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El aprendizaje cooperativo como estrategia para enseñar inglés en las escuelas públicas de Ecuador

Cooperative learning as a strategy to teach English Language in the Public Schools of Ecuador

A aprendizagem cooperativa como estratégia para ensinar o idioma inglês nas escolas públicas do Equador

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Abstract

Cooperative learning is a highly motivating strategy to achieve the learning of another language. Under this notion, this article is presented whose objective is to propose cooperative learning activities for teachers working in the Ecuadorian Public Schools in order to motivate students to learn English. For this, a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach was used. The population was constituted by the students of the eighth year of basic education of the Ecuadorian public schools of the province of Tungurahua and whose sample was of 32 students and 3 English teachers. The applied instrument was a survey of 10 questions, whose alternatives of answers were Yes / No and multiple choice, the analysis of the obtained information allowed to conclude that the English teachers of the Ecuadorian Public Schools investigated did not apply cooperative learning activities in their classes They preferred individual work to facilitate evaluation and make individual comments on the structure of grammar and the use of vocabulary.

Keywords: Cooperative learning; English language; public education; students.

Resumo

A aprendizagem cooperativa é uma estratégia altamente motivadora para alcançar o aprendizado de outra língua. Sob essa noção, este artigo é apresentado com o objetivo de propor atividades de aprendizagem cooperativa para professores que trabalham nas escolas públicas equatorianas, a fim de motivar os alunos a aprender inglês. Para isso, foi utilizada uma abordagem mista qualitativa-quantitativa. A população foi constituída pelos alunos do oitavo ano de ensino básico das escolas públicas equatorianas da província de Tungurahua e cuja amostra foi de 32 alunos e 3 professores de inglês. O instrumento aplicado foi um levantamento de 10 questões, cujas alternativas de respostas foram Sim / Não e múltipla escolha, a análise das informações obtidas permitiu concluir que os professores de inglês das escolas públicas equatorianas investigadas não aplicaram atividades de aprendizagem cooperativa em suas aulas Eles preferiram o trabalho individual para facilitar a avaliação e fazer comentários individuais sobre a estrutura da gramática e o uso do vocabulário.

Palavras chave: Aprendizagem cooperativa; língua inglesa; educação pública; estudantes.

Introduction

Cooperative Language Learning could minimize part of the qualification work, since oral group lessons are not usually formally qualified. Although there are many examples of cooperative learning techniques, English teachers are not familiar with them or discover that group activities are difficult to control. In general, these English teachers apply traditional teaching methods such as grammar translation, simulations and repetitions, repetitions of vocabulary, individual activities in class, assignments, standardized tests, etc. I believe that these activities do not motivate students, therefore, neither teachers nor students achieve their learning objectives. English.

However, it should be noted that during the teaching practices in the Ecuadorian public school in the province of Tungurahua, cooperative learning activities are often included. For example, dialogues and group presentations of projects, being beneficial and motivating for students. On the other hand, it can be seen that the majority of students are not interested in the Cooperative Language Learning approach, while most students do not like to work and perform class activities in pairs or groups; Although they are interested in learning English, as can be seen in the 40 students subject of this research, in which most of them prefer to learn individually. This may be happening because generally during group work only the most motivated or advanced students work while others waste time and do not do their work together. In addition, in the Ecuadorian public schools of the city of Tungurahua, there are three teachers who always complain about the motivation of the students and the lack of interest in learning English. They also complain about the excessive amount of time it takes to record the work of the students, such as homework, grammar exercises, workbook activities and vocabulary translation, among others. Given this approach, this article aims to propose cooperative learning activities for teachers working in the Ecuadorian Public Schools for students in the eighth year of Basic Education "B" during the 2016-2017 school year in order to motivate students to English learning.

Developing

Cooperative language learning (CLL)

According to Halili (2013), CLL is part of a more general instructional approach also known as collaborative learning (CL). It is an approach that takes full advantage of cooperative activities involving couples and small groups of students in the classroom. For Aroca, Guevara Salazar, Hermosa Tovar and Moreno Solano (2009), cooperative learning is a group learning activity organized so that learning depends on the exchange of socially structured information among students in groups and in which each student is responsible for his own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Likewise, Johnson, Johnson and Smith, (2013), indicate how "students' learning objectives can be structured to promote cooperative, competitive or individualistic efforts" (page 33). In each classroom, the objective of the activities is to achieve the objectives and they are carried out above a goal in education. For example, a learning goal is an anticipated future state of demonstrating competence or mastery in the subject area being studied (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 2013).

Understanding that, the goal structure defines the ways in which students will interact with each other and with the instructor during the instructional period. Each goal structure has its place (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 2013). The most important goal structure, and the one that should be used most of the time in learning situations, is cooperation.

According to (Johnson and Johnson, 1989, 1999, Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 2006) cited by (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 2013) Cooperation is working together to achieve shared goals. Within situations of cooperation, individuals seek results that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other members of the group. Therefore, cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own learning and that of others. In this sense, it can be distinguished with competitive learning in which students work against each other to reach a higher academic goal and individual students work alone to achieve learning goals isolated from those of the rest of the students they learn. Therefore, in cooperative learning, teachers evaluate student efforts on a referenced criteria basis, while, in competitive

individualistic learning, teachers grade students in a normative reference (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 2013).

Cooperative Learning and Communication Language Teaching

Although different researchers define cooperative learning in different ways, the operative definition of cooperative learning implies the following characteristics: cooperative learning is a teaching and learning system in which students are active agents in the learning process instead of passive recipients of the product of any true knowledge. This system increases students' academic learning, as well as personal growth, as it decreases learning anxiety, increases the amount of student contribution and the student's speech in the target language, also builds supportive learning environment and less threatening, and helps the retention learning rate. (Masoud Azizinezhad, Hashemi, and Darvishi, 2013). Richards and Platt (1992) cited by Masoud Azizinezhad, Hashemi and Darvishi (2013) noted that "cooperative learning activities are often used in the teaching of communicative language" (page 65).

General characteristics of cooperative language learning

There are some special characteristics in cooperative language learning, such as raising the achievement of all students, cooperative learning promotes positive relationships among students while providing a healthy social, psychological and cognitive development experience and replaces the competition with cooperation. It replaces the lessons directed by the teacher with group and interactive activities centered on the student, develops learning and communication strategies, reduces the student's stress and creates a positive climate in the classroom (Aroca, Guevara Salazar, Hermosa Tovar and Moreno Solano (2009).

Cooperative learning related to the Theory of learning approach

As cited by Aroca, Guevara Salazar, Hermosa Tovar and Moreno Solano (2009), Piaget and Vygotsky affirm that the theory of the learning approach is the "Role of social interaction in learning". This theory of approach includes the following: development of critical thinking skills emphasizing cooperation, not competition, increase and variation of second language training, cognitive development and increase of language skills, language integration with areas based in

content, more variety of materials to stimulate language learning and concepts, mastery of professional skills that highlight communication and students act as resources for the other in a more active role Aroca, Guevara Salazar, Hermosa Tovar and Moreno Solano (2009).

Theory of language

According to some research, the ability to learn a natural language distinguishes humans from other animals, and usually participates during the first decade of life during the critical period for language acquisition. The linguistic system that develops infiltrates everyday life, providing an infinite linguistic capacity and the vital creativity of language. The use of language is sensitive to a variety of social and contextual variables and can be analyzed in several levels of description. Linguists and other cognitive scientists have a central interest in understanding the relationship between languages (Halili (2013) and Weeks (1979: 1) cited by Halili (2013), states that Cooperative Language Learning is based on some basic assumptions about the interactive and cooperative nature of language and language learning "all normal children who grow up in a normal environment learn to talk, we are born to talk ... We may think we have been programmed to talk ... In general, it is considered that Communication is the main purpose of language. "As Halili (2013) and according to Richards and Schmidt (1983, page 117) cite." Human beings spend much of their lives talking and for most of them, conversation it is one of his most significant and exciting activities. "

Theory of learning

As mentioned by Halili (2013), stated by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, "cooperative learning advocates the theoretical work of development psychologists". A central principle of CLL is that students develop communicative competence in a language by conversing in socially or educationally structured situations. CLL also pursues the critical thinking skills of the development students.

Cooperative learning strategies for ELL

Educators have always been concerned that traditional models of classroom learning are led by teachers, encourage competition rather than cooperation, and that majority students are preferred.

They believed that minority students could be behind the highest performing students. Therefore, there are many learning strategies to apply in the teaching process to involve students and motivate them to learn English. Cooperative learning has proven to be effective for all types of students, as it promotes learning and promotes respect and friendships among diverse groups of students. In fact, the greater the diversity in a group, the greater the benefits for each student (Halili 2013).

By applying cooperative learning, peers learn to depend on one another positively for a variety of learning tasks. However, it is necessary for teachers to establish norms and procedures for the classroom that guide students to contribute, stay focused on the task, help each other, encourage, share, solve problems, offer and accept comments from their peers, etc. (Halili 2013). In addition, cooperative learning is beneficial for any student who is learning a second language. When applying cooperative activities in the language learning classroom, it is important to consider some guidelines such as: promoting language acquisition because it encourages peer interaction, which helps to improve language and learning of concepts and content and equal groups because it is important to assign ELL students to mixed-skill groups and socioeconomic backgrounds because they benefit from the various role models in English that make up the group (Norman 2013).

ELLs learn to express themselves with greater self-confidence when working in small teams. ELLs benefit by perceiving how their peers learn and solve problems and "pick up" vocabulary from others in the group. For example, if teachers assign each student on a team a role as a reporter, recorder, timekeeper and material manager, they will want to rotate the roles as the activity changes. By doing this, teachers can avoid the problem of students selecting the same roles. In other words, the same students end up doing the same tasks, but if the teacher handles the role play assigning different roles to the students, the students have the opportunity to develop the skills they need most to practice (Norman 2013).

According to Norman (2013), many cooperative learning strategies work successfully in groups of four. This may vary according to the size and structure of the class. It may also be useful to use cooperative strategies in pairs instead of groups to benefit both the teacher and the students.

Some examples of cooperative learning activities

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that divides ELL students into groups, with each group containing members of various levels and abilities. The members of each group that are on the same level; work together independently to complete part of the group's task. When they finish working separately, the team members return to their groups and work together to join all their pieces into a single organized group project. In another activity, the teacher will assign each student a number. The teacher asks a question about a lesson that has been taught. All group members should make sure that each person in the group knows how to answer the question. Then the teachers call a random number, and the person in a group called with that number must answer the question for the whole group. Therefore, this activity helps students learn from each other and promotes peer interaction. (<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/cooperative-learning-strategies>)

Writing around is another example of a cooperative learning activity. In Write Around, the teacher starts by dividing the class into groups of four or more according to the size of the class. Then he / she gives them a story or initial summary a long sentence that each person in each group can add a sentence. Then, each group can present their stories or summaries of a class to the class. (<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/cooperative-learning-strategies>)

Tea Party is an activity in which students line up in two lines facing each other. The teacher poses a question to the class and asks the students to confront each other in the lines that discuss the question for a minute or two depending on the size of the group. Then, the teacher asks a new question and asks that a line be moved to the right so that each student is facing a new partner. These new partners discuss the question and so on. This activity can also be done in circles, where a circle moves to the right when it is time to get new partners (<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/cooperative-learning-strategies>).

Role of the teacher in cooperative learning

According to Johnson et al. (1998 a, b, 2002) cited by Gillies, Ashman and Terwel (2008), cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to

maximize their own learning and that of others. There are three types of cooperative learning, such as formal, informal and cooperative grassroots groups.

Formal cooperative learning

Formal Cooperative Learning, is that students work together during a class period to several weeks to achieve shared learning objectives and complete joint assignments and assignments in accordance with (Johnson et al., 1998a, b, 2002). As cited by Gillies, Ashman and Terwel (2008) in the book "The role of the teacher in the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom" in formal cooperative learning groups, the role of teachers is as follows: formulate objectives of academic skills and social, decide on the size of the groups, choose a method to assign students to the groups, decide which roles to assign to the members of the group, organize the room and place the materials that the students need to complete the task. By assigning roles to students, the interdependence of roles is established. (Gillies, Ashman, and Terwel, 2008).

The way in which materials are distributed creates interdependence of resources. The arrangement of the room creates environmental interdependence and provides the teacher with easy access to observe each group, which increases individual responsibility and provides data for group processing. In explaining the instructional task and the cooperative structure, teachers clarify the academic task to the students, explain the performance criteria, provide a structure that fosters interdependence and discrete responsibility, explain the behaviors students are expected to use, and they emphasize intergroup cooperation. In this way, teachers eliminate the possibility of competition among students and extend the interdependence of positive objectives to the class (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008).

In addition, by explaining the social skills highlighted in the lesson, teachers control the following: the social skills objectives of the lesson and the patterns of interaction, monitoring student learning and intervening to provide assistance in completing the task effectively. using interpersonal and group skills effectively. While directing the lesson, teachers monitor each learning group and assist them when necessary to improve homework and teamwork.

The monitoring of learning groups creates individual responsibility. Each time teachers observe a group, members tend to feel responsible for being constructive members. In addition, teachers

collect specific data to promote interaction, the use of specific social skills, and commitment to the desired interaction patterns (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008).

While assessing student learning and helping students define how well their groups work, close the lesson, evaluate and evaluate the quality and quantity of student achievement, ensure that students carefully analyze the effectiveness with which they worked together, help students to draw up an improvement plan; and encourage students to celebrate the hard work of group members. The evaluation of student performance highlights individual and group responsibility and indicates whether the group achieved its objectives.

The celebration of the group is a way of rewarding interdependence. The feedback received during group processing is aimed at improving the use of social skills and is a form of individual responsibility. When discussing processes, the group used to function, emphasizes continuous improvement and promotes the interaction and interaction patterns needed to maximize student learning and retention (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008). According to Johnson et al. (1998b, 2002) cited by Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, (2008).

Informal Cooperative Learning

It consists of having students work together to achieve mutual learning objectives in temporary groups that last a few minutes to a class period during a conference or demonstration. Informal cooperative learning can be used to focus the student's attention on the material to be learned, help students establish expectations, ensure that students process and cognitively test the material being taught. Informal cooperative learning allows teachers to summarize what was learned and close the instructional session. The roles of the teacher in the use of informal cooperative learning are the following: making the task and the instructions clear and precise, and demanding that the groups produce a specific product, such as a written response (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008). The procedure of teacher roles is presented as follows:

Introductory discussion focused on which teachers assign students to explain the task of answering questions in a 4 or 5 minute time period and the positive interdependence of reaching consensus. The purpose of the discussion is to promote the anticipated organization of what the students know about the topic to be presented and to establish expectations about what the

conference will cover. Individual responsibility is guaranteed by the small size of the group. A basic pattern of interaction is required to stimulate oral practice, high level thinking and the construction of agreements (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008). Intermittent focused discussions in which teachers divide the conference in 10 or 15 minute parts. After each section, students are asked to address the person next to them and work cooperatively answering questions that require students to cognitively process the material presented.

The technique proceeds as follows: each student formulates their response, the students share their response with their partner, the students listen attentively to the response of their partner and the peers construct a new answer that is higher for the initial question of each member. The question may require that the students summarize with the presented material, react to the concepts and forecast what will be presented next, solve a problem, share material with the previous and integral learning in a conceptual framework. Teachers must ensure that students pursue consensus to agree on the answers to the questions (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008). Teachers randomly choose two or three students to present a 30-second summary of their discussions.

Cooperative learning

The last type of cooperative learning is that of cooperative grassroots groups. According to Johnson et al. 1998b, (2002) cited by Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, (2008), "Cooperative grassroots groups are heterogeneous long-term cooperative learning groups with stable membership". The main responsibilities of the members are as follows: To certify that all members are achieving good educational progress, they are responsible for each other and are motivated to learn and provide support, encouragement and mutual assistance to complete the tasks. Periodically, teachers must teach the required social skills and make the group process work effectively to ensure that the base groups function effectively. Cooperative grassroots groups are generally heterogeneous in terms of membership in terms of achievement, motivation and task orientation. The base group's agenda can include academic support tasks, for example, getting to know each other and helping each other solve non-academic problems, routine tasks and assessment tasks and verify mutual understanding. Therefore, the role of the teacher in the use of cooperative grassroots groups is to form heterogeneous groups and schedule a schedule in

which they meet regularly at the beginning and end of each class (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008).

The longer a cooperative group exists, the more affectionate their relationships, the greater the social support they will provide each other, the more committed they will be to the success of the other and the more influence members will have over others. (Gillies, Ashman, and Terwel, 2008). Advantages and disadvantages of cooperative learning, Although the most basic sense of cooperative learning is group work in which two or more students work together to complete a class task, cooperative learning has some disadvantages. The following are considered disadvantages: The same grades; Unequal Effort When qualifying a group, all members of a group receive the same grade no matter how much work each member does. This is a disadvantage for group members who do most of the work. In addition, when projects such as written reports are classified, it can be difficult for the teacher to conclude which parts of the project each group member completed. To combat possible inequality, the teacher can carefully monitor the groups as they work to define the contributions of each member (Sosnowski, 2001). Groups can be too social Cooperative groups can be created by selecting students or teachers, and each has some disadvantages. When students can select their own groups, they can choose based solely on social preferences, which can encourage students to lose sight of the assigned task. On the other hand, if the teacher selects groups, there is a danger of grouping students with similar skills, which can create groups of very weak students. There is also the possibility of grouping students who may not work well together (Sosnowski, 2001).

Lesson planning can take more time When students work in groups, the teacher's task is to manage the entire classroom, in this sense it is a bit more difficult since students are required to interact. The teacher may have to design a lesson and an assessment in advance that is appropriate for group work and that allows for the impartial evaluation of all students. The teacher may also need to develop a task that involves all group members during the allotted time. In addition, teachers should be careful about plagiarism in group work, particularly if each member is required to present their own final project. (Sosnowski, 2001). Making it a good learning experience for all. Successful cooperative learning offers a positive communication and teamwork experience. To build these opportunities, careful planning can improve some of the

disadvantages found in group work. In describing injustice, it can be avoided by generating clear expectations for each member of the group. Informal grouping, such as counting group numbers, can decrease the amount of unnecessary conversations and keep students focused on their tasks. Finally, teachers can plan cooperative learning activities to review lessons and skills already learned, therefore, group work will not be the only way for students to learn about a topic. (Sosnowski, 2001).

Class activities for cooperative learning

According to Devlin (2001), "cooperative learning is a style of education that makes students actively participate in the classroom." Cooperative learning is much more than group work, although that is part of it. The Kennesaw State University defines cooperative learning as when "small teams... use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject." This method of education is appropriate for all age levels and for all subjects, some classroom activities include the following:

- **Puzzle**

The Jigsaw method groups the students, usually in groups of five. Each student learns a different topic and then teaches it to the other members of the group. The teacher then asks questions and probably takes an exam. For example, a student may be asked to study and explain about Hitler's rise to power, while the other may focus on the entry and role of Japan in the war (Devlin 2001).

Activities to get to know it Questions and activities to break the ice are important to encourage teamwork and cooperation. One way to do that is to find a large beach ball and write questions everywhere, then the teachers have the students stand in a large circle, either in the classroom or outside, so they can throw the ball between them. Who catches the ball has to answer the question that the student's right thumb is or is closer. For example, sample questions include "What is your favorite movie?", "What is your favorite subject at school?" and "Why did you choose the outfit you are wearing today?", etc. (Devlin 2001). Double entry journal The double entry journal is the best activity that is done with students in pairs when working together on a single project. Each student reviews the development and contributions of the other on the left side of a piece of paper. Once the project is completed, the students exchange papers so that they have the

observations of the other. After a day of considering the comments, students can write their answers on the right side of the document. To further encourage cooperation, couples must meet for the last time to discuss any concerns and suggestions, as well as to seek the clarifications they need (Devlin 2001).

- **Round table**

In a round table exercise, students can sit in a circle. Then, the teacher gives a topic and each student, circling in the circle, has to offer a word or idea in a certain time limit. For beginning students, the subject can be as simple as asking them to propose words that begin with a certain letter. For example, competent students can be asked to contribute ideas on how to evaluate the topic or give suggestions on the presented topic (Devlin 2001).

- **Write around**

This activity is similar to the round table method. The teacher can put a story beginning on the top of a piece of paper, and then begin to flip the page around the classroom. Each student enlarges a sentence of their own. Once the sheet has been passed at least once, the teacher can read his story aloud. This can also work for older students and subjects outside of English. For example, a history or science teacher can ask students about each fact present on a specific topic. (Devlin 2001).

Concluding, on the basis of research, this document proposes cooperative parenting activities as interactive activities for students who are learning a second language, as it gives students the opportunity to share their knowledge according to their background. By applying cooperative learning, teachers can manage large classrooms and at the same time teachers can easily monitor the collaboration of students in the group. While students work in groups, teachers can observe student learning and motivate them to learn. Therefore, teachers have time to teach innovative content instead of wasting time in rating the individual work of students. Based on the analysis, I recommend three cooperative learning activities. I believe that these activities are beneficial for the eighth grade students of Basic Education at Mariano Benítez School. For example, Puzzle, Activities to get to know and round table. This type of activities motivates and involves students to learn. When teachers apply Jigsaw, Activities to Know and Round Table, they allow students

not only to learn, but also to teach among them according to their sociocultural background and the level of knowledge of the students depending on the subject.

Methodology

The research followed a mixed quali-quantitative approach. Regarding the qualitative, from the proposal of materials and activities to teach a second language, according to Hidalgo (2017) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001). Regarding the quantitative methodology, it was possible to provide a descriptive and frequency analysis of the data provided by the researchers, as they were presented in their specific context or state, in which the characteristics of the phenomenon Creswell (2003) cited by (Hidalgo (2017) Regarding the study method, he referred to a case study that allowed identifying a specific case or situation and looking for possible solutions to a specific problem, allowing to provide a method to analyze the teaching and learning process, the problem of research and propose some possible solutions based on the collection of data from surveys and interviews, for this purpose Yin (1984: 23) cited by Zainal (2007), defines the research method of the case study "as an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its context of real life, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the conte xto are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used "(page 77) The population was constituted by the students of the eighth grade of basic education of the Ecuadorian public schools of the province of Tungurahua and whose sample was of 32 students and 3 teachers of The applied instrument was a survey of 10 questions, whose answer alternatives were Yes / No and multiple choice.

Results

The categorization was used to analyze the surveys. Based on the analysis of the surveys, it became clear that the English teachers of the Ecuadorian Public School did not apply cooperative learning activities in their classes. They prefer that students work individually because in this way teachers can evaluate and make individual comments about the structure of grammar and the use of vocabulary. According to the survey, it is also clear that some of the students do not like to work in groups because not all group members share their ideas correctly or participate with the

same effort. However, a moderate number of students prefer to practice cooperative learning because they feel freer to contribute their own knowledge on a given topic.

Conclusions

It was found that there is a lack of knowledge among the researched students about the benefit of cooperative learning during the learning of the English language.

It is necessary that the students and teachers investigated understand the advantages of cooperation, in the understanding that with cooperative learning you have the opportunity not only to learn but also to teach each other.

A high percentage of students investigated, reject work in groups which was evidenced by answering those questions that required the cooperation strategy of their peers.

It was found that the participating teachers were motivated to apply cooperative learning activities in the classroom during their teaching process, specifically due to the number of students in each classroom, it would be better and more beneficial to ask participants to work cooperatively, allowing to reduce the loss of time of teachers by having to score so many individual activities.

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