, correspondingly, listening to the natives or more competent speakers and practising the language with other speakers of English language as teachers and peers. As for the major foci of the learners while speaking, more than half of the population (56.5%) stated that accuracy was the most important focus. Fluency was conceived to be a foremost concern for 30.4% of the respondents. So, the major practices that OE teachers implemented to teach the speaking skill are demonstrated in table 2.

Table 2

Frequency of the Teachers' Evaluation Practices.

Frequency Aspects	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No answer	Total
Pronunciation	55.1%	20.3%	11.6%	4.3%	2.9%	5.8%	100%
Grammar correctness	46.4%	24.6%	14.5%	7.2%	-	7.2%	100%
Vocabulary	40.6%	34.8%	10.1%	4.3%	-	10.1%	

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Speech flow and spontaneity	20.3%	20.3%	37.7%	10.1%	1.4%	10.1%	100%
Speech content	47.8%	23.2%	18.8%	2.9%	-	7.2%	100%

As displayed in table 2, pronunciation, speech content and grammar correctness (55.1%, 47.8%, 46.4% consecutively) were the most criteria taken into consideration while evaluating the learners' oral presentations evaluated by the teachers as revealed by 55.1% of the respondents and so was grammar correctness (46.4%). Yet, the speech flow and spontaneity were the least considered in the evaluation processes (20.3%). Thus, the findings revealed that teachers leaned towards focussing more on accuracy over fluency in the evaluation practices of their EFL learners' speaking performance.

In line with evaluation of the speaking abilities, 34.8% of the respondents stated that their teachers were the ones who often evaluated their oral presentations. Peers' assessment was less implemented compared to the teachers' one as the highest percentage (36.2%) claimed that peer assessment was sometimes practised. Few participants reckoned that their teachers solicited them to exercise self-assessment after performing orally in the classroom.

In an attempt to scrutinize the correspondence of the teachers' feedback practices on the oral group performances and the participants' preferences of these practices, table 3 is inserted to demonstrate the findings.

Table 3

Correlation between Teachers' Evaluation Practices and Learners' Evaluation Preferences

Teachers' Evaluation Practices	Percentage	Learners' Evaluation Preferences	Percentage
1. Teachers evaluate and give feedback about the presentation of each individual.	26.1%	1. Learners prefer to get a grade (mark) only upon their own part in the oral presentation.	55.1%
2. Teachers evaluate and give feedback about the overall presentation.	43.5%	2. Learners prefer to get a grade upon the overall oral presentation (all the group members should get the same mark)	39.1%
3. Teachers Evaluate and give feedback about each individual's performance and then evaluate the whole presentation.	20.3%		

As shown in the table above, 43.5% of the informants proclaimed that their teachers provided feedback about the overall performance of the group instead of evaluating each individual's one (26.1%). Only 20.3% stated that their teachers provided feedback about each member's oral performance and then gave feedback about the whole group presentation (20.3%). If these findings are correlated with the learners' preferences as to the addressed teachers' feedback, it is quite plain that the participants' answers do not correlate with the actual teachers' practices. Put otherwise, the fact that more than half of the participants (55.1%) demonstrated their inclination to be evaluated upon their own part of the oral presentation over receiving feedback about the whole group performance (chosen by 39.1%) indicates that learners' preferences did not correspond with the way teachers evaluated their speaking skill. More than half of the participants seemed inclined to be evaluated upon their individual contribution rather than the overall group performance.

With reference to the types of tasks assigned in OE classes, 47.8% of the respondents reported that discussion types and debates were the most used while 30% of them opted for role-plays option, the rest i.e. 22.2% revealed that they were exposed to communication gap activities (such as puzzles, describing tasks...etc.).

Regarding the extent to which the participants were experienced and prone to language anxiety, the results showed that more than half of them (53.6%) acknowledged that they considerably felt anxious while speaking in front of their classmates and teacher. Only 14.5% of them demonstrated that speaking was neither challenging nor a source of anxiety to them. Thus, having that high percentage, who admitted their exposure to language anxiety, indicates that the latter might be a serious inhibiting factor that is likely to make them reticent to verbally communicate with the others in the classroom.

The findings also showed that the major adopted strategy those anxious learners implemented to overcome communication breakdown was self-monitoring. Put otherwise, 37.3% reported that they self-monitored their speech through noticing their errors first and then revising their speech.

III.4. Learning the Speaking Skill under the Cooperative Learning Method in the EFL Classroom

The fourth section was formulated to enquire, primarily, about the participants' attitudes towards the adoption of the CL principles while practising the speaking skill. As it also attempted to investigate the degree of their adherence to embracing these precepts in the course of their cooperation to conduct oral tasks. Thus, the findings are exposed in the fourth table.

Table 4

Learners' Attitudes towards the CL Principles Application in Learning the Speaking Skill

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Answer	Total
1. Positive Interdependence	72.5%	5.8%	11.6%	10.1%	100%
a. Learners should think neither competitively nor individually, but cooperatively while performing an oral task in groups.	63.8%	14.5%	10.1%	11.6%	100%
b. Successful oral presentations are reward to every student in the group.					
2. Individual Accountability	79.7%	4.3%	8.7%	7.3%	100%
a. Though learners cooperate to perform oral presentations, each one is held accountable for the task fulfilment.					
3. Face to Face Promotive Interaction	69.7%	1.4%	10.1%	18.8%	100%
a. Cooperation with peers strengthens social relationships and may result in better oral performance.	24.7%	26.1%	36.2%	13%	100%
b. Cooperation decreases learners' language speaking anxiety.					
4. Interpersonal and Small Group Skills	46%	30.5%	15.5%	8%	100%
a. Listening to other peers in the group helps learners to develop their speaking performance.					
5. Group Processing	8.5%	69.5%	10%	12%	100%
a. learners should be allowed and trained to self-assess/evaluate their oral performance.	14.5%	50.7%	20.3%	14.5%	100%
b. learners should be allowed and trained to assess/ evaluate their peers' oral performance.					

To summarize the attitudes of the participants towards the put into practice of the CL method precepts in the process of learning the speaking skill and to demonstrate the extent of the

EFL Learners' Attitudes towards the Use of the Cooperative Learning Method in Learning Speaking participants' adherence to espouse these principles in the speaking classes, the following figure recapitulating the findings displayed in table 4 is inserted.

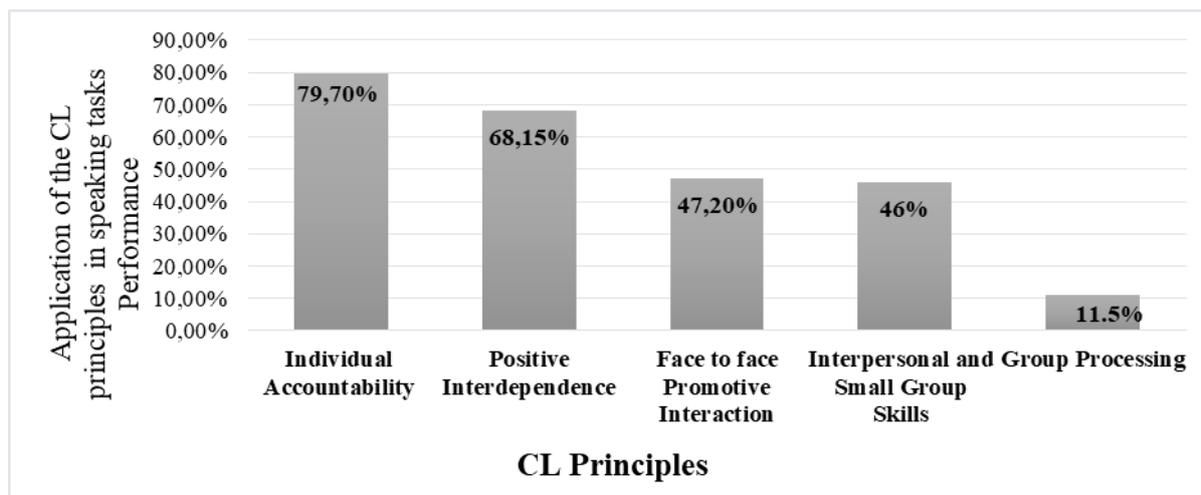


Figure. Learners 'Consideration about the CL Principles' in Learning the Speaking Skill

As demonstrated in figure above, individual accountability seems to be the most adopted and espoused principle of the CL method in the performance of the speaking tasks. The majority of the participants (79.70%) showed positive attitudes towards its application and articulated the necessity of assuming responsibility of one's task share even if it was a group task. Positive interdependence is also significantly perceived focal as 68.15% of the respondents agreed that it was fundamental to think cooperatively rather than individualistically or competitively in performing an oral task. The participants seem to be conscious that the success of the group in performing speaking tasks is a victory granted to all the teammates. Interpersonal and small group skills appears to be partly significant and less applied compared to the aforementioned principles. To elucidate more, less than half of the participants (46%) voiced their agreement with the fact that listening to their teammates could enhance their speaking skill. Moreover, group processing was valued as a pivotal principle to adopt by only 11.5% of the respondents who believed that the learners ought to be trained to exercise self-assessment and peer-assessment in evaluating oral tasks.

As far as the benefits of the CL method in developing the Algerian EFL learners' speaking skill, the findings indicated that 60.8% of the participants considered the method beneficial to adopt as it enhanced their motivation and willingness to speak. Moreover, 66.6% of them reckoned the CL practicality in developing self-esteem.

Pronunciation, accuracy and fluency, as fundamental language aspects, appeared to be affected positively by the application of the CL method. The findings showed that the majority (78.3%) viewed the method feasible to help them in the correction and diminution of pronunciation mistakes. Accuracy, as reported by 68.1% of the sample, could develop in the course of cooperation with the other peers. Furthermore, 63.8% of them admitted that learning cooperatively could lead them to be more fluent language speakers. As for the ability to formulate complex sentences while speaking and making use of different discourse genres, half of the respondents (50.7%) believed that the method was efficient as they

were given more chances to negotiate meaning and learn from other advanced speakers in the group.

Nonetheless, only 13% affirmed that the method was practical in developing their vocabulary background. In addition, 33.3% of them considered noise as major shortcoming resulting from the application of the method in the speaking classes.

In relation to roles that the teachers and learners alike should play in the CL classroom, 36.2% of the participants stated that the teacher should be the only assessor of the oral performance. Similarly, 39.1% of them acknowledged that the speaking module classes should be controlled as much as possible by the learners and the teacher's role should be by and large minimized. In addition, a considerable proportion (59.4%) disagreed that different roles ought to be allocated by the teacher.

IV- Conclusion

The present study demonstrated that the majority of the participants did hold positive attitudes towards the implementation of the CL method to learn the speaking skill in the Algerian EFL classroom. The method was regarded as practical to develop many language aspects such as pronunciation. In addition, CL was perceived as important to generate the input needed for learning to take place. Moreover, cooperating to perform oral tasks energised the Algerian EFL learners' ability to notice the committed mistakes in their own and their peers' speech. In contrast, cooperating with the other peers was not considered advantageous to enrich vocabulary repertoire and to lessen language anxiety. Considerably significant was CL viewed to enhance pronunciation accuracy, fluency and language complexity, but it was not the case for grammar accuracy. Moreover, social relationships reinforcement, self-esteem enhancement, the motivation and the eagerness to speak were all positive outcomes of the application of the CL method in the speaking classes.

As regards the practice of the basic precepts of the CL method, the learners did not fully and efficiently embrace them. Individual accountability appeared to be the prevailing principle adopted while conducting speaking group activities compared it to the rest of the principles. Quite the reverse, group processing was hardly taken into account. Though they seemed to be apt to cooperate in speaking tasks, the participants demonstrated less commitment to be evaluated upon the whole group performance. This contradicts largely with the CL principles and shows their individualistic learning orientation.

Giving learners the freedom to form the groups, not offering feedback on each individual's oral performance and focusing more on the group presentation, as teachers' practices in the OE classes, demonstrated the ill application of the CL method. These practices adopted by the OE teachers can be interpreted as a sign of limited knowledge of what makes a group work cooperative as they are not compatible with the method basic principles. Moreover, the aforementioned practices may not efficiently nurture the learners

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with CL core skills and are likely to restrict the efficient application of some elements such as individual accountability and positive interdependence.

Thus, the appropriate application of the CL method in the teaching of speaking calls for the incorporation of its foremost elements. Strengthening positive interdependence and individual accountability implies the use of some tasks as the jigsaw. In those types of tasks, each individual is supposed to work on a part, collaborate with other peers to have the task fully done, and perform it orally. Such types of task enhance the sense of belonging to the group and increase responsibility feeling among the individuals as well. Furthermore, face to face promotive interaction reinforces social relationships and so it does to provide input and new vocabulary. Interaction in the group paves the way for the learners to notice grammar and pronunciation mistakes and thereby develops fluency. Therefore, EFL teachers need to stimulate their learners to exchange criticism and to challenge their peers for developing their cognitive and language abilities. Conclusively, learners should be encouraged and trained to make use of interpersonal and social skills such as supporting one another, accepting criticism ...etc. In so doing, a better quality of verbal interaction may result. Group processing can be also reinforced by granting the learners more opportunities and time to reflect on their own and their group's performances to elaborate their speech.

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