Domaine : Lettres et Langues Etrangères

Filière : Langue Anglaise

Spécialité : Langue et Communication

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in English

Title:

Investigating Challenges and Difficulties in the

Implementation of Cooperative Learning:

A Case of 'Licence' Classes in the Department of English at Mouloud

Mammeri University in Tizi-Ouzou.

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Dedication

This modest work is especially dedicated to the memory of my dear and loving cousin Celia. I will never forget you. May you rest in peace.

A unique and loving "thank you" to...

...My beloved and respectable parents Achour and Djamila whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears.

...My soul brother Mohand who has never left my side to whom I wish all the best of the world.

...My maternal grandparents Akli and "Yemma Hia".

...My paternal grandparents Arezki and Fatma (in memory).

...My aunts Safia, Rachida, Fadhila, Chafia and Zouina.

...All my lovely cousins especially Doudou, Koucila, Youven, Dihia and her husband Ahmed.

...I also want to remember all my friends especially Ouardia, Chafi .

...Last but not least I am dedicating this to my binomial and best friend Sihem.

Thileli Boukais .

Dedication

I dedicate this work with a special feeling of gratitude to:

My lovely parents Mohammed and Saliha for their endless love, care and support

all along   my studies, without their help this work would not have been achieved.

My dear brothers Hacen and Aziz

My grandparents in memory

My precious aunts, Malika, Nouara and Zohra for their assistance and help

My uncles, Ahcen, Hocine and their wives

All my lovely cousins

All my friends, especially Lydia and Ouardia

My best friend and binomial in work Lyly

Sihem Farez.

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Acknowledgement

Abstract

The current study attempts to investigate the difficulties and challenges that the teachers of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (MMUTO) mainly face when implementing cooperative learning (CL) in their classes. It strives to glean some insight into teachers' and students' perceptions of CL, and the extent to which this pedagogical approach is effectively implemented. The study is also meant to identify the problems and factors behind the teachers' poor implementation of CL. To attain these objectives, two distinct but interrelated frameworks have been considered namely; David Johnson and Roger Johnson' Social Interdependence Theory (2009) as well as Spencer Kagan and Miguel Kagan' Cooperative Learning theory (2009) as theoretical plinths. This research in fact, is based on a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis. Thus, two distinct but interdependent questionnaires have been addressed to thirty (30) "Licence" (i.e. first, second and third year) students and ten (10) of their teachers. In order to analyze the data, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) is used for statistical data analysis while Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) has served to interpret the results of the open-ended questions of the two questionnaires. The conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that, whereas the students have a negative attitude towards CL, their teachers hold a positive one. However, the results also show that despite their favorable perception of this pedagogical approach, teachers fail to properly implement it, as they do not consider the basic elements of CL and its main characteristics. In addition to the teachers' lack of theoretical knowledge about CL, this study goes further, revealing the existence of two other obstructive factors - the lack of training and lack of collegial support which in turn generate problems for the implementation of CL. In sum, the difficulties identified are related the students' behavior, time consumption, task construction, assessment, and class management.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Learning Implementation, Elements of Cooperative Learning, Challenges and Difficulties, Obstructive Factors

List of Abbreviations

- C L : Cooperative Learning

- et al. : and others

- MMUTO : Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou

- n.d. : no date

- QCA : Qualitative Content   Analysis

- SPSS : Statistical : Package for Social Sciences

List of Diagrams

List of Tables

Contents

General Introduction

Chapter 1: Review of the Literature

x

Chapter 2: Research Design

Chapter3: Presentation of the Findings

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings

General Introduction

General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The value of cooperation has been recognized since early years of human development. First, human beings have felt the need to operate as groups to safeguard their security and sustain their survival in hostile physical environments. Later on, in modern times, the importance of cooperation has become even more vital as life challenges grow more critical none more so than in the domain of scholarly activities of education. Hence, the advent of CL as a teaching and learning method to enhance both intellectual skills and academic knowledge is of a great importance.

CL is a successful teaching approach in which small groups, each with students of different levels of ability, tend to solve problems and build knowledge by coordinating their learning activities and efforts in order to achieve common understanding (David Johnson, Roger Johnson and Holubec, E.J, 1993). However, despite its significance, CL has yet to find the place it deserves in educational systems given the many difficulties this method of teaching and learning is faced with when applied in the classroom (Robyn Gillies and Michael Boyle, 2008). That is to say translating into practice the concept of CL is much more complex than expected, and the attainment of its stated objectives is not easily measurable. This difficulty is compounded with the reluctance of teachers to adopt it mainly due to arising challenges and difficulties related to teachers' unfamiliarity with this teaching strategy and lack of sufficient understanding on how to properly implement it, time management issues and problems with assessing students' group work (Ibid). Moreover, the resistance to implement CL is mainly due to the constraints it poses to teachers' control of the teamwork. Indeed, interaction between team members does not necessarily mean cooperation although the two (interaction and cooperation) are mutually inclusive. To be more explicit, the success of CL is contingent upon comprehensive preparation and planning, which usually requires

1

more efforts beforehand than its practical execution. The case in point is the group membership in terms of knowledge ability and competency, which should be done on specific criteria than just mixing students on a random basis (Gillies and Boyle, 2010; Angel Ovejero, 1990; Sarah Petersone and Jeffrey miller, 2004; Leonor Prieto, 2007). Concerning the students, it seems that CL does not attract their enthusiasm. In other words students are neither motivated nor comfortable with the fact of getting involved in a group work, as they usually face many difficulties considering their incompatible personalities. For example, "free riders" piggyback students with high abilities, who show due diligence to learning. It is this kind of difficulty that makes the task for teachers much more difficult than it actually is.

A brief glance at the literature points out that the use of CL has already been recognized as an effective approach mainly for the reason of its importance in improving the students' academic and social performance. However, some researchers propose that sustaining to this system seems to be problematic (Gillies and Boyle, 2010; Lynda Baloche and Celeste Brody, 2017; Yael Sharan, 2010). Yet, the challenges and difficulties in implementing CL is still a fallow area of investigation in Algeria and more precisely in the department of English at MMUTO. Thus, the purpose of this study is oriented accordingly.

Aims and Significance of the Study

The originality of this work on CL is one of the first of its kind to be undertaken in the context of Algeria's education system. It is beyond this study to determine the effectiveness of and identify the various challenges of CL as analyzed across many international studies. Its uniqueness is to explore the topic in a national setting of Algeria at a regional university (MMUTO). Even though it is limited to exploring teachers' and students' perceptions towards the awareness of, the difficulties in implementation and students experience of CL, such an exploratory research is expected to provide a strong basis to building more realistic

hypotheses to further deductive studies capable of generating much robust and generalizable results.

Furthermore, however small the added value of this study, its contribution in raising awareness of the effectiveness of and the potential implementation of CL in Algeria could be in itself, deemed to be of great benefit; especially for the future endeavor of the Algerian government to reform the country's education system which inexorably in need for a comprehensive review to be abreast of today's overall educational progress.

The research study strives to attain four major objectives. The first objective is to investigate both teachers' and students' perceptions of CL. Second, it examines the extent to which this approach is effectively implemented. Third, it seeks to shed light on the main difficulties and challenges teachers confront when implementing this pedagogy. As far as the fourth objective is concerned, it looks to identify the different factors behind the poor implementation of CL.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This dissertation focuses on exploring the main challenges and difficulties that teachers encounter when implementing CL at the department of English at MMUTO.

In order to examine the above problematic, some orientations are posed in the form of research questions to be answered:

Q1- What do teachers and students perceive about CL use and what motivates teachers to use this learning strategy?

Q2- To what extent do teachers implement CL effectively?

Q3-What kind of difficulties do teachers encounter when implementing CL?

Q4-What are the factors behind the poor implementation of CL?

The following hypotheses are formulated as an attempt to give a tentative answer to the aforementioned research questions:

HP1: Teachers and students view CL as an effective learning strategy that plays an important role in developing both the academic, social and psychological aspects.

HP2: Teachers and students view CL as an ineffective learning strategy.

HP3: Teachers have effectively implemented CL in their classes.

HP4: Teachers encounter several difficulties when implementing CL.

HP5: There are various factors behind the poor implementation of CL.

Research Techniques and Methodology

To collect the necessary information and know how much the above mentioned hypotheses are true, the present study opts for a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis. The research data are collected by using one main instrument namely a 'questionnaire' designed and administered for both thirty (30) "Licence" students and ten (10) of their teachers of the department of English at MMUTO. It is principally meant to identify the teachers' and the students' perceptions of CL as well as to examine the extent to which teachers effectively implement this approach. It is further used to investigate the main difficulties and challenges they encounter when implementing this learning strategy. Finally, it seeks to outline the factors behind its poor implementation.

For the data analysis, a descriptive statistical method relying on SPSS is used in order to make the analysis of the statistical data easy. In addition, a QCA is used to interpret and explain the results obtained from the open-ended questions of the two questionnaires.

Structure of the Dissertation

In terms of organization, this dissertation is structured and organized conforming to the traditional-complex model that consists of a general introduction, four chapters and a general conclusion.

First and foremost*,* the *General Introduction* section presents the statement of the problem aims and significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, research techniques and methodology and the structure of the dissertation. The first chapter called "*Review of the Literature"* consists on reviewing some key concepts related to the research topic as well as the theoretical framework underlying the research study. The second chapter entitled "*Research Design"* introduces the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter labeled *"Presentation of the Findings"* provides a detailed account of the findings. The forth and last chapter, is named "*Discussion of the Findings"*. It is the main part of the present dissertation as it represents a significant contribution to the academic debate that revolves around the topic of CL by bringing answers to the research questions. Lastly, the *General Conclusion* summarizes the major research points tackled throughout the study. It suggests some recommendations and a number of directions for further research.

Chapter 1: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to review the literature that revolves around the topic investigated in this study. As its title suggests, the present work is about investigating difficulties and challenges in the implementation of CL. The first part defines and explains the meaning of CL, its elements, main characteristics and key relevant classroom activities. Then it highlights the role played by teachers in implementing CL, followed by an examination of the benefits arising from its effective implementation. Lastly, it presents a clear distinction between teamwork and group work. The final part is dedicated to the main theoretical considerations related to the challenges and difficulties teachers encounter and that students experience when implementing CL as an approach of teaching and learning. In addition, it presents the theoretical framework guiding this study.

1.1. Cooperative Learning (CL)

1.1.1. Definitions

Until the mid-1960s, CL has been somewhat ignored, if not unknown, by education providers as a scholarly activity since the main teaching method, then, labeled "Traditional Teaching" has been geared towards individual learning (Gillies, 2007). From the 1970s onwards, CL has started to be recognized and accepted, all over the world, as an alternative method for education purposes.

In general, with CL, individuals seek to achieve mutual learning benefits for both themselves and their teammates. Having said that, CL has been defined in different ways.

CL is generally explained as a basic term attributed to a variety of techniques used in classroom setting for organizing and managing small but diversified and heterogeneous groups to achieve common learning goals (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, E, 1994; Slavin, 1990).

Johnson, Johnson and Verna Monson (2012) define CL as a new teaching paradigm that puts into practice new working conditions, under which students are joined together so that they can work actively to build their own knowledge, develop their personal relationships as well as the needed competencies. By doing so, learning is no longer an individual but rather a social process to achieve motivation. Similarly, Spencer Kagan (1994) states that CL is a thriving teaching approach that promotes team work, in which team members with different abilities use various learning activities as a basic way to enhance their knowledge understanding. In other words, each student is not only in charge of his/her own learning but also help his/her teammates to learn the subject at hand through the creation of a positive and stimulating learning environment.

Another scholar, Jim Knight (2009), considers CL as a learning conducted by students rather than teachers, in which group's participants work cooperatively to teach themselves by sharing each other strengths and abilities to develop their social skills. Teachers adopt such a teaching strategy for their advantage in order to tackle several diversified lessons. In addition teachers relying on CL should not only seek to group students together but also make sure to form heterogeneous groups.

Christopher Cheong (2010) provides more specific details by stating that to secure effectiveness; to guarantee positive interdependence of group members; and to enable the practice of teamwork skills, it is important to assign roles to each member such as leader, recorder, summarizer etc.

From the above definitions, one can conclude that the aforementioned authors are in common agreement in explaining the fundamental principles of CL as an important method of teaching in which small groups, with different abilities, work together on same issues to improve their knowledge understanding by creating a positive learning environment.

1.1.2. Essential Elements of CL

The degree of effectiveness of CL depends on a number of elements to ensure group cooperation capable of stimulating the learners' team spirit. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), CL does not only require the students grouping to achieve CL benefits. To be successful in setting up and having students complete group tasks, five essential elements must be met. These are positive interdependence, individual accountability and personal responsibility, promotive interaction, group processing and appropriate use of social skills.

➢ Positive Interdependence

Positive interdependence is a case whereby efforts of each individual benefit not only itself but also everyone else in the group. In other words, students are provided with the learning material and given the collective responsibility to learn such material. Members of the group have to help one another to master the learning task and achieve a collective understanding (Johnson and Johnson, 1994).

The key to this element is committing to the group work by sharing knowledge and providing mutual support and cheer since the success of one person is dependent on the success of the group.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1984), for CL to be successful in classroom, teachers must establish a state of positive interdependence by considering five predetermined parameters, which are goal, reward, task and resource interdependence. By doing so, the learning process is likely to be maximized and enhanced. Thus, teachers must help students learn to interact positively with other participants who might have different abilities and think differently.

➢ Individual Accountability and Personal Responsibility

This component is based on the belief that students learn together but perform alone. Each one in the group must be responsible for his or her own work and avoid any kind of

"hitch- hiking" on the others, as the goal of cooperation is to make each member a responsible individual. Therefore, everyone in the group must be individually assessed to determine how much effort each member is contributing, by providing them with proper feedback and make sure that there is no "free riders" (Johnson, Johnson, and Karl Smith, 1991).

➢ Promotive Interaction

In pomotive interaction, team members promote each other's success and productivity by sharing resources and helping each other on specific tasks to reach the group's goal (Johnson and Johnson, 1994). In promotive interaction, students explain, discuss and support each other's effort to learn and assist one another for the completion of the assignment.

➢ The Appropriate use of Social Skills

An active application of the interpersonal and social skills is essential for the group to function successfully. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), to ensure effective and unambiguous communications and for the group to move in a specific direction, social skills are required such as common decision-making, trust-building, mutual communication and conflict management and resolution. They further say, to accommodate low social skilled students, teachers are under the obligation of teaching the social skills along the academic ones to achieve the group's goal.

➢ Group Processing

Group processing suggests that students should continuously self-assess their productivity and see how well they have progressed and, most importantly, make decisions as to what actions to continue or change under the follow up and the supervision of their teachers. In such a way, the members' effectiveness as a whole will be improved and the desired goals will be achieved (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).

To conclude, for CL goals to be achieved, all the above mentioned elements should be taken into consideration. Used properly and meaningfully, teachers are more likely to await durable results.

1.1.3. Characteristics of CL

The review of the literature has identified four key characteristics of CL (Gillies, 2008; Robert Stahl, 1994; Johnson *et al.*, 1994).

➢ Heterogeneity and Group Size

One of the most important conditions of CL is the group membership and design. In fact, classroom environments are becoming more and more diverse, which is reflected in various aspects such as gender, ethnicity, language proficiency, knowledge ability, intellectual skills etc. Such group heterogeneity makes CL very challenging for teachers. However according to Gillies (2008), heterogeneous groups are expected to perform better than their homogeneous counterparts. In heterogeneous groups, high achievers are more likely to support those with low and/or average abilities or of the less confidence. Members of heterogeneous groups support each other until they successfully understand and complete the task, hence; enhancing adaptation and reducing the risk of stigmatization.

Another prevailing point is the importance of having small group sizes. According to Stahl (1994), a group should be as small as possible so that the students will be mixed as heterogeneously as possible.

➢ Assigning Specific Roles

One way to reduce conflict and off-task behavior in group work is to assign specific roles to students such as leaders, encouragers, reflectors or a checkers, etc. By doing so, each group member will have his or her part of responsibility and realize what is expected from him or her (Johnson *et al*., 1994). Role assigning enables teachers to ensure each member's

accountability of their work and create an atmosphere of positive interdependence among members.

> ➤ **Allocating Sufficient Time**

Following the group formation and the role attribution, teachers have to allocate an appropriate amount of time to their students so that to perform required tasks and learn the targeted content (Stahl, 1994). Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2011) further explain that sufficient time should be given to the students to function properly and correctly within their CL groups and allow them to discuss their thoughts and learn from one another; otherwise a lack of sufficient time would produce frustration and create difficulties to achieve the desired outcomes.

> ➤ **Providing Clear Guidelines**

Effective teaching and learning cannot be completed in a poorly managed classroom. According to Johnson and Johnson (2011), for an effective CL to happen, teachers are recommended to deliver well defined directions and guidance beforehand for the learners to know what is expected from them in terms of behavior and results. In addition, Stahl (1994) specifies that before engaging in a CL group work, teachers need to set clear guidelines to clarify what is expected to do within the group, how to do it, in what sequencing and which appropriate tools to use. Resulting outcomes reflect members' abilities and the extent to which they have understood the task at hand.

1.1.4. CL Strategies

Using CL in classroom is considered to be the best way to get students' willingness to work as a group. Incorporating specific activities into classroom compounded with specific guidelines is proved to be an excellent way to implement CL. Such activities are developed in the following paragraphs.

> ## Jigsaw

Is an effective CL method that has been widely investigated by different researchers (Spencer Kagan, 1990; Slavin, 1983).With this teaching technique, students are first divided into groups and then each group is assigned a unique academic material to learn, then each group member becomes expert in one aspect of a particular subject area so that to be able to teach it to their peers and ensure clear understanding across the group.

The aim of jigsaw is mainly to increase students' engagement and build on them important collaboration and communication skills.

> ## Think Pair-Share

Think pair-share is a CL strategy that involves a three steps structure. In the first step students are required to think individually on a given issue presented by the teacher. In the second step, they pair up so that to share and discuss their thoughts about that issue. In the third step, students-pairs are asked to present their ideas to the whole class (Lyman, F, 1992). Advantages of this technique are multifold. First, it increases the students' self-esteem and self-confidence. Moreover, it ensures that no one is left out and everyone is given the opportunity to engage and voice their opinions. Finally, it fosters students' interaction mainly by encouraging the most reticent and introverted ones (Kristina Roberson, 2006).

> ## Circle the Sage (Kagan, 1994)

With this CL strategy, the teacher first identifies those students possessing a particular skill or as specific knowledge, for example, who is able to answer a difficult mathematics question, or who have visited Italy or who is able to recognize a particular historical event. Those students are named "Sages" and stand as models around whom the rest of students are gathered to disseminate information and learn from, by asking further questions and taking notes. Students then reconvene their initial groups each in turn explains what he has learned. As they have consulted different "Sages", they could have been informed differently.

Thereafter, if there is any variance in the knowledge received, remedial actions would be introduced to correct any misunderstanding.

> ➢ **Team-Pair- Solo**

It is a strategy of CL whereby students are put into teams and work together to solve a given problem, either by brainstorming ideas or sharing/discussing prior knowledge. After that, they split into pairs to further clarify their ideas before they come to work on their own (Kagan, 1994) and evaluate their learning by themselves.

This strategy is a great way to motivate students to manage and succeed at problem solving which at first is seen as being beyond their capacity. Moreover, team pair solo is based on a simple concept of mediated learning and permits the students to be complementary, as what may be difficult to one student is another student's strength. Marty Spring (2007) puts forward, that a skill is best taught when students first try it as a team, then in pairs and finally independently.

1.1.5. The Role of Teachers in CL

Contrary to the conventional teaching method, the teacher's role in CL is key in scaffolding the students' learning. According to Spencer Kagan (2013), teachers' role has changed from being lecturers to facilitators. Instead delivering direct lectures, they carefully design and set meaningful activities that emphasize an active participation of students who would acquire knowledge through interacting with both the teacher and classmates alike (ibid). Ching-Ying Pan and Hui-Yi Wu (2013) also argue that the teachers' role in CL should be a mediator, either by facilitating, modeling or coaching. They further act as monitors by moving from group to group to provide students with needed assistance by tackling arising questions, providing feedback and underlying the group's progress (Ogunleye, B.O, 2011).

1.1.6. Team VS Group Work

Most of the time the words "group" and "team" are used interchangeably while they actually differ. Teamwork consists of people who are commonly joined together and work interdependently in order to achieve a common objective. They are also mutually accountable and share responsibility for the completion of a given task since the work done by each partner interferes and affect the final results. Conversely, group work consists of a collection of persons who come together to perform a given task but possessing individual responsibilities without interfering with others. To explain such a difference, Michael Carter (2009:4) asserts that "*the group definition describes the individuals within it as having a common interest, while the team definition describes the members within it as striving for a common goal*".

Another distinction concerns creativity. While in groups creativity is almost suppressed due to the lack of communication among group members, in teams creativity is at its highest because of the presence of promotive interaction (John Schermerhon, 2011). The last distinction is related to the role of the leader, who actually plays an active role in a group work, as he dominates and exerts control, whereas in a team it is difficult to identify the leader as everyone is sharing leadership and act as facilitators.

1.1.7. Benefits of CL

CL has been a widely used instrument by teachers all around the world and it has a successful history of research. Several studies investigating CL have found that cooperation in general, is a human endeavor that benefits various areas of social life (Johnson, Johnson, and Karl Smith, 2014; Houssain Ahmed, 2013).

➢ **Academic Benefits**

CL has direct positive influence on students' learning performance. Slavin and Robert Cooper (1999) claim that the primary goal of cooperative group work is mainly to boost the

students' academic achievement by giving them a considerable chance to discuss, help and encourage each other to learn the fundamental concepts necessary in tackling diverse assignments. Small group interactions offer students opportunities to reflect upon, discuss and analyze questions arising from diverse situations which create a rich pool of ideas for students to build their academic knowledge and hone their intellectual skills.

> ## Social Benefits

The most important value behind the use of CL is to help students acquire social and interpersonal skills. CL offers a reliable and confident environment to develop social skills by allowing individuals to exchange their ideas and add their perspectives to new issues. Such an exchange inevitably helps them to build up effective communication and interpersonal skills. As Johnson and Johnson (2009) put it, CL is a context where new skills are practiced by students.

To work cooperatively as a group, students need to engage in interactive tasks such as conflict-management, leadership, negotiation, and problem solving, etc, which lead to improving their social skills which are transferable to and applicable in many real life situations.

> ## Psychological Benefits

CL creates a platform for personal motivation. When interacting with others within a group, students realize the value of their presence and feel secure when supported by others. Therefore, unassuming and less engaging persons might be more likely to be stimulated by the presence of others.

In addition to motivation, the students' self-esteem can be extremely affected by the CL environment. As confirmed by a number of researchers who claim that CL environment can raise learners' self-esteem and build confidence (Andrea Bertucci, Conte, S, Johnson and Johnson, 2010; Van Dat Tran and Ramon Lewis, (2012).

15

Organizing students to individual activities may probably exert pressure and create anxiety on them. Indeed, anxiety is perceived as a negative factor that undermines learning proficiency. But with good guidance and creation of good atmosphere and a comfortable group environment, personal anxiety could be overcome.

➤ **Critical Thinking**

It has always been recognized that verbal interaction stimulates positive learning experience. Exchanging viewpoints and ideas through face-to-face communication triggers positive perceptions which contribute to enhancing academic knowledge understanding. Kenneth O'Rouke (2008) likewise explains that classrooms that emphasize active communication, rather than passive listening, increases students thinking skills. As students engage in a dynamic process of rising questions of other members, in addition of their own help critical thinking in general.

In addition to these benefits that accrue to CL, one could add others which have been omitted by the above mentioned studies. CL also helps group members to be tolerant of others' ideas and opinions, also learn compromise through negotiation and sympathy by accepting to accommodate those of lower abilities and skills.

1.2. Challenges in Implementing CL

In spite of CL effectiveness and given its well documented benefits, a number of studies have found some impediments in its implementation due to the challenges it presents to teachers and which students experience. There is often a hole between what theoreticians say about CL and what practitioners do. Most researchers have focused mainly on its positive aspects, with little attention to the problems CL poses in its application. Randall, V (1999:29) states that "*So popular has cooperative learning become that its benefits may blind us to drawbacks*". Consequently, the present section aims at documenting these challenges faced while implementing CL.

➢ Lack of Experience with CL

One of the greatest challenges in cooperative education is the lack of teachers' initial training to embrace this teaching approach (Basamh, S.A, 2002; Lenor McWey, Henderson, T and Piercy, F, 2006). As stated by Ellen Murphy, Grey, I and Honan, R (2005), teachers in their endeavor to employ CL tend to show little knowledge about its use, this results in the learners lack of success. Similarly, Johnson, Johnson and Roseth, C (2010) point out that the academic and social outcomes are far from being achieved when the CL approach is poorly or badly implemented.

A study conducted by Pham Thi Hong Thanh (2011) that investigates the difficulties of implementing CL among teachers, has revealed that the majority of them ignore its use. In fact, teachers with little or no exposure to CL could apply it wrongly without taking into consideration its underlying principles. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), CL should be used following definite elements namely (positive interdependence, individual accountability and personal responsibility, group processing, promotive interaction and interpersonal and small group skills). By simply grouping students without considering these elements would inevitably lead to failure in reaching positive outcomes. Thus, experience in and knowledge of CL are considered to be vital in achieving a successful implementation of CL.

➢ Group Composition Problems

CL requires grouping students on the basis of their gender, personality and ability in order to work together on common issues. However, all these differences are proven difficult to accommodate if the grouping is done at random without judicious selection of members constituting each group. According to Spencer Kagan (2009) there are various personal attitudes which may create additional and further challenges to the group. Even when groups are selected, personalities can conflict, some students are reluctant to cooperate with their

team members; some are set-aside others try to impose themselves as leaders. Moreover, when teachers put together students who have affinities is more likely to create suitable environment for just socializing rather than working. For this reason, it is important for teachers to plan and teach the students important interaction patterns and assign them roles to prevent and avoid attitudinal conflicts.

➢ Time Consumption

One of the drawbacks of CL is timing for lesson including planning and preparation (Gillies and Boyle, 2010). In addition to classroom time requirements, a considerable amount of time is needed for preparing and planning lessons to ensure that all the CL principles are fully included and appropriately integrated. Tsailing Liang (2002) further states that it also takes time to design tasks, set groups and assign roles. Meeting all these requirements is very challenging, if not impossible, to manage large classroom and within a certain allocated time. For example, designing jigsaw worksheets or teaching social skills are complex tasks which require a lot of time, practice and patience. Consequently, many education providers avoid the use of CL because of the tremendous efforts involved in and time duration (Joanne Putnam, 1998) for which they are not always compensated for. Likewise, Spencer Kagan (2009) reports that planning a complex CL lesson makes teachers lose their enthusiasm resulting in the abandonment of or dropping CL altogether.

➢ Assessment Difficulties

Elizabeth Cohen (1994); kagan and Miguel Kagan (1998) have raised the concern of evaluation problem in CL. As CL happens in a group, it makes it difficult for teachers to assess the students' individual outcomes, performance and each member's specific contribution and get reliable results.

Teachers usually assign a common score for the whole group working on a common issue, this in turn will be attributed to each group member, yet students' real knowledge, skills or

efforts are far from being equal (Phil Race,2011; Noreen Webb,1995). Additionally, Webb (1993) states that assessment at the level of the group is often invalid, in that they generate scores that are unpredictable of the individual degrees of ability. Even when they are asked to work individually on an apart work, students may help each other to complete the task. This is what makes teachers averse to this learning strategy, as there is always one who works more than others or a number of students who count on high achievers to do their share of work and yet receive the same or similar scores.

➢ **Free Riding**

One common situation in using CL is that students work together on common issues, and each of them must teach his or her part of work to the other team members (Ellis Ormrod, 2008). The downside is that sometimes only a few members are engaged in completing the task at hand. Other indolent members might show a passive behavior resulting in unequal contribution or take advantage of the proactive ones to complete the assigned work. In this context Slavin (1995:19) claims that "*Some team members do all or most of the work and learning while others go along for the ride. The free rider effect is most likely to occur when the group has a single task to accomplish such as being asked to submit a single report, complete a single worksheet, or produce a single project*".

This is viewed by educators as one of the difficulties encountered when implementing CL (Martin Davies, 2009; Andrew Kapp, 2009). Such scenarios usually cause frustration among the learners who take the brunt of the work and let the others benefit from this situation by receiving the same grade. One way to avoid such a problem, is for teachers to enforce CL principles mainly positive interdependence and individual accountability so that to avert free-riding (Johnson and Johnson, 2008), generally by assigning specific roles to students and making them responsible of their own learning, thus arise their accountability toward the team (Gillies, 2003; Johnson and Johnson, 2014).

➢ **Dilemmas of Group Dynamics**

Relying on a positive group dynamic to function effectively as a team is one of the biggest challenges of CL. Conflicts between individuals can alter the smooth functioning of any group work; problems arise especially when group members are too young without enough skills to embark on conflict resolution.

Incompatible personalities can obstruct CL even in the absence of conflicts or disharmony between students; as students with strong characters can occupy leadership roles whether or not they are best placed to lead the project at the hand, which may put aside and intimidate those with low personalities. As cited by Kagan and Kagan (2009), one of the greatest issues in a group context is the balance of power. Different roles usually lead to power struggle in which some members in a leadership position may try to dominate and influence followers. Leaders with tendencies to exert absolute power might disrupt the group activities which may result in producing counterproductive outcomes in teaching and learning (Ibid).

1.3. Theoretical Framework

As every study must rely on conceptual bases, the present work rests on two distinct but interrelated theoretical frameworks that will be presented in the following paragraphs.

➢ **Social Interdependence Theory**

One of the successes of social and educational psychology is the wide acceptance of CL with its imminent theory of social interdependence. This latter is one of the main theories on which this study will be based, as suggested by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (2009) in their article entitled "*An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence and Cooperative Learning*". This article is meant to provide a valuable explanation of the social interdependence theory (that is, cooperation, competitive and individualistic efforts). In more explicit terms, teachers who are about to use CL must understand that cooperation

compared to competitive and individualistic efforts, tend to result in the way that group members work and interact together so that to achieve a common goal instead of working against each other or simply working alone (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). To reach this state of cooperation, social interdependence theory advocates that teachers should structure goals to their students before working cooperatively in a way to avoid situations of competition and/or individualistic learning. According to Johnson and Johnson (2010), the premise of this theory is that the way educators set goals determines the type of relationships between individuals. The last but certainly not the least of the recommendations to teachers according to this theory is that they are expected to have a profound knowledge on how to incorporate the five basic elements that allow cooperation between team members, which include Positive Interdependence, Promotive Interaction, Individual Accountability and Personal Responsibility, Appropriate use of Social Skills and Group Processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). The deriving motive behind the adoption of this theory as an analytical framework to underlie the present study is that the five elements it proposes and which have been tackled in this chapter are congruent with the requirements of a successful implementation of CL. So teachers should take them into account for a proper implementation of this method.

> **Cooperative Learning Theory**

The second theoretical framework on which the present research study relies is "*Cooperative Learning theory*", proposed by Spencer Kagan and Miguel Kagan (2009) in their book labeled "Kagan Cooperative Learning" intended as a guide for teachers to effectively implement the CL approach in their classes. This theory provides teachers with the most prevailing and important directives for an appropriate CL use, especially concerning: team building, classroom management, social skills, lesson planning, class building structures and the basic CL principles (PIES). But the most interesting element of this framework on which the present study mainly focus, is the fact that Kagan and Kagan have enumerated the

common problems that the majority of students and educators usually face when these latter do not manage to follow the aforementioned directives, which according to these authors are the basic characteristics of CL that teachers must consider in order to reinforce the necessary conditions for a safe CL environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the pertinent literature related to the present work in details. It helps getting informed about what CL is, its benefits, characteristics, its current activities as well as the basic elements that underpin this method. Then, it has referred to the role of the teacher and the main distinction between group and team work. This section likewise shed light on the difficulties and challenges that affect the implementation of CL. Lastly; this review has also dealt with the theoretical framework that underlines the present research work. The provided literature can be potentially relevant for educators so that to promote better implementation of CL.

Chapter2: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter is methodological and deals with the research design of the present study. It describes the research techniques used to investigate the difficulties and challenges encountered when implementing the CL approach at the level of the Department of English at MMUTO so that to answer the fundamental research questions stated in the general introduction. It consists of two sections. The first one provides a descriptive account of the context and the participants who took part in the investigation. Furthermore, it typifies the instrument used for the data collection namely a "Questionnaire", handed to both teachers and their students. The second section, explains the procedures of data analysis. While the statistical method labeled 'SPSS' is used to analyze the quantitative data arisen from the closed-ended questions of the two questionnaires, the QCA is used to analyze the qualitative data elicited from the open-ended questions of the same research tool.

2.1. Context of Investigation and Population Sample

This investigation is carried out in a realistic setting that is in the department of English at MMUTO. The targeted population, which is regarded as the source of the data in this research, consists of thirty (30) Licence students, who are randomly selected from a large population. Besides, this study is carried out with the participation of ten (10) teachers of the same department.

2.2. Procedures of Data Collection

In order to provide a more comprehensive picture and get a better understanding of the issue under investigation, a mixed-methods approach has been adopted. The latter, combines between quantitative and qualitative procedures using one main instrument namely a "Questionnaire" so that to garner the adequate information, to investigate this particular topic.

2.2.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is one of the most common instruments of data collection, which consists of a series of questions about a particular issue. It can be defined as a useful research tool that gives the researcher access to a considerable amount of participants and get a large understanding from their responses in a relatively short period of time. According to Zoltan Dörneyei (2003:1) "*the popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable*". Generally, questionnaires include two types of items: closed and open-ended ones (Louis Cohen, Manion, L and Morison, K, 2007). The first type known as closed-items, restrict the respondents to the selection of one or several answers from a defined list of choices. The second type known as open-ended items, allow the respondents considerable freedom to answer in a less restricted way.

As far as the present study is concerned, this research tool is addressed to License students and their teachers of the department of English at MMUTO on February 2018.

➢ Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire administered to teachers starts with a brief introduction that explains to the informants the importance of their participation in this research and the aims behind the study. This was intended to motivate them to fill in the questionnaire and guarantee more reliable data. It is made up of nineteen (19) questions which are divided into two types: closed and open ended questions. They are grouped according to their aims and arranged into four parts. The first part called "*Teachers' Profile*" is aimed to draw general information about the teachers' background. The second part named "*Teachers' Perceptions of CL*" covered the teachers attitudes about CL in general. As regards the third part "*Teachers' Implementation of CL*", is intended to evaluate the extent to which teachers effectively implement CL. The fourth and the last part labeled "*Problems and Factors Affecting CL Implementation*" deals

with the main difficulties and factors affecting the teachers' implementation of CL inside the classroom.

➢ Students' Questionnaire

Apart from the teachers' questionnaire, the same research tool has also been conducted with License students as a means to deepen the understanding of the issue under investigation. It is made up of thirteen (13) items. These latter are classified into two kinds: closed and open- ended questions, which in turn are organized into three main sections. The first section named "*Students' Profile*" is intended to show the learners background information. The second section called "*Students' Perceptions of CL Implementation*" is aimed to get the learners' outlooks of CL and their point of view concerning their teachers' implementation of this pedagogy. Regarding the third section "*Problems in CL Implementation*", seeks to investigate the challenges that students experience when their teachers use the CL method.

2.3. Procedures of Data Analysis

For the present study both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures have been used. The supplementary information that has been gathered from the open-ended questions of the two questionnaires has been analyzed qualitatively using the QCA, whereas the numerical data collected via the closed-ended questions using the same research tool has been analyzed with the Descriptive Statistical Analysis namely the SPSS.

2.3.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

As mentioned above, the numerical data obtained from the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire are analyzed, manipulated and finally presented in the form of statistics using a statistical analysis procedure called SPSS. The latter is a powerful software program that is mainly used in social sciences. It is known for its ability to perform and manipulate a

wide variety of data with a great precision into statistics and generate tabulated reports, charts, and diagrams (Sabine Landau & Brian S. Everitt, 2003).

2.3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

As regards the analysis, description and interpretation of the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions of both the teachers' and students' questionnaire, the QCA has been adopted. This has been defined by Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shanon (2005: 1278) as "*a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*". In other words, QCA strives to examine, analyze and interpret the meanings that may be reported in a particular text following a coding process. In the same context, Philip Mayring (2000:2) defines QCA as "*an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantifications*". This implies that QCA concerns "*the interpretive analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data*" (Dörnyei, 2007:246) and so goes beyond a mere quantification of words.

Three distinct approaches to QCA have been discussed by Hsieh and Shanon (2005) namely, "Conventional", "Directed" and "Summative". While the three aforementioned approaches seem to be similar in their intent; to produce an understanding of the text content they may differ in their coding schemes as well as the origins of codes (ibid). Within the Conventional Content Analysis, coding categories directly emerge from the text data. In the words of Hsieh and Shanon (2005: 1279), this approach is about "*gaining direct information from study participants without imposing preconceived categories*". Unlike the Conventional Content Analysis, the Directed one is an approach where a theory or relevant research findings; that serve as a guide for initial codes, can be considered as the starting point for the analysis. Hickey, G and Kipping, E, (1996) affirm that "*content analysis using a directed*

approach is guided by a more structured process then in the conventional approach". As far as the Summative approach is concerned, it deals with the quantification and classification of key words, and then extends the analysis to include the interpretation of the underlying meanings of the words or the content.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the research design of the study used to investigate the challenges and difficulties in implementing CL in the department of English at MMUTO. First, it has described both the participants and the context of the present study. Then, it has presented the procedure of data collection which consists of a "Questionnaire" handed to both teachers and their students. Lastly, it has displayed the tools of data analysis. In fact, the SPSS is used to provide statistical results of the data collected through the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire, while the QCA is used to interpret the open-ended questions of the same tool.

Chapter 3: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

The present chapter is empirical. It is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the results yielded from the two questionnaires administered to both Licence students and their teachers at the department of English of MMUTO. In this research, a statistical analysis relying on SPSS is used to deal with the closed-ended questions of the two questionnaires. It further uses the QCA for the interpretation of the open-ended questions of the same research tool. For the sake of visibility and readability, the results are converted into statistics tabulated and displayed through various histograms and pie charts. This would facilitate the discussion of the results later on. Concerning its organization, this chapter contains one main section, which in turn is divided into two subsections. The first one covers the results of the teachers' questionnaire. As for the second, it comprises the results that have been obtained from the students' questionnaire.

3.1. Presentation of the Questionnaires' Results

3.1.1. Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire

➢ **Section One: Teachers' Profile**

• **Teachers' Profile in Terms of "Degree Held and Experience"**

Description		Respondents	
		Number	**Percentage**
Degree Held	BA (License)	0	0%
	MA (Magister / Master)	7	70.0%
	PH.D (Doctorate)	3	30.0%
	Total	10	100.0%

Teaching Experience	0-1 year	0	0%
	1-5 years	2	20.0%
	More than 5 years	8	80.0%
	Total	10	100.0%

Table 01: Teachers' Degree and Years of Teaching Experience

As it can be seen in the above table, concerning the qualification of teachers, the highest percentage; that is, 70% (7 teachers) is that of teachers who have got a Master/Magister degree and only 30% which stands for 3 teachers are Doctorate holders. From this one can deduce that the majority of teachers are qualified enough to teach the grade levels under investigation. As regards their teaching experience, it clearly falls in the category of 1-5 and more than 5 years (20% and 80% respectively). This implies that the sample respondents are a mixture of experienced and novice teachers.

> **Section two: Teachers' Perceptions of CL**

Question 01: How would you define CL?

To question regarding the definition of CL addressed to the teachers, six of them (6/10) have reported that it is a method of learning used by teachers who intend to make their students learn through cooperation so that to achieve common objectives. For example one teacher has answered that CL is "*the fact of working together in the classroom to achieve a desired goal set by the teacher*". Moreover, some of them have added that "*CL may be contrasted with competitive learning whose aims are individualistic*". Only one teacher (1/10) has offered a close definition of the term "Cooperative Learning" that is "*encouraging students to work in small groups and using a variety of activities to maximize their learning*". However, three teachers (3/10) seem to be unfamiliar with the concept of CL, since they have given a vague definition of this notion. For example one teacher has said "*I don't have much understanding of it, it is something to do with group work*".

Question 02: Is CL an efficient approach to language teaching?
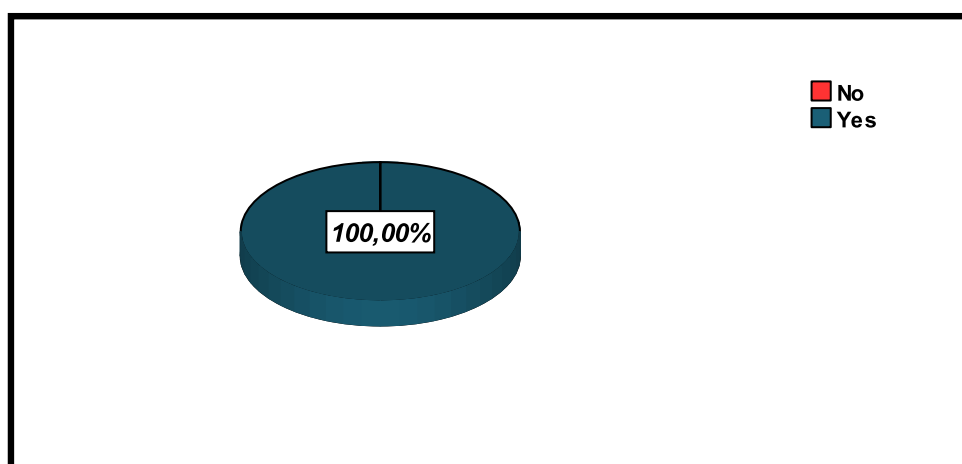
Diagram 01: The Efficiency of the CL Approach

The pie chart highlights that all of the ten participants; that is, one-hundred percent (100%) have affirmed that CL is an efficient approach to language teaching.

If yes, how?

The totality of the respondents have expressed their agreement concerning the importance of CL as a prominent teaching approach allowing the development of various aspects including academic, social and psychological ones. They have supported their views by claiming that CL is an efficient approach because it increases the students' achievements as well as their positive working relations, they further state that it gives the student opportunity to be a more confident learner, as it can help shy students to get rid of their inhibition.

Question 03: CL improves the students'
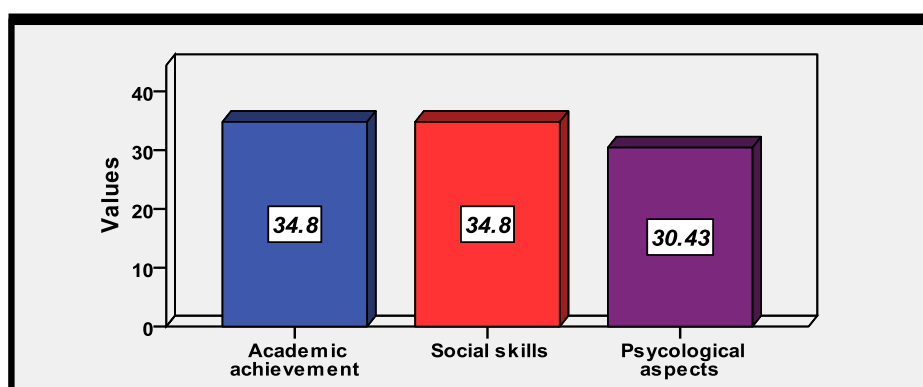
Diagram 02: Teachers' Views on the Benefits of CL

It is apparent from the diagram (02) that both the "*Academic achievement*" and "*Social skills*" benefits rank first with the same value of "34.80". However, the "*Psychological aspects*" takes the second position with the value of "30.43".

Question 04: According to you, how successful is CL for students with low abilities?

As for the question seeking teachers' perceptions as to whether CL is successful, or not, in helping students with low abilities, there is a general agreement among teachers that this teaching method is of great help in fostering slow learners' intellectual abilities and enables this category of students to gain a much higher degree of control over their learning competence and skills. They also recognise that this type of learning provides an opportunity for those students to be integrated in the group and benefit from others' experience.

➢ **Section three: Teachers' Implementation of CL**

Question 05: How long have you been implementing CL in your classes?

When the respondents are asked about their years of implementing CL, the data collected have revealed that while the majority of teachers (5/10) denote that they have started using it since the beginning of their teaching careers, the minority of them (3/10) affirm that they have been implementing this approach since "4, 5 and 18 years". However, the remainder (2 teachers) concede that they have just initiated CL as a teaching method.

Question 06: How would you assess your experience with CL? (Please explain)
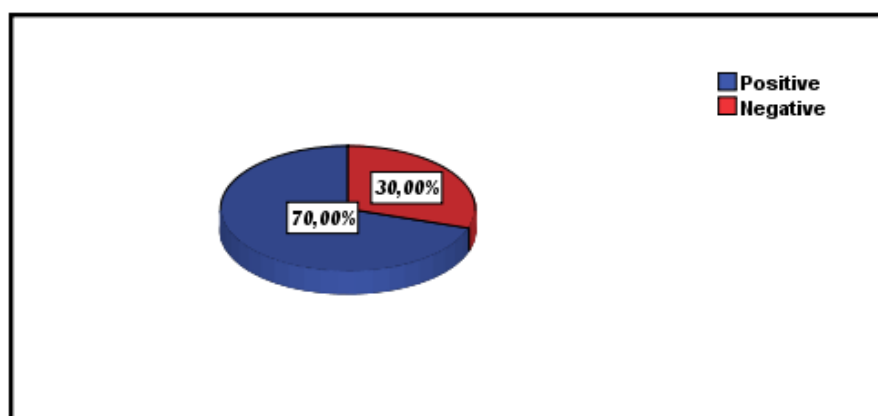
Diagram 03: Teachers' Evaluation of their CL Experience

As for the teachers' evaluation of the CL experience, the results in the above diagram indicate that the overwhelming majority of 70% of the participants reveal having a positive experience with CL since it creates an agreeable atmosphere in the classroom as well s the introduction of high degree of motivation in the mind of students. Others namely 30% have reported somehow a negative experience by stating that it is difficult to implement as it requires a special training and a considerable amount of theoretical knowledge.

Question 07: Within a CL class, how would you define your role?
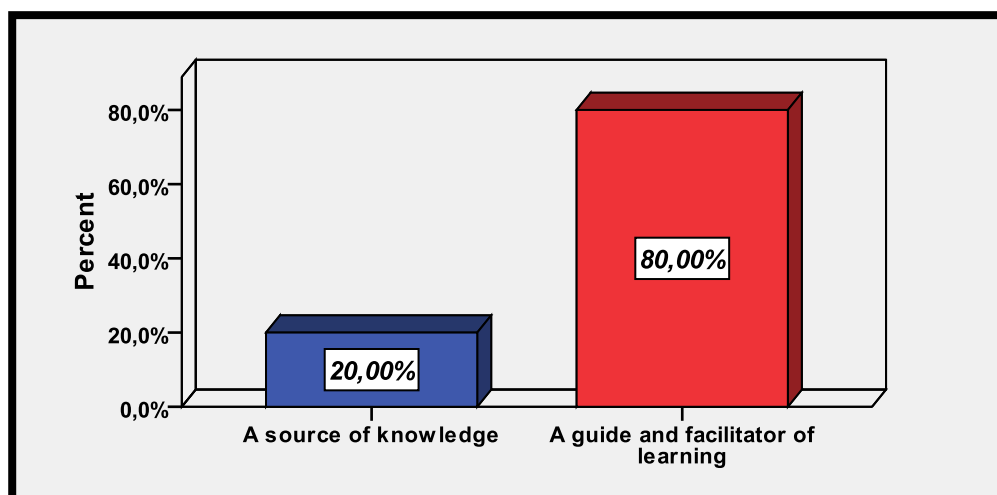
Diagram 04: Teachers' Role in a CL Class

The statistics of diagram (04) clearly indicate that most of the participants; that is 80% pretend to be "*A guide and facilitator of learning*" during their CL lessons. In contrast, the remaining teachers (20%) define their role as being "*A source of knowledge*".

Question 08: Which of the following do you consider important for an effective CL implementation?
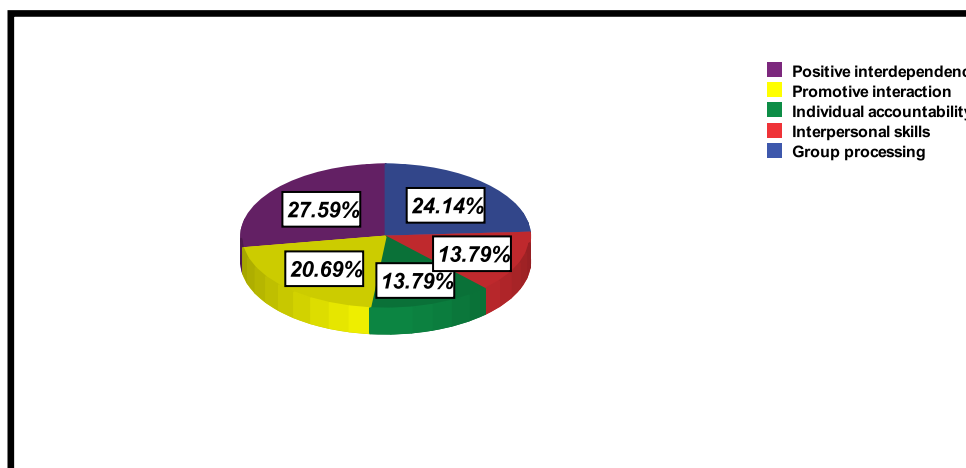
Diagram 05: The Important Elements for an Effective CL Implementation

As understood in diagram (05), divergent points of view have been given concerning the important elements for an effective CL implementation. The highest number pinpoints "*Positive Interdependence*" as being the most important with 27.59%. It is then followed by "*Group processing*" with 24.14%. Besides, "*Promotive Interaction*" ranks third with a percentage of 20.69%. The last two elements which are "*Individual Accountability*" and "*Interpersonal Skills*" are equally rated with a percentage of 13.79%.

Question 09: How do you promote positive interdependence in your classes?

When it comes to promoting positive interdependence in the classroom, the findings have demonstrated that the responses differ in nature and almost every teacher has his or her own way of doing, there are for example the way of "*giving specific tasks to each member who cooperate to achieve the whole task*" or "*through mutual exchange of opinions and the teaching of the social skills like mutual respect and the respect of others' opinions*". In the other side, others consider promoting positive interdependence just as the fact of "*creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom*" or "*giving students tasks to be done together*".

Question 10: Do you assign your students specific roles before conducting any CL activity?
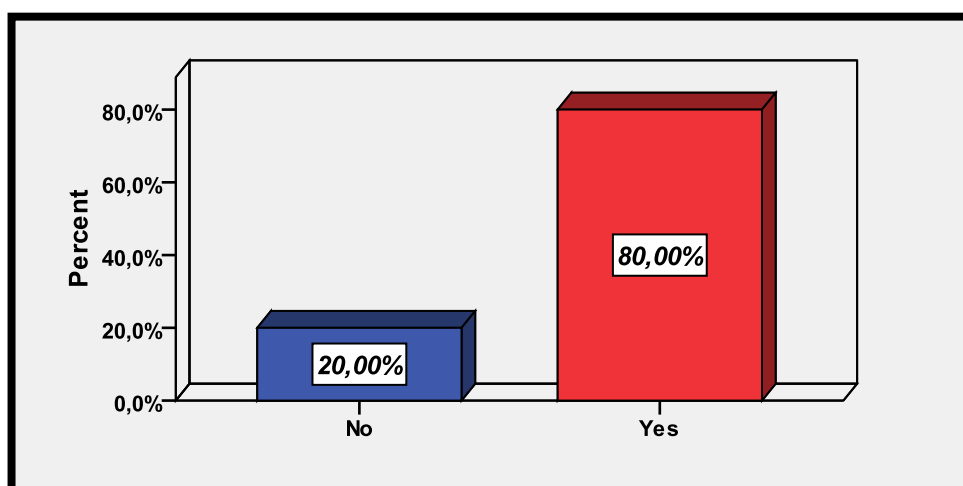
Diagram 06: Teachers' Attribution of Roles before Conducting any CL Activity

As displayed in the above diagram, 80% corresponding to eight (08) teachers have opted for "Yes" they allocate specific roles to their students before conducting any CL activity while 20% standing for two teachers (02) do not.

Question 11: Do you teach your students appropriate social skills (e.g. negotiating skills and conflict management skills, etc.) before conducting a CL activity? (Please justify)
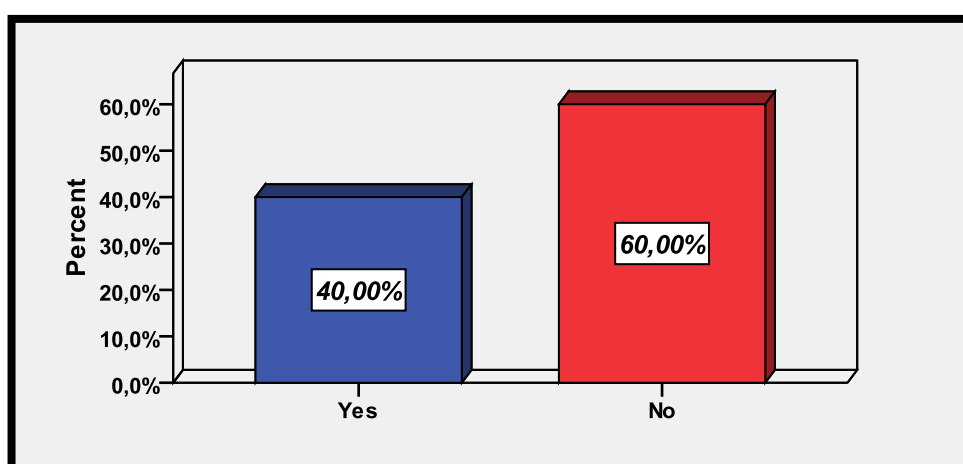
Diagram 07: Teachers' Teaching of the Appropriate Social Skills

From the results it has been perceived that the greater part of the participants (60%) assert that they do not teach their students appropriate social skills before undertaking a CL activity by assuming that it is time consuming and that such skills should be acquired

naturally. One teacher further specifies "*this type of teaching requires a specific training*". On the other hand, very few ones (40%) argue that they do teach this kind of skills without justifying their answers.

Question 12: Do you interfere to help students? If yes, how often do you do it?
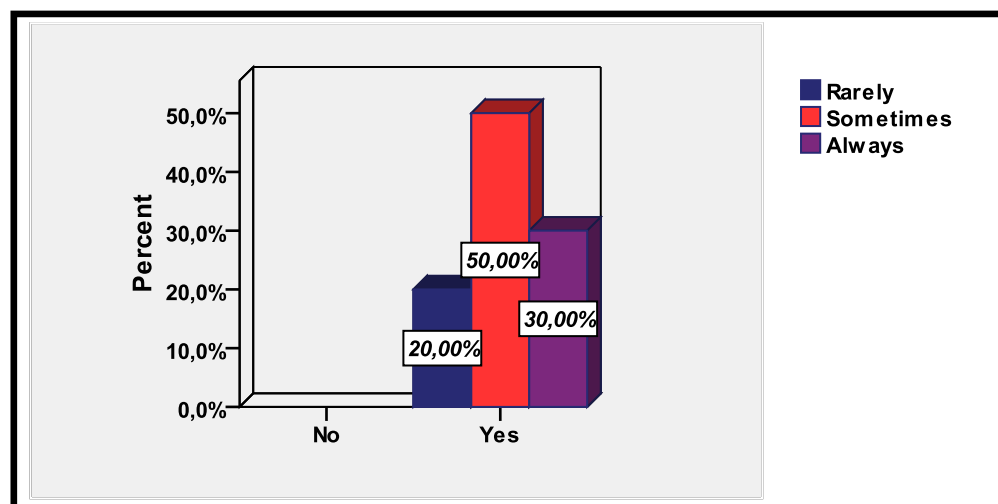
Diagram 08: Teachers' Interference to Help Students and its Occurring Frequency

Concerning the teachers' interference to help their students, the diagram (08) shows that the totality of the respondents (100%) have answered "Yes", they do interfere to help them. Regarding its occurring frequency, half of the teachers (50%) have said that they do it "*sometimes*", others (30%) "*Always*", and 20% "*Rarely*".

➢ **Section four: Problems and Factors Affecting CL Implementation**

Question 13: Do you find difficulties in implementing CL?
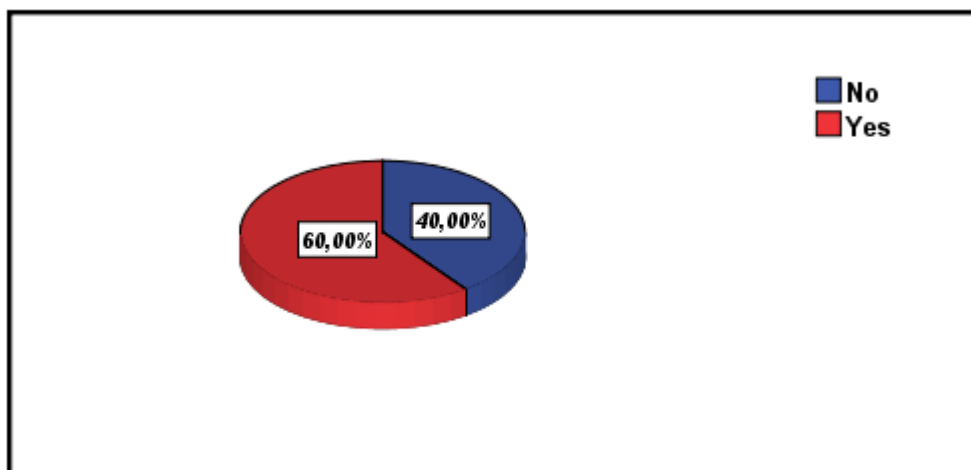
Diagram 09: The Difficulty for Teachers to Implement CL

The diagram (09) denotes that 60% of teachers recognized having encountered difficulties in implementing CL, whereas 40% of the total participants' have provided just the contrary.

If yes, is this due to
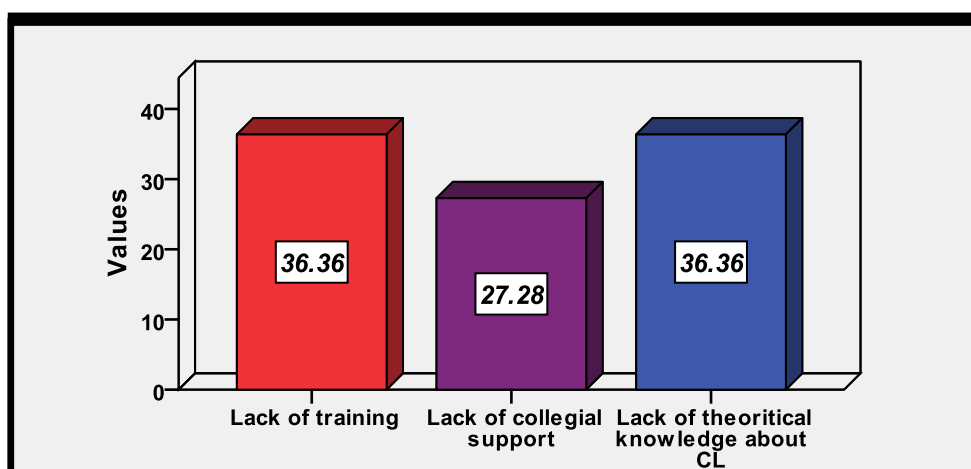
Diagram 10: Factors Affecting CL Implementation

Among those who have answered "Yes" they ascribe the difficulties they experience mainly to the "*lack of training*" and "*the lack theoretical knowledge about CL*" with the same value of "36.36". Concerning the remaining value of "27.28", it goes to the "*lack of collegial support*".

Question 14: Which of the following problems do you usually face when implementing CL?
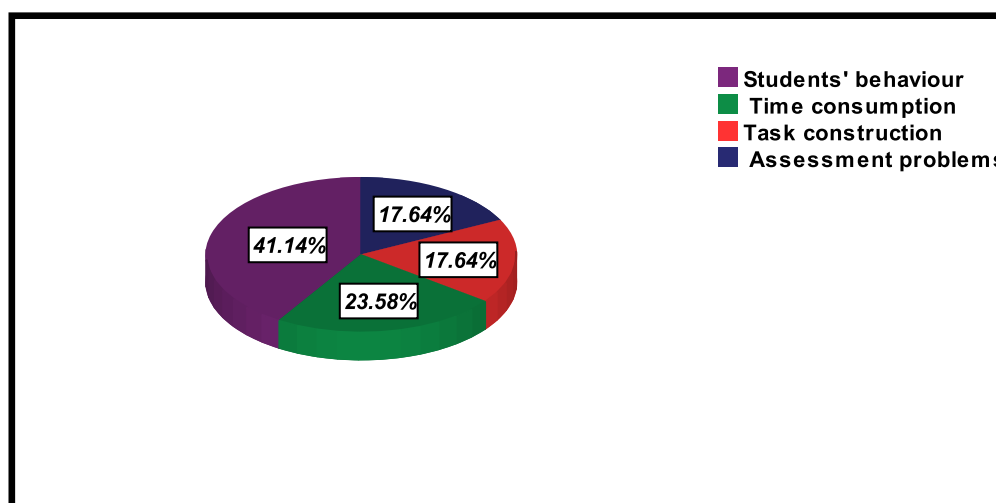
Diagram 11: Teachers Faced Problems when implementing CL

To the specific question of which problems do teachers usually face when implementing CL, "*Students' behaviors*" comes on the top with 41.14%, followed by "*time consumption*" with a percentage of 23.58%, then "*Task construction*" and "*Assessment problems*" with 17.64% each.

Question 15: What kind of instructional CL methods do you use in your classes?

As far as this question is concerned, only three teachers (3/10) have provided precise answers concerning the use of instructional CL methods in their classes. For example two of them claim that they generally use "*Think-Pair-Share*" in their CL lessons. The third one states that she/he sometimes uses "*Jigsaw*" as a CL technique. However, the remaining participants namely seven (7/10) have supplied unrelated answers to the previously asked question. Examples of these answers are "*group, team work and exposes*" and "*monitoring and changing the discussion in class*", etc.

Question 16: Do you encounter difficulties in choosing the appropriate CL method? (If yes, why?)
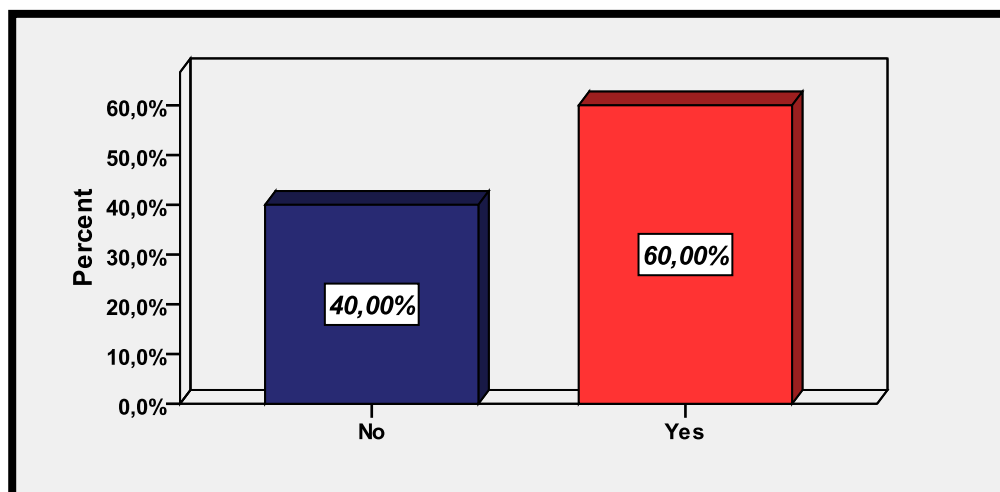
Diagram 12: The Difficulty to Choose the Appropriate CL Method

A quick glimpse at the diagram above shows that 60% of the participants do find difficulties in choosing the appropriate CL method by arguing that it is mainly due to the requirements of meeting specific needs of individual students. Other difficulties such "*time constraints*", "*the nature of the activity itself*" and "*the lack of appropriate materials and resources*" are also signaled. However, the remaining 40% of teachers assert not having this kind of difficulty.

Question 17: While carrying a CL activity, is it difficult for you to both reflect on your own behavior and at the same time manage other classroom issues (e.g. monitoring students' behaviors)? (If yes, why?)
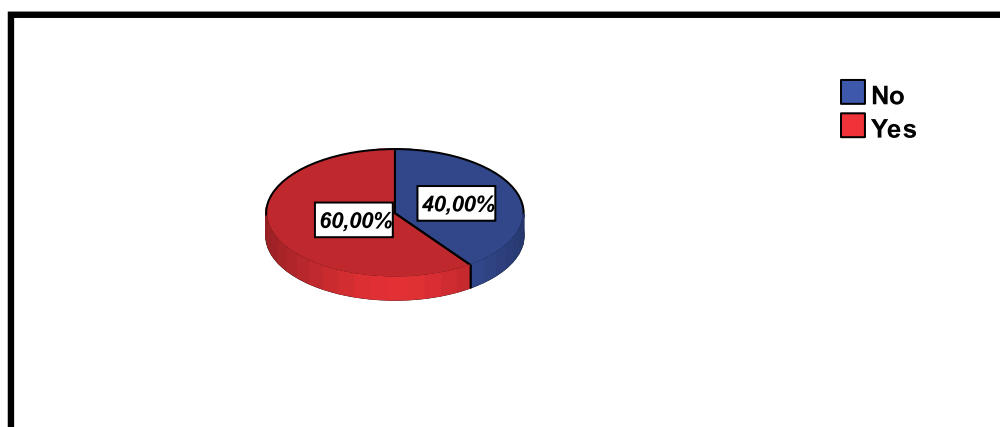
Diagram 13: The Difficulty for Teachers to Simultaneously Reflect on their Behaviors and Manage other Classroom Issues

More than a half of teachers (60%) reveal having a difficulty of simultaneously conducting their self-evaluation and monitoring other classroom issues. This is justified by the risk of losing control over the whole class, especially if it is a large one. The other 40% of teachers (4/10) do not seem to face similar challenge.

Question 18: Do you group your students or give them the chance to group themselves? And how many students do you set in each group?

Concerning the responsibility of the group selection, five teachers (5/10) assert that they use two ways: allowing students to form their groups independently and in some cases the teachers decide on group formation. Moreover, three teachers (3/10) claim that they give the chance to their students to group themselves, whereas the rest of the participants (2/10) affirm that they do it by themselves. When it comes to the "group size" it turns out that the majority of teachers (7/10) set groups of "5-6" students. Two other teachers namely (2/10) prefer groups of four "4". The remaining teacher (1/10), states that "*the whole class is involved in a single and unique group";* hence no grouping is undertaken.

Question 19: Do you feel that your students show more willingness to work in cooperative situations or do they prefer to work in competitive ones where each individual works to achieve better than others?

Relying on the gathered data, it has been noticed that the majority of the respondents which stand for seven teachers (7/10) contend that their students show more willingness to work in cooperative situations where all the group members strive to achieve a common goal. However, three teachers (3/10) point out that in some situations, their students prefer to work competitively where each individual works to achieve better than others.

3.1.2. Results of the Students' Questionnaire

➢ **Section One: Students' Profile**

• **Identification of the Participants in Terms of "Level of Study"**

Categories	Number of Participants	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
First year	10	33,3%	33,3%
Second year	10	33,3%	66,7%
Third year	10	33,3%	
Total	30	100,0%	100,0%

Table 02: Students' Level of Studies

Regarding the students' level of studies, the table above shows that the thirty students (30/30) who represent 100%, are equally divided across the three levels of study; that 33.33% represent each level "*First year*", "*Second year*" and "*Third year*".

➢ **Section Two: Students' Perceptions of CL Implementation**

Question 01: How would you define CL?

On the ability to define CL, it seems that the majority of them (20/30) agree on the fact that CL is a way of interacting and creating social relationships with others. Very few ones that is (7/30) join the first idea, and add that it is a useful way of learning and gaining knowledge by sharing information and exchanging ideas among the group members. The rest of the participants, which corresponds to three students (3/30) go further to specify that this type of learning is described as a "*group work*" in which students work together to achieve certain goals.

Question 02: Do your teachers give you opportunities to work in teams?
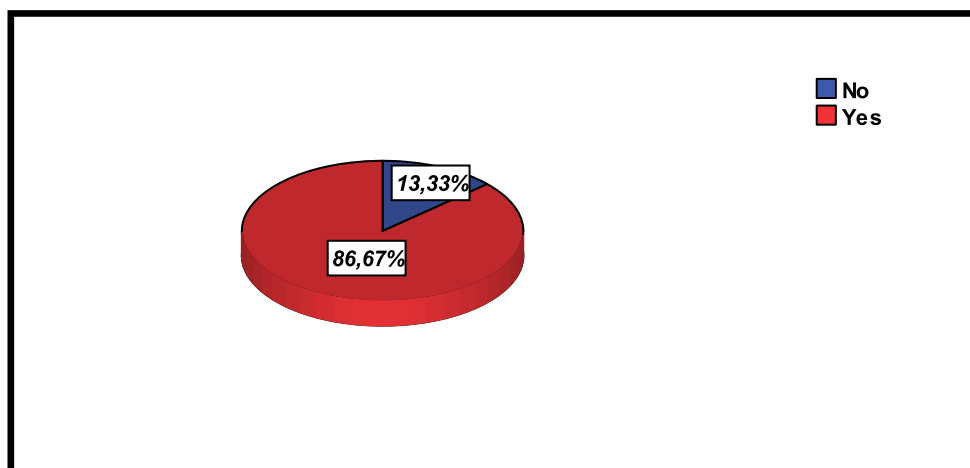
Diagram 14: Students Given Opportunity to Work in Teams

The results gathered from question (02) distinctly show that contrary to the 13.33% who have argued that their teachers do not give them opportunities to work in teams, 86.67% state that they do receive such opportunity.

If yes, how often do they do it?
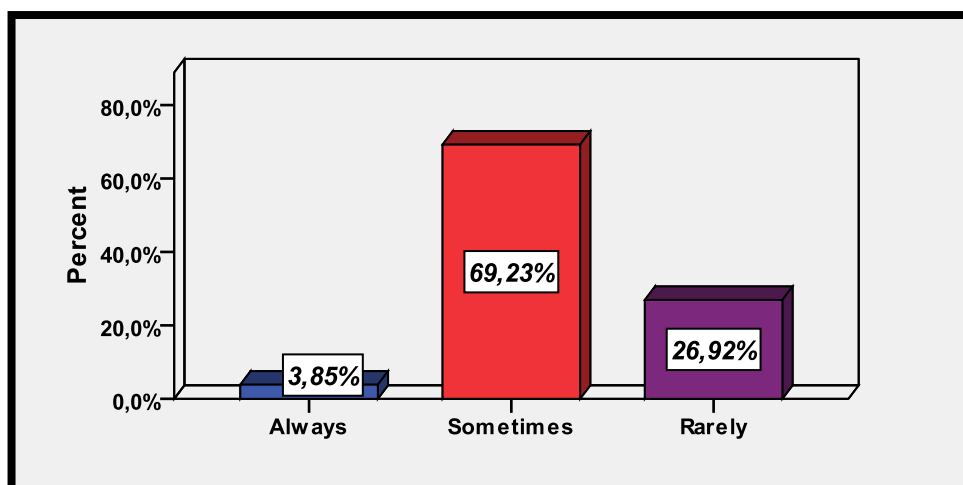
Diagram 15: The Frequency of Team Work

When it comes to the frequency of team work, the majority of students (69.23%) claim that their teachers "*Sometimes*" give them the opportunity to work in teams, others namely 26.92% affirm that they are "*Rarely*" given such an opportunity. The remaining participants who correspond to 3.85% assert that they do it "*Always*".

Question 03: In what way does CL benefit you? It improves your
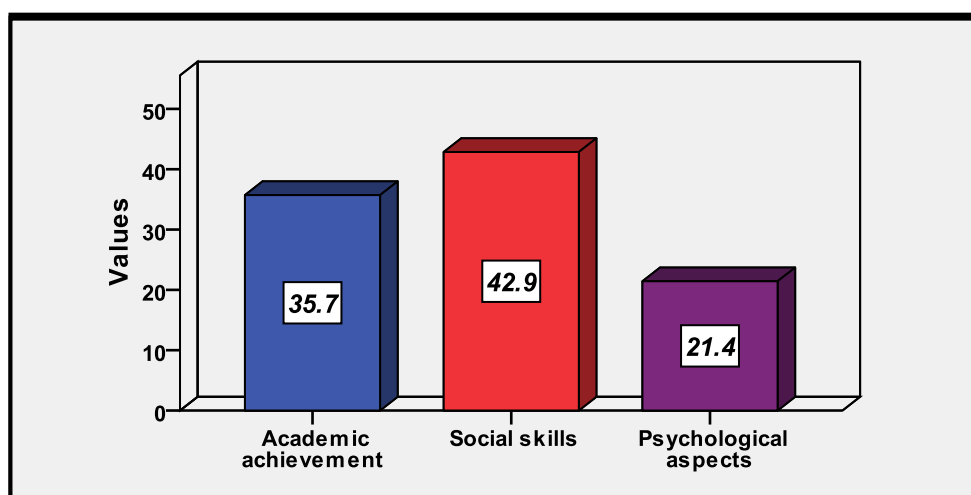
Diagram 16: Students' Views on the Benefits of CL

With regard to the students' perceptions of CL benefits, the statistics of diagram (16) indicate that the "*Social skills*" and "*Academic achievement*" rank first and second with the value of ("42.9" and "35.7" respectively). However, "*Psychological aspects*" comes in the third position with only "21.4".

Question 04: How would you assess your experience (if any), with CL? (Please explain)
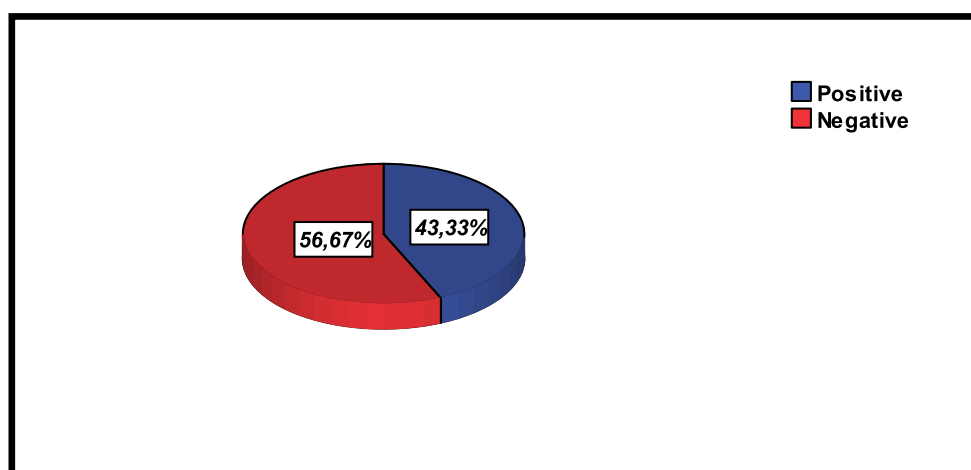
Diagram 17: Students' Evaluation of their CL Experience

A quick look at the diagram above reveals that 43.33% of the participants affirm having a positive experience with CL. They have defended their view by the fact that CL benefits them in many aspects particularly concerning the "Academic", "Social" and "Psychological" ones by helping them develop intellectual capacities, raise their self esteem

and reduce their anxiety. It also gives them the opportunity to interact and create social relationships with other group members. In contrast, 56.67% is the percentage that corresponds to those who reject this view. they justify their answer by highlighting some difficulties that they find when working in groups , which is prone to creating "*conflictual relationships*" resulting from a high degree of "*work pressure*" and the "*desire for some students to dominate others*", thus render their experience with CL negative.

Question 05: Within a CL class, do you prefer to work?
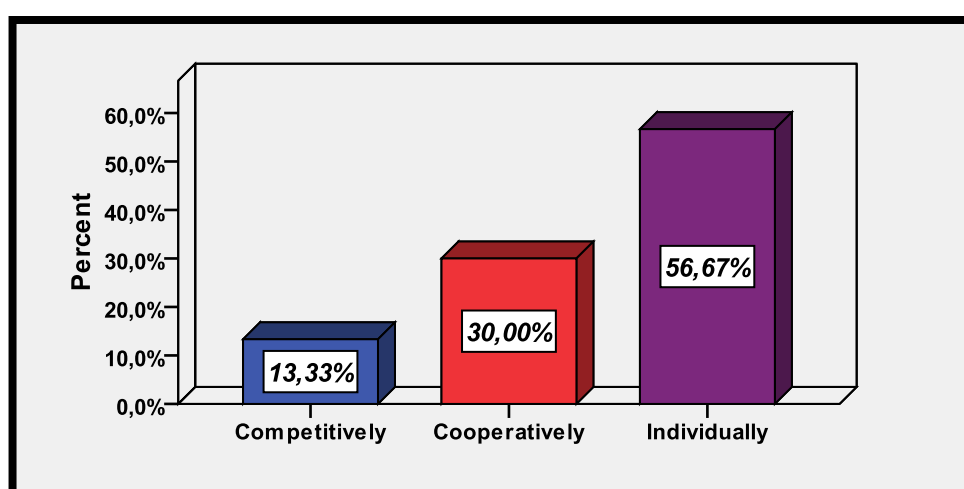
Diagram 18: Students' Work Preference within a CL Class

The findings related to the students' working preference within a CL class, indicate that 56.67% of the respondents prefer to work individually. Another significant percentage of students (30%) enjoy working cooperatively. Only a minority of them; that is, 13.33% have mentioned that they work competitively.

Please justify

Students preferring individual learning explain their choice with the argument that this method enables them to concentrate more and work effectively and also avoid the noisy atmosphere in the classroom. Those choosing CL sustained their preference with the exchange of ideas, improvement of their speaking ability and the opportunity to learn mutually with other group members. However, the students who have answered that they prefer to work

competitively have supported their answer by the fact that competition motivates them to give the best of themselves and achieve better results than the others do.

Question 06: When learning cooperatively, how would you define your teacher's role?

Legend:
- A source of know ledge
- A guide and facilitator of learning

26,67%
73,33%
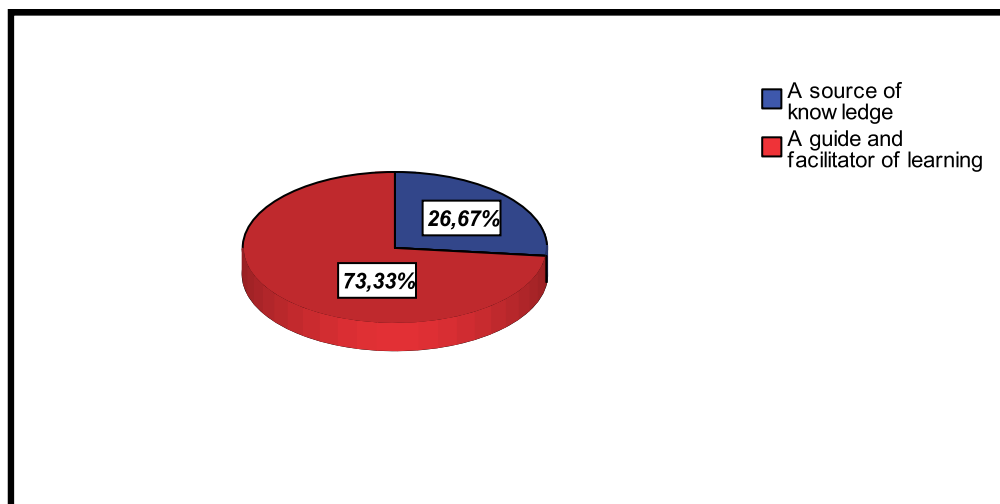
Diagram 19: Students' Views on their Teacher's Role in CL Classes

Concerning the issue of teacher's role in the CL setting, a compelling majority of students (73.33%) have cited that their teacher plays the role of "*A guide and facilitator of learning*". Nevertheless, the rest of the students (26.67%) view his/her role as "*A source of knowledge*".

Question 07: Do you and your group mates share important resources in order to achieve the group's goal?

Legend:
- No
- Yes

33,33%
66,67%
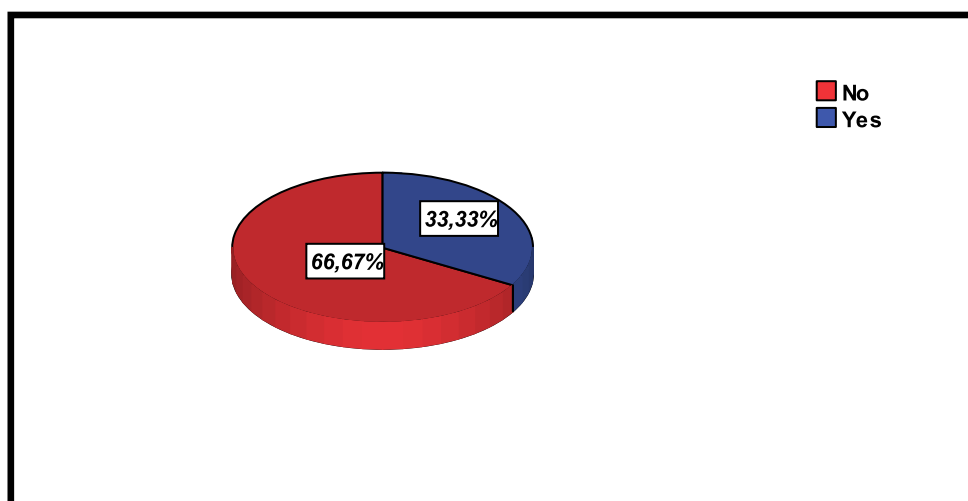
Diagram 20: Group' Sharing of Important Resources

From the given answers, it has been observed that a high portion of students (66.67%) are affirmative; that is, they do share important resources among themselves in order to achieve the group's goal. Only a few of them, corresponding to 33.33% have voiced the opposite.

Question 08: Do you encourage one another to participate and make contributions?
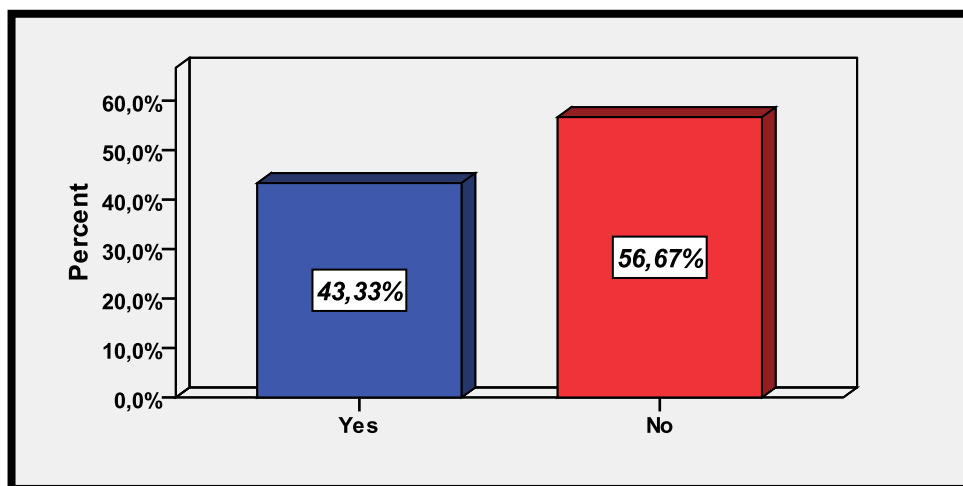
Diagram 21: Students' Mutual Encouragement to Participate and Make Contributions

As exhibited in the above diagram, the answer to the query of mutual encouragement to partake in group work is almost split with those recognizing mutual encouragement (43.33%) and those denying such reciprocal encouragement with a considerable percentage of 56.67%.

Question 09: Do your teachers assign you specific roles before conducting any CL activity?
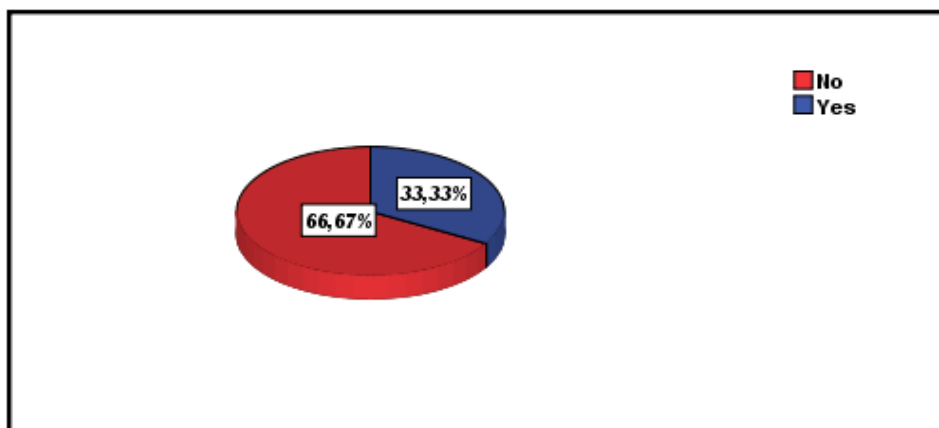
Diagram 22: Students' Views on Being Attributed Roles before CL Undertaking

The pie chart highlights that more than a half of students (66.67%) assert that their teachers do not assign them specific roles before conducting any CL activity. 33.33% is the percentage representing the students who attest that their teachers do assign them roles.

Question 10: Do your teachers teach you important social skills (e.g. negotiating skills and conflict management skills, etc.) before conducting any CL activity?
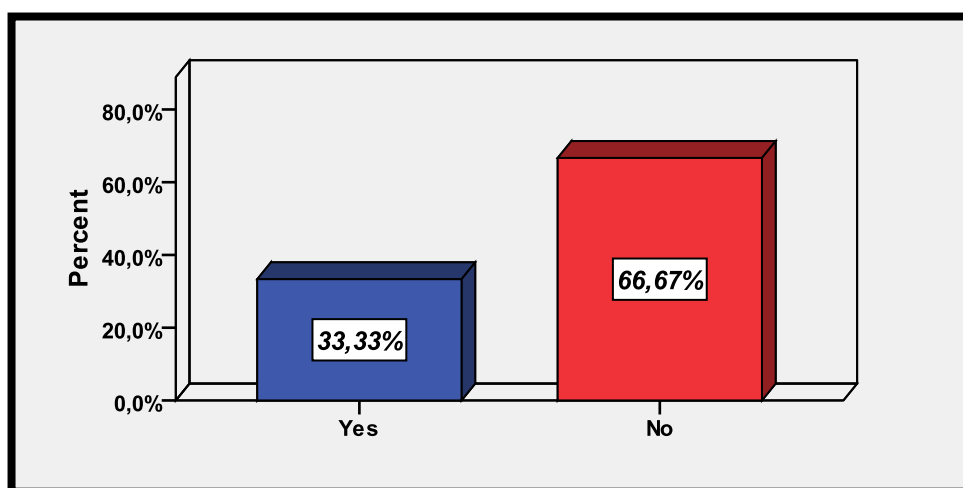
Diagram 23: Students' Views on Being Taught Important Social Skills

When students are asked if their teachers teach them important social skills before conducting a CL activity, the previous diagram evinces that while almost 67% of the

participants have provided a negative reply, very few of them; that is, 33.33% acknowledge that such teaching is provided beforehand.

> ➢ **Section Three: Problems in CL Implementation**

Question 11: Which of the following problems do you usually face when working cooperatively?
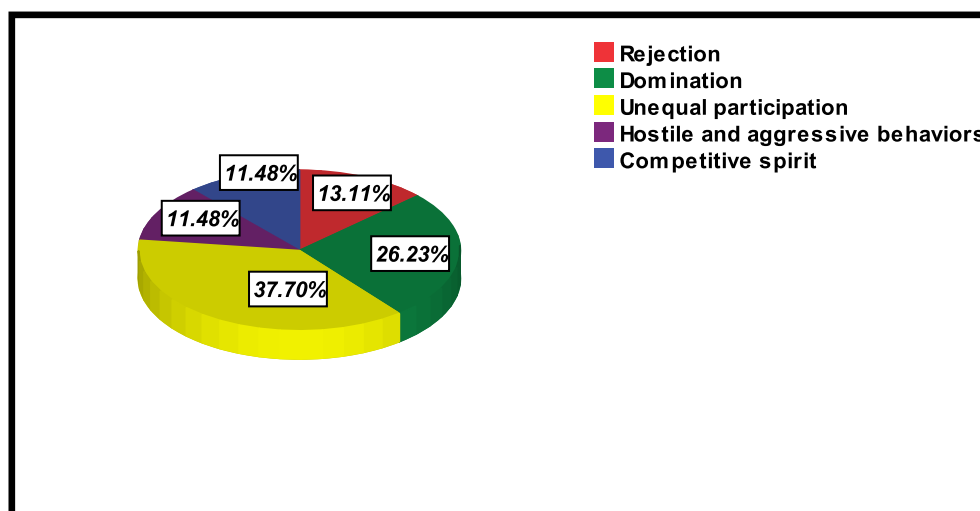
Diagram 24: Students' Faced Problems when Working Cooperatively

It becomes clear from this graph, that students face many problems while working cooperatively. The first problem is the one of "*Unequal participation*" which takes the first position with 37.70%, closely followed by the one of "*Domination*" with 26.23%. In contrast, 13.11% of replies go to the issue of "*Rejection*". Only few informants have opted for each of the challenges "*Competitive spirit*" and "*Hostile and aggressive behaviors*" (11.29%+11.29% respectively).

Question 12: Do your teachers provide you with some preparation before setting you to work cooperatively?
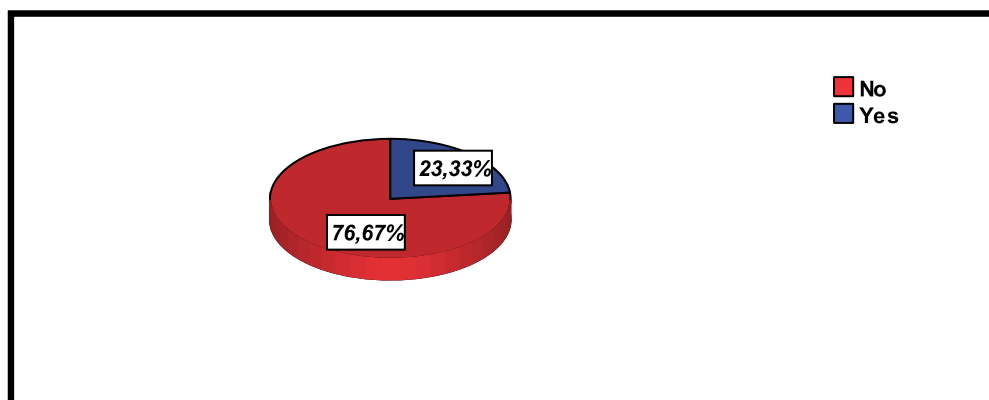
Diagram25: Students' Received Preparation before Working Cooperatively

76.67% of the students have answered "No" ;that is, their teacher do not provide them with some preparation before setting them to work cooperatively. Nevertheless, 23.33% have confirmed receiving such a preparation.

Question 13: Who is responsible for the selection of the group members?
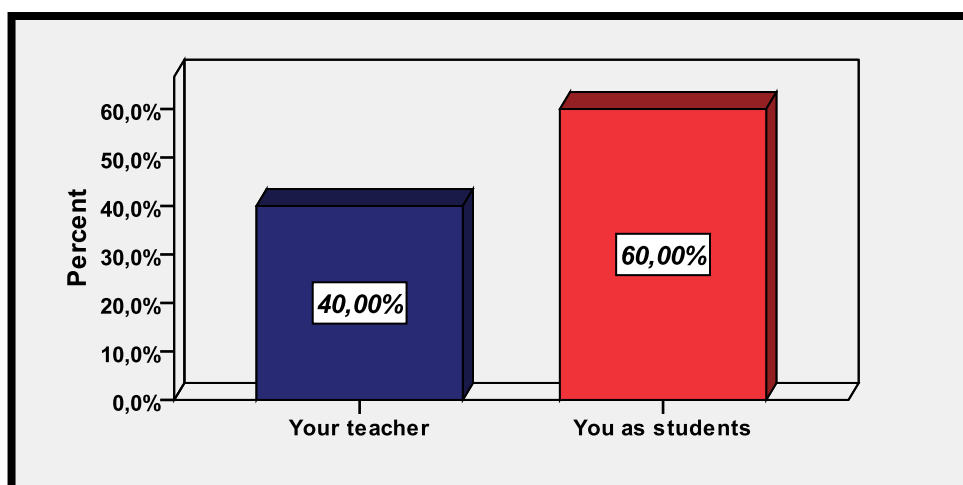
Diagram 26: Responsibility of the Group Selection

With a regard to whether the responsibility of the group selection is given to teachers or students, it has been confirmed from the above diagram that it goes principally to students with a percentage of 60%. Only 40% of the informants perceive it as being the teachers' responsibility.

Conclusion:

This chapter has taken a disproportionate number of pages because of the multitude of graphic displays used in it in an attempt to provide the readers with as much information as needed for a clear exposure of the findings. It is concerned with the presentation of the findings that have been obtained from the analysis of the two questionnaires' answers, which are mainly related to CL implementation. Thus, for a better understanding of these findings, histograms, pie charts and tables have been used. The results that have been reached will be the main concern of the subsequent chapter in which they will be discussed and interpreted in more detail.

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The last chapter in this dissertation, it strives to discuss and interpret the results obtained from the main research instrument, used in the current study namely the "Questionnaire" in the light of previous studies and theoretical notions, in an attempt to bring answers to the research questions and to confirm or refute the hypotheses stated in the general introduction. It is made up of five (5) major sections. The first section deals with the teachers' and the students' perceptions of CL. The second section looks into how teachers implement CL and how do learners experience it. The third one discusses the main difficulties and challenges teachers confront when implementing this pedagogy. As regards section four, it outlines the different factors behind the poor implementation of CL. Finally, the last section highlights the relationship that lies between the factors, problems and the teachers' implementation of CL.

4.1. Discussion of the Teachers' Questionnaire along with the Data Gathered from the Students' Questionnaire

4.1.1. Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of CL

➤ **Teachers' and Students' Conception of CL**

The results that have been reached from the teachers' questionnaire show that the great majority of them can be categorized as having a general understanding of CL. This is perceivable by the answers they have provided in the results section. Despite the teachers' different conceptions of this teaching approach, they all turn around the same sense which is "*the fact of working together in the classroom to achieve a desired goal set by the teacher*". Of the remaining participants, only one is seen as having a close understanding of CL, this can be deduced from his/her answer that is "*encouraging students to work in small groups and using a variety of activities to maximize their learning*". However, the other teachers have

demonstrated limited CL knowledge. One of them claims that "I *don't have much understanding of it; it is something to do with group work*".

When it comes to the students' definition of CL, the findings indicate that almost all the participants have a broad conception of the term and tend to consider it as "*a way of interacting and creating social relationships with others*". *Moreover*, few ones have supplemented the first definition by adding that it is "*a useful way of learning and gaining knowledge by sharing information and exchanging ideas among the group members*". As far as the rest of the respondents describe CL as a group work in which students work together to achieve certain goals.

From the teachers' and the students' definitions of CL, it appears that both of them have not assimilated that CL goes beyond the traditional group work, as they perceive them as being identical (Alice Artzt and Claire Newman, 1997; Johnson, *et al*., 1993; Alfie Kohn, 1998). Yet, according to Roger Olsen and Spencer Kagan (1992: 8, cited in Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers, 2011) "*cooperative learning is a 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*". This implies that traditional group work is different from CL in a sense that this latter requires mainly the presence of "positive interdependence" and "individual accountability" that is translated by the fact that each student is responsible not only for his/her own learning but also for the learning of his/her teammates. This is what seems to be missing in the teachers' and students' definition of the term "Cooperative Learning", because if there is no "positive Interdependence" and "Individual Accountability" this would be considered as "Individualistic learning" and this is what one teacher specifies by saying "*CL may be contrasted with individualistic learning whose aims are competitive*". In this context, Johnson *et al.* (1994) put forward that this type

of learning is a situation in which students work to seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves but not beneficial to the others.

➢ **Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards CL and its Benefits**

This is an extremely important part of the questionnaire because it aims at gathering information about the teachers' and students' attitudes towards CL use. Thus when they are asked about their experience with this approach, it appears that the majority of teachers (70%) and 43.33% of the students hold a positive attitude towards CL use. The remaining 30% of the teachers and 56.67% of the students report having a negative attitude to this method.

With regard to those who have reported positively, they tend to consider it as being an important learning strategy to group work that creates an agreeable atmosphere and increases the students' motivation to learn. That is, "*when students are put together, their willingness to learn is likely to be increased*" as one teacher indicates. Additionally, it is noticeable from the students' answers that CL benefits them in many aspects particularly concerning the "*Academic*", "*Social*" and "*Psychological*" ones. From this, it can be understood to what extent CL is a multidimensional learning strategy with different expectations for both teachers and students. Indeed, when asked about the benefits of CL, the grand value of (34.8) and a considerable value of (35.7) that goes to "*Academic achievement*" indicate that the majority of teachers and an important amount of students consider CL as a method that mainly help learners to maximize their learning, thus improve their academic performance. Similarly Cohen (1994) views CL as an instructional method that enhances learning gains and help reach higher order thinking thanks to the substantive conversations and the active learning that it prompts. This means that when the class is organized in such a way that permits students to work cooperatively on learning tasks, students are more likely to benefit academically as they continuously discuss and debate their understanding of important issues being treated.

The results also reveal that most of the teachers contend that this type of learning (CL) helps the low ability students, who seem to struggle academically, to learn from the high achievers and take the advantage of their learning. As one teacher precise in his answer "*the only way to help students with low abilities is to immerse them in groups/teams*". This is quite appreciable if only the students are grouped in a way to feel that they have an interest in doing the task collectively.

As regards the social benefits, teachers have attributed the same value to the "*Social skills*" as that attributed to the "*Academic achievement*" that is to say the value of (34.8). In the other hand, the students have overestimated it compared to their teachers by giving it the value of (42.9). This implies that in addition to the academic benefits, CL could be presumed to be an important approach that mainly improves the students' social skills. As its systematic use in the classroom provides a safe and intimate atmosphere which promotes communication, it helps students not only to socialize properly but also to have a chance to practise important skills such as negotiating and conflict management skills, etc. through the use of various CL structures. In this respect, Johnson and Johnson (2009) state that CL is a situation, in which learners can practise new skills. However, it is worth noting that from the analysis of the students' answers; specifically those related to the definition of the term CL, it appears that their overestimation of the item "Social skills" is probably due to their miscomprehension of the concept "socialization", as they tend to associate it only with the fact of interacting and creating social relationships with other group members. As one student put it this way "*cooperative learning consists of working and creating new relationships with others*". Yet, in CL the process of socialization is not only restricted to promoting friendly relationships among students but it also represents a suitable way for the development of essential skills which, according to Carter, L (2001), include: communication, listening,

leadership, time building and problem solving skills. These skills inevitably facilitate interpersonal communication.

When it comes to the "*Psychological aspects*", both teachers and students have ranked it with the value of (30.43 and 21.4) respectively. From this, one can deduce that contrarily to individual learning, which generates pressure on students, CL is highly recommended for it reduces their anxiety and raises their self-esteem. Because when students work together especially in a problem-solving activity, they feel positively supported by their teammates and it is known that solutions come much more from the group rather than from individuals.

 In contrast, the participants whose reaction towards CL is negative, manifest a certain apprehension concerning the fact of working in groups by admitting that they find many difficulties when working with others, they also relate these challenges to their working conditions such as "*work pressure*", "*conflictual relationships within the group», «domination problems"* and the *"resistance of some students to work".* This makes them feel less confident and resistant to work in groups. As for the teachers who join students on their negative position towards CL, they sustain their attitude by arguing that its implementation is difficult as it requires some special training and a considerable amount of theoretical knowledge, thus creates on them a kind of resistance and reluctance to embrace such an approach. Indeed, in order to get a clear idea about the various difficulties that could be encountered while using CL, a detailed analysis will be presented later on in this chapter.

To sum up, from what has been discussed above it is possible to say that both the academic, social and psychological benefits are the main gains of CL. This is what motivates teachers to implement this approach and makes them view it as an effective learning strategy. Therefore, it is clear that on the teachers' side, the first hypothesis claiming "teachers and students view CL as an effective learning strategy that plays an important role in developing both the academic, social and psychological aspects" has been confirmed. However, as each

53

teaching approach has advantages and disadvantages when put into practice, it is therefore quite normal that CL has also disadvantages during its implementation. This explains why students perceive it differently from their teachers; that is to say in a negative way mainly because of the different problems and difficulties they face during its application, and that despite all the benefits they think to draw from it. From this it can be deduced that the aforementioned hypothesis has been refuted on the students' side.

4.1.2. CL and Teachers Practice

➢ The Identification of the Basic Elements of CL

It is predictable from the findings displayed in diagram (5) that the teachers who informed the questionnaire have selected and estimated the five items ("Positive Interdependence", "Group Processing", and "Promotive Interaction", "Individual Accountability", and "Social Skills") with different rates. This may have only one explanation; teachers see them as being major elements for CL implementation to be effective. That is, from their positive perception of these five main components, one can deduce that they probably put them into practice to be in line with the prerequisites of the conduct of the CL lesson. In order to check teachers' practice of CL, it is necessary to take, in the following paragraphs, a detailed analysis of the actual use of the CL basic elements identified by Johnson and Johnson (2009) in the teachers' answers along with those of the students that have emerged from the two questionnaires.

In fact, as already mentioned in the literature review, teachers should feel in an obligation to understand these essential elements of cooperation if they are to implement CL successfully. Otherwise, there would be what is called clumsy implementation, which mainly generates high risks that teachers adopt techniques and strategies that do not fit their learning objectives, this inevitably create negative outcomes in their classes. In this regard Johnson and Johnson (2009: 366) maintain that "*five variables mediate the effectiveness of cooperation:*

54

positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, the appropriate use of social skills, and group processing".

- **Positive Interdependence**

A quick look at the results indicates that the percentage of "*Positive Interdependence*" outnumbers the rest of the elements with 27.59%. Put simply, positive interdependence is the main element that teachers consider the most while implementing CL. Indeed, positive interdependence refers to a situation, in which students are positively correlated in a sense that each individual needs the assistance of the other teammates to perform well within the group. In this respect, Johnson and Johnson (2009) contend that positive interdependence occurs when group members realize that they are cooperatively linked in such a way that the contribution of each member is important towards the attainment of their joint goal. However, when teachers are asked about the way they promote positive interdependence, it turns out that it is not the totality of teachers who know how to do it, and this is made noticeable in some of their answers. For instance one teacher says that he does it by simply "*creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom*". Another one suggests that it is just a fact of "*giving students tasks to be done together*". Yet, in order for teachers to promote positive interdependence, it is necessary for them to know how to provide an environment in which students work cooperatively to achieve their shared goal; principally through the attribution of roles, using group rewards or dividing the work so that everyone will be held accountable of his/her own learning. This has been confirmed by Johnson and Johnson (1984) who claim that for a successful establishment of positive interdependence, five group parameters should be considered: goal, reward, task, role and resource interdependence. Moreover, The difficulty that some teachers find in promoting positive interdependence is also felt in the students' behaviors since the majority of them (66.67%) express an unwillingness to share important resources between them (See diagram 20). Evidence of such claim is visible in the students'

answers when questioned about their working preferences where 56.67% of them manifest their desire to work individually rather than cooperatively (see diagram 18). Also, this is in complete paradox with the majority of teachers (7/10) perceiving CL as a preferable learning method by their students.

In sum, it can be deduced that all the above discussed results come to confirm what Spencer Kagan (2007:1) has said about positive interdependence, that is "*despite the power of positive interdependence to improve many educational outcomes- knowingly or not- many teachers create situations of negative interdependence. Understanding positive interdependence gives us the power to make learning more enjoyable and effective*".

- **Group Processing**

It is the second major element of CL that closely follows positive interdependence with the percentage of 24.14% (see diagram 5). As stated by Johnson and Johnson (2009) group processing exists when the students evaluate and reflect on their actions to decide about what actions to pursue or change. In addition to this, they stipulate that learners processing should be done under the observation and follow up of their instructors, who are supposed to ensure the progress of the students' work, observe how well they use their assigned skills, analyze the problems they may face and provide them with feedback (ibid). Relying on the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, it appears that the totality of them (100%) are aware of the concept of group processing as they have answered that they all interfere to help students when working cooperatively. More precisely, half of them (50%) have further indicated that they do it "*Sometimes*" instead of doing it "*Always*" or "*Rarely*" as displayed in diagram (8). This implies that this category of teachers act mainly as guides and facilitators, which has been subsequently confirmed by the majority of teachers and students (80%, 73.33%) respectively, who maintain that the role of teachers in CL classes consist of "*A guide and facilitator of learning*" rather than "*A source of knowledge*" (see diagrams 4 and 19).

Sharan (2010) supports this view by saying that contrary to the traditional classroom; where teachers only impart knowledge to their students, in CL classes teachers tend to shift the dynamics of the classroom by acting as facilitators.

Considering the rest of teachers (20%), who perceive their role as "*A source of knowledge*" are probably those who "*Always*" interfere to help their students when working cooperatively (see diagram 4). This can be explained in that they may have a certain difficulty to delegate authority to their students and thus lose their principal role in the classroom which consists of the only provider of knowledge.

- **Promotive Interaction**

It is the third major element of CL that is highly selected by teachers with a percentage of 20.69%. As previously mentioned in the literature, promotive interaction involves individuals supporting and assisting each other to learn and complete the assigned task (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). Yet, this is not what has been found in the department of English at MMUTO, as the analysis of the students' responses to the question asking about whether they encourage one another to participate and make contributions has revealed that the majority of learners (56.67%) have answered that they do not do it (see diagram 21). This denial may be explained by the fact that the majority of teachers have failed to not only promote positive interdependence but also to establish individual accountability despite their indispensability to foster promotive interaction among students when working cooperatively. Therefore, in the absence of these critical elements, there is what is called "*oppositional interaction*", where students are believed to have a competitive spirit that is translated by the fact that they do everything to succeed at the expense of their teammates; by making sure to impede their efforts for preventing them from completing their work. Indeed this is what Johnson and Johnson (2009) refer to as "*Negative interdependence*".

- **Individual Accountability**

Is another prevailing element of CL identified by Johnson and Johnson (2009), in which the team success is imperatively dependent on the feeling of responsibility of each team member for his/her own learning and performance. Nonetheless, the results indicate that "*Individual Accountability*" only ranks fourth with the percentage of 13.79%. In other words, despite the importance of this element only a minority of teachers take it into consideration when implementing this pedagogical approach. As this study progresses to see the extent of the teachers' understanding of individual accountability, a question has been asked to them "do you assign your students specific roles before conducting any CL activity?". The results are surprising considering that the majority of teachers (80%) do so; they assign roles to their students (see diagram 6). This undeniably creates a certain paradox as they do not attach much importance to incorporating the aforementioned element that seems to be in direct relation with role attribution through which students are not only aware of their part of work but also responsible of it.

It is worth mentioning, that the outcomes obtained from the students' questionnaire are not in conformity with the findings derived from the teachers one. From the diagram (22) in the previous chapter, it is noticeable that the majority of students (66.67%) affirm that their teachers do not assign them roles while these latter pretend the opposite. This does not reflect what Kagan and Kagan (2009) assert, that roles should be assigned to students whenever they work as a team because they are important for the creation of a strong interdependence between team members. In so doing, all the students are more likely to participate and make an essential contribution to the accomplishment of the work. Otherwise, if no roles are attributed, this certainly creates propitious moments for students to socialize and for "social loafing" to occur.

- **Interpersonal Skills**

The results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire reveal that most of them (60%) are not aware of the importance of "*Interpersonal Skills*" element, as they have only estimated it with a percentage of 13.79%. This is observable in the answers they have provided. For instance, one teacher states that "*this skill should be developed naturally through work with others*". Another participant answers that "*it is time consuming*". So, considering the given justifications, one can deduce that teachers do not devote time to the teaching of these social skills (e.g. monitoring skills, conflict management skills, etc) despite their pertinence. This does not corroborate what Johnson and Johnson (2009: 369) assert:

> Interpersonal and small group skills form the basic nexus among individuals, and if individuals are to work together productively and cope with the stresses and strains of doing so, they must have a modicum of these skills. Group members must have or be taught the interpersonal and small group skills needed for high quality cooperation.

As mentioned in the quotation, a successful teamwork requires that team members should be taught and use the appropriate and needed skills for an effective group functioning and most importantly to be able to deal with the tensions that can arise while working together within the group.

The results that have been obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, which indicate that the majority of them do not teach their students important social skills are similar with what has been found in the students' one. That is, 66.67% of the students also deny this fact (see diagram 23).

From the forgoing discussion, it is possible to conclude that teachers in the department of English at MMUTO have failed to put CL into practice. One possible reason is that these teachers do not know what CL really is, given that they do not manage to successfully employ the five basic elements of CL which is evident in the answers they have provided along with

the students' ones. This result diverges with Johnson and Johnson (2009), who do not discriminate any of these items. On the contrary, they consider all the five components as essential to the effectiveness of CL. To affirm that this implementation is not successful, one must first look if its implementation poses problems for teachers as well as their students. If so, what are the potential factors behind this poor implementation? This is what the next part of this chapter will be treating.

4.1.3. Problems Affecting CL Implementation

This part of the questionnaire contributes to the advancement of knowledge about the main challenges and difficulties that teachers in the department of English at MMUTO may face when attempting to implement CL. Indeed, despite the fact that teachers admit the greater advantages of CL on students, when it comes to its implementation the majority of them (60%) often confront a lot of difficulties, which in turn will be covered in the subsequent paragraphs.

➢ **Students' Behaviors**

Managing students' challenging behaviors effectively, is one of the most difficult impediments to CL use that teachers have chosen with a considerable percentage of 41.14% as it is shown in diagram (11). One possible explanation is that these behavioral problems often impede the progress of the teachers' work, but especially hinder the group's harmony as the actions of some group members negatively affect the others. To better understand what kind of problems teachers encounter, a question has been asked to students concerning the possible problems they usually face when working cooperatively, as they are the principal concerned with this kind of experience (see diagram 24).

• **Unequal Participation**

The findings deriving from the students' questionnaire reveal that "*Unequal participation*" is the main challenge identified by students with a percentage of 37.70%. This

estimation indicates that group members do not equally participate since there are always some students who do not contribute to the fulfillment of the assigned task, which makes an extra work for the others during the attended session. In the same vein, Kagan and Kagan (2009: 356) affirm that "*one of the biggest pitfalls for cooperative projects is unequal participation: one student or some students work extra hard on the projects, while the others do little*". The problem of having resistant students may be a question of motivation or a lack of interest of these latter. This kind of situation is referred to as "*social loafing*", from which unhelpful group dynamics results, as already mentioned in the literature.

From the previous result one can deduce that the aforementioned problem is certainly due to the fact that teachers did not succeed to incorporate individual accountability that is supposed to allocate responsibilities equally among students when working together. Otherwise, they will take the advantage of this situation and go in a free-ride.

- **Domination**

The data gathered also revealed that "*Domination*" is the other challenge that students mainly encounter when working cooperatively. This problem means the balance of power, in which not all the individuals are given an equal voice within the group. With regard to this Kagan and Kagan (2009) say that domination is a situation in which the dominator, who can be either a high or a low achiever, has only one intention which is the fact of controlling the group in a drastic way so that to dominate his/her teammates by making all the decisions without taking into consideration the ones of the others.

- **Rejection**

Another problem that seems to deter the smooth running of the group work is "*Rejection*". This latter refers to the act committed by certain students to put aside or squarely refuse their teammates in a way to ignore even their existence within the group. Kagan and Kagan (2009) share this view. This issue may be ascribed to one reason, is that in the group

there are always students with weak personalities such as shy, passive and academically handicapped students, who are often dominated and rejected by those who have strong personalities. From this it becomes evident that domination and rejection are related in a way that they cohabit and coexist together to the point that the former automatically leads to the latter.

- **Hostile and Aggressive Behaviors and Competitive Spirit**

These two remaining problems with which students also struggle are equally estimated as it is shown in the result chapter (see diagram 24). With regard to hostility, Kagan and Kagan (2009) assert that individuals should accept the reality stating that conflicts are something natural, which frequently occur in CL classes. This is what probably makes students subject to hostility within the group by undergoing aggressive behaviors such as bullying, embarrassment and domination on the part of their teammates. Competition in the other side, refers to the situation in which students are an integral part of one and the same team but who nevertheless do everything to go beyond and distinguish themselves from the others, because they have what is called the "*Competitive Spirit*" as previously discussed when the point of "*Promotive Interaction*" has been treated.

Relying on the previously discussed results, it becomes clear that the main reason for these behavioral problems is the teachers' failure to prepare their students before setting them to work cooperatively. This is evidenced by the students' answers, in which 76.67% (see diagram 25) have reported that they did not receive any preparation. Yet, this latter seems very important so that to initiate students to effectively cooperate with others by telling them what they are supposed to do and how they are expected to do it. Put simply, students should be taught important social skills so that to know how to behave and interact within the group and should be assigned specific roles to avoid any kind of social loafing. Thus, this research

reached analogous results with Gillies and Boyle' (2010) study in which it has been revealed that students' preparation is something primordial to work cooperatively together.

➢ Time Consumption

Apart from the behavioral problems, teachers also rated "*Time Consumption*" as one of the major challenges in implementing CL with the percentage of 23.58%. Indeed, time constraints have been cited by many teachers as being a barrier; seeing that they are likely to spend a lot of time in rearranging the classroom to become conductive for cooperative structures or just due to the fact that they struggle with getting students in groups. Kagan and Kagan (2009) go on to say that a considerable amount of time is required for any successful CL design.

➢ Task Construction

The questionnaire results further point out that some teachers are seen to face difficulties when it comes to designing significant tasks to their students, that is they have selected "*Task Construction*" as being an obstacle with a percentage of 17.64%. This possibly comes down to the fact that teachers find it difficult to respect all the principles that seem necessary for an infallible task design, specifically in relation to the statement of a clear group goal, promoting positive interdependence in addition to promotive interaction, ensuring individual accountability and students organization (in terms of size, heterogeneity, etc.). This result goes hand in hand with what has been found in the early research. Indeed, Gillies and Boyle (2010) testify that teachers often struggle to design tasks within CL classes since they are required to take into consideration several components for its construction. Furthermore, a study by Elise Ruys; Hilde Van Keer and Antonia Aelterman (2012), which analyzed preparation of collaborative activities of pre-service teachers, have demonstrated a certain negligence on the part of teachers regarding the organization of the group work.

It is also believed that in CL classes, each kind of task must be advanced by a well defined method. So, what is really needed from the teacher is to be intelligent in choosing the adequate method because the success of any lesson depends on the harmony between the matter to be learned and the appropriate method. But according to the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, it turns out that the majority of them; seven (7/10) teachers are not aware of these instructional methods, That's why they do not use them during their CL implementation as clearly evidenced by their responses in which they associate these methods to "*group, team work and exposes*" and "*monitoring and changing the discussion in class*". From what has been said, it is quite normal to deduce that these educators encounter several difficulties in choosing the right method. Evidence of such claim is perceivable in diagram (12) in which 60% of the respondents assure that they encounter such a difficulty. Thus, for not having to face this kind of difficulty it is important to have a profound knowledge of these structures. This is what Kagan and Kagan (2009: 111) certify by claiming that "*once a teacher masters a cooperative learning structure, she/he finds it easy to create a range of successful cooperative learning activities*". Following this idea, despite the fact that the remaining three (3) teachers have affirmed that they use two of these instructional methods namely "*Think Pair-Share*" and "*Jigsaw*", it appears that they have a restricted knowledge of the other existing ones. Yet, it is quite important to consider them all as each of which develops precise educational goals. In this vein Kagan and Kagan (2009) argue that for a teacher to be efficient in CL classes and attain a wide range of learning objectives, a specific knowledge of each structure is required on their part as each of them performs at least one function.

➢ **Assessment Problems**

Results also denote that teachers are often confronted with "*Assessment Problems*" which has been equally estimated with the problem of "*Task Construction*", that is with the

percentage of 17.64%. It is true that content is learned better with CL groups. However, it is difficult for some educators to assess their students' learning perhaps because they tend to get lost between two types of assessment, especially that of "individual" and the one of "group". But, the latter is perceived as being essentially unfair since it tends to attribute the efforts made by each individual to the whole group by putting the group forward at the expense of the individuals. This is what Kagan and Kagan (2009) attest by saying that group grades must never be used since they are flagrantly unfair.

➢ **Problems of Management**

One final problem regarding the initial challenges to CL implementation, which has risen from the teachers' open ended questions, is the lack of effective "*Classroom Management*". This issue which the majority of teachers (60%) (see diagram 13) encounter is likely to be explained by the fact that they may find it difficult to reflect on their behaviors and at the same time manage other classroom issues which may lead them to lose control over their classes. This view is shared by one participant who has maintained that "*it is difficult, for I often lose the control of my classroom*". Thus, one can infer that this majority is struggling to manage their classes in a correct way since in the English department of MMUTO, the classes count a lot of students. So, to simplify the task the majority of teachers tend to create groups of 5-6 students when it comes to team building, as their answers demonstrated so well when asked about this fact, seeing that it is easier to manage 5 to 6 groups rather than 10 for example. This automatically goes against what Kagan and Kagan (2009) say, to maximize participation and facilitate interaction, it is ideal for teachers to create teams of four students rather than of five or six. If not, it is clear that instead of solving a problem they create others more difficult to manage such as: noise, time wasting and students' behaviors (e.g. socializing, free-riding and conflictual relationships, etc). Because educators cannot assume

65

everything at ones; manage students' behaviors and at the same time dispense their course in a correct way by paying attention to their own behaviors.

Moreover, in a response to a question asking about the responsible of group formation the majority of teachers (7/10) and a significant percentage of students (60%) have said that it is mainly the task of these latter. In this kind of situation, students take the opportunity and from groups on the basis of their affinities, gender (i.e. boys with boys/ girls with girls) and their academic level (i.e. High achievers associate themselves with students, who have the same abilities, whereas the low achievers take the advantage of this situation to be with high achieving students), which is therefore one of the major reasons for all the previously mentioned problems especially those related to behaviors. For this reason, it is up to the teacher to make sure of the group composition by establishing "group heterogeneity" that is an important characteristic of CL as previously mentioned in the literature review. Where it has been stated that teachers should consider certain aspects (i.e. level, gender and so on) so that to assure heterogeneity of CL groups, otherwise it will be a chaos. Such claim is likely to prove Kagan and Kagan's (2009: 189) assertion which suggests that "*without good management techniques in place, the classroom can blow up! Cooperative management is the control that channels energy to productive learning*".

To sum up, based on the data gathered from the two questionnaires regarding the problems that both teachers and students of the department of English at MMUTO encounter when using CL, it is possible to say that both of them face many problems. Besides, the results also indicate that the identified problems that teachers mainly encounter are various and diversified including, students' behaviors, time consumption, task construction, assessment, and management problems. One can deduce that the fourth hypothesis, which states that there are several difficulties encountered when implementing CL, is corroborated as well.

66

4.1.4. Factors Affecting CL Implementation

This part will shed light on the potential factors that may have obstructed teachers from implementing CL effectively.

➢ **Lack of Training**

The results have reported that lack of training is a major factor behind the teachers' failure to practice CL in classroom instruction, so it has been evaluated with a considerable percentage of 36.36% (see diagram 10). From this, it can be understood that teachers of the department of English at MMUTO did not receive any training about CL use. However, the extent to which training affects teachers' knowledge and implementation of CL is considerable and of a great importance in the teaching context. This finding therefore sustains the previous results of Seid, M (2012) suggesting that the absence of training prevents teachers to have a valuable guidance and understanding of what CL really is.

➢ **Lack of Theoretical Knowledge about CL**

The outcomes also reveal that teachers have rated the "*Lack of theoretical knowledge about CL*" as another main obstructive motive, with a percentage of 36.36%, which prevents them from implementing CL effectively. What is expressed here is that teachers have a limited knowledge concerning the adequate way of using CL inside their classes. This point therefore emphasizes the idea that teachers should possess as much information as possible about this approach to successfully implement it. In this concern, Brody and Nancy Nagel (cited in Cohen *et al*. 1998: 37) posit that "*when teachers fail to understand the theory underlying a particular method they are likely to misapply the method and/or to abandon it when problems occur*".

➢ **Lack of Collegial Support**

Apart from the above named factors, some teachers have ascribed their failure to CL implementation to the "Lack of collegial support" (27.28%) as an inhibiting factor. Indeed, without the support and the valuable advice of other teachers, who may have used this approach during their teaching process, those who are about to use it for the first time may be lost. From this, it is expected that through this supportive manner, teachers are more likely to be effective in their way of implementing this strategy. This result shows parallelism with what Mark Brubacher (cited in Cohen *et al*. 2004) stating that unless novice teachers have the opportunity to work with teacher trainers who serve them as a support and provide them with an increased assistance, they will have a difficulty in implementing CL during their classes.

To conclude, the data gathered throughout this section have revealed the existence of several factors that may have paralyzed teachers and prevented them from properly implementing CL. They include of teachers' lack of training, lack of collegial support and lack of theoretical knowledge about CL. It is then obvious to deduce that the results are in agreement with the suggested hypothesis, which states that the poor implementation of CL is the result of various factors.

4.2. The Relationship that lies between the Factors, Problems, and the Teachers' Implementation of CL

In general, the data gathered throughout this study have revealed that teachers of the department of English at MMUTO have manifested a limited knowledge on CL through their failure to even differentiate it from a mere formation of groupings. The reality on the ground can be allocated to two major reasons, which are their unsuccessful employment of the fundamental elements and characteristics of CL, and the presence of some factors which could aggravate their poor knowledge of this teaching method. Considering these two reasons teachers are likely to encounter a lot of problems that challenge their proper implementation of CL, and this in spite of their many years of teaching experience and their high degree of

study as displayed in table (1). Thus, it is difficult to imagine that these teachers know and implement the essential elements of CL in the presence of the pre-stated limiting conditions. Therefore, the extent to which teachers use CL in their classes is not in accordance with what has been advocated in the literature. From this, it is quite logical to understand that the third advanced hypothesis has been refuted.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the discussion and the interpretation of the different results reached through the two questionnaires, in an attempt to bring answers to the fundamental research questions and confirm or refute the formulated hypotheses. In sum, the analysis of the data gathered through this study has revealed that CL cannot be decreed or improvised; it requires a fairly strict framework, so teachers cannot take advantage of its benefits if their acquaintance with its principles is limited.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This study is intended to shed light on one of the most important methods of learning in the field of education termed "Cooperative Learning". More specifically, it is aimed at providing defined answers surrounding the main difficulties and challenges teachers are confronted with when implementing this method. It has taken licence students and their teachers of the department of English at MMUTO as a case to carry out the study.

To bring answers to the research questions formulated in the general introduction, this study relies on two distinct but interrelated theoretical frameworks namely; David Johnson and Roger Johnson' Social Interdependence Theory (2009) as well as Spencer Kagan and Miguel Kagan' Cooperative Learning theory (2009) as theoretical plinths. Moreover, this research has adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis. To gather data, two questionnaires have been addressed to both thirty (30) License students and ten (10) of their teachers in the aforementioned department. For the sake of analyzing the quantitative data, a software package known as SPSS has been used while the QCA has served to analyze the open-ended questions of the two questionnaires.

After adopting an exploratory research based on two questionnaires, designed to both teachers and students, this research has resonated the effectiveness of CL when it comes to the majority of teachers (70%), whereas on the students side it is perceivable that the majority of them that is 56.67% view this approach in a negative way because they experience a lot of difficulties when working together in groups.

Additionally, the results obtained also indicate that teachers lack sufficient knowledge concerning CL implementation as they have not considered the five basic elements of CL suggested by Johnson and Johnson (2009) namely; "*Positive Interdependence*", "*Individual Accountability*", "*Promotive Interaction*", "*The Appropriate Use of Social Skills*" and "*Group*

Processing" as well as its main characteristics. Therefore, the extent to which CL is implemented in the department of English at MMUTO is found to be low.

From what has been said, it is deducible that the majority of teachers lack theoretical knowledge about CL implementation. In addition to this, the results further indicate the existence of two other obstructive factors which impede the proper implementation of CL notably, "*Lack of training*" and "*Lack of collegial support*". Considering these factors, the results ultimately demonstrate that 60% of teachers encounter a great deal of difficulties and challenges when implementing this pedagogical approach. They include of students' behaviors, time consumption, task construction, assessment, and management problems.

Finally, another unexpected finding of this study is the students' preference for individual learning in a socially collectivist society due to endemic behaviors and the absence of positive interdependence of the great majority of students, which are perceived as the main problems hampering CL as a teaching method, from which teachers mainly suffer.

To meet its objectives and be in line with its rationale, this study puts forward the following suggestions deriving directly from the research analysis:

- To provide a comprehensive training scheme to endow teachers with the necessary skills and procedures to be able to implement CL as a method of teaching.

- To coordinate efforts through frequent teachers meetings and peer observation.

- To prioritize the development of social skills as a basis.

- To ensure that teachers play a pivotal role in conducting CL activities by assigning specific roles to students.

- To introduce a scheme enabling teachers to tackle difficulties as they arise.

- To make sure group size no longer than four (4) members in order to generate positive group dynamics.

71

- To always take into consideration students' feedback in term of teaching and learning experience.

- To organize students groups in such a way to prevent "free-riding" by stating a system of rewards within groups, and set specific guidelines. Everyone group member must be individually assessed to determine how much efforts each member is contributing, by providing them with proper feedback and make sure that there is no "free riders" (Johnson, *et al.,* 1991). Finally emphasize the importance of positive interdependence and individual accountability.

The present research acknowledges the existence of some limitations. First, owing to time constraints this study relies only on one research instrument namely "a questionnaire". Second, the number of the participants is confined to only thirty (30) license students and ten (10) teachers. This is due to the difficulty of getting in touch with them.

Hopefully, the findings of this present work will pave the way to future researchers interested in the same area to carry on the study focusing for instance on investigating the role of theoretical knowledge in improving the teachers' implementation of CL.

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79

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Appendices

Appendix one:

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is designed to assess teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward Cooperative Learning (CL). It also seeks to explore the possible problems and factors that may lie behind the poor implementation of this pedagogical approach. The information to be collected is highly valuable. Hence, your truthfulness is essential for the accomplishment of the present work. The answers you provide will strictly be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

You are kindly requested to tick the appropriate box (es) or provide a full statement whenever required.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: Teachers' Profile.

Degree (s): BA (License) ☐   MA (Magister/ Master) ☐   PH.D (Doctorate) ☐

Years of teaching experience: 0-1 year ☐   1-5 years ☐   more than5 years ☐

Section two: Teachers' perceptions of CL

Q1-How would you define CL?

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………...

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Q2-Is CL an efficient approach to language teaching?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

 If yes, how?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

I

Q3-CL improves the students' (you can tick more than one)

Academic achievement ☐   Social skills ☐

Psychological aspects (e.g. self-esteem, anxiety reduction) ☐

Q4-According to you, how successful is CL for students with low abilities?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………....

Section Three: Teachers' Implementation of CL

Q5-How long have you been implementing CL in your classes?

………………………………………………………………………………………………....

Q6-How would you assess your experience with CL? (Please explain)

Positive ☐   Negative ☐

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………....

Q7-Within a CL class, how would you define your role?

A Source of knowledge ☐   A Guide and facilitator of learning ☐

Q8-Which of the following do you consider important for an effective CL implementation?

(You can tick more than one)

Positive interdependence ☐   Individual accountability ☐

Promotive interaction ☐   Interpersonal skills ☐

Group processing ☐

Q9-How do you promote positive interdependence in your classes?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q10-Do you assign your students specific roles before conducting any CL activity?

II

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q11-Do you teach your students appropriate social skills (e.g. negotiating skills and conflict management skills, etc.) before conducting a CL activity? (Please justify)

Yes ☐   No ☐

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q12-Do you interfere to help students?

Yes ☐   No ☐

 If yes, how often do you do it?

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐

Section Four: Problems and Factors affecting CL Implementation:

Q13-Do you find difficulties in implementing CL?

Yes ☐   No ☐

 If yes, is this due to: (you can tick more than ones)

Lack of training ☐   Lack of collegial support ☐

Lack of theoretical knowledge about cooperative learning ☐

Q14-Which of the following problems do you usually face when implementing CL? (you can tick more than one).

Students' behavior ☐   Task construction ☐

Time consumption ☐   Assessment problems ☐

Q15-What kind of instructional CL methods do you use in your classes?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q16-Do you encounter difficulties in choosing the appropriate CL method? If yes, why?

III

Yes ☐   No ☐

………

………

Q17- While carrying a CL activity, is it difficult for you to both reflect on your own behavior

and at the same time manage other classroom issues (e.g. monitoring students' behaviors)? If

yes, why?

Yes ☐   No ☐

………

……….

Q18-Do you group your students or give them the chance to group themselves? And how

many students do you set in each group?

………

……….

Q19-Do you feel that your students show more willingness to work in cooperative situations

or do they prefer to work in competitive ones where each individual works to achieve better

than others?

………

………

Thank you!

Appendix two:

Students' Questionnaire

Dear Students,

   This questionnaire is designed to assess the students' knowledge and attitudes towards cooperative learning (CL) as well as allow them assess their learning process. The data to be collected are highly valuable. Hence, your truthfulness is essential to meet the objectives of the present study. The answers you provide will strictly be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

   You are kindly requested to tick the appropriate box (es) or provide a full statement whenever required.

                                             Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: Students' profile

Level: First year ☐   Second year ☐   Third year ☐

Section Two: Student's Perceptions of CL Implementation

Q1-How would you define CL?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

Q2-Do your teachers give you opportunities to work in teams?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, how often do they do it?

Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐

Q3-In what way does CL benefit you? It improves your (you can tick more than one)

Academic achievement ☐   Social skills ☐

Psychological aspects (self-esteem, anxiety reduction, etc) ☐

Q4- How would you assess your experience (if any) with CL? Please explain?

Positive ☐   Negative ☐

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Q5-Within a cooperative learning class, do you prefer to work?

Individually ☐   Cooperatively ☐   Competitively ☐

Please justify

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q6-When learning cooperatively, how would you define your teacher's role?

A source of knowledge ☐   A guide and facilitator of learning ☐

Q7-Do you and your group mates share important resources in order to achieve the group's goal?

Yes ☐   No ☐

VI

Q8-Do you encourage one another to participate and make contributions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q9-Do your teachers assign you specific roles before conducting any CL activity?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q10-Do your teachers teach you important social skills (e.g. negotiating skills and conflict management skills, etc.) before conducting any CL activity?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Section Three: Problems Experienced during CL Implementation

Q11-Which of the following problems do you usually face when working cooperatively?

Rejection ☐   Unequal participation ☐   Competitive spirit ☐

Domination ☐   Hostile and aggressive behaviors ☐

Q12-Do your teachers provide you with some preparation before setting you to work cooperatively?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q13-Who is responsible for the selection of the group members?

You as students ☐   Your teacher ☐

Thank you!