

BLOCK 4.

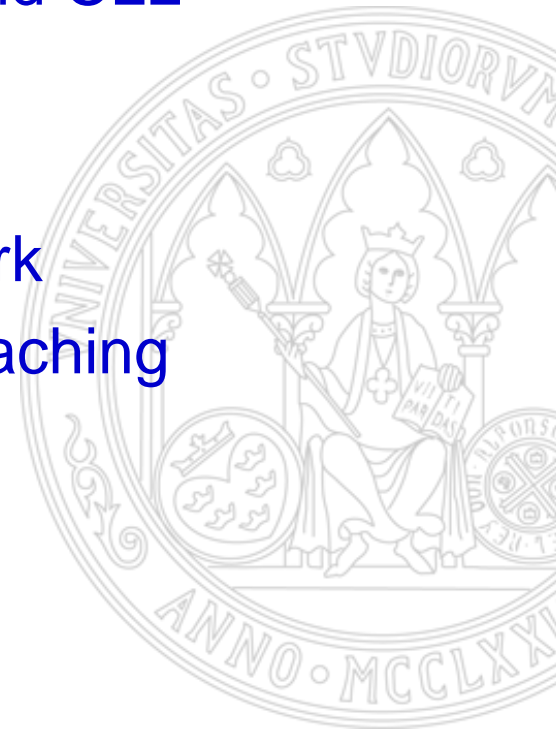
The past meets the present: Language teaching methods in the 20th and 21st centuries

Sub-block 4.3. Communicative approaches

Unit 4.3.6. Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goal of CLL
3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL
 - 3.1. Origins and development
 - 3.2. Benefits
 - 3.3. Distinctive feature of CLL: Group work
 - 3.4. Specific goals of CLL in language teaching
4. Analysis of the components of CLL
5. Critical assessment of CLL



1. Objectives of this unit

1. Report on the fundamentals of CLL and group work.
2. Analyse the communicative and social base of CLL.
3. Analyse the implications of “cooperative” teaching and learning.



2. Goal of CLL

To develop communicative competence and to foster cooperation between students



3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.1. Origins and development



What does the word cooperative evoke to you? In rough terms, do you think that all the methods that we have studied so far have encouraged cooperative learning at all?



3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.1. Origins and development

- ✓ A specific kind of Collaborative Learning, which is a general instructional framework in mainstream education.
- ✓ Related to peer-tutoring and peer-monitoring and learner-centred approaches, as opposed to teacher-fronted classroom methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
- ✓ *Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups, and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.*

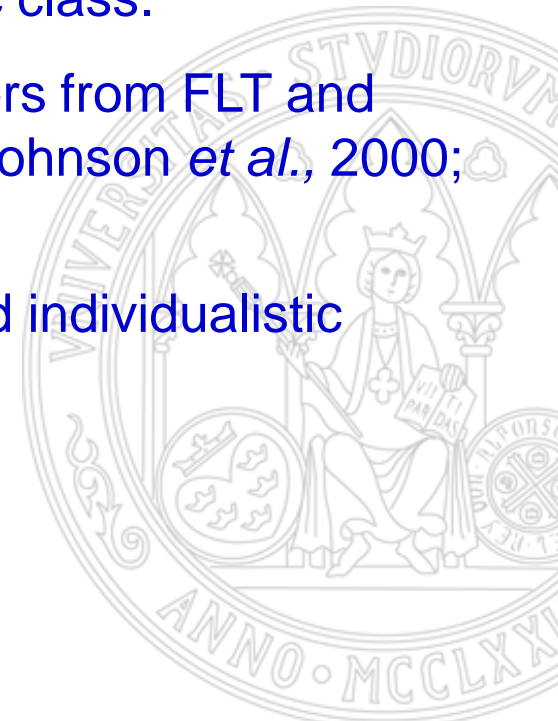
(Olsen & Kagan, 1992: 8. In Richards & Rodgers, 2001:192)

- ✓ Precursor: John Dewey (1859-1952), an American philosopher and educator. He rejected traditional methods of teaching, based on competition among students and favouring majority students. He advocated fostering cooperation in the classroom and interaction as the main learning strategy.
- ✓ Big development in the 1960s and 1970s within the boost of the “Progressive Education” movement in the USA, which started from the beginning of the 20th century.

3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.2. Benefits

- ✓ “There are over 900 research studies validating the effectiveness of cooperative over competitive and individualistic efforts” (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2010: 2), from many different areas of knowledge involving different types of students in terms of age, gender, country, instructional settings, cultural background, economic class.
- ✓ Major benefits of CLL distinguished by CLL supporters from FLT and mainstream education (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Johnson *et al.*, 2000; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995; Zhang, 2010; etc.):
 - ❑ Higher achievement level than in competitive and individualistic learning environments.
 - ❑ Positive effects on
 - relations among students,
 - self-esteem,
 - long-term retention,
 - depth of understanding of course material, etc.



3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.3. Distinctive feature of CLL: Group work

- ✓ “The success of CL is crucially dependent on the nature and organization of group work” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 196).
- ✓ The following principles are key to the success of group-based learning in CLL (Olsen & Kagan, 1992):
 1. **Positive interdependence:** the task has to be performed between *all* the members. Mutual support within the group. If one fails, all the group fails, and the other way around.
 2. **Group formation:** decisions on the size of the group (normally, between 2 and 4 members. The group should be small enough so that all members can participate in the completion of the activity); assignment of students to groups and roles of students.
 3. **Individual accountability:** each member of the group is held accountable for doing their specific share of the whole activity and for mastering all the material to be learnt.
 4. **Appropriate use of teamwork skills:** trust-building, leadership, decision making and conflict management skills.

3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.3. Distinctive feature of CLL: Group work

5. Structuring and structures: pedagogical ways to organise students' interaction. Kagan (1994) calls his approach to cooperative learning “structural approach” (more than 100 structures explained).



Axis 3

Johnson *et al.* (1998) add the two following ones:

6. Face-to-face interaction.

7. Group formation or regular self-assessment of team functioning.

Cooperative learning is not simply a synonym for students working in groups. A learning exercise only qualifies as cooperative learning to the extent that the [seven] listed elements are present.

(Felder & Brent, 1994: 2)

Links with *Multiple Intelligences* via group work: In small groups, students can share their strengths and weaknesses and use the activities to develop a variety of their intelligences.



Unit 4.4.2

3. Historical background and rationale behind CLL

3.4. Specific goals of CLL in language teaching

A learner-centred approach with the following FLT goals:

- to provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities
- to provide teachers with a methodology to enable them to achieve this goal and one that can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings (e.g., content-based, foreign language classrooms; mainstream)
- to enable focused attention to particular lexical items, language structures, and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks
- to provide opportunities for learners to develop successful learning and communication strategies
- to enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 193)

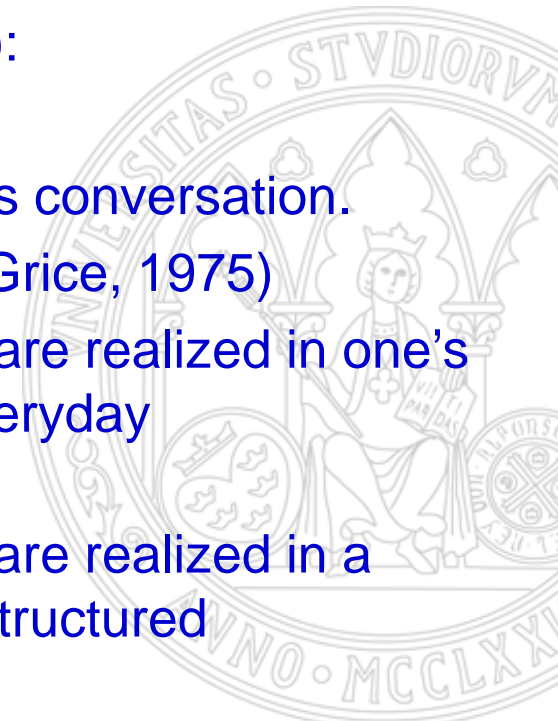
Which approach(es) do these goals remind you of?



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)
 - Communicative competence. Interactive and communicative nature of language. Also: structural and functional models of language
 - Premises (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 193-194):
 - Premise 1: *Born to Talk* (Weeks, 1979).
 - Premise 2: most talk/speech is organised as conversation.
 - Premise 3: cooperative rules or “maxims” (Grice, 1975)
 - Premise 4: how these cooperative maxims are realized in one’s native language is done through casual, everyday conversational interaction
 - Premise 5: how these cooperative maxims are realized in a second language is done in cooperatively structured interactional activities.
 - Culture: an integral part of language learning.



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- Theory of learning (learning principles)
 - Social-constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978):



Unit 4.3.5

- Learning through interaction: students build their own understanding of the world through communication.
- Understanding of the material to be learnt is achieved by formulating, explaining and negotiating meaning.

4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- Theory of learning (learning principles)
 - Compliance of CLL with almost all critical variables of language acquisition (Kagan, 1995), that is, input, output and context.
 - Input: comprehensible, developmentally appropriate, redundant, and accurate
 - Output: functional, communicative, frequent, redundant, and consistent with the identity of the speaker.
 - Context: supportive and motivating, communicative and referential, developmentally appropriate, and feedback rich.

4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs

- Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)
 - Learner-centred approach.
 - Teaching should encourage interaction
 - Emphasis on interactive pair and group-work activities conceptualised as “structured interactional activities”.
 - Keys to successful group-based learning



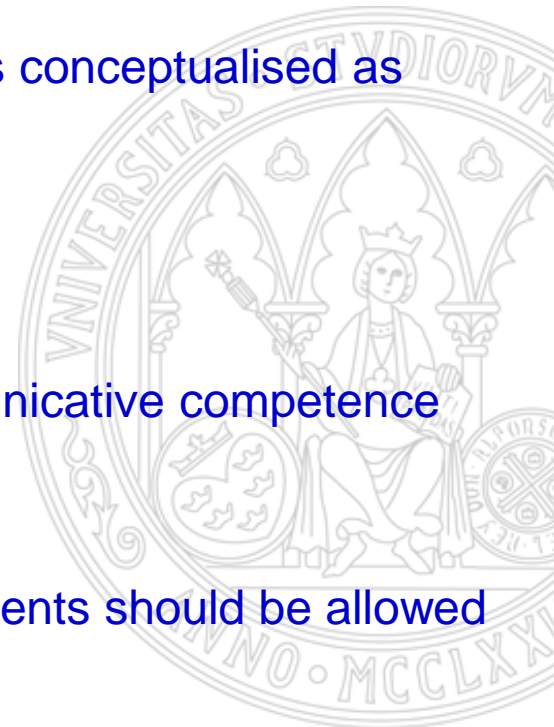
Section 3.3



- Teaching directed at making students develop communicative competence

Practice activity 3

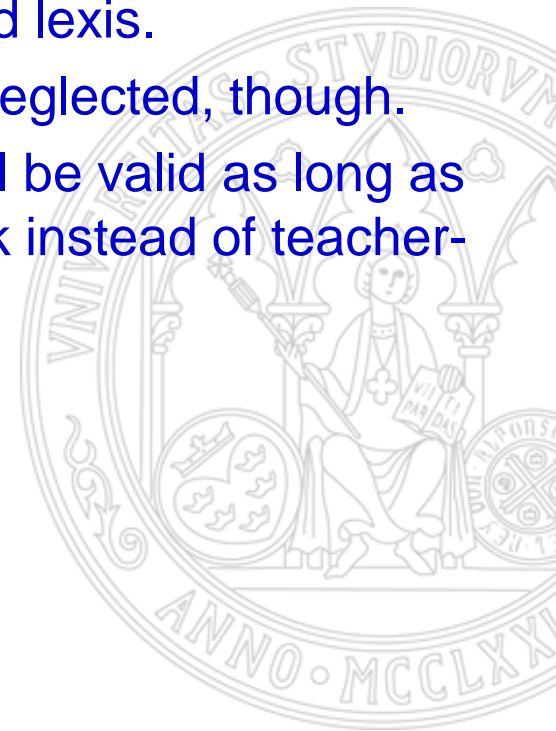
- Error correction: Explicit and implicit procedures. Students should be allowed to self-correct.
- No explicit role for the L1



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Emphasised language: structures, functions and lexis.
- ❑ Prioritised skills: mostly oral. Written skills not neglected, though.
- ❑ Syllabus: not specified. Any form of syllabus will be valid as long as it is taught via the implementation of group work instead of teacher-fronted teaching.



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

□ Activities

Coelho (1992: 132. In Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 197-198). Three main kinds of cooperative learning tasks and their learning focus:

1. Team practice from common input –skills development and mastery of facts
2. Jigsaw: differentiated but predetermined input – evaluation and synthesis of facts and opinions.
3. Cooperative projects: topics/resources selected by students – discovery learning

Olsen & Kagan (1992: 88. In Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 198-199)

distinguish the following “structures”:

4. *Three-step interview*
5. *Roundtable*
6. *Round Robin*
7. *Think-Pair-Share*
8. *Solve-Pair-Share*
9. *Numbered Heads*



Section
3.3



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Procedure



2



4. Analysis of the components of CLL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

□ Roles of teachers

▪ Creators of

a highly structured and well-organized learning environment in the classroom, setting goals, planning and structuring tasks, establishing the physical arrangement of the classroom, assigning students to groups and roles, and selecting materials and time.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 199)

▪ Guiders, facilitators, and negotiators

As a facilitator, the teacher “interacts, teachers, refocuses, questions, clarifies, supports, expands, celebrates, empathizes” (Harel, 1992: 169. In Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 199)

4. Analysis of the components of CLL

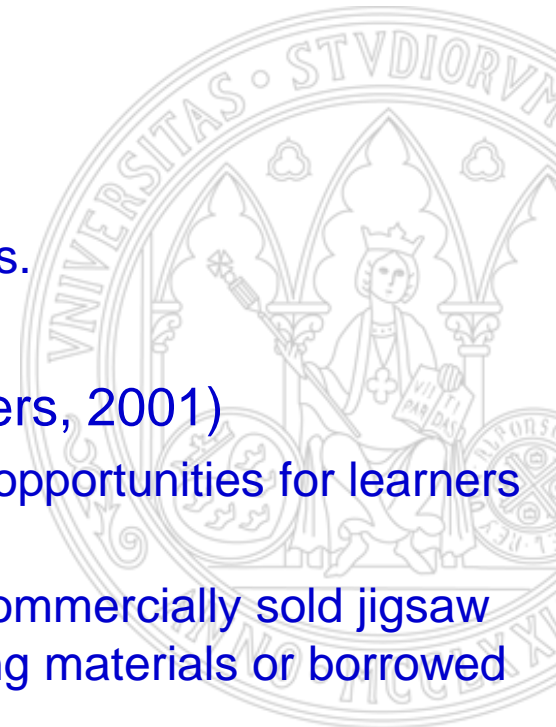
Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of learners

- Responsible for their own learning.
- Collaborative members of groups.
- Must develop life-long learning skills.
- Active and creative participators.
- Tutors, checkers, recorders, and information sharers.

❑ Roles of instructional materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

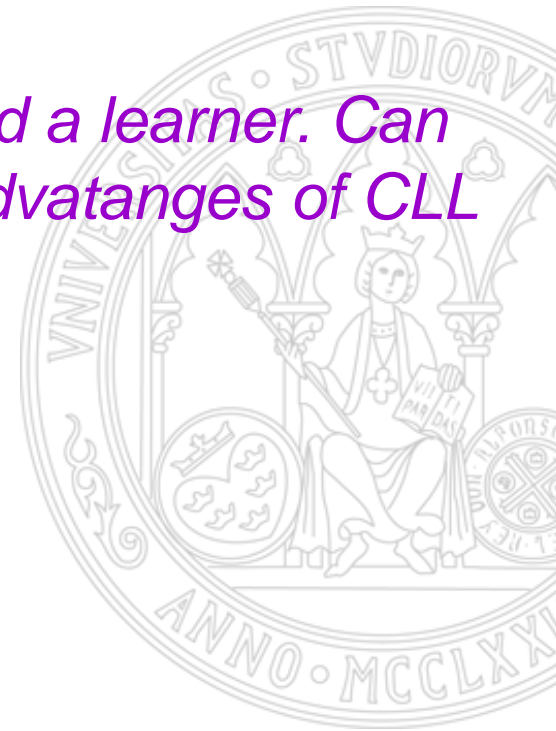
- Important function inasmuch as they should create opportunities for learners to work cooperatively.
- Specially designed for CLL learning (for instance, commercially sold jigsaw and information-gap activities), adapted from existing materials or borrowed from other disciplines



5. Critical assessment of CLL



Imagine yourself as both a teacher and a learner. Can you think of any advantages and disadvantages of CLL from both perspectives?



5. Critical assessment of CLL

☐ Positive aspects

CLL has been extensively researched in many areas of knowledge, the findings being generally supportive (see section 3.2)

1) Advantages that go across learning any area of knowledge.



Section 3.2. plus...

- a) Celebration of diversity
- b) Acknowledgement of individual differences
- c) Interpersonal development
- d) Actively involving students in learning
- e) More opportunities for personal feedback.

(<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/>)



5. Critical assessment of CLL

□ Positive aspects

2) Advantages for the ESL classroom

1. *Increased frequency and variety of second language practice through different types of interaction*
2. *Possibility for development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills*
3. *Opportunities to integrate language with content-based instruction*
4. *Opportunities to include a greater variety of curricular materials to stimulate language as well as concept learning*
5. *Freedom for teachers to master new professional skills, particularly those emphasizing communication*
6. *Opportunities for students to act as resources for each other, thus assuming a more active role in their learning.*

(McGroarty, 1989. In Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 195)

5. Critical assessment of CLL

❑ Negative aspects:

1. From teachers' perspective:

- a) Extremely demanding role from teachers
- b) Vague objectives

2. From students' perspective:

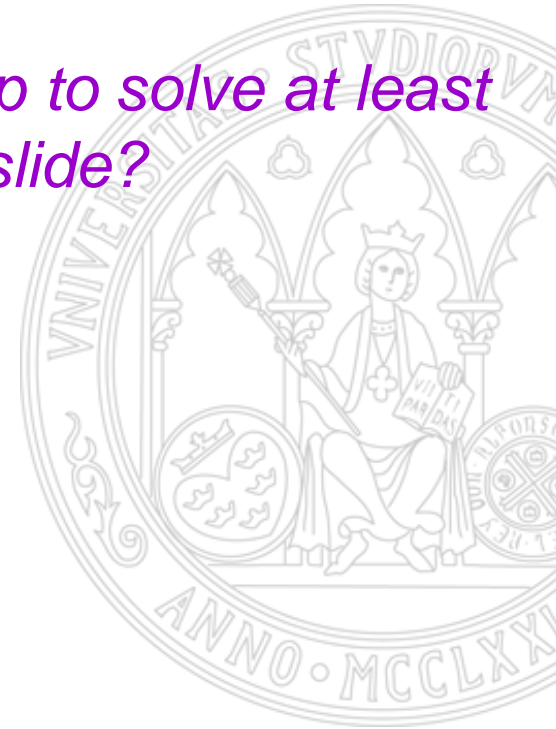
- a) Catering for group learning but neglecting individual learning
- b) Issues with peer feedback
- c) Issues with proficiency levels
- d) Randall (1999) cautions against the abuse of group work. She identifies the following common weakness in the implementation of group work:
 - Making members of the group responsible for each other's learning.
 - Encouraging only lower-level thinking.
- d) Mix of students as a source of potential difficulties: “slow” members holding back work of whole group; derived conflicts with faster learners.
- e) Group work may reinforce stereotypes and prejudices directed at female learners and minorities (Cohen, 1986; Linn & Burbules, 1993; Sadker *et al.*, 1991)

5. Critical assessment of CLL

❑ Negative aspects:



How do you think that teachers can help to solve at least some of the problems listed in the last slide?



5. Critical assessment of CLL

□ Influence of CLL on FLT:

- Making teachers and researchers aware of the potential benefits of group work
- Continuing the emphasis on humanistic values and on the increasingly popular “learner responsibility/autonomy” trend



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