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USE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS FOR FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate how English language teachers at the researcher's university have implemented cooperative learning (CL) as a learning strategy in their speaking classes and explored whether implementing this strategy is effective to Vietnamese learners of English in the development of their oral proficiency. With descriptive research design, the study was carried out with the first-year English - majored students at the university, with a view to finding out how CL can help them to improve their English in general and their speaking skills in particular. Questionnaires and classroom observation were used as the main data collection instruments in doing the research to get an insight of how CL had been applied in speaking classes and the effectiveness of using it in developing students' speaking skills. Two questionnaires were administered, one for the first-year English - majored students in their first semester of the academic year 2022-2023. The other was for English language teachers at the university. Simultaneously, classroom observation was conducted during six speaking lessons in class to collect information. The findings of the study reveal that CL was implemented in different activities in the speaking lessons and helped to enhance the students' speaking skills effectively, which implies that CL can be considered an effective method of teaching speaking skills for teachers of English and should be applied extensively to promote its benefits.*

Keywords: *cooperative learning, learning strategy, speaking skills, English-majored students*

INTRODUCTION

It is recognized that in recent years, in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), researchers have been more interested in studying the learning process than the learning product and in the development of communicative competence than that of linguistic competence (Chen, 1990). This tendency has resulted in many research studies on learning tasks or classroom interaction through classroom management. Following this tendency, the present study is intended to investigate the application of cooperative learning (CL) to the development of speaking skills based on theoretical, pedagogical and contextual grounds.

Theoretically, the interest in studying classroom interaction and SLA has become the focus of many researchers in recent years. The classroom itself has become the experiment ground where the methodology is tried and the target language is used. This study focuses on applying CL as an experimental study in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to develop speaking skills. Firstly, it is assumed that the concept of CL can provide researchers with sonic elements such as

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its components and techniques that can help in the development of coherent research. Secondly, from the viewpoint of CL, it is easy to see that interaction in the classroom is somehow similar to that in the real world and the society. The classroom is considered as a miniature of the society and the learners are seen as real members of that community. Finally, we know that speaking skill is a productive skill which has been paid much attention in classroom interaction. Second or foreign language learners neglect or have difficulty with oral production (speaking). Some learners have mentioned hundreds of words and many grammatical rules, but they still cannot speak well. That is the interest of the study.

On the basis of careful consideration of the reality of English language teaching and learning at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 (HPU2), the study was done towards this orientation to state more clearly the relationships between EFL teachers and the various communities which they serve them. It aimed to applying CL to develop speaking skills of the first-year English majored students at HPU2. Specifically, it attempted to:

- Investigate classroom tasks in speaking lessons through textbooks and teacher's material being used at HPU2;

- Investigate the use of CL in speaking lessons to develop speaking skills for first-year EFL students at HPU2;

- Explore how CL helps to develop speaking skills for the first-year EFL students at HPU2.

To gain the above objectives, the researcher worked to answer the following research questions:

1. What CL activities have been frequently used in speaking lessons at HPU2?

2. How can CL activities motivate students and help them to improve their speaking skills?

To do the study, the researcher carried out studying and analyzing the references related to the study, designing questionnaires to conduct surveys of English language teachers and students' opinions about the use of CL in their speaking lessons, as well as doing classroom observations to get an overview of how CL is used in speaking classes and to what extent it can help to improve students' speaking skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Cooperative Learning

Various definitions to CL have been formulated.

Without the cooperation of its member's society cannot survive, and the society of man has survived because the cooperativeness of its members made survival possible…It was not an advantageous individual here and there who did so, but the group. In human societies, the individuals who are most likely to survive are those who are the best enabled to do so by their group.

(Montagu, 1965)

Learning can be structured competitively so that students work against each other; individually, so that students work alone; or competitively so that students work together to accomplish shared learning goals. And while all three structures should be used, cooperation should play the dominant role in any classroom.

According to Slavin (1990), Cooperative Learning shares the idea that students working together to learn are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own. This idea emphasizes the use of team goals and team success, which can be achieved only if all members of the team learn the objective being taught.

Qualitatively, CL is different from what is often called "group work." In group work, students sit together and sometimes work together. Students' contributions may be unequal, and one may dominate the others. This kind of group work, which does not create interdependence and accountability, often produces results similar to those in the traditional classroom.

Davidson (1990) states that CL is the task for group completion, discussion, and (if possible) resolution. It is required to create an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual helpfulness within each group so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. The group success is measured by a fixed set of standards. Thus, a student seeks an outcome that is beneficial to himself/herself and beneficial to all other group work members.

Spencer and Kagan and their colleagues have developed the "Structural Approach" (Kagan & Kagan, 1994) to CL. Structures are devices for organizing classroom interaction. They describe four principles which are key to the structural approach.

✓ Simultaneous interaction

✓ Equal participation

✓ Positive interdependence

✓ Individual accountability

Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (1993) recognized that cooperative learning is the structured use of small groups in the classroom to direct teaching and make learners benefit from each other's learning.

Richards (2001, p.192) also states,

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner held accountable for his or her own learning and motivated to increase the learning of others.

Similarly, CL has been defined as a learning approach in which the benefits are contrasted with a competitive approach. Therefore, Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (1994) state,

Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. It may be contrasted with competitive learning in which students work against each other to achieve an academic goal such as grade of "A" that only one or a few students can attain and individualistic learning in which students work by themselves to accomplish learning goals unrelated to those of the other students.

<div align="right">(as cited in Mints center staff, 2001, p.6)</div>

Slavin (1995, p.2, as cited in Fehling) states,

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 the gaps in each other's understanding.

Using CL generates opportunities for students to work together and share knowledge, so the critical element in cooperative work is the negotiation of meaning among and between students to arrive at a general understanding of a given task. In other words, Gillies (2007) indicates, "*Cooperative learning involves students working together in small groups to accomplish shared goals.*" The researchers emphasize the important role of CL in doing the assignment. It is undeniable the fact that this method enables students to work together, support, assist and complete to each member of the group can appreciate knowledge as well as the assignment. CL is beneficial for all members of the group to make the most use of time to practice speaking skills, as Shindler (2010, p.227) states, "*Cooperative learning refers to any form of instruction in which students are working together for a purpose.*" Gokkurt *et al.* (2012, p.3432) also notes, "*Cooperative learning is a learning approach that, they are helping each other learn about academic subjects, creating small mixed groups of students in the classroom in accordance with a common purpose and the groups success is rewarded in different ways.*" Thus, CL creates opportunities for students to work together, help each other, support each other and more interactive in the learning process to achieve success and gain desired results

All the above-mentioned definitions share one thing in common: CL is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Considerable research demonstrates that CL produces higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and healthier psychological adjustment than competitive or individualistic experiences.

Applying Cooperative Learning in practicing speaking skills

Nowadays, CL is implemented widely in the educational system. CL refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work together with others in groups/ pairs to maximize the amount of time practicing speaking skills as well as sharing knowledge, supporting each other in the learning process. Instead of individual work, students discuss or argue with their classmates to update the latest knowledge and achieve better comprehension. Using CL methods in speaking lessons is beneficial to all students or all members in groups by assisting them in completing each other's understanding of the content of their lesson. It may be contrasted with competitive in individual work to achieve higher results. The implementation of CL is regarded as a powerful tool in the classrooms which facilitates teaching and learning and brings positive results. Successful learning depends on successful classroom organization; thus, the application of CL is an effective method for learning a foreign language.

In terms of speaking skills, it is considered one of the most important skills of language acquisition. However, it is also the most difficult skills to master. It is undeniable that speaking means to communicate, convey messages, thoughts, emotions and connect people. However, speaking is regarded as one of the most difficult skills to master and the key to conquering this skills is practice every day. The more we speak, the more our ability improve. Thomson (1993) says: "*The only normal way to begin speaking in a new language is to begin speaking badly.*"

Therefore, with industrious study, speaking language acquisition is not difficult. The only way in helping students improve speaking ability is maximize the time of practice students' learning experience. The more students practice, the more they achieve. However, it is advisable to apply appropriate techniques to achieve the best results in the learning process. The application of CL in practicing speaking skills cannot be neglected by providing positive influences on students' oral skills. CL also brings opportunities for students to practice speaking in an enjoyable environment in which they share, support and assist each other to accomplish a common goal. Undoubtedly, it is essential to apply CL technique in teaching and learning speaking a language.

CL is one of the effective techniques applied in modern language class especially in speaking language class by its various benefits. Firstly, CL creates interesting talking environment which motivates students in participating speaking activities by cooperating, supporting each other to accomplish knowledge as well as a common goal. They cannot reach any academic tasks unless the whole group does (Jolliffe, 2007), each member is an important link, another word, the efforts of individual will contribute to bringing the success of the whole group. Thus, with CL Techniques, it encourages individual accountability and interdependence. Furthermore, CL implementation in speaking class generates funny and enjoyable atmosphere which engage students in oral tasks and encourage them interaction and exchange and positive interdependence and individual accountability. With CL techniques, it is an opportunity for studying in an interactional classroom in which the interaction increases as well as the use of language also increases, which is an effective way in the development of speaking proficiency. Besides, working with other members, learners can practice without fear of making mistakes, without making themselves foolish in front of their classmates. The fear is an obstacle which impedes interaction in improving the spoken language. As Norland and Pruett say (2006, p.23): "*When students are interacting in group, they are required to use authentic and fairly fluent communication skills, which prepare them for the actual communication skills they will need in real life.*" According to Kagan (2009, p.215), students get more motivated in an interesting learning environment when they are studied with CL technique in various activities such as debates, discussions, role plays.

Language researchers explore many advantages of CL implementation in speaking classes such as increasing the use of language in classrooms, more varied talk, more exciting atmosphere, greater motivation, more negotiation of meaning, increasing amount of comprehensible input (Liang *et al.*, 1998; Olsen and Kagan,1992). McGroarty (1989, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.195) identify six benefits:

- Increased frequency and variety of second language practice through different types of interaction.

- Possibility for development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills.

- Opportunities to integrate language with content-based instruction.

- Opportunities to include a greater variety of curricular materials to stimulate language as well as concept learning.

- Freedom for teachers to master new professional skills, particularly those emphasizing communication.

- Opportunities for students to act as resources for each other, thus assuming a more active role in their learning.

CL is considered as a powerful instrument for the development of spoken language proficiency. Students have more opportunities to practice speaking skills with CL activities. Through applying CL in speaking class, students have more opportunities to practice speaking skills, share each other about both knowledge and language skills. Furthermore, learners do not receive rewarding feedback from others and correct them unless they work together, as Lodge (2005) notes, "*You learn more when working with others*."

In conclusion, although speaking skills are one of the most challenges of foreign language learning, new techniques are applied in speaking classes to enhance the students' speaking acquisition. One of the useful techniques is CL which can be administered in speaking activities and brings lots of benefits to students and helps them to develop their speaking skills quickly and effectively. The benefits of CL are undeniable. It has many benefits in different aspects: sociological, psychological and academic achievement. Concerning academic achievement, it is the fact that compared to traditional teaching techniques, CL application brings learners opportunities for communication and interaction in various activities (role-play, discussions, storytelling…) in an enjoyable atmosphere and interactional classroom environment. Interaction and communication are the keys to enhancing students' oral proficiency. Amount of time of practicing speaking skills increases, which enables learners to present fluently and accurately. In addition, in terms of knowledge, it is an effective means to widen perspective and update the latest knowledge by working with other classmates. All members in a team or a group must take responsibility for their own learning as well as others'. Socially, it is a link between students in the classroom when activities are designed that engage students in interactional environment regardless of different gender, performance, race, ethnicity (Good and Brophy, 2008). Psychologically, CL implemented in speaking tasks increase students' motivation and reduction of anxiety thanks to support and interdependence of other members. Thus, they feel more comfortable to propose and exchange information. With CL, negative emotions will be replaced by positive attitudes which are regarded as an important factor in improving learners' oral proficiency. The benefits of CL implementation in speaking classes are undeniable. Thus, the study is conducted to discover the use of CL in foreign language teaching that it helps to improve the first- year major English students' speaking skills and how it can be applied effectively as a good teaching technique in class.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

As CL has in fact been used by teachers of English at the university in speaking classes, the researcher aims to investigate what CL activities were implemented as well as how they were carried out in detail, with a view to examining their benefits and effectiveness in helping the students improve speaking skills. The teachers themselves may not have been aware that they actually used CL in their teaching, though the activities they used in class are truly CL ones. Thus, the study can be said to be a descriptive one which focuses on the current state of the use of CL in teaching and learning speaking skills by English language teachers and students at the university.

Participants

Students

The study was administered to the first-year English major students at HPU2 during the academic year 2022-2023, with seventy eight of them participating in the study.

Teachers

Nine teachers of English at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 participated in the study. The researcher got their opinions by using questionnaires, then these statistics were calculated and analyzed to realize the usefulness of Cooperative Learning in teaching speaking skills.

Data collection instruments

Data for the study were collected with two main instruments: Questionnaires and classroom observations.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are considered an effective instrument for collecting data in the research by a variety of advantages. Kathori (2004) emphasizes that the advantage of using questionnaire is a quantitative form which is "rigorous quantitative analysis." Besides, not only is the questionnaire practical but it is also time- effective. It is effective and convenient to collect a huge amount of information from a large number of people in a short time. Moreover, when questionnaire is administered, the result can be easily quantified and analyzed in comparison with other forms of research (observation, interview, recording, and so on.) scientifically and objectively. Therefore, using questionnaires is regarded as an appropriate tool, which helps the researcher collect information.

The questionnaire for teachers was designed by the researcher with eighteen questions to ask about the teachers' teaching experience, the task-types that they most frequently design for their students and their awareness of CL. His questionnaire for students consists of 18 questions and is divided into two sections. Section 1 has 8 questions (from questions 1 to 8) aiming to investigate the students' perception of speaking skills in learning English. Section 2 includes 10 questions (from questions 9 to 18) that are used to explore students' perception of Cooperative Learning in speaking lessons. Three different kinds of question were designed to seek the opinions from teachers and students about the use of CL in speaking classes for the first-year English major students at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2, including Yes/No, rating scales, multiple choices. With each question in the questionnaire, instructions were given clearly.

Classroom observation

Based on knowledge in literature review, observation sheet was designed with five aspects as follows.

- Number of students in each class observed

- Topic of the lesson

- CL activities used in class

- Form of learning

- Types of interaction

When doing observation, the researchers based on observed aspects to determine what the teacher did or how CL was implemented in speaking activities and took notes of necessary information to collect specific data.

Procedures for data collection

The data was collected for seven weeks with the first-year English major students in the two classes of the 48th course in the faculty of English at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2. Data collection was conducted as follows.

- Design the questionnaires for teachers and students and classroom observation sheet;

- Contact the teachers who are in charge of the speaking classes to ask for their permission to observe the classes for seven weeks and do the survey;

- Contact other teachers in the faculty of English to deliver the questionnaires;

- Collect data from the students' questionnaire in the first week and collect their opinions after each session observed.

- Observe six speaking lessons in which the teachers used CL during six weeks, with information noted down in the observation sheet used for each lesson.

Data analysis

The data collected was then analyzed to get the outcome of the study and then had discussions about it. The information in both the questionnaires for the teachers and those for the students as well as the researcher's observation sheets were statistically analyzed and calculated into numbers and percentages, then presented in charts. These figures showed the participants' opinions about the use of CL activities in speaking classes and how they were implemented in teaching and learning speaking skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' opinions on the use of CL in their speaking classes

Some questions in the questionnaire for teachers were designed to ask for their opinions on the use of CL in speaking classes. Their answers to the questions were recorded and analyzed with the following results.

For the question "Have you ever used CL in your classes?", all the teachers gave the answer 'Yes" which means that they are aware of the positive impacts on students if CL is implemented in teaching. Most of them actually take CL into consideration in teaching although CL application in the class is not obliged. The frequency of their use of CL activities in speaking classes is shown in the chart below.
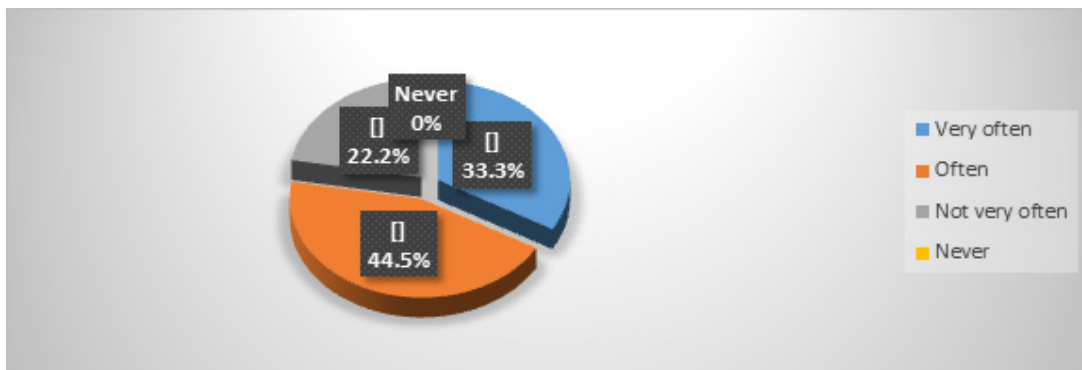
Figure 1. The frequency of teachers' use of CL in speaking classes

As shown in the chart, three teachers (33.3%) said that they always used CL activities in speaking classes. Four of them (44.5%) replied that they often used it. "Not very often" was the choice of the other two teachers. No one stated that they never use CL when teaching. These statistics indicate that CL activities were frequently used by the teachers to teach speaking skills.

On being asked about students' motivation by CL activities, all the teachers stated the implementation of CL helps to motivate learners; it stimulates their participation as well as their contribution to the lessons. Also, it creates a friendly learning environment when learners have opportunities to work together with their friends, which encourages them to talk more in sharing and contributing ideas instead of the feeling of anxiety when facing their teacher or fear of making mistakes in front of the whole class. Specifically, the following CL activities are often designed in the lessons by the teachers to encourage their students to practice speaking skills effectively, as shown in the chart below.
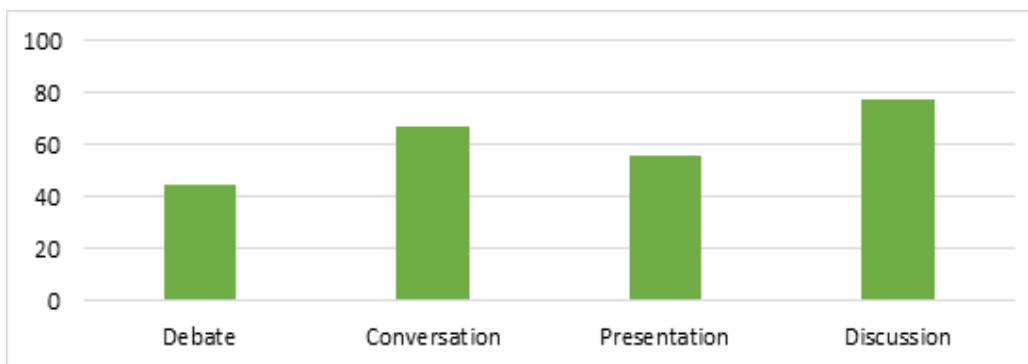
Figure 2. CL activities that teachers often use in speaking classes

Activities often used in speaking lessons are discussions, (77.8%), conversation, (66.7%), presentations, (55.6%) and debate, (44.4%). Discussion is used the most frequently in speaking lessons. Besides, there are a variety of CL activities used such as project, scriptwriting, role-play, interview, storytelling and so on. The use of these activities was also examined and evaluated by the teachers about their effectiveness in helping students improve speaking skills, as can be seen in the chart below.

Figure 3. Teachers' evaluation of using CL activities in developing speaking skills

Agreeing on the effectiveness of using CL activities in speaking lessons, most of the teachers stated that they could highly motivate students to actively take part 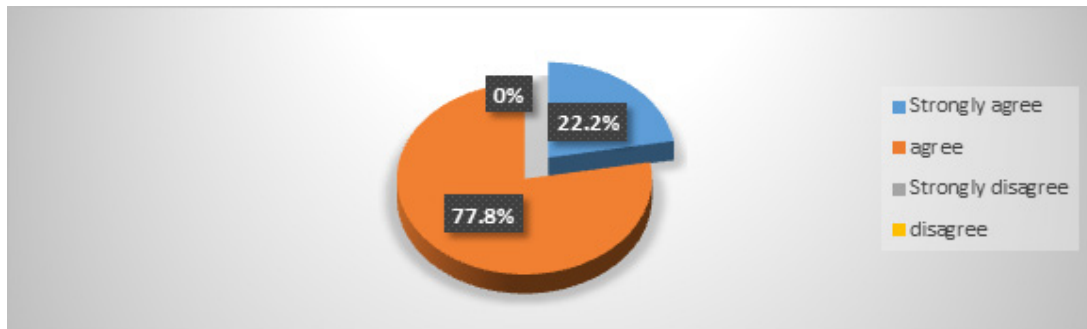in the tasks held in class as well as willingly make their contributions to the lessons. This can be seen in the following chart.
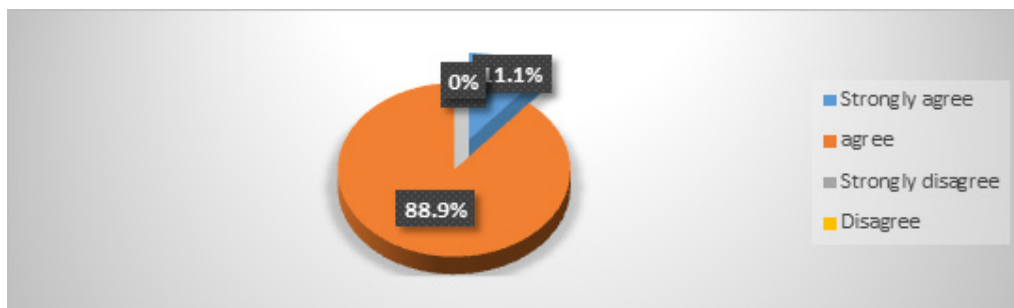
Figure 4. Teachers' opinions about CL activities in motivating students

Students' perception of CL in speaking classes

On being asked about Cooperative Learning, 61 of 78 students (78%) said that they knew it and 17 of them (22%) stated that they had never heard of it, which means that the majority of students were aware of CL, as it had been applied in teaching and learning process in their classes. Most of them (97,4%) also noted that the use of CL activities in class was much more effective than working individually in speaking lessons. The main reason for this was that they were offered chances to work with their classmates, which brought them a lot of benefits, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 5. Students' perception of the effectiveness of working with others

As a result, all of the students said that CL brought about significant positive influences in helping them enhance their speaking skills. Furthermore, it helps to build up students' confidence. Also, when using CL, t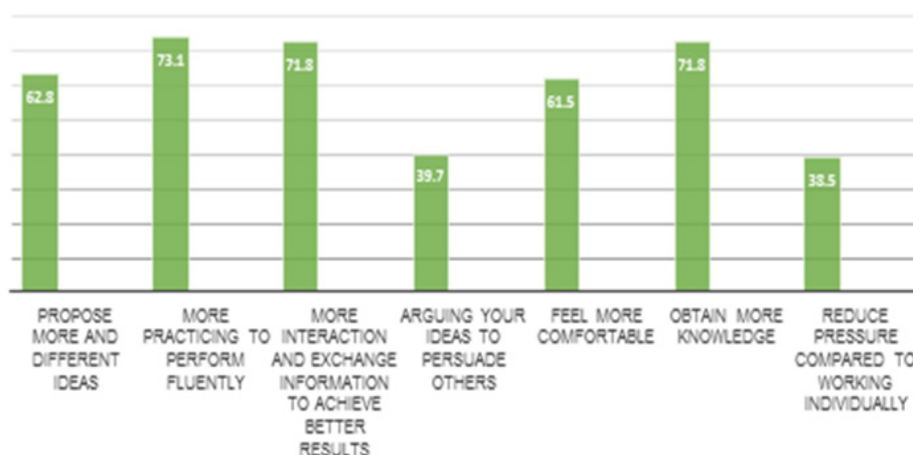hey can correct mistakes for other members in their group as well as receive others' comments on their performance. In this way, they can not only make progress for themselves but also help each other learn better.

Classroom Observation

The data was taken from six observation sheets which were collected through the researcher's observation during 6 speaking lessons in which CL was implemented. There were different CL activities used in each speaking lesson. The results of observing six speaking lessons were the same. The details were presented below.

The first observation aspect was students' contribution in class. In all the six lessons, as can be observed, students took part in speaking tasks; however, there existed differences in their attitudes towards participation in oral tasks in the classroom. For students who can speak English well, learning speaking skills is considered as their passion by its communicative function both in the classroom and real life. Thus, they were eager to participate in the task and express ideas. Their positive attitudes were usually expressed in taking part in speaking assignments. On the other hand, for those who had difficulties in using foreign language, it was an obstacle which impeded their participation in speaking tasks. There existed quiet atmosphere in which lazy or weak students seemed to neglect most activities of the lesson, even a few of them slept in the classroom or talked about something else, or just had small talk.

The next part was about students' attitudes towards CL. During observing the lessons, it was the fact that CL implementation brought an interesting learning environment in which students felt happier and more comfortable when they worked together in teams or groups or pairs through interaction and exchange. According to observation and obtained data after finishing each lesson, most of the students preferred collaborating with their friends to accomplishing the assignments with better outcomes. Group work or pair work was preferable compared to individual work. In the six lessons observed, higher levels students were active and highly enthusiastic in cooperating with others to discuss, share ideas and support each other to complete academic tasks. They tried to speak English as much as they could.

Another important aspect of the study was CL activities applied in speaking lessons and the frequency of using them. After the six lessons had been observed, it was the fact that there were a variety of CL activities administered in each speaking lesson with the aim of getting students' involvement in the task to increase interaction and communication.

After the six lessons had been observed, it can be said that CL activities were widely used in speaking classes, especially in speaking English classes. There were various CL activities that the teachers applied in teaching the first-year major English students. According to what was observed during the lessons, discussion was considered as the main activity used in all the lessons. Interviews were often used in speaking lessons, (with 3 in total of 6 lessons observed). Besides, games and conversations were used in speaking lessons, (with 2 in total 6 observed lessons). Games were used in lesson 3 and 6 while conversations were used in lessons 1 and 4. Also, there

were other CL activities such as picture description, presentation or story completion. Pictures description was held in lesson 2, presentations were applied in lesson 3 while story completion was implemented in one of the 6 lessons observed. Only one lesson used story completion although it was exciting and engaged many students' involvement in the lesson. Most of the students felt that implementing CL activities brought interesting speaking lessons, which highly motivated them to speak English more as well as practice more for the enhancement of their oral skills through interaction and exchange with each other. Discussions and games were liked the most of all the CL activities implemented. It meant that discussions and games motivated students and help to improve their speaking skills the most.

In all the speaking lessons, most of the activities motivated cooperation among students; thus, pair work or group work was preferable instead of individual work.

The next aspect was students' language use. Using CL motivated meaningful interactions and discussions among or between students, which helped their use of language more in these discussions. Students worked together to practice and produce oral language that was correct and fluent. However, it is easy to understand they are freshmen whose knowledge and language proficiency is still limited. Hence, the words are used simply. Sometimes, they still use their mother tongue in their discussions because of its convenience. They said that using mother tongue made them feel easier and more comfortable when they talked about a matter. They sometimes found it hard to use English when working together with their classmates because of limited language proficiency. According to what was observed, there were weak students who wanted to express their ideas in simple English words, but it was a big problem when they did not know how to present them because of their limited vocabulary. Therefore, when working in pairs/ groups, they prefer using their mother tongue. Only when performing in front of the whole class or being asked to answer in English by the teacher, students used the target language. There existed those who overused mother tongue when working in groups/ pairs to exchange and share information because of laziness in using oral foreign language. Those who were good students tried to practice speaking English skills as much as possible.

In terms of students' opinions on their partner, in all the sessions observed, students were asked to work with other classmates in most of the activities. It is easy to realize that working with one who sits near or next to them was preferable because of no change of the position. Some students enjoy cooperating with classmates who have a common interest.

In speaking classes sometimes, the teachers asked students to work in groups of their own choice. Sometimes, groups/ pairs were divided according to one rule or a small game. For instance, the teacher counted the number, and each student had a number, then people who had the same number were in a group. Sometimes, the teacher raised the question like: "What is your favorite job?" then students who had the same answer became a group. These were chances for them to interact with other classmates and develop their speaking skills. Therefore, in the classroom, students' positions can be changed flexibly to help them work in pairs/groups effectively.

Discussion

It can be seen that CL was often implemented in speaking classes for the first-year major English students at HPU2. Most of the activities in each speaking lesson are completed by

cooperation between or among students because of its effectiveness. Teachers often let them work with other classmates to discuss, support each other to complete the tasks quickly and obtain the best academic results. There are a variety of CL activities used in speaking lessons such as discussion, interview, presentation, conversation, story completion and so on. Concerning the types of CL activities, discussion is used in most of the lessons. It shows that the activity frequently used in speaking lessons is discussion because of its effectiveness in motivating and enhancing learners' speaking ability.

Although CL is a learner-centered approach, its success is often is linked to teachers' supervision and direction. Teachers play an important role during the teaching and learning process. The teacher has a variety of roles in CL activities such as introducing tasks and activities, providing guidance in doing activities, motivating the students in oral production, monitoring learners' autonomy, providing assistance when necessary, assessing learners' processing and giving useful comments. According to Harmer (1991), with CL implementation teachers perform six roles: a guide, facilitator, organizer, evaluator, promoter and participant. For the teachers at HPU2, as observed in the lessons, they have performed five main roles: activity designer, instructor, observer, assistant, and evaluator.

As for students' roles, according to Lin (2006), students have different roles in speaking foreign language classes: leader, secretary, presenter and researcher. However, there are differences in students' roles in CL activities. At HPU2, students have played three main roles: participant, secretary, and presenter. By contributing ideas can the students complete the tasks. They discuss, share ideas and support each other to achieve the target language and academic results. It is necessary to write good ideas acquired through interaction between members. After working together, a representative of each pair or group presents their opinions in front of the whole class. As the time of each session is limited, it is impossible for all members to present what they have discussed.

Both teachers and students get the benefits of CL activities in their teaching and learning. CL is a student-centered approach; this is one of the greatest changes in foreign language pedagogy which has been the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Therefore, students have opportunities to practice more as well as express themselves in speaking the language. It is undeniable that the importance of CL activities to students in learning speaking skill is very great indeed. Teachers also obtain some benefits from implementing CL in foreign language teaching. Freeing themselves from being the center of the lesson could be considered the first point. CL helps to make the speaking lessons varied in forms of cooperative work activities. A variety of activities can be designed in speaking lessons, which helps to attract students' attention, participation in the lessons as well as create an exciting learning atmosphere. Furthermore, teachers have more time to work with their students. Hence, it is easier for them to control whether their students work effectively or not. Especially, the teachers can prompt and encourage them to speak English more and provide assistance when necessary. Furthermore, it is easier for teachers to check students' mistakes and limit their weaknesses as well as give assistance if necessary.

In conclusion, CL activities bring many benefits to teachers and students; therefore they have been widely used in speaking classes at HPU2 with a view to raising students' interest, participation as well as developing their oral proficiency.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Combination of CL and speaking skills are the main focus of the study. It aims to investigate whether the use of CL helps to improve the oral performance of the first-year English major students at HPU2 and how it can be applied effectively as good teaching technique in class. The study attempts to discover the effectiveness of implementing CL in improving students' speaking skills.

At the beginning, the study provides a theoretical background of two issues: Cooperative learning and speaking skills. Questionnaire and classroom observations were used as the main data collection instruments in this research. Based on the obtained data, the researcher conducted the analysis of students' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, and classroom observations. The findings show that implementation of CL brought some benefits for the teachers in teaching speaking lessons. This strategy raised students' attention and students' involvement in the task thanks to a variety of CL activities, which helped the lecture more successful. The teacher' speaking time decreased at that time they played the role as activity designer, instructor, observer, assistant, and evaluator. Besides, when students were working together, they had more time to go to each group to listen and check their students' mistakes, prompt them to speak English more and provide assistance if necessary. Also, the implementation of CL in speaking classes would contribute to the development of students' speaking skills. It creates an interactional classroom environment in which learners have chance to practice, interact and support each other as well as correct each other's mistakes to better their oral performance. Consequently, as CL is used widely in speaking classes, it is greatly beneficial to learners in improving their oral proficiency.

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