

Cooperative learning: Making groupwork and pairwork effective



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WARWICK

APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Thanks for coming... who are you?

1. What's your name?
2. What's your hometown?
3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
4. What's your favourite teaching activity?

Criticality Caution

Always be critical of other people's ideas for your classroom:

- Will they be relevant?
- Will they be feasible?
- Will I have time?
- Will I need to adapt?

Aims

- To reflect on challenges we face when doing groupwork and pairwork
- To critically examine how we do pairwork and groupwork
- To develop our understanding of what cooperative learning is, and the theory of learning behind it
- To review the research evidence for cooperative learning
- To evaluate a range of cooperative learning activities and strategies

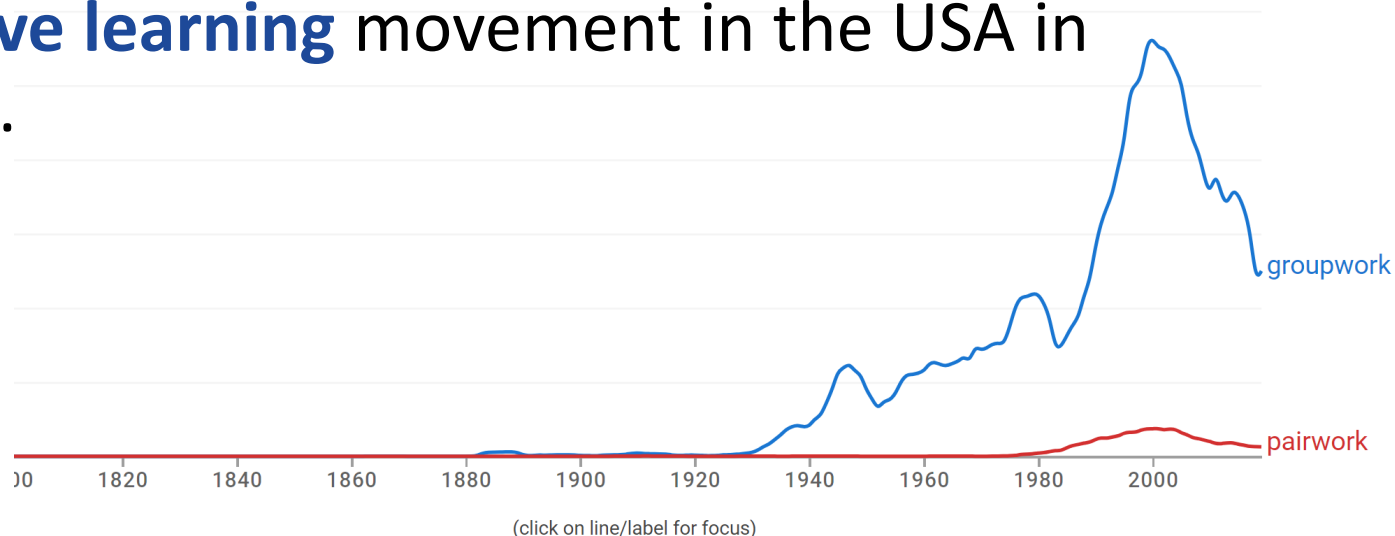


Pairwork and groupwork challenges

- We often refer to closed pairwork and groupwork as '**collaborative learning**' in CLT (communicative language teaching).
- In such activities, each learner is working or interacting with one or more of their peers outside of the direct control of the teacher.
 1. What challenges do you face when doing pairwork and groupwork activities in your classes?
 2. What do you (the teacher) do during such activities?
- Share your thoughts in the chat.

Where do groupwork and pairwork (in education) come from?

- Early references in education come from progressive schools in the USA in the 1890s, esp. laboratory schools of Francis Parker and John Dewey (Cuban, 1993).
- It became (more mainstream) during the **cooperative learning** movement in the USA in the 1960s.



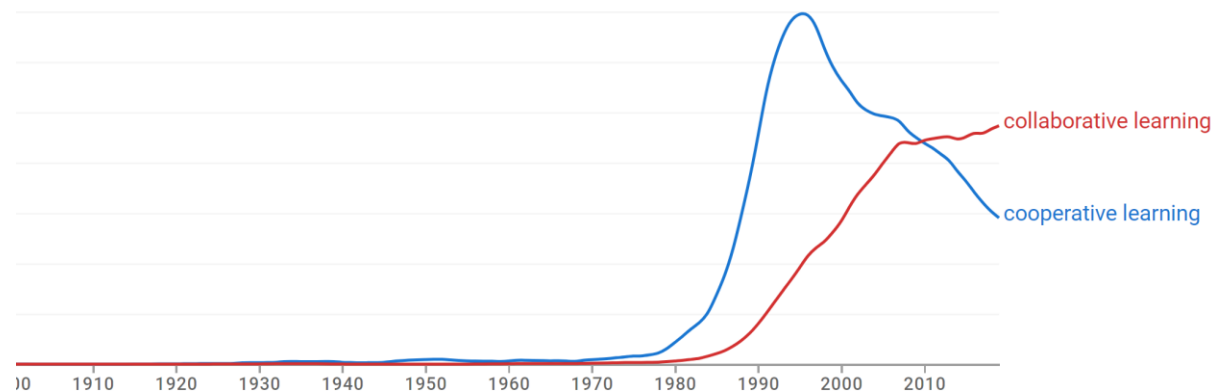
A brief history of cooperative learning

- Cooperative learning evolved in mainstream education in the USA, reaching its peak of popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
- It has roots in the work of educator John Dewey, and psychologists Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch.
- It became prominent in the 1960s and early 1970s, after desegregation in the USA, when teachers looked for ways to integrate and build rapport among previously segregated groups with very different prior educational experiences in the same classroom (Anderson 2019).
- As such, it is a methodology developed in and for **heterogeneous** classes.



Cooperative and collaborative: What's the difference?

- both are underpinned by a belief that learners can and should learn from each other, not just the teacher
- **cooperative learning** is a specific methodology: it has principles and research evidence supporting it
- **collaboration** or **collaborative learning** are more recent terms, referring simply to how we can do an activity: in pairs or groups
- the underlying principles of cooperative learning are often overlooked in more generic uses of collaborative learning



Two key principles of cooperative learning

- **Positive interdependence:** For an activity to be truly cooperative, learners must work as a team, not in competition with each other (although inter-team competition is recognised by some cooperative writers as acceptable).
- **Individual accountability:** Group success depends on contributions from all group members, making each learner accountable for their own learning and the success of the group. And making all learners accountable for full group participation.

Why are these principles important?



Do you do any activities that involve them?



'Communicative language teaching' activities that have their origins in cooperative learning

1. Jigsaw reading / listening tasks
2. Information gap activities
3. Describe and draw
4. Onion ring discussions
5. Find someone who

What was lost when CLT imported these activities?



'Classic' cooperative learning activities

- **Jigsaw:** Each student in the group gets a (short) text. They can't show it to each other, but must summarise the content. This enables them to complete a task.
- **Student team achievement division (STAD):** (Slavin, 1995) Lesson framework with five stages:
 1. teacher presentation (of lesson content);
 2. teamwork in which homegroups check that they all understood the presentation;
 3. individual quiz to check what students have learnt;
 4. individual improvement scores;
 5. team recognition, through praise, mention in a newsletter, or, sometimes, rewards.

Student team achievement division (STAD): (Slavin, 1995)

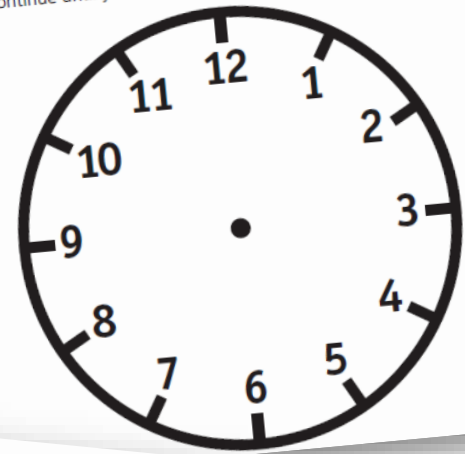
Lesson framework with five stages:

1. teacher presentation (of lesson content); **E.g. how to tell the time.**
2. teamwork in which homegroups check that they all understood the presentation;
3. individual quiz to check what students have learnt;
4. individual improvement scores;
5. team recognition, through praise, mention in a newsletter, or, sometimes, rewards.



Teamwork clock

Work in teams. Use the clock to practise telling the time. Draw the time and then tell it or write it. Use a pencil and eraser. Continue until you are all able to tell the time and spell the words correctly:



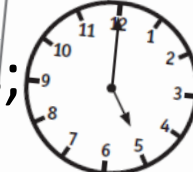
Quiz

What's the time?

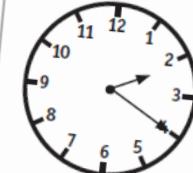
A) Write your name:

Work individually. Write the cor

1. It's o'clock.



2. It's past



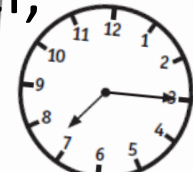
3. It's half



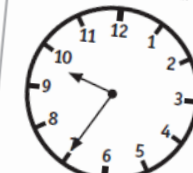
4. It's



5. It's quarter



6. It's ten.



7. It's



8. It's



- B) Check another student's answers. Correct any mistakes and then write the score here:
- C) Add up your team's scores to work out your team total.

Cooperative and uncooperative jigsaws!

Example: different texts about people's work

Student B

Student A

1. Read the text. Can you guess what Hana's job is?

Just the job!

I work for a small company in central London. I usually work from home, but twice a week I go to the office for meetings with clients or my boss. I enjoy working from home, but sometimes I miss the office atmosphere: having a joke with colleagues or going out after work. My hours are flexible, but I usually average about eight hours a day. My salary is about £48,000, better than most designers.

The great thing about my job is that things change so quickly. New technology appears almost every day. I enjoy learning the new programs and seeing my work on big websites. My degree in fine art is useful, and my talent for languages helped me to learn HTML and Java. As for the future, things are looking good. The company is growing and my line manager is leaving in the summer. I'm sure if I went for that job, I'd get it and an office in London as well!"



2. Sit with students who read about a different person. Tell each other about your person, and together try to answer these questions, comparing all four people:

1. What is his/her job?
2. Where does she/he work?
3. How much does she/he earn? etc.

**Cooperative
questions?**

Cooperative and uncooperative jigsaws!

Example: different texts about people's work

Student B

Student A

1. Read the text. Can you guess what Hana's job is?

Just the job!

I work for a small company in central London. I usually work from home, but twice a week I go to the office for meetings with clients or my boss. I enjoy working from home, but sometimes I miss the office atmosphere: having a joke with colleagues or going out after work. My hours are flexible, but I usually average about eight hours a day. My salary is about £48,000, better than most designers.

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Not very cooperative!

Cooperative and uncooperative jigsaws!

Example: different texts about people's work

Student B

Student A

1. Read the text. Can you guess what Hana's job is?

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Cooperative questions!

Uncooperative questions!

1. What is his/her job?
2. Where does she/he work?
3. How much does she/he earn? etc.

Cooperative and uncooperative jigsaws!

Example: different texts about people's work

Student C

1. Read the text. Can you guess what Carla's job is?

Student D

1. Read the text. Can you guess what Matt's job is?

Just the job!

I work twice as hard as most people. I work with my hands every day. I've always dreamed of doing this. The day I started was the best day of my life. As the

Just the job!

I hated my last job! I worked from 9–5 in an office and lived in the city. So, two years ago, I started my own business and now I work outside in the fresh air. I work hard each day, especially during the summer. I usually start at 8 am and finish when it gets dark, but I'm very healthy and I sleep very well. Most days I have two or three jobs, sometimes at private homes and sometimes doing parks or flower displays in my local town. The thing I like most about my job is watching the trees and plants develop through all four seasons of the year. Each year, every garden gets a little bit more beautiful. The only problem with my job is the salary. It's very unpredictable. Some months I can make £2,000, other months it can be half that! But I don't mind. My wife is a vet, so together we have a very good income. We live in a beautiful little village with our two children and three dogs. At the weekends we like to go for long walks in the national parks. I'm so much happier now I've got out of the city!



try

2. Sit with students who read about a different person. Tell each other about your person, and together try to answer these questions, comparing all four people:
 1. Who works hardest?
 2. Who makes the most money?
 3. Who do you think has the most difficult job? Why?
 4. Who is happiest? Why do you think this?
 5. Which of the four jobs would you prefer? Why?
5. Which of the four jobs would you prefer? Why?

Text division jigsaw

‘Synthesis’ question:
What is the correct order for your 3 extracts?

Group A

Group B



“Yes, of course I will be happy with you, but I have a choice. He said that I should be happy with you, but I have a choice. He said that I should be happy with you, but I have a choice.”

Group C



Gawain’s Choice

Arthur was put in prison by the king of Scotland. The king liked Arthur, so he decided to give him a year to save his life. He told Arthur that he would free Arthur if he could answer a very difficult question. A question about women that all men should know the answer to.

The question was: “What does every woman want?” He gave Arthur one year to bring him the answer. If he failed, the king would kill him and take his kingdom. The question was difficult, but he had no choice: Arthur accepted the challenge!

He returned to England and went to his best friend, Gawain. Arthur told him about the question. Together they asked everybody, but nobody had a good answer to the king’s question.

A wise man had an idea. He told Arthur to find an old witch called Ragnelle, who lived in the mountains. She might know the answer. With no other options, Arthur and Gawain went to see the witch. She said: “Yes. I know the answer to your question. But before I tell you, you must accept my price.”

How to make a discussion activity cooperative?

Dunlin Airport

Introduction

The city of Dunlin is getting bigger, and Dunlin Airport is not big enough to cope with the increased air travel. There are three options:

- a) Build a new airport at site A, at the mouth of the River Dun.
- b) Expand Dunlin Airport to add a second runway at Site B.
- c) Build a superfast rail link to the city to encourage people to travel by train more.

Dunlin Airport

Option A: build a new airport on the estuary of the River Dun

Estimated cost: \$11 billion

Estimated time:

Advantages:

High approval

Disadvantages:

It will take 45 years

Very unpopular

major campaign

Option B: expand Dunlin Airport to add a second runway at Site B

Estimated cost: \$8 billion

Estimated timespan: 2 years

Advantages: Not too

world's largest, and a

Disadvantages: Very

residents prefer this opt

action if it goes ahead.

Dunlin Airport

Option C: Build a high-speed rail link to the city to encourage people to travel by train more

Estimated cost: \$6 billion

Estimated timespan: 6 years

Advantages: The cheapest option. Superfast trains (up to 450 km/h). Travel times to nearby cities in the country and in Europe will be just as fast as flying. Likely to reduce the need to fly, thereby improving the environment. Only disturbs a small number of residents. Approval rating quite high – 30% of Dunlin residents prefer this option.

Disadvantages: It doesn't really solve the main problem of increased air traffic. Planes from other continents will still need to land somewhere, so international tourism and trade will suffer. Travelling by the high-speed train will be more expensive than flying on most airlines. It will take six years to complete.

Superfast rail link to Europe

Getting the groups right

1. What group sizes work best in your classrooms?
2. Do you choose the groups, or let the students? If you choose, how do you decide who to put together?
3. Do you vary the groups?

Groups in cooperative learning

- **‘Home groups’** or **‘base groups’** The most typical format for cooperative learning is small, stable, heterogenous home groups of 4-5 learners (e.g., Kagan & Kagan 2009). Learners do the majority of groupwork in home groups.
- **‘Expert groups’** Homogenous grouping (e.g. of similar academic ability) for learners to interact with new content, complete exercises, etc.
- Individual work and pairwork are also important. Both of these can happen (usually) within home groups.
- **Note:** Be aware of neurodivergent learners, some of whom find it difficult to work in groups.

Research evidence: How do we know cooperative learning works?

- Over 1,200 studies have been conducted on it (Johnson & Johnson, 2009)
- John Hattie's meta-analysis (2009) noted: "There seems a universal agreement that cooperative learning is effective..." and his and Marzano's (1998) meta-analyses, drawing on over 1,000 separate studies scored it 0.41-0.59 and 0.73 in effect size respectively, among the highest effect sizes noted for teaching approaches by both authors.
- Some 'anecdotal' reports of the positive impact of cooperative learning from a range of English language learning contexts around the world (e.g., Ning 2010, Panhwar 2016).

But...

- Over 90% of the 156 studies that Johnson et al. (2000) included in their meta-analysis were conducted in North America.

Implementing cooperative learning

- **Start gradually:** Choose an activity that you like and try it out with a 'favourite' class.
- **Prepare the learners:** First time, explain carefully to your students what you're going to do, and what you expect from them (in L1 if necessary). Explain why you think it will be useful.
- **Choose and adapt materials as required:** Search for 'cooperative' and 'jigsaw' activities online. Change the length, vocabulary, difficulty, etc. to suit your learners.
- **Keep groups simple to start with:** Try pairwork first, or convenience grouping. When you feel it's working, then try creating stable 'home groups'
- **Manage noise and language choice patiently:** Especially in large classes, noise levels will increase. If learners really enjoy it, they may use L1 alongside or instead of English. Manage each group separately. Praise groups who do it well at the end of the activity, and gently encourage more use of English each time you do it (e.g. with rewards).

Tools and strategies for cooperative learning

- Think, pair, share
- Pass the pen
- Mini-whiteboards
- Random nomination
- Padlet

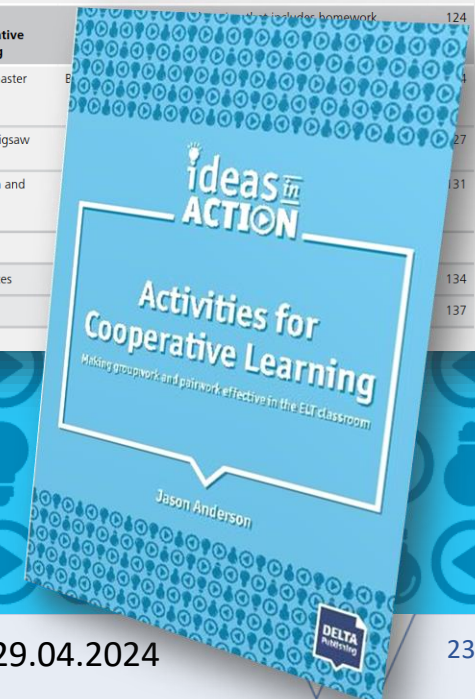


Activities for cooperative learning – Contents

			Page
0	Introduction to cooperative learning	Brief history, key principles, organising pairwork and groupwork, research evidence for cooperative learning, implementing cooperative learning in your classroom, developing and valuing cooperative skills.	8
1	Micro-strategies and tools	Strategies include Random nomination, Think-Pair-Share, Peer prompt, Partner switch, Team challenge, Gallery walk, Pass the Pen, Test-Learn-Test and Intergroup competition. Tools include nomination sticks, mini-whiteboards and the IT tool, Padlet.	18
2	Pairwork Activities	<i>Levels of example activities</i> Activities that maximise interaction and cooperation through the use of pairwork.	24
2a	Pairwork jigsaw	A1–B1 Students read one of two texts individually. They then cooperate to compare and synthesise what they have learnt.	24
2b	Peer-interviews	A2–B1 Students answer interview questions about themselves and then get feedback on what their answers mean.	27
2c	I, she, you	A1–B2 Three-stage interviews that practise use of the first, second and third person verb forms.	31
2d	PQRST	A2–B2 A five-stage pairwork activity that helps students to learn more from what they read: Predict, Question, Read, Summarise, Test.	34
2e	Mystery questions	A2–B1 Students talk on a topic for an allotted time period. They get points every time they answer the mystery questions that only their partner can see.	37
3	Pairs to groups	Activities where students first collaborate in pairs then use the product of their collaboration in a groupwork activity.	40
3a	Cooperative picture descriptions	A2–B2 A cooperative variation on 'Describe and Draw': students work in teams to recreate their partner's pictures.	40
3b	Six questions	A2–B2 Students work in pairs to write the answers to six questions on a mystery topic. They then play a guessing game with another pair by rolling a dice and asking questions.	43
3c	Peer poster	A1–A2 Students interview their partner and complete an infographic. Then, in groups, they create a poster based on what they have learnt.	46

				Page
3d	Peer needs-analysis	A2–B2 Students find out about the needs and learning preferences of their classmates, increasing rapport and peer-understanding.		49
3e	'Call my Bluff'	A2–B2 Students work in pairs to create two false definitions for a word. This is followed by a guessing game in groups.		52
4	Teamwork	Students work in small teams to solve problems, make decisions or complete quizzes.		55
4a	Team problem-solving	B1–C1 Teams work together to solve a problem that requires analysis, evaluation and creativity, and then present their answers to classmates.		55
4b	Student teams achievement divisions (STAD)	A1–A2 Teams work together to learn and practise important grammar or vocabulary before each taking a quiz on the topic.		59
4c	Peer quizzes	B1–B2 Teams work together to create multiple choice quiz questions, answer them and then provide useful peer-feedback.		62
4d	Reciprocal teaching	B1–B2 Team members work as a group to help each other understand a challenging text in English.		65
4e	Cooperative listening	A2–B1 A listening activity with a difference – teams only get the comprehension questions afterwards!		70
4f	Decision maze	B1–C1 Teams work together to make decisions in this interactive story-creation activity.		73
5	Jigsaw groupwork	Students learn something new and then share and synthesise with other group members.		81
5a	Four-text jigsaw reading	A2–B1 Students read one of four texts in expert groups, then share and synthesise their findings in their home group.		81
5b	Grammar jigsaw	A2–B1 Students learn about different areas of grammar in their expert groups then do an activity that draws on their shared knowledge.		85
5c	Internet research jigsaw	B1–B2 Students research different, but related, questions in expert groups using the Internet. They then work together in their home groups to find out how their research links together.		89
5d	Story jigsaw	B1–B2 Groups get part of a story and are challenged to remember it. Then in their home groups, they share their part of the story to understand the whole.		92
5e	'Spot the difference' texts	B1–B2 Each student gets one of three near-identical texts which they cannot show each other. They must ask questions to find the differences and work out which one is wrong.		95

				Page
6	Groups to whole class	Activities where students work in groups first, followed by whole class interaction through presentations, peer assessment and gallery walk activities.		99
6a	Expert writers	A2–B1 Students learn from studying an example text in their expert groups, then write a similar text in home groups, followed by peer-assessment.		99
6b	Translingual jigsaw	B1–B2 Students compare news stories in different languages in order to improve an English language version.		104
6c	Informed debate	B2–C1 Groups get facts and figures to prepare for a whole class debate and try to come to a class consensus, rather than 'win' it!		107
7	Whole class	Activities where students work together as a whole class to solve a shared problem or complete a task.		112
7a	Line stand	A1–B2 Groups arrange themselves into lines according to differences between themselves and then try to guess what the other group's line represents.		112
7b	'People snap'	A1–B2 Students mingle to find classmates with similarities.		115
7c	Whole-class jigsaw	B1–C1 Students mingle to share information on strips of paper; then home groups try to reconstruct a story, rewrite a text or design a poster.		118
7d	'Find everyone who ...'	A2–B1 Pairs create questions to ask classmates and report back on their findings.		121
8	Flipped cooperative learning	Activities where students complete homework before class.		124
8a	Vocab master	B1–B2		124
8b	Flipped jigsaw	B1–B2		127
8c	Research and share	B1–B2		131
	References			134
	Indexes			137



References and further reading

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**Any
questions?**