

# COMMUNICATION THROUGH COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

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## ***Abstract:***

*Imparting communication skills has always been a challenge for English language teachers. Conventional teaching methodology grounded on teacher centered learning cannot alone effectively accomplish the objectives of the English language course as teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge. In today's fast paced world where education arena is witnessing many advances and novelties coming up every day to enthuse the students and elevate the teaching learning process, Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning can be used as innovative educational approaches by English language teachers to facilitate ESL learners reap the benefits of Peer Learning. This paper discusses Instructional Scaffolding and emphasizes the characteristics, strategies and benefits of Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning. Effective incorporation of collaborative and cooperative learning strategies into the classrooms can prove to be beneficial to all types of students including the academically talented ones.*

**Key words:** *Collaborative Learning, Cooperative Learning, Peer Learning, Scaffolding, ESL learners, Communication Skills, Interpersonal Skills*

## **Introduction:**

Everything in this world is subject and so are the classrooms and teaching methodology. The way the learners seek information has also greatly varied with time as there are other repositories and sources of knowledge easily accessible by the students. Also, honing the communication skills of ESL learners often becomes a challenge to English language teachers, as students are often reluctant and fearful to express themselves in a teacher-centered classroom. To cope with changing times and increasing academic needs of the students the teaching and the teaching-learning process needs a stir. Introducing new norms to cater to the growing educational requirements and also to fulfill the objectives of the English language course is the need of the hour. Enabling the students to steer their learning and making the teaching-learning process more engaging and making the students an integral part of the assessment process can make them interested and accountable.

## Methodology:

“Learning is a persisting change in human performance or performance potential which must come about as a result of the learner’s experience and interaction with the world.”(M. Driscoll, Psychology of Learning for Instruction).

Improving the communication skills of the ESL learners often poses a challenge to English language teachers because of many barriers in the classroom. While language and speech difficulties, peer pressure and personality differences make it difficult for the slow learners to communicate their ideas and express themselves fearlessly, non-engaging lessons and lack of motivation make the academically gifted students lose interest in a traditional classroom setting. In order to make the teacher- learning process dynamic and encouraging, learner-centered approaches which motivate the students and help them learn with peer help rather than peer pressure need to be integrated in the curriculum.

Teachers can be successful if they are able to identify the areas where students can work independently and where they need support or assistance. In other words, teachers should be able to help the students find their zone of proximal development. As incorporation of technology into the classrooms can promote learning, strategies like Scaffolding, Collaborative learning and Cooperative Learning can benefit the second language learners of English language as these strategies foster peer interaction and help increase their confidence to express themselves in small groups.

### Scaffolding

Scaffolding or guided learning is a strategy where a teacher provides support to the student in tasks that he is unable to accomplish on his/her own and withdrawing it as the student gains the capability to work independently. Matching the support with the requirements of the learner ensures the success of this strategy. It can effectively be employed in the form of constant encouragement, instructions or guidelines and demonstrations or illustrations.

### Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning

The terms collaborative learning and cooperative learning are often used interchangeably in the context of making the students work together. These pedagogical models of learning are employed with the purpose of engaging the students in thoughtful learning.

Collaborative learning plays a crucial role in furthering the concept of student-centered learning. As opposed to individual learning, collaborative learning is a group learning strategy that enables students to benefit from others’ skills and resources. Students tend to learn more efficiently and effectively as compared to individual learning. This methodology requires the learners to depend on each other to complete a common task. The slow learners rely on ‘the more knowledgeable other’- the peer(s) to accomplish the task.

This methodology of learning necessitates active engagement of all the group members, thereby making every individual of the group responsible and accountable. Retention of information increases as students engage in thoughtful discussions with their peers. This interdependent learning activity instills positive attitude in the students towards learning and towards their peers. It also encourages critical thinking skills. Activities that can be done by the students using collaborative learning strategy are group discussions, group tasks, group projects, joint problem solving etc.

While collaborative learning requires the mutual and coordinated efforts of all the group members to accomplish a common task, cooperative learning requires each member to take up a portion of the task and then coordinate to put their respective portions together. Cooperative learning method is suitable for lower grade students. It can be effectively used with all types of students ranging from the academically talented ones to the slow learners. It fosters learning and nurtures respect and amiability among diverse student groups.

Students can enhance their communication skills, in particular speaking skills. The improvement of the ESL learners can be evident in the form of their performance. The attitude of the students towards English and the process of learning changes significantly. It improves their self-esteem and self-confidence and also gives them a sense of accomplishment. Activities that can be done using cooperative learning are focused listing, forced debate, jigsaw and cooperative graffiti.

### **Conclusion:**

Both collaborative and cooperative learning can be used by the learners to acquire knowledge and improve the skill set of the students. They provide an opportunity for the learners to work on their strengths. Students develop their interpersonal skills as they cooperate and collaborate. Collaborative and cooperative pedagogical methods can be effectively used by teachers to promote all round development of the students.

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