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DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LESSONS

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

This MA thesis focuses on the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom.

Many studies have shown the positive effect of cooperative learning on students' cognitive and social development and peer relationships, so it is important to practice this method in the classroom. Cooperative learning (CL) is not just about grouping students; it is about applying the key elements of CL which make learning effective and productive. Since coursebooks do not contain a significant number of cooperative activities, the teacher must create or adapt the activities to meet the criteria.

The aim of the MA thesis was to create and carry out cooperative activities in English lessons and to analyse whether students' opinions about group work changed after participating in the activities. The thesis tries to answer two research questions: what have students' previous experiences with group work been and how participating in CL activities changes students' opinion about group work.

The first part of the thesis provides an overview of the theoretical aspects and elements of cooperative learning, its principles and importance of implementation. The second part focuses on the study in which students participated in seven CL activities and responded to two questionnaires - before and after participating in the activities. The activities accompany the *Solutions Elementary* coursebook. 13 Year 7 students participated in the study, and activities were carried out in English lessons over a period of two months.

Although the study was conducted over a short period of time, its results show that the implementation of cooperative activities has a positive effect on students' interaction, mutual decision-making, and active participation in activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning is one of the most effective ways to start teaching students about how to successfully work together and achieve mutual goals. It is also an opportunity to actively involve students in the learning process and guide them towards becoming self-directed learners.

Students can engage in the learning process passively or actively. Johnson & Johnson (2018) describe passive learning as a process where the student is silent, working separately from others, and under the direction of someone. They state that active learning, on the other hand, takes place when students engage meaningfully, cognitively, and emotionally with other students, the task assigned, and the materials used to complete the task. According to the same authors, the characteristics of active learning are students communicating with each other, generating new ideas and discovering their own understanding and meaning from the learning activities and determining their own learning direction. The Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011, Appendix 2, Subject "Foreign languages") considers learners' active participation in the study process as one of the essential principles in the learner-centered teaching process.

One of the ways to change the student's role from passive to active is to use cooperative learning (CL) where participants work in small groups to reach shared goals related to academic assignments (Johnson & Johnson 2008). Cooperation is a process where participants are equal partners and teamwork is regulated by partnership (Dewey 1929) and all group members are expected to contribute to the work of the group by sharing their ideas, solving problems together, arguing constructively, and working towards the same goal (Johnson & Johnson 2008).

Cohen (1992: 4) defines CL as follows: "In a cooperative learning group, students work together in a group small enough so that everyone can participate on a task that has

been clearly assigned. Students are expected to carry out their task without direct and immediate supervision of the teacher." In addition, the outcomes of group work must benefit all members of the group (Johnson & Johnson 2018). Cooperation should be a normal part of classroom activities, and several studies confirm the positive impact it has on students' development (Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1998; Johnson et al. 1981; Bossert 1988).

David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson have conducted research into cooperation since the 1980s, and many of today's authors rely on their studies on this topic. Johnson et al (1998) point out the most important factors of cooperation, such as working together towards the same goals and working together to maximize students' own and each other's learning. The authors believe that every member of the group is a different expert who needs the others to complete the group's task. Furthermore, for the group to succeed, the members must help and encourage their groupmates to apply maximum efforts (Slavin 1995).

Research into CL has mainly been conducted in the United States and Australia; in Estonia, there has been no thorough research into CL (Heidmets 2017). Loogma (2014) states that, in theory, Estonian teachers support the learner-centered approach, but in the classroom, they still tend to use traditional teaching methods (Heidmets 2017). Learner-centered teaching is the cornerstone of the constructivist approach, whose main idea is that learners acquire knowledge actively, and by relying on their own previous experience, new understandings are constructed (The approach to learning... 2017). On the website of Estonia's Ministry of Education and Research, the essence of the constructivist approach is described as follows:

> According to the constructivist approach, learning is individual, active and takes place in a specific context. They create new knowledge and skills, associating the things they have already learnt with the information they receive from the environment. The importance of context emphasises that learning has to be meaningful: learning depends on the extent learners can assign meaning to new information on the basis of their previous experience, and what that meaning is. Effective learning can therefore take place on the basis of situations that are familiar and significant for the learner, by analysing such situations and giving them meaning through the new knowledge, and by solving relevant problems. In

such a case, teaching means instructing and guiding the learners, creating the conditions that favour learning. Collaborative learning means working together towards a common goal. Maximising learning by every participant as well as other members of the group is important here. In collaborative learning, learners learn from each other as much as from teachers or instructors, in order to reach a jointly constructed new meaning. In this kind of learning, the focus is on consensus instead of competitiveness and superiority. (The approach to learning... 2017: 9)

This discussion of the constructivist approach includes the concept of collaborative learning. Collaborative and cooperative learning are sometimes used as synonyms and they have some common features, but these concepts are somewhat different in principle. The main distinction is that, in the case of collaboration, the primary focus is on learning; cooperation, however, is more about teaching. It can be stated that cooperative learning is teacher-centered whereas collaborative learning is student-centered (Panitz 1999).

According to Bruffee (1995), foundational knowledge (for example, spelling and grammar in language learning) is best learned using cooperative learning structures as the aim of cooperation is to accomplish a content-specific end product or goal through students working together under the guidance of the teacher (Panitz 1999). Collaboration, on the other hand, is not just a classroom technique but a philosophy, where individuals interact and take responsibility for their own actions (including learning) and have respect for the abilities and contributions of their peers (Panitz 1999). However, during the process of collaboration, new, non-foundational knowledge is created when students doubt answers and methods provided by the teacher and participate actively in learning and the inquiry process (Bruffee 1995). Bruffee has formulated the main outcome of collaborative learning: "Out of this process new knowledge is often created, something not likely to occur when dealing with the facts and information associated with foundational knowledge. Collaborative learning shifts the responsibility for learning away from the teacher as expert to the student, and perhaps teacher, as learner". Therefore, cooperative learning, where the learning process is

mostly controlled by the teacher, should transform in time to collaborative learning, where students are responsible for their own learning (Bruffee 1995).

Since CL has a significant impact on students' development, it is important that the environment created in the classroom supports and encourages cooperation. Coursebooks used in foreign language classes often contain group work activities, but usually the structure of these exercises does not meet the criteria for cooperative learning. The author of this thesis believes that teachers should regularly carry out cooperative activities in foreign language classes by adapting coursebook tasks or creating cooperative activities themselves.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to design and implement cooperative activities that can be used with *Solutions Elementary Student's Book* (used in Year 7) and to determine students' views on group work before and after implementing cooperative activities. Since the author of the thesis is teaching students in a slower pace group, it is considered important for them to acquire foundational knowledge in English. Learners of this age are not yet completely self-directed learners; therefore, applying cooperative activities is appropriate. According to the aim of this thesis, the research questions are as follows:

1. What have students' previous experiences with group work been?
2. How does participating in CL activities change students' opinion about group work?

The thesis consists of two chapters. Chapter One explains the principles and nature of CL and describes how CL can be implemented in the classroom. Chapter Two gives an overview of the study conducted, presents the research questions, and describes the method and the results.

CHAPTER 1. COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter One provides an overview of the principles and essence of cooperative learning (CL) as well as focuses on the importance of CL and how it could be implemented in the classroom.

1.1 PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

There is a difference between having students simply work in a group and structuring CL. For successful cooperation, the teacher must organise the interaction of the group so that all members could contribute and learn (Topping et al 2017). There are different activities that involve cooperation, but their main elements are the same as defined first by Johnson et al (1998): *interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal, and small group skills, group processing*.

The most important of them is *interdependence*. Team members understand that they need each other in order to complete the group's task. Positive interdependence may be structured by establishing mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles. The second element is *individual accountability:* each member's contribution is assessed, and the results are given to the group and the individual. *Face-to-face promotive interaction* is the third element. By helping, sharing, and encouraging efforts to produce, group members promote each other's productivity. They explain and discuss what they know with team members. The fourth important element is *interpersonal and small group skills.* Members need to have and use the needed social skills for the group to function effectively. These cooperative skills include instructorship, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills. The fifth element is *group processing.* The group needs specific time to discuss how well they are moving towards their goals and maintaining effective working relationships among members. The group needs feedback from the instructor on how well the group is working together. Spencer and Miguel Kagan add *equal*

participation to the core elements mentioned above; the authors believe that active involvement of all team members is an important part of the CL process (Topping et al 2017).

Therefore, CL is much more than just placing students to work in a group. To meet the requirements of CL, the process of working and learning together must be carefully organised. Elements such as *interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing* lead to a successful teamwork and bring maximum possible benefits to each participant.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

CL affects the learning process, outcomes, and interaction between students. Johnson et al (1981) claim that cooperative activities are more beneficial for students than competitive or individualistic ones. When the teacher uses activities that include cooperation, it helps to develop skills needed for future life, such as communication skills, making decisions, and respecting the opinion of others. Therefore, cooperation is a competence necessary for the accomplishment of learning activities and a general norm to be learned (Bossert 1988).

In addition, Bossert claims the students' achievement is often higher in CL activities than in traditional classroom activities, and CL methods encourage positive interpersonal relations, motivation to learn, and self-esteem among students. Research has shown the positive impact of CL on reducing anxiety, improving self-confidence and self-esteem, increasing motivation, and promoting positive attitudes in foreign language learning (Song 2017). Results of the study that was conducted with university students by Brady and Tsay (2010) indicate that CL fosters higher academic achievement and more successful performance of the students who have participated in group work where they helped to

accomplish the group's goal, were prepared for the class, gave constructive feedback to their peers, and cooperated with the whole team.

CL provides an opportunity for students to learn from each other and with others (Topping et al 2017). For enhanced learning processes to take place, Slavin (1995) presents group goals which are based on learning from group members. The goals are *motivation to learn, motivation to encourage groupmates to learn,* and *motivation to help groupmates to learn*. The author believes that the goals need to be supplemented with *individual accountability* to give students an incentive to help and encourage each other for the whole group to succeed. Students who value doing well as a group and are motivated to teach each other by sharing explanations learn the most in CL (Slavin 1995). Moreover, recent studies find CL to be an efficient technique to support students' ability to restore information in their long-term memory by relating it to the learned knowledge and applying it to new situations for solving problems or making decisions (Tran et al 2019; González-González & Olaya 2020).

In addition to supporting students' social and cognitive development, CL also contributes to the development of language skills. Overall English language proficiency is improved while using CL in language lessons (Zarrabi 2016). Also, different studies have been carried out to investigate the impact of CL on individual language skills. For instance, implementation of CL activities improves the usage of reading strategies and reading comprehension skills (González-González & Olaya 2020). In addition to reading skills, CL improves leadership, decision making, communication, and problem-solving abilities (González-González & Olaya 2020). The findings show that writing skills are also improved due to participation in CL activities (Mahmoud 2014). Mahmoud suggests that the improvement of writing skills can be explained by the encouragement and feedback students give to each other. During CL activities, positive peer feedback plays an important role in

students' English language performance, because it increases motivation to work in groups, which in turn greatly affects students' academic results and participation (González-González & Olaya 2020). Giving feedback to peers is another skill that is being practiced and developed through CL (Mahmoud 2014).

Altogether, CL has a wide range of positive long-term effects on students' social and cognitive development. Social skills are supported through helping each other, making decisions, giving feedback, and working together to achieve the same goal. Also, learning through experience helps to improve memory and problem-solving skills. The positive effects of CL apply also to the language learning process.

Although the long-term positive impact of CL has been proven by many studies, there may be obstacles to its implementation. Firstly, it is time consuming and needs teachers' preparation (Buchs et al 2017; Ghufron & Ermawati 2018). Secondly, research shows that before using CL in the classroom, students may not have a positive attitude towards the method (Mahmoud 2014). Weaker students in the group might feel insecure about their language skills, and more advanced students, on the other hand, believe they are too competent to work with low-level students (Mahmoud 2014). However, after the students had participated in the activities, their views changed, because while working in groups they received support, feedback on their learning performance, and they had a chance to participate actively in foreign language lessons (Mahmoud 2014).

All in all, it can be said that the positive impact of CL on different aspects of students' development is remarkably large. Through this impact, academic achievements and motivation are likely to increase. Even if it is difficult to get started with CL, it should be practiced in the classroom to achieve the long-term positive effects.

1.3 IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Cooperation is a structure of interaction with the purpose of achieving a specific end-product or goal through group work (Panitz 1999). CL can be carried out in any lesson in any subject area with students of any age (Gilles et al 2008). Efforts in CL should have three main outcomes: effort to achieve, positive interpersonal relationships, and psychological adjustment (Johnson & Johnson 2014). To accomplish these outcomes, it is important for the teacher to think through how to form groups, which tasks to use and how to instruct students. Johnson et al (1998) divide cooperative learning groups into three types – *informal cooperative learning groups, formal cooperative learning groups,* and *cooperative base groups*.

Informal cooperative learning is the type where students work together in temporary groups that last for one discussion or class period to achieve joint learning goals (Johnson et al 1998). Such learning groups are used to focus students' attention on the material to be learned; create an expectation set and mood conducive to learning; ensure students cognitively process the material being taught etc. While implementing informal cooperative learning, the teacher must keep in mind two important aspects: the task and the instructions have to be clear and accurate; group work needs to have a definite result (for instance a written answer) (Gilles et al 2008). The teacher should keep an eye on students' mutual discussion during the group work to give extra instructions or see how well students understand the material; the teacher's participation also increases students' individual accountability of participating in group discussions (Gilles et al 2008).

In *formal cooperative learning groups*, students work together for one or several class sessions to complete specific tasks/ activities and achieve shared learning goals (Johnson et al 1998). These learning groups provide the foundation for other cooperative learning procedures and are structured through the teacher's pre-instructional decisions,

building the task and the cooperative structure, observing the groups while they work and communicating to improve teamwork and evaluating students functioning in the group (Johnson et al 1998). Hence the teachers' role before starting the group work is to set objectives for academic and social skills; decide on the size of the groups; determine the method for assigning students into groups and give roles to group members to establish role interdependence; organize the room and materials students are going to use during the assignment to create resource interdependence (Gilles et al 2008). As in informal group work, the teacher should observe every group to increase individual accountability and give instructions when needed (Gilles et al 2008).

The third type of cooperative learning groups Johnson et al (1998) define is *cooperative base groups*. These groups are created for a longer term which lasts for at least one semester or a year with stable members whose primary responsibility is to give each other the support, encouragement, and assistance they need to progress academically and develop cognitively and socially (Johnson et al 1998). When using cooperative base groups, the teacher should form heterogeneous groups of four or three; make up a schedule when the group will regularly meet; put together a timetable with specific tasks and a routine for the group meetings; ensure the five basic elements (*interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small group skills, group processing*) of cooperative groups are fostered and, from time to time, have students process the efficiency of their work in the base group (Gilles et al 2008). Relationships in the groups become more considerate and caring the longer the groups exist (Gilles et al 2008).

CL needs certain structure as well as shared goals and individual accountability so that group work will not result in "the blind leading the blind" or "pooling ignorance", or one person doing all the work (Topping 2005). Therefore, the teacher has an important role in guiding successful cooperation. Cohen (1992) maintains that the teacher's role in

conducting group work is as influential for the success of the learning process as it is in the traditional setting. To achieve effective group work, the teacher needs to build students' skills in discourse by choosing suitable tasks and by holding students accountable as individuals and as groups (Cohen 1992). Also, the heterogeneity in the team is necessary to arrange relations of mutual aid and the differences can be used to give students' an opportunity to construct and exchange knowledge with their peers (Topping et al 2017).

Implementing well-organized CL activities is useful for students in every subject. But the reason why group work is particularly suitable for teaching a foreign language is that language learning is largely about communication and using the language in real-life situations (Davies & Pearse 2000). Group work provides good opportunities for practicing the language and skills needed for both. A study conducted by Arda and Doyran (2017) in Turkey shows that teenagers consider English lessons which concentrate mainly on the coursebook exercises boring and less motivating. The same study also confirmed that adolescents and teenagers enjoy varied activities in which they are involved actively, so that they can communicate with peers and exchange views and opinions. Relationships with peers and the sense of belonging are very important for teenagers (Fonseca-Mora & Fuentes 2007). Therefore, using different language activities which contain empathetic behaviour can influence their sense of belonging to a group which, in turn, will improve the quality of their relationships (Fonseca-Mora & Fuentes 2007). When learners have good relationships, they work in a group more successfully, make decisions together, share ideas, and accomplish tasks together (Fonseca-Mora & Fuentes 2007).

Anderson (2019) has created a set of materials containing CL activities suitable for English lessons. He gives examples of various jigsaw activities which can be used in language learning, such as grammar jigsaw where students learn about different areas of grammar in their expert groups and share their knowledge with others. Another example

would be the Internet research jigsaw, which is a good way to learn about different cultures. Students, first, research information about related questions in expert groups using the Internet and then work together in their home groups to find out how their research links together. According to Anderson (2019), cooperative picture descriptions is also a suitable activity for language lessons, where students answer questions about each other's pictures and try to draw a picture according to the answers they get. In Anderson's view, pair work can also be carried out successfully as a cooperative activity. An example would be a pair work jigsaw, in which students read one of the two texts individually and then compare and analyse what they have learnt. Peer-interviews also provide good opportunities for students to cooperate. Interviews can be conducted in pairs or groups of three where one student asks the questions, the second one answers, and the third person writes down the answers. Later, they can compare the answers with another pair or group.

To conclude, CL has a positive impact on the students' learning process, but research shows that teachers have some difficulties in implementing CL because the process is time consuming; it is challenging to adapt it to the curriculum and evaluate students during cooperative activities (Buchs et al 2017). In addition to the time factor, CL needs active participation from both the teacher and students; hence it is difficult to manage and requires extra preparation (Ghufron & Ermawati 2018). At the same time, research findings show that CL is a method that increases students' self-confidence and motivation, reduces nervousness, increases students' responsibility in learning, and makes learning easier (Ghufron & Ermawati 2018) and, thus, its implementation seems to be worth the effort required. Since language learning is mainly about communication, it is appropriate to use various CL activities in foreign language lessons to support and improve the learning process.

CHAPTER 2. COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPANY *SOLUTIONS ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' BOOK*

Chapter Two gives an overview of the study on implementing CL activities and the students' opinion about group work. The research questions, method used, and results of the study with the discussion are presented.

2.1 THE AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the study discussed was to create and implement cooperative activities in the English language classroom and to find out students' perceptions about groupwork before and after participating in the CL activities created. The aim was to encourage each student's active participation in group work so that effective learning can take place. The topic was chosen because coursebooks used in foreign language lessons often provide group work activities which do not lead to cooperation. The activities created were used along with the *Solutions Elementary Student's Book.* Based on the purpose of this MA thesis, the specific research questions posed were as follows:

1. What have students' previous experiences with group work been?

2. How does participating in CL activities change students' opinion about group work?

2.2 PROCEDURE

The study participants were 13 7th grade students (one study group). The students are all 13 years old. The students were selected because they study in a slower-pace group, and it was hoped that cooperative activities might encourage them to use English more actively in the learning process. The students have been learning English since the second grade. In the first year, they had one, in the second year two, and after that three English lessons per week. At the beginning of the 7th grade, the class was divided into two groups according to their pace of learning. Before that, English lessons were held with the whole class.

Since all the students are under the age of 18, the parental consent form (Appendix 1) was sent to the parents, who all allowed their children to participate in the study. To ensure the students' anonymity, their names have been replaced with Student 1, Student 2 etc.

The study was carried out in four stages.

Firstly, a questionnaire was compiled by the author of the thesis (Appendix 2). At the beginning of the school year, the participants filled in the questionnaire containing questions and statements about group work. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the students' previous experience with and perceptions about group work before they took part in the CL activities carried out in the context of the current study. The students had to answer the questions about advantages and disadvantages of group work and express their opinion of different aspects of group work through the statements presented.

Secondly, the group work activities in the coursebook *Solutions Elementary Students' Book* were analysed. The analysis was conducted to determine what the content of group work activities is and whether the instructions given meet the principles of cooperative learning. The coursebook was chosen because this is the book used in the 7th grade.

After the coursebook analysis, seven CL activities were prepared and carried out in English lessons over a two-month period. The activities were used together with the *Solutions Elementary Student's Book*. In the activities, the focus was on developing different language and cooperation skills through working together. An activity plan was compiled for each activity (Appendix 3).

Finally, after the students had participated in the CL activities, the second questionnaire was administered. The purpose was to find out if the students' opinions about group work had changed compared to the first time they filled in the questionnaire. Both questionnaires were written and completed in Estonian to ensure that all the students understood the questions and statements and could express their thoughts fully.

2.3 GROUP WORK ACTIVITIES IN THE *SOLUTIONS ELEMENTARY* STUDENTS' BOOK

The *Solutions Elementary* set used with the students who participated in the study includes a coursebook and a workbook (as well as the teacher's book, tests, and class audio CDs). The *Solutions* materials are being used in this class for the first year. Previously the *I Love English* series by Ülle Kurm and Ene Soolepp was used. The school has decided not to continue with *I Love English* in the 7th grade because it is thought to be poorly structured, including outdated texts, and often not age appropriate. Though the topics of the *Solutions* materials are age appropriate, the structure and some teaching methods (for instance, the presentation of grammar rules) seem to be too complex for 13-year-olds.

The *Solutions Elementary* set is described as suitable for the language proficiency up to level A2 (elt.oup.com. 2021). However, the analysis of the exercises and tasks it includes using the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001) revealed that the materials are more suitable for the levels A2-B1. CEFR (2001) describes B1 language proficiency as follows:

> "Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. /.../Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans." (CEFR 2001: 24).

The *Solutions* coursebook contains exercises and activities at both levels A2 and B1. Reading tasks require students to read and understand specific texts (e.g., Paralympic Games; Unusual Cities; Palmerston, an Island in the Pacific Ocean, etc.) which are quite long and contain specific thematic vocabulary. After reading the text, students usually need to answer questions about the content or match the titles with the right paragraphs. Writing activities include writing a short article about a town, a narrative, or a description of a home. Students are provided with clear instructions on how to structure their texts and there is

always an example given. However, the sentence structures and vocabulary needed are rather complex. Speaking activities are usually done in pairs and students need to express their opinion, agree, or disagree with certain statements and give reasons for their opinions, or have a discussion with a partner and afterwards retell what the partner said. The examples provided above show that students cannot manage by using only language of immediate relevance, communicating in simple and routine tasks which require elementary and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters, as is characteristic to the A2 level (CEFR 2001: 24).

In the lower-pace group, the language level of the students is quite varied. The National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011) expects the students to reach the level A2 in all skills by the end of the sixth grade. The majority of the students in the study group have indeed reached the level A2. However, a few students have not and need additional help regularly.

The coursebook is organized by topics and consists of nine units. Since the 7th grade has three English lessons a week, it takes approximately one month to work through one unit. Each unit consists of 8 lessons: A- Vocabulary, B- Grammar, C- Listening, D- Grammar, E- Word Skills, F- Reading, G- Speaking, H- Writing. In reality, one coursebook lesson can sometimes take 2-3 school lessons if the material is complex and the students need more time to master the topic. The coursebook is closely supported by the workbook, which has the same structure.

Each lesson in the coursebook contains different types of activities, which usually require the use of all four language skills. Even when the lesson is focusing on speaking, it has activities where students also need to write, read, or listen to something.

The coursebook is concise and does not contain many practice activities through which students could acquire grammar rules more easily, practice speaking and

communication skills. Every lesson of the unit in the coursebook contains two to four pair work activities, but there are only four group work activities in total. The workbook contains one pair work activity and no group work. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to adapt the coursebook activities or create extra practice activities.

The pair work activities in the coursebook are, in general, creative, and fall into one of the four types. The first type requires an exchange of personal opinions or experiences between students. For instance, "Work in pairs. Tell your partner about housework in your home. Use phrases from ex 4. Note down what your partner says." (Solutions 2017: 11), "In pairs, ask and answer questions about what your partner has to do at weekends. Use *Do you have to....* and the phrases below." (Solutions 2017: 20), "Work in pairs. Design your ideal school year and school day. Make notes about these things." (Solutions 2017: 23). Most of these pair work activities continue with the students needing to inform the whole class about their opinions, for instance: "Tell the class about your partner." (Solutions 2017: 11), "Tell the class about your ideal school year and school day. Use the notes you made in ex 7." (Solutions 2017: 23). Such activities support students' communication and performing skills, because when they can discuss their answers in pairs first, it is easier for them to speak to the whole class later as they are more confident about their answers when they present information that has been discussed with a partner before.

The second type of pair work activities is preparing dialogues as in the following examples from the coursebook: "Work in pairs. Prepare a dialogue using the prompts below. Use problems from exercise 4 or your own ideas." (Solutions 2017: 26)." "Work in pairs. Prepare an interview between a journalist and one of the climbers" (Solutions 2017: 87), "Work in pairs. Imagine you are planning a day at the Olympics. Look at the timetable in exercise 6, and agree on four events to see. Prepare a dialogue using phrases from exercises 3 and 7." (Solutions 2017: 92).

The third type of pair work activities focuses on specific tasks students need to complete through working together. For instance, "Work in pairs. Put the family members below into three groups: a) female b) male c) male or female. Then listen and check." (Solutions 2017: 9), "Work in pairs. Ask and answer the questions in ex 5." (Solutions 2017: 12), "Work in pairs. Choose the best summary of the text: a, b or c. What is wrong with the other summaries?" (Solutions 2017: 14), "Work in pairs. Describe the photo of the classroom. Use the phrases and words below to help you. What is unusual about it?" (Solutions 2017: 21).

The four group work activities are very similar to the pair work ones: students need to prepare a dialogue or create imaginary situations. The group work activities in the coursebook are as follows: "Work in groups of three. Act out the dialogue in ex 2, but order different food and drinks." (Solutions 2017: 48), "Work in groups of three: two customers and waiter. Look at the menu below. Then prepare a dialogue in which you do three of the following." (Solutions 2017: 48), "Work in pairs or groups. Think of a campaign you would like to start on social media to make your school, town or environment better in some way. Invent a hash tag for your campaign. Present your campaign to the class. Which is the most popular?" (Solutions 2017: 80), "Speaking. Work in pairs or small groups. Imagine you want to raise money for charity by doing an event similar to the one in the text. Discuss these questions and make notes. Use the phrases below to help you. Share your ideas with the class." (Solutions 2017: 89).

Thus, the group work activities in the coursebook mainly consist of short pair work activities where students express their opinion or perform different imaginary situations with their partner. The activities encourage communication between students, but they do not foster much cooperation.

Firstly, in order to successfully apply CL elements, there should be 3-4 students in one group so that individual accountability, interdependence, face-to-face interaction and equal participation could take place. The only element out of the four that is present is face-to-face interaction as most of the pair and group work activities are speaking activities and, thus, students need to communicate and discuss topics with each other. However, the amount of individual accountability cannot be measured as the roles or assignments within pairs or groups have not been divided and some students might feel that they are not accountable for achieving the group's goal, for instance: "Work in pairs. Put the family members below into three groups: a) female b) male c) male or female. Then listen and check." (Solutions 2017: 9). The instruction says to work in pairs, but nothing more. Another example from the coursebook proves that there might occur a situation where some members participate in the activity and some do not, since the instructions do not assign any tasks: "Work in pairs or groups. Think of a campaign you would like to start on social media to make your school, town or environment better in some way. Invent a hash tag for your campaign. Present your campaign to the class. Which is the most popular?" (Solutions 2017: 80). From this instruction, students do not get any guidelines for how to achieve the goal as a group. Since the activities lack the element of individual accountability, the issue of equal participation also appears as the instructions given do not share different tasks between group members. Therefore, active, and more successful students could do all the work and those who are insecure or less motivated may remain inactive.

The activities are also quite short so probably students cannot build up productive positive interaction and teamwork in such a short time to reach mutual goals. Hence, it is up to the teacher to adapt or create cooperative activities for students.

2.4 THE STUDY AND ITS RESULTS

This section focuses on the analysis of the pre-study questionnaire, the description of the created and implemented cooperative activities and the analysis of the post-study questionnaire.

2.4.1 THE FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE – THE STUDENTS' OPINION OF GROUP WORK BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

The first questionnaire was created to find out students' previous experiences with group work and their views on different aspects of group work. The questionnaire consisted of nine open-ended questions and 14 statements about group work. The possible responses to the statements were "Always", "Often", "Rarely" and "Never". The students filled in the questionnaire electronically during one of the English lessons.

The results of the first questionnaire ought to answer the first research question of this thesis, which was: **What have students' previous experiences with group work been?**

The responses showed that, based on their previous experience, the students prefer to work in pairs or groups rather than alone (only three students out of 13 prefer working alone) (Question 1). The reasons provided for their preference include: they can discuss things, it is more fun, and tasks can be divided. One student, however, pointed out that it is better to work alone because it is easier to stay focused then (Question 2). The students were asked about the usefulness of group work (Question 3). The most useful aspect mentioned was that group work allows students to communicate with different classmates and be more considerate of others (5 out of 13 students noted that). The other benefits of group work mentioned were "the opportunity to have discussions", "to receive better grades", "to gain new knowledge", "to understand the topic better", "it is easier to if you don't have to do all the work alone". To the statement "Working in a group with others, I understand the material

better than learning alone" five students responded "Always", five students "Often" and three students "Rarely". No one chose the option "Never". Hence, the majority of the students have experienced the positive impact of group work on their learning process.

The students were asked to list arguments for and against using group work based on their earlier experience (Questions 4 and 5). Arguments for the group work method were: "increases respect for others", "it gives more courage to perform", "I don't like working alone", "peers help each other", "I can be in a team with my friends", "sharing responsibilities". Three students out of 13 responded that it is easier to get work done in a group. Five students mentioned communication and discussion between group members. Thus, it is important for the students to communicate and have discussions during the learning process. They feel more confident, and it is easier to manage different tasks. However, the students also mentioned several disadvantages of group work. The main problem for them was inequality. Five students out of 13 complained that during group work some of the students do not participate at all and others have to do all the work. The second negative factor was the noise that arises during group work. Four students out of 13 mentioned noise and redundant speaking. The same number of students mentioned disagreements between group members.

When asked about the frequency of group work activities in different subject lessons, eight out of 13 students claimed that group work is rarely done (Question 6). Two students thought that group work is done often. Biology (8 students out of 13), English (5 students out of 13) and literature (2 students out of 13) were mentioned as the main subjects where group work is practiced. It can be concluded that only three teachers use group work regularly. One student stated that group work is carried out in every subject, but apparently, the other teachers use it rarely. The question about what group work activities should be used in English lessons (Question 7) received the following responses: eight students out of 13

answered "making presentations"; the other activities mentioned included "learning new material or words", "learning grammar", "reading together". These suggestions were taken into account when preparing the CL activities.

The students were asked to express their opinion about the formation of groups – is it important who is in their group, who should form the groups, and how the roles should be shared in the group (Questions 8, 9 and 10)? Seven students out of 13 considered it important who they are working with in a group. They listed such arguments as "because I don't know everyone in the class so well", "cooperation with some people is better", "it is essential to be in the same group with a best friend", "I don't get along equally with everyone". Six students claimed that they could work together with every student in the class as long as "group work is fun", "everyone works equally". One student responded, "Everyone deserves to be somewhere". So, division into groups is strongly affected by the relationships among the students. Though it is important for the students with whom they work, seven out of 13 students would form groups randomly or let the teacher decide. Six students would like to choose for themselves who to work with. When groups are formed, the matter of the roles in the group arises. Two students out of 13 suggested that there should be a group leader who divides the tasks. Four students did not know how the roles should be distributed. Five students thought that each group member is important, and everyone should participate equally.

The statements concerning the principles of CL can be broadly divided into four sections: statements concerning *individual accountability* (Statements 17 and 20), *interdependence and mutual goal* (Statements 18 and 20)*, face-to-face interaction* (Statements 13 and 14) and *equal participation* (Statements 12, 15, 16 and 19). The students had to respond according to their previous experience with group work.

The first statement regarding *individual accountability* was: "In group work, all members are actively involved in solving the task". Two students out of 13 chose the option "Always" and 11 students chose "Often". No one picked "Rarely" or "Never". To the second statement "In group work, each member has a task for which he or she is responsible" the responses were as follows: four students out of 13 chose "Always", eight students "Often" and one student "Rarely". No one chose the option "Never". Hence, most of the students have experienced individual accountability aspects in previous group work activities. The aspect of active participation received more positive responses than the statement about the tasks. This might be due to the fact that not always the tasks are divided between group members and the instructions given are too general. This in turn creates a situation where all group members are not actively involved in solving the task.

To the statement about *interdependence* – *"We help each other in group work"* – seven students out of 13 responded with "Always" and six students with "Often". "In group work, all members have mutual goal" – the statement about mutual goals – got the response "Always" from eight students and "Often" from five students. Interdependence in the group work is accomplished when group members have an understanding that in order to complete the task, they need each other and cannot do it without the help of all the group members. Answers to the statements might indicate that helping each other is not essential because the work is not done equally, and the responsibility is not shared. The same can be concluded about mutual goal, the members who do not participate in group work, they do not consider it important to achieve the mutual goal.

The statement about *face-to-face interaction* – "When working in groups, we communicate with each other in a friendly way" – got the response "Always" from seven students and the response "Often" from five students. One student responded with "Rarely". The same results were received about the statement "Everyone in the group can express their

opinion". These results might be related to the previous answers about interdependence and individual accountability, because the members who are not involved actively in the group work are too passive to express their opinion and might feel they do not belong in the group. That automatically reduces friendly communication and discussion between the group members.

Out of the four CL elements, the most attention was paid to *equal participation,* since the students had mentioned it as one of the biggest downsides of group work. The students had to respond to four statements on that topic. The first statement was about sharing tasks: "When working in a group, we share tasks equally" (Statement 12) and seven students out of 13 chose the option "Always" and six students "Often". The next claim concerned equality of the members: "In group work, the opinion of all members is equally important" (Statement 15). Five students stated that this is "Always" and eight students that it is "Often" true. The statement about focusing on the task – "In group work, all members focus on the task" Statement 16) – received the reply "Always" three times, "Often" nine times, and "Rarely" once. The last statement about equality was: "We make decisions together during group work" (Statement 19). The options "Always" and "Often" were both chosen six times and "Rarely" once. The students who answered "Always" to these statements have experienced group work where all the members participate equally, and everyone's opinion is equally important. This usually happens in groups where all the members are motivated, confident and with good language skills. The problems with equal participation occur when the members have different abilities and confidence about their language skills. Students who are less capable are usually passive in a group and do not express their opinion. They usually just listen to others or do not focus on the work at all. It can be avoided if all the group members have the same amount of responsibility, and the work cannot be completed until all the members have contributed.

One statement concerned the feedback the students had received for participating in group work – "The grade / feedback received from the teacher for group work is fair to all members" (Statement 22). Four students out of 13 responded with "Always", seven students with "Often" and two with "Rarely". The reason why a larger number of students answered "Often" might be the situations where everyone has not participated equally in the group work but still get the same grade as those who did all the work. This, in turn, reinforces the understanding that even if not all members contribute to the work of the group, it will not affect the grade they receive. In the first questionnaire, most of the students agreed that the grades should be received according to the contribution.

It can be concluded that the students had had some experience with group work though they stated it was done rarely. The experience with group work appears to have been mainly positive since they prefer learning in a pair or a group rather than alone. The majority of the students have in different variations experienced the elements of CL during group work activities, for instance face-to-face interaction, having mutual goals and expressing their opinion in a group. As downsides of the group work, inequality, disagreements and noise was mentioned. The matter of inequality and noise can be solved by better organization and structure of the group work. If the group work activity is structured according to the principles of cooperative learning, the level of inequality and noise should decrease. Although disagreements are a normal part of the cooperation process, and the more students work together, the better they learn to resolve differences, these factors are apparently problematic for students since they participate in group work activities rarely and the structure of the activity does not meet the goals of cooperative learning.

2.4.2 CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

It is a known fact that language learning takes place the best when the language is being actively used in practical situations. Therefore, seven group work activities which foster active use of English and cooperation were created in the context of this study. The purpose was to create or adapt one to two CL activities for each unit of the *Solutions* coursebook, since the coursebook itself does not contain many such activities.

The activities were designed considering the principles of cooperative learning. It was important that the activities emphasize *mutual goals, individual accountability of every group member, interdependence, face-to-face interaction*, and *equal participation*. Three of the activities were adapted from the coursebook (see Appendix 3 – Activity plans 2, 3 and 4), three were designed by the author of the thesis (see Appendix 3 – Activity plans 1, 5 and 6) and one activity was taken from the book "Activities for Cooperative Learning" (Anderson 2019) (see Appendix 3 – Activity plan 7).

While compiling the activities, the proposals made by the students in the first questionnaire were also taken into consideration. The activities they wanted to do in groups included making presentations (Activity 1), learning new words (Activities 2 and 3), learning grammar (Activity 5), and reading together (Activity 4).

As the activities were meant to accompany the *Solutions Elementary* coursebook, the topics for them were derived from the topics of the coursebook units they accompany: Unit 2 – School Days (Activities 1 and 2); Unit 3 – Style (Activities 3, 4 and 5); Unit 4 – Food (Activities 6 and 7).

Forming groups was one of the biggest challenges while implementing CL activities. Groups were formed differently for different activities. There were three ways how groups were formed – the students chose for themselves, randomly and by the teacher. The students got to choose their own group mates in the activity "Presentation about Great Britain"

(Activity 1), since the outcome was a presentation, and they would feel more relaxed performing in front of the class with someone they feel comfortable with. In the activity "Vocabulary crossword" (Activity 2), students could also choose their own partners. The activity "Peer interviews: "How healthy are you?" (Activity 7) was structured so that, first, the students worked in self-selected pairs and, later, in randomly formed groups. The activities "Describing pictures" (Activity 3) and "Making plans for the weekend" (Activity 5) were also carried out with groups whose members were selected randomly. However, when activities are more complex and require a wider range of skills, it is best to form heterogeneous groups. Hence, the groups were formed by the teacher for such activities as "Jigsaw reading" (Activity 4) and "Internet research jigsaw" (Activity 6). The students worked in formal study groups as they worked in the same groups for one or more school lessons.

Table 1 gives an overview of the activities carried out, the way the groups were formed, and the CL elements implemented in each of them.

Table 1. Cooperative activities which were carried out in the context of the study.

Activity number	Name of the activity	How pairs/ groups were formed	CL elements				
			Individual accountability	Inter-dependence	Face to face interaction	Equal participation	Mutual goal
1	Presentation about Great Britain	By the students		X	X		X
2	Vocabulary crossword	By the students	X	X		X	X
3	Describing pictures	Randomly by lot.	X	X	X	X	X
4	Jigsaw reading	By the teacher	X	X	X	X	X
5	Making arrangements – my weekend plans	Randomly by lot.	X	X	X	X	X
6	Internet research jigsaw	By the teacher	X	X	X	X	X
7	Peer interviews: "How healthy are you?"	Pairs – by the students. Groups - randomly	X	X	X	X	X

Before implementing the activities, the topic of cooperation was discussed in a lesson. The students pointed out main keywords they associated with cooperation and suggested what the positive and negative aspects of group work might be and how it could be made useful for all the participants. The main points the students mentioned were: cooperation is communication, concentration, being friendly, working together, solving different tasks, noise, equal rights, different opinions, listening to others and teamwork. The students were worried that during group work not everyone contributes equally. The students considered it important that if everyone participates equally, everyone should be assessed

the same way. It can be concluded that the students are familiar with the concept of cooperative learning and know the keywords which describe successful group work.

The seven activities were used over a period of two months, once or twice a week. Activities differed in their duration. Three activities (Activities 3, 4 and 5) were shorter and lasted about 20-30 minutes. Four activities were more time consuming (Activity 1 – three lessons, activities 2 and 6 – two lessons, activity 7 – one lesson).

To conclude, the students had a good attitude towards group work activities. They participated actively and were motivated. The main difficulty, as mentioned, was forming groups. When the students had an opportunity to choose their own group mates, they chose the same partners every time. When groups were formed randomly or by the teacher, the students were not always pleased with the partners they ended up with. Nevertheless, they participated in the activities, and, over time, this problem decreased.

2.4.3 THE SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE – THE STUDENTS' OPINION OF GROUP WORK AFTER PARTICIPATING IN COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

After participating in CL activities, the students filled in the second questionnaire, which was aimed at finding out if the students' views about group work had changed. Therefore, based on the results of the second questionnaire, the second research question can be answered: **how does participating in CL activities change students' opinion about group work?**

The second questionnaire consisted eight open-ended questions and 11 statements about group work. The open-ended questions were about the group work activities the students had participated; the statements about the CL elements were the same as in questionnaire one so that the answers could be compared. The possible responses to the

statements were "Always", "Often", "Rarely" and "Never". Students filled in the questionnaire electronically during one of the English lessons.

In the second questionnaire, the students were asked only to respond on the basis of the cooperative activities that had been used in the English lessons during the two months. In an oral group discussion, it was revealed that in the other subjects the share of pair and group work had not increased or changed compared to previous times.

Before the study, the students considered the greatest disadvantage of group work to be unequal participation – the fact that some members do not contribute at all. After participating in the CL activities, none of the students thought that some members did not participate in group work at all (Question 18). However, three students out of 13 stated that some of their peers contributed less than the others. In the first questionnaire, noise was mentioned as another argument against using group work by four students. After the activities, two students still mentioned too loud noise. The third disadvantage of group work on the basis of the first questionnaire was disagreements between group members mentioned by four students. In the second questionnaire, three students still mentioned it. After participating in the CL activities, a new negative aspect (mentioned by three students) appeared – group composition. Three students were disappointed when the groups were formed randomly or by the teacher and they were not in the same group as their best friend. Three students did not mention any shortcomings in the CL activities.

In the second questionnaire, the students were asked about the activity they most liked and disliked (Questions 1 and 2). Five students out of 13 considered their most favourite activity to be "Describing pictures" (Activity 3) as it was fun and diverse, they could play different roles and move around. The activities "Vocabulary crossword" (Activity 2), "Internet research jigsaw" (Activity 6) and "Peer interviews: "How healthy are you?""

(Activity 7) got all mentioned twice as favourites. The students characterised these activities as fun, interesting and full of new knowledge.

The least favourite activity was "Jigsaw reading" (Activity 4). Six students out of 13 thought so. They considered it to be quite boring and difficult. Two students mentioned that sometimes it was difficult to understand the text or the questions. "Presentation about Great Britain" (Activity 1) was mentioned as the least favourite activity by three students. The arguments were: it was not fun; it was difficult, and the amount of work was quite large.

It can be concluded that the students enjoyed the activities which were varied and playful the most. However, the activities that were more static and required longer concentration on reading or writing were not so highly appreciated.

Next, the statements students responded to in the two questionnaires are compared. The statements concerned *individual accountability, mutual goals and interdependence, face to face interaction* and *equal participation in group work*. This comparison should reveal whether the students' experience and opinion about the nature of group work has changed.

Individual accountability is one of the cornerstones of cooperative learning. Group work must be structured in a way that every member is responsible, and through every member's contribution mutual goal is achieved. Before participating in CL activities eight students out of 13 claimed that "Often" in group work "each member is responsible for his/ her task". Option "Always" was chosen by four students and one student claimed it happens "Rarely". After participating in CL activities, the opinions slightly changed: ten students out of 13 stated that it was "Always" so and three students that it was "Often" the case. The statement "In group work, all members are actively involved in solving the task" was responded to with "Always" by six students and with "Often" by seven students. Figure 1 shows how the opinions differ in the responses to the first and the second questionnaire.
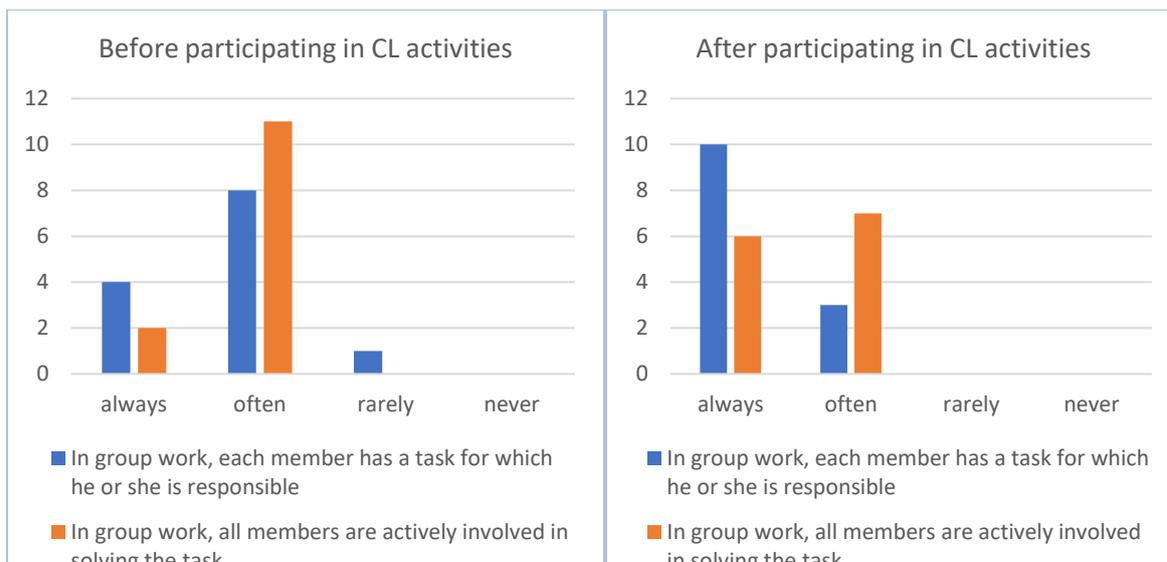
Figure 1. Students' opinions concerning individual accountability.

It is seen in Figure 1 that the opinion concerning *individual accountability* has changed after participating in the CL activities. Especially the matter of shared tasks during group work has changed. This is probably due to the fact that if assignments are divided between students, then everyone is equally responsible for doing their part and all the members have to be actively involved in solving the task.

The responses to the statements regarding *interdependence and mutual goals* also differed slightly in the two questionnaires. The statement about helping each other during group work (Statement 12) received 11 "Always" and two "Often" responses in the second questionnaire. Before the activities, these numbers were seven and six respectively. The same can be said about having a mutual goal in group work (Statement 15). The responses about interdependence and mutual goal are provided in Figure 2.
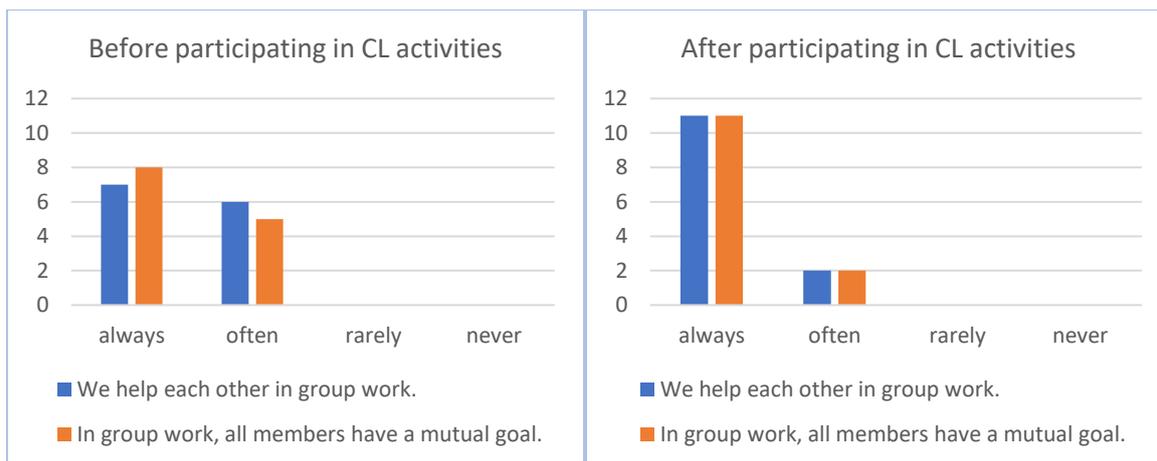
Figure 2. Students' opinions concerning interdependence and mutual goals.

The reason behind these increased numbers might be again shared assignments: when every student has a certain task, the more active ones cannot do it for the others; the students need to help each other in order to get the work done

Also the change in the students' opinions took place regarding friendly communication (Statement 7). While in the first questionnaire, seven students stated communication was "Always" friendly, five that it was "Often" friendly and one that it was "Rarely" friendly, then after the activities, 12 students claimed that friendly communication is "Always" part of group work. One student chose the option "Often". The experience of expressing opinions in group work (Statement 6) did not differ much in the two questionnaires. The results regarding the two statements about *face-to-face interaction* can be seen in Figure 3.
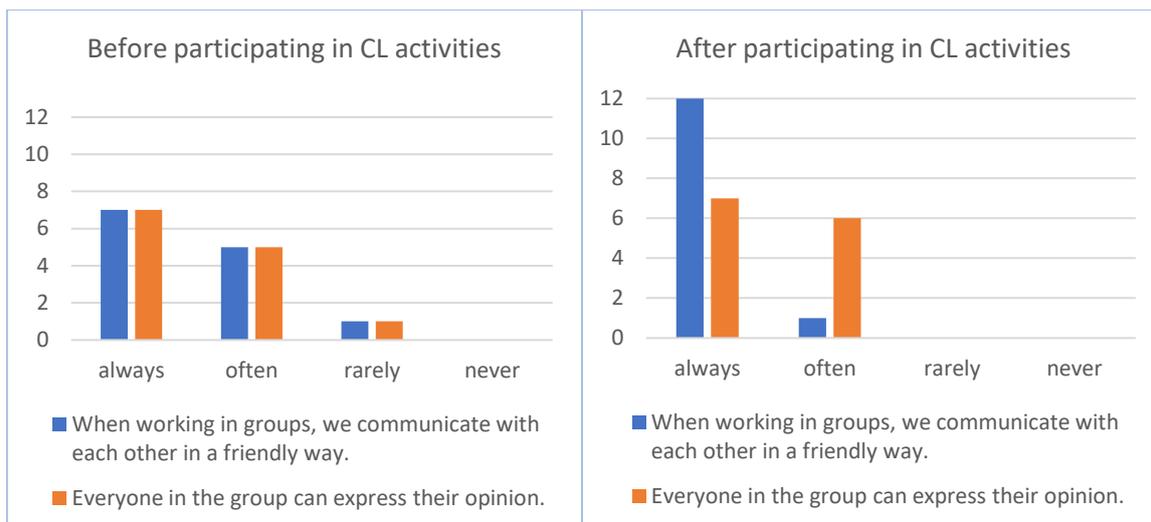
Figure 3. Students' opinions concerning face to face interaction.

The friendly communication between students has increased probably because everyone was equally responsible for the success of the work. In this situation, the students communicate in a friendly way since no one is left out and no one must be responsible alone. Also, the fact that the students had to work in groups with different people might have changed their attitude towards the students whom they got to know better. This fact, in turn, makes communicating between students easier and they are more comfortable to express their opinions in a group.

Equal participation was the topic mentioned by the students several times in the questionnaires and considered a downside of group work. The opinions in the second questionnaire were somewhat different from those in the first one. The statement about making decisions together (Statement 13) received 12 responses of "Always" in the second questionnaire while in the first the number of such responses was six. It is understandable that when all the members are involved in group work, they start making decisions together. When no one is left out and everyone has a clear role in the group, then decision making requires the opinion of all the members. Figure 4 shows how the students' judgements about equality differed in the two questionnaires.
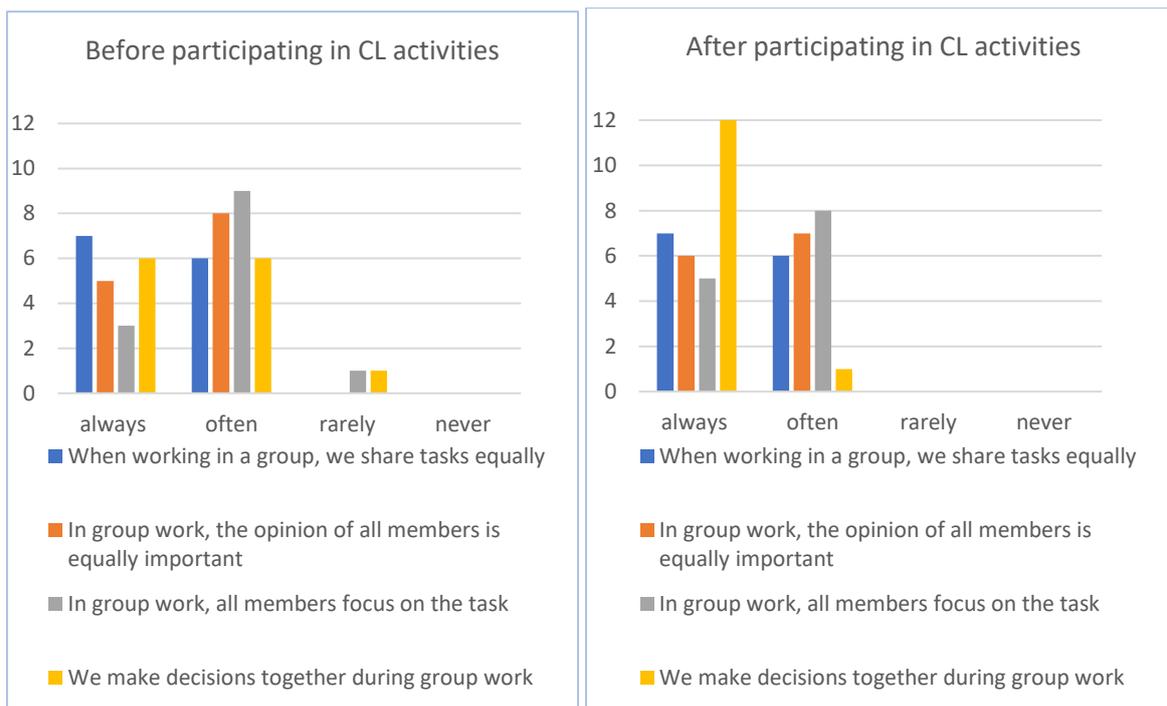
Figure 4. Students' opinions concerning equal participation.

It is seen in Figure 4 that views about sharing tasks (Statement 8) have not changed. This might be caused by the fact that the activities the students participated in were built up so that every group member was already assigned to a certain task. The students did not have to share tasks; this had already been done by the teacher. In the future, when the students are more skilled in working together, they can start dividing tasks and organising their work more by themselves. However, the statements about equally important opinions (Statement 9) and being focused on the task (Statement 10) have some differences, and the answer "Always" was chosen more often in the second questionnaire. Again, these changes were caused by the fact that all group members had to participate and make an effort. If the students are aware of the responsibility they have to their group, then they are more likely to express their opinion and be focused on the task.

When asked about feedback and grades received from the teacher, the students answered that it was fair to all students "Always" (six answers) and "Often" (seven answers).

This is the area where the teacher's role is especially important. It is essential to notice every student's effort and participation so that the feedback would be as fair as possible.

To sum up, the results of the second questionnaire show some changes in the students' opinions about every area of group work. Of the five elements of cooperative learning as defined by Johnson et al (1998), the greatest change took place in *individual accountability.* The students changed their answers most about being responsible for a certain task in a group and all group members being actively involved with the task. The next element in which the changes were also significant was *equal participation.* The students changed their answers the most about making the decisions together during group work. *Interdependence and mutual goals* were the elements where slightly fewer changes took place. However, the opinions about helping each other during group work and having a mutual goal changed somewhat. *Face-to-face interaction* had the least changes in the students' opinions. They thought the same way about everyone expressing their opinion in a group before and after participating in the activities. The answers about communicating with each other in a friendly way had changed slightly.

Similarly to previous studies about CL (Arda & Doyran 2017, Fonseca-Mora & Fuentes 2007), this study also showed that using cooperative activities has a positive impact on the learning process, even when the activities are carried out over such a short period of time as in the current study. When students can participate in group work activities which are well structured, interesting, and fun, positive effects on mutual communication, equal decision making, and active participation are noticeable.

CONCLUSION

The key principle of the constructivist approach is that learners acquire knowledge actively, and, by relying on their own previous experience, new understandings are constructed (The approach to learning... 2017). For active learning to take place, the appropriate conditions and environment must be created in the classroom. One way to engage students actively in the learning process is to use cooperative activities.

It is known that CL activities do not only have an extensive impact on students' learning process, but they also increase students' achievement and affect positively interpersonal relations, motivation to learn, and self-esteem among students (Bossert 1988). The additional advantage of using cooperation in language learning is the considerable contribution to language acquisition that interaction and communication during group work make (Arda & Doyran 2017).

Although implementing cooperative activities has several advantages, language learning coursebooks do not contain much group work that fosters cooperation. This is the reason why materials should be created or adapted so that the learning process would contain working together in groups. However, placing students simply to work together is not automatically cooperative learning. For successful cooperation, the teacher must organise the interaction of the group so that all members could contribute and learn (Topping et al 2017). For this to happen, five basic elements presented by Johnson et al (1998) should be taken into consideration - *interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal, and small group skills, group processing*. The fact that foreign language coursebooks do not contain such activities in large enough numbers provided an incentive for the study undertaken.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to design and implement cooperative activities which can be used with *Solutions Elementary Student's Book* and to determine

students' views on group work before and after participating in cooperative activities. The thesis set out to answer two research questions: what the students' previous experiences with group work were and how the students' opinion about group work changed after participating in CL activities.

To answer these questions, a study was carried out in a group consisting of 13 7th grade students who are studying English using the coursebook *Solutions Elementary*. At the beginning of the school year, the students completed a questionnaire about their previous experiences and opinions about group/ pair work. Next the group work activities in the coursebook *Solutions Elementary Student's Book* were analysed to determine what the content of group work activities was and whether the instructions provided met the cooperative learning principles. After the coursebook analysis, seven CL activities were prepared and carried out in English lessons over a two-month period. The activities were used together with the *Solutions Elementary Student's Book*. Lastly, the second questionnaire was filled in to determine whether the students' opinions about group work had changed compared to the first time they filled in the questionnaire.

To answer the first research question about students' previous experience concerning group work, the results of the first questionnaire were analysed. The results indicated that the students have had rather positive experiences with group work, though they stated that it has been used rarely. The positive aspects mentioned were the possibility to have discussions with group members, help each other, get to know each other better and have fun. As downsides of the group work, inequality, disagreements, and noise were mentioned. During previous group work activities, the students had experienced the elements of CL in different variations.

The second research question could be answered based on the results of the second questionnaire. In every matter involving group work, the results of the second questionnaire

showed changes to some extent. The positive effect on mutual communication, equal decision making, and active participation was noticeable.

A number of studies have shown the positive effect of CL on different aspects of students' development and learning. Social skills are supported through helping each other, making decisions, giving feedback, and working together to achieve the same goal. Learning through experience helps to improve memory and problem-solving skills as well. CL also has positive effects on the process of learning languages. Though the present study shows the positive impact of CL activities on students' opinion about group work, these results cannot be seen as conclusive since the period of time while the activities were carried out was short. To have a notable impact on students' behaviour and cooperation skills, the activities must be carried out regularly and for longer periods of time. Future studies could use cooperative activities with a larger group of students and for a longer period to see what the long-term effects are. Also, students of different ages could be involved so it could be seen if the impact of CL is different or the same for all ages.

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APPENDIX 1. PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

28.09.2021

Lugupeetud lapsevanem/ eestkostja.

Olen Teie lapse inglise keele õpetaja ja palun nõusolekut kaasata Teie laps enda magistritöö uurimusse, mille valimisse kuulub Teie lapse inglise keele rühm.

Uurimuse eesmärgiks on analüüsida õpilaste arvamust rühmatööst ja viia läbi erinevaid struktureeritud koostöiseid tegevusi inglise keele tundides. Õpilaste roll uurimuses on täita kahel korral rühmatööd puudutavat küsimustikku ja osaleda oma inglise keele tundide raames rühmatöödes. Mingeid lisakohustusi uurimusega seoses ei kaasne.

Uurimusega selgitatakse välja õpilaste arvamus rühmatööst enne ja pärast struktureeritud koostöiste tegevuste läbi viimist. Uurimus on anonüümne – õpilaste nimesid magistritöös ei kasutata.

Uurimust viib läbi Kõrveküla Põhikooli inglise keele õpetaja ja Tartu Ülikooli anglistika osakonna magistrant Regina Roostar. Uurimus toimub inglise keele tundide ajal 2021-2022 õppeaasta esimese ja teise veerandi jooksul.

Tänan Teid koostöö eest!

Lugupidamisega
Regina Roostar
regina@korve.edu.ee

Annan nõusoleku uurimuses osalemiseks.
JAH   EI

Lapse nimi:
Lapsevanema allkiri:
Kuupäev:

APPENDIX 2. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 1

STUDENTS' OPINION OF GROUP WORK BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN CL ACTIVITIES.

Küsimustik 1

Olen Regina Roostar, Tartu Ülikooli anglistika osakonna magistrant. Oma magistritöös uurin rühmatöö olulisust võõrkeele tundides. Palun sul vastata järgnevatele küsimustele. Uurimus on anonüümne. Tänan.

1. Tunnis eelistan ma töötada pigem...

   üksi/ paaris/ rühmas.

2. Palun põhjenda eelmise küsimuse vastust paari lausega.

   _____

3. Mis muudab rühmatöö sinu jaoks kasulikuks?

   _____

4. Mis on sinu jaoks rühmatöö plussid?

   _____

5. Mis on sinu jaoks rühmatöö miinused?

   _____

6. Kui sageli ja millistes õppeainetes kasutatakse sinu klassis rühmatööd?

   _____

7. Millist laadi rühmatööd eelistad inglise keele tunnis teha? (nt koos ettekannete tegemine, sõnade õppimine, grammatika õppimine, uue materjali käsitlemine vms)

   _____

8. Kas sinu jaoks on oluline, kellega koos sa ühes rühmas oled? Palun põhjenda oma vastust.

   _____

9. Kuidas peaks toimuma rühmatööks liikmete valimine? (nt õpetaja otsustab, õpilased ise valivad, juhuse teel vms). Palun põhjenda oma vastust.

   _____

10. Kuidas peaks rühmatöös olema liikmete rollid jaotatud? (nt sekretär, rühmajuht vms)

_____

11. Rühmas teistega koos töötades mõistan õpitavat materjali paremini kui üksi õppides.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

12. Rühmas töötades jagame ülesanded omavahel võrdselt.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

13. Rühmatööd tehes suhtleme üksteisega sõbralikult.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

14. Rühmas saavad kõik avaldada oma arvamust.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

15. Rühmatöös on kõikide liikmete arvamus võrdselt oluline.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

16. Rühmatöös keskenduvad kõik liikmed ülesandele.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

17. Rühmatöös osalevad kõik liikmed aktiivselt ülesande lahendamisel.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

18. Rühmatööd tehes aitame üksteist.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

19. Otsuseid teeme rühmatöö ajal ühiselt

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

20. Rühmatöös on igal liikmel oma ülesanne, mille eest ta vastutab.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

21. Rühmatöös on kõigil liikmetel ühine eesmärk.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

22. Rühmatöö eest õpetajalt saadud hinne/ tagasiside on õiglane kõigi liikmete suhtes.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

23. Rühmatöö eest peaksid kõik liikmed saama sama hinde.

    alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

APPENDIX 3. ACTIVITY PLANS

Activity plan 1

Presentation about Great Britain

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 2 – School days. Speaking – unusual schools. Forming questions.
Language skills	Reading, writing, speaking, listening.
CL elements	Interdependence Equal participation Shared goal Face to face interaction
Learning objectives	1. Students can find and sort different facts from the Internet. 2. Students are able to divide tasks and work with a partner. 3. Students make a presentation and answer questions concerning the chosen topic.
Preparation	Possibility to use computer class.
Materials	
Time	3 lessons.
Instructions	1. 1st lesson (in the computer class). Work in pairs. Choose one topic concerning Great Britain (food, school life, royal family etc.). Find information about this topic from website projectbritain.com. Divide tasks – who does what (finding information, writing, designing presentation slides etc.) Make a presentation (slide show) which contains introduction (why did you choose this topic); 5-6 facts with explanations about the chosen topic; comparison with Estonia; conclusion. 2. 2nd lesson. Presentations and listening. Pairs present their slide show and answer the following questions. Each pair who listens should ask one question from the presenters. Feedback from the teacher and classmates. 3. 3rd lesson. Each pair makes 4 questions about their own presentation- two open-ended and two multiple choice questions. When the questions are ready, pairs switch them with another pair, who will answer them. After that switch back and give feedback to each other.

Activity plan 2

Vocabulary crossword

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 2 – School days. Vocabulary about daily routine.
Language skills	Reading, writing, speaking.
CL elements	Interdependence Equal participation Individual accountability Mutual goal
Learning objectives	1. Students learn the necessary vocabulary. 2. Students are able to define words using English. 3. Students can give constructive feedback to each other.
Preparation	New vocabulary has been introduced to students.
Materials	Squared paper
Time	2 lessons.
Task structure	1. 1st lesson. Work in pairs. Create a crossword consisting of 15 words. Choose the words from unit 2 wordlist. The definitions of the words must be written in English. 2. 2nd lesson. Give your crossword to another pair to solve. Each pair receives a crossword. Solve the crossword. After solving, switch the crosswords back and give feedback to each other.

Activity plan 3

Describing pictures.

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 3 – Clothes. Grammar – present continuous. Vocabulary.
Language skills	Speaking, listening.
CL elements	Interdependence Individual accountability Face-to-face interaction Mutual goal Equal participation
Learning objectives	1. Students can use present continuous tense. 2. Students ask questions from each other. 3. Students can describe pictures.
Preparation	Make a copy of pictures where people wear different clothes – coursebook page 30-31
Materials	Pictures, white paper, coloured pencils
Time	15-20 minutes
Instructions	1. Students are divided into groups of three by lot. 2. The first group member receives a printout and stays in the classroom. The second group member gets white paper and coloured pencils and goes to the hall. The third group member asks questions about the picture from the first group member and then tell the information he/ she heard to the second member in the hallway. The second member draws a picture according to the received information. When the picture is ready, they compare it with the printout and discuss the differences and similarities.

Activity plan 4

Jigsaw reading

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 3 – clothes. Reading task on page 35.
Language skills	Reading, speaking, listening.
CL elements	Interdependence Mutual goal Equal participation Individual accountability Face to face interaction
Learning objectives	1. Students can compare short texts. 2. Students can find answers from the text through discussion with others.
Preparation	Copies of the coursebook page 35. Cut the texts apart.
Materials	
Time	15-20 minutes
Instructions	1. The teacher divides the students into groups of four (these are homegroups). 2. Each group member receives a different paragraph from the same text – how teenagers buy clothes. Now new groups are made – expert groups. Students with the same paragraph sit together, they read it and discuss the content. 3. Homegroups are formed again (same as at the beginning). Each group gets 4 questions (questions cover all four paragraphs). They discuss what they read and find the answers. 4. The whole class discusses the answers, and everyone can express their opinion.

Activity plan 5

Making arrangements – my weekend plans

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 3 – Clothes. Making arrangements – page 38.
Language skills	Speaking, writing, listening.
CL elements	Interdependence Mutual goal Equal participation Individual accountability Face to face interaction
Learning objectives	1. Students can make arrangements for the future. 2. Students use present continuous tense.
Preparation	
Materials	A3 size paper for each group
Time	30 minutes
Instructions	1. Each group receives a paper. They draw a square in the middle and divide the rest of the paper into four. They write *Our weekend plans* in the middle, *Differences* and *Similarities* below it. 2. Each group member writes about his/ her weekend plans. 3. Group discusses their plans and writes down the differences and similarities of their plans. 4. Every group reads out loud the information they wrote in the middle of the paper.
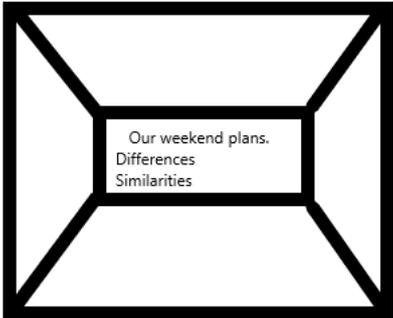
Activity plan 6

Internet research jigsaw

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 4 – Food. Vocabulary about food.
Language skills	Reading, writing, listening, speaking.
CL elements	Interdependence Mutual goal Equal participation Individual accountability Face to face interaction
Learning objectives	1.Students can find specific information about food from the internet. 2.Students know the vocabulary needed to speak about food.
Preparation	Make tables for the information search.
Materials	
Time	2 lessons
Instructions	Lesson 1: 1.The teacher forms groups of four – these are homegroups. 2.Each member gets a name of a country and a table to fill in. 3.The students form expert groups (students with the same country form a group). Now groups are formed by countries. 4.The students work in a computer class and each expert group works together and finds the needed information and writes it into the table (table 2). Lesson 2: 1.The students have found all the required information and return to their homegroups. 2.Each student introduces the information he/ she found about the country. 3.The students answer the questions given by teacher (Table 3). do you think so? 4. Each group presents their answers to the whole class.

FOOD IN FRANCE/ GREAT BRITAIN/ CHINA

NATIONAL FOOD	POPULAR BREAKFAST	POPULAR DESSERT	EATING TRADITIONS
INGREDIENTS	INGREDIENTS	INGREDIENTS	

Table 2. Students fill in the table in expert groups.

Questions
1. Which country has the strangest national dish?
2. Which country has the healthiest breakfast? Why do you think so?
3. Which country has the most delicious dessert?
4. Which ingredients would you use in your kitchen?

Table 3. Questions which students discuss in their home groups.

Activity plan 7

Peer interviews: "How healthy are you?" (Anderson, 2019: 29-30)

Topic	Activity can be used with Unit 4 – Food.
Language skills	Speaking, listening, writing, reading.
CL elements	Interdependence Shared goal Equal participation Individual accountability Face to face interaction
Learning objectives	1.Students can take notes on what they have heard. 2.Students understand questions and statements about healthy food.
Preparation	
Materials	Copies of the activity (Anderson 2019: 29-30)
Time	1 lesson
Instructions	Instructions are in Picture 1 and Picture 2.

Student A

How healthy are you?

Interview your partner. Ask the questions and make notes on your partner's answers.

1. **What do you eat for breakfast every day?**

2. **What's your favourite weekend activity?**

3. **You fancy some chicken for dinner. How will you cook it?**

4. **Your friends invite you to a fast food restaurant for your birthday. What do you do?**

5. **How would you prepare for a marathon?**

Now get together with other Student A's. Compare your partners' answers. Give 5 points to the 'healthiest' answer, 4 points to the 2nd healthiest answer, and so on. Then add up each student's total. Who is the healthiest Student B and why?

When you finish, return to your partner and tell her/him how well s/he did!

- ✂ - -

Student B

How healthy are you?

Interview your partner. Ask the questions and make notes on your partner's answers.

1. **When did you last exercise?**

2. **How much chocolate have you eaten over the last 24 hours?**

3. **What would you do if someone offered you a cigarette?**

4. **Your friend asks you for advice to lose weight. What do you say?**

5. **What's your favourite drink?**

Now get together with other Student B's. Compare your partners' answers. Give 5 points to the 'healthiest' answer, 4 points to the 2nd healthiest answer, and so on. Then add up each student's total. Who is the healthiest Student A and why?

When you finish, return to your partner and tell her/him how well s/he did!

Picture 1. Activity 7: Peer interviews: How healthy are you? (Anderson 2019)

Optional answer guide for scoring Student B's answers

How healthy are you?

Work as a team to compare and score the answers of the Student B's that you interviewed. Here are some ideas for scoring the answers – but remember: you decide on the points you give them and why!

Question	Very healthy ←				→ Not very healthy
1	breakfast cereal (e.g. corn flakes) with milk / fruit / oats	toast / pastry / bread with jam / cheese / cold meat	yoghurt (or similar)	nothing / just a drink	hot meal with fried food (e.g. sausages, eggs, chips)
2	doing a sport with friends / family	going to the gym	going for a walk / to the park	going out with friends	watching TV / films / playing video games
3	boil or steam it / in the microwave	in a soup or stew	in a stir fry / on a barbecue	sauté it in a little oil	fry it
4	change my friends	suggest an alternative, healthier restaurant	suggest a dinner party at someone's house instead	go to the restaurant but order something healthy (e.g. a salad)	go to the restaurant and eat as much as you can
5	build up the distance by running several times a week, as well as other exercise	build up the distance gradually by running once a week	go for one or two runs during the week before	stay relaxed and eat a very big meal the night before (no need for exercise)	I'd never do a marathon

✁ -

Optional answer guide for scoring Student A's answers

How healthy are you?

Work as a team to compare and score the answers of the Student A's that you interviewed. Here are some ideas for scoring the answers – but remember: you decide on the points you give them and why!

Question	Very healthy ←				→ Not very healthy
1	today	in the last 3 days	this week	over a week ago	what's exercise? / never!
2	none	just a little (e.g. in a cookie)	a few pieces or one chocolate drink	one or two chocolate bars	lots – with every meal!
3	refuse it and warn them about the dangers of smoking	refuse it	take one, or have a quick smoke of theirs	accept	I have my own!
4	recommend a calorie-controlled diet and to slowly increase exercise	suggest changing the diet only	join a gym / take up a sport	eat fewer cakes	You look fine! Don't worry about it.
5	water	tea	juice	coffee	cola / soda / alcoholic drink

Picture 2. Activity 7: Peer interviews: How healthy are you? (Anderson 2019)

APPENDIX 4. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2

STUDENTS' OPINION OF GROUP WORK AFTER PARTICIPATING IN CL ACTIVITIES

Küsimustik 2

Palun vasta rühmatööd puudutavatele küsimustele. Oma vastuses lähtu allolevast seitsmest paaris/ rühmatöö tegevusest, milles oled viimase kahe veerandi jooksul inglise keele tundides osalenud.
Tänan sind vastuste eest.
õp Regina

1. Ettekanne Suurbritannia kohta – paaristöö.
2. Ristsõna koostamine, tagasiside andmine – paaristöö.
3. Piltide kirjeldamine kaaslasele ja joonistamine – kolmesed rühmad.
4. Tekstilõikude lugemine ja küsimustele vastamine – neljased rühmad.
5. Oma nädalavahetuse plaanide tegemine – neljased rühmad.
6. Internetist erinevate riikide toitude kohta info otsimine -kodugrupid ja ekspertgrupid.
7. Intervjuu tegemine sõbraga „Tervislikud eluviisid" – paaris ja suures grupis töö

1. Milline seitsmest tegevusest oli su lemmik? Miks?
_____

2. Milline seitsmest tegevusest meeldis sulle kõige vähem? Miks?
_____

3. Kas sulle meeldis töötada pigem paaris või suuremas rühmas? Miks?
_____

4. Kas sinu jaoks oli oluline, kellega sa samas rühmas/ paaris töötasid?
_____

5. Millisel viisil rühmaliikmete/ paariliste määramine sulle kõige paremini sobis (õpetaja määras, ise valisid või juhuse teel)?
_____

6. Rühmas/ paaris töötades said kõik liikmed võrdselt avaldada oma arvamust.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

7. Rühma/ paaristööde ajal suhtlesime üksteisega sõbralikult.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

8. Rühma/ paaristööde ajal jagasime ülesanded omavahel võrdselt.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

9. Rühma/ paaristöid tehes oli kõikide liikmete arvamus võrdselt oluline.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

10. Rühma/ paaristöödes keskendusid kõik liikmed võrdselt ülesandele.

alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

11.Rühma/ paaristöödes tegelesid kõik liikmed aktiivselt ülesande lahendamisega.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

12. Rühma/ paaristöid tehes aitasime üksteist.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

13. Otsuseid tegime rühma/ paaristööde ajal ühiselt.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

14. Rühma/ paaristöödes vastutas igaüks talle antud ülesande eest.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

15. Rühma/ paaristöödes oli kõikidel liikmetel ühine eesmärk.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

16. Rühma/ paaristööde eest õpetajalt saadud hinne/ tagasiside oli kõigi liikmete suhtes õiglane.
alati/ sageli/ harva/ mitte kunagi

17. Mis olid sinu jaoks nende tegevuste plussid?
_____

18. Mis olid sinu jaoks nende tegevuste miinused?
_____

19. Kas osalemine nendes tegevustes on muutnud sinu arvamust rühmas töötamise kohta? Kuidas?
_____

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND
Regina Roostar

Designing and implementing cooperative learning activities in English as a foreign language lessons.

Koostöiste tegevuste loomine ja läbiviimine inglise keele tundides.

(Magistritöö)

Aasta: 2022
Lehekülgede arv: 63

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev magistritöö keskendub koostöise õppimise rakendamisele klassiruumis.
Kuna paljud uurimused on näidanud, et koostöine õppimine avaldab positiivset mõju nii õpilaste kognitiivsele kui ka sotsiaalsele arengule ning parandab suhteid eakaaslaste vahel, siis on oluline seda meetodit klassiruumis kasutada. Koostöine õppimine ei seisne üksnes õpilaste paigutamises rühmadesse, vaid sisaldab olulisi elemente, mille rakendamisel on õppimine efektiivne ja tulemuslik. Põhjusel, et õpikud ei sisalda olulisel määral koostöiseid tegevusi, tuleb õpetajal luua või kohandada tegevused kriteeriumitele vastavaks.
Magistritöö eesmärgiks oli luua ja läbi viia koostöiseid tegevusi inglise keele tundides ning analüüsida, kas õpilaste arvamus rühma- ja paaristöö kohta muutub pärast tegevustes osalemist. Vastused püüti leida kahele uurimisküsimusele: milline on õpilaste kogemus ja arvamus rühmatöö kohta enne koostöisetes tegevustes osalemist ja milline on arvamus pärast tegevustes osalemist.
Magistritöö esimene osa annab ülevaate koostöise õppimise teoreetilistest aspektidest ja elementidest; rakendamise põhimõtetest ja olulisusest. Töö teine osa keskendub praktilisele uurimusele, mille käigus õpilased vastasid kahele küsimustikule – enne ja pärast seitsmes koostöises tegevuses osalemist. Tegevusi rakendati parallelselt Solutions õpikuga. Uurimuses osales 13 seitsmenda klassi õpilast ja tegevused viidi läbi inglise keele tundides kahe kuu jooksul.
Kuigi uurimus viidi läbi lühikese perioodi jooksul, siis näitavad selle tulemused, et ka lühiajaliselt koostöiste tegevuste rakendamisel on positiivne mõju õpilaste omavahelisele suhtlusele, ühisele otsuste langetamisele ja tegevustes osalemise aktiivsusele.

Märksõnad: koostöine õppimine, võõrkeel.

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Regina Roostar

24.01.2022

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Kinnitan, et olen koostanud käesoleva magistritöö ise ning toonud korrektselt välja teiste autorite panuse. Töö on koostatud lähtudes Tartu Ülikooli maailma keelte ja kultuuride kolledži anglistika osakonna magistritöö nõuetest ning on kooskõlas heade akadeemiliste tavadega.

[Autori allkiri]
Regina Roostar

24.01.2022

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Ülle Türk

24.01.2022