
Revista de Estudios y Experiencias en Educación

REXE

journal homepage: <http://revistas.ucsc.cl/index.php/rexe>

Introducing Cooperative Learning for ELT in Chile: Two Teachers' Perceptions and Use

Soffía Carbone-Bruna^a y Erika de la Barra-Van Treek^b
Universidad Mayor^a. Universidad de Santiago^b, Santiago, Chile.


Recibido: 02 de diciembre 2022 - Revisado: 30 de mayo 2023 - Aceptado: 21 de agosto 2023


ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a qualitative study of the perceptions of two English teachers about their adoption of cooperative learning in two vulnerable schools in Santiago. The study aimed to examine the preconceptions, expectations, and apprehensions that prevent teachers from incorporating more interactive methodologies, such as cooperative learning and content-based approaches, when teaching English as a foreign language, thus perpetuating the use of more traditional approaches like the grammar translation method. Data were collected through rubrics from classroom observations, teachers' reflective journals, and teachers' semi-structured interviews. The data were coded according to the model provided by Creswell (2013), which allowed us to categorize themes that were later interpreted in the context of the study. The results showed that both teachers found the experience useful and helped them realize how important their role as agents of change is. Nonetheless, the results also suggest that teachers face important challenges when introducing cooperative learning at schools, which are related to the school community's culture and what is expected from teachers. An implication of the findings was that when teachers introduce cooperative learning, they should incorporate a formative phase to help students understand the dynamics of this approach.

Keywords: Cooperative learning; EFL; pedagogical reflection; literature.

^{*}Correspondencia: Soffía Carbone-Bruna (S. Carbone-Bruna).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7285-6308> (soffia.carbone@umayor.cl).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2209-7275> (erika.delabarra@usach.cl).

Introduciendo el aprendizaje cooperativo en ELT en Chile: Percepciones y usos en dos profesores

RESUMEN

Este trabajo reporta un estudio cualitativo de las concepciones y percepciones de dos profesores de inglés sobre el uso del aprendizaje cooperativo en dos colegios vulnerables del área Metropolitana en Santiago. El estudio se propuso examinar las preconcepciones, expectativas y aprensiones que impiden a los profesores incorporar metodologías más interactivas al enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera, tales como el aprendizaje cooperativo y el enfoque basado en contenidos, perpetuando así el uso de enfoques más tradicionales como el método de traducción gramatical. Los datos se recopilaron mediante rúbricas de observaciones de clases, diarios de reflexión y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Posteriormente se codificaron según el modelo de Creswell (2013) que permitió categorizar temas que fueron interpretados en el contexto del estudio. Los resultados mostraron que ambos docentes encontraron la experiencia útil y les ayudó a darse cuenta de lo importante de su papel como agentes de cambio. No obstante, los resultados también sugieren que existen dificultades importantes en la aplicación del aprendizaje cooperativo. Esto tiene que ver con la cultura de las comunidades escolares y con lo que se espera de los profesores. Los resultados también señalan que el aprendizaje cooperativo requeriría una fase formativa para familiarizar a los estudiantes sobre sus dinámicas.

Palabras claves: Aprendizaje cooperativo; EFL; reflexión pedagógica; literatura.

1. Literature Review

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Chile continues to be a challenge, especially in subsidized and public schools. Research suggests that schools in vulnerable contexts have less access to good quality materials and better trained teachers (Matear, 2006; Rosenzvaig-Hernandez, 2022) and most teachers keep using traditional methodologies, which do not help students develop productive skills (Abrahams and Farias, 2014; Herrada et al., 2012; McBride, 2010; Yilorm, 2016) and perpetuate inequality among Chilean students. This inequality is even more pronounced in rural areas where students have less chance of doing well in standardized tests of quality and standardized tests for university entrance (Quiroz, 2020). The study therefore aimed to examine the preconceptions, expectations and apprehensions that prevent EFL teachers from incorporating more interactive methodologies, such as cooperative learning and content-based approaches, thus perpetuating the use of more traditional approaches like the grammar translation method.

Cooperative learning (CL), together with other approaches such as problem-based learning and project-based learning, can be considered as part of the social, constructivist approaches to learning where the student takes an active role in the process (Gökçe, 2020). One of the most relevant figures behind this approach was Vygotsky (1978) who emphasized the importance of social interaction in the process of learning. CL became a popular approach in the 1980s, with excellent results in a wide variety of areas (Gökçe, 2020). The initial and sustained contribution of researchers such as Johnson et al. (1991), Slavin (1985), and Kagan

(1990) have been key to its development. In addition to facilitating learning, cooperation is an important characteristic in a democratic society because it helps suppress the egotistical self-interests of the individuals (Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). When cooperation takes place, individuals discover the value of relationships, and of helping, sharing and reciprocity, instead of just aiming at individual goals.

In the field of education, CL was developed first by Kagan (1990) who provided a definition that was later used as a basis by other authors. In his definition, Kagan (1990) emphasizes the social interaction within the classroom which provides the necessary structure that facilitates cooperation. It is worth mentioning that merely sitting in groups does not bring about cooperation. CL entails specific criteria in terms of how students are grouped, such as whether to group lower- and higher-achieving students together, group size, frequency of group work, and group stability throughout the course.

Prior to Kagan's conceptualizations, Slavin (1985) had made important contributions to the development of CL. He synthesized 60 studies carried out in elementary and secondary schools, arriving at the conclusion that learning cooperatively was more effective than learning individually or through competition. Gillies (2016) accounts for the experiments carried out by Slavin where he taught the same contents to two different groups. The control group received traditional instruction, while the experimental groups received CL instruction. The results obtained showed that in 72% of the cases, CL instruction was more successful.

Johnson et al. (1991) also provided relevant insights for the implementation of CL by establishing 5 principles which are still in use today. The first of these is that interpersonal and small group skills must be developed before cooperative learning is implemented because social skills such as leadership, decision making, trust building, communication, and conflict management are necessary for the successful implementation of CL. The remaining four are that there should be positive interdependence on task; face-to face promotive interaction to facilitate sharing and helping each other; individual accountability to ensure that each member is responsible for his/her contribution to the group; and finally, group processing to allow the members of the group to monitor if they are achieving the goals and maintaining positive intra-group relationships.

Other studies have also pointed at the positive effects of CL in different areas. André et al. (2013) demonstrated that CL can be very effective with pupils with learning disabilities in France, enhancing positive social relationships and thereby being beneficial in a context where inclusion is at stake. Another study that showed the positive effects of CL was conducted by Zhang (2018), who combined the use of flipped classroom techniques with CL at university level. The results revealed that the combination of the two methods was very successful because students had become more autonomous with the use of flipped classroom techniques and then their interaction increased with the use of cooperative techniques. Similarly, a study by Sharan (2010) pointed at the benefits of CL in terms of the development of social skills and improvements in classroom management especially in contexts of classes that are largely multicultural. Thomas and Martina (2022) described a successful experience in Indonesia where cooperative learning strategies proved valuable for increasing students' motivation. Their results also indicated that academically successful students were willing to help those who were less likely to learn individually. The democratic element was present since both higher- and lower-achieving students participated in the discussion. In the context of undergraduate university programs, Mendo-Lázaro et al.'s findings (2022) suggest that CL helps students achieve a series of goals such as learning skills, social reinforcement and motivation.

In spite of all the benefits that CL seems to have for students' learning and growth, success is not always guaranteed. For example, [Mai Nguyen \(in Sharan, 2010\)](#) examined the application of CL techniques in a Vietnamese school in a secondary school context where the implementation turned out to be chaotic because the culture did not validate a learning process where students are sitting next to each other. Thus, one very important condition for CL to work efficiently is that students are instructed about the principles of this approach before the implementation takes place. Moreover, the culture itself can be a drawback if it is too closed and does not allow for certain flexibility. [Sharan \(2010\)](#) states that there is always a gap between the learning promise and theory of CL and its actual implementation, which involves people and their culture. Apart from this, recent studies like the one conducted by [Abramczyk and Jurkowski \(2020\)](#) suggest that although teachers know about CL principles and realize how rewarding the experience can be for students, they use CL infrequently in their classes, mainly because they feel they require some more practical instruction on how to implement it.

Another important element to consider for implementing CL effectively is the right combination of this method with short periods of teacher-centered instruction. This seems to be more effective than only implementing CL activities, as found by [Fernandez-Santander \(2008\)](#) in an intervention carried out with first year students of optics and optometry. The study showed that the combination of the two methods proved highly effective and the results obtained through anonymous university interviews showed that they perceived they had learned better with these two methods combined. Through CL, team members were forced to rely on each other to achieve common goals. In addition, students perceived a number of positive elements with this methodology including that studying at home was easier; feeling that they left the lesson with the contents learnt; the sessions were more entertaining; difficult items were easier to learn; the work was more valued by the teacher; and there was a lot of help within the group.

It is also important to consider the role of the teacher when using CL. In a study carried out by [Hsiung et al. \(2014\)](#), the authors advocated for the early identification of ineffective groups in CL. As mentioned before, due to cultural traits, the implementation needs to follow a strict structure; the role of the teacher is to identify if the groups are working well during the implementation. When a group does not work cooperatively, it can be difficult to repair the dynamics of it. Some researchers have suggested that the use of peer rating can be an effective technique to detect the students who are not working as expected.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that although CL is an effective approach to teaching, its success depends on the culture and the previous training of the students and teachers involved. As mentioned before, CL must not be confused with 'group work', which does not require any specific structure, as certain requirements must be met for its successful implementation ([Johnson et al., 1991](#)). If this structure is not applied correctly and the principles are not explicitly declared to the students and teachers, the approach does not work as efficiently as expected.

2. Methodology

To carry out the present study a qualitative approach was chosen in order to identify the teachers' conceptions, apprehensions, expectations, and difficulties when implementing CL with their own classes in two vulnerable schools in the Metropolitan area.

3. Research design

According to Jiménez-Domínguez (2000), qualitative methods start from the basic assumption that the social world is constructed of meanings and symbols. Hence, intersubjectivity is a key part of qualitative research and the starting point for reflexively capturing social meanings. The social reality seen in this way is made up of intersubjectively shared meanings. The objective is the intersubjective meaning attributed to an action. Qualitative research can be seen as the attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings and definitions of the situation as presented to us by people, rather than the production of a quantitative measure of their characteristics or behavior.

4. Data collection

Data was collected in three different ways. First, the researchers observed two of the lessons of each of the teachers using rubrics to examine the degree of cooperativeness of the lessons, secondly, the teachers kept a journal to find out about their own conceptions, apprehensions, expectations, and difficulties they encountered when using CL and the third instrument were semi-structured interviews with both teachers once the intervention period had been completed.

a. Cooperative learning rubric

To observe the lessons, a rubric was designed taking into consideration the five principles stated by Johnson et al. (1991). The rubric graded the presence of the criteria according to four different levels of achievement: 4 - strong, 3- capable, 2 - emerging and 1 - weak. Each of the levels was assigned a score to help quantify the level of cooperativeness in the classes observed. The rubric was piloted by one of the researchers who attended the English lesson of the other researcher and changes were introduced to secure reliability.

b. Teacher's journals

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), reflective journals written by participants comprise an important part of documenting the experience when working in fields such as education. The advantages of using reflective journals include being able to provide an opportunity for participants to express the thoughts and changes they experience while participating in the study (Dunlap, 2006). Phelps (2005) also claims that keeping a journal does not only help collecting qualitative research data but also enables participants to learn about themselves promoting their self-orientation and responsibility for the processes of their personal learning. Cohen et al. (2007) indicate that journals are useful and effective instruments to collect data in qualitative research as they help obtain information about participants' feelings, experiences and more. Since we needed to identify and analyze the use of CL in teachers, we decided to ask our participants to keep a journal and to complete it after each session of the workshops. These journals were handwritten in English and included the teachers' reflections on CL, if the activities had worked well or if they had encountered difficulties.

c. Semi-structured interviews

To add more relevant data to the study, teachers were also interviewed so that they could express their opinions about their experience. Interviews are valuable instruments for qualitative studies because they are "concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals" (Dornyei, 2007, p. 38). A useful trait of semi-structured interviews is that they allow questions to be narrowed and focused while still providing the researcher the auton-

omy to explore and discover concepts and ideas that may come up in the while conducting the interviews (McGrath et al., 2019). A qualitative approach has the characteristic of providing a clear understanding of the complexities involved, hence participants can express themselves and have a voice while using semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013).

5. Participants and background

Two participant teachers took part in this study. The first (from now on, M) was a 28-year-old male. He was a qualified teacher who had been working as a teacher in Cajón del Maipo, just outside Santiago, for three years. The second (from now on, J) was a 24-year-old male pre-service teacher who worked in Santiago. These two participants were personal contacts of the researchers; they were invited to participate since they were enthusiastic and open to learning about CL. As they had never been trained in CL and they had never used the methodology before, they were asked to read a few articles on the topic and to keep a reflective journal during the intervention. Both teachers had graduated from a five-year English Teaching Training Program at a private University in Santiago, in which students take courses related to English language, literature, linguistics, methodology, culture, education, psychology and sociology, among others.

6. Procedure

The two teachers carried out English workshops from October to December 2018. Each session lasted 60 minutes and students participated on a voluntary basis after their regular lessons at school. Both teachers received a set of materials designed for the purposes of the intervention at the beginning of August 2018. The thematic element that connected the units was literature since most of the materials included short stories and poems written in English, and cooperative activities created based on the literary pieces. Table 1 describes the type of cooperative activities associated with each of the units designed for the intervention. As can be observed, a group or pair work activity is associated with most of them. To differentiate these activities from traditional informal group work activities, it is important to mention that students had in mind the CL principles and they agreed about the role each of them would have before the activity started. For example, if the task was about vocabulary, each of the students agreed to focus on a specific word and if the task was about discussing a question each of them focused on a specific aspect. This is especially important as it is necessary to understand that group work is not always cooperative.

Before the beginning of the workshop, both J and M spent some time explaining the principles of CL to students. Neither of the teachers employed a specific approach to organize the cooperative groups. Some of the criteria regularly used is the students' grades, or their interest in the subject. However, in the case of M and J, both allowed students to work in the groups they chose, mostly based on the degree of knowledge students had of each other. After students were familiarized with the concepts of CL, the teachers started working on the units described in Table 1. At the same time, they began writing their reflections in their journals considering questions such as how successful the activities had been; what they would have done differently; how they had felt during the lesson; and what expectations they had for the next lesson. At the end of the intervention, students also had to answer a survey providing their own impressions about the activities they had been involved with during the intervention.

7. Ethical considerations

Under the university regulations regarding research using human subjects, ethical guidelines were followed during the intervention. Informed consents were signed by both teachers who took part in the project, and by the students' parents since the students were under 18 years old. In both cases, it was clearly stated that this research would always respect their privacy and that results would be dealt with the strictest confidentiality. These documents can be found in the appendix.

Table 1

Units, Literary Genre, and Cooperative Learning activities

Unit	Literary Genre	Cooperative activity associated
1 Defeated by Pride	Short story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of pre-reading activities in groups. • Guessing the meaning of words in a group. • Working together to solve the Acrostic.
2 Bad Temper	Short story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of pre-reading activity in pairs. • Predicting in groups based on guiding questions. • Post-reading discussion and reflection. • Final interview, pair work activity.
3 My Greatest regret	Lyric poem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-reading, inferring tasks, pair work. • Group reading and vocabulary guessing. • Reflection and discussion, group work. • Role play, pair work.
4 Foolish Imitation	Short story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming, discussing in groups of 4. • Interviewing a classmate, pair work. • Discussion questions in groups.
5 The Night Train at Delhi	Short story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guessing and predicting in groups what the story is about. • Guessing vocabulary from context in groups. • Predictions for an ending in groups.
6 There will come soft rains	Short story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-reading vocabulary activity guessing the meanings. • Answering comprehension questions in groups. • Role play activity, pair work.

8. Analysis Plan

The analysis of the data considered in the first place the comparison and contrast of the evidence obtained from the class observations. The class observation rubric which had been constructed taking into consideration the cooperative principles developed by [Johnson et al. \(1991\)](#) intended to help the observer identify the presence or absence of certain criteria of cooperativeness in the lessons observed. The teachers' journals and the semi-structured interviews were color coded in order in order to interpret the data and establish a set of categories. The main purpose of coding was to interpret the data, which allowed the researchers to examine the underlying processes that could be inferred from the journals and the interviews. The data obtained through class observation was later crossed with the data obtained from the teachers' journals and the semi-structured interviews to answer the research question.

9. Findings

9.1 Lesson observation rubrics

Table 1 shows the levels of students’ cooperativeness during the observed lessons. Here, the teacher in Cajón del Maipo moved from an extremely cooperative environment to a less cooperative one, whereas the teacher working in Santiago went the other way, from almost not cooperative to a more cooperative approach. As previously stated, this indicates that the teacher in Cajón del Maipo used CL in a more effective manner as he knew how to adapt it and combine it with other approaches without leaving CL aside. The class in Cajón del Maipo demonstrated more cooperative behavior during their first lesson than in the second, whereas the class in Santiago demonstrated more cooperative behavior in the second lesson than in the first.

Table 2

Degree of cooperativeness in the schools.

Criteria	School in San José de Maipo		School in Santiago Centro	
	Score		Score	
	Class n° 1 (22/10/2018)	Class n° 2 (29/10/2018)	Class n°1 (25/10/2018)	Class n°2 (15/11/2018)
Individual accountability and contribution to group	4	3	2	3
Consideration of others	4	2	3	3
Social skills	3	2	1	3
Face to Face promotive interaction	3	2	2	2

Note. 4 – Strong, 3- Capable, 2 – Emerging, 1 - Weak

Individual accountability and consideration of others were the two most developed traits, indicating that learners were conscious of how important their contribution was when working in groups and considering each other’s feelings. The aspect of CL in which the students scored lowest, in both contexts, was that of social skills, which are related to negotiation and leadership. This suggests that to make CL work in our culture, a previous period of adjustment is necessary.

i. Individual accountability and contribution to the group

This category scored higher in Cajón del Maipo than in Santiago Centro. The teacher in Santiago was aware of the importance of using the CL approach. In the first observed lesson, he promoted activities that aided students to work with their own individual accountability as also contributing to the group. However, while being observed for the second time, less CL work was present as the teacher was able to understand that this approach worked better when combined with other methods such as lecturing, which is exactly what he did at the beginning of the class.

However, in Cajón del Maipo, it could be seen that the use of CL went from less to more, as the teacher in charge was gaining confidence and knowledge as the workshops took place. It is important to keep in mind that the teacher in Cajón del Maipo is more experienced and confident than the one in Santiago Centro, since the former has more teaching experience,

and he is also a few years older. This lack of confidence and experience was reflected in the first lesson, with individual accountability and contribution to the group being very weak; the category ranked 2, which means emerging, while in the second class, it ranked 3, which means capable. It can be said then that the CL approach was more present in the second class than in the first one, together with more individual accountability and contribution to the group. This happened because the teacher tried to include CL during the entire class, in each one of the activities and it was hardly ever combined with other methodologies. This explains the score disparity in both classes, and it also explains that the approach was more effective in the intervention that took place in Cajón del Maipo than in Santiago Centro.

ii. Consideration of others

The development of this category was like the one of positive interdependence, meaning that students understood that they needed the rest of the group to complete a certain task while being interested in the feelings and learning needs of others. Students from Cajón del Maipo ranked strongly (4) in this category during the first lesson, which means that they maintained a positive attitude towards each other's feelings, yet in the second lesson they ranked emerging (2). As previously explained, the teacher in Cajón del Maipo moved from more cooperative to less cooperative and it was during the second lesson that some students did not want to work in groups and were not considering the feelings of others. This behavior was observed during transition activities when the teacher stopped lecturing and moved to cooperative learning activities.

No major changes were observed in the workshops from one class to the next in Santiago Centro, as the category of consideration of others was ranked capable (3), in both classes. Students were consistently sensitive to the feelings and learning needs of their classmates. This is a very positive aspect of CL, and it was the most notable one in the classes in Santiago Centro thanks to the teacher's role to enhance appropriate and respectful treatment among his students.

iii. Social Skills

This is the category that entails students' social skills to interact during group work. In the first lesson observed in Cajón del Maipo, this skill was ranked capable, since skills such as decision making, leadership, conflict management and trust building were observable. However, social skills were less evident during the second observation as students ranked only emerging; there was poor resolution of conflicts, an absence of trust building and bullying in the classroom. This bullying instance was immediately stopped by the teacher, who had to end the cooperative activity and resort to a more lecturing and traditional approach and role.

A relevant change was observed in Santiago Centro, from class 1 to 2 in this category. During the first class, this category ranked 1, with students never using skills such as decision making, trust building, communication, leadership, and conflict management. Yet, there was an improvement that could be seen during the second observation, as the category went from 1 to 3, which means capable. The observer could notice that those students who were once reluctant to work in groups and to communicate effectively were now comfortably working together.

iv. Face to face promotive interaction

The category which measures if students help each other by sharing and encouraging efforts to learn is face-to-face promotive interaction. In Cajón del Maipo, this category ranked capable during the first observation, while in the second one student only ranked emerging, which means that learners were not using strategies such as giving advice or making requests. On the other hand, in the school in Santiago Centro, no changes were evident, as in the first lesson the category ranked emerging (2), and it remained the same during the second class. This reveals that the students participating in the workshops did not manage any interactive strategies such as turn-taking, negotiation and how to interpret verbal and non-verbal clues.

9.2 Teachers' journals and interviews

Once the data was gathered, we began its evaluation using thematic analysis. According to [Spencer et al. \(2014\)](#), this type of analysis allows the researcher to infer, discover, interpret, and report patterns of meaning within the data. While examining the interviews and journals, we were able to trace important themes relevant to our research question. We decided to use [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) thematic analysis proposal, in which six phases have been defined. These phases are outlined below.

The first phase relates to understanding the data until the researcher is "familiar with the depth of the content" ([Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87](#)). For this to be done, it is necessary to read the data several times searching for recurrent meanings and patterns together with keywords and topics. We therefore printed copies of the interviews and journals and highlighted key words to help us determine codes and concepts. The second phase indicates the generated initial codes from the data ([Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88](#)). Coding means labeling the data or categorizing it in small groups ([Creswell, 2013](#)). Codes need to be as closely related as possible to the actual data provided, rather than interpreting the information. This is the point when we began coding each highlighted part selecting keywords to maintain authenticity. This step is connected to the third phase, which deals with searching for common patterns among the codes, also known as themes. Hence, we grouped similar codes under broader labels, organizing them into main and sub-themes.

Phase four is the refining stage, in which all potential code themes from step 3 should be clearly identified and distinct from one another ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)); we combined themes with similar ideas and eliminated those lacking enough data. The next phase involves naming the themes by locating the essence of each one. These names should be "concise, punchy and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about" ([Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92](#)). We tried to provide names that reflected the data selected, so each one would be easily identifiable. Phase six refers to producing the final report, where the researcher should deliver a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tells" ([Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93](#)). The researcher should capture the essence of what they want to demonstrate by not only describing the data but by making "an argument in relation to your research question" ([Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94](#)). Taking these suggestions into account, we will now report the results of our analysis together with pertinent discussions.

i. Conceptions and apprehensions

RQ. - What are the conceptions and apprehensions of these two teachers regarding the use of CL in the EFL classroom?

When asking teachers what CL meant for them, the conceptions about the topic were different. On one hand, M explained that *“my perceptions and opinions towards this methodology were positive and enhance the idea of teaching through different abilities”* while J felt that he did not know much about the topic: *“I thought it would be difficult to carry out the workshops, because the knowledge I had about CL was not enough”*. When it comes to the apprehensions these teachers have regarding the use of CL, both felt compelled to make CL work and make the most of it during the workshops. As M explained *“the development of a cooperative climate and spirit must be integrated as part of the routine”* while J claimed that he was worried about the success of the implementation of CL as *“this is an area that teachers do not do in their workplaces, and it is essential to promote cooperative work and also teacher reflection”*. These responses indicated that CL was still uncharted terrain for these EFL teachers.

ii. Expectations

RQ. - What are the expectations of these two teachers when using CL in their EFL lessons?

Regarding the expectations that these teachers have, we discovered that in both cases they were quite similar. M explained that *“my expectations were related to trying a new methodology... free of restrictions of a prescriptive approach in teaching English”* while J expected this *“experience to give me tools for my work as a teacher”*. What is really motivating is to see that both teachers expected CL to bring new tools not only for them but for their students. J explained, *“I could effectively see that CL would contribute to my students’ learning process”* whereas M expected that *“CL will only contribute to enrich the experience of my students in areas of social interaction, cultural awareness, psychological and personal growth”*. Since this was a new approach for both teachers, we were also interested in discovering the difficulties they might have to face while implementing the workshops.

iii. Difficulties

RQ. - Which difficulties can be faced by teachers while using CL?

The fact that CL was new to both teachers meant they had to rise to the challenge of understanding the new methodology. As J commented, *I had to devote a few hours to read what the theory said about CL in order to implement it in the workshops*. A difficulty that was experienced by both teachers was to make students work in an appropriate way following the CL methodology; M claimed that *“it was hard to promote in my students a sense of metacognition and realization of what they were now doing”*. He also noted that some students were unaccustomed to working in groups: *“these students usually work individually in their school subjects and only work together on long-term projects, which is why the methodology is significant as a way of learning rather than working”* (M). This was a similar situation in J’s class, as he stated: *“the workshops were held with students of different grades which made it difficult to create work teams for affinity issues”* and *“the first workshops were more difficult and over time the students were breaking down the barriers and began working with those people who were not their friends or classmates”*.

iv. Feelings and impact

RQ. – How do teachers feel after implementing CL in their lessons? Does CL have an impact in their professional life?

Both teachers described feeling strong emotions about implementing CL for the first time. For example, M stated that *“after taking part in this intervention using CL methodology, there is a mix of emotions”* and *“happiness covered most of the interventions during all the weeks and stayed after these ended, a sense of pride about my students’ performance and how they get to interact with other students...gave us all a sense of accomplishment when the sessions ended”*. Similarly, J explained that *“the first feeling that comes to mind is hope. I strongly believe that it is through research related to education that we can make a significant impact to make positive changes in education”* and *“another feeling that comes to mind is pride... I thought that I would not be able to do the workshops, because of the amount of work involved... When it was all over, I felt I could do many more activities that I thought I could do”*.

When asking these teachers about the possible impact that CL might have in their professional lives, both teachers agreed on the positive impact it had. J mentioned that *“having participated in this experience did impact the way I currently do my classes”*, while M stated that *“this opportunity for sure proved to have caused an impact in my professional development every time it reminds me of the many options teachers have for the diversification of teaching methodologies”* and *“how we could impact our students’ academic and personal lives with only small but meaningful changes”*.

Both teachers had the opportunity to reflect upon their current practice and value what they had learned about CL. In J’s words, *“an experience of this kind fosters the formative evaluation within the classroom...encouraging co-assessment...which gave me a different vision of the roles that students can play in the classroom”*. He also reflected that *“if we are able to organize people by their abilities, we can take advantage of their potential when they will work in teams...not all students must perform the same task within a team to achieve the different goals”*. Likewise, M commented that *“this was an important opportunity to consolidate the way I see and understand the world of education”* and *“in many valuable words it came to once again reaffirm my vocation in teaching and my personal beliefs to improve the quality of the opportunities we present to students facing difficult contexts”*.

10. Discussion

This study aimed at examining why EFL teachers continue to use traditional approaches to teach English rather than implement CL or other more interactive approaches in their lessons. We wanted to find out the teachers’ conceptions, their apprehensions, expectations, and feelings regarding the use of this method. Based on the data collected from the lesson observations, the teachers’ journals, and the interviews, we drew four main conclusions:

11. Efficacy of CL

If applied correctly, CL can become an effective tool to enhance teachers’ work in their EFL classrooms. The right application requires a previous process of training and reflection. Teachers need to feel confident with the approach, but do not necessarily have to attend courses or seminars on CL. Application of a new method can also be a process of self-growth and self-discovery as it fuels a process of learning: self-study and trying out new activities and ideas. It can also provide very interesting material for journal writing, a practice that many teachers seem to overlook, but which can provide interesting opportunities for refreshing our practice.

Methodologically speaking, the most successful teacher in this study was the one who, after acute observation and reflection, understood that CL works better when combined with other methods rather than on its own, as suggested by previous researchers (Sharan, 2010; Zhang, 2018). For CL to work effectively, and go beyond just 'group work,' it is necessary to comply with all the principles described by Johnson et al. (1991). It seems that in the Chilean context, it is necessary also to educate students about the benefits of cooperation. Students and their culture of learning should not be overlooked. Some studies on CL conducted in other parts of the world suggest that if students do not believe in cooperation as beneficial to learning, then they will not learn through CL. As suggested by Mai Nguyen (in Sharan, 2010), the application of CL in the Vietnamese context was difficult since students in those cultures were not used to sharing and interacting amongst themselves. In the two Chilean schools where the workshops were carried out, students felt comfortable interacting, but they lacked the social skills required for cooperation, which is a serious issue that needs to be considered for CL implementation and broader participation in society. Abilities such as leadership, decision making, trust building and conflict management are key to cooperativeness in society, but also form the basis of a democratic society.

12. Teachers' conceptions and apprehensions

Although the teachers had a positive attitude towards implementing CL, there was also some apprehension about implementing a strategy that they had not been formally trained for; the fact that both teachers did their own training and tried the activities designed by the researchers was not enough to make them feel confident. However, together with this feeling of anxiety, there was also the idea that it would be interesting to integrate these cooperative principles into the daily routine. Apart from the feeling of not being trained it added to their anxiety the fact that cooperation and collaboration was somehow absent in their workplaces. Something that is not very encouraging if you want to try something new.

13. Teachers' expectations and difficulties

Regarding the teachers' expectations, it can be stated that in both cases they were similar and positive indicating that there is a strong aspiration to try new methods and experience new approaches that can make learning English more successful and fun. The teachers perceived that CL would allow students to develop socially and culturally, which made them view CL positively. The teachers were aware that grammar translation methods do not develop the skills students require today. Apart from not being effective in the development of communicative skills in English, it does not develop other necessary skills in students which are important, such as cooperation, relationship-building, helping and reciprocity. As mentioned before, these skills are important for a successful democratic society (Tomasello and Vaish, 2013).

Regarding the difficulties, it is interesting to confirm that teachers identified one in terms of their own formative process and the other as connected to what was stated previously in terms of educating students to be able to work cooperatively. The method cannot be applied from one day to the next because students have trouble working cooperatively. The teachers' perceptions are confirmed by the observation data. Students need to develop their social skills to work cooperatively, and they need to value their classmates as valid sources of information and knowledge. Sadly, in the two schools that were part of the project, the only valid source of knowledge was the teacher.

14. Teachers' emotions regarding the experience

In both cases, teachers were extremely happy about the results obtained, and they perceived their participation in the process as an enriching experience that helped involve themselves in a process of change which had an impact on their self-perception of growing professionally. It is also relevant to observe that teachers saw this process – and especially the journal writing – as a new, deep experience of reflection and thought. So, in general, their perception of CL was positive and rewarding. It gave them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and take their role as an agent of change more seriously.

To conclude, going back to the research questions, it can be stated that contrary to the researchers' beliefs that teachers were reluctant to use this method because of the fear of losing classroom control, the two teachers who took part in this project were willing to apply the method, but expected more training to do so. Despite the fact that they did not receive the training that they expected, they tried the method, and learned about it on their own. They encountered difficulties in the application given the fact that students had never worked cooperatively before and did not know what was expected from them. Educating students on the importance of cooperation, and training teachers with the key elements of how CL works would probably enhance the application of this method contributing to happier, and more stable and democratic EFL classrooms.

References

- Abramczyk, A. & Jurkowski, S. (2020). Cooperative learning as an evidence-based teaching strategy: what teachers know, believe, and how they use it. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(3), 296-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1733402>.
- Abrahams, M.J. & Farías, M. (2014). Struggling for Change in Chilean EFL Teacher Education/ La lucha por un cambio en la educación de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera en Chile. *Colombian Applied Linguistic Journal*, 12(2), 110-118. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/calj/v12n2/v12n2a09.pdf>.
- André, A., Louvet, B., & Deneuve, P. (2013). Cooperative group, risk-taking and inclusion of pupils with learning disabilities in physical education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(4), 677–693. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2012.674102>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Connelly, F., & Clandinin, D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Dunlap, J. C. (2006). Using guided reflective journaling activities to capture students' changing perceptions. *Techtrends*, 50, 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-006-7614-x>.
- Fernandez-Santander, A. (2008). Cooperative Learning Combined with short periods of Lecturing. *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education*, 36(1), 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bmb.20141>.

- Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative Learning: Review of Research and Practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 39-54. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n3.3>.
- Gökçe, D. (2020). A Review of Flipped Classroom and Cooperative Learning Method Within the Context of Vygotsky Theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01157>.
- Herrada, M., Rojas, D., & Zapata, A. (Octubre de 2012). *El Desempeño Profesional de los Profesores de Inglés según los datos de la evaluación docente*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/s0718-07052022000300009>.
- Hsiung, C.M., Luo, L.F. & Chung H.C. (2014). Early Identification of ineffective cooperative Learning teams. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 30, 534-545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12062>.
- Jiménez-Domínguez, B. (2000). Investigación cualitativa y psicología social crítica. Contra la lógica binaria y la ilusión de la pureza. *Investigación cualitativa en Salud*, 1-17.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (1991). *Cooperation in the classroom*. Interaction Book Company.
- Kagan, S. (1990). The Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning. *Educational Leadership*, 47(4), 12-15. https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198912_kagan.pdf.
- Phelps, R. (2005). The potential of reflective journals in studying complexity 'in action'. *Complexity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 2, 37-54. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cmplct8726>.
- Quiroz, C. (2020). Pandemia Covid-19 e Inequidad Territorial: El Agravamiento de las Desigualdades Educativas en Chile. *Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social*, 9(3). <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7396636>.
- Matear, A. (2006). Barriers to Equitable Access: Higher Education Policy and Practice in Chile since 1990. *Higher Education Policy*, 19, 31-49. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300114>.
- McBride, K. (2010). Podcasts and second language learning: Promoting listening Comprehension and intercultural competence, in Abraham, L. and Williams, L. (eds.). *Electronic Discourse in Language Learning and Language Teaching*. (pp. 153-168). John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.25.12mcb>.
- McGrath, C., Palmgren, P.J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Med Teach*, 41(9), 1002-1006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>.
- Mendo-Lázaro, S., León-del-Barco, B., Polo-del-río, M. & López-Ramos, V. (2022). The Impact of Cooperative Learning on University Students' Academic Goals. *Frontiers of Psychology*, 12, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.787210>.
- Rosenzvaig-Hernandez, M. (2022) Unmaking the market: exploring the Chilean challenges to de-privatise the educational system. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 21(3), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2119123>.
- Sharan, Y. (2010). Cooperative Learning for Academic and Social Gains: valued pedagogy, problematic practice. *European Journal of Education*, 45(2), 300-310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2010.01430.x>.
- Slavin, R.E. (1985). *An introduction to cooperative learning research*. In R. Slavin, S. Sharan, S. Kagan, R. H. Lazarowitz, C. Webb, & Schmuck (eds.), *Learning to cooperate, co-operating to learn*. (pp. 5-15) New York.

- Spencer, L. and O'Connor, M. (2014). Analysis: Principles and Processes. in Jane Ritchie et al. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*. (2a ed., pp. 269-293). Sage.
- Thomas, H. & Martina, D. (2022) Application of Cooperative Learning Model In Increasing Students' Motivation, Learning Participation And Creativity. *Educativo: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 1(1), 314-319. <https://doi.org/10.56248/educativo.v1i1.55>.
- Tomasello, M., & Vaish, A. (2013) Origins of Human Cooperation and Morality. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 231 – 255. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143812>
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Pensamiento y Lenguaje*. La Pléyade.
- Yilorm, Y. (2016). Proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en escuelas públicas chilenas: ¿producción o reproducción? *Estudios Pedagógicos*, 42(especial), 103-116. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052016000300009>.
- Zhang, L. (2018). English Flipped Classroom Teaching Model Based on Cooperative Learning. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 18(6), 3652-3661. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/estp.2018.6.278>.

Appendix 1

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (profesor)

Título de Proyecto: *Implementación de aula cooperativa en inglés en un colegio vulnerable de la Región Metropolitana*

Estimado profesor:

Esta comunicación es para motivar su participación en una investigación liderada por la Universidad Mayor sobre el uso de la literatura como medio para la creación de un aula cooperativa en inglés. Específicamente, quisiéramos solicitar su participación en la realización de un taller de inglés que se desarrollará a partir de la tercera semana del mes de agosto y hasta mediados de octubre de 2018 en donde se implementarán actividades utilizando aprendizaje cooperativo. Algunas de las clases serán supervisadas y se le invitará a llevar un journal donde pueda registrar sus experiencias. También está contemplada la participación en una entrevista semiestructurada.

Es importante que usted sepa que los datos obtenidos se analizarán con fines puramente académicos; por lo tanto, la información será manejada cuidando siempre su confidencialidad y resguardando su identidad. En cualquier caso, usted puede retirarse de esta investigación en cualquier momento.

Si tienes alguna duda o requieres información adicional, puedes contactar a la investigadora responsable de este estudio: Soffía Carbone Bruna (soffia.carbone@umayor.cl).

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PARTICIPANTE

Yo _____ profesor de inglés _____ estoy de acuerdo y acepto participar en esta investigación.

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

Appendix 2

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (estudiantes)

Título de Proyecto: *Implementación de aula cooperativa en inglés en un colegio vulnerable de la Región Metropolitana*

Estimado(a) apoderado (a)

Esta comunicación es para motivar la participación de su hijo (a) en una investigación liderada por la Universidad Mayor sobre el uso de la literatura como medio para la creación de un aula cooperativa en inglés. Específicamente, quisiéramos solicitar la participación de su hijo(a) en un taller de inglés que se desarrollará a partir de la tercera semana del mes de agosto y hasta mediados de octubre de 2018. Las clases serán llevadas a cabo por un profesor de inglés del colegio bajo la supervisión de las investigadoras de la Universidad Mayor, y no tiene ningún costo adicional para usted.

Es importante que sepa que esta investigación no resultará en una nota para su hijo(a) y que usted puede libremente decidir si quiere que su hijo (a) participe o no. Asimismo, los datos recolectados serán únicamente utilizados con fines docentes y de investigación; por lo tanto, serán manejados cuidando la confidencialidad y anonimato de su hijo(a)

Si tienes alguna duda o requieres información adicional, puedes contactar a la investigadora responsable de este estudio: Soffía Carbone Bruna (soffia.carbone@umayor.cl).

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PARTICIPANTE

Yo _____ apoderado de _____
alumno(a) del curso _____ estoy de acuerdo y acepto que mi hijo(a) participe en esta investigación.

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____



Este trabajo está sujeto a una licencia de Reconocimiento 4.0 Internacional Creative Commons (CC BY 4.0).