



COOPERATIVE LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN ENGLISH CLASSES: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT. The present study aimed to explore teachers' viewpoints on integrating cooperative learning methodology in English classes. The primary objective is to evaluate the extent to which cooperative learning is implemented and to identify the challenges associated with its use. Additionally, the study aimed to explore whether individual characteristics of educators were influenced in their opinions on the integration of cooperative learning. An *ad-hoc* questionnaire was administered to 74 primary and secondary school teachers working in the region of Andalusia. The data revealed that while respondents felt adequately trained, concerns arose about the adequacy of university training and accessibility of in-service courses. The benefits of cooperative learning were acknowledged, including improved language skills and collaboration. However, challenges such as resource constraints, uneven participation, and difficulties in adapting activities to diverse proficiency levels were identified. Moreover, the study showed that factors such as age, gender, school type, experience, and English proficiency level influenced teachers' opinions on cooperative learning implementation in English classrooms.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, English classes, Primary education, Secondary Education, Spain.

IMPLEMENTACIÓN DEL APRENDIZAJE COOPERATIVO EN EL AULA DE INGLÉS: UNA PERSPECTIVA DOCENTE

RESUMEN. El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar los puntos de vista de los docentes sobre la integración de la metodología de aprendizaje cooperativo en las clases de inglés. El objetivo principal fue evaluar el grado en que se implementa el aprendizaje cooperativo e identificar los desafíos asociados con su uso. Además, el estudio buscó analizar si las características individuales de los educadores influían en sus opiniones sobre la integración del aprendizaje cooperativo. Se administró un cuestionario *ad hoc* a 74 docentes de educación primaria y secundaria que trabajan en la región de Andalucía. Los datos revelaron que, aunque los participantes se sentían adecuadamente capacitados, surgieron preocupaciones sobre la adecuación de la formación universitaria y la accesibilidad a cursos de formación continua. Se reconocieron los beneficios del aprendizaje cooperativo, incluyendo la mejora de las habilidades lingüísticas y la colaboración. Sin embargo, se identificaron desafíos como limitaciones de recursos, participación desigual y dificultades para adaptar las actividades a distintos niveles de competencia. Además, el estudio mostró que factores como la edad, el género, el tipo de centro, la experiencia y el nivel de dominio del inglés influyeron en las opiniones de los docentes sobre la implementación del aprendizaje cooperativo en las clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje cooperativo, clases de inglés, Educación Primaria, Educación Secundaria, España.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing educational landscape, it is crucial to develop 21st-century skills like critical thinking and creativity to prepare students for global challenges (Ferguson-Patrick 90). These skills are essential not only in professional environments but also in everyday life, where the integration of social and attitudinal competencies plays a key role. Therefore, contemporary education focuses on the development of students' abilities to move easily between workplaces, highlighting not just memorization and repetition but also the integration of crucial social skills and attitudes for effective application in diverse professional environments (Ferguson-Patrick 90). Cooperative learning (CL), described as "groups of students working to complete a common task" (Siegel 339), serves as a crucial method for instilling these skills (Veldman et al. 1). This methodology enables students to collaboratively work towards common goals or outcomes, promoting mutual reliance and ensuring that individual contributions are held responsible (Brody and Davidson 8).

Previous research has underscored that the favourable outcomes of CL methods are observable at all educational levels (Duran and Miquel 4) spanning from preschool to university levels (Johnson and Johnson "An Educational Psychology Success Story"

365). Leung, who synthesized insights from 72 papers, concluded that peer tutoring is effective across all age groups, with a specific emphasis on its efficacy in secondary education (575). Further insights into the positive outcomes of CL emerge from the meta-analysis conducted by Roseth et al., which provided evidence that CL enhanced student achievement (239). Beyond academic benefits, this methodology is also believed to foster the development of skills and attitudes associated with the principles of a democratic society (Duran et al. 25). Furthermore, CL acts as a powerful educational tool, allowing students to engage with peers who bring advanced knowledge, thereby promoting support and knowledge exchange (Wells).

In the context of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, CL is also recognised as an effective model for fostering students' development, as emphasised by Dyson et al. (138). SEL is defined as "the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioural, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship" (Jones et al. 19). Hence, CL methodology is deemed essential for meeting the challenges of the 21st century, establishing it as an impactful approach with far-reaching benefits for schoolchildren (Johnson and Johnson "Cooperative Learning in 21st Century").

In the context of foreign language teaching, it is important to note the substantial body of research that underscores the positive influence of CL on students' English proficiency skills (Alghamdi; Almuslimi; Astuti and Barratt; Wei and Tang). In language classrooms, the CL methodology proves relevant by providing opportunities for peer interaction, which supports second language acquisition (Astuti and Barratt 11). This collaborative approach, as described by Kagan and Kagan, not only fosters individual and group responsibility but also addresses the diminishing motivation of EFL students (cited in Ning and Hornby 118). Neo et al. further elaborate on how CL creates a conducive environment for student interaction, active participation, and effective learning, reinforcing its importance as a method focused on learner engagement (874).

Given the multitude of advantages associated with incorporating CL in the education of schoolchildren, it goes without saying that educators ought to promote a culture of collaboration in the classroom from the early stages as this approach not only offers academic advantages but also equips students with skills and benefits that will extend well beyond their academic years. Despite the multitude of benefits and its potential to transform the learning experience, the constrained implementation of cooperative learning in schools has been reported in the existing research literature (Ferguson-Patrick 91).

Implementing CL in classrooms appears to be challenging for many teachers due to obstacles such as time management issues and difficulties in preparing students for collaborative work (Gillies and Boyle "Teachers' discourse"). Moreover, a prevalent issue is the insufficient training of teachers in CL methods, with the majority having not received training in incorporating CL into their daily instructional practices (Blatchford et al. 750). Thus, they often lack clear understanding of the methodology and how to put it effectively into practice (Gillies and Boyle "Teachers'

Reflections on Cooperative Learning: Issues of Implementation” 933), and it is crucial to note that merely placing students into groups for collaborative work is insufficient (Veenman et al. 88; Baines et al. 21). It has also been observed that teachers are often not adequately prepared because they underestimate the difficulty of turning the concept of CL into a reality (Sharan “Cooperative Learning” 303).

Another challenge associated with CL in schools is the potential resistance or hesitation from both teachers and students accustomed to more traditional instructional methods. In the new educational scenario, teachers are evolving from being mere transmitters of knowledge to creating scenarios that foster appropriate interdependence and interaction among students (Duran et al. 7). This shift involves actively promoting and supporting productive relationships, dialogue, and communication, ultimately handing over control of activities to the students (Mayordomo and Onrubia 28). The establishment of this transformative role appears to pose a real challenge in implementing and sustaining CL in schools (Sharan “Cooperative Learning” 306). In addition to limited knowledge, it has been argued that the focus on high-stakes testing leads to a reluctance in adopting CL in primary classrooms (Ferguson-Patrick 98). In today’s educational environment, where the importance of standardised test scores is considerable, numerous teachers tend to choose conventional approaches, showing reluctance towards adopting innovative methods. Therefore, high-stakes exams are criticised for narrowing curriculum focus, promoting teacher-centred instruction, and diminishing student motivation (Thompson and Harbaugh 301). This testing emphasis also hampers essential twenty-first-century skills (Ferguson-Patrick 90).

Limited adoption of this approach attributed mainly to teachers’ unfamiliarity with the methodology and resistance to embracing innovative methods calls for enhanced training and assistance (Gillies and Boyle “Teachers’ Reflections” 938). Insights from various initiatives aimed at enhancing initial teacher training (Baloche and Brody; Duran et al.) suggest the importance of incorporating experiential learning, using CL simulations (Sharan “Meaningful learning” 88). This approach allows students to move beyond mere theoretical knowledge about CL to actively learning through CL experiences.

Building upon prior research and recognising the significance of implementing CL in the education of schoolchildren, this study seeks to examine the viewpoints of primary and secondary school teachers regarding the incorporation of CL in English classes. The primary objective was to evaluate the extent to which cooperative learning is implemented and to identify the challenges associated with its use. Therefore, the present study aims to answer the following research questions (RQ):

- RQ1: What are teachers’ opinions on their training, the benefits, and the potential challenges of implementing CL methodology in English classes?
- RQ2: How often do teachers implement CL methodology in English classes?
- RQ3: How do individual characteristics of educators influence their views on the integration of CL in English education?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Instrument

The data were gathered through an *ad-hoc* questionnaire designed to explore teachers' perspectives on implementing CL methodology in English classes. The questionnaire comprises two main sections. The initial section collects demographic information, while the second part, organised into four categories, assesses teachers' qualifications and training in the CL methodology (3 items), the benefits (8 items) and challenges encountered while implementing CL (10 items) and, finally, its actual implementation in their English classes (3 items). Likert Scale measurement, ranging over six points, was employed for the first three categories (Items 1-21). In the latter categories, participants were offered predefined options or the flexibility to suggest another response in the "Other" field for additional input. Each category concludes with an open-ended question, allowing teachers to share supplementary comments on pertinent issues.

Before developing the questionnaire, an extensive literature review was conducted using databases such as Web of Science and Scopus to identify relevant studies on cooperative learning in English classes among schoolchildren. After analysing existing research, key themes were established, and a set of items was designed to match the study's objectives. In line with existing questionnaires, the formulation of these items was influenced by the findings of Chakyarkandiyil and Prakasha, and Buchs et al. particularly regarding the challenges faced in implementing CL. Similarly, concepts related to the perceived benefits of CL were derived and adapted from the work of Pegalajar and Colmenero. Following validation by two experts, the questionnaire underwent a pilot procedure before the actual data collection. In this phase, a sample of in-service teachers from primary and secondary schools completed the final version of the questionnaire along with an evaluation grid created in Google Forms. Since the informants unanimously acknowledged the validity and applicability of the study, no adjustments were made.

2.2. Sample

In the months of September-October 2023 an email was sent to public, private and charter primary and secondary schools in the region of Andalusia. The study engaged with a sample of 74 teachers, with an average age of 44.4 years (SD 9.1), all of whom held Spanish citizenship. The majority of the participants were female (83.8%). Within this group, 82.4% were affiliated with public schools, while 17.6% worked in charter schools. Unfortunately, no responses were received from private schools. On average, the teachers had accumulated 16.4 years of teaching experience (SD 9.0). The predominant English proficiency level was C1 (51.4%), followed by B2 (25.7%) (see Figure 1). This suggests that very many teachers possess a strong command of the language. Surprisingly, 12.2% indicated no accredited level of English. Yet, it has to be borne in mind that while a good command of English is crucial for effective teaching, the lack of certification does not necessarily imply

inadequate language proficiency. Teachers may still demonstrate strong practical language skills and their ability to implement effective teaching strategies, such as CL, in the classroom.

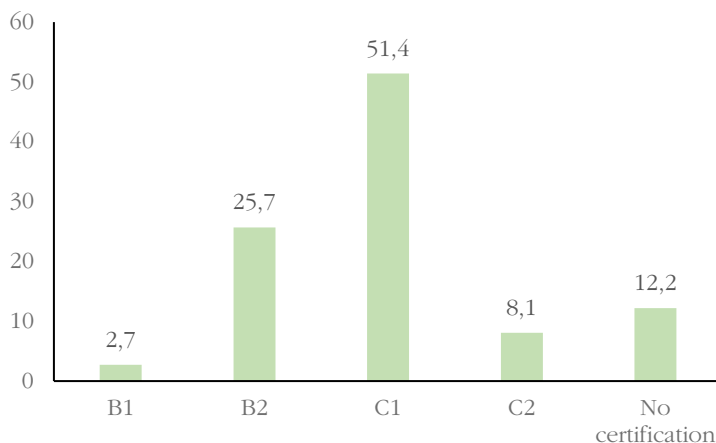


Figure 1. Percentage of teachers with different English proficiency levels.

2.3. Statistical analysis

Initial descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations or percentages, were calculated for the general questions included in the first part of the questionnaire. Subsequently, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) for the 21 items were calculated. For items 22, 23, and 24, where the respondents were presented with multiple-response questions, allowing them to select more than one option, percentages were calculated. Additionally, to examine the influence of teachers' characteristics on their opinions, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to compare scores on the 21 items across categorical variables such as gender (men and women) and school (public and charter). Furthermore, Spearman's rank-order correlation analyses were conducted between non-categorical variables, namely teachers' age, experience in teaching English, accredited level of English, and the questionnaire items. Finally, Spearman's rank-order correlation analyses were also conducted to examine the association between having adequate training in CL methodology (i.e., item 1) and the benefits and challenges of CL incorporation (i.e., items 4-21). Effect sizes were estimated using the Rosenthal's r (i.e., $r = z / \sqrt{n}$) (Rosenthal 14) which were interpreted as follows: 0.00-0.09 trivial, 0.10-0.29 small, 0.30-0.49 medium, and 0.50-1.00 large (Field). All statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS version 25.0 for Windows (IBM® SPSS® Statistics). The statistical significance level was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Teachers' perspectives on cooperative learning

The findings (see Table 1) indicate that, on average, respondents perceived themselves as adequately trained (4.3). However, this perception diminished significantly when evaluating training received during university studies (2.0). Additionally, participants expressed apprehensions regarding the accessibility of in-service training courses on CL methodology, revealing an average score of 3.3. These findings indicate that the existing training opportunities might be considered limited or inadequate.

As regards the benefits associated with the implementation of CL in the English classroom, the data revealed that, on average, the teachers surveyed agreed that the methodology improved students' level of English (4.4) and enhanced collaboration among students (4.9). Likewise, as the means result indicates, the participants confirmed additional advantages, such as promoting active student involvement in the learning process (4.8), fostering creativity (4.8), autonomy (4.8), inspiring motivation in English learning (4.7), and developing social skills (4.9). The overall satisfaction level with English classes also received a positive rating, with a mean score of 4.7.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire for the total sample (N = 74)^a.

		Percentage of the respondents' answers					
Variables	Mean (SD)	I totally disagree (1)	I disagree (2)	I slightly disagree (3)	I slightly agree (4)	I agree (5)	I totally agree (6)
<i>Training and qualifications</i>							
1. I have adequate training to implement cooperative learning methodology in English classes.	4.3 (1.2)	5.4	1.4	12.2	39.2	24.3	17.6
2. During my university studies I received adequate training to implement cooperative learning.	2.0 (1.5)	58.1	13.5	9.5	10.8	4.1	4.1
3. Teachers are offered sufficient in-service training courses on cooperative learning methodology.	3.3 (1.3)	6.8	24.3	27.0	18.9	17.6	5.4
<i>Benefits (I believe that):</i>							
4. CL improves students' level of English	4.4 (1.0)	0.0	1.4	18.9	33.8	29.7	16.2

5. CL enhances collaboration among students in English classes.	4.9 (0.9)	0.0	1.4	5.4	25.7	40.5	27.0
6. CL fosters the autonomy and responsibility of students for their own learning process.	4.8 (1.0)	0.0	1.4	14.9	16.2	41.9	25.7
7. CL encourages student participation and involvement in the learning process.	4.8 (1.0)	0.0	0.0	16.2	14.9	40.5	28.4
8. CL helps to develop pupils' creativity.	4.8 (1.1)	0.0	0.0	14.9	21.6	31.1	32.4
9. CL encourages the motivation of students in the English learning process.	4.7 (1.1)	0.0	0.0	18.9	23.0	29.7	28.4
10. CL helps students develop social skills such as argumentation, dialogue, listening skills, debate and respect for dissenting opinions.	4.9 (0.9)	0.0	0.0	6.8	27.0	35.1	35.1
11. CL increases the level of student satisfaction with English classes.	4.7 (1.1)	1.4	0.0	12.2	31.1	28.4	27.0
<i>Challenges</i>							
12. Time constraints hinder effective cooperative learning in English class.	4.8 (1.3)	2.7	4.1	10.8	13.5	27.0	41.9
13. Preparing English classes with cooperative learning is challenging.	4.2 (1.4)	2.7	10.8	17.6	21.6	24.3	23.0
14. Supervising all students in team work is challenging.	4.6 (1.3)	1.4	8.1	9.5	14.9	40.5	25.7
15. Students show unwillingness to participate in cooperative learning activities.	3.3 (1.4)	12.2	23.0	14.9	31.1	13.5	5.4
16. The lack of adequate resources or teaching materials hinders the implementation of cooperative learning.	4.3 (1.4)	2.7	8.1	20.3	18.9	29.7	20.3
17. Assessing individual performance is challenging in a cooperative work environment.	4.4 (1.3)	1.4	9.5	12.2	23.0	35.1	18.9
18. Adapting cooperative learning activities to diverse English proficiency levels is challenging.	4.3 (1.4)	4.1	8.1	16.2	23.0	27.0	21.6
19. Overcoming communication barriers in English during group work can be difficult.	4.4 (1.4)	2.7	5.4	18.9	23.0	23.0	27.0
20. Not all members participate equally in carrying out collaborative work.	5.3 (1.1)	0.0	2.7	8.1	5.4	20.3	63.5
21. Students experience interpersonal conflicts when participating in group activities.	4.4 (1.3)	0.0	10.8	13.5	23.0	28.4	24.3

While acknowledging the advantages of incorporating CL in the English classroom, teachers also identified a range of challenges during its implementation. The findings showed that, as the mean results indicate, the respondents struggled with time constraints (4.8) and the difficulty of preparing English classes using CL methodology (4.2). They also agreed that supervising all students (4.6) and assessing individual performance in a cooperative work environment might pose additional challenges (4.4). Furthermore, adapting activities to accommodate diverse English proficiency levels (4.3) and overcoming communication barriers proved to be a challenging aspect acknowledged by the teachers surveyed (4.4). Finally, according to the respondents, potential issues hindering the effective implementation of CL in English classes include insufficient resources or teaching materials (4.3) and conflicts within the collaborative learning environment (4.4). Notably, the item related to uneven participation in cooperative work stood out with the highest mean score of 5.3, indicating that participants perceive uneven participation as a significant obstacle in the context of CL. Conversely, according to the mean result, the surveyed teachers did not perceive students' reluctance to participate in CL as a substantial challenge (3.3). This implies a prevalent belief among teachers that students are eager and receptive to participating in cooperative learning activities.

In terms of frequency of CL implementation in class (item 22), the research outlines a noticeable trend, as illustrated in Figure 2. The data reveals that the majority of educators opt for the CL methodology on an occasional basis, employing it once a week or even less frequently (44.6%). Notably, 21.6% of respondents acknowledge employing this approach quite often, integrating it several times a week. On the other hand, an equivalent percentage of 20.3% indicate infrequent implementation, stating that they use CL rarely, specifically once a month or even less frequently. This detailed analysis reveals a varied landscape of adoption rates among teachers, shedding light on the diverse practices surrounding the frequency of implementing CL in educational settings.

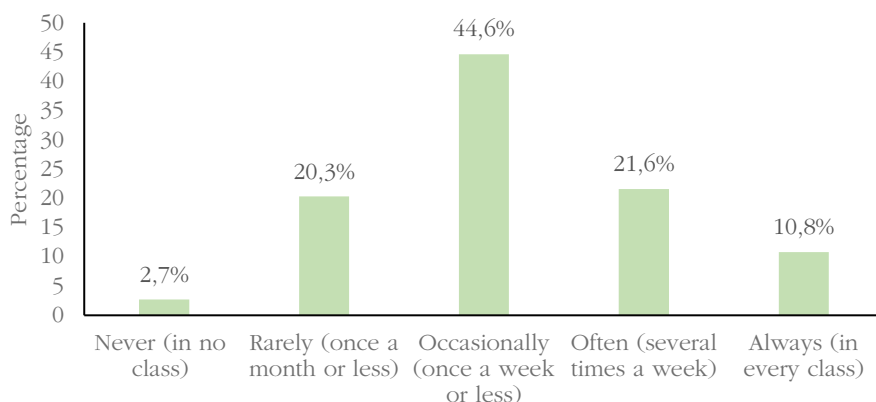


Figure 2. Frequency of CL implementation in English classes.

Regarding the factors influencing teachers' infrequent or non-existent use of the methodology, as outlined in item 23 of the survey, the findings show significant barriers hindering the widespread adoption of CL within their classrooms (see Figure 3).

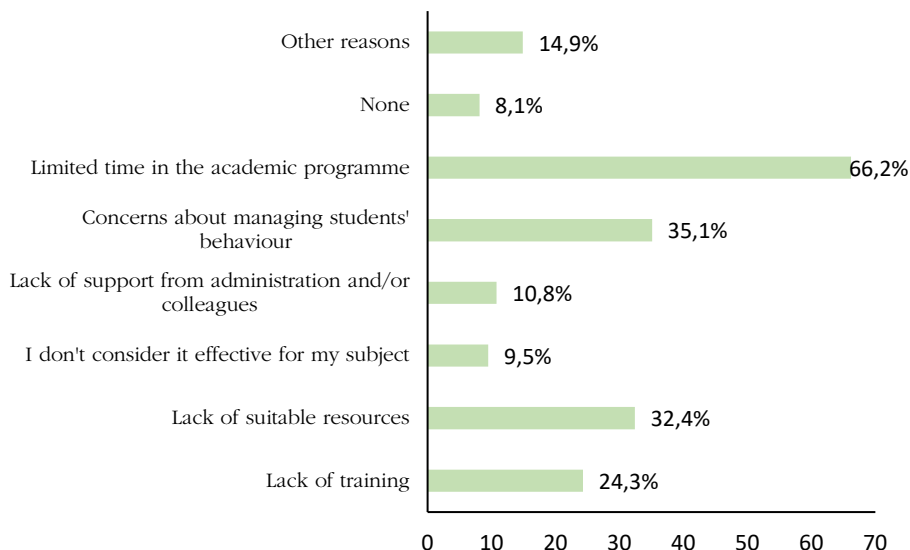


Figure 3. Factors influencing teachers' infrequent or non-existent use of the methodology.

Identified as the primary concern, 66.2% of the respondents highlight limited time within the academic programme as a major barrier. The recognition of time constraints indicates a common understanding among educators that integrating CL can be difficult to balance with the demands of a dense curriculum. Another predominant concern, articulated by 35.1% of participants, revolves around the management of students' behaviour during CL activities and the lack of available resources (32.4%). Furthermore, a substantial number of educators explicitly recognised that the absence of adequate training serves as a hindrance to effectively implementing the CL methodology in their classrooms (24.3%). The open-ended responses provided in the "others" field in the same item further clarify individual perspectives, emphasising challenges related to class size, logistical constraints such as limited physical space, the considerable preparation time required, and the absence of instant feedback in language instruction. Furthermore, among the articulated concerns is the belief that not all English language skills can be developed through cooperative work. According to the respondents, working with highly disruptive groups further contributes to reservations about the suitability of cooperative work in this context. All these challenges underscored in the present study may contribute to resistance and reluctance in implementing CL in practical settings.

As regards the strategies for enhancing CL in the English classroom (Item 24), key considerations emerge from the data provided by educators (See Figure 4). The majority of teachers polled affirmed that establishing defined roles for each student is crucial (74.3%). Similarly, defining clear objectives for each activity, as recognized by 77% of the respondents, offers a structured framework guiding students toward purposeful engagement in cooperative tasks.

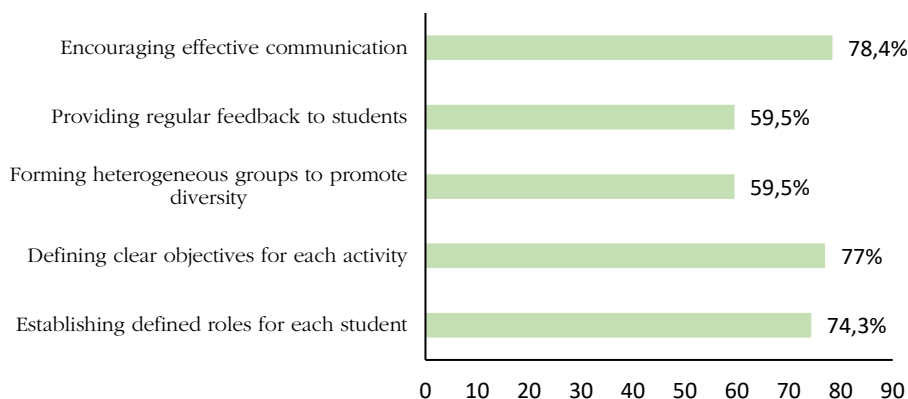


Figure 4. Strategies to foster the implementation of cooperative learning in class.

The strategy of forming heterogeneous groups, supported by 59.5%, underscores the importance of diversity in enriching the learning experience. This approach acknowledges the value of varied perspectives and skill sets, contributing to a more inclusive CL environment. Additionally, the emphasis on providing regular feedback to students, acknowledged by 59.5% of the surveyed teachers, plays a vital role in enhancing their learning experience and academic progress. A crucial aspect, highlighted by an overwhelming 78.4%, revolves around encouraging effective communication among group members. Fostering open dialogue, active listening, and constructive exchanges becomes essential for creating a positive collaborative atmosphere, which is also crucial for the development of language skills.

3.2. Influences of teachers' characteristics on their opinions

As regards the gender, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed statistically significant differences in Item 1 ($Z = 2.028$, $p = 0.043$, $r = 0.24$), Item 12 ($Z = 2.793$, $p = 0.005$, $r = 0.32$) and Item 16 ($Z = 2.889$, $p = 0.004$, $r = 0.34$). The data showed that men seemed more confident about possessing the required training in CL methodology for the English class. Nevertheless, women were more inclined to agree that a shortage of time and absence of teaching materials posed a hindrance to the effective integration of CL in the English classroom, as their mean result in

both cases was significantly higher. However, for the rest of the variables statistically significant differences were not found ($p > 0.05$).

Regarding the learning context (public vs. private schools), the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed statistically significant differences in Item 5 ($Z = 1.973$, $p = 0.049$, $r = 0.23$), Item 6 ($Z = 2.370$, $p = 0.018$, $r = 0.28$) and Item 10 ($Z = 2.029$, $p = 0.042$, $r = 0.24$). The findings revealed that teachers from public schools indicated a greater level of agreement regarding the improvement of student collaboration in English teaching and promotion of students' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning process. Likewise, individuals affiliated with the public sector expressed a higher level of agreement with the notion that CL aids students in developing social skills such as argumentation, dialogue, listening, debate, and respect for diverse opinions. However, for the rest of the variables statistically significant differences were not found ($p > 0.05$).

According to the results of Spearman rank-order correlation analyses, it was found that teachers' age exhibited a statistically significant negative relationship with items 2 ($\rho = -0.319$, $p = 0.006$) and 7 ($\rho = -0.274$, $p = 0.018$). This indicates that as teachers' age increased, there was a decreasing agreement that the training they received at university was adequate, which might be due to changes in teaching models, evolving curriculum standards, and a growing emphasis on student-centred pedagogy in contemporary teacher training programmes. Furthermore, younger teachers tended to agree more strongly that CL encouraged student participation and involvement in the learning process, and this could be attributed to the fact that younger teachers, having recently completed their education and training, may be more familiar and comfortable with modern pedagogical approaches.

Similarly, the Spearman correlation results indicated that teachers' experience in teaching English had a statistically significant negative relationship with item 21 ($\rho = -0.232$; $p = 0.047$). This indicates that with increasing experience, there was a diminishing level of agreement regarding students encountering interpersonal conflicts when engaged in group activities as part of CL. This may suggest that more experienced teachers may have developed strategies to manage group dynamics, leading them to perceive interpersonal conflicts less frequently as an issue in CL activities.

The data also revealed that teachers' accredited level of English had a statistically significant positive relationship with item 2 ($\rho = 0.258$, $p = 0.026$). It indicates that teachers with higher accredited levels of English were more likely to agree with the statement regarding the adequacy of the training they received at university. Thus, it appears that the cohort with higher English proficiency may be better equipped to understand and implement the strategies taught, leading them to perceive the training as more relevant and applicable to their teaching practices.

Regarding the Spearman's rank-order correlation analyses conducted between item 1 (having adequate training in CL methodology) and the benefits and challenges of CL incorporation (items 4-21), the data revealed that items 4 ($\rho = 0.410$, $p < 0.001$), 5 ($\rho = 0.393$, $p = 0.001$), 6 ($\rho = 0.360$, $p = 0.002$), 7 ($\rho =$

0.229, $p = 0.050$), 8 ($\rho = 0.274$, $p = 0.018$), 9 ($\rho = 0.301$, $p = 0.009$), and 10 ($\rho = 0.306$, $p = 0.008$) showed statistically significant positive correlations with item 1. Moreover, item 1 showed statistically significant negative correlations with items 12 ($\rho = -0.310$, $p = 0.007$), 13 ($\rho = -0.272$, $p = 0.019$), 14 ($\rho = -0.462$, $p < 0.001$), 17 ($\rho = -0.281$, $p = 0.015$), and 20 ($\rho = -0.229$, $p = 0.050$). This implies that teachers who are confident in their training tend to recognise more benefits of CL and find it easier to handle the challenges of CL.

4. DISCUSSION

Regarding the first research question (RQ1), which aimed to explore teachers' opinions on their training, the benefits, and the potential challenges of implementing CL methodology in English classes, our research reveals that teachers are aware of the potential advantages that CL can offer students, encompassing not only linguistic achievements but also general benefits contributing to students' overall development and learning experience. However, it appears that despite this awareness, the incorporation of the methodology is filled with challenges, an issue highlighted by Duran and Miquel (7.) In common to the results of our study, previous research emphasised issues such as effective time management and facilitating collaborative work among students (Gillies and Boyle "Teachers' Reflections" 938). Respondents in our study also voiced concerns over issues such as student behaviour, effectiveness of CL for the English subject, supervision, and individual assessment during teamwork. These concerns may be linked to a lack of solid understanding of CL methodology due to insufficient training, which may consequently lead to uncertainties and reservations in its implementation. Indeed, the perception of having the necessary training was found to be positively associated with a greater appreciation of its benefits, such as improving students' English proficiency, fostering creativity, and promoting social skills. Additionally, the negative correlation between the teachers' perception of having the necessary training and challenges in CL implementation indicates that those who perceive themselves as better prepared report fewer obstacles, such as lack of time, complexity in lesson preparation, difficulty in supervising students, assessing individual performance, and unequal participation in collaborative work .This suggests that when teachers feel confident in their training, they find it easier to manage the difficulties of CL. Therefore, a well-designed training programme could potentially address these concerns, equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to overcome challenges associated with CL and enhancing their confidence in implementing this methodology effectively. In their ground-breaking meta-analysis on peer tutoring, Cohen et al. already emphasised the pivotal role of well-designed training for tutors, highlighting its direct correlation with enhanced effectiveness in educational methodologies.

It is widely acknowledged that merely assigning students to groups and instructing them to collaborate may not inherently foster genuine cooperation (Veldman et al. 1). In formal education, students are learning cooperation but may lack the social skills for team tasks. For this reason, teachers should provide

structured frameworks for meaningful pupil interaction instead of expecting spontaneous cooperation in grouped activities (Duran and Miquel 2). Thus, acquiring the necessary knowledge and qualifications is crucial for effectively structuring these interactions. Furthermore, given the frequent uneven distribution of responsibility within group dynamics in a school setting, where one student may exert more effort, occasionally hindering the contributions of others (Duran and Miquel 3), teachers must appropriately organise the interactions among team members. This involves adhering to the five principles proposed by Johnson and Johnson (“An Educational Psychology Success Story” 366): Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability and Personal Responsibility, Promotive Interaction, Appropriate Use of Social Skills, and Group Processing (Duran and Miquel 3). These principles aim to transform group work into authentic teamwork.

Given the need for more training, the current study’s findings are unfavourable, as the participants in our study voiced concerns about the adequacy of existing training opportunities, suggesting that this may be a potential hindrance to the effective implementation of CL methodology in their classes. These results corroborate the conclusions of Gillies and Boyle, who similarly emphasised the absence of proper training (“Teachers’ Reflections”), which may constitute a significant hurdle to the successful adoption and application of the methodology. The low scores for items related to the training received during university studies and the availability of in-service training suggest that teachers in our study perceive these training opportunities as inadequate or insufficient. However, it is noteworthy that the data revealed that teachers seem to feel confident in their ability to implement CL in their English classrooms. This suggests that they may have developed this ability through experience, practical application, or independent efforts, even if formal training did not fully equip them for the task. However, it cannot be expected that every teacher will make the necessary effort and dedication to overcome these limitations on their own. Therefore, it is crucial to offer adequate and continuous training programmes to support them.

Considering the significance of adequate training, a growing number of university-based initiatives in the field of initial teacher training have been developed (Duran, et al. 7). Results from these initiatives emphasise the importance of incorporating experimental learning, as advocated by Sharan (“Meaningful learning” 88), particularly through CL simulations. The necessity for experiential learning also became evident in the study conducted by Jolliffe (73) who emphasises that the essential skills for students while working in groups can only be acquired through first-hand experience within cooperative learning-organised classrooms. According to Veenman et al. teachers’ increasing familiarity and proficiency in CL is likely to contribute to a more positive attitude, facilitating its future implementation in classrooms (101). As Brody observed “experiencing cooperative learning is at the core of being able to understand it and eventually transfer and apply its principles to classrooms” (187).

Building on this idea, and in response to the paradox between the pedagogical value of CL and the challenges associated with its implementation, Sharan

recommends that teachers undergo training in the conceptual of CL ("Cooperative Learning"). The author further suggests that educators should be taught how to distinguish between various methods and techniques, learn how to organise interactions within teams, and adopt a transformative role in teaching that goes beyond conventional, passive teaching methods (Duran and Miquel 3). When teachers decide to use CL methodology, they also must decide on aspects such as group composition, task complexity, instructional approach, communication patterns, and expected student behaviours, including performance standards and interpersonal skills (Gillies and Boyle "Teachers' Reflections" 938).

Moving beyond the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge necessary for the effective implementation of CL there is also a need to shift the focus within schools. The findings related to the second research question (RQ2) indicate that most educators implement the CL methodology only occasionally. The respondents in the present study cited time constraints and already demanding curriculum coverage as major concerns which prevent them from implementing the methodology. Drawing inspiration from successful schooling systems like Finland, where high-stakes testing is absent, we observe a model that values autonomous professional teachers (Ferguson-Patrick 91). These educators are not only afforded the freedom to employ intellectually demanding pedagogies, such as CL, but are also encouraged to do so (Sahlberg 167).

Hennessey and Dionigi also highlighted that the transition from teacher-led to student-centred pedagogies presents intricate obstacles, potentially leading to teacher reluctance in exploring and experimenting with diverse instructional approaches (64). CL is considered to be "a complex pedagogy" and the success of this approach is highly dependent on the critical role the teacher plays in its implementation (Ferguson-Patrick 91). However, as Ruys et al. observed "although there is consensus on the importance of the teacher role in CL, this is far less studied than the effectiveness for students" (1090). This underscores the need for further exploration and understanding of the specific contributions and dynamics of the teacher's role in collaborative learning environments.

Furthermore, beyond examining the competencies teachers require, it would be valuable to explore their characteristics to assess whether these traits influence their implementation of CL in English classes. Thus, in line with the third research question (RQ3), the present study identifies several influential variables affecting teachers' perceptions of CL use. Notably, gender dynamics play a significant role, with distinct variations in confidence levels and concerns between male and female educators. Moreover, institutional contexts, as reflected in the type of school, emerge as impactful factors. Public school teachers show a more pronounced inclination toward collaborative and autonomous learning, which suggests that charter schools might consider fostering similar approaches to enhance their educational environment. The study also showed a correlation between teachers' age and perceptions of training adequacy. Younger teachers, in line with contemporary trends, endorse CL more strongly. This emphasises the need for ongoing professional development to bridge generational gaps and adapt to evolving

pedagogical approaches. Experience in teaching English also plays a role, impacting perceptions of interpersonal conflicts in collaborative settings. More experienced teachers tend to perceive fewer challenges, which may suggest the evolution of expertise in managing collaborative dynamics over time. Additionally, language proficiency emerges as a notable variable, positively correlating with confidence in university training. Hence, the data indicates that English proficiency level also plays a role in how teachers perceive the relevance of their training. This suggests that higher language proficiency may also enhance teachers' ability to apply the strategies effectively in their teaching.

In a study by Makovec, the key findings reveal that teachers with extensive professional experience feel more confident in their roles, particularly in tasks related to planning and teaching (43). The author concluded that teachers who have accumulated rich experience over years of teaching are less likely to resort to formal measures, which are more commonly used by teachers with fewer years of service. The findings of our study are in line with these findings, indicating that teachers with several years of experience feel better qualified to perform their duties. An essential discovery by the study conducted by Makovec is that teachers shape their professional identity and role based on their personality traits (43). This, similar to the results of our study, emphasises the significance of considering teachers' personal characteristics, as they significantly contribute to professional development and identity formation. Similar findings were reported by Zlatković et al. who studied the role of teachers in the learning process. They found that older teachers feel more successful in their role as regulators of social relations in the classroom and as partners in emotional interaction with pupils (382). It is worth noting that, while our study revealed another aspect related to the variable of age, specifically that older teachers exhibit a higher agreement with aspects related to training opportunities, this is consistent with the broader notion emphasised in the research – the significance of considering various variables.

Despite the statistically significant differences found in this study, the effect sizes were generally small, indicating that the practical impact of these differences may be limited. Medium effect sizes were found in gender-related differences concerning the lack of adequate resources or teaching materials, which may hinder the implementation of CL. However, in most cases, the differences between groups (e.g., gender, type of centre) and correlations with teacher characteristics (e.g., age, experience, English proficiency) showed only small effect sizes, which means that, while these factors do play a role, they do not strongly determine teachers' opinions. For this reason, future studies should explore other factors that may have a more significant impact on teachers' views and implementation of CL. This will help provide a deeper understanding of the elements that shape teachers' perspectives and practices, and, in turn, contribute to the development of more effective educational strategies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, our study examines teachers' perspectives on the use and effectiveness of CL methodology in their English classes. In response to RQ1, while teachers recognize the potential advantages of CL for students' overall development, they appear to face hurdles such as time constraints, curriculum demands, and concerns about teamwork management among others. Training emerges as a crucial factor, with our findings highlighting concerns about its adequacy. These results are consistent with previous studies underlining the pivotal role of well-designed training in enhancing the effectiveness of educational methodologies, including CL. The importance of experiential learning and initiatives in initial teacher training is evident, emphasizing the significance of equipping educators with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective CL implementation. Addressing RQ2, our study indicates that the frequency of CL implementation varies widely. While some teachers integrate CL regularly, others use it sporadically due to structural constraints, lack of training, and institutional barriers. Moreover, in response to RQ3, the study unveils influential variables shaping teachers' perceptions of CL, such as age, gender dynamics, institutional contexts, experience, and English proficiency. However, since the results suggest that these factors have some influence but are not key determinants of teachers' opinions, future research should investigate other factors that could have a more significant impact on teachers' views.

Furthermore, beyond the imperative of providing additional training in CL methodology, it is crucial to promote a culture that encourages teachers to actively implement it in the classroom. Achieving this requires adapting the curriculum and creating an environment where teachers feel less stressed and overwhelmed. Moreover, reducing the emphasis on exams and placing a greater focus on formative assessment could likely foster a more receptive attitude among teachers toward experimenting with innovative pedagogies. Therefore, in fostering an educational environment that prioritises not only the accumulation of knowledge but also the acquisition of 21st-century skills, it is imperative to integrate innovative teaching pedagogies to engage students in their learning process.

As for the limitations in the present study, the study worked with a relatively small sample which may limit the generalisability of the findings. The absence of private school respondents also presents a gap in the study's scope. Therefore, future research could address these gaps by expanding the sample size and including private school teachers, as well as incorporating more qualitative research methods to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the study makes a meaningful contribution to the field, providing insights into the implementation of CL methodology in English language classrooms.

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