HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Cooperative Learning in Foreign Language Teaching

A Study of the Use of Group Work in Language Studies in Icelandic Secondary Schools

Ritgerð til MA-prófs í enskukennslu

Kristjana Hrönn Árnadóttir

Maí 2014

Háskóli Íslands

Hugvísindasvið

Enskukennsla

Cooperative Learning in Foreign Language Teaching

A Study of the Use of Group Work in Language Studies in Icelandic Secondary Schools

Ritgerð til MA-prófs í enskukennslu

Kristjana Hrönn Árnadóttir

Kt.: 0902872499

Leiðbeinandi: Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir

Maí 2014

Preface

This thesis was written as my final project toward the degree of M.A. in English Teaching in the department of Humanities in the University of Iceland. The 30-credit thesis was written under the supervision of Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor of Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogy, School of Humanities, University of Iceland. I am deeply grateful for all the guidance and encouragement she has given me in the months that it took to complete the project.

There are a few more individuals to whom I want to express my deepest gratitude. This thesis, and in fact the five years spent in the University of Iceland, is not just my own. I owe my fiancé and children a great deal. Without their love, support and endless patience, none of this would have been possible.

I thank my sisters and my father for the love and support they showed me throughout the entire project. However, I may owe my mother the greatest debt. Without her support, encouragement and unbelievable ability to raise my spirits when I was about to give up, I would not have finished this thesis.

To my partner-in-crime, Jóna Guðrún, I want to express my gratitude as she helped me through some difficult times during our two years of Masters education.

And last, but not least, I want to thank those individuals who made this study possible with their participation in the survey. I do not know who those 37 people are but I will always be in their debt.

Ágrip

Þessi 30 eininga ritgerð fjallar um hópavinnu og samvinnunám og notkun þessara kennsluaðferða í enskukennslu. Fyrri hluti verkefnisins gerir grein fyrir þeim kenningum sem hið svokallaða samvinnunám (ens. Cooperatie Learning) er byggt á og lýsir sögu þessarar kennsluaðferðar. Fyrst er kenningum um tjáskiptamiðað nám (ens. Communicative Approaches) lýst en þær mynda grunninn að samvinnunámi. Kostum samvinnunáms er þá lýst, meðal annars uppbyggingu hópa, undibúning nemenda fyrir samvinnunám og breyttar áherslur, til að mynda breytt hlutverk kennara og nemenda, sem aðferðin felur í sér. Þá verður fjallað um hvernig nýta má samvinnunám í tungumálakennslu. Seinni hluti ritgerðarinnar lýsir rannsókn sem gerð var í tengslum við efnið. Rannsóknin miðaði að því að skoða hvernig enskukennarar á Íslandi nota hópavinnu í kennslu sinni og hvort að íslenskir kennarar þekktu til formlegs samvinnunáms sem kennsluaðferðar. Niðurstöðurnar benda til að hópastarf sé notað töluvert í tungumálanámi hér á landi en lítið sé stuðst við formlegt samvinnunám. Ástæður sem gefnar eru eru meðal annars skortur á þekkingu kennara á þessari kennsluaðferð.

Abstract

This 30-credit thesis discusses group work and Cooperative Learning and the uses of these different teaching approaches. The first part of the project describes and the theoretical foundation of Cooperative Learning (Ice. samvinnunám) and outlines the development history of the methodology. The thesis begins by discussing Communicative approaches that form the foundation of Cooperative Learning. The benefits of Cooperative Learning will be described along with the planning of cooperative groups, how to prepare students for cooperative approaches and the various frameworks used to structure cooperative instruction. In addition, the thesis will discuss how Cooperative Learning can be applied in language teaching. The latter part of the essay describes a study that was conducted in relation to the subject. The study explored how English teachers in Iceland use group work in their classes and whether they are familiar with formal Cooperative Learning methods. The results indicate that group work is used to some extent in Iceland and that teachers believe that it is beneficial, but Cooperative Learning as a methodology seems to play a minor role in language teaching, as teachers are not familiar with this way of structuring group work.

Table of Contents

A List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

Human beings are very social creatures by nature. People's need to communicate with others can be seen in all aspects of life. To meet this need for socializing, group work has been used for educational purposes for hundreds, and perhaps even thousands, of years. It would probably be a very difficult task, and maybe even an impossible one, to find a person who has never had to take part in a group assignment during their education. Unfortunately, traditional form of group work does not seem to be efficient enough to lead to desired results such as higher-level thinking abilities and critical and analytical thinking (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Traditional group work also often lacks the structure needed to maximize language learning. Many language teachers have experienced difficulties in getting students to speak together in the target language which means that communicative skills in the foreign language will not be enhanced during group work.

The last century saw an effort to provide an instructional framework regarding cooperative learning. These cooperative theories have tended to go hand in hand with discussions about how best to encourage students to be more active in their studies and to take more control of their own education. Cooperative Learning has become a popular teaching philosophy all around the globe. This work has been led by experts such as Johnson and Johnson, Slavin and Spencer Kagan. The works of these scholars have become highly respected although they may differ on some points (Johnson & Johnson 1994; Kagan 1992).

But what is real cooperation? What characteristics does a group need to be able to call itself a Cooperative Learning group? Is it simply having students that sit together while working on assignments? Is there a real difference between traditional group work and what is called Cooperative Learning? And what is the relevance of these methods to language teaching and learning?

This thesis attempts to answer all of these questions and to demonstrate the importance of Cooperative Learning approaches to language learning. The latter half of the thesis will introduce the results of a survey that was conducted in order to examine the use of group work and specifically Cooperative Learning in English language classrooms in Iceland.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Background

This chapter will begin by reviewing the two major predecessors to Cooperative Learning, The Communicative Approach and Constructivism. The theories behind these instructional models helped shape the model that later became known as Cooperative Learning. Then the chapter will move on to describe Cooperative Learning itself, how to prepare students and how to structure Cooperative Learning assignments to insure maximum results. It will also attempt to justify the use of this teaching approach in the language classroom. Then an overview of some of the major Cooperative Learning Structures is presented. Finally, the chapter outlines some issues that teachers have encountered in the Cooperative Learning classroom and discusses solutions to these problems.

2.1 Communicative Methodology

One of the primary predecessors leading up to the creation of Cooperative Learning theories was Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), also known as the Communicative Approach. The origins of the CLT go back to the 1960s when the approach was established as a means of replacing the Situational Language Teaching approach (SLT). The SLT approach aimed to teach students a language by practicing basic structures in a controlled setting (Manoliu 2012), which is very consistent with the Grammar Translation Method. The Grammar Translation method was used in language teaching for decades. The method made the form of the target language the focal point of each language lesson. Lessons were rather monotonous as students were expected to translate written language and structures. The Grammar Translation method favored written texts over spoken language and there was very little or no communication (Condruz-Bacescu 2012). Classes following the Grammar Translation method were usually taught in the learners' native language, vocabulary was taught through word lists and texts were only read as exercises in grammaticality (Brown 2007). Today it is considered a real wonder that this method dominated language teaching for centuries because it did not produce efficient speakers of languages as there was no emphasis on communication or fluency. Teaching was teacher centered and students did little more than sit passively and

listen while the teacher talked. Teachers monopolized classroom speech, leaving students very little or no time to practice speaking in the target language. Students were given very little time to communicate with the teacher and their peers (Sachs et al. 2003). This teaching approach is very ill fitting for the learning of a second language. Experts on second language acquisition agree that what students need the most to learn a language is the opportunity to speak in the target language (Brumfit 1984) and teacher centered approaches simply do not give students the necessary opportunities for practice. During the latter half of the 20th century the Grammar Translation method came under heavy scrutiny as there was more demand for competent speakers of languages and people had to be able to communicate efficiently with speakers of different languages. However, when the European Common Market was created it became clear that a new approach to teach adults languages in a more effective way was called for (Ju 2013). This led to the recognition of the fact that language teaching needed to focus on communicative proficiency rather than the structures upheld by the SLT and thus communicative competence should be the aim of language teaching and learning (Manoliu 2012). Communicative Language Teaching approaches place great significance on using authentic materials when teaching languages, materials that accommodate the needs of learners (Ju 2013).

Christopher Brumfit was one of the founders of communicative methodologies. In 1984 he published *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching*. This book was written in an effort to help teachers exploit communicative methods in an efficient manner (1984). In this book, Brumfit makes arguments for the necessity to increase oral communication in language learning and teaching. He lists three main activities provided for language students at the time; conversation, comprehension and extended writing. However, Brumfit calls for an addition, extended speaking, claiming that language is a means of communication and thus extensive communication should be a part of all language learning. He suggests increasing students' opportunities for verbal communication in the classroom through group work as a proper medium of extended speaking activities and calls for a focus on meaning and fluency rather than accuracy. Brumfit's main argument for applying group work to language teaching is that it facilitates increased involvement and with it the quality of language practice (1984). In addition, he points out that when students are engaged in group work they are using many semiotic systems which will lead to

more than language learning and that when students are participating in group work they are given an opportunity of interaction that they normally do not get in whole-class discussion (1984). Whole-class discussion sessions often benefit only a few students because many students do not feel comfortable speaking out in front of the entire class.

Brumfit is not the only scholar who recommends allowing students to work together during language studies. Swain discusses students' confidence in the classroom and the relation between their confidence and their fluency exercise. She suggests that students are more self-conscious and feel more pressure to change and adapt their spoken output when feedback comes from the teacher than they do when it comes from their peers (2007). This means that fluency suffers at the expense of accuracy when students communicate with their teacher. Allwright (1983) also supports the use of group work as he talks about the difference between communication between students versus the communication between students and the teacher. His assumption is that students can become more effective in communication by interacting with their peers because they are at similar cognitive levels. In an article on the communicative approach, Allwright asks the question: "Are we teaching *language* (for communication)? *or* Are we teaching *communication* (via language)? (p. 167). Those favoring communicative approaches would probably answer that communication was the focal point of all language teaching and thus, communication should be used to teach languages (Allwright 1983). Communicative approaches aim at making students more fluent in the target language, sometimes even at the expense of accuracy. The idea is that as long as students can carry on a fluent conversation they will be understood by native speakers even though they make minor grammatical mistakes.

Stephen Krashen has become widely known for his theories regarding second language learning that emphasized the importance of communication as a basis for language acquisition. These theories were developed in the 1970s and 1980s and soon became very controversial. Krashen's language learning model has become known as the Monitor Model and it proposes five hypotheses regarding the acquisition of a second language.

The first hypothesis Krashen states is the Acquisition-Learning Distinction. This hypothesis claims that there are two ways for adults to learn a language, acquisition and learning. The first, acquisition, is a very similar process that children

go through when developing their first language. This happens subconsciously as the person is not fully aware of their increasing skill in the new language (Krashen 1982, p. 14). The other way is learning, a conscious effort to increase one's knowledge of a target language (Krashen 1982).

The Natural Order Hypothesis states that learners of a second language usually learn that language in a predictable order. This means that people usually learn some aspects of a language early and others later in the learning process (Krashen 1982, p. 15).

The third hypothesis is the Monitor Hypothesis which postulates that acquisition and learning take place in specific ways. It states that acquisition is responsible for fluency as it launches utterances in the target language. Learning then edits these utterances and the learner modifies the form of the utterance. This is why learning has been called the Monitor (Krashen 1982, p. 18). This means that acquisition and learning are processes that complement each other and can take place at the same time. The Monitor allows students to use items that have not been acquired (Krashen 1982, p. 20). That is, grammar rules and vocabulary do not have to have become a part of the learner's subconscious knowledge to be used. However, Krashen does warn against using the Monitor too much because it would severely hinder fluency (Krashen 1981).

Krashen's Input Hypothesis is probably the most debated part of his language learning model. The Input Hypothesis entails that students can learn languages through "comprehensible input" (p. 409) and that as long as students are willing to take note of that input then they can learn. Krashen's assertion was that:

> Only comprehensible input is consistently effective in increasing proficiency; more skill-building, more correction, and more output do not consistently result in greater proficiency (1991, p. 410).

Krashen even goes so far as to state that:

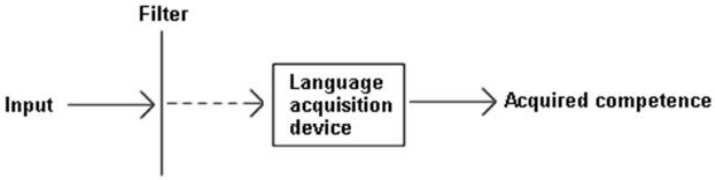
> Even high levels of proficiency can take place without output, skill-building, error correction, and comprehensible output (1991, p. 420).

According to this, students only needed to be willing to receive input in order to learn

and error correction and output were unnecessary. The hypothesis placed little value on communication between peers as a teaching approach. The Input Hypothesis also claims that speaking fluency cannot be taught; the only technique to teach speaking is to give students enough comprehensible input (Krashen 1982, p. 23). This means that students do not need to practice speaking, the ability to do so simply "appears" with the input they receive.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis is the last part of Krashen's language learning model. The hypothesis "states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process" (Krashen 1982, p. 29). Intrinsic factors such as motivation and confidence can have enormous effect on a person's ability to learn a new language. Krashen's assumption is that if students have a high Affective Filter then the input they receive cannot become a part of their acquisition, even if they understand the input (Krashen 1982, p. 30).

Figure 1. Affective Filters



(Krashen 1982, p. 31)

Figure 1 displays how Affective Filters work. They block the input's way so that it cannot reach the "Language acquisition device" and thus cannot become acquired competence and used within the subconscious knowledge. Krashen's language learning model means that the teaching that takes place inside the classroom mainly functions as a means for supplying input for students (Krashen 1982).

Krashen's Monitor Model soon raised enormous critique from scholars such as Michael Long and Merrill Swain. Swain disagrees with the very foundation of the Input Hypothesis and claims that producing language, either written or spoken, is an essential part of learning a second language. Her Output Hypothesis attests that when students work with and produce something relating to the target language they will realize where they lack knowledge and can thus contemplate and analyze this in an effort to learn and further their knowledge (Swain 2007). In addition Swain states that producing output in the target language engages higher-level thinking skills that

students are not given the opportunity of using when they only receive input (Swain 2007). The Output Hypothesis has been proven beneficial when it comes to learning vocabulary but few researches have attempted to establish a link between the hypothesis and the learning of grammar (Mitchell & Myles 2004). Krashen disagreed with the Output Hypotheses. His claim was that a person could become a highly efficient language speaker without producing language during their studies (Krashen 1998).

As mentioned above, Long also criticized Krashen's Input Hypothesis, mainly because according to the Input Hypothesis students only had to receive input, there was no need to work with that input in order to process it. His Interaction Hypothesis asserts that in order to learn and acquire a language then students need to interact with the input they receive. This means that by recycling and paraphrasing input and negotiating the meaning then students will be more likely to comprehend it (Mitchell & Myles 2004) and it can become part of the students' knowledge data base. The Interaction Hypothesis does not necessarily disagree with the Input Hypothesis in the claim that input is the most crucial part of language learning. Rather, it complements the Input Hypothesis by adding to it (Mitchell & Myles 2004).

Although Krashen's model for language learning did meet with criticism it was a valid attempt to create a holistic framework for second language learning. It emphasized the student and the role of input as a foundation for successful language learning.

2.2 Constructivism

Related to Communicative Approaches are constructivist theories, also known as Constructionism (Mitchell & Myles 2004). Constructivism has had considerable impact on the development of language pedagogy (Kaufman 2004, p. 303). John Dewey (1913) is usually considered to have founded the theory of constructivism; he disapproved of approaches that saw students simply as recipients of the teacher's knowledge but favored methods that allowed students to "construct their own knowledge through experience and problem solving" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011, p. 151). Constructivism became widely acknowledged as a teaching technique at the same time that the shift from teacher-centered approaches to learner-centered approaches became prominent (Kaufman 2004).

Constructivist theories are related to task-based language teaching approaches (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011) because they are based on the idea that learners should construct their own knowledge of a second language. This means that during a task the learner should use all the resources available, plus his or her previous knowledge of languages, to compose new knowledge about vocabulary and grammar of the target language. This process includes that the learner takes notice of patterns of the L2 and builds associations in the brain which means that linguistic knowledge comes through "associative processes" (Mitchell and Myles 2004, p. 122). Constructionism gives students opportunities to "engage in hands-on manipulation of raw data" (Kaufman 2004, p. 305), meaning that they interact with the material at hand and make inferences regarding that material, leading to enhanced knowledge. The learner, therefore, makes his or her own meaning (Kaufman 2004). This has become known as negotiating meaning (Mitchell & Myles 2004).

Constructivism claims that second or foreign languages can be learned through these associative processes and by using the target language and thus there is no need for innate language acquisition devices in the brain (Mitchell & Myles 2004). This theory thus disagrees with the notion of Universal Grammar as put forth by Chomsky (Apple 2006). Constructionism in language teaching gives students the opportunity to learn the target language in a classroom that is learner-centered. The student is given opportunity to examine grammatical structures and vocabulary on their own terms which is likely to result in a deeper knowledge of the language.

Most communicative methodologies would be considered to fall within the guidelines of constructivism since these communicative approaches are based on students forming their own knowledge and competencies of languages in a social setting. While engaged in communicative tasks language students are given liberty to practice speaking and fluency while enhancing their knowledge of the target language. The idea of fluency will be discussed further in section 2.7 Cooperative Learning in Language Teaching.

2.3 Group Work

Group work has been used for educational purposes for centuries and there is no way to determine where or when it was first used. The benefits of group work

have been researched and discussed for many decades (Apple 2006). Experts agree that group work, when done correctly and efficiently, can increase not only student's knowledge but also their social intelligence and higher-level thinking abilities. Group work is also a good way to engage students to be more active and responsible for their own education (Brumfit 1984). However, traditional group work has proven to be rather problematic. Both teachers and students have often complained that group work creates conditions for lower-ability students to benefit from the work of their class mates, that is, they simply allow others to do the work and then receive a grade or a recognition that they have not earned. Johnson and Johnson (1994) claim that this happens on what they call disjunctive tasks which is when students realize that their efforts are superfluous. In addition, they point out that the more homogenous the group is "the less each member adds to the group's resources" (1994, p. 80). This is what tends to happen during conventional group work as students are often allowed to form their own groups. They tend to form groups with friends or other people they know well and feel that they are compatible with, which leads to homogeneous group members who often share personality traits.

In addition, often the group work is not really group work as students simply do not know how work together or be responsible to a group. The original idea of the Communicative Approach was to increase students' participation. However, if the task is not structured properly it will fail its purpose. These pitfalls may be avoided with a stricter framework such as formal Cooperative Learning Structures offer.

2.4 Cooperative Learning

The communicative approaches, constructivist theories and conventional group work discussed in previous sections are central to the foundation which Cooperative Learning approaches were built upon. However, Cooperative Learning is much more purposeful than conventional group work and has a clearer framework and it challenges students in many ways, socially and intellectually (Stenlev 2003). Johnson & Johnson state that they started investigating Cooperative Learning and creating Cooperative Learning structures because this approach radically changes the atmosphere of classrooms. Traditional teaching approaches tend to be very competitive and often in inappropriate ways. Cooperative Learning, on the other hand, is built on the very foundation of human nature; human beings cannot survive

without cooperating with others (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Kagan makes different arguments for his support of Cooperative Learning. His claim is that without being active in one's own studies, it is not possible to learn, whatever the subject may be. Cooperative Learning engages students to work harder than they do in the traditional classroom (Kagan Publishing 2014).

Cooperative Learning fits quite nicely into constructivist theories regarding education as students are more active in constructing their own knowledge in a social setting. Cooperative Learning methods are an ideal teaching tool when it comes to teaching languages. All teachers would agree that the most important element of language learning is that students need to use that language, without practice they cannot learn the subject. Cooperative Learning not only affords students the opportunity to use the language but it also allows them to discover it, the vocabulary and the grammar, for themselves and they learn how to manipulate the language to serve their purposes. When incorporating Cooperative Learning into the language classroom it is necessary for teachers to take time to prepare themselves and their students because in order for Cooperative Learning to result in a better understanding of the material at hand it must be done correctly and efficiently. This means that when designing a task, the teacher should make use of the enormous amount of structures meant to enhance learning and have been created by experts in order to help teachers make their classrooms a resource of knowledge and competence for students.

2.4.1 Why Cooperative Learning?

Students need to take active part in the lesson in order to learn but all teachers will be familiar with the difficulty of getting students to participate in whole-class discussions. Motley claims that 85% of all people fear public speaking more than anything else (Motley, 1988). According to Motley, these fears stem from the fact that people are afraid of being mocked for making mistakes. Taking these numbers into account when organizing lessons, one could expect that in a class of 25 students, 21 of those people will be afraid to speak in front of the class. This means that there is always the danger that less forthcoming students get left behind as they simply become invisible because of lack of motivation or the nerve to speak

up (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 243), while more assertive students do most of the talking and answer questions asked by the teacher. Of course there is also the possibility that no one dares to speak. Many teachers recognize the situation where they ask questions in order to generate discussions but for some reason the group is unresponsive and the teacher ends up answering his or her own question. This happens often in second language classrooms as students are not only afraid of speaking in public because they might answer incorrectly regarding the material but also because they may feel that they do not have the necessary linguistic knowledge, vocabulary or pronunciation to communicate their ideas to the rest of the class. Cooperative learning that takes place in small, well designed groups where each student has an assigned role, will give timid students the forum to be heard as they will likely be more comfortable speaking with only two or three other students and the more confident students get the opportunity to exercise their listening skills. Learning to carry on a conversation with only a few students in a group will also prepare students for taking active part in whole-class discussions.

Spencer Kagan (1992) explains the need for Cooperative Learning this way: "because cooperative teamwork, interaction and communication will characterize the workplace of the future, it is imperative that our classrooms include not only individualistic and competitive interaction, but also cooperative interaction" (p. 2:1). Of course, it has been a long time since this book was written so perhaps the future is here and now. Today it is nearly impossible to imagine a workplace or a sector of the job market where a person does not need to interact with others in some way and, in fact, when looking for staff, companies frequently list "the ability to work well with others" or "good cooperative skills" as a desired skill in their advertisements for new employees (Vísir 2014). In order to be successful in the job market people must be capable of socializing with others and work with them so why should we not start preparing them for this while they are still in school and thus relatively sheltered from the expectations of society? Teachers should be responsible for teaching students to work with others, teach them to hear others and be heard by others.

Human beings are very social by nature and people crave the company of others. Perhaps this applies to adolescents more than any other age group. The teenage years can be a very confusing time and most teenagers feel, at one point or another, that their parents or other adults do not understand them at all. At this time it is important for teenagers to communicate with their peers, confiding in them and

spending time with them. Many teachers are familiar with scenarios where students seem to be unaware of what is taking place during the lesson simply because they are too busy whispering and talking to each other. Cooperative Learning is a good way to divert this need for peer communication into a more useful situation, allowing students to communicate while studying. Savage, Savage and Armstrong (2012) claim that learning is a social process and suggest turning the classroom into a platform for communication where students work together in order to gain understanding of the teaching materials (p. 242). Kagan (1992) agrees with this view but he takes it even further, claiming that the changed dynamics of families and different roles of family members results in the necessity that schools teach students to socialize with others because they are not learning to do so in the home. According to this, schools must now take on the role of teaching social and moral values to students as there are fewer opportunities for them to learn these values elsewhere. Whether this view is accurate or not will not be discussed here but it goes to show what an important aspect socializing is to education.

Cooperative Learning, when conducted in an efficient manner, will teach students more than only social skills. Students' communication with peers "forms the basis for more complex thinking and understanding" (Frey, Fisher & Everlove 2009). Slavin posits that the success of Cooperative Learning can be traced to the fact that while students are working with their peers in small groups they are working with persons who function within the same Proximal Zone of Development (Slavin 1995). That is, during group work, students of similar developmental stages are working together. Slavin supports his argument by citing Kuhn's study of the development of cognitive structures. In 1972 Kuhn published an article on her research and in it she describes what she calls "the optimal mismatch hypothesis." This hypothesis, based on Vygotsky's theories, states that while working with others children learn the most when their model or partner is close to or just above their own cognitive level. The further the student's partner is from his own stage of development, the less likely he is to learn from his partner and reach a higher stage (Kuhn 1972). This entails that it would be even more beneficial for students to interact with their peers than interaction with a teacher would be.

This may apply to language learning. Students interacting with peers that are on similar cognitive levels may result in them learning new vocabulary and syntax that they might not receive from the teacher. Although teachers are trained to meet the

needs of their students they are simply incapable of thinking in similar ways as their students do because they are not at the same cognitive level as the students. Therefore, language students may benefit immensely from interacting with peers as they may gain knowledge that their cognitive level is ready to receive. In addition, students may be more willing or motivated to receive new knowledge from their peers than their teacher, because the peers may be using the target language for similar purposes as themselves.

Johnson & Johnson (1994) write about how critical thinking can be affected by engaging in Cooperative Learning lessons. They cite multiple researches such as those of Dansereau et. al (1984) and Gabbert, Johnson & Johnson (1986) in support of their argument. The results of these researches definitively show that when participating in Cooperative Learning students develop their reasoning strategies in ways that would be impossible to do while learning in a competitive or individualistic environment. This should come as no surprise to teachers. Students are forced to utilize their reasoning skills doing group work in ways they do not have to do when working individually. Asking clarification from others, justifying or explaining their opinions and making compromises are all acts that can help develop cognitive reasoning skills but these skills are usually unnecessary when working independently.

Although it was not originally designed as a language teaching method, Cooperative Learning can be very useful when it comes to language studies. As discussed in a previous section relating to communicative methodology, the aim of learning a language is to be able to communicate with other speaker of that same language. Cooperative Learning gives students the opportunity to practice communicating with other while engaging in assignments that are meant to increase students' knowledge if the language. Cooperative Learning approaches can also give students the opportunity of engaging many semiotic systems as long as the tasks are structured to enhance students' listening, reading, writing and speaking skills in the target language (Brumfit 1984). Brumfit is convinced of the necessity of employing communicative approaches to language teaching:

> Any model of language that we adopt for teaching must recognize that learners need to develop a capacity to operate with the target language

> sufficiently flexibly to be able to express themselves as much or as little as they wish to (1984, p. 28).

Brumfit is very adamant about employing communicative methods because of their benefit in regard to communication. Allwright (1983), on the other hand, points out that, by interacting with others, students can enhance their technical knowledge of the target language:

> A case can be made, therefore, for reorienting "language" teaching towards communication practice, not just because the eventual product aim is "communication", but because communication practice can be expected to develop linguistic skills (1983, p. 170).

This means that by communicating with peers students will not only gain fluency and communicative skills but will also gain knowledge of the grammar and syntax of the target language.

2.4.2 Cooperative Learning Methodology

David Johnson and Roger Johnson are pioneers in the area of Cooperative Learning. According to them, five elements need to be present in order for Cooperative Learning to be successful: positive interdependence, individual accountability, social skills, face-to-face interaction and group processing (1994). This entails that simply having students sit together and ordering them to do the work together does not constitute Cooperative Learning.

Positive interdependence is, according to the Johnson brothers, the most important factor when it comes to Cooperative Learning (1994). Positive interdependence entails that students realize that they are dependent upon each other in order to finish their task. Without every member's participation the group cannot hope to succeed. This in turn means that without the group's collected efforts the individual cannot succeed (Frey, Fisher & Everlove 2009). Savage, Savage and Armstrong (2012) suggest different methods of achieving positive interdependence. These are distribution of the work, division of supplies or resources, delegating different roles to group members and ascertaining objectives that all group members

must work together in order to achieve (p. 250). When positive interdependence is built into a Cooperative Learning unit it will encourage students to shoulder the responsibility of completing their task because they are no longer answering only to themselves, they are responsible for the group's success. Students will realize that they must encourage and assist their team mates to do their best if they hope to succeed themselves. Positive interdependence must be facilitated by the teacher; when designing the unit he has to make sure that the work of the upcoming project can be divided equally among members of each group and that the project cannot be completed without the efforts of every individual (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Positive interdependence can be incorporated into Cooperative Learning language lessons in a number of ways. One way of achieving this would be to assign the role of a "policeman" who makes sure that everyone speaks in the target language, one person could be responsible for proofreading the final product to make sure that grammar and syntax is correct, someone could be in control of making sure all vocabulary is academic or formal. The possibilities are endless.

Individual accountability is important when it comes to cooperative learning. It ensures that each and every member of a group takes active part and participates at all stages of the task at hand (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 2012). Individual accountability is directly linked with positive interdependence as each student is responsible for a part of a whole that cannot be completed without their effort. Individual accountability will not only lead to the success of the group, it will also ensure that all group members learn and become stronger persons (Johnson & Johnson 1994). If and when a Cooperative Learning task is set up in a proper manner it will give students a sense of responsibility to other members of the group (Frey, Fisher & Everlove 2009) and all students will understand that their work is essential for the group to succeed. Johnson and Johnson (1994) claim that in order for students to be accountable as individuals they must be assessed and graded as such. This means that not only will the group receive a collective grade but each student will receive one as well. This dual grading arrangement will ensure that no student can sit back, relax and benefit of the work of others, that is, there will be no "piggy back riding". Individual accountability is an important element when it comes to Cooperative Learning in language studies. In order for each member to enhance their knowledge of the target language he or she must be given the opportunity to use the language and work with it during the task. Individual accountability in

language learning can be achieved in similar ways as positive interdependence. Distribution of the workload, the assigning of different roles or having students be accountable for separate parts of the language of the assignment, that is, one student could be responsible for spelling while another is responsible for grammar, are all ways of making sure that each student of the group is afforded the opportunity of exploring the target language with the help of peers and thus enhancing their abilities and communication skills.

In order to work with a group through Cooperative Learning students must possess some social and small-group skills. Teachers should realize that social skills need to be taught; a person does not simply wake up possessing the skill to work well with others. Unfortunately it happens too often during group work that students are simply thrown into groups and expected to work together, often leading to poor execution of projects and a lack of learning. Savage, Savage and Armstrong (2012) recommend teaching students a few skills that may be useful before starting the work. These include skills such as how to listen actively, how to explain yourself in a clear and concise manner, how to effectively ask others for clarifications and how to resolve conflicts. Frey, Fisher and Everlove (2009) set up an excellent table, Common Interpersonal Skills, explaining the skills that students need in order to work together with others:

Figure 2. Common Interpersonal Skills

Skill	Operational definition
Leadership	• Offers guidance and organizational suggestions to help the group complete tasks • Allows others to voice opinions and assume responsibilities • Shares in successes and failures • Encourages the group to move toward their goal
Decision making	• Listens to the opinions of others and takes them into consideration • Identifies possible courses of action and accurately describes the costs and benefits of each • Is willing to make a choice when the group needs to come to a decision
Trust building	• Follows through on commitments to others

	• Contributes to a positive atmosphere • Disagrees respectfully • Accurately assesses his or her own competence
Turn taking	• Listens when others are talking and does not interrupt • Acknowledges others who have spoken • Makes sure all others are included • Offers supportive statements • Uses verbal and nonverbal signals to invite responses from others
Active listening	• Makes eye contact with the speaker • Uses an open posture • Stops other activities to listen • Paraphrases statements of others • Asks clarifying questions • Seeks and offers feedback
Conflict management	• Listens to the views of others • Avoids hurtful statements about others • States his or her own views without becoming defensive • Is able to identify personal concerns and the concerns of others • Accepts the group's decision graciously • Is able to resume the task

It goes without saying that if students do not have these skills they will not be very proficient at group work, and in fact this does not only apply to students but to people from all walks of life. These skills go hand in hand with teaching students to care for one another; they need to be skilled at showing others the respect and trust they deserve (Nagel 2001). This gives students a sense of belonging to the group and they will be more motivated to work with, and for, others. If students are taught these skills then it will be more likely that students' performance during Cooperative Learning will be of high quality (Johnson & Johnson 1994). These small-group skills are especially important when it comes to Cooperative Learning in the language classroom. It can be difficult for students to express themselves in the target language because they may feel that they are not skilled enough or they are simply afraid to do so. In this situation it is very beneficial for students to know that their

peers are willing to give them the opportunity of expressing themselves and supporting them without being interrupted or judged.

Face-to-face interaction, or promotive interaction, is essential in Cooperative Learning. It is not enough for students to communicate using technological means as this sort of communication is non-verbal and can thus be very isolating (Frey, Fisher & Everlove 2009). Through direct verbal communication students can help advance each other's accomplishments and understanding. This part of Cooperative Learning engages intellectual activities that take place when students help each other learn. These activities include discussions about problem solving, discussions about new concepts, students sharing their knowledge with others, and connecting new things with past knowledge (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Promotive interaction can be facilitated by the teacher. If the teacher allows students the time to work on their task during class it will greatly increase the face-to-face interaction, much more so than it would if students are only allowed to work on their projects outside of class. It is a simple fact that it can be difficult for four people to find the time to meet to work together outside school hours. This will lead students to simply divide the work among themselves and they each do their own part in their own corner. There is no interaction or encouragement passing between them which does not comply with Cooperative Learning ideology. Face-to-face interaction is the part of Cooperative Learning that may be the most beneficial element to language learning, especially when it comes to communicative competencies. When engaged in face-to-face interaction students get the opportunity of speaking the target language in a small group of peers. The benefits of this are discussed above in a section called 2.4.1 Why Cooperative Learning?

The last integral element needed for Cooperative Learning is called group processing. Group processing is when members of the group discuss the work process after completing the task. It is very beneficial for students to discuss their behavior during Cooperative Learning. This way students can give each other opinions regarding which behaviors are helpful and which are not. If any actions have been unhelpful then they can discuss how to change this behavior (Johnson & Johnson 1994). This can be done, for example, by giving students a list of discussion points or have them keep a joint Cooperative Learning diary where they record their actions and what behaviors they want to keep or change, similar to the diaries that students keep when engaged in lessons related to The Project

Framework instructional model. Setting goals before engaging in a task gives students something to aim for. During group processing the students can discuss and identify whether they reached those goals or not and what can be done differently in the future if those goals have not been met (Johnson & Johnson 1994). After this they can set new goals related to changing their behaviors. It is possible to connect group processing directly to language studies. This can be done by having students evaluate whether they have learned certain aspects of the language properly during the task, e.g. have they learned the desired vocabulary, grammar or syntax or have they gained communicative competencies regarding the subject.

Cooperative Learning brings new roles to the classroom, both for the teacher (and other staff, if present) and for the students. The teacher is no longer in the front and center but must relinquish some of his control or authority over to his classroom and trust that his or her students will do the work necessary to learn the material. The teacher's job is no longer to stand in front of the class and give a lecture. He or she must now walk among the students, make sure that everyone is active and communicate with them and support them and encourage them while they construct their own knowledge and figure things out for themselves. With a new instructional model the students' roles change drastically. They are no longer expected to simply show up and listen to a lecture while taking notes when relevant. They now explore the material on their own while working with their peers. Johnson & Johnson (1995) set up a table which portrays these new roles in a very efficient manner.

Figure 3. Old vs. New Paradigms

	Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Knowledge	Transferred from faculty to students	Jointly constructed by students and faculty
Students	Passive vessels to be filled by faculty's knowledge	Active constructor, discoverer transformer of knowledge
Faculty Purpose	Classify and sort students	Develop students' competencies and talents
Relationships	Impersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students	Personal transaction among students and between faculty and students
Context	Competitive/individualistic	Cooperative learning in classroom and cooperative teams among faculty
Assumption	Any expert can teach	Teaching is complex and requires considerable training
Ways of Knowing	Logico-scientific	Narrative
Epistemology Mode of Learning	Reductionist Memorization	Constructivist relating
Climate	Conformity/cultural uniformity	Diversity and personal esteem/cultural diversity and commonality

As can be seen in the table, the landscape of the classroom becomes drastically different when Cooperative Learning is incorporated into the teaching. The students are no longer “passive vessels” but active participants in the lesson. The students are now doing the learning, it is not being done to them (Johnson & Johnson 1995). Probably the most important part of this table is the part that describes the different “Epistemology Mode of Learning.” With the shifting paradigms of education comes a different way of learning. Students no longer study by simply memorizing content given to them by the teacher; they must now assemble their own knowledge through

discovering, exploring and discussing and making connection between new materials with pre-existing knowledge.

These new paradigms can make the language classroom look drastically different. The old paradigms were consistent with John Locke's theory of tabula rasa, that is, the student's mind is like an empty piece of paper, waiting to be written on by the teacher (Locke 1692). However, when Cooperative Learning structures are adapted into the classroom, students are no longer expected to sit quietly and make notes about grammar. Students enter the language classroom with some previous knowledge about languages, their purpose and their structure, because they already know one language, their native tongue. When engaged in Cooperative Learning students discover the new language and its usages on their own and connect this new knowledge to the language knowledge they possessed prior to entering the classroom.

2.4.3 How to Build Successful Groups for Cooperative Learning?

The following section will provide information regarding the formation of successful cooperative groups. When forming groups for Cooperative Learning there are some guidelines that should be taken into account to make the learning experience as effective and beneficial as possible for the students. These guidelines include group size, whether to form ability groups, and the difference between homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Lastly, this section will discuss what Johnson and Johnson call formal, informal and base groups (1994).

When incorporating Cooperative Learning into the language classroom, it must be noted that the sizes of cooperative groups are important. Groups that have too many members are likely to disintegrate into chaos and lead to inactive members. To begin with it might be a good idea to introduce pair work, that is, let students work two and two together before increasing group size. This way, students can be eased into working with others. Most teachers and experts on the subject agree that groups of four to six members, is ideal (Center for Teaching and Learning 1999). Most Cooperative Learning Structures recommend using groups of four. With groups of that size it is possible to divide tasks among group members so everyone has some responsibility to bear and it is possible for groups to hold discussion and debates

where everyone can be heard and everyone's opinion is taken into account. This will be discussed further in a section of this thesis that describes Cooperative Learning Structures. The smaller the group is the greater the individual accountability (Johnson & Johnson 1995). If the groups are small then each person is required to do more work than they would in a larger group and thus their responsibility increases. It is a good idea to keep groups small when incorporating Cooperative Learning approaches into the language classroom. A group of four students affords each member more time to speak in the target language than a group of six would do. Therefore students will have more time to practice speaking in smaller groups than in larger ones.

Constructing groups can be a delicate matter, especially if students are experiencing Cooperative Learning for the first time. In the beginning it may be a good idea to let students choose their own groups. This way, students will team up with people they know and trust. When they have gotten used to working with others the teacher might introduce new ways to construct groups, ways that are more consistent with Cooperative Learning theories. Doing this will allow students to ease into Cooperative Learning and will allow students to work with different people.

The question of ability grouping has never really been laid to rest although most scholars oppose to it. Grouping students together by their learning abilities may not be a good idea. Putting stronger students into one group and weaker students in another will likely result in a great divide in students' abilities at the end of the project. Some research even suggests that ability grouping can have negative effect on learning outcomes as it does not bring about amplified learning achievements but does indeed have damaging outcome on students' self esteem (Frey, Fisher, Everlove 98). However, it has been shown that combining students of different abilities into one group will be beneficial for both stronger and weaker students. Kagan writes that "a meta-analysis of 65 objective studies of peer tutoring concluded that peer tutoring was effective in producing positive academic and social outcomes for both tutors and tutees" (p. 3:3). In other words, when students tutor each other it will be beneficial for both parties involved. Having students of different abilities work together in small groups during language learning can be very useful for all parties involved. Most students will have some knowledge of the language that they can share with the rest of the group, some may have excellent knowledge of grammar

and syntax while others may be good spellers. This way students can learn about different aspects of the target language from their teammates.

But how long should groups work together? The answer to this question is closely linked with the type of tasks students are expected to perform each time. When performing simple, isolated tasks there is nothing to prevent students from changing groups after each task or class. This may even be a good idea as students will experience working with more people (Frey, Fisher & Everlove 2009).

However, Slavin (1995), Kagan (1992) and Johnson & Johnson (1994) all suggest that having the same groups cooperate throughout an entire semester could be very beneficial, especially in Cooperative Learning structures such as Teams-Games-Tournaments (see section number 2.5.8 for further information) and Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (see section number 2.3.3 for more information in STAD).

Johnson and Johnson have identified three types of groups, formal, informal and base groups. Informal groups have a very short lifespan. These groups are typically used for assignments that are meant to last for only a limited amount of time, such as one class period. Johnson and Johnson recommend using these groups to focus students' attention on the material being discussed (1994). Informal groups can very often be seen in language classes where students are meant to work on together on short tasks such as content questions from texts or grammar exercises.

Formal cooperative groups usually last longer than one class period; they may even last for a few weeks. These groups have a more specific purpose as they must complete a set task (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Formal groups can be used in language teaching, e.g. with project based work or tasks centered around specific reading material.

Cooperative base groups usually last for at least one semester. These groups are heterogeneous and have been formed according to Cooperative Learning guidelines. They meet regularly and work together in an effort to help all members graduate, whether it is from a course or school (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Base groups can easily be applied to language studies. Although language studies are not likely to provide a task that will take an entire semester to perform, it is possible to use the base groups to solve a number of assignments throughout the semester. The goal of the base group would then be to make sure that all members become sufficiently skilled in the material in question to graduate from the course.

Most Cooperative Learning models recommend using heterogeneous groups (Johnson & Johnson 1994; Slavin 1995; Kagan 1992). This means that members of each group are carefully chosen according to Cooperative Learning guidelines. Heterogeneous groups include members of different abilities, both male and female and preferably of diverse ethnicity (Kagan 1992). They are also on different ability levels. The idea is that different individuals bring different skills and perspectives to the group and, thus, might have something to teach group members. Homogeneous groups, on the other hand, are not as carefully structured and may include members that have similar personalities. This is what tends to happen when students are allowed to form their own groups or when groups are chosen at random (Kagan 1992).

2.4.4 Cooperative Learning Assignments

Assigning cooperative tasks must be done with care. Assignments need to be appropriate for each class or group of students. When group work is introduced it would not be appropriate to give students a complicated project with many components. In fact, a number of authors, for example Savage, Savage & Armstrong (2012) and Slavin (1995), recommend very simple activities as an introduction to Cooperative Learning. These simple tasks are aimed at getting a group of students talking and getting them acquainted with each other. Slavin (1995) puts forth a process which he calls *Team Building*. This is a very simple process which is meant to shake the group together, get students to know each other and to get them talking. The first step is very simple; students have a limited time to learn group member's names. On the second level students conduct interview with each other and thus gain deeper knowledge and understanding of their team mates. The third step involves teams coming up with a team name and create a banner, logo or a mural. These are uncomplicated tasks but they are good for breaking the ice and getting the conversations started. This activity is very similar to Kagan's Three-Step Interview which will be introduced in a later section. Take note that Slavin calls this *team* building (Slavin 1995), and not *group* building. This gives the feeling that the students of a group are a whole and not just a band of individuals thrown together.

Teachers must be careful when handing out assignments. Instructions must be clear and concise; if students do not fully understand the task one cannot expect them to be able to perform the task to the best of their ability. It might also be a good idea to explain the purpose of each task to the students. If students understand why they are doing what they are doing, they are more likely to execute their tasks with interest and put forth their best effort (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 244).

In addition, teachers should take care not to expect perfection from their students. Students are as different as they are many and they have different backgrounds and experiences and this is bound to have effect on the way they think and work. Group work entails students exchanging opinions and making compromises when necessary (Nagel 111) which means that perfection is difficult to achieve. Language teachers must be especially cautious in their expectations to students' performance during Cooperative Learning tasks. Cooperative Learning and communicative approaches in language learning aim to award students greater fluency in the target language. This may happen at the expense of accuracy because the teacher is not present to correct the student's every mistake. Therefore, teachers should not expect that the finished product contains language that is completely free from syntactical mistakes.

2.5 Cooperative Learning Models and Structures

There are several Cooperative Structures available for teachers to choose from. Teachers simply need to choose the model and structure that best suits them and the task at hand. Some of these models have a stricter structure than others and some of them might be more suitable for students who are taking their first steps in Cooperative Learning while others may be more fitting for those who have had some practice with this kind of approach. This section will introduce the theological foundation of some of these methods and describe their execution.

Kagan's Cooperative Learning model postulates a few arguments for its implementation. The greatest argument is that students need to be prepared for a cooperative world when they leave the protected environment of schools. In addition it claims that by implementing Cooperative Learning into the classroom, teachers

give their students more opportunities to learn and the students will be engaged most of the time (Kagan 2014). Kagan's model is a little different from Slavin's and Johnson & Johnson's models in that it puts the most emphasis on the social benefits of Cooperative Learning.

Slavin (1995) states that Cooperative Learning models should include a variety of methods that allows students to work together in small groups to help each other learn (p. 2). His model does not try to replace teacher instruction but does aim to replace individual seatwork (p. 2). In addition, Slavin's Cooperative Learning model tries to eradicate inappropriate competitive teaching methods which he claims are oftentimes unhealthy and ineffective inside the classroom (1995, p. 3).

Johnson and Johnson have posited yet another Cooperative Learning model. Theirs agrees with Slavin's model in one aspect: they want to eliminate inappropriate competition from classrooms and replace it with cooperative methods that will allow students to communicate and care for one another (1994, p. x of preface). Johnson & Johnson's model is similar to Kagan's model in that it does uphold the social benefits of Cooperative Learning but places greater emphasis on the benefits that cooperative approaches can have on higher-level thinking skills (1994).

2.5.1 Three-Step Interview

Kagan developed the so-called Three-Step Interview which is a simple Cooperative Learning introduction activity. The Three-Step Interview should preferably take place while working with groups of four students. As the name suggest the activity is performed in three simple stages. The first stage is executed in pairs as one person interviews the other and then the roles are reversed before the second stage. During the third stage the entire group (four students) comes together and the students share what they have learned about their team mate. The activity cannot be completed until all members of the group are familiar with the subject of each interview. The Three-step Interview can be carried out in any subject as the content of the interview can be related to whatever the teacher or the students choose (Kagan 1994). This Cooperative Learning structure is very simple and easy to execute as it does not require a very firm structure or rules. Because of its simplicity this is an excellent activity for students who are taking their first steps with

Cooperative Learning to provide them with some cooperative experience before moving on to more complicated tasks. The Three-Step Interview is an ideal task to assign to language students that are experiencing Cooperative Learning for the first time in their language studies, as it allows them to use the target language in a relaxed atmosphere.

2.5.2 The Jigsaw

The Jigsaw approach was developed in the 1970s by Aronson. During a Jigsaw task students are divided into small groups and given an assignment. Each students then has to investigate a different aspect of the subject of the task. After their investigation they meet up with students from other groups who have been exploring the same aspect of the assignment. After students have conferred with these "expert" groups they return to their original groups where they have to share their findings with their team mates in such a way that all members of the group learn the material. After the assignment is completed students can be tested on what they have learned (Aronson 2014). The Jigsaw has become a very popular Cooperative Learning technique, perhaps because it is relatively simple and easy to implement. The method can be applied to many kinds of tasks as long as it can be broken up into a few components. The chief benefit of the Jigsaw approach is that it automatically provides the groups with positive interdependence as the task cannot be completed without the effort of every group member. Over time, a number of variations to the Jigsaw method have seen the light of day. Slavin developed Jigsaw II, an approach that builds on the original Jigsaw but focuses on work relating to texts that students must read and explore and then share with their team mates (Slavin 1995). Team Jigsaw is a variation that entails that each group studies one aspect of the material and then members of the groups spread out to share what they have learned (Kagan 1992). There are many more variations to the Jigsaw method, some of which might be more suitable for younger children while others would be good for teenagers. It is simply a matter of teachers doing some research to figure out what best suits them and their students. The Jigsaw structure may be applied in the language classroom. However, it may not be well suited for assignments that are related to the form of the target language, that is grammar and vocabulary. It may,

on the other hand, be very well suited for tasks that are aimed at familiarizing students with specific content. This could mean that the Jigsaw may be used for projects relating to novels or other reading material or assignments that require students to investigate certain material.

2.5.3 Jigsaw II

Jigsaw II is a structure that was developed by Slavin. It is based on Aronson's structure but is a more easily adapted form (Slavin 1995). It is also very similar to STAD in many ways. Jigsaw II is a suitable structure for any task in which students are to explore written texts. Students are expected to work together in heterogeneous groups where each member focuses on a different topic of the narrative. As in the original Jigsaw students become experts on their own topic. Then they meet with experts of the same topic from different groups and hold discussions. The experts then come back to their original group and teach the group about their topic (Slavin 1995, p. 122). After this step has been completed students take exams or quizzes on all of the topics, similar to those who are implemented in STAD. Jigsaw II uses very similar scoring system as STAD does. Base scores are calculated before each task and each individual's improvement score is contributed to a group score (Slavin 1995). As with the original Jigsaw structure, interdependence is automatically built into the assignment as students are dependent upon each other for information. Slavin explains that Jigsaw II was originally designed to teach narrative texts (1995, p. 122) so it should not be problematic to apply this structure to literature in second language learning. However, it is possible to apply this structure to other aspects of language teaching as well. It could for example be adapted to teach syntax in which case each member of the group would become an expert on different aspects of grammar, one student could look into word order while another looks at prepositions and so on.

2.5.4 Student Teams-Achievement Division

Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD) is a little more complicated than the Jigsaw method and takes a bit more preparation time. It was designed by Slavin

as a team exercise that improves the learning of all group members. STAD has five main components or stages: class presentations, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores and team recognition (Slavin 1995, p. 71). The first stage is the class presentation. The class presentation is given by the teacher and is very similar to direct instruction methods. This can take the form of lectures, visual presentations or even class discussion. The only condition is that the lecture must focus and be directly related to the STAD unit being implemented. During the second stage of the STAD teams are assembled. Preferably, each team should have four to five members. The team works together on the material of the unit and tries to make sure that all members learn the material to the best of their ability. After the team exercise is complete each student takes a quiz or an exam on the material covered. This is followed by a calculation of each individual's score and their improvement. The fifth part is the team recognition where the individual improvement scores are calculated together into one group grade (Slavin 1995). The STAD is a very effective way to encourage students as it not only involves the group's progress but also their own. Students are usually more motivated when they have a chance of attaining a tangible proof of their success. However, as mentioned above, it does take quite a bit of preparation time. Before the unit can begin the teacher must do some legwork. First, a base score must be calculated for each student. The base score is the starting point for them. That is, the base score is the level of knowledge and skill that students have before beginning the STAD unit. After the quizzes have been conducted and graded students receive improvement points. These improvement points are used to calculate the group grade (Slavin 1995). Second, in order to follow the initial ideology of STAD the teacher must take great care when assembling the groups. Race, ethnicity, gender and mixed abilities are all factors that must be considered (Slavin 1995). If this preparation is made with great care then the STAD experience should be very beneficial for all students. The STAD structure can be useful in almost any subject and with many kinds of material. The only limitation is that it needs to be used with material that has definitive answers, it is not suitable for interpretative material as it must be possible to calculate a definite improvement. When it comes to language teaching, the STAD may be excellent for tasks that are based on the form of the target language because of its structure. Teachers can implement this structure in order for students to learn vocabulary, spelling or syntax. It may even be used for material such as content questions from reading material.

However, it is not suitable for interpretative exercises such as those that might deal with higher-level reading comprehension.

2.5.5 Group Investigation

The Group Investigation is a structure that gives students more control over their studies than other Cooperative Learning approaches as it gives students the opportunity to, to some extent, choose what they learn. Group Investigation typically takes place in six stages. During the first stage the groups are assembled (Sharan & Sharan 1990). These groups are not as concerned with a heterogeneous structure as many other Cooperative Learning approaches are; what matters here is that each group is made up of students who share similar interests. When the groups have been assembled they identify their topic and decide on a structure. During the second stage students plan their investigation, subtopics are identified and questions raised. Then the work is divided among the students so each one has different topics or questions to answer. The third stage is the actual investigation. Students examine sources and other data. The fourth stage is devoted to producing the actual product or report. The group gathers back together to share their findings and make a complete report or project to be handed in or presented. The fifth stage is the presentation of the project. Preferably, each group should present their project or report to the rest of the class. The sixth and final stage of the Group Investigation is the evaluation of the final product (Sharan & Sharan 1990). The group investigation is an excellent way of incorporating learner autonomy into the classroom because it gives students the opportunity to take charge of their education, even if it is just for this one unit. It also gives the opportunity of exploring a range of subjects. Unlike the STAD it can be used with material that does not have to be strictly definitive but may contain interpretative subjects so students can form their own opinions on the subject being explored. In addition it gives students the opportunity of learning how to assess others. As the final projects are presented to the entire class it gives an excellent chance of incorporating peer review. This way students learn to give each other constructive criticism and they learn how to take criticism as a positive opportunity to learn.

The Group Investigation structure can, as so many others, be applied to language studies. There are very few limitations to how this may be executed. The Group Investigation may be used for learning structural material relating to the target language and it may also be used for content. This may include the investigation of the content of reading material as well as deciphering meaning from the material.

2.5.6 Co-op Co-op

The Co-op Co-op approach is very similar to the Group Investigation structure in execution as it is based on the work of individuals coming together to form a group product. The approach can be used for a wide variety of subjects and as such it can be used across all school levels, from kindergarten to universities. It is simply a matter of designing the unit with the abilities of the students in mind (Kagan 1990). Just like Group Investigation, Co-op Co-op has several different steps or stages. Slavin describes these stages very well. The first step is a whole-class discussion during which the teacher and students discuss the upcoming unit and identify what they want to learn. The second step is the forming of heterogeneous teams which is similar to STAD. Next the teams choose their topic which must be related to the whole-class discussion session. During the fourth stage students identify subtopics and divide the work among group members. The fifth stage is conducted individually as each student investigates his or her part of the project. During the sixth stage the groups come back together and each member shares his or her findings with the rest of the group. The seventh step is the production of the final report which is then presented to the class during the eighth stage. The evaluation is the ninth and final step (Slavin 1995). The Co-op Co-op is clearly very similar to the Group Investigation structure. It follows the same general guidelines and the same sequence of events. The main difference between these methods lies in the way in which students are assigned to teams. During Group Investigation students are assigned to groups based on their interests but Co-op Co-op structures place more emphasis on heterogeneous groups like STAD does. As mentioned above, the Co-op Co-op is very similar to Group Investigation and as such it may be used for similar purposes in language learning; language structure and content may easily be taught

with the Co-op Co-op Structure.

2.5.7 Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition

As the name suggests the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) structure was developed to allow students to work together on the two basic elements of education, reading and writing. When it comes to reading, the CIRC model can help students work more much more efficiently on follow-up activities relating to the text as students help each other to understand what they have just read. The CIRC approach encourages teachers to afford their students the time to read out loud to each other as research suggests that this can have great impact on their comprehension skills (Slavin 1995). CIRC has three major elements; basal-related activities (also known as story-related activities), direct instruction in reading comprehension and integrated language arts and writing (Slavin 1995, p. 106). Basal-related activities allow groups to work together on tasks that are related to the text being taught. With younger students it is suggested that students be given time to read out loud to each other but with students in secondary schools it might be more appropriate to instruct students to read the text before class so that the group can focus on activities relating to the text. CIRC activities tend to focus on the structure of the language, that is, vocabulary, grammar and spelling. Direct instruction in reading comprehension (the second element of CIRC) entails that students are taught how to further their understanding of the reading material, that is, identify main ideas, themes, and interpreting the text (Slavin 1995, p. 108). The third element is integrated language art and writing in which students first discuss their ideas with the rest of their team and then complete their writing assignment. This part of CIRC ends with teams reading and editing each other's work and discussing how the compositions may be amended (Slavin 1995). The CIRC model was originally structured for students of elementary schools but there is no reason why teachers should not be able to adapt the method for students of secondary schools. As discussed above it is a known fact that discussing ideas can be very beneficial for students. So once again it is simply a matter of identifying the needs of the class and structuring the unit based on those needs. The CIRC structure is an ideal teaching tool when it comes to teaching reading and writing in second or foreign languages. It

may increase students' reading comprehension in the target language and allow them the opportunity of enhancing their writing skills.

2.5.8 Teams-Games-Tournaments

Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT) is very similar to STAD in execution and contains many of the same elements. The TGT unit begins with a lecture or presentation as STAD does, teams are constructed in much the same way and students work together to learn the material. However, where STAD holds quizzes and calculates individual scores, TGT uses academic tournaments. In these tournaments games are played in different stations where one student from each team comes to play against students from other teams. The games consist of questions relating to the content of the unit (Slavin 1995). A special bumping system is used to make sure that each competition is played by students of equal abilities. This means that after each tournament the winner of each tournament table moves to a higher ranking table and the loser moves to a table of an easier level. This way all students have the opportunity of winning at some point (Kagan 1992). Each student's wins or points are calculated into a group score for their original group. The TGT can be particularly successful as it combines both cooperative and competitive educational structures because students first help each other to learn the content and then they go on to compete as individuals but their successes also benefit the group, that is, it is both an individual and a group competition. In the language classroom TGT may be more suitable for teaching materials with definitive answers just as is the case with STAD. Because the execution of the TGT is dependent on calculating points to identify "winners" it is excellent for purposes such as teaching structure, vocabulary and content questions. It is not impossible to apply the structure to interpretative material such as reading comprehension in a second or foreign language but this may make it more difficult to calculate scores for individuals and groups.

2.5.9 Learning Together

Learning Together is a structure that was first developed by Johnson and Johnson. Learning Together is, like many other Cooperative Learning structures, based on students helping each other learn. The structure focuses on developing a team product and because of this there is a strong emphasis on forming heterogeneous groups as it is important that each group is made up of students of different skills and abilities (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 2012). This structure differs from structures such as the Jigsaw in regards to the content of each task. The Jigsaw requires content that can be easily divided into subtopics as discussed in this essay in Section 2.5.2 The Jigsaw. However, this is not the case with Learning Together. Learning Together expects a group product that includes various skills such as creative writing and art (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 2012, p. 258). Each member of the cooperative group becomes answerable to different parts of the project, consisting with their skills and interests (Savage, Savage & Armstrong 2012).

Research on Learning Together and similar structures have shown that they increase students' learning in ways that individualistic approaches do not and that they increase students' respect for their classmates (Slavin 1995).

Learning Together can easily be applied to language teaching but because the structure does not require content that can be divided into subtopics it does place some restrictions on the content that can be applied. Project based work, such as posters, videos and websites, may be assigned. The workload could then be divided accordingly, one person could be responsible for gathering information, another for artistic layout and so on. Savage, Savage and Armstrong suggest playwriting in which one group member could be responsible for seeking information, another a group artist, the third a writer and the fourth a recorder (2012, p. 258). This task could be assigned to language students of secondary schools without considerable difficulties. On the other hand, the Learning Together structure may not be suitable for tasks involving the learning of grammar and language structures.

2.6 Pitfalls of Cooperative Learning

This section will discuss some of the problems that teachers have encountered with Cooperative Learning, as well as give an overview of solutions as

proposed by Kagan and Slavin. With Cooperative Learning, as with so many other things, making Cooperative Learning work efficiently is simply a question of great organization, encouragement and a lot of work. Kagan (1992) includes a chapter in which he discusses some reservations that teachers might have about Cooperative Learning. These include students benefitting off of the work of others, and a lack of time to get through the curriculum. As with traditional group work there is the possibility of inactive students. However, as was discussed above the problem of unequal work input can be prevented by including positive interdependence and individual accountability. If individual students are responsible for a part of the project they know that if they do not do the work the group will not succeed which in turn means that they cannot succeed.

Some teachers have expressed concern about whether they will have time to get through the assigned curriculum when they incorporate Cooperative Learning. This is a valid question but it might be a larger problem when traditional group work is being used instead of Cooperative Learning approaches. The lack of structure might lead to delays in execution. Kagan points out that certain structures, such as the Jigsaw, can be used to go through a large amount of content in a short period of time in an efficient manner (1992).

Another possible problem that can arise during Cooperative Learning is when members of a group do not get along with each other. This can easily happen because if groups have been formed according to Cooperative Learning guidelines then the group is made up of very different personalities. Slavin recommends giving students time to adjust. Once they see that they need to cooperate in order to succeed then they will find a way to get along. Therefore, teachers should not reassign group members to different groups too quickly (1995, p. 141). If students have been taught the social skills discussed in section 2.4.2 Cooperative Learning Methodology, then they should possess the skills needed to find a way to work with students they may dislike.

2.7. Cooperative Learning in Language Teaching

The groundbreaking work on Cooperative Learning was done in the 1970s and 1980s. Some may ask whether these 40 year old theories are relevant today. The short answer is yes. The fact is that Cooperative Learning theories are constantly

receiving more and more acclaim in educational settings and research on the subject is only increasing and almost all the research that is being done is founded on the work and theories of the scholars discussed here. Almost all Cooperative Learning structures that are used today are based on the ones devised by Slavin, Kagan and Johnson & Johnson. Many of these were described above but through the years many varieties to those structures have seen the light of day. Cooperative Learning is now used with great success worldwide and across all subjects and school levels (Johnson & Johnson 2009). Many students will respond positively to Cooperative Learning approaches because Cooperative Learning satisfies their affective needs. Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that all people need to feel a sense of relatedness, competence and autonomy (Apple 2006). Cooperative Learning approaches are capable of meeting all these needs; working with and depending upon fellow classmates will give students a sense of relatedness, being responsible to others and working to accomplish a certain goal will enhance their feeling of competence and working individually on a subtopic, making choices and decisions will provide students with autonomy. However, it is not enough to let students work together in a cooperative setting that does not provide the appropriate structure. Elements such as positive interdependence and individual accountability (as discussed in section 2.4.2 Cooperative Learning Methodology) are necessary to promote autonomy (Apple 2006).

Traditional language learning theories argued that language instruction should focus on language competence (Mitchell & Myles 2004) which means that teachers should emphasize teaching vocabulary and structural use of the target language. However, in the 1970s language experts started to debate the issue of fluency versus accuracy. Fluency is "a relatively unlimited automatic mode of processing language forms" (Brown 2007, p. 64), meaning that the student has reached a stage where he or she can carry on a conversation without having to think about every word or sentence that he or she is producing. Situational Language Teaching approaches (SLT), which focused on accuracy, such as the Grammar Translation approach which emphasized the learning of structures, had ruled the language classroom for decades. When the issue of fluency arose, those who argued for fluency claimed that the second language classroom should focus on meaningful language involvement (Brown 2007, p. 323). That is, the language classroom should focus on producing efficient and fluent speakers of second or foreign languages. According to

Fillmore (1979) there are four different kinds of fluency; the ability to engage in a conversation without significant hesitations, the ability to produce and talk in meaningful sentences, the ability to say appropriate things according to the context and the ability to be creative in language use (Brumfit 1984, p. 54). If a person possesses these skills then he or she should be able to function in a communicative setting (Brumfit 1984). Brumfit argues that language teaching is meant to prepare students for speaking adequately in natural circumstances and because of this students should be given the necessary time to practice (1984, p. 51). He then suggests that language students "may be more responsive to an emphasis on fluency" (1983, p. 188). Apple (2006) discusses the different goals that language teachers and students might have; teachers of languages may want to focus on the form and vocabulary of the target language while students may focus on fluency and social meaning (p. 284). The goals of the students must be considered when designing language tasks to maximize the possibility of a positive outcome. This is where Cooperative Learning can be very beneficial.

Cooperative Learning can be beneficial to language teaching and learning. The goal of Cooperative Learning is to afford students the opportunity of constructing their own knowledge which can be very compatible with the ideas of Communicative Approaches. Communicative Approaches to language learning emphasize that students should be given the opportunity to speak the target language as much as possible because substantial practice is the only way for students to develop productive, fluent language skills (Apple 2006). Cooperative Learning approaches provide students with ample opportunities of using the language so they are more likely to attain fluency or communicative competence. As it may be of use when it comes to practicing fluency then, according to Brumfit (1983) and Apple (2006), students should be responsive to this approach. However, Cooperative Learning is not limited to providing language students with fluency as it may be used to combine the goals of teacher with the goals of students (Apple 2006). As discussed above in section 2.5 Cooperative Learning Models and Structures, many Cooperative Learning structures may be used to teach students about the structural aspects of the target language in a communicative setting, combining accuracy practice and fluency practice.

Icelandic English language teachers have made attempts at introducing cooperation in language classrooms through what may be called "traditional group

work”. Unfortunately, this kind of group work often tends to lack the appropriate structure so it becomes inefficient and fails to produce the desired results for all participants of each group. This will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Methodology of the Study

A study was conducted in order to explore the use of Cooperative Learning in Iceland and teachers' ability to implement Cooperative Learning into their classrooms. The results of the study is presented in this chapter. In an attempt to find out whether teachers use any cooperation in their classrooms the study focused on group work and then asked specifically about the use of Cooperative Learning as an instructional methodology. The research question is threefold:

1. How do English teachers use group work in their classrooms?
2. Are they familiar with Cooperative Learning?
3. What opinions do they hold towards Cooperative Learning?

3.1. The Subjects

The search for subjects was relatively simple. The study was sent in the form of an online survey to all members of FEKÍ (Félag enskukennara á Íslandi) although it was only aimed at English teachers of the upper primary and secondary level. Since the survey was sent to a list serve and was entirely optional, there was no need to gather permissions. The survey was completely anonymous so there was no way of tracing the results back to each individual. However, the program used to create the survey allowed the option of examining each individual's responses as a whole. This was done by giving each participant a number and the program tracked the answers of each numbered individual. 37 people answered the survey, 16 primary school teachers and 20 secondary school teachers. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to find out exactly how many members were registered to FEKÍ, which in turn meant that it was impossible to calculate the proportion those 37 participants represented.

3.2. Data Collection

All data collection took place via the Internet. A survey consisting of 14 multiple choice question was created, using a program called SurveyMonkey. The survey can easily be divided into three parts. The first part simply served to establish the background of the participants. The second part of the survey asked participants how they use group work in their classrooms, how much time they devoted to it and

how they execute it. The last part asked specifically about formal Cooperative Learning methods, whether the participants are familiar with the methodology and where they were introduced to it. A link that led them to the survey was sent to them via email along with an introductory letter. The questions of the survey can be found, as they appeared to participants, in Appendix A.

The letter also contained my email address in case anyone had questions and a link to the survey. A copy of the letter can be seen in Appendix B. If and when members of the target group decided to participate they simply had to follow the link and it led them to the survey. As stated above all of the questions were multiple choice but some only required one answer while others provided the possibility of marking more than one choice. In addition some of the questions were followed by text boxes where participants could explain their answers if needed. These textboxes were provided with questions regarding the use of roles during group work, the types of assignments given, and the participants' use of Cooperative Learning.

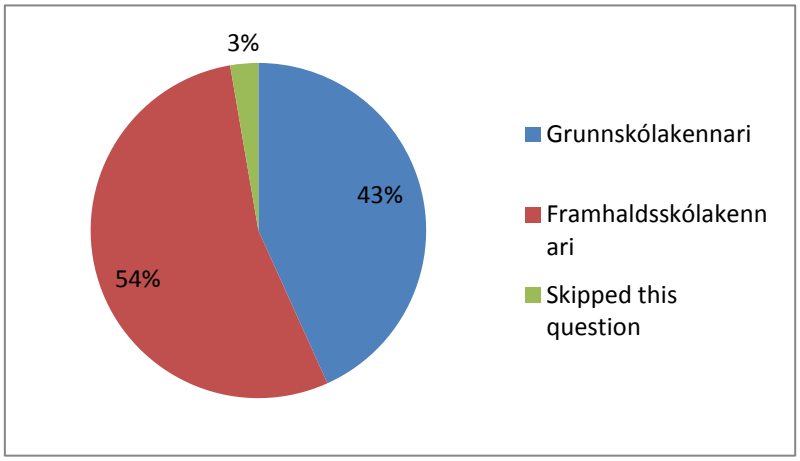
All of the survey questions were optional, that is, participants were not required to answer them in order to finish the survey. The results section will depict how many teachers skipped each question.

A reminder was sent out in an effort to remind people about it and thus getting more answers. The first time it was sent it received about two thirds of the total replies, as was to be expected. However, the second and third reminder served their purposes as they did bring in a few more answers each time.

3.3 Results

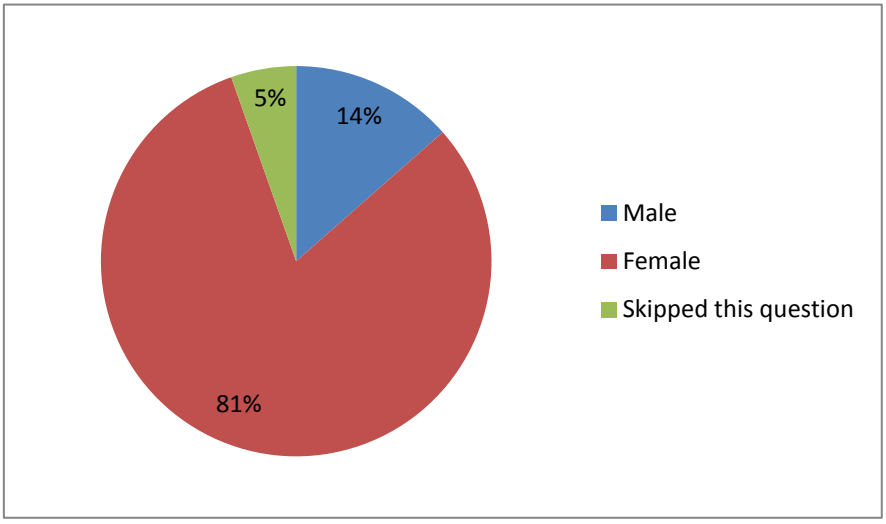
The following section provides various figures portraying the results from the survey. The first four questions serve to establish the background of the participants, their gender, where they teach and how long they have been teaching. Questions five to ten ask about their use of group work and questions eleven through fourteen ask about their opinions of group work and their knowledge of Cooperative Learning. In addition to rendering information about how many people marked each possibility, the charts also depict how many participants ignored each question.

Figure 4. Question 1 – At what level do you teach?



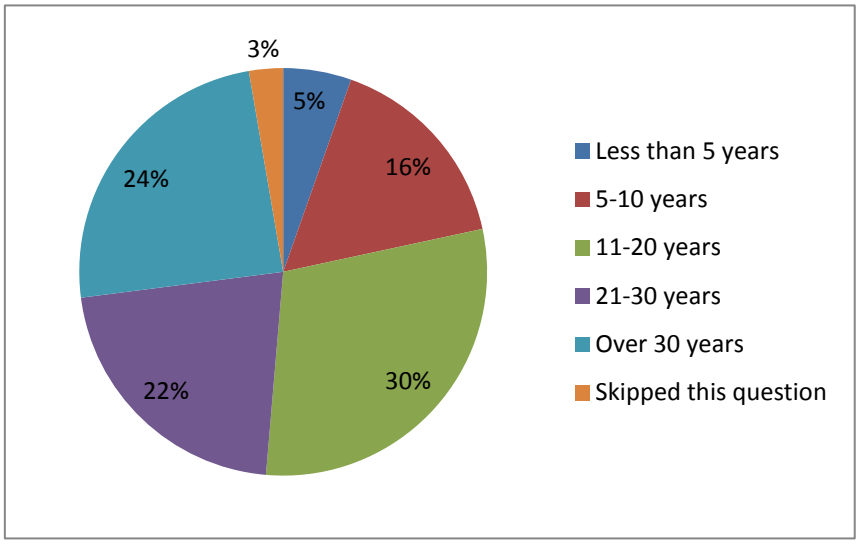
Out of the 36 that answered this question, 16 teach at the primary level and 20 at the secondary level. One person decided to skip this question.

Figure 5. Question 2 – What is your gender?



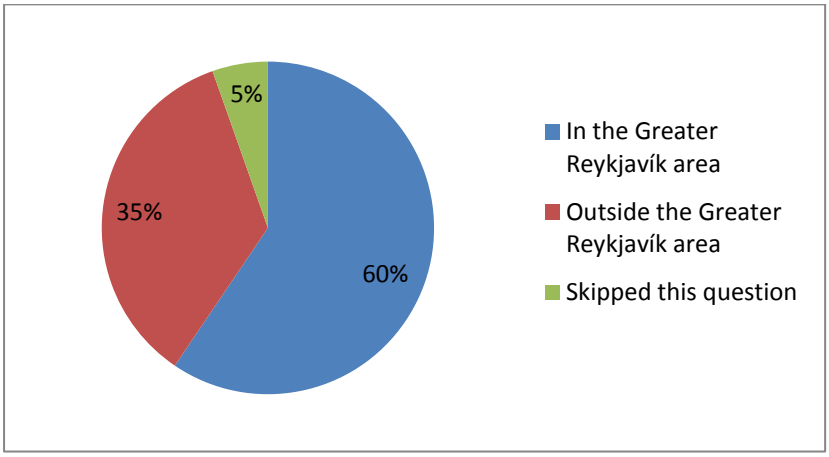
Five participants were men while 30 were women. Two people did not answer. It is difficult to say whether this is a representative sample for English teachers in Iceland because there are no official numbers for the division of the genders within the teaching population of language teachers in Iceland.

Figure 6. Question 3 – How many years of teaching have you completed?



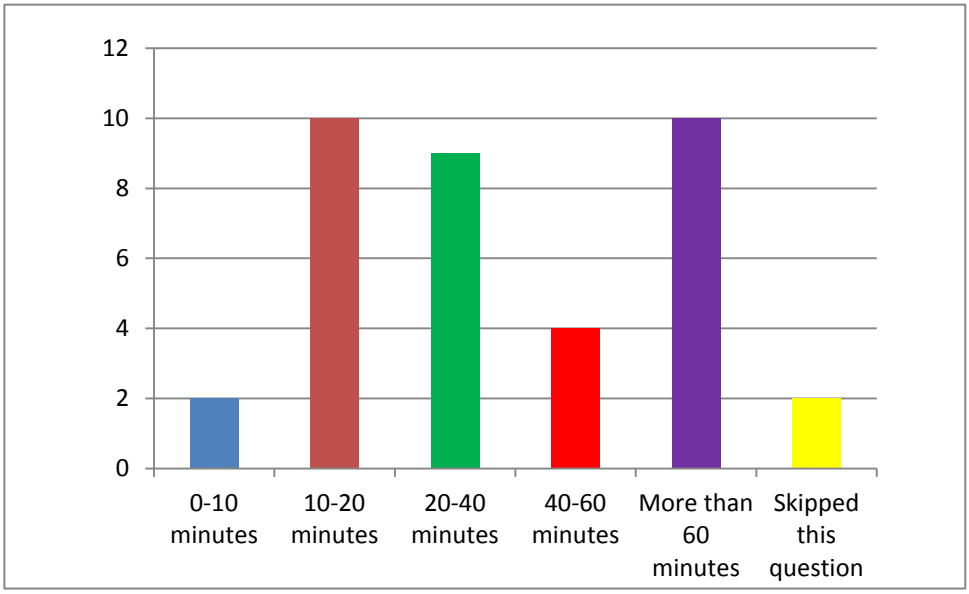
Answers to this question were fairly evenly distributed. Two people had been teaching for less than five years, six people for 5-10 years, 11 people had taught for 11-20 years, eight people had been teaching for 21-30 years and nine people for over 30 years. One person skipped this question.

Figure 7. Question 4 – Where do you teach?



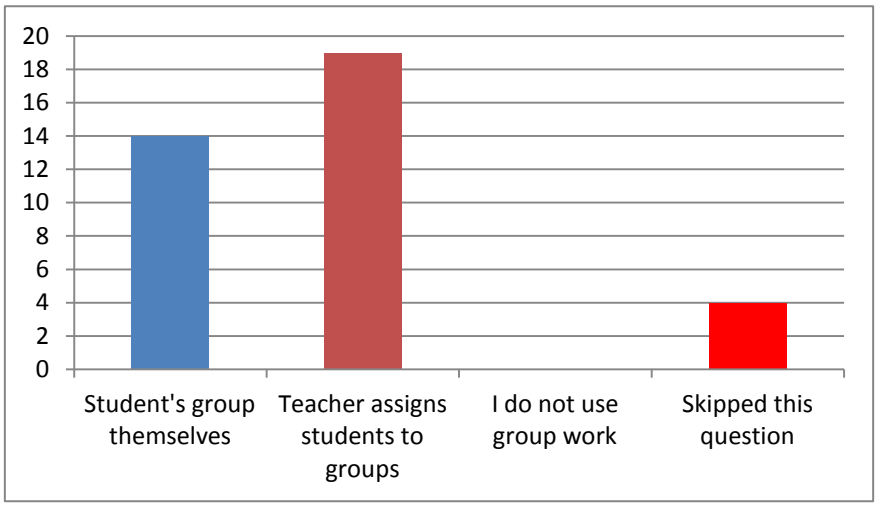
22 of the participants teach in the capital area and 13 in the country. Two people ignored the question. This is a representative example for teachers in Iceland according to numbers from The Bureau of Statistics (Ice. Hagstofa) (2014).

Figure 8. Question 5 – Approximately, how much time, per week, do you devote to students' group work?



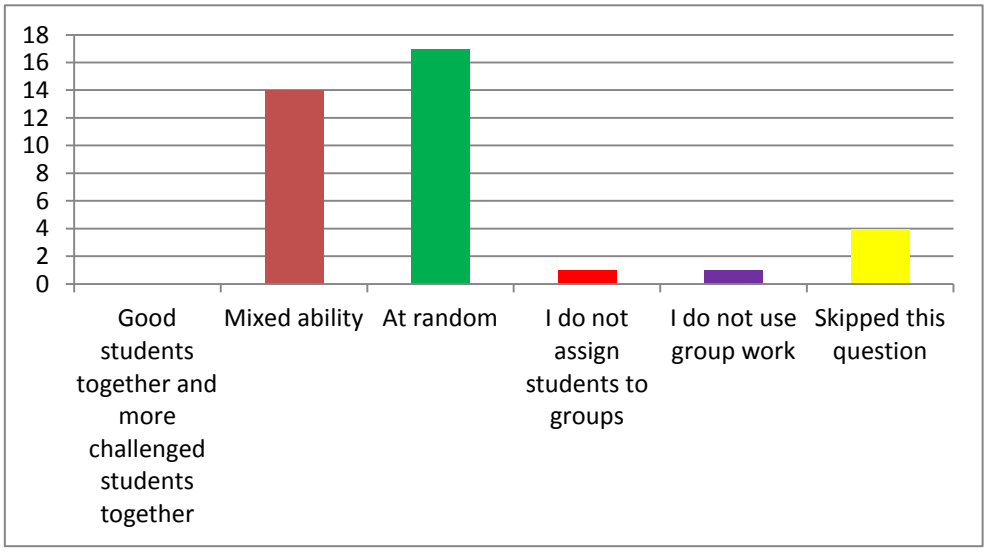
Two people said they spend less than 10 minutes on group work each week, 10 people claimed that 10-20 minutes were spent on group work per week, nine persons spend 20-40 minutes on group work, four people devote 40-60 minutes each week to group work and 10 people said they use more than 60 minutes for group work. Two people skipped the question.

Figure 9. Question 6. When doing group work, how are students assigned to groups?



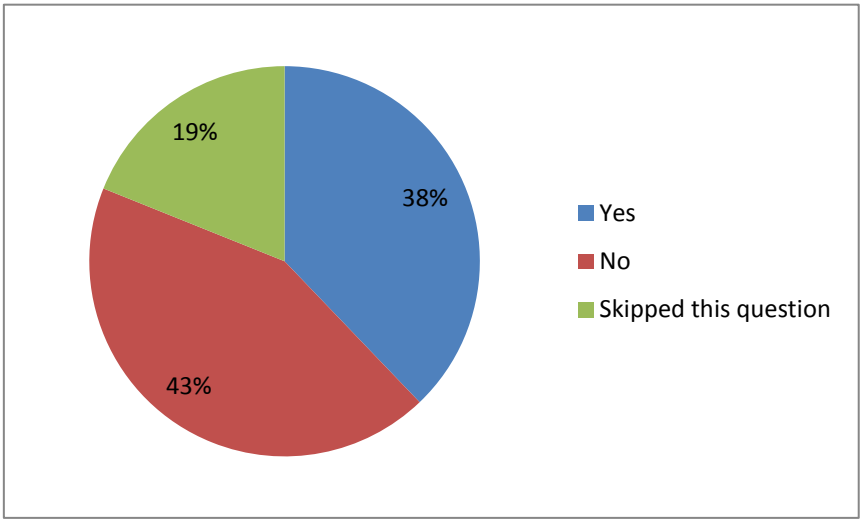
14 teachers answered that students are allowed to group themselves while 19 chose to assign students to groups. Four people did not answer the question.

Figure 10. Question 7 – If you, as the teacher, assign students to groups, do you assign them by ability, that is:



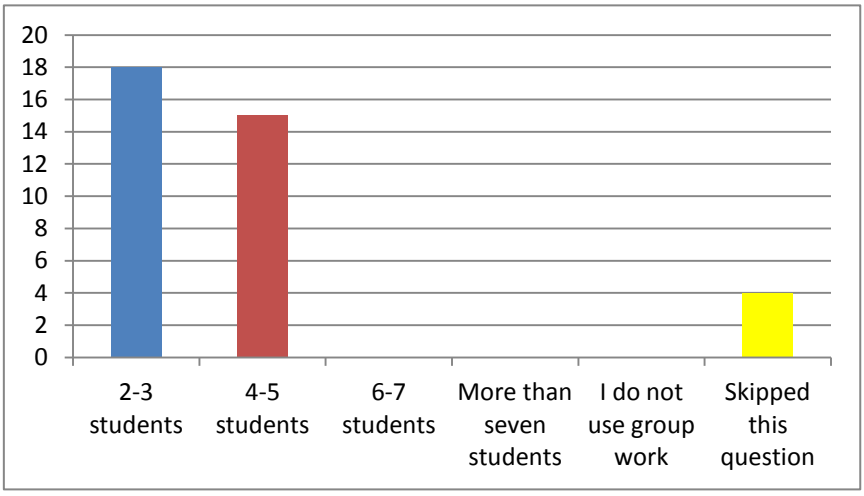
No one said that students were grouped according to ability while 14 said mixed ability. However, 17 people answered that students were grouped randomly. One person answered this question with the fact that they never assign students to groups and one person claimed that they never use group work. Four participants skipped the question.

Figure 11. Question 8 – If and when you assign students to groups, do you assign roles?



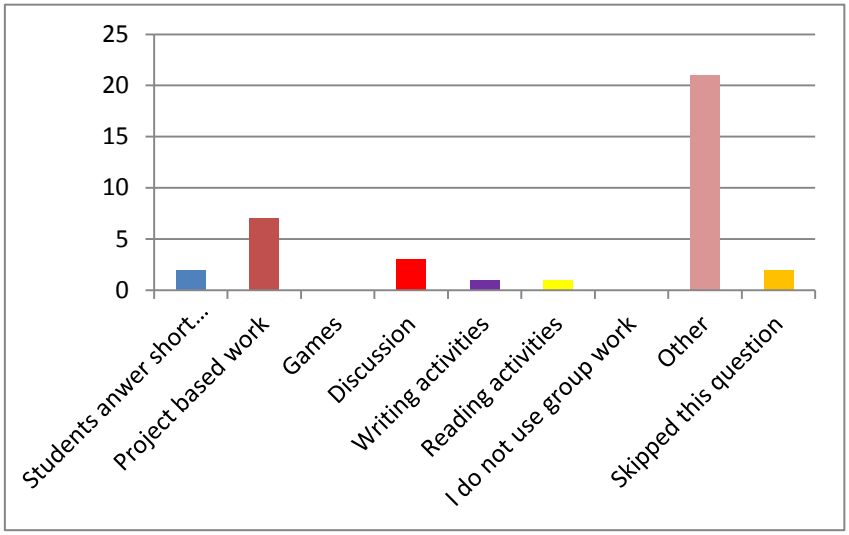
14 teachers answered that they do assign roles but 16 said that they do not. Seven people did not answer.

Figure 12. Question 9 – When implementing group work, how large are the groups?



18 teachers answered and said that they usually had groups consisting of 2-3 students and 15 said the groups usually had 4-5 students. No one said that they used groups with more than five people. However, four teachers skipped the question.

Figure 13. Question 10 – What activities are most commonly used during group work?



The answers to this question were various and quite evenly spread. 21 people answered the question with "other" and then commented in a special box for this purpose. This will be explained better in the discussion chapter.

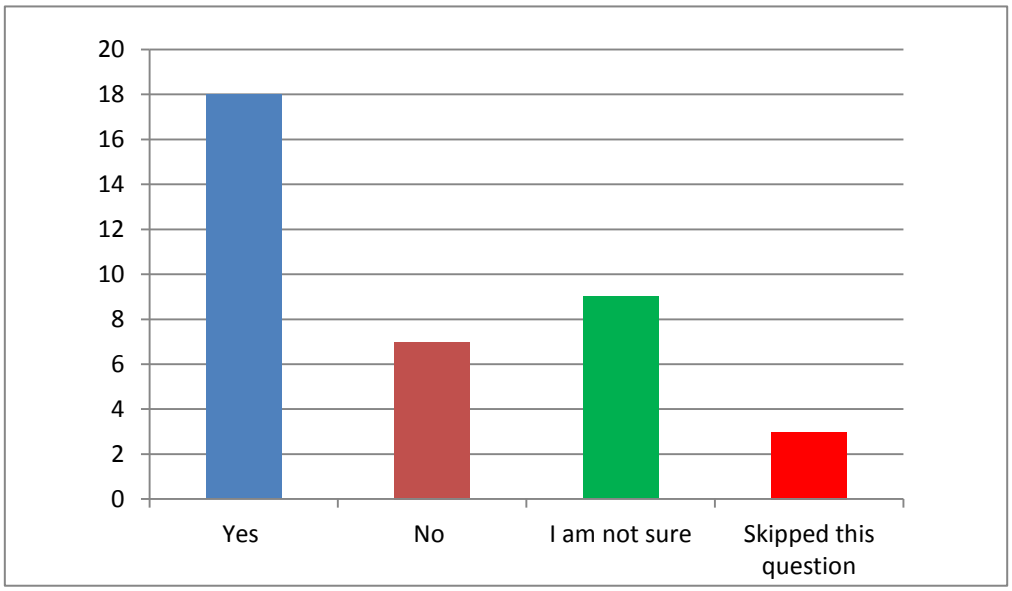
Figure 14. Question 11 – What are the advantages and disadvantages of group work?

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Engaging in group work enhances students' language skills	30 83.33%	2 5.56%	4 11.11%
During group work students tend to veer off task	11 30.56%	11 30.56%	14 38.89%
Implementing group work takes too much preparation time	1 2.94%	29 85.29%	4 11.76%
Group work is a good way to engage students that would otherwise be inactive	27 77.14%	2 5.71%	6 17.14%
Group work enhances the learning of low-ability students	24 72.73%	2 6.06%	7 21.21%
Group work holds high-ability students back	1 2.78%	31 86.11%	4 11.11%
Peer interaction helps students obtain a better understanding of the material	32 88.89%	2 5.56%	2 5.56%

It is very difficult to evaluate students fairly when using group work	8 22.22%	19 52.78%	9 25%

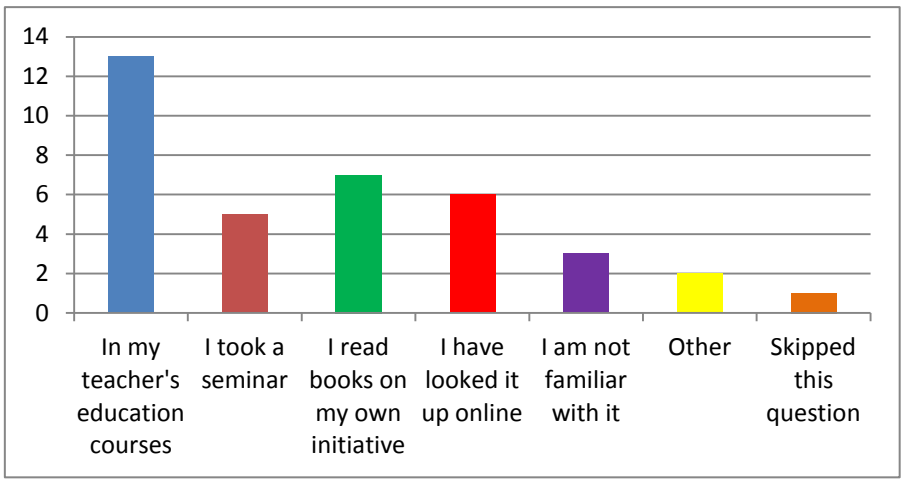
Teachers' opinions of group work seem to vary quite a bit. They seem to disagree in some aspects on what can be seen as advantages and disadvantages of group work. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

Figure 15. Question 12 – Are you familiar with the Cooperative Learning method?



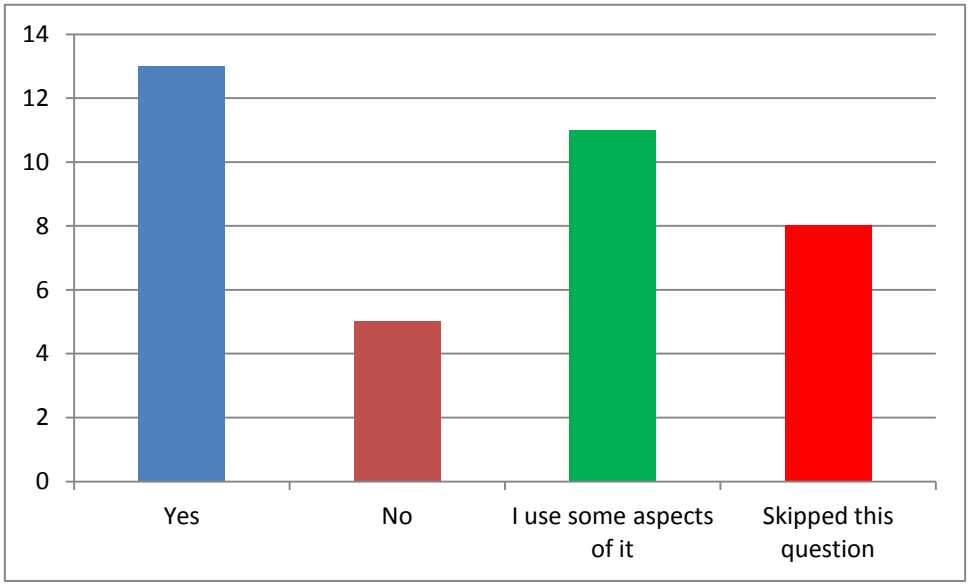
18 teachers claim to be familiar with the Cooperative Learning method but seven do not. Nine people were not sure and three skipped the question.

Figure 16. Question 13 – If yes, where were you introduced to it?



Here we see that only 13 participants have said that they were introduced to Cooperative Learning theories during their teacher education. However, many of the participants have chosen to familiarize themselves with the methods on their own. Some have read books or done internet research and five individuals took a special course on the subject.

Figure 17. Question 14 – Do you use Cooperative Learning?



Apparently formal Cooperative Learning approaches are not very common in English classrooms in Iceland. Only about a third of the participants claim that at some point they incorporate Cooperative Learning into their curriculum.

This section has provided a clear outline of the basic results of the survey. No additional information has been provided and the results have not been altered in any way. However, this section has excluded all comments given by teachers in textboxes provided for the purpose of relaying additional information. These answers can only be seen here in the form of charts that have an option called “Other”. These comments and answers will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Discussions

The following chapter will present the results of the survey in more detail and discuss what these findings may mean for English teachers and English teaching programs in secondary schools. The chapter is divided into three sections, each exploring a different theme from the survey, that is, the first section will discuss the participants' background asked about in the first four questions in order to find out whether the participants can be seen as a reliable sample, the second section examines the participants' use of group work and the third and final section will consider the participants' personal views and experience of Cooperative Learning as asked by the last four questions. First, the numbers from The Bureau of Statistics (Ice. Hagstofa) will be explored in an effort to find out whether the sample of the survey can be found to represent the population of secondary school teachers.

4.1 Background of Participants

The first four questions of the survey served to establish the background of the sample, whether one group of teachers was more likely to use group work than another or whether any one group was more likely to be familiar with Cooperative Learning. The first question asked whether the participant was a teacher at the primary or the secondary level. As can be seen in Figure 4 in the chapter above the division between levels is balanced. Although this essay mostly discusses the use of group work and Cooperative Learning in secondary schools it is interesting to see whether students might have experienced group work when they enter secondary schools. The second question asked about the gender of participants. Five participants or 14 percent were male while 30, or 81%, were female. Unfortunately, it is impossible to claim that these results represent the teaching population of this country, especially because the survey included both primary and secondary teachers. According to the Bureau of Statistics there were 1915 teachers of secondary schools in this country during the school year of 2011-2012. Close to half of those teachers were male.

Figure 18. Teachers in secondary schools according to gender.

Starfsfólk við kennslu eftir kyni, réttindum, starfsheiti, tegund og aðsetri skó la 1999-2012

	Alls við kennslu		
	Alls	Karlar	Konur
2011-2012			
Alls	1.915	904	1.011

(Hagstofa Íslands 2014)

However, when looking at the gender of primary school teachers, the numbers look drastically different:

Figure 19. Teachers in primary schools according to gender.

Starfsfólk við kennslu eftir kyni, landsvæðum og kennsluréttindum 1998-2012

	Starfsfólk við kennslu, alls		
	Alls	Karlar	Konur
2012			
Fjöldi			
Alls	4.784	921	3.863

(Hagstofa Íslands 2014)

According to this table there were 4.784 primary school teachers teaching in the year 2012. 921 or 19.3% were male. This percentage is much closer to the division of the participants in the survey. All the same, because the statistics of the survey include participants of both levels it will be difficult to apply the gender question to results of some of the later questions in the survey. It is possible that language teachers are more likely to be women. It certainly seems that way when you observe teachers in schools. This should be taken with a grain of salt as it was, unfortunately, not possible to find public figures regarding the gender division of all language teachers. However, The University of Iceland does publish a list of graduates. According to this list eight people have graduated with either a M.Paed or MA in English teaching since 2006. All eight were women (Háskóli Íslands 2014), supporting the notion that most English teachers are female.

The third question asked how long teachers had been teaching. Most of the results were quite balanced. Only two people, or 5% had been teaching for five years or less. 16%, six people, had been teaching for five to ten years, 11 people (30%) for 11-20 years, eight people or 22% for 21-30 years and nine people had been teaching for more than 30 years (24%). Unfortunately, the Bureau of Statistics does not keep record of how long teachers have been teaching so there is no way of

discovering whether these results represent the actual periods of employment for teachers in Iceland. However, the Bureau of Statistics does keep record of the actual age of teachers:

Figure 20. Secondary school teachers by age.

Starfsfólk eftir kyni, aldri, stöðuhlutfalli og menntun 1999-2012

	Starfsfólk við kennslu		
	Starfsfólk		
	Alls	Karlar	Konur
2011-2012			
29 ára og yngri	93	50	43
30-39 ára	373	148	225
40-49 ára	518	185	333
50-59 ára	597	306	291
60 ára og eldri	330	213	117

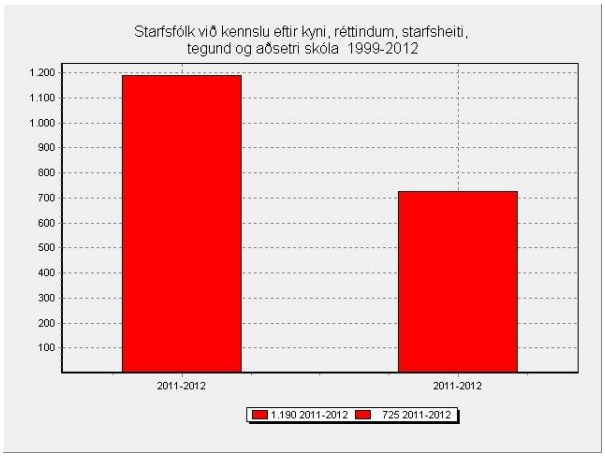
(Hagstofa Íslands, 2014)

If these numbers are converted into percentages the numbers will look something like this: 29 and younger = 4.9%, 30-39 years old = 19.5%, 40-49 years = 27.1%, 50-59 years = 31.2% and 60 years and older = 17.3%. When this table is compared to Figure 6, which contains the results of the question, it becomes clear that the categories seem to fit together quite nicely. It is tempting to make the assumption that this table can support the findings of the survey and thus claim that the survey gives a rather accurate representation of teachers in Iceland. However, this must be taken with a grain of salt. Not all teachers start teaching right after graduating from college or university but much later, earning them a shorter teaching career than other teachers in the same age range. In addition some teachers have taught for a few years, taken a break from teaching and then come back to it. Nonetheless, it is probably safe to assume that teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience will fall into the upper range of the age categories. The question about the length of teaching careers will give the opportunity of exploring whether longer or shorter experience effects the use of group work or opinions on Cooperative Learning in any way. That is, it allows for a search of themes or trends among participants.

The last question in this section asked the participants whether they teach in the Greater Reykjavík district or outside of it. Figure 7 in chapter three contains a pie chart that shows that 60% answered that they work in the Reykjavík district and 35% outside of it. However, two people skipped the question. If those two people were

left out of the final results so that the remaining 35 were the only ones included, then the percentages look a little different, that is, 37% work outside of the capital district and 63% work in the capital. When statistics from the Bureau of Statistics are examined some common themes appear:

Figure 21. Secondary school teachers according to placement.



(Hagstofa Íslands, 2014)

The diagram shows that in the school year 2011-2012 38% of secondary school teachers taught outside of the capital district while 62% taught in the Reykjavík area. The numbers for primary school teachers are very similar. It is clear that the numbers are very much comparable so it is safe to say that the results of the survey provide an accurate sampling of the teaching class. This provides the opportunity to examine whether group work is used in a different manner outside of the capital or not.

4.2 Participants' Use of Group Work

The first question in this section asked teachers how much time was spent on group work each week. There was quite wide a distribution in the answers. 6% of teachers said that they only spend about 10 minutes on group work per week, 27% answered that they spend 10-20 minutes on group work each week, similar results or 24% came for 20-40 minutes, 11% said they devote 40-60 minutes to group work and 27% of participants claim that more than 60 minutes are used for group work each week. It is obvious that teachers are using group work in their classrooms. However, it is alarming that almost 60% of participants answered that they use group

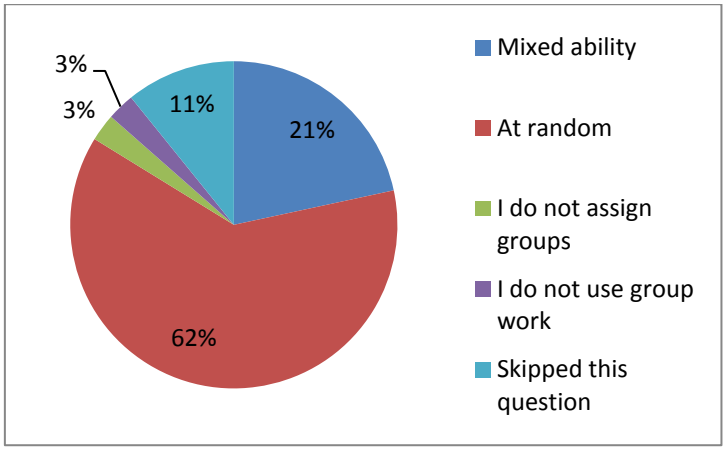
work for less than 40 minutes each week. The literature on Cooperative Learning all seems to agree that the more this method is used in the classroom, the more beneficial it will be for students. Johnson and Johnson claim that in order to build a high performance cooperative-team structure it is necessary to spend a majority of classroom time working with Cooperative Learning methods and even go so far as to claiming that a cooperative school structure in which students, teachers and other staff work on cooperative groups would be the best way to produce students with high level thinking skills and knowledge (1994). Leaving the matter of cooperative schools aside, it is clear that although teachers seem to be incorporating group work into their classes, according to the survey answers, they are not doing so in a manner that is consisting with Cooperative Learning theories. What is interesting here is that when the answers to this question are examined in correlation with the teaching experience of the participants there does not seem to be any connection between years of teaching and the use of group work. When the average of how many minutes each age group spent on group work were calculated, it turned out that the difference was not enough to be considered significant. The groups with the highest average number of minutes spent on group work per week were individuals who had been teaching for up to ten years but on average they spent 40 minutes on group work each week. The group with the lowest average of 31 minutes per week, were teachers who had been teaching for 21-30 years. When the time spent on group work each week was examined from the perspective of primary and secondary school teachers, it turned out that the difference was not very drastic. On average, participants who taught in primary schools spent about 31 minutes on group work each week. Secondary school teachers, on the other hand, spent 41 minutes on average on group work each week. There did not seem to be a difference in the use of group work according to location; teachers in the Greater Reykjavík area and teachers outside the capital had very similar numbers when the average time spent on group work was calculated according to this criteria.

The sixth question of the survey (the second in this section) asked how students were assigned to groups during group work. A little over half of the participants answered that the teacher assigns students to groups while almost 40% said that students were allowed to group themselves. It is a matter of concern that students assign themselves to groups. As discussed in chapter two of this essay, Cooperative Learning theories suggest that teachers should in all cases be

responsible for forming groups or teams that are likely to succeed. These groups are formed on the basis that students can compensate for each other's "shortcomings", that is they can give the rest of the group something of themselves. Students forming their own groups opens up the possibility of success being minimized as students often do not think about choosing to work with people who are likely to enhance their own knowledge or teach them something, but opt to work with their friends, which in turn sometimes leads to students turning away from the task at hand to discuss other matters. Two of the participants complained in textboxes provided with other questions in the survey, that only having two options to answer here was too limited. They pointed out that sometimes they count into groups or even draw names from a hat. These comments are valid as teachers often use these techniques to divide students into groups. However, this arrangement was chosen deliberately; for the purposes of this essay, all methods of grouping students together that does not include students forming their own groups, are considered to be the act of the teacher; it is the teacher's choice whether he counts into group, draws them from a hat or simply points to students and tells them to work together.

The next question is related to the previous one as it asks about the criteria according to which students are assigned to groups, that is whether this is done at random or by ability. It was pleasant to see that no one replied that they divide students into groups by ability, that is, high-achieving students together and lower-ability students together. Students of different abilities should have the opportunity to work together and learn from each other. However, there are some troubling results here. 14 participants, or 38% said that they assign students to groups by mixed abilities, and, unfortunately, almost half or 46% said that students were grouped randomly. The trouble with these results is that half of those who claim to assign students into mixed ability groups answered the previous question by saying that students were allowed to group themselves. These answers must be considered mutually exclusive. As discussed in the last paragraph, students are likely to want to work with people they know or their friends. This means that they are not considering bringing different abilities and talents into their groups. If these instances are shifted accordingly into the category of random group selection then the chart will look drastically different:

Figure 22. Adapted numbers for answers to question seven.



Here we see that 62% of teachers allow groups to be selected at random, whether they appoint the groups or allow students to do it. In order to produce the desired outcome, that is, critical higher-level thinking and deeper understanding of the language, the groups must be formed carefully as explained in chapter two. This will lead to a more focused work environment where all students can gain and retain knowledge.

When asked whether the participants assign roles to students during group work, more than 40% said no and 38% said yes. Assigning different roles to students during group work can make the students' efforts more direct as they know exactly what they are supposed to do and what is expected of them. However, experts seem to take a different stand when it comes to assigning roles. Spencer Kagan mentions these kind of roles which he refers to as "maintenance roles." However, he simply explains what they are but does not express an opinion on their practicality or efficiency other than claiming that assigning these roles does not make sure that all students of the group participate equally during the task (1992). Johnson and Johnson are much more positive toward assigning roles than Kagan is. They point out the certainty that comes with these roles, as they define what each student is responsible for and what they can expect from other members of their group, thus creating a more potent working relationship (1994). A textbox was provided with this question so that participants could write down what were the most commonly used roles in their classroom. This was not mandatory but 17 people chose to write down a few roles. The most common roles were group leader, secretary and someone who makes sure that everyone speaks English during group work. These are all valid roles for many kinds of group work. However, often students tend to ignore

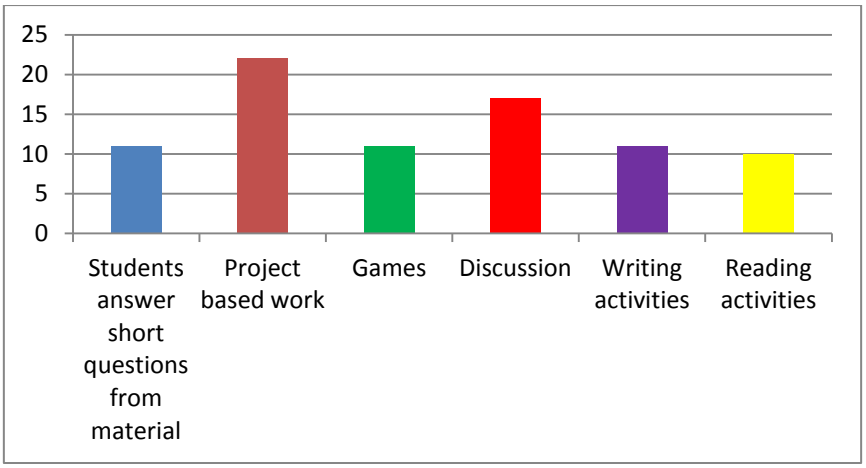
their roles; as they feel that as long as someone is writing down their project or text then the rest does not matter. In an article about literature assignments, Ratz wrote a list of more than ten roles that can be given to students during group work. These are aimed at literature groups but many of them can be applied to many kinds of group work. The list includes roles such as “Provocateur” whose roles is to ask challenging questions, “connector” who associates the material with other subjects and a “summarizer” who summarizes what the material is about (Ratz 2008). These roles can lead students to be even more active and work in ways that they have not done before, leading to a longer retention of the material they are studying.

The next question asked about group size. Cooperative Learning theories are rather clear when it comes to deciding on group size. Frey, Fisher & Everlove write that, preferably, students should work in groups of four. They support this claim by stating that the larger groups are, the risk of inactive students increases as they simply do not get the chance to express themselves (2009). Johnson & Johnson offer a bit more leniency when it comes to determining group size as they suggest that each group consist of two to four students (1994). It is encouraging to see that the results from the survey seem to be in an agreement with the theories. The survey included answers for four different group sizes. Half of the respondents said that they usually have groups of two or three students and 40% said four to five students. No one claimed to use groups larger than five students which is congruent with Frey, Fisher & Everlove’s assessment of group sizes (2009). However, one participant did mention in a separate textbox that the number of students in each group depended on the kind of work being executed each time. This is a valid point when group work in Icelandic secondary schools is being examined. Most teachers let the work load determine group size. Although this is a well-founded remark, when Cooperative Learning is being implemented into the lesson, the structure of each project or task should be prepared while keeping group size in mind in order to make sure that every student learns as much as possible.

Icelandic teachers seem to use group work for a variety of tasks. When asked what kind of activities they most commonly assign during group work the answers were diverse. The survey offered six different answers to the question, listing different task types, and asked which task types teachers most commonly used. Unfortunately, the survey only allowed participants to choose one answer to this question but it would have been more appropriate to offer the chance to mark

multiple answers. However, a textbox was provided and, fortunately, many of the participants chose to list all the different tasks they use for group work. Here is a column chart depicting the results:

Figure 23. Tasks assigned during group work.



This chart includes both multiple choice answers and answers written down in the textbox. It is clear that many teachers have written down multiple activities used over the each semester during group work. This diversity of tasks lends a very positive side to group work as it gives students the opportunity to work with others in different settings each time, allowing them to learn even more than they would in a competitive or individualistic classroom.

The last question in this section asked about participants' personal opinion on what implementing group work into the classroom means. Overall, teachers seem to be very positive toward group work as can be seen from Figure 14, depicted in chapter three. The question was set up in such a way that eight statements were given to participants and they were supposed to answer each statement by choosing to mark options called "agree", "disagree" or "neutral". The first statement asked whether participants agreed that participating in group work is a good method to enhance language skills. It was tremendously encouraging to see that more than 80% of participants agreed with this statement. It was surprising that two participants disagreed with the statement and four claimed to be neutral. Prior to sending out the survey it was believed that this statement would attract close to a 100% agreement because group work engages so many skills, especially language related skills. The answers to a statement asking teachers whether they feel students tend to veer off

task, were rather troublesome. Close to 40% answered that they were neutral, 30% agreed and 30% disagreed. So long as a task is structured well then students should be engaged in the work through the entire class. Perhaps their distractions can be blamed on lack of structure to the tasks assigned. Cooperative Learning theories suggest very tight structures to each task. These structures are meant to engage students and make sure they learn. It seems that often, though by far not in all cases, group work in Icelandic secondary schools seems to lack structure that keeps students occupied with the task.

The third statement asked teachers whether they felt that implementing group work takes too much time to prepare. The results here showed that 85% of participants disagreed with the statement, thus claiming that the preparation time was acceptable. When preparing for group work teachers should take the time to do it well but should also make sure that the preparation time is consistent with the length of the task, how much it counts toward the final grade and how many people are meant to solve the task. The preparation time should be adequate to structure each task well, it should not take so long that it dissuades teachers from implementing group work and Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson 1994).

The fourth statement of this question asked whether group work is a suitable method to engage students who would otherwise be inactive. 77% of participants agreed with the statement but 17% said they were neutral. As discussed in chapter two, group work and Cooperative Learning should be the ideal teaching technique to make sure that all students of the class are taking active part in the lesson. If the task is structured in such a way that guarantees positive interdependence then no student is unnecessary during the time spent in group work; every student's best efforts are needed in order to complete the task.

Next, participants were asked whether they agreed that group work was well suited to reinforce the learning of lower-ability students. 73% agreed, 6% disagreed and 21% were neutral. Perhaps group work is exactly what this group of students needs; by applying themselves in group work and Cooperative Learning students explore the teaching material in different ways than they would do in whole class discussion or when they are simply given the information by the teacher. This is along the lines of John Dewey's theories on "learning by doing" where students learn by experimenting and exploring materials for themselves (Lehal 2013).

The next statement was linked to the previous one as it asked about the effect of group work on students of different abilities. This time participants were asked whether they felt that group work holds higher-ability students back from learning. The majority of participants disagreed with the statement, meaning that they did not feel that group work has negative impact on high-ability students. This is very similar to what Johnson and Johnson write about students of different abilities who engage in group work. They claim that so long as students work in heterogeneous and mixed ability groups then the work will be beneficial for all students as high-ability students can learn even more and gain even deeper understanding of the material by discussing them and explaining them to others. That is "the tutor becomes the tutee" (1995).

The seventh statement pertained to whether participants felt that peer interaction helps students obtain a deeper understanding of the material at hand. The vast majority of those who answered the question agreed with the statement. As discussed above, interacting with peers can be highly beneficial for students. Students can relate to one another and create a working relationship that will never exist between a student and a teacher. They understand each other in a way that adolescents and adults may not even be capable of and can thus communicate in a manner that leads all parties involved to learn that which they need.

The last statement of this question addressed the subject of whether teachers felt uncomfortable assessing students during group work. 53% of participants disagreed with the statement, 22% agreed and 25% answered they were neutral. Some teachers might feel that it is difficult to evaluate students fairly when they are working in teams and they may even be right. It takes a bit of work to make sure that all grades are fair and given according to participation as well as the quality of the work of each student. This is why dual grading systems could be beneficial. Grading systems for Cooperative Learning are discussed in more detail in chapter two of this essay.

4.3 Participants' Knowledge of Cooperative Learning

The last section of the survey discussed above asked participants about their use of group work in their classrooms. Questions in the following section, on the

other hand, asked specifically about participants' knowledge of formal Cooperative Learning methodology and whether they use any aspects of it in their teaching.

The first question in this section (question 12 of the survey) simply asked whether participants were familiar with formal Cooperative Learning methods. As Figure 12 in chapter three depicts, half of the respondents answered "yes", but 19% said no and 24% were not sure. However, one might ask "so what? Why does it matter whether teachers are familiar with this or not if they are using group work anyway?" The answer is that it matters a great deal. Being familiar with formal methods of Cooperative Learning may help teachers to structure their classroom's group work in a more efficient manner so that it becomes more focused and students gain knowledge from their participation that they would not otherwise gain.

The next question asked participants where they had been introduced to the theories of Cooperative Learning, that is if they were familiar with them. What is interesting here, is the fact that only 13 respondents claimed that they learned about Cooperative Learning methodology in their teacher's education courses. When these 13 were examined specifically to see how long their teaching experience was, it turned out that they belonged to every category given in question three. This means that it is not possible to determine whether Cooperative Learning is getting stronger or weaker in teacher training programs here in Iceland. On the other hand there were many participants who claimed to have gotten to know Cooperative Learning methods through their own personal efforts. Some attended special seminars on Cooperative Learning, while others looked it up online or read books and articles about it on their own initiative. In a textbox one respondent even said that she took a two day seminar about the subject in Canada. Even though teaching programs do not seem to offer adequate information on Cooperative Learning, teachers are still very interested in learning about it and, hopefully, applying it to their classrooms.

The last question of the survey asked whether participants use Cooperative Learning in their classrooms. Unfortunately, 22% of participants decided against answering this question. 13 individuals (35%) said that they use Cooperative learning, five (13%) said no and 11 (30%) said that they use some aspects of it. The answers to this question are quite interesting when they are examined in relation to the question that asked whether participants were familiar with Cooperative Learning methods. 13 people said that they use Cooperative Learning in their classrooms and 11 more said they used some aspects of it but when the answers of these 24

respondents were reviewed individually it turned out that about a handful of them had answered that they were either not familiar with Cooperative Learning methods or that they were not sure. This suggests that teachers who want to apply these methods do try to do so but they are simply not familiar enough with them to do so successfully. This is no surprise as teachers do not seem to be getting sufficient education to administer these methods.

It is clear that teachers are using group work and even though they seem to be positive toward Cooperative Learning methods they are generally not using them, whatever the reason may be. Perhaps teaching courses offered to training teachers should emphasize Cooperative Learning more than is currently being done so that teachers are more prepared to use it in their classrooms. It may even be a good idea to offer seminars on Cooperative Learning as part of refresher courses for teachers (Ice. endurmenntun). Then perhaps teachers would be able to structure tasks according to Cooperative Learning methodology and thus encourage their students to become more active in each lesson.

To comment on the amount of responses to the survey, some critique may be valid. The survey was sent to all members of FEKÍ but only 37 individuals answered. Although this is not a very high number it does have its advantages. These people represent the target group quite well as was discussed in the first section of this chapter. In addition this number of participants allows for a closer examination of the answers of each individual so that it is possible to examine the answers from more than one criteria.

As mentioned above it is clear from the results of the survey that teachers are using group work in their classrooms. However, formal Cooperative Learning does not seem to play a large part in language studies. This is rather surprising. Given the proven success of Cooperative Learning methods and the general consensus that students should be more active in their own learning, it could have been surmised that Cooperative Learning would be a widely used method. Although it is very popular around the globe it seems to be rather rare in Iceland. Teachers cannot be expected to teach what they do not know so perhaps the problem lies in their education, that is, their lack of education concerning Cooperative Learning methods.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

The thesis has aimed at examining the use of Cooperative Learning approaches in English language classrooms in Iceland. The goal was to explore to what extent group work is used in the English language classroom in Iceland and whether teachers were familiar with and used Cooperative Learning methods to enhance language learners' opportunities to practice using English in communication with other learners. The results of the study came as no surprise as many respondents claimed that they used group work, but most were unfamiliar with Cooperative Learning Approaches. Group work therefore seems to be unstructured and haphazard. When those who answered that they knew Cooperative Learning as a teaching methodology were asked where they had learned of it, most seemed to have done so on their own and not, for example, in their teacher education. This comes as no surprise as Cooperative Learning has not been emphasized in teachers' education in Iceland. This is unfortunate because, according to the study, teachers seem to be have very positive opinions of cooperative approaches.

Cooperative Learning is important when it comes to language learning for a number of reasons. It is a learner centered approach that affords the language learner greater opportunities to practice their language skills in real communication than traditional teacher centered models allow. Cooperative Learning Structures provide a framework for group work where each student has a role and activities are prepared so that student engagement is both cooperative and independent, thus maximizing participation by all students in the group. When engaged in Cooperative Learning students construct their own knowledge of the target language through working with others on language rich tasks. This means that students are no longer passive participants in the classroom but become active in their own language development which is likely to result in greater retention of the material covered. Students' thinking skills are enhanced as they negotiate meaning from the material they are provided with and make connections between the new material and previous knowledge they may possess. Pronunciation and fluency are greatly enhanced so that students should become more efficient language speakers and thus able to perform in a communicative setting. Furthermore, students' social skills and abilities to solve problems in cooperation with others are enhanced.

Teachers often talk about how they want their students to be more active in their own studies and take on more responsibility. Cooperative Learning approaches are excellent for this purpose as it is based on students working to help each other construct their own knowledge of the subject being studied.

Cooperative Learning approaches can never, and will never, replace all other teaching approaches such as direct instruction and lectures but it can prove to be a valuable addition to any classroom.

This thesis, especially the chapters that describe the survey, mostly discuss Cooperative Learning approaches in relation to English teaching. However, these approaches apply to the teaching of all languages.

Bibliography

Allwright, R. (1983). Language learning through communication practice. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* C.J. Brumfit & K. Johnson (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Apple, M.T. (2006). Language Learning Theories and Cooperative Learning Techniques in the EFL Classroom. *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture, 9*(2), 277-301. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/443286/Language_learning_theories_and_cooperative_learning_techniques_in_the_EFL_classroom

Aronson, E. (2014, April 4). *The Jigsaw Classroom: Overview of the Technique.* Retrieved from http://www.jigsaw.org/overview.htm

Brown, H.D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy.* White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Brumfit, C. (1983). "Communicative" Language Teaching: an Educational Perspective. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* C.J. Brumfit & K. Johnson (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brumfit, C. (1984). *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching: The roles of fluency and accuracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Center for teaching and learning. (1999). Cooperative Learning: Students Working in Small Groups. *Speaking of Teaching, 10* (2), 2-4.

Condruz-Bacescu, M. (2012). Foreign Language Teaching Methods. *The International Annual Scientific Session Strategies XXI 1,* 197-202. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1326754931?accountid=28822

Frey, N., Fisher, D. & Everlove, S. (2009). *Productive Group Work: How to Engage Students, Build Teamwork, and Promote Understanding.* Alexandria, Virgina: ASCD.

Hagstofa Íslands. (2014, March 24). *Starfsfólk við kennslu eftir kyni, réttindum, starfsheiti, tegund og aðsetri skóla 1999-2012.* Retrieved from http://hagstofa.is/?PageID=2604&src=https://rannsokn.hagstofa.is/pxis/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=SKO03301%26ti=Starfsf%F3lk+vi%F0+kennslu+eftir+kyni%2C+r%E9ttindum%2C+starfsheiti%2C+tegund+og+a%F0setri+sk%F3la++1999%2D2012%26path=../Database/skolamal/fsStarfsfolk/%26lang=3%26units=Fjöldi

Háskóli Íslands. (2014, Jan 30). *Brautskráningar.* Retrieved from http://www.hi.is/adalvefur/brautskraningar

Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. (1994). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning.* Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T & Smith, K.A. (1995). Cooperative Learning and Individual Student Achievement in Secondary Schools. *Secondary Schools and Cooperative Learning: Theories, Models and Strategies.* J.E. Pedersen & A.D. Digby (Ed.). New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc.

Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. (2009). An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning. *Educational Researcher 38*(5), 365-379. Retrieved from http://edr.sagepub.com/content/38/5/365.full.pdf+html

Ju, F. (2013). Communicative language teaching (CLT): A critical and comparative perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(9), 1579-1583. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1445143089?accountid=28822

Kagan, S. (1990). The Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning. *Educational Leadership, 47*(4), 12-16. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198912_kagan.pdf

Kagan, S. (1992). *Cooperative Learning.* California: Kagan Cooperative Learning

Kagan, S. (2014). About Kagan Publishing & Professional Development. *Kagan Online.* Retrieved from http://www.kaganonline.com/about_us.php

Kaufman, D. (2004). Constructivist Issues in Language Learning and Teaching. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 24,* 303-319. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/198094654?accountid=28822

Krashen, S.D. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning.* California: Pergamon Press Inc.

Krashen, S.D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* California: Pergamon Press Inc.

Krashen, S.D. (1991). The Input Hypothesis: An update. *Georgetown University Round Table of Languages and Linguistics 1991.* James E. Alatis (Ed.). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Pres.

Krashen, S.D. (1998). Comprehensible Input? *System 26,* 175-182.

Kuhn, D. (1972). Mechanism of Change in the Development of Cognitive Structures. *Child Development, 43,* 833-844.

Larsen-Freeman, D. & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lehal, J. (2013, Jan 17). Column: Learning by doing is key. *The Leader.* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1270763509?accountid=28822

Locke, J. (1692). *Some Thoughts Concerning Education.* Retrieved from http://www.fordham.edu/HALSAll/MOD/1692locke-education.asp

Manoliu, M.N. (2012). A Communicative Approach to Language Teaching – Origins and Development. *International Journal of Communication Research, 2*(2), 138-139. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1114878134?accountid=28822

Mitchell, R. & Myles, F. (2004). *Second Language Learning Theories.* London: Hodder Education.

Motley, M.T. (1988). Taking the terror out of talk. *Psychology Today,* 22 (1), 46-49. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/214479231?accountid=28822

Nagel, G.K. (2001). *Effective Grouping for Literary Instruction.* Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, a Pearson Education Company.

Ratz, M. (2008). Shakespeare in Circles: How a New Approach Enlivened My Classroom. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 45*(1), 40-44. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/232031835?accountid=28822

Sachs, G.T., Candlin, C.N., Rose, K.R. (2003). Developing Cooperative Learning in the EFL/ESL Secondary Classroom. *RELC Journal, 34*(3), 338-369. Retrieved from http://oro.open.ac.uk/347/1/1000209.pdf

Savage, T.V., Savage, M.K. & Armstrong, D.G. (2012). *Teaching in the Secondary School.* Boston: Pearsson.

Sharan, Y. & Sharan, S. (1990). Group Investigation Expands Cooperative Learning. *Educational Leadership, 47*(4), 17-21. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198912_sharan.pdf

Slavin, R.E. (1995). *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research and Practice.* Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, a Simon & Schuster Company.

Stenlev, J. (2003). Cooperative Learning in Foreign Language Teaching. *Sprogforum (25),* 33-42. Retrieved from http://inet.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/spr25/Stenlev.pdf

Swain, M. (2007). Frálagstilgátan: Kenningar og rannsóknir. *Mál Málanna: Um nám og kennslu erlendra tungumála.* Auður Hauksdóttir & Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir (Ed.). Reykjavík: Stofnun Vigdísar Finnbogadóttur í erlendum tungumálum.

Vísir. (2014). *Atvinnuauglýsingar.* www.visir.is. 6. Feb. 2014.

Appendix A.

Following are the questions asked by the survey as they appeared to participants.

1. At what level do you teach?
    a. Primary level (grunnskólakennari)
    b. Secondary level (framhaldsskólakennari)
2. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
3. How many years of teaching have you completed?
    a. Less than 5 years
    b. 5-10 years
    c. 11-20 years
    d. 21-30 years
    e. Over 30 years
4. Where do you teach?
    a. In the Greater Reykjavík area (Hafnarfjörður, Garðabær, Kópavogur, Reykjavík, Seltjarnarnes, Mosfellsbær, Kjós)
    b. Outside the Greater Reykjavík area
5. Approximately, how much time, per week, do you devote to students' group work?
    a. 1-10 minutes
    b. 10-20 minutes
    c. 20-40 minutes
    d. 40-60 minutes
    e. More than 60 minutes
6. When doing group work, how are students assigned to groups?
    a. Students group themselves
    b. Teacher assigns students to groups
    c. I do not use group work
7. If you, as the teacher, assign students to groups, do you assign them by ability, that is:
    a. Good students together and more challenged students together
    b. Mixed ability

c. At random
d. I do not assign students to groups
e. I do not use group work

8. If and when you assign students to groups, do you assign roles?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. If so, which?_____
9. When implementing group work, how large are the groups?
    a. 2-3 students
    b. 4-5 students
    c. 6-7 students
    d. More than 7 students
    e. I do not use group work
10. What activities are most commonly assigned during group work?
    a. Students answer short questions from certain material
    b. Project based work
    c. Games
    d. Discussion
    e. Writing activities
    f. Reading activities
    g. I do not use group work
    h. Other (please specify)_____
11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of group work?

Engaging in group work enhances students' language skills	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
During group work students tend to veer off task	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Implementing group work takes too much preparation time	Agree	Disagree	Neutral

Group work is a good way to engage students that would otherwise be inactive	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Group work enhances the learning of low-ability students	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Group work holds high-ability students back	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Peer interaction helps students obtain a better understanding of the material	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
It is very difficult to evaluate students fairly when using group work	Agree	Disagree	Neutral

12. Are you familiar with the Cooperative Learning method?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I am not sure
13. If yes, where were you introduced to it?
    a. In my teachers' education courses
    b. I took a seminar
    c. I read books about it on my own initiative
    d. I have looked it up online
    e. I am not familiar with it
    f. Other (please specify)_____
14. Do you use Cooperative Learning?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I use some aspects of it (please specify)_____

Appendix B.

This is a copy of the letter that the participants received:

> Hello. My name is Kristjana Hrönn and I am a student in the Master's program in English Teaching at Háskóli Íslands. This semester I am writing a Master's thesis about the use of group work in English language classrooms. The following link is connected to a survey. The questionnaire is made up of 14 multiple choice questions about group work, some requiring only one answer while others can be answered with more than one answer. The survey should not take more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All answers will be confidential and anonymous and will only be used for this particular study. I would greatly appreciate your participation.
>
> If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me…
>
> Thank you.
>
> Kristjana Hrönn Árnadóttir

The email address and the link to the survey have been removed from the letter.