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The Impact of Cooperative Language Learning on EEC Students' Motivation

A paper submitted in

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Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

By

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the students' attitudes towards cooperative language learning and the effect of the cooperative language learning approach on students' motivation. Moreover, the current paper aimed to find the factors that influence students' motivation while working collaboratively. The final aim of this project was to design deliverables, comprising a list of recommendations that can help EEC teachers to implement collaborative language learning in the classroom successfully.

The qualitative data was collected by observing classes in 4 EEC (Experimental English Courses) groups to get in-depth information about students' motivation, cooperative tasks given by the teacher, factors influencing students' motivation, teacher's role, etc.; by taking field notes based on the researcher's observations; by interviewing the teachers and a limited number of students from the aforementioned EEC groups.

The data collected through the observations, field notes and interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

The findings indicated that most of the students found collaborative learning interesting, engaging, enjoyable and pleasant.

The overall finding was that cooperative language learning fosters students' motivation. However, this is not true in all situations, because the level of students' engagement greatly depends on several critical factors, such as the group members' personal relationship, the type of the cooperative task given by the teacher, as well as students' personal characteristics and their overall mood.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.1   Introduction

The present MA Paper is designed for Experimental English Classes (EEC), an afterschool English program for 6- 17 year old school children. 'The EEC was established in 2005 by the Department of English Programs at the American University of Armenia to meet the growing interest of the younger generation in learning English. This community service offers communicative student-centered English classes for children and young adults, aiming to provide them with the possibility to learn English through communicative methods of teaching. Moreover, Experimental English Courses provide MA TEFL students with practicum and independent teaching and it serves as a center for research in EFL teaching' (quoted from EEC official website).

I did my practicum and independent teaching in EEC, as it was a part of the MA TEFL program. While teaching there I noticed that students of different levels and ages have different attitudes towards collaborative learning and their motivation also varies. As a result of that, sometimes I had difficulties in designing my lesson plans and implementing pair/group work in this or that class. This problem led to the idea of exploring and writing about collaborative language learning and its impact on students' motivation. Accordingly, students' different attitudes towards collaborative learning eventually led to the idea of making my own contribution to EEC program, through developing a guideline with a list of recommendations that can help EEC teachers to implement collaborative language learning in the classroom successfully.

Hence, my Master's Paper concerns the following topic: The impact of collaborative language learning on EEC students' motivation. It aimed to discover the attitude of EEC students towards cooperative language learning and the effect of collaborative learning on students' motivation. The current paper also aimed to find the factors that can influence the students' motivation while working collaboratively. The final aim of my project was to develop a guideline with a list of recommendations that can help EEC teachers to implement collaborative language learning in the classroom successfully, thus contributing to the whole EEC program. The present MA Paper was directed by the following statements of the problem:

How does cooperative language learning foster EEC students' motivation?

What are the factors that can influence the EEC students' motivation while working collaboratively?

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2. 1. The Concept of Motivation

Motivation seems to be the most controversial and inexpressible construct both in the field of psychology and education. People use the term "motivation" in their daily lives and professional contexts, without understanding and appreciating its importance. Yet, when it comes to describing what this critical term means, various opinions, ideas and contradictions arise. In spite of the fact that 'motivation' is a term commonly used in both educational and research contexts, there is still little agreement on the exact definition of motivation in the literature (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001).

Jordan, Carlile and Stack (2008) state that the word 'motivation' comes from the Latin *movere* – 'to move' and it refers to the set of factors that 'move' people so that they respond. According to *The Short Oxford English Dictionary*, motivation is "that which moves or induces a person to act in a certain way; a desire, fear, reason, etc which influences a person's volition: also often applied to a result or object which is desired". As Covington (1998) claims, "Motivation, like the concept of gravity, is easier to describe than it is to define and it is much easier to identify the external signs of motivation than to say what exactly motivation is".

To be motivated means "to be moved to do something". A person who feels no stimulation to act is characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is enthusiastic and eager to do something is considered motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Dornyei (2002), motivation is "an abstract concept that we use to explain why people think and behave as they do, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it" (p. 8).

If students are motivated, the chances of learning the language they are studying increases, and if educators want their students to maximally benefit from the educational curriculum, they must "provide a learning context that motivates students to engage in learning activities" (Stipek, 1993; Tudor, 2000). However, according to Tudor (2000), if students are not motivated, learning and teaching are likely to become a waste of time and the results will probably be disappointing for both teachers and students. Hence, Tudor (2000) states that the question of how to motivate students is possibly one of the most persistent and primary concerns of the classroom teachers.

Motivation is not a "unitary phenomenon". People vary not only in the level of their motivation, but also in the "orientation of that motivation". Accordingly, there are four types of motivation that can influence a person: integrative and instrumental, extrinsic and intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These four types of motivation will be the focus of the present literature review.

2. 2. Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

The terms 'integrative' and 'instrumental' motivation were originally developed by Gardener and Lambert (1959) to describe distinct motivational orientation. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), integrative motivation can be represented by the individual's desire to integrate into the culture of the target language; instrumental motivation refers to the kind of motivation, which is created due to achieving some goal set by the individual. Those learners who have high integrative motivation are likely to be interested in learning a foreign language in order to make friends with other speakers of the target language, to travel where the particular language is spoken and are enthusiastic to learn about the culture and the people of the target language. Instrumentally motivated learners are expected to be more educational and career oriented. Those students are more interested in obtaining a job or earning more money (Redfield, Figoni & Levin, 2009; Vaezi, 2009).

Vaezi (2009) states that despite the fact that both kinds of motivation (integrative and instrumental) are seen as the main prerequisites of successful L2 learning there have been much debate and disagreement among researchers and educators, regarding the different kinds of motivation. Gass and Selinker (2001) found integrative motivation superior to instrumental motivation for predicting the success of second language learning.

2.3. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Another distinction that researchers make in the field of second or foreign language learning is intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation.

According to Van Lier (1996), motivation is an interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable", and extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome" (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

According to Ryan and Stiller (1991), intrinsic motivation has become a vital phenomenon for educators —"a natural source of learning and achievement that can be systematically catalyzed or undermined by parent and teacher practices". Deci and Ryan (2000) assert that this "natural motivational tendency is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills" (p. 3). Further, McCullagh (2005), states that intrinsic motivation is an individual's need to feel capability and satisfaction in something.

In general, children appear to enter school with high levels of intrinsic motivation, although motivation tends to decline as children progress through school. Children gradually develop a perception of different types of motivation and only by the age of 8 or 9, they seem to differentiate between engaging in an activity for pleasure and performing a task because they have been required (Lai, 2011). Lai (2011) believes that one of the ways to increase student motivation and task engagement is to use collaborative or cooperative learning methods.

As the present study also aims to explore the effect of collaborative language learning approach on students' motivation, hence the literature on this approach should also be reviewed.

2.4. What is cooperative/collaborative language learning?

A great number of studies have been conducted to compare and evaluate the effect of cooperative and individual learning. The results of those studies indicate that cooperative learning experiences promote higher academic achievement and greater maintenance than do individualistic learning experiences for all students (Stevens & Slavin, 1995).

"Cooperative language learning (CLL) is part of a more general instructional approach, also known as collaborative learning (CL)" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The authors state that cooperative activities, including pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom, underlie the cooperative learning approach. Artz and Newman (1990) state that cooperative learning is defined as small groups of learners working together as a team on a particular problem, task or a common goal. The authors further claim that cooperative learning requires students' maximum cooperation and interdependence in its task, goal, as well as reward structures. In this respect, cooperative learning is not just putting students into groups and giving

them something to do. It has certain principles and techniques that teachers use to encourage mutual cooperation and the active participation of all group members (Jacobs & Hall, 1994).

The implementation of cooperative learning needs thorough planning and there are many critical philosophical questions that the educators need to consider. Among these questions are whether to stress intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, how much choice to give students in deciding how and whom to collaborate with, and finally, how tightly to structure activities to encourage successful cooperation (Graves, 1990; Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 1991). Accordingly, the above mentioned questions should be the focus of all teachers interested in cooperative learning.

As Jacobs and Hall (1994) state, implementing cooperative learning is not "like waving a magic wand and saying a few magic words and everything works great". The authors suggests that in planning and accomplishing cooperative learning, teachers should consider a number of factors such as the size of the group, its formation, the level of teacher's involvement, time limits, etc.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), cooperative learning is not simply placing students near each other. Successful interaction requires teachers to ensure that "an ethos of trust is established and the skills to cooperate are explicitly taught" (Brown, 1992).

2. 4. What is the difference between cooperation and collaboration?

According to Kozar (2010), the terms cooperation and collaboration are synonymous, but Dillenbourg et al. (1996) and Roschelle and Teasley (1995) assume that it is important to make a distinction between these two terms. Cooperative learning can be defined as "working together to accomplish shared goals", whereas, collaborative learning is "a method that implies working in a group of two or more to achieve a common goal, while respecting each individual's contribution to the whole" (McInnerney & Robert, 2004; Smith, 1995).

Cooperative learning is more than just group work. The main difference between cooperative learning and traditional group work is that in the latter, students are supposed to work in groups with no attention paid to group functioning, whereas in cooperative learning, a thorough preparation, planning and monitoring takes place (Jacobs, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Ng & Lee, 1996).

There are several critical conditions that support cooperation, such as clearly perceived positive interdependence (the feeling among group members that what helps one member helps all and what hurts one hurts all), face-to-face supporting interaction (group members need to interact and support each other); individual accountability (each group member feels responsible for their own learning and for helping their group mates learn); the teaching of collaborative skills; and group processing (groups spending time discussing the dynamics of their interaction and how they can be improved). Teachers who use cooperative learning have learning objectives that are academic, affective, and social. Students are encouraged not to think only of their own learning but of their group members as well. So, cooperation becomes "a theme", not just a teaching technique (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Jacobs, 1997).

The main difference between cooperation and collaboration is that cooperation focuses more on working together to create a final product, while successful collaboration requires participants to "share in the process of knowledge creation" (Dillenbourg et al. 1996; Roschelle and Teasley 1995). In other words, as Kozar (2010) assumes, cooperation can be achieved if all participants work individually on their assigned parts and bring their results to the table; collaboration, in contrast, requires immediate interaction among the group members to produce a product and involves negotiations, discussions, and accommodating others' perspectives.

2. 5. What are the main benefits of cooperative/collaborative learning?

Cooperative learning has not been specially developed for foreign language teaching, but its implementation in second/foreign language learning has a lot of advantages, such as increased student talk, more varied talk, a more stress free environment, greater motivation, more negotiation of meaning, and greater comprehensible input. Accordingly, cooperative learning can serve as an excellent way of conducting communicative language teaching in foreign/second language classroom (Kagan, 1992; Stenlev, 2003).

Collaborative learning has become one of the most central language teaching approaches for developing students' communicative ability and it is gradually being integrated in EFL classrooms. This language teaching approach is helpful in the TEFL classroom, since it contributes to helping students get involved in various interaction types and also supports a more helpful and cooperative class (Ibnian, 2012). Moreover, "collaborative learning provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of

helping groups as well as helping individuals; and it can enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, organizational, as well as community problems" (Brown, 1992).

As was mentioned above, cooperative/collaborative language learning can be very effective in the foreign/second language classroom. One of the advantages of cooperative learning is that students help each other in completing various tasks and activities and in doing so they build a supportive community which raises the performance level of each group member, also encourages the students to participate more actively in the learning process and enhances their self-esteem (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Webb, 1982; Kagan, 1992). Moreover, Johnson and Johnson (1989) believe that cooperative learning develops positive student-teacher attitudes, where the level of engagement of all the participants in a cooperative system is very strong and personal. Furthermore, cooperative learning creates a learning atmosphere in which learners feel respected and connected to one another. Thus, as Keller (1983) claims, cooperative learning provides many advantages to teachers and learners and many of these advantages arise from the intrinsic motivational strength of collaborative learning. The author asserts that this set of outcomes results from the successful incorporation of motivational issues into instruction.

However, the successful implementation of cooperative/collaborative learning in a foreign/second language classroom and the students' high level of engagement greatly depend on several critical factors that should be taken into account. According to McDonell (1992), cooperative learning is highly student-centered, but as Robinson (1995) states, the teacher's role is also essential in the classroom: "a teacher should conceive self as flexible, permissive, interested in stimulating discussion and seeing other grow" (p.57). Teachers should carefully consider the students' learning needs before they apply those learning activities into their teaching. In cooperative learning the teacher encounters several roles, among which are supporter, facilitator, observer, change agent, and adviser. The teacher's role is to "arrange the students in heterogeneous groups, to provide students with proper materials, and to design structural teaching strategy" (Chen, 1999; Lightbown & Spada, 1993). Students show more motivational benefits from "teachers they like over teachers they dislike". Hence, the role of teachers seems very critical in the learning environment (Montalvo, 1998).

However, teacher's role is not the only factor that influences student motivation. Motivation is linked with a number of factors that encourage or hinder the desire to engage in behavior (Krause, K.L, Bochner, S,

& Duchesne, S., 2003). As Krause, et. al (2003) state some students are easy to teach because they are eager to learn and as a result they are responsive to the teacher's idea, whereas, there are other students who are totally indifferent to their studies and what happens in the classroom. The authors believe that "factors that can also influence students' motivation to learn include their observation of peer achieving success or failure, their ability to regulate their own behavior and their need for personal fulfillment." As Robert Schuller (n. d.) states "You cannot push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself."

According to Williams and Williams (n. d.), a number of important factors tend to improve students' motivation. Some of those factors are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, various individual and social factors, hierarchy of needs, perceived well-being ("Well-being" is the degree to which a student is satisfied with his or her life including enjoyment in daily activities, meaningfulness of life, mood, etc.), efficient use of energy and focus, purposeful connection with work, public speaking competence, study time and study habit, etc (Williams & Williams, n.d.).

To increase students' motivation in learning, teachers should understand and accept their students' personality. They should turn the goals set by the outsiders into "group goals" to increase interest in students and motivate them to complete the tasks (Dornyei, 2005).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The current study was designed to investigate the students' attitudes towards cooperative language learning and the effect of the cooperative language learning approach on students' motivation. This chapter presents the setting, the participants, the stakeholders, the duration of the study and the instruments of data collection.

3. 1. Setting

The study was designed as a case study. A case study is a "valuable way of looking at the world around us" and it is defined as an experimental inquiry that investigates a current phenomenon within its real life context. The main strength of case studies is the ability to carry out an investigation into a phenomenon in its context (Rowley, 2002; Yin, 1994). The purpose of this study was to find out the EEC students' attitude towards cooperative learning and their level of engagement while working collaboratively. Moreover, it aimed to find and establish the factors that could influence the students' motivation in collaborative learning. The study was conducted in Experimental English Courses (EEC) and the observations were carried out in four EEC groups which are as follows: Construction 4 & 7 (level is beginner); Communication 2 & 3 (level is elementary).

3. 2. Participants

The participants of the current study were 4 teachers and 53 students from 4 EEC groups. Students from Experimental English Classes (EEC) of the Beginner and Elementary levels were involved in the current qualitative study. The participants were both male and female and their ages varied from 7 to17 years. The nationality of all the participants was Armenian.

3. 3. Stakeholders

The stakeholders of the present study were the researcher, the teachers and the students of the target groups and the director and coordinators of EEC program.

3. 4. Time

The duration of the present study lasted 8 weeks, starting from April 16 until June 6, 2012.

3. 5. Instrumentation and Procedure

Three instruments were used to collect relevant information for the study. Those tools were: classroom observations, field notes and interviews with the teachers and students.

Observations (based on the observation guideline, developed by the researcher, seeking to find out the students' reactions and level of engagement while working collaboratively). (*Appendix 3; Table 3*)

Field notes (based on the researcher's observations)

Interviews (with the teachers of the aforementioned 4 EEC groups, as well as with a limited number of students from the same groups at the end of the study, aiming to find out the students' and teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the Master's Paper topic mentioned above. The total number of interviewed students was 16.) (*Appendix 1; Table 1 and Appendix 2; Table 2*)

Analysis of Qualitative Data

4.1. Classroom Observation

Observation is "non-judgmental description of classroom events that can be analyzed and given interpretation" and it is considered to be one of the techniques for qualitative data collection in classroom research (Gebhard, 1999; Mackey & Gass, 2005).

For classroom observations, an observation guide was designed by the researcher, including 9 items. The items included in the observation guide were as follows:

The size and the types of groups

The number and the types of cooperative tasks used in the classroom

Degree of participation of each group member

Degree of students' focus on the given task

Students' emotional reactions towards the given task

Meaningfulness of the given task (students find the task interesting, challenging, connected to learning, boring, etc.)

Teacher's level of involvement

The group structure that was most successful

The overall duration of EEC (Experimental English Courses) courses is 10 weeks. Each class lasts 60 minutes. The observations were conducted systematically every other week starting from week 3 (week 3, week 5, week 7 and week 9). Each group was observed 4 times. Each observation lasted 60 minutes.

Description of the 4 observation groups

<u>**Construction 4 Group**</u>	<u>**Construction 7 Group**</u>
Number of the group – 1 (**Group 1**)	Number of the group – 2 (**Group 2**)
Total number of students – 8	Total number of students – 17
Gender – male and female	Gender – male and female
Age – 7- 8	Age – 9-13
Proficiency level – Beginner	Proficiency level – Beginner

Communication 2 Group	**Communication 3 Group**
Number of the group – 3 (**Group 3**)	Number of the group – 4 (**Group 4**)
Total number of students – 16	Total number of students – 12
Gender – male and female	Gender – male and female
Age – 11-16	Age – 12-17
Proficiency level – Elementary	Proficiency level – Elementary

In data analysis the groups will be called by their numbers (Group 1, 2, 3, 4). The results of total 16 classroom observations are provided below.

The size and the types of groups

During my four observation weeks I noted that all the teachers used cooperative tasks during their classes. The majority of teachers used at least one cooperative task per class. However, I observed that there were teachers who managed to use more than one cooperative task in 60 minutes. It should be mentioned that during my observation weeks all the teachers used both group work and pair work, except one teacher, who used only pair work. As Dillenbourg (1999) states, the broadest definition of collaborative learning is that it is a situation in which two or more people learn or try to learn something together. The author interpreted "two or more" as a pair, a small group, a class, a community and even a society. Hence, it can be assumed that all 4 teachers in my observation groups used collaborative tasks.

Group and Pair work

In two groups (Group 1 & Group 4) I observed that the teachers used more group work than pair work, whereas in the other two groups (Gr. 2 & Gr. 3) the teachers preferred to give more pair work than group works. Based on the teachers' reports and the researcher's observations, it was evident that the choice of giving either group work or pair work was based on the type of activity given by the teacher and it also depended on the group itself. During my observations, I noticed that the teachers whose groups were big were more inclined to give pair work than group work. A possible reason for this could be that, in most cases, big groups are noisy while working on the task; therefore, the teachers are having difficulties in controlling all the groups simultaneously. However, as Matera (2008) states, this is called "positive noise"

and it does not bother the students. The author assumes that they are concentrated on the task and they do not hear it.

Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups (mixed genders)

In most cases the groups were formed randomly, mostly depending on the students' sitting places in the classroom. Sometimes the teachers asked the students to count and make groups based on their numbers (1s together, 2s together, etc.). Hence, some of the groups were heterogeneous (different genders), the others homogeneous (same genders). However, I also observed cases in Groups 1 and 3, when the teachers formed groups non-randomly, because there were several problematic students who had their own preferences concerning the groups and the teachers took into account the students' personal relationship, as well as the students' personal characteristics.

Size of the groups

The size of the groups varied from 3 students to maximum 7. As Davis (1993) assumes, the best size for a group depends on the nature of the students as well as the nature of the task. The author goes on to state that one of the advantages of working in small groups is that this lessens the chances of possible conflicts between group members.

The number and the types of cooperative tasks used in the classroom

According to Willis (1996), a task is an activity "where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (p. 23).

During my observations, I noted that all the teachers used different types of cooperative tasks in the classroom.

The number of cooperative tasks per class

In all 4 groups (Gr. 1, 2, 3 & 4) the maximum number of cooperative tasks per class time (60 minutes) was 2. Only once a teacher from Group 3 gave 3 cooperative tasks during one class hour. In all 4 groups the minimum number of cooperative tasks given per class was 1 (all the teachers gave at least one group or pair work during their classes).

<u>The types of tasks</u>

The collaborative activities used by all 4 teachers were practicing writing, speaking and reading. While observing, I noticed that none of the teachers used collaborative listening tasks. The types of tasks used by the teachers were very mixed. During my observation weeks, the teachers used collaborative activities such as matching, puzzles, worksheets, story writing, problem solving, information transfer, error correction, jigsaw, debates and giving information.

<u>Writing, Reading and speaking tasks</u>

In three groups (Gr. 1, 2 & 3), I observed that the teachers used more writing activities than reading and speaking. It's also worth mentioning that the teachers gave several tasks that required both writing and speaking (e.g. continue the story and present it; write a short dialogue and present it, etc.). Only in one group (Gr. 4) I observed that the teacher used more collaborative reading tasks than writing and speaking. The most frequent type of activity used by the teachers was matching.

Equal participation (cooperation) of each group member

As Jacobs (2002) states, cooperation is a value which involves the feeling of "All for one, one for all". During my four observation weeks, I got different impressions from the four groups concerning the students' level of cooperation. In most cases, I observed that the students' level of participation in the tasks was equal. The majority of students were showing great enthusiasm and interest in the task, especially when it was pair work and the activity given by the teacher was interesting, meaningful and a little challenging. Based on my observations and the teachers' comments, I inferred that there was at least one student in each group who was problematic and wasn't motivated to work in a group, because these type of students preferred to work more individually than in pairs or in groups. However, in most cases the students' cooperation was equal and everybody was eager to help each other, to correct each others' mistakes and even to teach their peers.

<u>Equal cooperation vs. Partial and No cooperation</u>

While observing I noted a case in one group (Gr. 3) when one heterogeneous pair (boy & girl) was shy to work together, hence they didn't cooperate with each other at all. Whereas in another group (Gr. 4) I observed another case of a heterogeneous pair (boy & girl) working together, who had no problems in cooperation and they were equally participating in the task. I also observed cases when the students didn't

show equal participation in completing the task, because some of the students got bored and started to complain that the task was not interesting.

In one of the groups (Gr. 1) I observed one student, who had problems with the whole group and he always refused to work collaboratively. The teacher also told me that this student was very problematic and he regularly had conflicts with his group mates while working collaboratively. That is why the teacher allowed him to work individually. In Group 4 I noticed that the overall atmosphere of the classroom was so friendly during my four observation weeks that none of the students refused to work cooperatively and all of them were very excited and enthusiastic about group/pair work.

Factors that influenced students' motivation while cooperating

An interesting point that I observed was that there were several critical factors that had a negative impact on students' motivation to participate in the task and those factors were group members' negative interpersonal relationship, overall tense classroom atmosphere, uninteresting, not engaging tasks and poor instructions given by the teacher. According to Vygotsky, (1978) the classroom environment is the "culture" that establishes students' learning progress. The author assumes that only with the "existence of friendships and teacher support in classrooms, students' level of learning would be improved".

Students' consistent focus on the task

Keeping students on task and engaged in the learning process is the primary concern for any teacher. During my observations I mostly noticed that the students were engaged in the learning process, because in most of the cases they were on task and the majority of them were engrossed in the tasks given by the teachers. In all the groups that I observed there were more students who were on task than students who seemed distracted.

On- task student behavior

During the four weeks of my observations, I noted that in one of the groups (Gr. 4) there were no cases of students' distraction while working collaboratively on task. Regardless of the type of activity and the group members, the majority of students were showing a high level of engagement and interest in the tasks. In the aforementioned group, all the students were very active and excited about their studies and, during my observations I didn't notice any student's negative attitude towards cooperative learning.

In Group 3 I observed a case when everybody (even the naughty boys) was on task and engrossed in the activity. Possible reasons for that could have been the task being new and challenging for the students and also the time limit given by the teacher.

<u>Off-task student behavior</u>

I also observed one problematic student in Group 1(mentioned before) who seemed totally indifferent to his studies and to all the tasks/activities given by the teacher, especially cooperative tasks. This case was unusual, because during my four observation weeks I never observed this student being active and motivated while working cooperatively. Moreover, this student refused to work in group or in pair and once the following statement was made by him:

- I want to work alone and I don't need anybody to help me!

This statement helped me to understand the possible reason why this particular student was systematically refusing to work in pair or in group. He viewed group/pair work as help from his classmates and not cooperation among the students.

<u>Students' emotional reactions towards the task</u>

As Felder and Brent (2005) assume, students have different levels of motivation, different attitudes towards teaching and learning, and "different responses to specific classroom environments and instructional practices". When I was observing the students' emotional reactions towards the tasks and activities given by the teachers I had the same positive impression as compared to the previous item discussed above (students' consistent focus on the task). During my observations, in the majority of cases, the students were quite enthusiastic and excited about the tasks and activities. Depending on the type of tasks, sometimes I observed that the students were showing high emotional reactions (the students were very active, excited, noisy, etc.). I observed cases when the activity itself required full concentration (e.g. error correction, find the errors and correct them, etc.) and the majority of students were engrossed and at the same time very interested in the given task. Nearly in all groups I noticed that the students were becoming highly motivated and engaged in the activity when the teacher was giving them a time limit and when the task required competition between the groups.

<u>Students' positive reactions</u>

While observing I noted that in two groups (Gr. 2 & 4) the teachers were giving a lot of competitions between groups with time limits, because based on their students' reactions and reports, it was evident that in most cases the students were eager to compete with each other. In Group 3 once I observed a case when the majority of naughty boys were very excited and engaged in the given collaborative task, because the topic of that lesson (Sports) was interesting to them.

<u>Students negative reactions</u>

In Groups 1 and 3 the teachers seemed a little concerned about competitions, because the students were noisy, especially in Group 3, and because there were a lot of "undisciplined boys" who were disturbing the others with their comments and silly jokes. One of the problematic boys, already mentioned above, not only totally refused to work in any collaborative task given by the teacher but his emotional reactions towards the pair/group activities were also very negative. Every time he was asked to work in a group or in pair, he became very irritated and even once exclaimed that working in groups was not useful (he kept repeating the same statement). In Group 3 I witnessed the case of two boys working together who were not engaged in the task. While working, they made the following statement:

-   Oh, this activity is very simple!

Hence, I inferred that when the given task/activity is very simple and easy for the students (no challenge) they don't become engaged and interested in it. However, I also observed a case when the activity given by the teacher was too challenging and it made the majority of students become confused and unenthusiastic.

Meaningfulness of the task for the students (students find the task interesting, challenging, boring, etc.)

The task challenge is critical for creating a motivating environment and all classroom tasks must be accompanied by the elements of TARRGET framework in order to increase students' motivation. These elements are task, autonomy, recognition, resources, grouping, evaluation, and time. (Frey & Fisher, 2010)

Meaningfulness of the tasks and activities was another critical issue during my observations. All 4 teachers gave a lot of collaborative tasks/activities during the 4 observation weeks. Some of these activities

were interesting and challenging, others boring and too easy for the target students' level. While observing I noticed that the students' motivation greatly depended on the type of collaborative task given by the teacher: there were cases when the activity itself was so engaging and meaningful that it was nearly impossible to find a student who was bored and not excited about the task.

In order to find out whether the students found the task meaningful, challenging, interesting, easy, etc. the teacher asked several questions in English after each cooperative task. The questions are below:

- How was the activity for you?

- Did you like it?

- Was it difficult, easy, interesting, etc. for you?

The students' answers to the questions and their reactions to the tasks helped me to find out their opinions. In most cases the teachers gave meaningful and interesting tasks, because during my observations I mainly noted students' positive responses to the teacher's questions regarding the aforementioned item in my observation guide. In most of the cases the students found the task/activity interesting and engaging when it was a little challenging for them (but not too complicated).

Students' negative reactions

Only in one group (Group 1) I observed a case when one of the students responded to the teacher's question (Did you like the activity?) in the following way:

- No, I didn't like it! It's not useful!

I did not observe other negative reactions to teacher-assigned tasks in other groups. However, there were cases when the students were a little indifferent and not engaged in the collaborative activity, because they found those activities either too easy or too complicated for them. Sometimes I noticed that the tasks were boring, and in Group 1, I noted a case when the majority of students became bored, because they were given the same type of activity during the previous lesson. Hence, I inferred that students most often prefer to experience something new and they get bored when given very similar types of activity.

Students' Positive Reactions

Another interesting case I observed was in Group 4, when the teacher gave error analysis (find the errors and correct them) based on the students' written test. All the students became excited and engrossed in the

tasks, because they were eager to find their own mistakes in the test. It was evident from the students' reactions that the activity was very meaningful and interesting. It was also a bit challenging, as, while checking, the teacher found many mistakes that the students didn't notice.

Teacher's role and involvement in the classroom

A teacher's ability to promote a positive social environment for students to interact is critical to increased student motivation. Students' strong academic motivation greatly depends on good student-teacher relationships (Murdoch & Miller, 2003). Moreover, as Ryan and Patrick (2001) assume, teacher's increased individual attention and one-on-one interaction is also considered to be helpful in fostering students' positive academic motivation.

Teacher's role and involvement was the item in my observation guidelines that encountered the most positive notes across the 4 observation groups during my 4 observation weeks.

Classroom atmosphere

In all 4 groups the relationships between the teachers and the students were quite positive and friendly. The overall atmosphere of the classrooms was encouraging and stress-free. There was only one group where I noticed that the students didn't like one problematic student and sometimes this fact created some tension between the students. In all other groups the majority of students were mainly on friendly terms.

Teacher as facilitator

While observing I noted that all 4 teachers were constantly guiding and encouraging their students. These teachers acted as facilitators, because they were showing an individual approach to each student and they were always encouraging their students with praises and positive comments. All the teachers were very energetic and motivated during the classes and, while observing, I didn't notice a single case when the teachers' mood was bad or their attitude towards the students was negative.

The group structures that worked successfully

During my observations, the majority of group structures worked successfully and there were only a few cases when the size of the group wasn't appropriate to the type of the given task. While observing I noticed that the students' level of engagement in the activity also depended on the group structure they were

working in. All 4 teachers were more inclined to form groups of 3 to maximum 5 students. However, the teachers also gave a lot of pair work, which worked quite successfully in most of the cases.

Successful group structures

I observed that the groups consisting of 3 to 4 group members were effective, because nearly all the students had a chance to speak and express their ideas and opinions. In Group 4 I observed a case, when the teacher formed 2 groups of 6 and 7 students and in spite of the large size of the groups all the students cooperated with each other perfectly.

Unsuccessful group structures

 I observed that groups, which had more than 4 group members, were noisy and sometimes the teachers had difficulties in controlling them. In Group 4 once I noted a case when the teacher formed groups of 3 to 5 students and these group structures didn't work efficiently. The possible reason for that was the fact that the type of activity given by the teacher (error analysis) and the group structure were not compatible: the task itself required students' full concentration and participation, whereas the groups were noisy and not attentive.

4. 2. Interviews

Total number of interviewed teachers and students

Teachers	4
Students	16

The items for the interviews were developed based on the questions that emerged while conducting classroom observations. There were 5 open-ended items in the interview for the teachers and 3 open-ended items for the students. The interviews aimed to find out the teachers' and students' personal opinions concerning collaborative learning, and students' motivation. Interviews were conducted with the teachers of the 4 observation groups (Group 1, 2, 3 & 4), as well as with a limited number of randomly chosen students from the same target groups at the end of the study. In total, 16 students were interviewed. The teachers were interviewed in the target language (English), and the students in their native language (Armenian). The responses of the 4 teachers' and the students were recorded and the transcripts are presented in tables. (See Table 1 & 2 in Appendix)

For the data analysis the interviewed teachers and students were numbered in the following way:

Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4

Student 1, 2, 3, etc.

Results of the Interviews with the Teachers

1. **Do you use collaborative tasks and what kinds of tasks do you use?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	100.0
No	0	0
Total	4	100.0

The first question aimed to find out whether the 4 EEC teachers use collaborative tasks during their studies in general and what kind of tasks they prefer to use. All 4 teachers gave a positive response to the above mentioned question. The teachers assumed that they use both group and pair work. Only Teacher 1 said that she didn't give group work very often, because most of the kids prefer working individually. Two teachers (T 3 & 4) said that they always give different types of cooperative tasks.

Types of tasks

	Frequency	Percent
Writing	4	100.0
Reading	1	25
Speaking	2	50
Total	4	100.0

All 4 teachers (T 1, 2, 3 & 4) emphasized that they prefer to give more collaborative writing tasks than speaking and listening. Based on their experience, Teachers 1 and 2 believed that cooperative writing tasks are easier to control, than collaborative speaking and listening tasks, especially when the group is big. Whereas Teachers 3 and 4 mentioned that they also give collaborative speaking tasks through debates and discussions, as well as competitions, class projects, writing reports in groups and cooperative reading tasks.

2. **What is your main purpose for placing students in collaborative learning groups?**

The second question aimed to discover the teachers' attitude towards collaborative learning approach and the purpose of implementing this approach in the foreign language classroom. All 4 teachers agreed that students learn a lot from each other while working in groups, because they exchange ideas and share their opinions. According to Teacher 2, in collaborative learning strong students help weak ones, and, as a result, the whole group becomes engaged in the learning process. According to Teachers 3 and 4, the main purpose of implementing collaborative learning in a foreign language classroom is a stress-free environment; reduction of task difficulty and also the improvement of students speaking skills through collaboration.

3. **If you use cooperative tasks, do you consider any factors before forming groups? (e.g. gender, personal relationship, randomly vs. non-randomly chosen groups, maximum size of the group)**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	6.2
No	1	6.2
Depends	2	50
Total	16	100.0

For this question the teachers had different preferences. Teacher 1 prefers to form groups randomly, based on the numbers, whereas Teachers 3 and 4 prefer to give freedom to their students while forming groups. However, Teacher 4 mentioned that she sometimes takes the responsibility to form the groups. Only Teacher 2 considers some factors while forming groups. For example she tries to put "difficult students" in

different groups, so that they don't disturb each other and she also prefers to form heterogeneous (mixed genders) groups.

4. **Does collaborative learning foster students' motivation and how?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	75
Depends	1	6.2
Total	4	100.0

The aim of the fourth question was to reveal whether collaborative learning foster students motivation and how. The results showed that three teachers (75%) responded to this question positively. Only Teacher 4 was uncertain about the aforementioned question, and said that it greatly depended on the students' mood. Based on the Teacher 4 observations, if the students didn't have the right mood for working, nothing would motivate them, even collaborative learning. However, based on their experience and personal opinion, Teachers 1, 2 and 3 believed that in collaboration students become more motivated and eager to show their knowledge. Teacher 3 believed that cooperative learning boosts students' self-confidence.

5. **Have you ever experienced cases when student collaboration totally fails to work and why?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	6.2
No	2	50
Couldn't recall	1	6.2
Total	4	100.0

The last question aimed to find out whether the teachers had experienced cases when collaboration totally fails to work and what the possible reasons were. Two of the teachers (50%) hadn't experienced cases when collaborative learning totally fails to work and both of them mentioned two possible reasons that might have a negative impact on students' successful collaboration. Those factors were the types of tasks and group members. Though Teacher 2 couldn't recall a single case of students' failed collaboration, she also considered the type of the task and group members as critical factors for successful students' cooperation.

Only Teacher 4 recalled a case when her students were not inclined to work in general and everything failed to work that day. According to Teacher 4, the most critical factors for effective student' collaboration were students' mood, group members and types of tasks.

Results of the Interviews with the Students

1. **Do you like to work cooperatively? Why?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	93.7
No	1	6.2
Total	16	100.0

The responses of the students surprised me a lot, because 15 students (94%) out of 16 gave a positive answer to this question. Only one student had a negative attitude towards collaborative learning, because he/she assumed that if the group members didn't participate equally in the task, the final product would suffer. All the other students agreed that working in groups/pairs was more interesting, easy, enjoyable, engaging and pleasant than working individually. Moreover, some of the students mentioned that, while working collaboratively, one can make new friends. According to one of the students, collaborative learning helped students to carry out the task easily, because they could exchange ideas and discuss the problematic areas together.

2. **What types of activities do you like to do in groups? (e.g. speaking, reading, writing or listening tasks)Why?**

	Frequency	Percent
Speaking	11	68.7
Writing	8	50.0
Reading	2	12.5
Listening	1	6.2
Total	16	100.0

Collaborative speaking tasks

The results showed that the majority of students had the same opinion concerning this question, because 11 students (68.7%) out of 16 answered that they preferred more collaborative speaking activities, because there were more chances to interact with group members in the target language than in all the other types of cooperative tasks. Thus, it can be inferred that most of the students believed that collaborative speaking tasks/activities might enhance their speaking skills.

Collaborative writing tasks

The next popular task type among the interviewed students was writing. Eight students (50%) preferred collaborative writing tasks. However, 4 students preferred both types of collaborative tasks: writing and speaking. One of the students said that to write something in groups was easier than to do collaborative speaking tasks/activities, because while speaking, all the group members speak simultaneously and make noise. Thus, it can be assumed that, all collaborative speaking tasks need to be organized properly, so that students had an equal chance to participate in the task, without disturbing each other.

Collaborative reading and listening tasks

A minority of students (only 2 students) preferred collaborative reading tasks, without giving any explanations for their choice. Only one student emphasized the importance of collaborative listening tasks, as well as collaborative speaking.

3. **Are there any specific preferences when you form a group? Why?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	37.5
No	10	62.5
Total	16	100.0

No Preferences

The results showed that the majority of students (62.5%) had no specific preferences while forming groups. According to these 10 students their group mates were so nice and friendly that it didn't matter who they work with. Hence, it can be assumed that the overall classroom atmosphere and the students' personal relationship tended to have an influence on the students' responses concerning the aforementioned question.

Specific Preferences

However, the rest of the students (37.5%) had specific preferences while working collaboratively. Most of these students (4 students out of 6) assumed that it was more pleasant and enjoyable to work with their friends, because they knew each other better. According to one of the students the group members were a critical factor while working collaboratively, because all the students had individual characteristics and if

students' differences were not considered by the teacher while forming groups, this might lead to a conflict between the group members.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative study explored the influence of collaborative/cooperative learning on student motivation. Moreover, it examined the factors that have an impact on students' motivation while working collaboratively/cooperatively.

The study addressed the following statements of the problem:

How does cooperative language learning foster EEC students' motivation?

What are the factors that influence the EEC students' motivation while working collaboratively?

The results of the qualitative data (classroom observations) showed that all 4 teachers used cooperative tasks (group/pair work) during their classes. All of them implemented different types of cooperative/collaborative activities for practicing students' writing, speaking and reading skills. The results of the observation showed that all 4 teachers were very energetic during their classes and each of them acted as facilitators, by showing great enthusiasm and individual approach to each student. The results of classroom observations revealed that the majority of students were engaged in collaborative learning. Most of the groups/pairs were willing to participate in the cooperative tasks/activities given by the teacher, especially when the tasks were interesting, meaningful and a little challenging. However, there were students who preferred to work individually and in most cases these students' preferences were taken into account by the teachers. It was also observed that in all 4 groups there were more students on task while working collaboratively than students who seemed distracted. The results of the qualitative analysis showed that almost all the students were very motivated and excited about collaborative/cooperative learning, especially when the activities were engaging and interesting.

The results of the analysis of the classroom observations illustrated that there were several critical factors that had a great influence on students' motivation while working collaboratively/cooperatively. One of the factors was the appropriateness of the task/activity to the target students' level. The findings revealed that if the activity/task was not appropriate to the target students' level, the students' motivation and level of engagement would decrease. From the results of the qualitative data (classroom observations) another influential factor that was revealed was the group structure. The bigger the group was (more than 4 students) the more difficult it became for the teacher to control them. The findings showed that students' personal

relationship and their personal characteristics might also affect their level of engagement while working in groups/pairs. It was observed that those students who didn't get along with their group members and had problematic personal characteristics (stubborn, inflexible, etc.), tended to have low level of engagement while working collaboratively.

The results of the interview with the teachers revealed that all 4 teachers had positive attitude towards collaborative learning. All of them preferred to give collaborative writing tasks/activities, because, while writing, it was easier to control the groups/pairs. Interviews with the teachers also showed that, while collaborating, students learned a lot from each other, because they exchanged ideas and shared opinions. Moreover, the findings illustrated that collaborative learning created a stress-free environment for students to interact in the target language and it also fostered student speaking skills.

Based on the results of the interview conducted with the teachers it should be noted that almost all of the teachers agreed on the opinion that collaborative learning fostered student motivation and boosted their self-confidence. Moreover, the results revealed that students' motivation in collaborative/cooperative learning could be affected by several critical factors such as type of activity, group members and students' mood.

The results of the interview with the students showed that almost all of the students liked to work collaboratively/cooperatively. The findings showed that working in groups/pairs was easier, more interesting, enjoyable, engaging and pleasant for students, than working individually. While comparing the results of the findings of the two interviews (with teachers and students), it was found that there was a discrepancy between teachers' and students' preferences. The findings of the interview with students illustrated that the majority of students preferred collaborative speaking tasks, whereas almost all of the teachers preferred to give collaborative writing tasks/activities.

Based on the results it follows that the formulated statements of the problem were partially supported, i.e. cooperative language learning do foster students' motivation. However, this is not true in all situations, because the level of students' engagement greatly depends on several critical factors, such as the group members' personal relationship, the type of the cooperative task given by the teacher, as well as students' personal characteristics and their mood. Based on the findings, it follows that collaborative language

learning tends to create a stress-free environment for students to interact in the target language, seems to boost their self-confidence and encourages students to exchange ideas and opinions. Moreover, from the results it follows that students find collaborative learning interesting, engaging, enjoyable and pleasant. However, a few students prefer to work more individually than in groups or in pairs. This fact might be closely connected to the students' personal characteristics and their personal relationship with the whole group.

CHAPTER SIX: DELIVERABLES

The final aim of this project was to make a contribution to the whole EEC program, by designing a guideline with a list of recommendations that can help EEC teachers to implement collaborative language learning in the classroom successfully.

The teacher, obviously, plays the most important role in the cooperative learning process, because the teacher determines the final grouping of students, plans tasks with its specific outcomes, determines assessment tools and the ways in which they will be used. Moreover, the teacher serves as a facilitator, resource, and observer during all cooperative learning activities. Hence, there is a growing need for teachers to have a formal guideline when implementing successful collaborative learning.

While observing the four EEC groups, during the four observation weeks, I noticed that the students' motivation and their level of engagement in the collaborative task greatly depended on several critical factors. Some of the factors tended to have a positive impact on students' motivation while working collaboratively, whereas some factors tended to have a negative impact on the students' level of engagement. Based on the results of the classroom observations and the teachers' and students' interview responses, a guideline for teachers, with a list of recommendations was established. (See the guideline below)

Guideline for Teachers in Implementing Successful Collaborative Learning

Target student age: 6-17

Things to Do and Avoid Doing when giving collaborative/cooperative tasks (when possible)

Categories	Things to do	Things to avoid doing
Group Selection	Consider the group members' personal relationship.	Don't force to work together, if the group members' personal relationship is tense.
	Consider the students' needs and preferences.	Don't force to work together, if the pair is shy (different genders).
Task Procedure	Give the students engaging, meaningful and challenging (i+ 1) tasks.	Don't give an assignment that doesn't fit the students' level (e.g. too simple, too complicated, etc.)
	Set up "competitions" among groups.	Don't give the same task type for several times.
	Structure tasks through roles (e.g. recorders, reporters, checkers, etc.)	Don't give a new task type without thorough instructions.
Teacher's Involvement	Provide assistance, support, and encouragement to group members.	Don't neglect the groups' questions and concerns.
	Provide with thorough instructions before giving a task/activity.	Don't give unclear (confusing) instructions.
	Consider the group members personal differences.	Don't neglect the problematic students' needs and preferences.
	Develop a positive and friendly atmosphere.	Avoid giving public negative recognition toward a group.
	Be motivated and enthusiastic yourself.	Don't label the groups by using the words "winners" and "losers".
Class Management	Be conscious of group size (groups of 4-5 work best)	Don't allow the students to dictate who they want in their group.
	Give a time limit for the completion of the task.	Don't forget about a time limit.

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Table 1: Teachers' interview responses

Interview Question	Interviewee's Answer
Do you use collaborative tasks and what kind of tasks do you use?	**Teacher 1** Yes, I use group works, but not so often, because the kids like working individually. The tasks - mainly cooperative writing tasks/activities, because it's easier to control. **Teacher 2** Yes, I give pair works and sometimes group works The tasks - I focus more on writing rather than speaking or listening, because there are 17 students and it's easier for me to control cooperative writing tasks than speaking or listening. **Teacher 3** Yes, I always give cooperative tasks. The tasks - writing, speaking through debates and also reading tasks. **Teacher 4** Yes, I always try to give pair work/collaborative tasks. The tasks - cooperative tasks, such as competitions, discussions/debates, class projects, writing a report in groups. Most of the time I give collaborative writing tasks
What is your main purpose for placing students in collaborative learning groups?	**Teacher 1** They learn a lot from each other, while they share their opinions. I give them, because. I want them to get used to group works for future. **Teacher 2** The students learn more from each other, when they are discussing something together. Strong students help weak ones and they become engaged in the learning process. When they correct each others' mistakes they remember those mistakes better. **Teacher 3** The students digest the material and learn easily when they cooperate with each other. They exchange with each other ideas, thoughts and come to a certain conclusion. It makes them feel comfortable; it creates a stress free environment. Also collaborative learning enhances students' speaking skills. **Teacher 4** There are some activities/tasks that are difficult to do alone, and in groups they can help each other, share ideas and hence reduce the level of difficulty.

If you use cooperative tasks do you consider any factors before forming groups? (e.g. gender, personal relationship, randomly vs. non-randomly chosen groups, max. size of the group)	**Teacher 1** I give numbers and based on the numbers the groups are formed just randomly. If there is a problematic child I try to consider his wishes. **Teacher 2** Yes, I usually try to put the naughty students in different groups, because they are very active and it's impossible to control them whenever they are together. Usually I mix the genders, but if any student is shy to work with a girl/boy I consider also their preferences. **Teacher 3** I always give freedom to my students to decide who to work with. **Teacher 4** It depends greatly on the group. Sometimes I give such freedom to choose who to work with, but sometimes I myself take the responsibility to form the groups.
Does collaborative learning foster students' motivation and how?	**Teacher 1** Yes it fosters! When they are doing group works they are eager to show their knowledge (kind of a show off) and as a result they become motivated, especially when the gender differs. **Teacher 2** Yes! When they are given competitions, they become very motivated because they are eager to win and they are doing everything for that. **Teacher 3** Yes, it fosters, because they are more self confident and motivated in expressing thoughts when they are in groups. **Teacher 4** It depends! Sometimes yes, sometimes no. If they want to work they will work even individually, if they don't have the right mood, nothing will motivate them.

Have you ever experienced cases when the students' collaboration totally fails to work and why?	**Teacher 1** I haven't experienced cases of total failure, but sometimes they are less motivated to work in groups. The reason could be the task itself and the group they are working with. **Teacher 2** I can't remember, but if it fails it greatly depends on the task itself and the group members. These are the most possible reasons. **Teacher 3** No, I don't remember, I haven't experienced. The possible reasons why the group/pair work can fail to work are the type of a task itself and also group members. **Teacher 4** Yes, I have experienced. When the students don't have the right mood to work, everything will fail. So the factors can be the students' mood, group members and also the task. If the task is very challenging and long, they become bored and the group work fails.

Table 2: Students' Interview responses

Interview Question	Interviewee's Answer
Do you like to work in groups? Why?	**Student 1** No, I like to work individually, because all the group members may not participate actively and the final product will suffer. **Student 2** Yes! Because it's more interesting to work in groups; when we have questions we can ask each other and discuss them. **Student 3** Yes! Because it's enjoyable to work in groups, especially when the group members are good students and my friends. **Student 4** Yes! Because in groups we learn with more enthusiasm and interest. **Student 5** Yes, because it's interesting. **Student 6** Yes! It's more interesting and easier to work in groups than individually. **Student 7** Yes, because it's better and more pleasant to work in groups, besides you get to know your friends better. **Student 8** Yes, because it's more pleasant **Student 9** Yes, because it's more interesting to work in groups **Student 10** Yes, because it's more interesting, easy and we have fun together **Student 11** Yes, because it's more interesting. **Student 12** Yes, because it's easier and more interesting **Student 13** Yes, because it makes our lesson more interesting **Student 14** Yes, because you make new friends and the time passes more pleasantly when we are working in groups **Student 15** Yes, because it's more interesting **Student 16** Yes, because it's better to work in groups

What type of activities do you like to do in groups? (e.g. speaking tasks, reading, writing or listening)Why?	**Student 1** Speaking activities, because when you work in groups you have the chance to interact with each other and it's very helpful. **Student 2** Both writing and speaking, but more speaking, because the chances to interact with the group members are more than in writing collaborative tasks. **Student 3** More speaking activities, because only in speaking activities we can communicate with each other a lot. **Student 4** Speaking, because it's more interesting to work with my friends than do it individually with the teacher. Also collaborative writing. In any case group works are better. **Student 5** Both speaking and writing tasks **Student 6** Only writing, because in groups it's easier to write something than to speak all together. **Student 7** Reading tasks **Student 8** Reading and writing. I don't like collaborative speaking tasks **Student 9** Games, competitions, it can be both in writing and in speaking. **Student 10** Writing. I don't like speaking tasks. **Student 11** Writing tasks **Student 12** Collaborative speaking tasks, because in groups we can interact with each other. **Student 13** Speaking tasks **Student 14** More speaking than writing tasks **Student 15** Listening and speaking **Student 16** Writing and Speaking
Are there any specific preferences when you form a group? Why?	**Student 1** Yes! I prefer to work with my friends, because we know each other well and we know how to work together. **Student 2** Yes! For me it's more pleasant to work with my friends, because we know each other better.

	Student 3 No matter who to work with, because I always try to adapt myself to that particular group. **Student 4** Yes! The group members should be interesting to me, so that I can work with them. But if the teacher forms the groups and even if I have a problem with that particular student, anyway I'll work with him/her. **Student 5** No matter who to work with **Student 6** It doesn't matter! **Student 7** It doesn't matter! **Student 8** It doesn't matter! **Student 9** It doesn't matter, because I like all the students in my group. **Student 10** Yes! I like to work only with my friends, with the others I don't work! **Student 11** I prefer to work with my friends, but if the teacher decides who to work with, I will work. **Student 12** It doesn't matter, because all the students are nice. **Student 13** There is no difference who to work with, because I enjoy working with all our students. **Student 14** Yes! Because different students have different individual characteristics and sometimes you can have conflicts with them. **Student 15** It doesn't matter! **Student 16** It doesn't matter!

Appendix 3

Table 3: Observation Guideline (Designed by the researcher)

Class _____

Duration _____

Students' age _____

	Groups				
Q1	Task type				
Q2	Equal participation of each member				
Q3	Consistent focus (on task)				
Q4	Emotional reactions (exhibit enthusiasm interest, Ss are bored, etc.)				
Q5	Meaningfulness of work (Ss find the work interesting, challenging, connected to learning, boring, meaningless, etc.)				

Q6	Teacher's involvement				
Q7	Number of cooperative tasks used during the lesson				
Q8	Which group structure was successful				

The summary reports of Classroom Observations

<u>**Group 1 - Construction 4 (Beginner)**</u>

Week 1

During one class hour (60 min) the teacher gave 2 cooperative activities. The types of activities were:

- Matching (pictures with corresponding words)
- Puzzle (writing)

The overall impression was that the whole group was very motivated and enthusiastic about group works, except one boy, who was very problematic and somehow strange. He wasn't engaged in the learning process in general and he was playing fool games with his own things. During the group works everybody (except that problematic boy) was on task and the students were working cooperatively and they were showing great interest in the task. The teacher was a real facilitator, who showed individual approach to each student. The teacher was guiding all the groups and she was encouraging all the students to work cooperatively.

Week 2

During this lesson the teacher used only one cooperative activity, which was a pair work. The activity was a writing activity (worksheet) on the topic "Time". The same type of activity was given during their previous class and the students seemed not so enthusiastic to do the same kind of activity. Most of the students became bored, and as a result, they were destructed from time to time. Besides, the activity seemed too simple for them, even some of the students exclaimed that it was very easy and this fact also could have a negative impact on students' motivation. The teacher was a facilitator and guide.

Week 3

During the lesson the teacher gave 2 cooperative tasks: one group work, one pair work. The topic of the lesson was "Sport". The group work had the following instructions: make a dialogue based on the give words (sport vocabulary), then ask each other questions (e.g. Can

you swim? Yes, I can/No, I can't). The task type was both writing and speaking. The pair work was also based on the topic "Sport" and the teacher asked the pairs to continue the given story and present it to the whole group. The students were required to use the vocabulary of the aforementioned topic.

It's worth to mention that the groups were formed by the teacher (non-randomly), which had its negative impact on one of the pairs' behavior. The personal relationship between the boy (the boy was the same problematic boy) and the girl was very negative and they were quarreling with each other during the pair work. No collaboration was present between them, because each of them wanted to impose their ideas.

In this group I observed that at this age the students seemed to have a negative attitude towards each other. When they were given a competition, most of the students wanted to find even a small thing to complain about the other group, because they were eager to win. Also I noticed that, when the group members were not on a friendly terms with each other, they seemed not so much motivated to work at all.

The teacher guided the students and showed individual approach. She was a facilitator.

Week 4

In 60 minutes the teacher succeeded to give 2 group works. Both of the activities were writing. The topic of the day was "Food chain". The first activity required the students to write the name of the animal and what it eats (open ended questions). The second activity was food chain and the groups were required to write as many insects, small animals, big animals as they know under the given categories correspondingly. The groups were formed randomly. One of the boys exclaimed that the group was awful, because one of the girls couldn't write anything correctly and the group members were dictating everything her. This fact made the group members really angry.

However, the majority of students were motivated to work collaboratively, except one problematic boy and sometimes one girl. This girl was a little unenthusiastic, because the task seemed challenging for her and every time when the group members asked her a question, she

didn't know the answer. The problematic boy seemed very isolated, because everybody refused to work with him.

The teacher was a guide and a facilitator.

Group 2 – Construction 7 (Beginner)

Week 1

During this lesson the teacher gave only one cooperative task, which was a pair work. The task type was problem solving (giving instructions using the given prepositions). The emphasized skill was speaking. All the students were engrossed in the task. Most of them were discussing the activity in the target language (English). One of the boys didn't have a pair, that's why the teacher was working with him. Only from time to time the teacher was guiding the pairs and encouraging them to work cooperatively.

The general impression was that the whole group was enthusiastic, engaged and motivated about the pair work. Some pairs were working silently; the others were too active and noisy. However, everybody was on task and the pairs were showing equal participation in the completion of the task. Only one boy, who didn't have a pair, was a little passive, because he was shy to work with his teacher.

Week 2

The teacher gave only one collaborative task during the lesson. It was a group work, which was a matching activity concerning the topic "Jobs" (e.g. match the words with the pictures). The teacher gave a time limit. The students were assigned to do peer-assessment after the completion of the task. I observed that all the groups were on task and they were eager to help each other to complete the activity. The students seemed to enjoy working collaboratively, because everybody was very engaged and enthusiastic about the given task. I noticed that a time limit and a competition between the groups made the students to become very motivated and engaged in the learning process. Moreover, the topic of the lesson seemed interesting to the students, which also had its positive effect on their motivation. I observed that the overall

atmosphere was very friendly and warm and it was evident that the majority of students were on a friendly terms with each other.

The teacher was a facilitator and she guided all the groups.

Week 3

During the lesson the teacher gave one collaborative work. It wasn't a group or pair work; the whole group was collaborating together. The students were given cards with the following sentence written on it: "Who is going to do …… job? (the vocabulary of jobs were given) The students were required to move around and find their corresponding pairs. The majority of students seemed to be engaged in the task. Only one of the boys was not on task, because he refused to move around. He seemed a little lazy. And there were students who didn't get the gist of the task, because they were clarifying the instructions given by the teacher. I noticed that the teacher's instructions were not so much detailed, which affected some of the students reactions. At first they were puzzled, but later on, the majority of students got the essence of the task and they became engaged.

The teacher seemed not so much motivated that day and it had its negative impact on the students' overall level of engagement.

Week 4

The teacher gave a cooperative writing task (pair work). The task type was matching (e.g. match the words with the pictures and make sentences). The teacher gave a time limit. The pairs were formed randomly, except one pair. Only one pair was formed non-randomly (by the teacher), because the boy seemed problematic and the teacher decided to put him with a girl.

All the pairs were on task, without an exception. I noticed that the students liked the activity, because they seemed very excited and even noisy. The teacher guided the pairs from time to time and sometimes she encouraged them to finish quickly, as the students were given a time limit.

While observing I inferred that the main prerequisite of students' motivation was a time limit and competition between the groups. Most of the time the competitions made the students

active and engaged, especially when the instructions given by the teacher were appropriate and the pairs/groups were formed properly. For example, in this case the teacher decided to put one of the noisy/active boys with a girl and this pair cooperated quite well. So, the decision made by the teacher regarding this pair tended to be effective.

Group 3 – Communication 2 (Elementary)

Week 1

One cooperative task was given during the lesson. It was a pair work and the topic of the lesson was "Sport". It was a speaking activity, which had the following instructions: Answer the given questions and make a dialogue (e.g. –Can you ride a bike? - Yes, I can/No, I can't).

Most of the pairs showed equal participation in the completion of the task. Only one pair wasn't eager to work together, because the boy and the girl seemed a little shy to work together. The teacher was a facilitator and showed an individual approach to all the students.

The overall impression was that the majority of students were eager to work cooperatively, but some of the pairs (especially boys) were too active, but not on task (they were talking about other things and were playing games on their phones).

Week 2

The teacher gave a pair work during the class. The activity was speaking and it had the following instructions: Find 8 differences in the pictures (e.g. -Is there a man cleaning the cooker? – No, there is a woman opening the windows.). All the students were on task. Some of them were noisy and too active, the others were working silently. There was a pair (2 boys), who seemed not so much enthusiastic about the task and they were making noise.

During my observations I noticed that the task given by the teacher seemed to be not so engaging, because it was mainly based on grammatical structures and as a result the students tended to be a little bored. The teacher was guiding the pairs and showing individual approach to the students.

Week 3

Three cooperative tasks were given by the teacher during one class hour (60 minutes). Two of the activities were writing (worksheet/crossword and matching), the last activity required the students to write creatively (they were assigned to write a short composition about the weather to their friend). The instructions of the matching activity were as follows: match the expressions with the pictures (e.g. Walk in the town; Stay in the hotel, etc.). The majority of students were on task, except one pair (2 boys) and a girl. They seemed a little passive and indifferent to the task. The girl was working alone, because she didn't have a pair, and this fact could have had a negative impact on the girl's motivation. The two boys were not enthusiastic about the task, because I noticed that they were writing messages to each other on the paper. I observed that though the majority of pairs were on task, the activities were not so engaging and challenging, because the students completed it in 5 minutes and all the answers were correct.

During my observations I noticed that in this group the majority of students were not so motivated to do pair work. Besides, the teacher sometimes failed to give thorough instructions to the students (most of the time the students were clarifying the instructions), and sometime the tasks tended to be not so engaging.

However, the teacher was very attentive to all the students. She guided all the pairs and showed individual approach to each student.

Week 4

During the class the teacher gave only one cooperative task (pair work), which practiced the students' reading and writing skills. The task type was information transfer, based on the grammar topic "Past tense". The students were required to fill in the gaps with the given information within a time limit (10 minutes). The pairs were formed randomly.

While observing I noticed that at first the students were puzzled, because they didn't understand the essence of the activity and it seemed a little challenging for them. The teacher said that the task type was new for them, as a result why they were confused. As the activity was a little challenging, at first most of the pairs were engrossed in the task, but later the

majority of students got distracted, because they didn't manage to complete the task in 10 minutes and it made them to get angry. Even one of the boys exclaimed that the task was very difficult and he refused to do that. The teacher tried to guide them and sometimes she helped the pairs, but the majority of students were not motivated to work in general.

My overall impression after this pair work was that the activity given by the teacher failed to work in this group. The possible reasons could have been as follows: challenging and new task type for the students; the teacher's bad mood (she seemed very nervous and tired); the task itself was not engaging.

Group 4 – Communication 3 (Elementary)

Week 1

During the class the teacher gave two collaborative tasks (2 group works). The first group work was an error correction, which required the students to find the errors and mark them either grammatical or non-grammatical. The second task type was jigsaw (mixed sentences), which required the students to put the mixed words in the correct order and form grammatically correct sentences. The impression was really great, because all the students, without an exception, were engrossed in the tasks. The group members were cooperating with other; they were discussing and exchanging their ideas. All the students were so motivated and engaged in the learning process, that it was hardly possible to find a group, which was not enthusiastic about the tasks. From the students' emotional reactions it was evident that the students liked the collaborative tasks very much and the teacher was encouraging every group for each correct answer. Moreover, the teacher was so energetic and full of humor that all the students were eager to work with their teacher.

While observing I inferred that the main prerequisites to success in this group could have been the following factors:

- Competition between groups
- Challenging and meaningful tasks
- Thorough instructions given by the teacher

- Teacher's enthusiasm about the classes and towards her students

Week 2

A pair work was given during the lesson. The task type was error correction based on the students' own test results. The students were required to check all the given sentences and find the errors and finally correct them. Regardless the type of the group (homogenous, heterogeneous (boy and girl), the pairs showed equal participation in the completion of the task. Everybody was on task, without any exception. The majority of students were working silently, engrossed in their task. The reason for that could have been the fact that the task itself required full concentration. Moreover, the students seemed motivated and enthusiastic about the task, because the error correction was based on their own test results. The teacher guided all the pairs and encouraged the students to talk in English.

During my observation I inferred that, if the task was interesting to the students, it made them to get involved and motivated.

Week 3

An interesting collaborative task was given by the teacher during the class. It was a group work, the instructions of which were as follows: match the picture cards with the given paragraphs and make a story by putting the paragraphs in the correct order. A time limit was given (3 minutes). All the students got very excited and it was evident that they like the activity at once. Only one girl was passive and she said that she had a headache. The group members were cooperating with each other perfectly; they were helping each other and exchanging their ideas.

While observing, I noticed that the overall atmosphere of the group was very friendly and warm, and the students were on a friendly terms with each other.

The teacher was guiding and controlling all the groups. In order to motivate the students, the teacher promised a present to the group, who would win the first.

After the observation, I inferred that the factors, which had a positive impact on the students' motivation, could have been as follows:

- Friendly classroom environment

- Teacher's involvement and high level of motivation

- Time limit

- Competition

- Interesting and engaging task

- Teacher's proper instructions

Week 4

During this lesson the teacher gave an interesting debate between 2 groups. The topic of the debate was "Successful people". The debate required the students speak in the target language as much as possible, express their ideas. The impressions from the debate and the group, in general, were great, because all the students were 100% motivated, without any exception. They were so excited about the debate and everybody was eager to express their thought and ideas concerning the topic (even I was taking part in the discussion). The teacher was encouraging all the students to use only English. The debate worked perfectly and the reason for that could have been the interesting topic that the teacher gave. All the students seemed very interested in the debate, because there was a burning discussion between the groups.