

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**Mentouri University, Constantine**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of Foreign Languages**

**Cooperative Learning as a Motivational Factor in Enhancing  
Students' Writing  
The Case of Second year EFL Students at Constantine University**

*Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the Magister  
degree in Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching option "Language Teaching  
and Methodology"*

**By:**

ZOUREZ Leila

**Board of Examiners:**

- **Chairman: Prof. SAADI Hacène** *University of Constantine*
- **Supervisor: Dr. KESKES Said** *University of Setif*
- **Member: Dr. HAMADA Hacène** *ENS. Constantine*
- **Member: Dr. KAOUACHE Salah** *University of Constantine*

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to:

- ❖ My parents: Houria and Mohamed Tahar, who made me what I am,
- ❖ All my brothers and sisters.
- ❖ My dear husband: Abdelghani, who pushed me forward.
- ❖ My little daughter: Soundous.
- ❖ My family in-law.
- ❖ All my family and friends.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recent studies in the field of language teaching emphasize the importance of the learning process and the central role of the learner. With the new role that is assigned to the learner, our classrooms have to be reconsidered and much more emphasis has to be given to the learner. In fact, the learning context greatly affects the learner and the rate of his intake. Because writing is significant, teachers' techniques to teach this skill were investigated, and more precisely the extent to which they incorporate elements of Cooperative Language Learning (CLL): a new approach which is supported by research because of its motivational effects on the learner and learning. Moreover, students' attitudes to group work were explored. Based on the aspects investigated, two hypotheses were put. The first states that teachers' awareness of CLL would lead to create an affective learning environment through classroom participation in the writing tasks. The second, on the other hand, is that students' positive attitudes towards the use of group work could positively correlate with their affective side. To carry out this study, two questionnaires were used: one for teachers, and another for students. The questionnaires were analysed and compared. The results of the teachers' questionnaire show that second year teachers are concerned with the affective side of the learner and try to create a good atmosphere of learning. As for the use of CLL, they are not aware of the effective use of this form of teaching though they use group work which is the first step towards CLL. Students' questionnaire demonstrates that second year students have positive attitudes towards group work in teaching writing; however, they reported some aspects which they do not appreciate in their teachers' ways of teaching. The obtained results would guide us to provide some points on the effective way of incorporating CLL to teach not only writing, but also other modules. In addition, CLL pushes teachers to involve students in decision making, and give them more opportunities.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>1. BAK</b>	Background, Assumptions and Knowledge
<b>2. CL</b>	Collaborative Learning
<b>3. CLL</b>	Cooperative Language Learning
<b>4. CLT</b>	Communicative Language Teaching
<b>5. CW</b>	Collaborative Writing
<b>6. EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>7. ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>8. L1</b>	First Language
<b>9. L2</b>	Second Language
<b>10. LLS</b>	Language Learning Strategies
<b>11. Q</b>	Question
<b>12. ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development
<b>13. %</b>	Percentage

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Achieving a good level in writing is the primary focus of writing instruction. Reality, however, is bitter for most students since, after years of writing instruction, they still find writing difficult. Certainly, teachers are aware of writing deficiencies; yet, they cannot find their ways in teaching writing communicatively for one reason or another (Brookes & Grundy, 1990). Writing should be seen as a process in which students interact and communicate, hence, creating a good atmosphere for learning. In this vein, teachers should "think of writing, then, not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message."(Brown, 2001, p.337)

Byrne (1988) classifies writing problems under three categories: psychological, linguistic and cognitive. Psychological factors including: motivation, anxiety, self-esteem and self-confidence are very significant in determining learners' success or failure. Thus, teachers have to greatly consider these factors and to try to create a learning situation that helps the learner feel well.

Recent teaching methods like CLT, often recognized as learner-centered, have emerged in opposition to the more traditional methods (Grammar Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method etc...) in which the teacher plays a major role in class. Cooperative language learning (CLL) is a learner-centered approach of teaching and is said, when effectively used by teachers, to create an affective learning classroom. In general, research results are in favor of CLL (Slavin, Baloche; in Richards& Rodgers, 2001).

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Undeniably, affect (anxiety, self-esteem, self-confidence...etc) plays an extremely important role in learning and the former "has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second (L2)/foreign language learning."(Dörnyei, 1998, p.117). In writing, most of the time, we write on our own



and "...without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult." (Byrne, 1988, p.4)

The results of the pre-questionnaire, which was given to second year teachers of written expression, department of English, University of Constantine indicate that students' level in the writing skill is low and that only few students could perform well in writing. The causes of students' failure are many and varied. In part, this failure may be due to the fact that students are not motivated due to the teaching methods.

When asked about CLL and its implementation in writing classes, some teachers claimed not to have too much time and space for getting their students work cooperatively. They consider the over-crowded classes an obstacle to implementing CLL. Others are reluctant to use this form of teaching either because they do not know whether they are suitable to the Algerian learning situation or because they are not sure about their effectiveness in creating a good sense of feeling thus, fostering students' performance. In this context, Christison (1990) points out that "Some teachers decide that cooperative learning is not for them or for their students; they already have a system for managing and organizing their classrooms that "works.""(p.139). Another part of teachers; however, did not know the term at all. This demonstrate that some teachers are unaware of recent approaches to teaching English as a foreign language including CLL.

Cooperative group work has been widely supported by researchers, who report that its motivational effects are considerable in the sense that it creates an affective learning environment, and prepares learners for social life. Its use, however, in language learning a context is still limited and when used, it is not effectively implemented (Storch, 2005).

Because of the emphasis given to the learner in recent teaching methods, he became an active element in the teaching/learning process; therefore, students' attitudes towards teachers' forms of teaching would be investigated. Some researchers (Mishra & Oliver, 1998; Roskams,

1990; cited in Storch, *ibid.*) found that learners like working with other peers. Others (Hyde, 1993; Kinsella, 1996; cited in Storch, *ibid.*), however, reported that students maintain negative attitudes towards CLL. Moreover, L2 teachers report that some students seem reluctant to engage in cooperative activities (Peretz, 2003; cited in Storch, *ibid.*). Writing, like many other subjects, can be taught cooperatively. One name for this form of teaching is *collaborative writing* (Nunan, 1992); this can have many forms which would be discussed later. In a study carried out by Storch (*ibid.*) to investigate ESL students' reflections on collaborative writing, the results showed that "most students were positive about the experience, although some did express some reservations about collaborative writing."(p.153)

## **2. Aim of the Study**

The present study aims at exploring how teachers of written expression in the department of English, university of Mentouri, teach writing to 2<sup>nd</sup> year EFL students, and whether their teaching incorporates elements of CLL which would correlate positively with students' social and affective domains. While providing us with data about their practices in teaching writing, teachers would "reconstruct [their] teaching, and thereby learn about [themselves] as teachers."(Gebhard, 1999, p. 58) Moreover, this study investigates students' attitudes towards group work. Generally speaking, it aims at helping teachers use CLL as effectively as possible in order to create a good learning atmosphere, enhance students' participation in writing classes through developing some social skills along with some affective benefits including increased motivation, self-esteem, confidence, and lowering anxiety.

## **3. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Enhancing writing performance is one of the primary goals with which teachers and learners alike are concerned, and learners of English are most of the time faced with problems in writing. This research explores teachers' affective beliefs and their awareness of CLL as a way to encourage peer support and interaction as motivating elements in class. Add to this,

students' opinions about the use of group work are also considered. On this basis, the following research questions would be addressed:

1. Do teachers of written expression concern themselves with the affective side of the learner?
2. Do teachers of written expression incorporate elements of CLL as a motivational element to create an affective learning classroom?
3. What attitudes and opinions do second year students have about group work as a way to teach writing?
4. Does CLL create a supportive learning environment?

In the light of these research questions, the hypotheses state that:

- ❖ Teachers' awareness of CLL would lead to create an affective learning environment through classroom participation in the writing tasks.
- ❖ Students' positive attitudes towards the use of group work could positively correlate with their affective side.

In this research, we try to explore teachers' understanding of cooperative learning to let them decide to use it, but then "a decision to use cooperative learning or not [...] is based on a more complete understanding of the process."(Christison, 1990)

#### **4. Means of Research**

Any researcher has a number of methods; he/she should opt for the right method, that is, the one which is more appropriate to the nature of the study: descriptive, experimental, historical etc...To do this, it has been relied on questionnaires as descriptive tools. The teachers' questionnaire was administered to the whole population (N=11). The students' questionnaire was given to randomly-selected 154 students representing one fifth (1/5) of the whole population (770) students.

## **5. Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is a whole of seven chapters. The first chapter examines the teaching of the writing skill in academic contexts through the process approach, and highlights its main features including writing problems and their sources. Chapter two sheds light on CLL and discusses its effects as a source of motivation and affection thus, enhancing students' writing. In chapter three it is dealt with how CLL is applied to writing. It is in the fourth chapter that we expose the methodology used to carry out the practical part of this study. In chapters five and six teachers' and students' questionnaires are analysed successively. Finally, chapter seven provides some pedagogical implications on the use of CLL in teaching writing.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**WRITING SKILL AND ITS TEACHING**

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# **CHAPTER ONE: WRITING SKILL AND ITS TEACHING**

## **Introduction**

The first part of this chapter deals with the nature of the writing skill. First, it makes a distinction between writing and speaking in terms of nature and teaching, and then it looks in detail at the exact nature of the writing skill investigating the causes of its difficulty. The second part of the chapter is concerned with teaching writing according to the process approach highlighting its various features and problems. Another aspect that is dealt with in this chapter is peer review which is an important component of the process approach.

## **1. Writing Skill**

Although it may appear that writing has been superseded by other means such as the telephone, the tape recording or videos; it has always been a means of communication. Whether in everyday writing or in more formal writing tasks, we still have occasions to commit ourselves in writing. Therefore, like the other skills, writing need be developed by second/foreign learners. In fact, many students find it difficult to indulge in the task of writing; however, through developing the skill and making confidence in what they write, this skill will certainly become a pleasure that students cannot deprive themselves of.

### **1.1 Nature of Writing**

When we write we put words into graphic symbols. But is this what is meant by writing? Certainly not. Byrne (1991, p.1) clearly explains this stating that:

writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences.

Similarly, Brown (2001, p. 335) states that the view that writing is graphic symbols is not valid any more and that it is defied by a major theme in the field of ESL writing, that of "the

**composing** process of writing." Brown (ibid.) explains the nature of writing in terms of written products which:

[...] are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills...the compositional nature of writing has produced writing pedagogy that focuses students on how to generate ideas, how to organize them cohesively into a written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce a final product.

Neman (1995) argues that writing can be learned and improved and he provides the following definition: writing is "a craft, an artistic process with techniques and conventions that can be learned, employing skills that can be improved."(p. 4)

Many researchers agree on the social nature of writing (Chandler, 1995). Hayes (1996) argues that writing is social" because it is a social artefact and is carried out in social setting."(p. 5). Similarly, Zhu (2004) explains this nature of writing in terms of students' roles which have to be social in the first place. Finally, Johns (1990; cited in Gabrielatos, 2002, p. 4) considers the outcome of writing as "a social act".

## **1.2 Writing vs. Speaking**

Language is a whole of four skills that any learner has to master in order to learn that language successfully. However, some scholars believe that these skills should not be considered in the same way. Weigle (2002), reports that educational research prioritizes writing over speaking in the sense that it is" more ' correct' and therefore should be more valued than oral language."(p. 15)

Byrne (1991, p. 2) states that what makes writing difficult is that "we are writing for a reader". According to Parrott (2004), the writer has to affect the readers in order to be successful in his/her writing. Byrne (*op.cit*) further argues that because the reader is not present, we have to put all our effort on writing, the only means available to us, unlike in

speaking, additional facilitators as gestures and facial expressions which would do a lot for us. For this reason we have to learn how to use words in writing as skillfully as possible. In this vein, Byrne (ibid.) briefly explains the way we should put our thoughts on paper: "It is by the organization of our sentences into a text, into a coherent whole which is as explicit as possible and complete in itself, that we are able (or *hope* to be able) to communicate successfully with our reader through the medium of writing." (p. 2).

Harmer (2005) finds it necessary to highlight some differences and similarities between speaking and writing for a better understanding of how people write. He claims that the audience to whom we are writing is significantly important. In speaking, we have the advantage of interacting with what he calls "co-participants", whether we know them or not. This of course is highly beneficial for the speaker who may modify his speech according to his co-participants' reactions. But in writing, we write for an unknown audience, which means that our words are the only means available to us. Another difference between the two productive skills lies in the processes speakers and writers go through. According to him, "The process of writing is usually more complex than the process of speaking, but not always." (p. 8).

## **2. Process Approach to Teaching Writing**

Li (a writing teacher) (in Tsui, cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996) speculates about the way written expression is often taught in ESL classes and claims that students are not often given the opportunity to see how they came to produce the whole texts, nor are they made aware of the steps of writing. This statement indicates that students are most of the time taught according to the traditional ways of teaching where the most important thing is the outcome of instruction rather than the process through which the learner goes in order to get the predetermined outcome.



The perception of writing has changed as recent studies began to focus more on the process that leads to the final product and not on the product itself. (Appelbee, 1984; cited in Freeman & Richards, *ibid.*) In other words, the focus is shifting to "writing as a process." (Crowley, 1998; cited in Matsuda, 2003, p. 68). This shift would lead to another understanding so far as writing is concerned; it makes use of writing "as a process of creating, discovering, and extending meaning rather than a process of putting down preconceived and well-formed meaning." (Raimes, 1985; Shaughnessy, 1977; Silva, 1990; Zamel, 1983, 1987; in Tsui; cited in Freeman & Richards, *ibid.* p. 97).

Unlike the product approach in which mistakes are seen as inhibiting and, therefore, have to be eliminated, it is the argument that 'students made mistakes because they were allowed to write what *they* wanted' (Byrne, 1991, p.22). Thus, for the sake of eliminating errors, the importance of control (of topics) was stressed.

The process approach to teaching writing has been applied since the 1970s. In relation to its effects on students' performances, Williams (2003, p. 99) reports: "The percentage of run-on sentences actually increased during this period, as did the percentage of sentence fragments." In this respect, Williams (*ibid.*) argues that "the problem appears to lie in the implementation of process pedagogy, not in the concept itself." (p. 99)

The common belief is that "Prior to the advent of the process approach, writing instruction focused on a student's finished product." (Williams, *ibid.* p.100). When we come to the process approach, it is not that the final product is neglected or not considered at all, only that the learner, being the central focus in this approach, would understand the processes involved in putting ideas on paper.

## **2.1 Characteristics of the Process Approach**

In the first place, the process approach is top-down, and implies that the focus of the instruction would be on "producing entire papers, not on grammar or parts of

papers."(Williams, *ibid.* p.101). In other words, the aim of such instruction is directed towards changing students' general behaviour in order to reach the status of good writers. Williams (*ibid.*) states three factors which would be the key to good writing :(a) asking students to write often in meaningful contexts, (b) providing frequent feedback on work in progress and, (c) requiring numerous revisions based on that feedback. Tribble (1996) defines the process approach as an approach "to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models. (p. 160).

Hyland (2003) summarises the stages of the writing process as shown in the following figure 1.1:

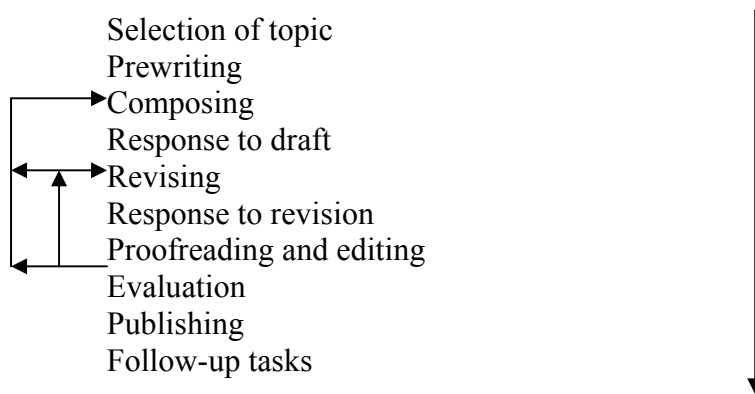


Figure 1.1: A Process Model of Writing Instruction. (Adapted from Hyland, *ibid.*)

As figure 1.1 shows, the writing stages are not linear but "recursive, interactive and potentially simultaneous"(Hyland, *ibid.* p. 11). This implies that the writer may go through all the work before the whole text is produced.

Raimes (1992; cited in Hyland, *ibid.* p. 12) names a number of strategies in order to facilitate the writing process:

- Setting pre-writing activities.
- Encouraging brainstorming.
- Requiring multiple drafts.

- Giving extensive feedback.
- Seeking text level revisions.
- Facilitating peer responses.
- Delaying surface corrections until the final editing.

## **2.2 Teacher's Role in the Process Approach**

As regards the role of teachers in the process approach, the role of the teacher is seen as that of guide and facilitator (Atkinson, 2003). Tsui (cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 98) sees that their role should not be that of "assessors, but of facilitators who help students to develop strategies for generating ideas, revising and editing." Similarly, Hyland (*op.cit.*) restricts the role of the teacher in the writing process to guiding students along the stages of writing in order to avoid focus on form and to give much importance to content and ideas. In addition, the teacher always remains a source of feedback (Bitchener et al, 2005).

## **3. Writing Problems**

Most people see writing difficult. Hilton & Hyder (1992, p.7), state that many people "regard writing as a chore: something that is difficult, which you delay or try to avoid". Byrne (1991, p.1) states that most writers be they professional or not "would agree that it is usually neither an easy nor a spontaneous activity." Writing is part of the learning process and can be difficult for students and even "unrewarding and even punishing for some students." (Daly 1985; in Tsui; in cited Freeman & Richards, 1996:101). Another thing is that writing in a FL or L2 is more demanding than writing in one's mother tongue on the basis that the former needs some abilities which may be "less well developed than in one's first language" (Schoonen, 2003, p. 166).

Byrne (*op.cit.*) discusses three categories of problems which can make writing difficult. The first category is the psychological problems. He highlights the necessity of interaction and

feedback and argues that the latter facilitate writing stating that "the fact that we are required to write on our own, without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult." (Byrne, *ibid.*, p.4). The second category is the linguistic problems. As has already been stated, speaking has other features as well as words. In writing, however, the situation would be different. Therefore, the absence of helping features requires that we should pay more attention to the selected words and structures so that the produced text can easily be interpreted. (*ibid.*) The third category is the cognitive problems. This concerns the organization of ideas "in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present by a reader who is not known to us." (*ibid.* p.5). The last cause of difficulty Byrne (*ibid.*) deals with concerns the circumstances when writing is imposed on the learner. Here, the problem is both psychological and cognitive. Winer (1992; cited in Freeman & Richards, *op.cit.*) reports that in his study on student teachers' attitudes towards writing, "dread of writing ... was repeatedly identified as one of the problems."

Language is not an independent system that learners can take without involving their feelings and emotions. Brown (2000, p. 144), explains what is meant by language:

language is behavior, that is, a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence as structurally divorced from the structure of nonverbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole in such a way that it cannot be subdivided into neat "parts" or "levels" or "compartments" with language in a behavioral compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behaviour.

This definition of language makes it clear that other factors interfere in second/foreign language learning. According to Arnold & Brown (1999), "the various emotions affecting language learning are intertwined and interrelated in ways that make it impossible to isolate completely the influence of any one of them." (p. 8). The affective domain, with all its

constituents, needs careful investigation for a better understanding of its effects on language learning.

### **3.1 Anxiety**

According to Woolfolk (2004, p. 365), anxiety is "a feeling of self-doubt, and sense of tension." It should be noted that anxiety can be either situational or state (Oxford, 1992). The former is the result of a given situation in language learning in which, for instance, a student may fear to perform in a given task. Sometimes, however, anxiety is a personality trait in which case it is called state anxiety. Brown (2001, p. 336) draws attention to anxiety as a present feeling while writing stating that "You may have felt a certain level of anxiety building within you as you felt the pressure to write an inclass essay that would be judged by the teacher, graded, and returned with no chance for your future revision."

Slavin (2003) states that anxiety is constantly present in education. Studies show that there is a negative correlation between this feeling and FL achievement including writing (e.g. Cheng & Schallert, 1999; MacIntyre et al, 1997; Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003; Young, 1991). In this vein, Covington & Omelich (1987; cited in Woolfolk, 2004, p. 365) state that "researchers have consistently reported a negative correlation between virtually every aspect of school achievement and a wide range of anxiety measures."

Harmer (2005) considers writing anxieties very dangerous in the sense that it can result in a negative attitude towards writing. According to Oxford (1992), harmful anxiety can have negative effects on learners by "reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language."

Causes of this feeling are various. Nunan (1991) simply states that anxiety is primarily a matter of learning a new language. Harmer (*op.cit.*) discusses causes of students' fear of writing in a more detailed way. First, he mentions lack of writing practice even in the mother tongue. Second, having nothing to say can also be an obstacle to students. Finally,

some people are simply not interested in the writing activity. He claims that teachers should develop self-confidence in their students through building the "writing habit".

Biggs (1990; cited in Fontana, 1995) argues that this feeling can "arise from interpersonal tensions between teacher and child, from time pressures, and from routine assessment." (p. 148). According to Li (1991), a teacher of writing, identifies anxiety in writing can be the result of some factors. In the first place, teachers' emphasis on grammatical accuracy makes students believe that unless they produce grammatically correct sentences, their product will not be that good. This makes them "worry about accuracy, they stop after each sentence and go back and check it for infections, word order, spelling and punctuation, breathe a sigh of relief and go on to attack the looming giant of the next sentence." (Raimes, 1983; in Tsui; cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 102). Another cause of writing anxiety according to Li is the writing topic. She argues that because students are often asked to write about topics which they do not find interesting, they feel bored. Therefore, giving students opportunities to choose their own topics would make them feel more at ease. One of her students said "I don't like the teacher to fix the writing topic for us." (ibid. p. 103). The final cause Li mentions is the "lack of a 'safe' environment for writing." (ibid. p. 104). She explains this source of anxiety saying that students "fear compositions because they are always supposed to generate ideas, elaborate on them, write them out, synthesize them, then revise them and edit them all at the same time. They fear compositions because they know the audience is going to be the teacher who will read it with a red pen and, more often than not, with a frown. In other words, they fear the teacher's negative evaluation (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Bailey (1983; in Oxford, 1992) asserts that one cause of language learning anxiety can be competitiveness in the classroom. Oxford (ibid.) does not exactly agree with this view. She argues that competitiveness causes anxiety in some students but not in others depending on their learning styles, the nature of their cultures the rewards of their environments.

### 3.2 Motivation

Slavin (2003) considers motivation as "one of the most important ingredients of effective instruction."(p.328). However, it is neither easy to define nor to restrict its sources for it is "a product of many factors, ranging from the student's personality and abilities to characteristics of particular learning tasks, incentives for learning, settings, and teacher behaviours"(p. 329). Slavin (ibid.) claims that it is the educator's job to sustain students' motivation and "to engage in activities that lead to learning."(p.329)

### 3.3 Self-esteem

The constructivist approach "places learners' developing conceptions of themselves at the centre of the learning process because these conceptions profoundly influence the ways in which individuals make sense of new stimuli and construct new knowledge."(Williams & Burden, 1999, p.194). Seifert (1997; cited in Williams & Burden, ibid.) argues that these conceptions would influence the ways in which learners tackle various tasks. Under this area of learners' conceptions of themselves falls the complex notion of self-esteem. According to Woolfolk (2004, p. 71): "**Self-esteem** is an affective reaction\_a judgment about who you are," For example, feeling good about the way you write.

High self-esteem can be due to many elements including"parental attention, encouragement, physical affection,"(Fontana, 1995, p.148), and most of all the teacher. The latter can play an enormous role in helping students build confidence in their abilities and have high self-esteem.

Woolfolk (*op.cit.* p. 73) asks two questions about self-esteem in learning: (1) How does self-esteem affect a student's behaviour in school? (2) How does life in school affect a student's self-esteem? March (1990; cited in Woolfolk, ibid.) found that students with high self-esteem tend to be rather more successful than those with low self-esteem. As for the second question, Hoge, Smith, & Hanson (1990; cited in Woolfolk, ibid.) found that students' positive

conceptions about school, their teachers' care and evaluation seemed to have an effect on students' self-esteem.

### **3.4 Self-confidence**

Hilton & Hyder (1992, p.7), consider confidence a condition to be a successful writer and '[b]y developing...writing skills and...confidence...writing becomes not only more pleasurable and satisfying but also more effective.' On his part, Harmer (2005) raises the issue of self-confidence and considers it very important for good writing. On his part, Neman (1995) argues that writing doesn't require merely knowledge, but also "the self-confidence to exercise this knowledge."(p. 5).

Neman (ibid.) highlights two types of solutions to writing problems. To begin with "the craft-centred solution" is concerned with correcting students' mistakes and even criticising them. Nevertheless, this solution was rejected on the basis that it results in anxieties in the learner which would distort learning. The other solution is what he calls "the affect-centred solution". The latter puts much emphasis on the general atmosphere of the learning process. In his words "the primary goal is no longer that of helping students to acquire the skills necessary for good writing, but of letting them use the opportunity writing offers to achieve a better understanding of themselves and their world."(ibid. p. 7). CLL meets much of these principles and its advantages are both sociological and psychological.

### **4. Peer Review**

In language learning contexts, peers influence one another. Harris (1995) acknowledges the big influences peers can have on one another, and he further claims that these effects can be even more powerful than those of parents. As a technique in the writing process, peer review has many advantages. According to Harmer (2005), it encourages collaboration between students, something which we aim at developing in students working together. Harmer (ibid.) further argues that unlike the teacher's feedback, peer review helps students develop self-



reliance and learn how to revise and edit by themselves. He, however, claims that when used for the first time and for the sake of making it work, the teacher has to guide students how to read their classmates' texts and provide useful comments. Brown & Hudson (1998; cited in Brown, 2004) cite some benefits of peer-assessment: "direct involvement of students in their own destiny, the encouragement of autonomy, and increased motivation because of their self-involvement."(p. 270).

Peer review has many benefits. It raises learners' awareness about the audience thus his consideration (Leki, 1993; cited in Storch, 2005). Moreover, it helps learners become analytical and critical readers and writers (Nystrand & Brandt, 1989; cited in Storch, *ibid.*).

Most researchers (Dunn et al. 1985; Hildenbrand, 1985; in Tsui; cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996) emphasize the importance of peer support for a good writing environment.

#### **4.1 Peer Review and the Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky (1978; cited in Antón, 1999, p. 304) maintains that "higher psychological functions originate in interaction between individuals (interpsychological level) before they are transferred within the individual (intrapsychological level)". Antón (*ibid.*) further explains that this transfer occurs within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is defined as "the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by the independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

In language learning contexts, the learner learns with the assistance of more capable peers but then it is not the success of the task that is more important but "the higher cognitive process that emerges as a result of the interaction."(Lantolf & Appel, 1994; cited in Antón, *ibid.*).

Antón (*ibid.*) maintains that the concept of ZPD and scaffolding originates in investigating the effects of the child's social interaction with adults on his cognitive development. This concept; however, has been extended to L2 contexts in order to foster learning. Well (1998)

claims that "the ZPD as an opportunity for learning with and from others applies potentially to all participants, and not simply to the less skilful or knowledgeable."(p. 345). In effect, other studies of L2 learning (e.g. Donato, 1994; Ohta, 1995) demonstrate that assistance with all its benefits can be supplied between all learners working collaboratively.

Vygotsky (1978; cited in Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 51) acknowledges the importance of peer assistance in learning:

an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child in interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement.

Guerrero & Villamil (ibid.) describe scaffolding as a supportive behaviour which would help learners who are working collaboratively to reach "a higher level of language development."(p. 53). The concept of scaffolding can be applied to both tutor-learner and novice-novice situations. Donato (1994) tried to examine the extent to which 3 novice French students, working cooperatively, would help each other in language development. The results showed that the learners were able to help each other and go beyond their linguistic level in the foreign language. Similarly, Ohta's (1995) study of the concept of scaffolding in pair Japanese learners demonstrated that the students benefited from peer assistance.

Research (Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997) show that cooperative/collaborative environments of learning are more effective and more productive than environments in which the teacher does everything. Guerrero & Villamil (2000, p. 55) shed light on peer review stating that "collaborative stances seem to be characterized by an emphasis on negotiating ideas and making meaning throughout the interactions, by peers trying

to see the text through the writer's eyes, and by an atmosphere of mutual respect in which feedback is allowed to flow freely from writer to reader and vice versa."

## **Conclusion**

Writing is a basic skill that foreign language learners should master together with the other skills. It is emphasized by scholars that this skill is sharply distinctive; therefore, it should be considered differently. The point is that moving from writing in academic contexts to non-academic ones reveals the social nature of writing, a characteristic which gives this skill extra importance that some teachers fail to recognize. However, some problems like: anxiety, lack of motivation, low self-esteem etc... can make writing difficult to some students, and disturb its learning. CLL is a recent method which proved to offer major solutions to the problems learners have in writing including (anxiety, self-confidence, motivation etc...). Therefore, the way this skill is taught should be reconsidered and given further importance for its infinite and unavoidable importance in learning English. In the next chapter, we shall shed light on cooperative learning and explore the solutions it offers to these problems sociologically and psychologically, as well as at the level of academic achievement.

## **CHAPTER TWO: COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ITS**

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# **CHAPTER TWO: COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND ITS MOTIVATIONAL EFFECT**

## **Introduction**

Recent developments in educational psychology (Nunan, 1992; Slavin, 2003) emphasize the role of the learner in the learning/teaching process. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a shift from more traditional classes where the teacher plays the central role to more learner-centered instruction in which the learner is responsible for the learning process whereas the teacher is merely a guide and facilitator.

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) also known as Collaborative Learning (CL) has emerged over the past ten years as one of the learner-centered methods of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this chapter, we try to give a wide picture of this type of learning focusing in the first place on the theoretical backgrounds of this learning, and most of all we try to investigate its motivational elements both sociologically and psychologically.

### **1. Learner-centered Instruction vs. Traditional Language Teaching**

In the field of language teaching and learning, recent teaching methods, often recognized as learner-centered methods, emerged as opposed to the more traditional methods in which the teacher plays a major role in class. The picture that is conjured up by many people, so far as teaching is concerned, is that "of students sitting in rows listening to a teacher who stands in front of them."(Harmer, 2005, p. 114), and although this type of instruction has been superseded by other teaching approaches, it is still the most common in teaching contexts.

Woods (1996, p. 188) asks many questions relating to the exact nature of language learning: "Is language something we learn through first consciously 'knowing' and then transferring that knowledge to application, or something we learn through doing; i.e. through experience?". These two questions determine the way in which the teacher will teach in class.

The former assumption about language learning underlies teacher-centered instruction in which the teacher, the main actor in class, pours his knowledge to his students who are supposed to take in. The latter assumption, however, forms the basis of a more recent experiential learning (Woods, *ibid.*) in which the learner himself is expected to take charge of his own learning. Here, CLL can be one way to experience learning.

Similarly, Scrivener (1994) discusses various teaching techniques underlying teachers' assumptions about teaching and learning. The traditional picture of the teacher is that of him standing in front of his students who listen and take in. He further argues that "his teaching style is based on the assumption that the teacher is the 'Knower' and has the task of passing over his knowledge to the students."(p.1). In these classrooms then, the teacher is "the most active person."( *ibid.* p. 2).

It should be noted that whole-class instruction can be beneficial on a number of scales. In the first place, it "reinforces a sense of belonging among the group members, something which we as teachers need to foster."(Williams & Burden, 1997; cited in Harmer, 2005, p. 114). That is to say, involving all students in the same activity strengthens their sense of belonging. Moreover, some lectures require of teachers to give only instructions in case of which this type of grouping would be much easier for the teacher. Add to this, whole-class instruction can help students feel more secure with the teacher acting as a controller and under his "his direct authority."(Harmer, *ibid.* p. 115).

Despite what has just been said, the disadvantages of whole-class instruction seem to be more serious and dramatic than its advantages. Harmer (*ibid.*) discusses its disadvantages. To begin with, the fact that knowledge is transferred from the teacher to students would not result in effective learning; rather, learners have to "discover things or research things for themselves."(*ibid.* p. 115) In addition, this type of instruction does not meet the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) with its emphasis on interaction, and communication

between learners which would be impossible when we have many students. Furthermore, in these classes, students are not encouraged to be responsible for their own learning, and both autonomy and independence are threatened.

Traditional teaching methods look at the process of teaching as a matter of transferring knowledge from a more proficient user of the language, the teacher, to less proficient users of the language, the students. This view of teaching came to be criticised for a number of reasons. At the affective level, students get bored, and lose motivation for learning. Moreover, their academic achievement may not be high. Scrivener (*op.cit.*) directs a criticism to this type of instruction on the basis of his own learning and his observations, relating that "Explanations, especially long ones tend to leave me cold: I get bored; I switch off."(p. 14). He considers involvement in a task, experimenting with it, and practising it the best way of learning. Another thing is that "' talking at' the learners does not necessarily mean that learning is taking place; in many cases *teacher talking time* (TTT) actually represents time when the learners are *not* doing very much and are *not* very involved."(p.14)

So far, the question arises as to whether the assumption that underlies this way of teaching is still valid. Scrivener (*ibid.*) questions the efficiency of traditional teacher-centered methods arguing that teaching and learning do not make a 'cause and effect' relationship. In other words, it is not necessary that if teaching happens, learning will automatically take place. In fact, "It is quite possible for a teacher to be putting great effort into his or her teaching and for no learning to be taking place; similarly, a teacher could apparently be doing nothing, but the students be learning a great deal."(p. 2).

Recently, research has focused on the classroom itself: "The central role of research in the area of language learning/teaching have shifted over the years, from a focus on the method of teaching, to a focus on the learner and learning processes, and most recently to a focus on the classroom setting in which formal learning is taking place."(Woods, 1996, p. 3), and the

process involved in it is rather more important than the product of teaching, though the latter is also considered. Woods (ibid. p. 12) puts it clear "An important purpose underlying this research shift was to determine what are the classroom processes that lead to successful learning of the language." He further makes a distinction between 'structure' of the course and its 'structuring'. The latter, he claims, is the responsibility of decision-makers and those responsible for designing materials. However, the former seems to be the result of classroom interactions.

This shift of focus to the learner is reflected in many aspects of the learning process: the curriculum reflects the learners' needs; learners are engaged in various communicative activities in which they share information and negotiate meaning, and the teacher is a guide and facilitator. (Nunan, 1989; cited in Antón, 1999). Antón (ibid. p. 304) clearly states the new role of the learner in learner-centred instruction: "The role of the learner is that of communicator: students interact with others, they are actively engaged in negotiation of meaning, they have an opportunity to express themselves by sharing ideas and opinions, and they are responsible for their own learning."

The 1980s have testified a real interest in finding ways of improving language learning and teaching. The shift was from "transmission-oriented to participatory or constructivist knowledge development."(Crandall, 1999, p. 226). In this regard, great attention was given to CLL as one possible way of fulfilling the predefined roles of both teachers and learners. Consequently, CLL was introduced in "second and foreign language and bilingual and mainstream classroom with students of all ages and language proficiency level."( ibid.)

The teacher, being responsible in class, has to frequently speculate about the learning process and try to ask intelligent questions about learning and teaching. In relation to learning, Nunan (1992) asks two questions, so far as cooperative learning is concerned, and which would help teachers and learners alike consider the classroom context more critically:



1. In what way is context an important element in language learning?
2. What classroom tasks and patterns of organization facilitate cooperative learning?

The role of the learner being redefined, the teacher has to try to understand the new role assigned to the learner and what implications, if any, this new role has on the classroom context as a whole.

Learner-centered instruction which emerged recently advocates the learner as an active element in class, and emphasizes his understanding of the learning process. In this spirit, Nunan (ibid.) provides three types of knowledge which the learner should have:

1. Their self-concept and view of their role as a learner.
2. The process of learning; and
3. The learning task.

He adds that these points help in understanding the philosophy of learner-centered instruction, and that "Cooperative learning in mixed ability teams provides a major pedagogical structure for working towards such goals"(ibid. p. 11).

Moreover, it is claimed that "Cooperative learning provides a viable, and in many contexts, a more effective alternative to the competitive ethic which dominates much educational thinking today."(ibid. p. 10). In general, research is in favor of this type of research in comparison to whole-class instruction. In the same vein, Wallace (1991) states that group work is a mode of teaching and learning which is defined as being "any form of learning activity which is done by groups of learners working together. Often distinguished from class work, in which the whole class works together." (p. 45).

Williams (2003, p. 103) specifies the focus in student-centered instruction stating that "It consists of shifting the focus of classroom activities from the teacher to the students." It should be emphasized, however, that the shift from traditional to learner-centred instruction is a gradual and long-term process, and even when teachers are willing to change to the new type of instruction, they always revert to the traditional way of teaching.

## 2. Cooperative Language Learning

Although the notion of cooperative learning is not a new one, it has only been examined in the last three decades (Woolfolk, 2004). Roughly speaking, it is the use of small groups or task-based instruction "which affords students the opportunity to develop a range of cognitive, metacognitive and social as well as linguistic skills while interacting and negotiating in the classroom."(Crandall, 1999, p. 227).

Learning styles and strategies have been the subjects of many studies (e.g, Cohen, 2003; Gan et al, 2004; Mori, 1999; Wenden, 1998). Wallace (1991) argues that the former naturally come to them and that they have to do with the learner's personality and personal ways of learning, whereas the latter can be said to be the adoption of various learning styles to the corresponding learning situation and have to be experimented with. He emphasizes the necessity of training students to use some learning strategies and that "teacher educators should focus on the concept of *learning strategies* rather than learning styles."(p. 25).

O'Malley & Chamot (1990) classify learning strategies used by learners into three: metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies. The latter type of strategies includes: Questioning for clarification, cooperation, self-talk and self-reinforcement. They, therefore, consider cooperation both as a social and affective strategy defining it as "working together with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance."(p. 139). They encourage teachers to train their students on the use of different strategies, including cooperation, and "stress the utility of learning strategies as aids to motivation."(p. 200). Strategy use aims at affecting "the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge"(Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; cited in O'Malley & Chamot, *ibid.* p. 43)

Paris (1988a; cited in O'Malley & Chamot, *ibid.*) names four instructional techniques "that lend themselves to the integration of motivational and cognitive strategy instruction."(p. 161). These strategies are: *Modeling, direct explanation, scaffolding instruction* and *cooperative learning*, in which "heterogeneous student teams work together to solve a problem or complete a task."( *ibid.*)

Oxford (1990) discusses three sets of social strategies that learners use: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. She further divides cooperating with others into two categories: cooperating with peers, and cooperating with proficient users of the new language. Cooperation, then, is a social indirect strategy that learners use in learning, and the following diagram shows the place of cooperative learning according to Oxford's classification:

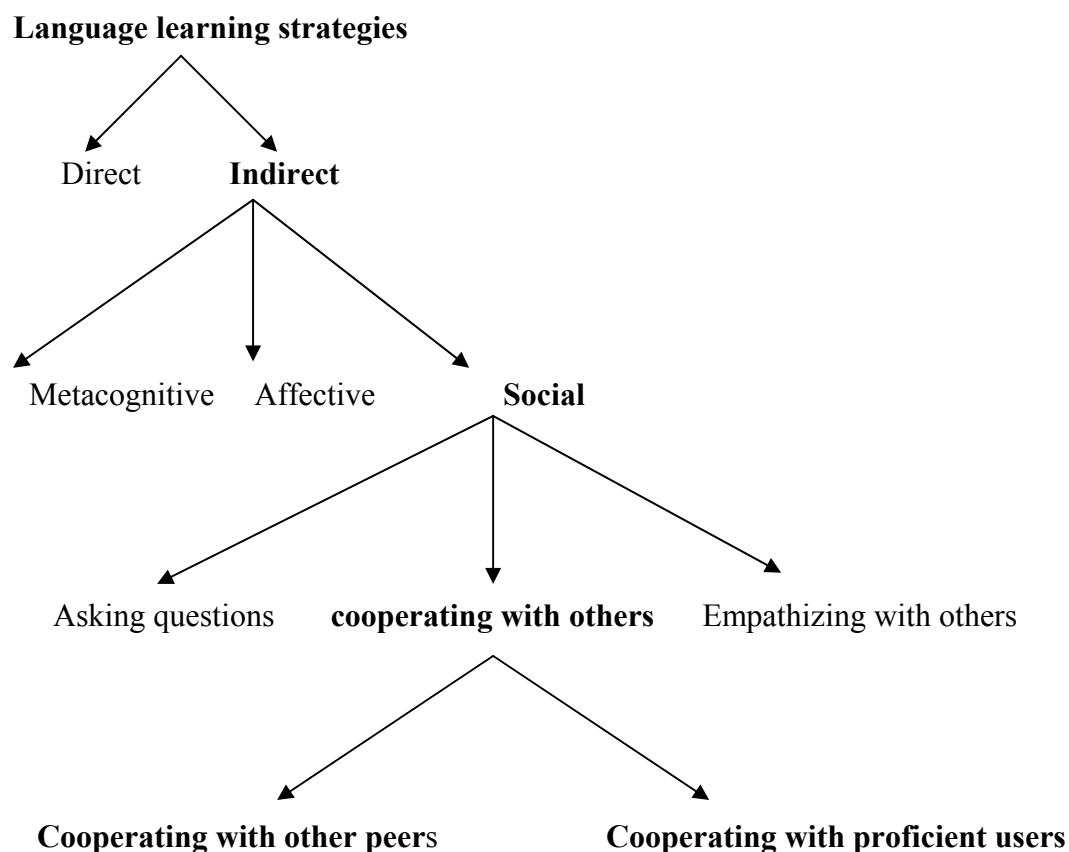


Figure 2.1: Language Learning Strategies (as classified by Oxford, *ibid.*)

The theoretical basis of social strategies is that "language is a form of social behavior."(ibid. p. 144). She views CLL as a social strategy on the basis that it involves interaction with other people.

CLL meets the principles of CLT, as Richards & Rodgers (2001) put it "Cooperative Language Learning originates outside of language teaching, but because it is compatible with many of the assumption of Communicative Language Teaching it has become a popular and relatively uncontroversial approach to the organization of classroom teaching in many parts of the world."(p. 151).

CLL can be classified under the teaching methods in which the learning process is given primary importance. The steps learners go through to achieve their goals are considered more important than the outcome itself. In other words, what matters most are not the goals, though these are checked and evaluated, but the way learners struggle in order to perform the assigned tasks. Nunan (1992) reveals that, in its core, CLL has much to do with process-oriented models of second language acquisition and he states that "Those tasks in which learners are required to negotiate meaning among themselves in the course of completing an interactive task are particularly suitable to language development."(p. 4).

CLL has been defined by many researchers each of whom spotting light on a particular aspect but in essence, all definitions; more or less, fall within the same scope. One definition of CLL is that:

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, cited in Richards & Rodgers, *op.cit*, p. 192).

Johnson & Johnson (1994; in Dale, 1997; cited in Richards & Rodgers, *ibid.*) emphasize the role of cooperation in enhancing learning and provide the following definition:

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals. Within cooperative situations, individuals seek outcomes beneficial to themselves and all other group members. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. (p. 195).

Similarly, Woolfolk (2004) views CLL as "arrangement in which students work in mixed-ability groups and are rewarded on the basis of the success of the group." (p. 492).

## **2.1 Theoretical Foundation of CLL**

Devising a given methodology for teaching a foreign language greatly depends on what assumptions we have about learning and the way it takes place. This was the case of most traditional and recent teaching methods which had their background in various theories about learning.

CLL is mainly based on the works of Piaget (1965) and Vygotsky (1962) about the critical role of interaction in learning. According to Piaget (1964, cited in Woolfolk, 2004, p. 41), learners construct their own knowledge and understanding. In his words:

Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not simply to look at it and make a mental copy or image of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed.

The use of cooperative and collaborative learning rests on strong theoretical basis. According to Storch (2005, p.153), "the use of small groups/pairs accords with a social constructivist view of learning". Social constructivism is based on the work of Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory views learning as a social act. According to him, cognitive development of

children "arises in social interaction with a more able member of society" (Storch, *op.cit.* p.154) who assists the child along this development. Studies (Donato, 1994; Storch, 2002; cited in Storch, *ibid.*) show that peers working together can similarly experience such assistance which is known as *scaffolding*. On this basis "learners should be encouraged to participate in activities which foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge."(*ibid.*). Pedagogically speaking, using pair/group work is supported as a way of putting this into practice. Moreover, critical thinking skills are viewed as being of paramount importance to learning. Kagan (1992) equated critical thinking with the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In CLL "there is a heightened interest in situations where elaboration, interpretation, explanation, and argumentation are integral to the activity of the group and where learning is supported by other individuals."(Webb & Palincsar, 1996; in Woolfolk, 2004, p. 492). Information processing theorists promote the role of CLL in expanding, rehearsing, and organizing knowledge. The Piaget perspective's advocates point out that because of group discussions, the learner may question his own understanding and tend to "go beyond his current state and strike out in new directions."(Piaget, 1985; *ibid.* p. 493). Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the significance of social interaction for learning, considers CLL a useful model of learning in which interaction between members of the group is established. (*ibid.*).

Cooperative/collaborative learning has many implications for learning. Nunan (1992, p. 13) mentions some of these:

- Learners are an important resource for their own collective learning, and this resource can be assessed through collaboration, cooperation and experiential learning;
- Learning is a social as well as a psychological process;
- Collaborative learning can help learners use what they already know to go beyond what they currently think.

## **2.2 Characteristics of CLL**

As has already been mentioned, CLL is a relatively new teaching method. Therefore, some of its features have to be highlighted.

### **2.2.1 Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning and Group Work**

At first sight, it might appear that cooperative learning is simply the division of students with varying levels in small groups in order to achieve common goals. Things; however, are not always what they appear to be. In fact, cooperative learning goes beyond organizing students. Crandall (1999) states that "Cooperative learning is more than just small group activity. In a well-structured cooperative task, there is a genuine information gap, requiring learners to both listen and contribute to the development of an oral, written or other product which represents the group's efforts, knowledge and perspectives."(pp.226-227)

Similarly, Woolfolk (2004, p. 492) argues that they do not imply the same thing because "group work is simply several students working together-they may or may not be cooperating." In making this distinction between group work and cooperative learning, Woolfolk does not criticize group work for being ineffective. Rather, she claims that group work is the first step towards getting students to work cooperatively, and she argues that "[group] work can be useful, but true cooperative learning requires much more than simply putting students in groups."(ibid.)

Another thing that is worth mentioning is the distinction between CLL and CL. Cooperation refers to a group working together on a task in which the members divide the work so that it can be completed individually. *Collaborative learning* is organized around learners working and learning together through face-to-face interaction (Damon & Phelps, 1988; in Bailey et al. cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 261).

Some writers made a distinction between cooperation and collaboration. Nunan (1992), for instance, uses the terms cooperative learning and collaborative learning interchangeably and

quotes the following definition: "Collaborative learning entails students working together to achieve common learning goals."(Slavin, 1983; Sharan et al.1984; cited in Nunan, ibid. p. 3). Others, however, used the terms interchangeably. In fact, the difference seems to be so slight to be considered at all. Therefore, differentiating cooperation and collaboration does not seem to offer many benefits. For this reason, the terms would be employed here to mean the same thing.

### **2.2.2 Group Composition**

CLL can take the form of group work or pair work. In discussing possible ways of arranging students in class, Harmer (2005) considers group work and pair work cooperative activities the advantages of which are mainly giving students equal opportunities for using and practising the language and more independence from the teacher. Moreover, both group work and pair work assign more responsibility to the learner as Harmer puts it"Decisions are cooperatively arrived at, responsibilities are shared"(p. 21). Sharing more responsibility can further increase the learner's self-esteem.

### **2.2.3 Role of the Learner**

CLL "promotes learning through communication in pairs or small groups."(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 174), and its major concern is to enable students to learn from each other through their contribution to the group. In this regard, each student would take the role that goes with his/her personality. As Crandall reports:"For example, in an activity requiring individual roles, an extroverted or more confident student who likes to speak in class may be assigned the role of Reporter, while one who prefers to write may be named the Recorder."(pp. 2-3). In his turn, Cohen (1994 a; cited in Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999) claims that in group work, students are assigned the roles traditionally done by the teacher. They, therefore, take charge of the learning process and check that all the group members are on task. In CLL, learners are responsible for their own learning. This does not imply that teachers have no role



to perform; rather, they delegate their authority to students who try to solve their own problems, and correct each other's mistakes. (ibid.)

Woolfolk (2003) states that in order to promote cooperation between students, the teacher can assign roles to each member of the group. The following table demonstrates the possible role that learners can perform.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>
Encourager	Encourages reluctant or shy students to participate
Praiser/Cheerleader	Shows appreciation of other's contribution and recognizes accomplishment
Gate keeper	Equalizes participation and makes sure no one dominates
Coach	Helps with the academic content, explains concepts
Question commander	Makes sure all students' questions are asked and answered
Taskmaster	Keeps the group on task
Recorder	Writes down ideas, decisions and plans
Reflector	Keeps group aware of progress (or lack of progress)
Quiet captain	Monitors noise level
Materials monitor	Picks up and return materials

Table 2.1: Possible Student Roles in Cooperative Learning Groups

(Kagan, 1994; cited in Woolfolk, 2003, p. 496)

### **2.3 Benefits of CLL**

Christison (1990, p. 146) asks two questions on the introduction of cooperative learning in EFL contexts:

1. What good results from a change to cooperative methods?
2. Why should we go to the trouble?

These two questions are likely to be asked by every teacher before he accepts to change to cooperative language learning.

In fact, most research on the effects of CLL on learners' achievement and the influential nature of peers on each other indicate that the results are significantly positive. CLL, then, has many advantages for language learning. Oxford (1990) claims that "many studies outside of the language learning field have strongly demonstrated the utility of cooperative learning strategies"(p. 146). Add to this, Woolfolk (*op.cit*) states that "truly cooperative groups have positive effects on students' empathy, tolerance for differences, feelings of acceptance, friendships self-confidence, and even school attendance."(p. 498).

Dörnyei & Malderez (1999, p. 156) summarize the advantages of group work on many levels stating that this approach is mainly responsible for:

- The participants' attitudes toward and affective perception of the learning process (Ehrman & Dörnyei,1988);
- The quantity and quality of interaction between group members (Levine & Moreland, 1990);
- The extent of cooperation between students and the degree of individual involvement(Johnson & Johnson, 1995);
- The order and discipline in the classroom (Jones & Jones, 1995);
- Students' relationships with their peers and the teacher (Ehrman & Dörnyei 1998);
- A significant proportion of student' s motivation to learn the L2 (Dörnyei in press);
- Student and teacher confidence and satisfaction (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997).

CLL differs from teacher-centered instruction in many ways, and the following characteristics both sociological and psychological would give a clearer image of this type of learning and teaching.

### **2.3.1 Sociological Dimension**

Using cooperative learning is primarily a matter of a teacher's approach to teaching. In this vein, Williams (2003, p. 139) argues that teachers who "believe that their job is to prepare young people for successful lives in a functioning society have little difficulty recognizing that cooperation and collaboration have social and educational benefits that make work groups an important part of the classroom experience."

#### **2.3.1.1 Interaction**

According to the constructivist perspective, learning is a matter of active construction of meaning by learners (Pope & Keen, 1981; Sutherland, 1992; Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985; cited in Williams & Burden, 1999). Social constructivists perceive of language learning as a social process, and the context in which meaning is constructed through interacting with other individuals, is given primary importance. (Donato & McCormick, 1994; Wertsch, 1988; cited in Williams & Burden, *ibid.*)

Interaction and negotiation of meaning are of paramount importance for successful language learning (Long, 1996; Oliver, 2002; Pica, 2002). Research (Pica, 1987; Pica & Doughty, 1985; cited in Woods, 1996) found that traditional classrooms do not involve but little negotiation of meaning and interaction between students. Moreover, it is reported that activities in which students are required to come to a consensus promote less interaction than do information gap activities where "every participant has unique access to information required by each of the other participants."(Woods, *ibid.* p. 10). Long (1983; cited in Nassaji, 2000) reports that according to "the interactive perspective, learning a new language is a function of social and meaningful interaction."(p. 243). Interaction consists of "sharing ideas and opinions, collaborating toward a single goal, or competing to achieve individual goals."(Pica et al., 1993; cited in Nassaji, *ibid.* p. 245).

During the 1980s, classroom interaction and negotiation of meaning were emphasized, and "second language acquisition research had moved from looking at the learner's order of acquisition of linguistic elements to comprehensible input as a factor in the learner's acquisition, and then to interaction as a means of getting the required input, i.e. from the learner *per se* to the learner's interactions."(Wood, *op.cit.* p. 10)

Littlewood (2003) maintains that it is the teacher and the role he assumes that sometimes dictates the degree of interaction in the classroom. As opposed to traditional classes where the teacher is the focal character, learner-centered instruction gives learners the opportunity to interact with each other, share their ideas and discuss them before confronting the class as a whole. This, of course, leads to lowering anxiety. According to Crandall (cited in Arnold, 1999, p. 233),"In cooperative classrooms, students learn to rely on each other and also have the security of knowing that they will have several opportunities to rehearse a contribution before they are asked to share it with the larger class."

Woolfolk (2004) emphasizes the importance of students' interaction with the teacher or other peers "in order to test their thinking, to be challenged, to receive feedback, and to watch how others work out problems."(p. 41). She also states that "communicating with others makes students use, test, and sometimes change their thinking abilities."(p. 42).

Scrivener (1994) provides a list for some ideas to promote interaction in class. Some of these ideas turn around the principles of CLL including:

- make use of pairs and small groups to maximize opportunities for students to speak.
- encourage interaction between students rather than only between student and teacher and teacher and student. Get students to ask questions, give explanations, etc to each other rather than always to you.
- encourage cooperation rather than competition ...we learn from others and from working through our own mistakes.

If this true, then it means that the teacher can concentrate more on the process of learning than simply on a plunge towards the "right answers"(p. 15). He, moreover, considers listening to another learner useful. This argument, of course, is not at the linguistic level, but if we come to interaction itself and to the time available for each student to take part in the classroom and make his own contribution, cooperative tasks are by all means useful. Scrivener (ibid.) adds that dividing students into groups a good way of arranging time stating that "The teacher could use this time effectively by discreetly monitoring what the students are saying, and using the information collected as a source of material for future feedback or other work."(p. 14).

Malamah-Thomas (1991) argues that interaction can be either positive or negative. In case of the former, it results in cooperation between students, and in case of the latter it results in conflict. He further suggests that only when interaction is based on cooperation that learning occurs. Therefore, the teacher should establish a cooperative atmosphere between learners in order to avoid conflicts between students.

In fact interaction with other students can be beneficial for both proficient and weak learners. The latter would benefit through getting more information and knowledge, whereas good learners would explain to their peers with the result that they would rehearse that they already know. However, it should be noted that setting students in groups does not automatically result in interaction between members of the group. Interaction occurs when group members behave in such a way as to influence one another. (Dörnyei & Malderez; cited in Arnold, 1999).

### **2.3.1.2 Positive Interdependence**

In cooperative tasks, each learner performs a given role. This, of course, is cooperation which according to Crandall (cited in Arnold, ibid.) "is more than just collaboration, where it is possible to complete a task or develop a product without the contribution of each of the members."(p. 2). It means that on the one hand, learners would be independent from the

teacher and on the other hand, they would be dependent on each other. Consequently, the success of the whole group would depend on the success of each member and vice versa.

### **2.3.1.3 Development of Social Skills**

In cooperative activities, students need to develop "skills in negotiating (clarifying, seeking clarification, checking for comprehension, probing for more information) as well as interaction skills in turn taking, listening, encouraging, helping, disagreeing" (Bennett; Rolheister-Bennett & Stevanh, 1991; cited in Arnold, *ibid.* p. 3). CLL equally aims at providing "a vehicle for critical thinking and problem solving, and to encourage collaborative social skills." (Calderon, 1987; cited in Christison, 1990, p. 140).

### **2.3.1.4 Promotion of Cooperation**

CLL aims to promote cooperation between students rather than competition to one another. In this vein, Richards & Rodgers (2001) put it that CLL "is an approach designed to foster cooperation rather than competition" (p. 195). From Oxford's (1990) standpoint "Cooperation implies the absence of competition and the presence of group spirit." (p. 145). However; "*cooperation*" does not automatically stand in opposition to "*competition*". Nunan (1992) puts it clear "Collaboration and competition can coexist in the same classroom; for example when learners work collaboratively with some learners in a small group, but competitively against other learners in other groups." (p. 3).

Similarly, Johnson; Johnson & Smith (1995; in Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999) highlight the effects of group work on cooperation between students stating that "Striving for mutual benefit results in an emotional bonding with collaborators liking each other, wanting to help each other succeed, and being committed to each other' well-being."

### **2.2.2 Psychological Dimension**

Brown (2000) claims that "no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your

own capabilities for that activity."(p.145). This implies the role of each of these in successful learning.

Research on the effects of CLL on second language learning has shown many advantages and more particularly on the affective side such as: higher self-esteem, increased confidence, lowering anxiety, and stronger language learning motivation. (Oxford, 1990). In addition, CLL is "a strategy for the classroom that is used to increase motivation and retention, to help students develop a positive image of self and others,"(Calderon, 1987; cited in Christison, 1990, p.140).

Crandall (1999) discusses the positive correlation between cooperative learning and the affective climate of the language learning classroom. He promotes the role of CLL in encouraging and supporting many affective aspects of language learning including: reducing anxiety, enhancing motivation, leading to the development of positive attitudes towards the target language and promoting self-esteem, and he puts it "cooperative learning, like other group work, creates a more positive affective climate in the classroom, while it also individualizes instruction and raises student motivation."(ibid. p. 233). Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that CLL is used 'to enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate.' (p. 193).

### **2.3.2.1 Anxiety**

According to Crandall (ibid.), fear of failure is one of the most threatening dangers to students' success. One way to overcome this danger is to have the opportunity to try out one's ideas, interact with other students, and receive their criticisms before the student faces the whole class. CLL has been found to offer a good atmosphere for such a situation, thus, lowering anxiety. Crandall points out that "Time to think, opportunities to rehearse and receive feedback, and the greater likelihood of success reduce anxiety and can result in increased participation and language learning.(ibid.).

Oxford (1990) draws attention to the potential of anxiety in language learning and states that "Inhibited learners are paralyzed by actual or participated criticism from other people and from themselves, so they try to ensure that there are as few "chinks in their armor" as possible."(p. 142), and she acknowledges the role of CLL in lowering anxiety. Likewise, Woolfolk (2004) proposes the use of cooperative learning activities.

### **2.3.2.2 Motivation**

Most scholars claim that the notion of motivation is complex (e.g. Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 2003; Feldman, 1997; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Spolsky, 2000). Motivation is considered as "a component of metacognition in so far as it plays a self-regulatory role in learning."(Jones et al. 1987; cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 160) and it has been found to have great effect on enhancing students' performance in the target language (Gardner, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Slavin 1990; cited in Woolfolk, *op.cit.*). In fact, "the will to learn appears to be essential for developing the skill to the learner."(Paris, 1988; cited in O'Malley & Chamot, *op.cit.* p. 184). Kunda (1990; in Myers, 1999) puts it also that "Experiments confirm that a motivational engine powers our cognitive machinery." (p. 65).

In teaching a foreign language the teacher comes across many problems of which motivation is one. In their study of the difficulties L2 teachers may encounter in introducing CLL in their classes, Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon (2002) state that"...Equally important to the level of difficulty for the teacher is the mindset of the learners. Are they motivated or recalcitrant?"(p.205).

The power motivation exerts on language learning is tremendous. In the first place, motivation has much to do with the choice of learning strategies by learners. Oxford (1990) argues that the strategies used by highly motivated students outnumbered and are more significant than those used by less motivated students. She further exemplifies in order to strengthen her point: "For instance, individuals who want to learn a new language mainly for



interpersonal communication will use different strategies than learners who want to learn a new language mainly to fulfill a graduation requirement."( *ibid.* p. 13).

It is claimed that the learning situation can greatly influence students' motivation (Skehan, 1989). The role of CLL in enhancing students' motivation has proved to be a major one. Slavin (2003) recognizes the importance of CLL in enhancing intrinsic motivation. In his words, "If all students are put on mixed-ability teams, all have a good chance of success."(Slavin, 1995a; cited in Slavin, *ibid.* p.351). Good & Brophy (cited in Nunan, 1992) suggest that"...[Although] the effects of cooperative learning on achievement appear to be basically motivational, the key is not motivation to win competitions against other teams but motivation to assist one teammates to meet their individual goals and thus insure that the team as a whole will do well."(p. 5). On his part Slavin (1983; cited in Nunan, *ibid.*) highlights the motivational effect of CLL arguing that the peer group's power being "perhaps the only remaining free resource for improving schools."(p. 5), on fostering learning is undeniable. For this reason, traditional classes have to be reconsidered and tasks restructured taking into account peer grouping. As for the motivational power of CLL, he states that "on the other hand, at least for achievement, we now know that simply allowing students to work together is unlikely to capture the power of the peer group to motivate students to perform."(*ibid.*).

According to Crandall (1999), in cooperative groups, students receive peer support and assistance. This will encourage them and subsequently they would be better motivated to learn. In his words "this, in turn, can motivate them to continue to try, especially when peers encourage and support their contributions."(*ibid.* p. 235). Long & Porter (1985; cited in Crandall, *ibid.*) state that motivation can be increased via group work. He further reports that out of 122 studies carried out by Johnson and his colleagues in 1981, 65 were in favor of cooperation. "Competitiveness is not much of a motivator."(Edwards, 1997; cited in Crandall *ibid.*).

Moreover, sharing one's work with the entire class makes students feel better about the learning process, "strengthens the bonding in the class, and motivates students to work hard." (Williams, 2003, p. 132). Another finding is that CLL seems to offer greater opportunities for learners to use the target language with each other (Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon, 2002).

### **2.3.2.3 Self-esteem**

High academic achievement is a matter of many factors of which self-esteem plays a good part and most psychologists acknowledge its essential role. In fact, there seems to exist a real correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement. Myers (1999) states that "Children with high self-esteem tend also to have high academic achievement."(p. 22). Accordingly, boosting the learner's self-esteem via one way or another would result in relating good achievement at school. The amount of the learner's contribution in class leads to forming a good image about him. Thus, the more the learner is involved and the more roles he is assigned, the better self image he would hold of himself.

However, he argues that self-esteem can be the result as well as the cause of high achievement stating that "Others argue that high achievement produces a favorable self-image."(Myers, *ibid.*) In case high-esteem learners fail, they "sustain their self-worth by perceiving other people as failing, too, and by exaggerating their superiority over others."(Agostinelli & others, 1992; Brown &Gallagher, 1992; cited in Myers, *ibid.* p. 65). Another thing is that "social rejection lowers our self-esteem, strengthening our eagerness for approval."(Myers, *ibid.*)

So far as the effects of CLL on self-esteem, Myers quotes Aronson reporting that "children in interdependent jigsaw classrooms grow to like each other better, develop a greater liking for school, and develop a greater self-esteem than children in traditional classrooms." (Aronson, 1980; cited in Myers, *ibid.* p. 542). In general, research (Covington, 1992; Deci & Ryan, 1985,

in Woolfolk, 2004) found that setting students to work collaboratively would positively affect their self-esteem.

#### **2.3.2.4 Self-confidence**

It is generally acknowledged by psychologists that higher self-confidence and higher self-esteem are very essential to success in language learning. According to Slavin (1990; in Crandall, 1999), unlike competitive classroom, cooperative ones increase both self-confidence and self-esteem. In the same spirit, Edwards puts it that "Competitiveness is really a deficit-motivated trait [and] self-esteem is at stake."(Edward, 1997; cited in Crandall, *ibid.*)

Students' self-confidence in their ability to write is significantly important in enhancing their writing though craft counts as well, as Neman (1995, p. 5) puts it "writing well requires both knowledge of the craft and the self-confidence to exercise this knowledge'. In deed, students 'who are convinced that they write badly will write badly; students who are convinced that they have nothing worthwhile to offer will probably not offer anything worthwhile.'"( *ibid.* 4)

So far as the effects of CLL on students' self-confidence, it is assumed that "students in cooperative groups will feel more liked by their classmates because of the increased opportunities to interact."(Christison, 1990, p. 146). Students' contribution to the whole group would make them feel that they are more recognized by their peers, thus, would feel more successful in their learning.

#### **2.3.3 Academic Achievement**

Tell me, and I'll forget; show me, and I'll remember; involve me, and I'll learn. This Chinese proverb recognizes the importance of task involvement for successful learning. CLL, as has already been discussed, can offer wide opportunities for interaction with other learners. Slavin (1980; in O'Malley& Chamot, 1990) acknowledges the role of CLL in fostering academic achievement and positive attitudes towards themselves and their peers.

In the same vein, McGroarty (1989; cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 195) states six advantages of CLL in the field of second language learning:

1. Increased frequency and variety of second language practice.
2. Possibility for development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills.
3. Opportunities to integrate language with content-based learning.
4. Opportunity to include a greater variety of material to stimulate language.
5. Freedom for teachers to master new professional skills.
6. Opportunities for students to act as resources for each other.

In addition to linguistic knowledge, CLL helps learners "to develop critical thinking skills, and to develop communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities of CLL."(Richards & Rodgers, *ibid.*)

A major advantage of CLL is that it enables students to learn from one another through interaction and communication with members of the group. (Richards & Rodgers, *op.cit.* Harmer, 2005). This is due to the assumption that CLL "gives each member of the collaboration access to others' minds and knowledge, and it imbues the task with a sense of shared goals which can be very motivating."(Harmer, *ibid.* p. 73). Christison (1990) summarizes the findings of the research done by Sharan (1980) and Slavin (1980) reporting that 27 studies were implemented in order to see the benefits of CLL, if any, on academic achievement and she claims that 19 studies were in favor of CLL in that they resulted in significant positive effects on basic skills.

#### **2.3.4 Additional Benefits of CLL**

CLL has other benefits. Brown (2004) considers autonomy one of the principles of second language acquisition that leads to successful learning. In CLL, learners would develop a kind of autonomy from the teacher but remain dependent on one another. According to Harmer

(*op.cit.*), collaborative writing is used to build the writing habit enthusiastically. In addition, Group work helps students recognize the importance of revision in writing, and "understand that mastering composition consists in part of becoming aware of how others respond to the work" Williams (2003, p. 139). Another thing is that cooperation that is "required in group activities appears to lead students to work harder and to discover more than they do when they perform tasks on an individual, competitive basis."(Cohen, 1994; Crawford & Haaland, 1972; Hertz-Lazarowitz et al , 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 2000, Spear, 1993; Wiersma, 2000; cited in Williams, *ibid.*)

#### **2.3.4 Shortcomings of CLL**

Cooperative learning has its own drawbacks. Many researchers claim that true cooperative learning demands constant and continuous control from the teacher. In other words, if the teacher does not monitor the groups appropriately, cooperative learning will hinder rather than facilitate learning. For instance, students may not have equal participation thus "one student may dominate while the others stay silent."(Harmer, 2005, p.21). Moreover, low performers might be ridiculed and their ideas ignored where as high performers tend to dominate the group and their ideas taken into consideration though not very interesting. (Anderson, Holland & Palincsar, 1997; Cohen, 1986; in Woolfolk, 2004).

In cooperative tasks, learners would listen to and interact with peers whose language is approximately the same. CLL was criticised on this basis. Scrivener (1994) argues that in whole class instruction, while interacting with the teacher, they feel that they are taking language from "a native speaker or an experienced user of the language."(p. 14). On the contrary, when working with other students whose level is approximately the same, they may not feel that they are making any benefits, as Harmer (2005) puts it "It is always popular with students, many of whom feel they would rather relate to the teacher as individuals than interact with another who may be just as linguistically weak as they are."(p. 116).

Another obstacle facing the use of CLL is group formation. Harmer (ibid.) refers to this problem stating that "students may not like the people they are grouped or paired with."(p. 21) especially if they do not know each other (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999). This can result in subsequent anxiety and lack of confidence (Mc collom, 1990b; cited in Dörnyei & Malderez, ibid.). In fact, to solve this problem, the teacher has to set up the groups on the basis of students' preference.

One's success in foreign language learning is a matter of many things including teachers teaching methods and students strategy use. But what if the former does not match with the latter? Bull and Ma (2001) claim that "it is recognized that a mismatch between the learning style of a student and teaching style of a class tutor can result in learner anxiety or dissatisfaction, and reduced achievement."(Ehrman, 1996; Felder& Henriques, 1995; Oxford & Lavine, 1992; ibid. p.171).

In conducting group work in class, the teacher has to pay attention to an extremely significant aspect of personality dimension; that of extroversion and introversion. Introverts may not like working with other people. Therefore, the teacher has to greatly consider the fact that" the introvert enjoys ample opportunities for quiet, structured work and that extrovert for more active, socially-oriented activities." (Fontana, 1995, p.148)

When asked to make comments on their group mates ' writings, students may not feel comfortable (Bleich, 1995; Bruffee, 1993; in Williams, 2003). Discomfort, then, can be a real obstacle to group work. To overcome this problem, Williams (ibid. p. 132) suggests allowing students to get acquainted to one another a time before they start workshops.

The use of the mother tongue when discussing various topics is another drawback of CLL. Harmer (2005) states students working cooperatively often talk "about something else completely, often in their first language."(p. 116).

Williams (*opcit.*) refers to a very negative aspect of group work; students are most of the time reluctant to give candid criticism of each other's drafts and urge "label even the most atrocious work as 'great'(p.142).

In her discussion about CLL, Oxford (1990) draws our attention to an important point. She states that CLL is a social strategy that learners are not ready to use by nature. In other words, language learners have to be intensively trained on how to cooperate with others, and research "shows that, on their own, with no special training or encouragement, language learners do not typically report a natural preference for cooperative strategies."(ibid. p.146) This is mainly due to the competitive nature of classes. Oxford (ibid.) puts it "Competition is strongly reinforced by the educational establishment, with schools often pitting students against each other for approval, attention, and grades in all subject areas, including language learning."(p.146)

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, CLL is an approach that was found to have many advantages and benefits on many levels: sociological and psychological, and academic achievement. When applied effectively, CLL can play a good part sociologically in the sense that they would learn how to interact with each other, learn from other peers as well as evaluate themselves vis-a-vis other students. Equally, CLL can raise students' self-esteem, increase their motivation, enhance their self-confidence, lower their anxiety, and create an affective social context of learning. All these elements put together can motivate students to learn; thus, increase their academic achievement. However, scholars emphasize the right way of conducting cooperative learning with its various models; Otherwise, the benefits of CLL would not be obtained. In sum, the motivational effect of CLL seems to be a considerable one. In the following chapter, we try to cast light on the various models of CLL and more particularly those used to teach the writing skill.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CHAPTER THREE: CLL APPLIED ON WRITING**

#### **Introduction**

CLL can be used to teach "content classes, ESP, the four skills, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary."(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.195). Chandler (1995) claims that writing is social by nature. This is the reason why "all writing involves some degree of collaboration."(ibid.) In support of this view, Murray (1992) mainly raises a debate about the nature of the writing process. He claims that writing is not necessarily an individual achievement; on the contrary, collaboration is likely to be highly beneficial for students on a number of scales. He explains the theoretical justification behind his viewpoint stating that the context and the text do interact and he mentions that researchers are, in fact, calling for teaching writing collaboratively (e.g. Doheny-Farina 1986; Odell 1985, cited in Murray, ibid. ) In this chapter, we shall see some models of CLL used in teaching writing.

#### **1. Collaborative Writing**

Writing and its teaching in academic context has been a controversial issue among scholars. Ede & Lunsford (1986; cited in Bekins & Merriam, 2004) state that writing is a process in which students collaborate in the sense that they interact and produce a product in teams. Another view is that writing in academic contexts dramatically varies from writing in non-academic ones; however, this transition seems to be neglected by teachers (Blakeslee, 2001). For this reason, CW should be considered.

Before dealing with CW as such, it is important to define collaboration. Farkas (1991, para. 3) provides the following points that states what collaboration is:

1. two or more people jointly composing the complete text of a document;
2. two or more people contributing components to a document;
3. one or more person modifying, by editing and/or reviewing, the document of one or more persons; and
4. one person working interactively with one or more person and drafting a document based on the ideas of the person or persons.

A definition of CW is that it is a "process of multiple authors producing one document, by writing together and soliciting one author's opinions about their writing."(Henderson & De Silva, 2005). Wynn & Cadet (1996, p. 4) state that CW is a social activity "whose aim is consensus". Bekins & Merriam (2004) describe CW as complex on the basis that it involves some skills like collaboration, negotiation and consultation. To teach students these skills, they propose the introduction of experiential learning (cf. chapter two). The latter enables learners to consult and collaborate.

## **1.1 Models of CW**

There are many models that are used to teach writing cooperatively.

### **1.1.1 Introduction on Paper Writing and Writing as a Literary Event**

Murray (1992) discusses two types of CW: *interaction on paper writing* and *writing as a literacy event*: the former is particularly limited to the review of books and articles to be published, "where the reviewers and editor make notes on the writer's draft and also writes additional comments."(p.101); while the latter concerns us much more because it can be applied to ESL contexts. A *literacy event* is an event that "[has] social interactional rules which regulate the type and amount of talk about what is written, and define ways in which oral language reinforces, defines, extends, or sets aside the written material."(Heath, 1983; cited in Murray, *ibid.* p. 102). Murray (*ibid.* p. 103) mentions a number of social and interactional rules which writers use "agreeing on a common goal; contributing differential knowledge;

determining the knowledge of the audience; interacting as a group; and distancing themselves from the text."

### **1.1.2 Writing Workshops**

Williams (2003, p. 103) defines workshops as classes in which students "share their work with one another and teachers intervene regularly as students develop compositions through several drafts." In this model of instruction, students, who form groups of three to five, help each other achieve a given writing task. Here the teacher is merely a facilitator.

Like all models of CW, writing workshops are highly beneficial in the sense that students are busy all the time. They talk, write, think and research, and they would better see their roles as active learners. (Williams, *ibid.*). Wynn & Cadet (1996) claim that workshops give students the opportunity for "generating ideas, providing feedback, responding to audience and composing papers, and thinking and writing critically."(p. 9).

Williams (*op.cit* p. 105) explains the strategy for implementing a composing activity in a workshop:

A teacher might direct students to brainstorm in their groups for a period of 10 minutes; at the end of this period, each group would report its results, thereby producing a whole-class discussion...Students exchange papers with their group mates, and then the teacher might direct them to identify prepositional phrases to reduce nominalization or to combine sentences to increase sentence variety.

#### **1.1.2.1 Role of the Teacher**

Williams (*ibid.*) explains the role of the teacher in such instruction as that of "coach and facilitator". This coach intervenes regularly in order to direct students and see if they are doing well in the learning process. This intervention consists of :

- Circulating among the groups.
- Teachers may add their own suggestions, and not just comments.

- The teacher should be able to monitor the groups. In case, for example, he is talking to a given group, the other groups should be in sight of the teacher. And not in sight of his back.

In fact students "might be tempted to become disruptive when they see the teacher's back is turned."(148). Moreover, since the teacher is a coach who is merely giving advice, and "advice is easier to take when it comes from someone seated nearby rather than from someone towering ahead."(p. 148).

### **1.1.2.2 Steps of Getting up Work Groups**

Setting up groups of students is not as easy as one might think. Williams (ibid.) suggests the following steps:

1. Get students acquainted to one another.
2. Evaluate their writing abilities in order to balance the groups. In this respect, Williams (ibid. p. 132) states that "collaboration thrives on input from different voices."
3. The teacher can equally use questionnaires to extract information about "the smartest person in the class, who is the best leader, who is the easiest to get along with, who are good friends, and so forth."( ibid. p. 133).

Teachers can of course change the structure of the groups through moving students from one group to another. On the one hand, this initiative is beneficial on the linguistic level on the basis that it gives students the opportunity for a greater variety of feedback. On the other hand, changing the students' groups can result in destroying the social bonds students have already established with their group mates. In this regard, Williams (ibid. p. 134) argues that "For the true cooperation that characterises effective work groups, bonding is essential."

Students should not be allowed to choose their own groups because if they are allowed to, they would do that on the basis of friendship, sex, age, language which would result in them discussing anything other than the task of writing. (ibid.).

### **1.1.2.3 Stages of Workshops**

Williams (2003) distinguishes three stages of collaborative learning: the bonding stage, the solidarity stage, and the working stage. He claims that the first two stages should be gone through with the help of the teacher. Only in the last stage are students required to tackle the task themselves. To begin with, the bonding stage requires that after identifying themselves with their groups, students need to feel that they should cooperate rather than compete with their group mates. This, however, is not easy to establish because of the bitter fact that they see writing as "a solitary act"(Williams, ibid.p. 143). He explains the bonding stage:"During the bonding stage, group members are adjusting to the idea that they will be working together closely for the entire term. They are trying to get to know one another, trying to establish a sense of community."(ibid.). During the solidarity stage, students know each other well. Therefore, they share responsibilities according to their strengths and weaknesses. It is during this stage that learners would become more confident in their capacities because of peer corrections. Finally, during the working stage, students can see their peers as real supports with the result that they would seek advice and accept comments more easily.

### **1.1.3 Writing Conferences**

Writing conferences represent another model of CW. However; they consist of teachers talking with their students about their writings. They can talk with one or more students having the same problems. In such conferences, students should be allowed to talk as much time as possible in order to understand better what they are doing. Another point that worth mentioning here is that teachers should not draw students' attention to all their errors. In this respect, Williams (ibid. p. 149) argues that" effective writing teachers commonly focus students'

attention on just a couple of points, even though the paper has numerous problems."(p. 149). In the same vein, Murray (1992) states that teachers should not appropriate their students' writings. Rather, they should give them "little or no guidance at all"(p. 116).

Applebee & Langer (1983; cited in Murray, *ibid.*) suggests some questions that teachers may ask in writing conferences:

1. Leading questions, e.g. 'Have you thought about...?' 'What would happen if...?'
2. Confirmation checks, e.g. 'Do you mean...?' rather than clarification checks, e.g. 'Can you tell me more about that?'
3. Advice, e.g. 'You could...!', 'Why don't you try...?'

Murray (*ibid.*) reports that classes often use single writing in which peer interaction is limited; and teacher-student conferences, if any, are largely dependent on students' knowledge and language. This approach to teaching writing, he claims, is based 'on the Platonic view that truth is discovered through an internal apprehension, a private vision.'*(ibid.* 114) He goes on saying that if writing is to be continued taught that way, it will never prepare our students for real-life contexts.

#### **1.1.4 Sequential Writing Model**

In this model of CW, group members do their work one after the other. That is to say, every single student in each group does his/her task at a given time. Lowry et al. (2004) discusses the advantages of this model stating that students may not come to a consensus on every single point, and that they can change other students' ideas and structures.

#### **1.1.5 Parallel Writing Model**

Unlike the sequential writing model, in this one every student in a team is assigned a role. Alfred et al. (2003) gives a detailed description of the model:

1. Designate one person as the team coordinator.
2. Collectively identify the audience, purpose and project scope.

3. Create a working outline of the document.
4. Assign segments or tasks to each team member.
5. Establish a schedule: due dates for drafts, revisions, and final documents.
6. Agree on a standard reference guide for style and format.
7. Research and write drafts of document segments.
8. Exchange segments for team member reviews.
9. Revise segments as needed.
10. Meet your established goals.

Johnson et al. (1994, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp.200-201) suggests a procedure for a cooperative writing task. After receiving a set of instruction on how to write an essay, for example, students work cooperatively to achieve the assigned task proceeding as follows:

1. The teacher assigns students to pairs with at least one good reader in each pair.
2. Student A describes what he or she is planning to write to Student B, who listens carefully, probes with a set of questions, and outlines Student A's ideas. Student B gives the written outline to Student A.
3. This procedure is reversed, with Student B describing what he or she is going to write and Student A listening and completing an outline of Student B's ideas, which is then given to student B.
4. The students individually research the material they need for their compositions, keeping an eye out for material useful to their partner.
5. The students work together to write the first paragraph of each composition to ensure that they both have a clear start to their compositions.
6. The students write their compositions individually.

7. When the students have completed their compositions, they proofread each other's compositions, making corrections in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, language usage, and other aspects of writing the teacher specifies. Students also give each other suggestions for revision.
8. The students revise their compositions.
9. The students then reread each other's compositions and sign their names to indicate that each composition is error-free.

## **2. Strategies for Implementing CLL Classes**

Christison (1990) states three assumptions of CLL. In the first place, she claims that cooperative skills must be learned. For clarity, learners are not born with tendency to cooperate with one another. Because of traditional classes and the general atmosphere of competitiveness, students need long-term training before they would be able to cooperate with one another. In other words, teachers should not expect their students to easily accept working with others. The change should go on slowly but surely. The second assumption is that the physical and special arrangement of the classroom affect cooperative work. The groups have to be structured in such a way that students can interact face-to face. The third assumption is that peer support and group dynamics are the keys to successful group work.

Crandall (1999; p.242) proposes some strategies to carry out cooperative learning successfully. He argues that "If cooperative language learning is to be successful, both teachers and learners need to be adequately prepared and interesting, relevant topics and materials must be available." He proposes four strategies for a better implementation of CLL. First, preparing learners for cooperative tasks, where teachers have to be aware of the transition from teacher-centered classrooms to cooperative learning. Hence, learners have to be well prepared and well trained on some issues such as how to provide feedback and function with other peers in



groups. Second, assigning learners to specific meaningful tasks, "the quality of the task is central to the success of the cooperative activities."(Crandall, *ibid.*, p. 243) In deed, in order that learners indulge in the tasks and show deep interest in them, they have to be relevant and motivating. Third, debriefing learners on their experiences with cooperative learning, reflection on what was learned whether social, cognitive or linguistic is an essential step in learning. Problems are likely to arise because learners previously accustomed to work individually and compete with one another, need some time in order to be able to cope with the new approach. Fourth, involving learners in evaluating individual and group contributions, training students how to evaluate their contribution to the group should be part of any cooperative activity only that this training has to be gradual. Crandall (*ibid.*) points out that "Involving learners in assessment and evaluation can lead to a sense of shared responsibility for the learning in the classroom, but it is a new experience for many students and may not be fully appreciated at first.". Teachers have to show perseverance in their work within the new approach.

Christison & Bassamo (1987; cited in Christison, *op.cit.*) suggested six strategies for carrying out cooperative learning. One of their strategies is *restructuring*. The latter consists of designing new activities which involve interaction between learners. Obviously, a new class structure requires new tasks and activities. Christison (1990) refers to the necessity of preparing students for the new approach claiming that "These activities help students adjust to future small-group, cooperative experiences by breaking down student expectations for the traditional teacher-controlled classroom."(p. 141).

Christison (1990) states that before students begin their activities, they should be taught some cooperative skills. Johnson & Johnson (1975, cited in Christison, *ibid.*) suggests four steps for teaching these skills. First, students must see the value of group work. This is mainly necessary because students usually expect the traditional classroom. They claim that teachers manage to do that through:

- Simply explaining the value of CLL.
- Scarifying a session on the value of CLL.
- Placing Posters to remind students of the advantages of CLL.

The second step is that students should be aware of the skills that cooperative work requires such as getting information from other peers and responding to questions. The third step as suggested by Johnson & Johnson (ibid.) is practising the skills students acquire. The last step is processing the skills which means that "students need to become aware of what exactly it is they have practiced and to evaluate how successful they have been in the practice of the skills."(Christison, 1990, p. 145).

## **Conclusion**

Like other skills, writing can be taught via CLL, and this type of writing is what is called collaborative writing. Basing on the fact that the act of writing is both individual and social, CL puts the second view into practice and greatly helps students later in their life. CLL has many models which enable teachers to teach the skill in more recent ways, and give students the opportunity to prepare themselves when they move from writing in academic contexts to non-academic situations. Although these models may differ in their steps and characteristics, all of them would help students to learn writing in a way that is different from traditional ways of teaching. The extent to which our teachers are aware of this form of teaching, and whether they incorporate its elements in their methods will be revealed in teachers' questionnaire. But before that, the research design is explained in the chapter that follows.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND TEACHERS'**

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Introduction**

As it was mentioned in the introduction to this study, the latter aims at investigating teachers' forms of teaching the writing skill, and students' opinions of the techniques used. This chapter, then, in the first part explains the method used to carry out this study in terms of its benefits and limitations. Moreover, it defines the sample, and the nature of research. As in the second part, a brief description of both teachers' and students' questionnaires is made.

#### **1. Means of Research**

Choosing the most appropriate means of research is certainly a matter of many factors. Beiske (2002) states that "[w]hile factors such as time and costs certainly play an important part in deciding how to approach a particular research problem, the subject of the research itself should ultimately determine the methods used." It should be noted that a good approach of the subject greatly depends on the right choice of the research method."(Scandure & Williams, 2002; cited in Beiske, 2002). In this study, it was opted for the questionnaire as a means of carrying out this research. When the teachers and students' questionnaires have been analysed, a comparison of the two questionnaires will be achieved in order to see the extent to which teachers go along with what their students like and prefer.

##### **1.1 Definition of Questionnaire**

Generally speaking, a questionnaire is a means of collecting data. Researchers (Bell, 1999; Kervin, 1999; de Vaus, 1996) agree that a questionnaire is a series of written questions that particular persons would answer for the sake of gathering information.

Items of questionnaires should be clearly and plainly stated in order to motivate the respondents to provide more information (Beiske, 2002; Boynton, 2004). The questions can be open-ended, or closed-ended (quick MBA, 2002). In case of the former, the informants have

the freedom of offering a range of answers; however, closed-ended questions require the respondents to choose one or more choices as given by the questionnaire designer.

### **1.2 Advantages of Questionnaire**

Questionnaires have many advantages. In general, they enable us to gather a large amount of data (Brown, 1983), and also we can use them easily in the classrooms (Nunan, 1992). Other advantages can be summed up in the following points:

- Almost all people are familiar with questionnaires, and know how to complete them.
- The respondents' opinions are not influenced by the researcher's viewpoints.
- The respondents can fill the questionnaire at their own pace.
- Questionnaires are easy to analyse.

(Beiske, 2002).

### **1.3 Limitations of Questionnaire**

It is, in fact, of paramount importance to mention that questionnaires, though they are widely used by researchers for the sake of investigating peoples' attitudes, they have some disadvantages. Moore (1983) states that one disadvantage of questionnaire is "the lack of qualitative depth to the answers and the resultant superficiality."(p.19). Brown (1988) states that respondents do not always reveal their real attitudes" subjects actually form or solidify attitudes that they did not have before filling out the questionnaire."(p.35). In addition, other limitations can be highlighted:

- Written questionnaires lack some helping features like gestures and other visual clues, and personal contact which can affect the respondents.
- Sometimes questionnaires are not completed by the persons we want.
- Some respondents may not give questionnaires back.

(Beiske, *op.cit*)

## **2. Sample**

According to Cohen & Manion (1980), there is no exact size of sample to carry out a particular research, that is to say, it all depends on "the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under scrutiny." (p. 77). Teachers' questionnaire was administered to all 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers (a total of 11) of written expression in the department of English at the University of Constantine during the academic year: 2007-2008. This is mainly to make the sample large; thus, a large amount of information would be provided. The students' questionnaire, on the other hand, was given to 1/5 (which makes 154 students) of the whole population (N=770). These EFL students complete their degree within the new system (LMD). This size makes the sample representative of the whole population. The participants randomly selected which gives each member of the whole population an equal chance of being selected (ibid.). It was opted for second year students on the basis that the latter have already experienced university teaching which makes them able to form conceptions about their teachers' forms of teaching; therefore, they can provide us with useful data.

## **3. Nature of Research**

This research is qualitative in the sense that it simply studies learners' and teachers' introspections of various aspects of the teaching/learning process without any statistics made (except numbers and percentages). Here, it should be stated that the obtained results apply only to the participants in the study; Seliger & Shohamy (1989) notes that this type of research is "questionable for generalization." (p. 115).

## **4. Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers' questionnaire explores whether teachers of written expression in the department of English at the University of Constantine incorporate elements of CLL in teaching this

module; and if yes, how they proceed. This questionnaire is a whole of 30 items divided into 3 sections. In its design, we relied on the research literature.

### **Section One: Teachers' Concern with the Affective Side of the Learner (Q1-10)**

The first section is made up of 10 items the different components of affection including: motivation (Q1-3), anxiety (Q4-6), and self-esteem (Q7-8). The other questions (Q9-10) are about the teacher's concern with the general learning climate. These questions would enable us to determine the extent to which teachers concern themselves with the psychological side of their students which, according to many scholars, is as essential as the cognitive side.

### **Section Two: Teachers' Incorporation of CLL Elements (Q11-27)**

This section is designed to explore the use of CLL, if any, by teachers of written expression. Question 11 seeks the frequency of setting students to work in groups. As for questions 12 and 13, they investigate the way the groups are set up, that is, pairs, small groups or large groups (Q 12), and the factors according to which the groups are formed (Q 13). Question 14 explores the frequency of the use of feedback by teachers, and the following question deals with the rate of encouraging peer review among students. Questions (16, 17, 18, and 19) aim at investigating the way teachers proceed with CLL in terms of helping students see the importance of using this strategy of learning and the way they manage to do that. Because CLL requires that students possess some skills, we designed questions (20, 21 and 22) to check whether teachers make their students aware of these skills and teach them through practice sessions. Some of the problems that students can come across, when working cooperatively, are dealt with in questions (23, 24 and 25). Moreover, whether teachers tackle these problems and the way they try to get students acquainted with this relatively new learning experience is also considered in questions: 26 and 27.

### **Section Three: Teachers' Evaluation of CLL (Q 28-30)**

This section seeks students' reaction to CLL (Q28). In addition, it explores teachers' knowledge so far as the advantages of CLL are concerned (Q 29-30).

## **5. Description of Students' Questionnaire**

Students' questionnaire mainly aims at investigating the students' attitudes and perceptions of group work as applied by their teachers, and whether they benefited from it. The questionnaire is wholly made up of 27 items classified under three sections each focusing on a particular aspect.

### **Section One: Students' Perceptions of the Writing Skill (Q1-Q6)**

This section contains six questions investigating some aspects of writing. In the first place, students are asked about their interest in writing (Q1), and are required to give explanations to their answers (Q2). Questions 3 and 4 deal with anxiety that can be generated in students for one reason or another. The last question of this section explores students' perceptions of some of teachers' behaviours towards them in writing classes.

### **Section Two: Students' Perception of their Teachers' Implementation of Group Work (Q7-Q21)**

This section aims at gathering information on some teachers' practices so far as CLL is concerned, and the way students want it to be applied. The first two questions of this section seek information about students' preferences of how the writing task be carried out. Then, students are asked about the frequency their teachers set them to work in groups (Q9), and his/her role in monitoring the groups (Q11). Questions (10, 12) investigate students' preferences for setting the groups, and the aspects they focus on when reviewing their peers. After that, students are asked about their teachers' use of group work, and that is in questions (13-17). The next item seeks to identify students' strategies when working in groups. Finally,



the problems that students can encounter and the solutions that their teachers offer are considered in questions (19-21).

### **Section Three: Students' Attitudes towards Group Work as Applied by their Teachers (Q22-Q27)**

This is an extremely important part of the questionnaire because it reveals to us whether students like this technique and feel better when they work with it. Students' reactions to group work are explored in questions (22, 23). The following questions (24-26) focus on the benefits of CLL sociologically, psychologically, and at the level of academic achievement. The last question (27) asks students about their opinions of CLL as compared to individual work.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has clarified the research design in terms of the means used, the context, and the participants involved. The questionnaire was then opted for the implementation of the study for the reasons already mentioned. The items of each questionnaire being described, the next two chapters contain analyses of teachers' and students' questionnaires successively and show the results in details. Moreover, a comparison of both questionnaires is made in the end.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

### Introduction

The whole chapter deals with the analysis of teachers' questionnaire. The latter is divided into three sections each of them collects information on a particular aspect. The first section is dedicated to investigating teachers' concern with students' affective states. As for the second section, it tries to reveal teachers' techniques to teach writing and whether they contain some elements of CLL to motivate students for learning. In the end, a general evaluation of cooperative teaching is made.

### 1. Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

#### 1.1 Section One: Teachers' Concern with the Affective side of the Learner

**Q1. Do you feel that your students are motivated to write in the English language?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	04	36.36
No	07	63.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.1: Teachers' Perception of Students' Motivation in Writing**

As the table indicates, most teachers (63.63%) say that their students are not motivated to write in the English language. This can be due to many factors, of which the most important are lack of interest in the writing topics themselves, and fear of committing grammatical mistakes. As most researchers found (cf. chapter two), motivation is extremely necessary for students in order to carry out their writing task, thus teachers should find their ways to motivate students. The following question would give us a clear image of teachers' perception of their roles so far as this component of learning is concerned.

**Q2. Do you think that it is the teacher's job to motivate students?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	10	90.90
No	01	09.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.2: Teachers' Beliefs about the Task of Motivating Students to Write**

All teachers (except one) state that it is their job to motivate students. This implies that that our teachers are aware of the great role motivation plays in successful language learning, and that beside giving knowledge, teaching should be seen as considering both the linguistic and the psychological side of the learner.

**Q3. Whatever your answer is, please explain.**

The ten teachers (90.90%) who said that it is their job to motivate students gave various ways of raising students' motivation. In the first place, writing topics should be interesting in the sense that they should match students' needs. Moreover, creating a good learning atmosphere can be of major benefit to the learners. Thus, they would feel comfortable with learning and be encouraged to write even if their English is not that good. Another thing is that talking to students about the importance of the writing skill can help a lot in pushing them to try writing. One teacher is completely convinced by the idea that the teacher, and not any one else, should motivate his students to write and that teachers have nothing to do in the classroom except motivating students to learn.

The only teacher who answered that it is not the teacher's job to motivate students argues that there are many factors that interfere in determining the learners' motivation, and the teacher would not be able to fight these external factors. Another argument is that students' intrinsic motivation can be undermined if the teacher tries to motivate them, and that is in the form of extrinsic motivation.

In sum, the notion of motivation seems to be understood differently by our teachers, and this leads to adopting various procedures to deal with their students in the writing classes. But, generally, motivation seems to have a place in their teaching plans.

**Q4. Do you feel that your students are anxious about writing in the English language?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	08	72.72
<b>No</b>	03	27.27
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.3: Teachers' Perception of Students' Anxiety in Writing**

Most teachers (72.72%) claim that their students are anxious about writing. The others (27.27%), however, report that their students do not show anxiety or fear of writing. As stated in the theoretical part, anxiety, "a feeling of self-doubt, and sense of tension"(Woolfolk, 2004, p. 365) accompanies students with varying degrees while others do not experience this feeling at all.

Because anxiety can be an obstacle to learning, teachers should make effort in order to help their students reduce or get rid of this feeling.

**Q5. If yes, do you try to lower their anxiety?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	08	100
No	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.4: Rate of Lowering Students' Anxiety in Writing**

All the teachers, who reported that their students have fear, claim that they try to lower it by helping their students engage in writing with pleasure. The answers clearly show teachers' awareness of the dangers this feeling can bring about. Consequently, they make their effort to render writing an anxiety-free activity, and the way they proceed in is carefully considered in the following question.

**Q6. Say how?**

The results of this question show that 6 teachers answered the question while the two others did not for one reason or another. In fact, the answers that teachers gave can be classified into two groups: linguistic and psychological. The former group includes: pushing students to do their tasks, selecting interesting topics to write about, providing students with effective feedback, encouraging peer corrections among students, and discussing home works in class. The other group, on the other hand, is mainly about encouraging students to write, not emphasizing their weaknesses, and convincing them with the possibility of becoming

proficient writers. One teacher considered group work a good way for lowering students' anxieties in writing because working with other peers can make learning more interesting, thus, students would feel at ease.

The answers provided are really considerable and constitute good strategies to deal with the problem being examined. In what follows is an examination of another component of affect which is as important as anxiety.

**Q7. Do you try to build self-esteem in your students?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	10	90.90
No	01	09.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.5: Rate of Building Self-esteem in Students**

This question considers self-esteem and the rate of trying to build it in students. The results clearly show that all teachers (except one) see the image that students form about themselves as extremely important. Hence, they try to help them improve their self-concepts for the sake of being successful in language learning..

The teacher who answers by *NO* seems to be completely convinced by the belief that teachers alone cannot change so many things in students and especially on the psychological side which, according to him/her, is a matter of a number of factors put together. In deed, high self-esteem is due to many elements including parental support and encouragement (Fontana, 1995). Nevertheless, we cannot shut an eye on the teacher's role in enhancing students' self-esteem.

**Q8. If yes, is it by:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Acknowledging what students can do</b>	10	100
<b>b-Others</b>	/	/
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.6: Techniques of Building Self-esteem**

100% of teachers who said that they try to build their students' self-esteem opted for the possibility that they acknowledge what students can do. This can have the form of praise, grades or simply talking to students about their own abilities. Unfortunately, no teacher gave us other ways of fostering students' self-esteem.

Here, the question arises as to the reasons for such a treatment of this question. This leads us to say that either teachers have little or no knowledge so far as this concept is concerned, or they are unable to express the forms of carrying out the concept in question.

**Q9. Do you try to establish a relaxed atmosphere?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	11	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.7: Rate of Establishing a Relaxed Atmosphere**

As indicated in table 4.2.7, all teachers admit that they try to establish a relaxed atmosphere for learning. This means that they will consider the psychological side of the learner and understand that it is of paramount importance for successful language learning. Creating such an atmosphere helps students a lot and will have very positive effects on the way they behave in class as well as the way they look at learning. Thus, they would change their views to learning which is generally looked at as a very serious process in a serious milieu in which teachers give knowledge to students and the latter are supposed to receive it.

In fact, teachers have a variety of ways for creating the good learning context that students need in order to be well engaged in learning. The following question provides them with some strategies to achieve this, so it investigates the extent to which they use these techniques.

**Q10. If yes, is it by:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Establishing good rapport with your students</b>	07	63.63
<b>b-Get students to feel comfortable talking with one another</b>	00	00
<b>a+b</b>	04	36.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.8: Techniques of Establishing a Relaxed Atmosphere**

A lot of teachers (63.63%) opted for the first choice that is, they tend to establish good rapport with their students, but not for the second. This clearly indicates that they think of the learning atmosphere as the relationship between them and their students. However, they do not support encouraging students to talk to each other in order to feel comfortable during the learning process. This answer can be interpreted in various ways.

## Section Two: Teachers' Incorporation of CLL Elements

### Q11. How often do you have your students work in groups?

Options	Subjects	%
Never	00	00
Rarely	02	18.18
Sometimes	05	45.45
Often	03	27.27
Always	01	09.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.9: Frequency of Group Work in Writing Classes**

Group work is a technique that teachers can use in class in order to carry out a writing activity. The analysis of the results shows that only one teacher is consistent in his use of group work. The other teachers, however, use it from time to time in the sense that: 18.18% of teachers rarely use it, 27.27% often use it, and a good part of our teachers (45.45) sometimes use it. This indicates that in the first place, they are aware of it and second, they have the readiness to use it and may be they have certain knowledge about it. The other teachers are either unwilling to use it or they have little or no knowledge about its procedure in class.

In fact, group work has to be carefully planned and smartly used in order to get good results. For this reason, the next few questions investigate the way teachers use and put this technique into practice.



**Q12. How about group size:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Pairs</b>	03	27.27
<b>b-Small groups(3-4)</b>	05	45.45
<b>c-Large groups</b>	00	00
<b>a+b</b>	03	27.27
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.10: Group Size**

After considering the results of this question, we notice that a relatively small percentage of our teachers (27.27%) claim that they set their students in pairs when involving them in group work. These teachers seem to be so precautious in their use of group work. According to them two students in each group would enable them to share ideas and correct each other when necessary. They believe in the sufficiency of two students to carry out a writing task.

The big part of teachers (45.45%) prefers a larger number of students in each group, that is, from 3 to 4. They probably believe that the more student are in each group, the more successful the task would be. They aim at giving their students the opportunity to exchange their own information and learning experiences with more students which would make learning more fun to them. Teachers, therefore, target at helping their students see the most enjoyable aspects of the learning process.

The rest of teachers opted equally for *a* and *b*. That is, they use both pairs and small groups. These teachers try to involve their students in the two kinds of group size using each time the one that goes along with the nature of the task before hand. This absolutely reflects teachers' consciousness about teaching and learning alike.

As for choice *c*, it was not opted by any teacher. Possibly, teachers are reluctant to form large groups because they see them rather noisy and not well organized. This in part implies that they seriously want to work with groups and try to make this technique fruitful the most.

Roughly speaking, teachers' answers indicate a variation in the use of group work so far as group size is concerned. However, other factors need to be considered and carefully studied for

a better understanding of the way teachers approach group work. For this reason, the following question investigates the bases of setting the groups.

**Q13. Do you set up the groups on the basis of:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Sex</b>	00	00
<b>b-Proficiency</b>	00	00
<b>c-Students' preference</b>	02	18.18
<b>d-Randomly</b>	08	72.72
<b>c+d</b>	01	09.09
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.11 Factors of Groups' Setting**

The first choice, that is, *sex* seems not to be considered at all by teachers when they form the groups. Although this factor largely plays a role in the Algerian context, teachers neglect it and do not give it any importance. As such, some students, be they girls or boys may detest working that way only because they would feel shy to share their ideas with girls or boys.

Equally, the factor of proficiency is not considered by teachers. By *proficiency*, we mean that more proficient students work together and less proficient ones work together. The belief of our teachers can be that setting excellent students apart from weak ones can leave a kind of embarrassment and self-dissatisfaction in some students. Therefore, they would less or even not motivated to learn. Their choice can equally be due to the fact that if put together, weak students would not benefit from one another which would lead them to feel bored and that group work would be meaningless to them. Thus, we can say that teachers' thinking is double-edged in the sense that it considers both students' feelings and their linguistic intake.

Only two teachers admit that they leave their students the freedom of choosing their group mates, that is, the peers they prefer to work with. These teachers aim at establishing a relaxed context so that group mates would feel at ease, thus, be more ready to learn. Moreover, this freedom to choose with whom to work can leave a trace of responsibility in students.

The majority of teachers (72.72%) say that they set the groups randomly. In other words, they do not consider sex and proficiency factors, and they do not leave the freedom of choice

to their students either. Setting the groups without systematic consideration of the components of the learning context indicates that these teachers do not care about the way the groups should be organized and that they bypass any benefit from setting the groups on the basis of some elements.

The remaining teacher; however, claim that he forms the groups both according to students' preferences and randomly.

All in all, teachers' perceptions of the factors that have to be taken into account when setting the groups reveals a lack of deep understanding of the real functioning of groups whose formation needs careful and attentive consideration on teachers' part.

**Q14. How often do you give feedback?**

Options	Subjects	%
Never	00	00
Rarely	00	00
Sometimes	04	36.36
Often	03	27.27
Always	04	36.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.12: Frequency of Feedback Giving**

Correcting students' mistakes is recognized by many scholars to be an essential feature of good teaching. Along the analysis of the results, we found that all teachers give feedback but with varying frequencies as shown in table 4.2.12. Feedback can be given without prior planning and preparation in the sense that committing mistakes by students stimulates teachers to provide them with the appropriate answers.

**Q15. Do you encourage peer review?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	08	72.72
No	03	27.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.13: Rate of Encouraging Peer Review**

Like feedback, peer review is another way of correcting students' mistakes. Whether teachers encourage it or not depends on teachers' approach to teaching. In this study, most of

teachers (72.72%) admit that they encourage peer review as a technique which has a number of advantages. On the one hand, it helps students get corrections from their peers which would not cause too much embarrassment when receiving corrections from their peers than from their teachers. On the other hand, it helps students engage in the teaching process. Therefore, they would feel more responsible about it. Thus, they would be more independent in their learning.

**Q16. Do you monitor the groups?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	11	100
<b>No</b>	00	00
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.14: Rate of Group Monitoring**

As it is shown in table 4.2.14, all teachers report that they monitor the groups. Monitoring the groups includes checking whether students are involved in the given task, and that every student is participating in its completion. The results clearly indicate that our teachers, once they set the groups, seriously follow the implementation of the writing task and that they want their students to come out with good results. However, this question is not enough to know teachers' real behaviour in group work. For this reason, we put the next question that demands of teachers to elucidate the way they monitor their groups.

**Q17. If yes, explain.**

When reading teachers' answers to this question, we noticed a variation in their responses which explained the reasons for monitoring the groups rather than the way they do that. The first group of teachers (a whole of 5) claims that when working in groups, students need a guide who would supervise their work and encourage them. Being a guide requires of teachers to engage with their students in the activity and explain to them the various steps they should go through in order to complete a task. One teacher states that guiding students leads them to work seriously. These teachers, then, want group work to be carried out under the

control of the teacher who should give direct instructions so that students would seriously follow the task and won't be lost so long as the teacher is there to help them.

Another three teachers restricted monitoring the groups in giving feedback. Put in another way, they find it more important to read what students write, correct their mistakes, help them in finding more ideas, and answering their questions if they have any. We can say that they prioritize the content of the task over the steps that students should follow.

Another thing that is seen as part of monitoring the groups is what two teachers state. The latter consider the organization of the various groups in class extremely important and that teachers should not turn their backs to. In this vein, one teacher puts it that he does so in order to avoid anarchy and achieve a successful work. The other teachers emphasize the thing that all students should apply similar revision criteria when correcting their peers' drafts. This would lead to the groups going through the same stages with the result that the teacher's job is facilitated and the work is more organized.

The remaining teacher explains monitoring the groups in terms of what is required of the students themselves. In other words, when the teacher monitors the groups he simply makes sure that every student is taking part in the task. Moreover, students should fully understand what they are supposed to do. This teacher, therefore, aims at making his students engage in their activities.

As we have just seen, teachers' answers are varied and they seem to cover a significant number of the aspects that teachers should take into consideration when monitoring the groups. These aspects includes: guiding students, providing them with feedback when necessary, organizing the group etc... Still, other teachers' practices so far as CLL is concerned have to be further uncovered as is intended in the following questions.

**Q18. Do you help your students see the value of cooperative group work?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	04	36.36
<b>No</b>	07	63.63
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.15: Teachers' Perception of the Value of group work**

The statistics related to this question shows that 63.63% of our teachers do not help their students see the value of cooperative group work, and that is a lot of teachers. It means that when they use group work, they do not try to make their students aware of the advantages and benefits of this technique. We can, therefore, say that these teachers do not believe in metacognition, that is, teachers can talk to their students about learning, and in this case speak to students about the psychological, sociological and linguistic benefits of group work. Probably, our teachers want to involve their students in CLL activities and leave it for them to experience the outcomes rather than talk about them at an early time.

The other four teachers, however, prefer to talk to their students about the importance of working cooperatively. Their aims can be to encourage and motivate students to engage in such activities. Possibly, this technique is completely new to some students with the result that they do not easily accept it. These teachers, therefore, believe in the necessity of preparing students for such a task before they ask them to work.

In sum, teachers' perceptions of the necessity of raising students' awareness to the value of CLL seem to be rather different. For a better understanding of the way teachers help their students see the value of group work, if they do, we put the following question.

**Q19. If yes, do you:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Simply explain why are you doing cooperative work</b>	04	100
<b>b-Do a brainstorm session on the value of group work</b>	00	00
<b>Total</b>	04	100

**Table 4.16: Techniques of Making Students See the Value of Group Work**

In this question, teachers are asked about two possible ways of making students see the value of group work. All teachers (a whole of 4), who answered the 'yes' in the previous question, now report that they simply explain why they ask them to cooperate in their task via groups. Although they actually care about making everything clear to their students, they simply do it via speaking about it. It seems that they do not give it too much emphasis to such a degree that they would sacrifice whole sessions on that.

**Q20. Do you raise your students' awareness towards the necessary skills for group work?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	03	27.27
No	08	72.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.17: Rate of Raising Students' Awareness towards the Necessary Skills for CLL**

Less than half of teachers (27.27%) state that they raise their students' awareness towards the necessary skills for group work. It is clear that they want group work to function in the right way through letting them realize that some skills are necessary so that they would really be able to cooperate with one another. These teachers seem to understand that group work does not merely mean setting students in groups for the sake of sharing information. Rather, it demands more than that both on teachers and students' part. (Woolfolk, 2004).

The majority of teachers (72.72%), however, answer *No* indicating that they do not raise their students' awareness towards the skills they need to work in groups. This can only be interpreted by their ignorance of the skills students should possess. At this point, we can safely say that the great part of teachers seems to ignore the real conditions for a proper functioning of CLL, which is most of the time confused with group or pair work. It is true that CLL can take the form of pair or group work (Harmer, 2004); however, is it by all means much far from it. The following question reveals some of the skills students need to handle in this kind of activities.

**Q21. If yes, do you tell them how to:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Get information</b>	00	00
<b>b-Respond to questions</b>	00	00
<b>c-Evaluate their own performance</b>	00	00
<b>d-Evaluate their peers' performance</b>	03	100
<b>Total</b>	03	100

**Table 4.18: Necessary Skills for Group Work**

As has been noted in the previous question, only 3 teachers reported that they raise their students' awareness towards the skills necessary for group work. When asked about these skills, the three teachers opted for choice *d*. Of the four skills we gave, *evaluating peers' performance* is the only one that teachers raise their students' attention to and teach them how to do it. This means that they do not teach them how to get information from their peers or how to ask them questions. But what I really find inexplicable is why teachers bother teaching their students how to evaluate their peers' performance at a time when they may not know how to evaluate their own performance.

Generally speaking, teachers' knowledge and practices so far as CLL and its conditions are concerned, seem to be very limited and need more consideration. Sure, various problems have been encountered when working with this technique. For this reason, we intended the next five questions to explore CLL problems and their solutions, if any.

**Q22. Do you set up practice situations for the skills you make them aware of?**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>Yes</b>	00	00
<b>No</b>	11	100
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.19: Rate of Setting up Practice Situations for Group Work Skills**

The previous questions enabled us to discover that teachers in the department of English, Constantine University, use group work in their teaching. However, it seems that they are not so enlightened about this relatively new technique in the field of teaching. The results of this question are really not encouraging for 100% that is, all teachers do not give their students the



opportunity to practise the skills necessary for a successful course. This can be due either to teachers' ignorance of this important step in their form of teaching or to the non-consistency in their procedure with what they are actually doing.

In fact, adding practice situations is of great benefit to students because this would make it possible for them to be more trained in how to proceed with CLL if the opportunity is provided to them. Thus, it would give better results.

**Q23. Do your students have problems working together?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	04	36.36
<b>No</b>	07	63.63
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.20: Teachers' Perception of Students' Problems in Group Work**

36.36% of our teachers say that their students have problems when they work together with other class mates. This is absolutely natural for differences between students can be so sharp that they cannot go beyond them. To illustrate, non-similar ways of thinking lead to different ideas, thus, a clash between students. Another thing relates to introvert students who would prefer working individually. In fact, these are just two instances of CLL problems and the following question gives us other problems students can meet.

Surprisingly, a great number of teachers (63.63%) answer this question positively, i.e. their students do not have problems working together. Of course, this is just a relative answer. Sometimes, teachers do not pay attention to small details in the groups, which can hinder the learning process. For this reason, we try to ask them about some negative aspects of CLL in the question that follows.

**Q24. Have you encountered these problems?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Poor help-giving</b>	01	09.09
<b>b-Unequal participation</b>	05	45.45
<b>c-Inactive groups</b>	00	00
<b>a+b</b>	01	09.09
<b>b+c</b>	03	27.27

<b>a+b+c</b>	01	09.09
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.21: Problems of CLL**

Only one teacher seems to encounter *poor help-giving* alone among his students. Another teacher encounters *poor help-giving* and *unequal participation*, and a third one reports observing all the problems we mentioned. So far as the first option is concerned, it seems that our students are ready to help each other when necessary for only three teachers reported having this problem. They, therefore, tend to cooperate rather than compete.

The second problem, that is, *unequal participation* seems to be encountered the most. The table shows that 5 teachers opt for this choice together with two others who add to it *poor help-giving* for the first and *inactive groups* for the second. This problem, to make it clear, may be really related to two factors: proficiency and some personality traits. The former means that more proficient learners tend to dominate the groups with their ideas and suggestions, thus, depriving other students from participating with what they know. The other factor, however, relates, as we have already noted, to shy students who may not be willing to contribute to the groups.

Finally, the last problem is encountered by only two teachers. This evidently implies that the groups, when formed, are active and that their members demonstrate a certain degree of participation and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the previous CLL problems constitute but a small

**Q25. If there are other problems, please explain.**

In fact, only one teacher discussed other problems of cooperative learning when applied to writing classes. He states that some students refuse to accept their peers' comments for one reason or another. Moreover, other students insist that they have the best ideas and that they want to keep them for themselves.

The other ten teachers, however, left this question unanswered. This can be explained by the fact that apart from the problems we mentioned before, they do not have any others. But most important of all is whether teachers try to solve the problems or not.

**Q26. Do you try to solve these problems?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	08	72.72
No	03	27.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.22: Rate of Solving CLL Problems**

Except three teachers, all the respondents claim trying to solve the problems that confront them when they set their students in groups to work cooperatively. This positive practice on teachers' part reflects their willingness to defy all the obstacles that can hinder their teaching. In addition, they demonstrate their desire to proceed teaching through this relatively new technique which takes the form of group work along with other conditions.

Regarding the three teachers who answered *No*, they seem irresponsible for their job as teachers and reluctant to solve the problems their students encounter in their learning. In the following question, we want teachers who stated that they solve the problems to identify the ways they do it.

**Q27. If yes, did you try any of these:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Giving direct instruction in help-giving</b>	04	50
<b>b-Modeling help-giving</b>	02	25
<b>c-Scripting interaction</b>	00	00
<b>Others</b>	/	/
<b>a+b</b>	02	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.23: Solutions to CLL Problems**

This item provides three ways of dealing with some of the problems encountered. Analysing the answers, we find that half teachers (50%) prefer giving direct instruction in help-giving. Said another way, these teachers merely tell their students how they should help each other. Another two teachers (25%) prefer to model help-giving instead of just giving

direct instructions on that. They seem to believe that students would not be able to do something properly unless they were trained on how they should do it. The remaining two teachers opted for both *a* and *b* indicating their readiness to try every single technique for solving students' problems.

Only one teacher added other solutions. In fact, it is only one solution and it is concerned with assigning roles to group members. He argues that doing so makes every student feel responsible. In addition, it assures the participation of every one.

### Section Three: Teachers' Evaluation of CLL

This section principally seeks the various effects of CLL on students.

#### Q28. How do students react to cooperative learning:

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Very motivated</b>	00	00
<b>b-Motivated</b>	10	90.90
<b>c-Little motivated</b>	01	09.09
<b>d-Not motivated</b>	00	00
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.24: Students' Reaction to the Use of Group Work in Writing Classes**

Almost all teachers (90.90%) opted for the second choice. That is to say, they recognise their students as motivated when set to work in groups cooperatively. Accordingly, the motivational effect of CLL is acknowledged by our teachers despite the fact that their perception of the notion of motivation and its signs may differ from one respondent to another. The other teacher states that his students are little motivated which indicates that the motivational effect of CLL varies in accordance with the way teachers apply this technique as well as the way every teacher looks at the obtained results.

In addition to motivation, we equally aim at investigating CLL effects on students' participation in writing classes, and that is in the question that follows.

**Q29. Does cooperative learning enhance students' participation in writing classes?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	08	72.72
<b>No</b>	03	27.27
<b>Total</b>	11	100

**Table 4.25: Role of CLL in Enhancing Students' Participation in Writing Classes**

The majority of teachers (72.72%) say that CLL enhances their students' participation in writing classes. Their recognition of the effectiveness of CLL differs from one teacher to another. For this reason, the next question demands teachers to elaborate explanations on how exactly CLL encourages students to participate more in writing classes. As for the rest of teachers (27.27%), they deny any benefit from CLL in making students' participation enhanced. This can be due to its misuse and we have already observed this in some of the answers they have previously given. It is also possible that these teachers attribute any good results to others factors other than CLL.

**Q30. If yes, say how?**

Of the eight teachers who claimed that CLL has some advantages, only one did not explain. The others, however, provided a variety of answers. To begin with, two teachers claim that CLL has very positive effects on students' self-confidence. The latter is raised and strengthened as students have more opportunities to show what they know because they would feel less embarrassed than when they work individually. In other words, they feel at ease since everyone in the group shares the responsibility of the answers provided. In the same vein, another teacher reports that sharing knowledge with other group mates generates a feeling of comfort in students who would further enjoy the writing activity. It is further claimed by two teachers that CLL enables some shy students to express themselves because working under such conditions creates a kind of challenge to them.

The second category of answers is provided by two teachers. One raises the issue of competition stating that grouping students together makes them feel that they are enduring a

competition with other groups rather than implementing a writing task. The other teacher talks of 'day dreaming' that some students enjoy when working individually. He/she clarifies his/her view maintaining that when students work with other peers, they can be advised by one another, thus, keep in contact with what is going on in the group.

## **Conclusion**

Analysing the teachers' questionnaire has revealed many facts on teachers' ways of teaching writing, their perception of the psychology of the learner and more precisely their assumptions and practices so far as cooperative group work is concerned. To begin with, motivation is recognized by many teachers as an essential element for successful language learning and most of them consider themselves responsible for motivating students one way or another. They also acknowledge their role in affecting some motivational elements such as self-esteem and anxiety.

When asked about their teaching of the writing skill, almost half of the teachers confirmed the use of group work. However, their implementation varies considerably. Some teachers really take into account some factors in group formation. Others; however, do not. Because true cooperative group work requires some skills from students, our teachers were asked about these skills and whether they teach them to their students. The results were not favourable for most of them neglect the skill necessary for a good functioning of group work.

Finally, cooperative group work is a way of teaching which, according to recent research and studies, succeeded in solving a number of problems originated with the teaching and learning of writing. Teachers' evaluation of students' reaction to group work, as applied by them, implies students' readiness for such a technique. The results obtained would help us in suggesting a list of recommendations on the use of CLL to teach writing.

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# CHAPER SIX: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS COMPARISON WITH TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

## Introduction

This chapter contains two sections. The first section deals with the analysis of students' questionnaire whose items seek to gather information on our students' perception of the writing skill as well as their attitudes towards the way it is taught and especially the implementation of group work, if any.

The second section of this chapter is a brief comparison between teachers' and students' questionnaires. This comparison mainly aims at identifying some points of differences and similarities between what teachers actually do in the classroom and what students need and prefer so far as some aspects of learning are concerned.

## 1. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

After analysing the teachers' questionnaire and understanding some of our teachers' practices in teaching the writing skill, let us now shed light on how students look at those teaching practices and their general appreciation of them. To achieve this, the students' questionnaire will be analysed and carefully studied.

### 1.1 Section One: Students' Perceptions of the Writing Skill

#### Q1. Is writing in English interesting to you?

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	140	90.90
No	14	09.09
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.1: Rate of Students' Interest in Writing**



As table 5.1 indicates, the majority of our students (90.90%) claim to have interest in the writing skill. These students like writing and want to perform well in it. Of course, their interest can have many sources such as the teacher, the learning context, or simply an internal desire for it.

Only (09.09%) of students state that writing in English is not interesting to them. The result obtained is really severe for many reasons. First of all, writing is one of the four basic skills that foreign language learners have to master in order to learn the language properly. Moreover, the writing and speaking skills are related on many levels and the lack of interest in one skill can lead to misperformance in the other. With these students lacking interest in writing, our curiosity arises to know some reasons for such a case. The following question, therefore, seeks to give explanations for both liking and disliking the writing skill.

**Q2. Whatever your answer, please explain.**

Students who answered the previous question positively provide a variety of answers, but they all fall within the same scope. Almost all of them consider writing interesting because it enables them to express their ideas freely. In this vein, one student reports that he/she writes about what he/she can't express orally. Another reason is that writing enables them to discover their mistakes and correct them, thus, improve their general level in English. Moreover, they argue that writing enables them to put grammatical rules into practice and learn new words and expressions. Some students consider writing an important skill that they simply have to master if they want to become good at the English language. Finally, another argument is provided by a number of the respondents and it is simply that writing is enjoyable and makes them feel happy.

As for those who answered the question by 'No', some abstained from giving their explanations, and others, however, gave some arguments. The majority of them admit that because they do not have so many ideas on the topic, they find the act of writing difficult and

fear to indulge in it. Another argument is that they like English but writing in particular is not enjoyable to them. In what follows, an attempt is made to explore students' fear of this activity and its causes.

**Q3. Do you feel afraid to write?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	70	45.45
No	84	54.54
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.2: Rate of Students' Fear in Writing**

As table 5.2 shows, 45.45% of our students admit that they have fear of writing, and the rest, that is, 54.54 % state that they are not afraid to write. As a foreign language, English and some of its basic skills can generate this feeling. Absolutely, causes of this feeling are varied and teachers have to know about them and try to put an end to them if possible. The next item investigates causes of fear from writing.

**Q4. If yes, is it because you:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Worry about making grammatical mistakes</b>	29	41.42
<b>b-Have very little to write about</b>	24	34.28
<b>c-Fear the teacher' negative feedback</b>	07	10
<b>a+b</b>	02	2.84
<b>b+c</b>	01	1.42
<b>a+c</b>	06	8.57
<b>a+b+c</b>	01	1.42
<b>Total</b>	70	100

**Table 5.3: Causes of Students' Fear in Writing**

41.42 % among the students who answered question 3 with 'Yes' attribute this fear to their worry about making grammatical mistakes. This indicates that these students care about form very much and consider it very essential to good writing. It is also possible that their teachers insist on grammar and require of them to produce grammatically correct sentences. Moreover, lack of ideas about a particular topic can also make students afraid to write in English, and 34.28% of our students opted for this cause alone. Of course, content is what we write and its lack can constitute an obstacle to writing. These students, therefore, are discouraged by the

lack of ideas. The last cause here relates to teachers' negative feedback. This, in fact, is a strong one and can have severe effects on some students especially the very sensitive, and 10% of our students report that this factor inhibits them from writing. The rest of the students opted equally for two or three causes as indicated in table 5.3.

In fact, fear is not the only factor that can constitute an obstacle to students in writing. The teacher as well plays an extremely important role in that through his general behaviour towards students. In the following question, we try to explore this from the students' standpoint.

**Q5. When you do not do well, does your teacher embarrass you?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	38	24.67
No	116	75.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5.4: Students' Perception of their Teachers' Embarrassment**

Analysing this question shows that a small percentage of students (24.67%) say that their teachers embarrass them when they do not perform well. It seems that these teachers do not consider the affective side of their students and prioritize their achievement over anything else. In effect, embarrassing students continuously may result in them lacking interest in learning. However, 75.32% of our students state that their teachers do not embarrass them. This category of teachers, by contrast, take into consideration both what the learner feels in the classroom and his achievement, and try not to hurt their feelings if they misperform in the writing task.

**Q6. What does your teacher do to create a good learning atmosphere:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Praise students</b>	6	03.89
<b>b-Acknowledge what students can do</b>	15	09.74
<b>c-Check that students are comfortable with learning</b>	8	05.19
<b>d-Encourage students to write</b>	54	35.06
<b>e-Establish good rapport with students</b>	11	07.14
<b>f-None</b>	20	12.98
<b>a+c</b>	01	00.64
<b>a+d</b>	03	01.94
<b>b+c</b>	01	00.64
<b>b+d</b>	07	04.54

<b>b+e</b>	03	01.94
<b>c+d</b>	04	02.59
<b>c+e</b>	02	01.29
<b>d+e</b>	07	04.54
<b>a+b+d</b>	02	01.29
<b>a+c+d</b>	01	00.64
<b>b+c+e</b>	01	00.64
<b>b+d+e</b>	03	01.94
<b>A+b+d+e</b>	04	02.59
<b>b+c+d+e</b>	01	00.64
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.5: Teachers' Techniques of Creating a Good Learning Atmosphere**

Teachers can do so many things in order to create a good learning atmosphere in the classroom, and table 5.5 shows some of those techniques. The statistics, therefore, indicates that 3.89% of students in the sample claim that their teachers praise them. This means that some teachers only tell their students that they are doing well in a given task as a form of encouragement and support. 9.14% of our students opted for 'b'. In other words, other teachers equally depend on reminding students of their capacities as a way of making them believe that they can do a lot of things to enhance their language learning. Another part of students which constitutes 5.19% state that their teachers check that they are comfortable with learning. These teachers, therefore, very much care about students' learning conditions. The biggest number of our students (35.06%) acknowledges their teachers' encouragement to write. Doing so can raise students' awareness towards the importance of writing. Finally, other teachers tend to establish good relationships with their students in order to assure them and make learning fun to them.

As table 5.5 also shows, some teachers adopt more than one way to create a good learning atmosphere depending on their knowledge as well as their students' needs. The table equally indicates that some teachers, as reported by 12.98% of our students do not use any of the techniques suggested here. It is possible that they use other ways to establish an affective learning context. Another explanation is that these teachers teach without taking into account the learning situation or what their students feel in the classroom.

So far the first section has enclosed some of our students' perceptions of writing, and also their teachers' concern with the learning context. In what follows is an attempt to understand students' preferences so far as the teaching of writing is concerned along with other aspects of their teachers' practices.

## 1.2 Section Two: Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Practices in Teaching Writing.

**Q7. When writing in class, do you prefer:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Working individually</b>	56	36.36
<b>b-Working in pairs</b>	36	23.37
<b>c-Working in groups</b>	53	34.41
<b>a+b</b>	05	03.24
<b>a+c</b>	02	01.29
<b>b+c</b>	02	01.29
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.6: Students' Preferences of Writing Techniques**

The results of this question show that our students generally prefer to work individually (36.36%). Working in groups equally seems to be preferable to them (34.41%), where as pair work does not attract them a lot (23.37%). Some students, however, opted for more than one choice indicating that their preferences vary according to some factors. Explanations of their choices are provided in the following item.

**Q8. Please, explain your choice.**

In fact, students' answers to this question are interesting and deserve to be carefully considered. Students who prefer to work individually argue that individual work gives them the opportunity to express their ideas freely and without any intervention from other students. It also enables them to evaluate themselves, discover their real level, and ask the teacher to correct their mistakes, if any. Moreover, these students add that they are not always satisfied with their peers' ideas and suggestions especially that some students are not serious. One student explains his/her choice saying that writing is something personal and has to be done individually.

Almost all the explanations provided on choice 'b' turn around the same points. In the first place, they claim that working in pairs is a good way to get new ideas and also share one's ideas with other peers. So far as mistakes are concerned, they argue that their group mates help them to discover their mistakes and correct them together. Last, working with other students leads to achieve a good work.

The explanations provided on choice 'c' are quite similar to those we have just finished with. However, some students further argue that group work teaches them how to respect different ideas and opinions and also how to ask and respond to more questions. Added to this, they acknowledge the importance of group work in giving them the opportunity to discuss their ideas and their peers', and learn from each other how to use these ideas. Finally, one student states that in such a way of working, they are less dependent on their teacher, and thus would feel more comfortable in learning.

As the results indicate, some students opted equally for more than one choice 'a+b', 'b+c', and 'a+c'. Most of these students argue that they do not prioritize one way over the other because each one has its own advantages, and their answers are similar to the previous ones. Now, let us focus on group work and try to explore its use in writing classes.

**Q9. How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Never</b>	08	05.19
<b>Rarely</b>	31	20.12
<b>Sometimes</b>	94	61.03
<b>Often</b>	14	09.09
<b>Always</b>	07	04.54
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.7: Frequency of Group Work Use**

It is noted from table 5.7 that more than half of students in the sample maintain that their teachers sometimes set them to work in groups. The other respondents, however, opted for the other choices with varying percentages. Therefore, it can be admitted that our teachers use group work in writing classes as a means of implementing tasks. In fact, only 5.19% of our

students said that their teachers never ask them to work in groups. This implies that these teachers ignore this technique or simply they do not want to use it. Let us now explore students' preferences concerning group formation.

**Q10. Do you prefer setting the groups on the basis of:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Sex</b>	12	7.79
<b>b-Proficiency</b>	29	18.83
<b>c-Preference</b>	55	35.71
<b>d-Randomly</b>	58	37.66
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.8: Students' Preferences of the Factors of Group Setting**

Setting the groups randomly seems to be preferable to a great number of students (37.66%). Just a little less than this percentage (35.71%) prefers to choose the peers with whom to work. Probably, these students are afraid of being put with members they do not like or trust. Some students opted for 'proficiency' (18.81%) which reflects their willingness to work either with those who are as proficient as them or to form mixed groups with strong and weak students in order to create an atmosphere of assistance and collaboration. Finally, the factor of sex does not attract many students (7.79%) which clearly indicates that our students have no problems working with the opposite sex. After this question, we move to investigate the teacher's role as perceived by students.

**Q11.Does your teacher:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Monitor the groups</b>	50	32.46
<b>b-Make sure students are on task</b>	100	64.93
<b>a+b</b>	04	02.59
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.9: Students' Perception of the Teacher's Task in Class**

More than half of our students (64.93%) say that their teachers make sure that students are on task. This simply requires of them to check that every group member is participating in the task and having a role in it. As for the first choice, it was opted by 32.46%. It means that teachers do a lot of tasks such as assigning roles to students, giving them feedback if necessary,

and settling down any problems. The rest of the respondents (2.59%) report that their teachers both monitor the groups and make sure students are on task. Therefore, it can be assumed that our students perceive their teachers as active elements in implementing group work.

**Q12. When you peer review, do you focus on:**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>a-Content</b>	08	05.19
<b>b-Structure</b>	07	04.54
<b>c-Language</b>	12	07.79
<b>d-All of them</b>	119	77.27
<b>a+b</b>	04	02.59
<b>a+c</b>	03	01.94
<b>b+c</b>	01	00.64
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.10: Focus in Peer Review**

The majority of our students (77.27%) seem to focus on the three aspects of language mentioned in the item. In other words, when correcting other students' writings, they emphasize content that is ideas, structures and language i.e. Vocabulary. The other students, however, focus on one aspect or the other as it is shown in table 5.10.

**Q13. Does your teacher help you see the importance of cooperative group work?**

Options	Subjects	%
<b>Yes</b>	76	49.35
<b>No</b>	78	50.64
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.11: Rate of Helping Students See the Value of CLL**

Approximately half of our students (49.35%) claim that their teachers talk to them about the importance and benefits of group work. These teachers, therefore, want to prepare their students for this technique and encourage them to accept it because of its advantages. Conversely, 50.64% of our informants say that their teachers do not tell them any thing about the importance of cooperative group work. Say it another way, these students ignore why their teachers set them to work in groups in a given writing activity. Of course, teachers can raise their students' attention to the importance of group work one way or the other, and the following question explores these ways.



**Q14. If yes, does he/she:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Simply explain why he is doing cooperative work</b>	50	65.78
<b>b-Do a brainstorm session on the value of group work</b>	26	16.88
<b>Total</b>	76	100

**Table 5.12: Techniques of Helping Students to See the Value of Group Work**

The results point out that a big number of our students (65.78%) who reported that their teachers help them see the value of cooperative group work, now state that they do that simply via explaining the benefits and talking about them. The rest of the respondents (34.21%), on their part, claim that their teachers do brainstorm sessions on the importance of group work. In other words, they sacrifice whole sessions in order to shed light on the advantages of group work and also discuss them with students.

In addition to its importance, group work would be carried successfully only if students possess some skills that their teachers tell them about and teach them as well. The following two items then highlight this issue.

**Q15. Does your teacher raise your awareness towards the necessary skills for group work?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	81	52.59
<b>No</b>	73	47.40
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.13: Rate of Raising Students' Awareness towards the Necessary Skills for Group Work**

As has already been referred to, group work demands some skills on students' part. The analysis of the results shows that approximately half of our students (52.59%) confirm their teachers' role in drawing attention to the fact that true cooperative learning requires some skills that they have to master. This implies that this group of teachers wants to get good results from group work. In addition, they are aware of the fact that group work may be a new experience to some students, therefore, the latter have to be first acquainted with. The other students (47.40%), however, say that they are not made aware about the skills necessary for group

work. One explanation to this can be that these teachers ignore these skills. It is also possible that they want them to acquire these skills through practice.

The question that follows complements this one and it suggests some skills and seeks to investigate whether teachers teach them to their students or not.

**Q16. If yes, does he/she tell you how to:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Get information</b>	36	44.44
<b>b-Respond to questions</b>	08	09.87
<b>c-Evaluate your performance</b>	22	27.16
<b>d-Evaluate the performance of your peers</b>	07	08.64
<b>a+c</b>	03	03.75
<b>a+d</b>	01	01.23
<b>c+d</b>	02	02.46
<b>a+b+c</b>	01	01.23
<b>a+b+d</b>	01	01.23
<b>Total</b>	81	100

**Table 5.14: Techniques of Raising Students' Awareness towards the Necessary Skills for Group Work**

This item explores teachers' concern with some of the skills that group work requires. A little less than half of our students (44.44%) maintain that their teachers tell them how to get information. The latter, then, is gaining much emphasis from teachers on the basis that group work is based on exchanging information between group members. In addition, learning how to respond to questions also helps students in exchanging information. But, we can see that only 9.87% claim that their teachers tell them how to respond to questions. It seems, then, that this skill is neglected. As for evaluating the performance, it is noted that self-evaluation (27.16%) is prioritized over peer evaluation (8.64%). Some teachers, of course, teach their students more than one skill as the statistics in table 5.14 show.

**Q17. Does your teacher set up practice situations for the skills he makes you aware of?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	64	41.55
<b>No</b>	90	58.44
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.15: Rate of Setting up Practice Situations for Group Work Skills as Perceived by Students**

More than half of our informants (58.44%) point out that their teachers do not make practice sessions for the skills they teach them. In fact, practice situations give students the opportunity to further master the skills which would lead to a better functioning of the groups. Neglecting this procedure can, therefore, create some obstacles within the groups especially if students are not acquainted with this technique. A relatively small number of students (41.55%) claim to benefit from practice sessions for the skills necessary for group work. These teachers, then, consider the importance of this step in putting the technique into practice. It can be said that they want to prepare their students to work cooperatively through teaching them the necessary skills.

**Q18. Do you have problems working with your peers?**

Options	Subjects	%
Yes	50	32.46
No	104	67.53
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.16: Students' Perception of their Problems in CLL**

Working with other peers does not seem to create many problems to our students and the results clearly show that. We notice that a big number of students (67.53%) answer this question with 'No'. Our students, therefore, like working together and try to help one another through sharing information and correcting each others' writings. However, the rest of the respondents (32.46%) confirm the question. In other words, they have some problems when it comes to working in groups and dealing with other students.

In order to understand the kinds of problems these students can encounter, we better move to next item.

**Q19. Explain.**

Students who answered the previous question with 'Yes' now explain the kinds of problems they have. Their answers are varied and provide us with a clear image of the problems of group

work. In the first place, they raise the issue of ideas stating that it is most of the time very difficult to decide which ideas they should take for every member considers his/hers the best. In addition, some students say that sometimes they are not satisfied with others' ideas and do not want to include them in the final draft. Added to this is some students' desire for remaining independent in their ideas because sharing them with other students may lead to disagreements and even disputes among them. The second problem that is emphasised by some students relates to group formation. They argue that teachers sometimes oblige them to work with students they do not like. In the end, students mention that some group members are not serious and spend the time discussing topics other than the writing topics. Also, some students commit a lot of mistakes that they are ashamed of and do not want to be corrected.

As for students who said that they have no problems working together, some justified their answers and others did not. The answers given can be summed up in the following points:

- Feeling comfortable.
- Sharing tasks.
- Exchanging ideas.
- Learning how to listen to others and respect their opinions.
- Creating a good learning atmosphere.

**Q20. Does your teacher try to solve the problems encountered when you are working with your peers?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	66	42.85
<b>No</b>	88	57.14
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.17: Rate of Teachers' Involvement in Solving Students' problems in CLL**

As shown in table 5.18, 57.14% of our subjects admit that their teachers do not try to solve the problems encountered when working in groups. Doing so can greatly affect students' attitudes towards this type of instruction. Moreover, students can soon get bored since their problems are not solved. The rest of the respondents (42.85%), however, report that their

teachers try to solve their problems. This group of teachers, then, cares about students' preoccupations and tries to encourage their students through solving their problems.

### 1.3 Section Three: Students' Attitudes to Group Work

**Q21. When the teacher asks you to work in groups, are you:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Very motivated</b>	19	12.33
<b>b-Motivated</b>	90	58.44
<b>c-Less motivated</b>	28	18.18
<b>d-Not motivated</b>	17	11.03
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.18: Students' Reaction to Group Work**

This item seeks to explore students' reactions to group work, and the results show that more than half of our students (58.44%) are motivated to work with other peers. The others, however, react with more or less degrees of motivation: 12.33% are very motivated, 18.18% are less motivated, and only 11.03% are not motivated at all. The conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that students' attitudes towards group work are generally positive which motivates them to learn. However, it should be noted that the degree of motivation can be affected by the way the teacher proceeds with this technique.

**Q22. Whatever your answer is, please say why.**

In the first place, it should be mentioned that a great number of students did not answer this question. Also, most of the answers provided are similar to those already seen in question 8. Students who said that they are very motivated and motivated simply state that they like working with other people. One student gave three arguments stating that group work is a new way of learning to him so he wants to try it and benefits from it through learning from other students as well as discovering his own level. Some insisted on the advantage of discovering one's mistakes and correcting them. Others find group work a source of motivation because it helps them discover other people's ways of thinking and compare them to theirs. Moreover,

some students claimed that this strategy is fun and it teaches them new skills. Finally, having the chance to talk and to show off is the argument provided by one student.

Coming to less and not motivated students, we notice a variety in their answers. Many of them argue that they do not feel relaxed when they work with other peers. This is due to the fact that on the one hand, some group members tend to control the group and do not give other students the opportunity to express their ideas and contribute to the group. On the other hand, some students are not responsible and not serious either which makes them feel bored and disgusted. Another justification relates to wasting time because it is sometimes difficult to agree on a particular point. One striking answer is given by one student who says that he/she is afraid of discovering that other students are better than him/her.

**Q23. This way of learning helps you to:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Learn to respect different ideas and opinions</b>	75	48.70
<b>b-Learn social skills for getting along with others</b>	29	18.83
<b>c-Ask and respond to more questions</b>	14	09.09
<b>a+b</b>	17	11.03
<b>a+c</b>	09	05.84
<b>a+b+c</b>	10	06.49
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.19: Advantages of Group Work**

This item investigates the effects of group work on the sociological side. The first option that is 'learn to respect different ideas and opinions' is opted the most (48.70%). In effect, group work relies on exchanging ideas and opinions between students which would teach them how to listen to the others and respect what they suggest. 18.83% of our students state that group work teaches them how to deal with other people since work with peers makes them aware of the way they should treat different personalities. As for the third option, it is selected by 9.09% of the respondents. This result can only be explained by the fact that students already know how to ask and answer questions, so they would rather concentrate on the skills that they do not have.

In addition to its effects on the sociological side, group work has also considerable effects on affection, an aspect which is dealt with in the following question.

**Q24. When you work in groups, do you:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Feel that you are satisfied with yourself</b>	09	05.84
<b>b-Take a positive attitude toward yourself</b>	27	17.53
<b>c-Feel that you are not goof at all</b>	10	06.49
<b>d-You wish you could have more respect for yourself</b>	04	02.59
<b>e-Feel less embarrassed to make mistakes</b>	13	08.44
<b>f-Feel more confident</b>	55	35.71
<b>a+b</b>	03	01.94
<b>a+c</b>	01	00.64
<b>a+d</b>	02	01.29
<b>a+e</b>	01	00.64
<b>a+f</b>	12	07.79
<b>b+f</b>	05	03.24
<b>c+d</b>	01	00.64
<b>c+f</b>	01	00.64
<b>d+e</b>	01	00.64
<b>a+b+f</b>	06	03.89
<b>a+e+f</b>	01	00.64
<b>b+e+f</b>	01	0.64
<b>a+b+d+f</b>	01	00.64
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.20: Students' Feeling When Working Cooperatively**

The results point out that confidence is highly raised in a great number of our students (35.71%). Others (17.53%) take a positive attitude towards themselves. In effect, working together reveals students' real level which would show to them that their level is not very far from that of their peers. This can encourage them one way or another. For sure all students make mistakes and sharing the same thing can make them feel less embarrassed. Only 5.84% of students say that they feel satisfied with themselves. Feeling of self-satisfaction indicates that these students contribute to the groups and are recognized by other peers. As for option 'd', only 2.59% of the informants claim that working with other peers makes them wish they would have more respect for themselves. These students may have discovered that they lack many

skills, or that their level is far from that of their peers which would result in self-dissatisfaction and disgust.

**Q25. How much did you learn from group work?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Very much</b>	20	12.98
<b>b-Much</b>	78	50.64
<b>c-Little</b>	51	33.11
<b>d-Nothing</b>	05	03.24
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.21: Amount of Learning When Working Cooperatively**

Half of the students (50.64%) state that they learnt a lot from group work. This indicates that this way of learning helps our students much in their learning and that they benefit from it with varying degrees. In this vein, we mention that 12.98% learn very much. However, a significant number of our respondents (33.11%) admit that they learn a little, but only 3.24% claim that they learn nothing from group work.

It can be said that group work is beneficial to many students and helps them learn new skills and motivate them for learning. However, some of them do not seem to learn from it for one reason or another. In what follows is a general evaluation of this technique from students' points of view.

**Q26. Group work as opposed to individual work is:**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>a-Unsatisfactory</b>	12	07.79
<b>b-Poor</b>	14	09.09
<b>c-Good</b>	97	62.98
<b>d-Very good</b>	23	14.93
<b>e-Excellent</b>	08	05.19
<b>Total</b>	154	100

**Table 5.22: Students' Evaluation of CLL as Opposed to Individual Learning**

When asked to compare group work to individual learning, students' responses are rather favourable in that 62.98% of them state that this way of learning is good. This indicates that it was beneficial to them on many levels. The others, however, gave other evaluations which vary from unsatisfactory to excellent. In fact, the problems that arise in group work can hinder



learning, thus the latter would be poor or unsatisfactory. This is the reason why teachers are asked to seriously tackle the problems for a better functioning of group work, and so that students can benefit from it as much as possible.

## **2. Comparison between Teachers' and Students' Questionnaires**

After analysing both teachers' and students' questionnaires, now an attempt is made to compare the obtained results in order to see whether what teachers actually do in the classroom to teach written expression and what students perceive about this skill go along. In this comparison we try to highlight the most outstanding aspects that have already been seen in the two questionnaires.

To begin with, motivation which is a basic element for fostering learning is highly recognized and emphasised by teachers who acknowledge their role to motivate students. It can therefore be said that it is important for our teachers to have interested students who love writing. In deed, when asked about their interest in writing tasks, the majority of students claimed that writing in English is interesting to them. So we can safely put it teachers' efforts to motivate students are fruitful.

The other component that can really hinder learning is anxiety. The latter is feeling of fear and which can constitute an obstacle to many students and prevent them from writing. Our teachers claim that they are aware of it and try to lower it via a number of techniques. On their part, students maintain that they sometimes have this fear which is caused by many factors. To illustrate, committing grammatical mistakes seems to be the most disturbing thing to them. In the second place, we have the lack of ideas, and last, the teacher's negative feedback. Here, there is a disparity between what causes teachers' anxiety and teachers' procedure to lower it for teachers do not seem to tolerate grammatical mistakes or support them in case of failure.

The third issue that is related to the affective side of the learner and which can lead to motivating students if enhanced is self-esteem. Almost all teachers said that they try to raise students' self-esteem through acknowledging what students can do, and praising them in case they do well. In deed, a great number of students stated that their teachers do not embarrass them. So, there is a similarity between teachers' and students' responses.

All teachers said that they try to establish a relaxed atmosphere, and more than half of them rely on improving their relationships with their students under the belief that this would lead to making students feel at ease once in the classroom. However, teachers do not encourage students to talk to each other (except 36.16%). Here, what teachers say does not go with students' answers. In fact, only 7.14% of our students report that their teachers establish good rapport with them.

In the second section, teachers and students are asked about the frequency of using group work to teach writing, the way it is implemented and its problems, if any. There is a match between teachers' and students' responses. They admit that group work is sometimes used. However, there is a disparity between what students really prefer and how teachers form the groups. In other words, teachers set the group randomly where as students prefer to choose their own group mates. As for group monitoring, it is reported by both teachers and students that teachers monitor the group and check that every student is on task.

Concerning the value of cooperative group work, it seems that our teachers neglect this aspect as it is reported by students. Moreover, they do not raise their students' awareness to the necessary skills for group work, though these are very essential to the good functioning of this technique. The same thing is noticed by students. This, in fact, would be accounted for and discussed in the next chapter about pedagogical implications.

When asked about the problems of group work, a great number of students said that they have no problems working together. Their answers quite go with what teachers report. In sum,

only a minority of our students encounter some problems which we will try to provide solutions to in the following chapter.

Finally, the effects of cooperative group work on students are investigated. Our teachers confirm what we found in the literature in that they acknowledge the role of group work in motivating students and enhancing their participation in writing classes. Similarly, our students note that the benefits of group work are great especially on the sociological side. In plain terms, this technique helped them a lot in learning how to listen to other opinions, ask about various things, and respect the others' ideas. On the psychological side, it has a role in building students' confidence and lowering their tensions.

In conclusion, teachers' and students' responses and perceptions are different in some points but they meet in most aspects. However, we noticed some drawbacks in teachers' implementation of group work. For this reason, the following chapter would be devoted to some pedagogical implications on the effective use of group work so that it meets the principles of cooperative language learning which can take the form of group work.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has mainly shed light on students' attitudes and perceptions of teachers' use of group work to teach writing. The obtained results would help us in providing a list of recommendations to teachers of written expression in order to use group work in such a way that would motivate students as much as possible.

As has already been mentioned in the analysis of students' questionnaire, writing was found to be interesting to most students as least in our sample (90.90%). However, they fear to indulge in the task for many reasons of which fear of making grammatical mistakes constitutes the outstanding obstacle to them. When asked about teachers' reactions to their students in the writing task, a considerable number of our students (24.67%) reported that they are

embarrassed in case of committing mistakes, something which teachers should avoid. Moreover, most teachers do not really consider the learning atmosphere.

As regards students' preferences for working in class, group work seems to be preferable to a great number of them (63.64%), and they said that they hope the teacher would give them the opportunity to choose with whom to work. But regarding some issues related to the functioning of group work, like teaching students some skills of group work and raising their awareness towards them, the results are rather negative, that is to say, our teachers, at least, neglect the necessary skills for group work, and they do not tell their students about the advantages of group work. In general, only some students encounter some problems when working in groups. However, only a small number of our teachers try to solve these problems.

Finally, students' reactions to group work are positive on the whole and confirm most of what is found in the literature.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Introduction**

Writing is in fact an important skill and its teaching should be carried out in such a way that encourages students and motivates them for learning. Teachers, therefore, are asked to critically examine their ways of teaching and make some changes if necessary. So far as group work is concerned, researchers found that its effects on students' psychological and sociological sides are tremendous, together with its role in enhancing their academic achievement. True cooperative learning is more than just setting students in groups and asking them to complete a given task. For this reason, they should carefully consider this technique in order to get good results.

### **1. Effective Planning of Group Work Activities**

Setting students to work in groups collaboratively is not always as easy as many teachers may think. For this reason, teachers are provided with some steps that are believed to be effective in planning group work:

- Considering group size: Small or large groups.
- Deciding about the number of students in each group.
- Time division: Specify the time required to finish the activity.
- Assessment and evaluation: The former involves students making judgments about their own work (self-assessment), or judging the work of their peers (peer assessment). As for evaluation, it means that the teacher asks his students about the best and the worst things they have experienced in group work.

- Allocating marks: Teachers can give either the same mark to the whole group, or individual marks. They can equally divide the mark between individual contribution and whole group achievement.

## **2. Groups' Formation**

CLL can take the form of pair or group work. Consequently, the first challenge that faces teachers is group formation. This is an extremely important step because it decides who will work with whom. There are many factors that teachers should take into account when forming the groups:

- Sex.
- Proficiency.
- Students' preferences.
- Randomly.

Many problems arise as a result of disagreements between students. The latter may not like to co-operate with members they do not like, and the results of students' questionnaire clearly show this. Teachers, therefore, should carefully consider this point in order to avoid later problems in group work.

Another issue that is related to groups' formation is group size. CLL can take the form of pair or group work, and in case of the latter, the groups can be either small (3-4) or large (more than 4). Again, students have to participate in teachers' decisions for the sake of making group work function effectively.

## **3. Valuing Cooperative Group Work**

In fact, the results of students' questionnaire have revealed that more than half of our students like to work in groups (pair or group work). However, the others expressed their

willingness to work on their own. For sure, students' attitudes to this way of learning are greatly affected by the way teachers proceed with its implementation. Therefore, it is intended here to give some points that can help students to value group work:

- Explaining to the learners the advantages of this way of learning.
- Making them aware of the necessary skills, and teaching them.
- Trying to solve their problems, if any.
- Highlighting their contributions to the whole groups.

#### **4. The Skills Necessary for CLL**

As has already been stated, group work is just the first step towards CLL. The latter demands more skills on students' part. Therefore, they have to be taught some skills that would enable them to benefit from CLL the most. Teachers, can consider the following skills and teach them to their students:

- Asking questions.
- Responding to questions.
- Listening to others actively.
- Turn-taking.
- Evaluating one's performance.
- Evaluating the performance of other students.

In fact, students are not expected to master these skills right from the start. Therefore, teachers can scarify one or two sessions so that students will have the opportunity to practice these skills before initiating group work.



## **5. Some Strategies for the Use of CLL**

CLL is a new technique that teachers can use for the sake of enhancing students' learning and creating an affective learning climate. However, it should be noted that it is not easy to implement it, and careful consideration is needed. To help teachers use this technique, we shall provide them with some strategies as proposed by Crandall (1990).

- Preparing learners for cooperative tasks: CLL may be a new experience to most students. Thus, the latter have to be first prepared to CLL before initiating the tasks within the groups. This preparation can be carried out through teaching students and making them practice the skills we have already talked about.
- Assigning learners to specific and meaningful tasks: For cooperative tasks to be successful, they have to be interesting, and can push students to think and use their intelligence. Therefore, teachers should design learning tasks carefully.
- Debriefing learners on their experiences with cooperative learning: True cooperative learning develops some skills in students. These skills have to be debriefed and reflected on. This strategy would help students to reinforce their readiness to work cooperatively. In addition, teachers should explore the problems that might arise and deal with them. Finally, it is argued that CLL should not be applied to every task. Rather, teachers should keep its use occasional but systematic. In other words, simple tasks are better done individually; where as more complex ones are left to CLL.
- Involving learners in evaluating individual and group contribution: This strategy leads to develop a sense of responsibility in students, and helps them see the value of what they are doing. However, some students may not know how to assess both their contribution and that of others. For this reason, we again emphasise the importance of the necessary skills we have already highlighted.

## **Conclusion**

Research in academic contexts acknowledges the benefits of CLL on three main dimensions: psychologically, sociologically, and academically. These dimensions are the basis to successful learning and should be considered in every aspect of learning and teaching. For this reason, teachers should carefully reconsider their techniques in teaching writing. They should equally follow all what is new in the field of research in order to make their ways of teaching go with the findings of research. In the end, the use of new methods and techniques needs careful consideration and serious planning.

## CONCLUSION

As a basic skill in the English language, writing can be taught in various ways depending on teachers' BAK, and students' preferences. However, teachers should know that the act of writing can be greatly affected by such affective, psychological factors like: anxiety, self-esteem, motivation...etc. In fact, these factors were found to have strong effects on the learner as well as his achievement. On the affective side, CLL can raise students' motivation, foster their self-esteem and lower their anxiety. Sociologically speaking, CLL teaches students how to interact with other people and learn from one another. Moreover, it helps them understand the social nature of writing. Most of all, learning from others and receiving feedback from both the teacher and peers helps the latter exchange and enrich information and enhance learning. For this reason, they should consider both the academic achievement and the psychological state of the learner. In a nutshell, CLL proved to have good effects on learners' affective and sociological sides, in addition to its usefulness in enhancing their learning.

This study has investigated two aspects. The first one relates to teachers' concern with the affective side of the learner and their techniques in that. Accordingly, teachers' questionnaire contained items about teachers' consideration of this important side of the learner. The results showed that our teachers care about students' affection in that they motivate them, try to lower their fear of writing, and raise their confidence and self-esteem; they also support them. Nevertheless, teachers' techniques to support their learners are somehow limited. For one reason or another, some teachers do not probably bother themselves looking for these techniques, and others may have an idea about these techniques, but they do not use them. So far as their use of group work to foster students' learning, it has been found that group work, as applied by them, is not systematic.

As for the second aspect, and which is about students' attitudes to cooperative group work, the hypothesis is confirmed in that these attitudes are positive. That is to say, most students like

to work in groups and those who have already experienced CLL, in one form or another, showed favourable attitudes. Precisely, the social nature of cooperative group work and the psychological effects it has on the learner makes it desirable for most of them. In fact, more than half of the participants expressed their desire to work with others peers in pairs or groups (small or large groups).

This study has somewhat confirmed some benefits of cooperative group work on many sides. In addition, it gives an overview of how this way of learning is applied by teachers of written expression in the department of English at the University of Constantine. We conclude by saying that this work paves the way to other researchers and studies about CLL, a form of teaching which is rather recent, but its implementation in academic contexts is gaining more and more spread. The fact that CLL has many models and other effects, that this study did not shed light on, requires that other researches need to be carried out. This work is equally beneficial to teachers of various modules and especially, oral and written expression in order to improve their students' learning.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Teachers' Preliminary Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We would be so grateful if you could answer the following questions for the sake of gathering information about students' level in writing.

Please, make a tick in the corresponding box.

### 1. How would you rate your students?

Non-writers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor writers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good writers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very good writers	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. Whatever your answer is, please explain:

.....

.....

.....

### 3. How often do your students commit mistakes in the following aspects of language?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization of ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Can you say that your students are motivated to write?**

Yes

No

**5. Whatever your answer, please explain?**

.....

.....

.....

**6. What other difficulties, if any, do your students have in writing?**

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your cooperation**

## Appendix 2: The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We would be so grateful if you could answer the following questions about teachers' affective beliefs, and amounts of effective CLL use in teaching written expression.

Please, make a tick in the corresponding box; more than one answer is sometimes possible.

### Section One: Teachers' Concern with the Affective side of the Learner

**1. Do you feel that your students are motivated to write in the English language?**

Yes

No

**2. Do you think that it is the teacher's job to motivate students?**

Yes

No

**3. Whatever your answer is, please explain.**

.....

.....

.....

**4. Do you feel that your students are anxious about writing in the English language?**

Yes

No

**5. If yes, do you try to lower their anxiety?**



Yes

No

**6. Please, say how?**

.....

.....

.....

**7. Do you try to build self-esteem in your students?**

Yes

No

**8. If yes, is it by:**

a-Acknowledging what students can do?

b-others?

.....

.....

.....

**9. Do you try to establish a relaxed atmosphere?**

Yes

No

**10. If yes, is it by:**

a- Establishing good rapport with your students?

b- Get students to feel comfortable talking with one another?

c- Others?

.....

.....

.....

## Section Two: Teachers' Incorporation of CLL Elements

### 11. How often do you have your students work in groups?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

### 12. How about group size:

a- Pairs?

b- Small groups (3-4)?

c- Large groups?

### 13. Do you set up the groups on the basis of:

a- Sex?

b- Proficiency?

c- Students' preference?

d- Randomly?

### 14. How often do you give feedback?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

### 15. Do you encourage peer review?

Yes

No

**16. Do you monitor the groups?**

Yes

No

**17. If yes, please explain.**

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**18. Do you help your students see the value of cooperative group work?**

Yes

No

**19. If yes, do you:**

a-Simply explains why you are doing cooperative work?

b-Do a brainstorm session on the value of group work?

**20. Do you raise your students' awareness towards the necessary skills for group work?**

Yes

No

**21. If yes, do you tell them how to:**

a-Get information?

b-Respond to questions?

c-Evaluate their own performance?

d-Evaluate the performance of their peers?

**22. Do you set up practice situations for the skills you make them aware of?**

Yes

No

**23. Do your students have problems working together?**

Yes

No

**24. Have you encountered these problems:**

a- Poor help-giving?

b- Unequal participation?

c- Inactive groups?

**25. If there are other problems, please explain.**

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**26. Do you try to solve these problems?**

Yes

No

**27. If yes, did you try any of these:**

a- Giving direct instruction in help-giving?

b- Modelling help-giving?

c- Scripting interaction?

d- Others?

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**Section Three: Teachers' Evaluation of CLL**

**28. How do students react to cooperative learning:**

a- Very motivated?

b- Motivated?

c- Little motivated?

d- Not motivated?

**29. Does cooperative learning enhance students' participation in writing classes?**

Yes

No

**30. If yes, say how?**

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**Thank you for your cooperation**

### Appendix 3: The Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

I would be so grateful if you could answer the following questions about your attitudes towards the use of cooperative group work and its advantages.

Please, tick the box that corresponds to your answer; more than one answer is sometimes possible.

#### Section One: Students' Perceptions of the Writing Skill

**1. Is writing in English interesting to you?**

Yes

No

**2. Whatever your answer, please explain.**

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**3. Do you feel afraid to write?**

Yes

No

**4. If yes, is it because you:**

a-Worry about making grammatical mistakes?

b-Have few or no ideas?

c-Fear teacher's negative feedback?

**5. When you do not do well, does your teacher embarrass you?**

Yes

No

**6. What does your teacher do to create a good learning atmosphere:**

a-Praise students?

b-Acknowledge what students can do?

c-Check that students are comfortable with learning?

d-Encourage students to write?

e-Establish a good relationship with students?

f-None?

**Section Two: Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Practices in Teaching**

**Writing**

**7. When writing in class , do you prefer:**

a- Working individually?

b- Working in pair?

c- Working in group?

**8. Please, explain your choice.**

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**9. How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?**

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

**10. Do you prefer setting the groups on the basis of:**

- a-Sex?
- b-Proficiency?
- c-Preference?
- d-Randomly?

**11. Does your teacher:**

- a-Control the groups?
- b-Make sure students are on task?

**12. When you peer review, do you focus on:**

- a-Content?
- b-Structure?
- c-Language?
- d-All of them?

**13. Does your teacher help you see the importance of cooperative group work?**

- Yes
- No

**14. If yes, does he/she:**

- a-Simply explain why he is doing cooperative work?
- b-Do a brainstorm session on the importance of group work?

**15. Does your teacher raise your awareness towards the necessary skills for group work?**

- Yes
- No

**16. If yes, does he/she tell you how to:**

- a-Get information?



b-Respond to questions?

c-Evaluate your performance?

d-Evaluate the performance of your peers?

**17. Does your teacher set up practice situations for the skills he makes you aware of?**

Yes

No

**18. Do you have problems working with your peers?**

Yes

No

**19. Please, explain.**

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**20. Does your teacher try to solve the problems encountered when you are working with your peers?**

Yes

No

### **Section Three: Students' Attitudes to Group Work**

**21. When the teacher asks you to work in groups, are you:**

a- Very motivated?

b- Motivated?

c- Less motivated?

d- Not motivated?

**22. Whatever your answer is, please say why.**

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**23. This way of learning helps you to:**

a-Learn to respect different ideas and opinions?

b-Learn social skills for getting along with others?

c-Ask and respond to more questions?

**24. When you work in groups, do you:**

a- Feel that you are satisfied with yourself?

b- Take a positive attitude toward yourself?

c- Feel that you are not good at all?

d- Feel less embarrassed to make mistakes?

e- Feel more confident?

**25. How much did you learn from group work?**

Very much

Much

Little

Nothing

**26. Group work as opposed to individual work is:**

Unsatisfactory

Poor

Good

Very good

Excellent

**Thank you for your cooperation**