

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

**USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT WITH LANGUAGE SUPPORT CLASSES IN
PAKISTANI HIGHER EDUCATION**

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents. My parents' love, prayers, devotion, sacrifices and moral support facilitated me to accomplish this achievement. I specifically dedicate this thesis to my father who always wanted me to return to Pakistan with PhD degree. Alas! He could not share this happiness with me and left this transient world for the eternal one. I pray; he may have an elevated place in heavens!

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

This thesis reports a classroom-based action-research study conducted in the University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan, where the researcher teaches English as a Second Language in large compulsory language support classes. The study aims to find an accessible solution to the problem that the majority of students do not actively engage with the learning process in these classes, and therefore fail to make satisfactory progress with their language learning.

The problem was investigated through a cyclical process of planning, action, observation and reflection in the researcher's own class. An initial literature review led to the hypothesis that a highly structured approach to group work, using permanent groups and regular cooperative learning strategies, could effectively improve participation without introducing the classroom management problems sometimes associated with group work in large classes. These strategies were introduced and regularly reviewed using the researcher's own reflections, as well as feedback from the students and from other teachers who observed the classes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and the findings from the two types of data were cross-referenced to check their validity.

The results indicate that the strategies enhanced students' participation, confidence, motivation, cognitive skills, and willingness to take responsibility for their own and others' learning; the intervention also increased student-student and student-teacher interaction. Although there were initially some problems related to students' unresponsiveness or reluctance to participate, these were largely brought under control by adjusting group membership and constantly explaining to the shyer students the benefits of learning in groups.

The study shows that a highly structured approach to group work, using permanent groups and carefully selected cooperative learning activities, can serve to increase student engagement in English language support classes at the University of Sindh, without requiring significant extra resources or creating classroom management issues. It is therefore suggested that wider adoption of this form of communicative learning across the institution, and in similar situations elsewhere, is feasible and could be beneficial for both students and university teachers.

Key words: action research, language support, large classes, English as Second Language, teaching, learning, group work, cooperative learning

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT:	Communication Language Teaching
CSR:	Class Size Reduction
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ESL:	English as a Second Language
GI:	Group Investigation
HEC:	Higher Education Commission
IELL:	Institute of English Language and Literature
IQR:	Inter Quartile Range
JSSF:	Jeay Sindh Student Federation
M:	The Mean (average)
SD:	Standard Deviation
SPSF:	Sindh Peoples Students Federation
STAD:	Student Team Achievement Divisions
STAR:	Student Teacher Achievement Ratio
TGT:	Teams-Games Tournament
TESOL:	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TPS:	Think Pair Share
UoSJP:	University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development
FLSCS:	Foreign Language Self-Concept Scale
UCLES:	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
TuAF NCO:	Turkish Air Force Non-Commissioned Officer

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is the result of a classroom-based action-research study conducted in the University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan (henceforth UoSJP) with the aim of addressing problems experienced by both students and teachers in the English language support classes at that university. UoSJP, also informally known as Sindh University, is the second-oldest public university in Pakistan, established in 1947. Its main campus, Allama I.I Kazi Campus, is situated in Jamshoro, Sindh, about 15 kilometres from Hyderabad city. In the language support courses at UoSJP, students are taught English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL); this support is offered to all students because English is the medium of instruction throughout the university. One of the striking features of these classes is their large size, with usually between 100 and 300 students, and this is typical of such classes in developing countries (Todd, 2012; Bughio, 2013). There is evidence that ESL teachers in developing countries, including Pakistan, believe that, due to their large size, these classes are difficult to teach (Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006; Bughio, 2013). Furthermore, this belief tends to deter these teachers from attempting to use modern interactive teaching methods that might help students enhance their English proficiency (Naidu, et al., 1992; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006; Bughio, 2012). Instead, the teachers tend to fall back on lecturing which, for many, is the only way they know of managing such large classes, even though it is not effective for the development of language skills (Todd, 2006a).

My ten-year teaching experience at UoSJP left me with the impression that even though students attend these ESL classes, many of them do not improve their English language proficiency and continue to experience difficulties with communicating in English. I hypothesise that this lack of progress is not due to the size of the classes per se, but is the result of the teacher-centred pedagogical method, i.e. lecturing, which makes it difficult for students to engage with the course content (cf. Nunan, 1987; Nunan and Lamb, 1996; Ur, 2004). I believe that the difficulty of managing large classes is a challenge to be overcome, rather than a reason to abandon interactive teaching methods, and the aim of this study is to address that

challenge through a process of action research (see Chapter 4 for details of action research). This methodology is particularly appropriate to educational research ‘conducted by educators in their own settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning’ (Efron and Ravid, 2013 p. 2). The choice of action research therefore both reflects the origins of my study in my experience as a practitioner, and provides a framework for my research question. Specifically, my research question is:

How can I change my teaching practice to improve students’ experience of and engagement with the learning process in large ESL classes at UoSJP?

This introductory chapter will set the scene for the study, by providing the reader with background information about the status of the English language in Pakistan, the Pakistani educational system in general and UoSJP in particular.

1.2 Background to English language in Pakistan

The history of the dominance of the English language in Pakistan can be traced back to the British rule in the Indian subcontinent. On 7th March 1835, at the instigation of Lord William Bentinck, the UK parliament passed a resolution stating that the British government’s main objective in the subcontinent would be to promote European literature and science. According to Mahboob (2002, pp. 17-18), there were two reasons for this. Firstly, an influential faction of British society believed that western culture and especially Christianity were superior to the indigenous culture, and that they therefore had a moral duty to westernise the subcontinent. Secondly, the introduction of English language and culture had economic value to the British, since it meant that Indian workers could more easily be employed in English businesses and institutions, especially the army (Rahman, 1996; Evans, 2002; Rasool and Mansoor, 2009). To achieve this aim, the British colonial authorities introduced English as the language of power, making it the language of government, civil services, armed forces, industry, education and media (Evans, 2002; Mahboob, 2002; Rahman, 2003). The change was aimed at westernising people by making them aware of English values and traditions. However, access to English was not universal. Rahman (2003) highlights that the policy was primarily aimed at the most economically influential strata of Indian society and was therefore

implemented mainly in urban areas. The rural areas, where the majority of the uneducated poorer people lived, remained unaffected. Thus, English became the asset of the economically rich classes.

Due to the influence of the language-based hierarchical system created by the British Empire, the English language in Pakistan has mainly been the preserve of the elite classes - the military, civil service and higher judiciary - ever since the country's independence in 1947 (Rahman, 1999; 2004; 2006; Shamim, 2011). Although the constitution of 1973 promoted the use of Urdu, the armed forces and the higher bureaucracy never shunned the use of English for official purposes. They have always considered English to be the language of privileged people and do not want to diminish their privileged position by giving up the language (Rahman, 2001). Furthermore, they realise that English is the language of technological and socio-economic development, and that without English they would not be able to communicate with the world (Rahman, 2001; 2003; Khalid, 2006; Shamim, 2008; 2011). Therefore, they have aimed to recruit young people who are competent in English. Consequently, the elite classes, who want their children to get jobs in the current realms of power, are very eager to educate their children in English (Rahman, 2003, p. 7). According to the 1973 constitution, English was supposed to remain as the official language of the country only for 15 years, i.e. until 1988 (see page 4). However, even though those 15 years have long gone, English is still as firmly rooted in the realms of power in Pakistan as it was before, during and after 1947 (Rahman, 2006; Shamim, 2008).

1.3 Controversial status of English as an official language

Despite its entrenchment within the elite classes, the status of English in Pakistan has been controversial ever since the country's independence, with each political party and successive leader introducing a different language policy based on their socio-religious dogmas (Mansoor, 2003). On the one hand, some have favoured English as an official language, because they see it as the language of economic and technical development, while others have favoured Urdu, which they see as the language of Islam and national unity (Rahman, 1996; 1999). Soon after independence in 1947, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, declared that Urdu would be the

national language of the country because Urdu represented Islam, Islamic literature and national unity, whereas English represented liberalism (Rahman, 1999; Shamim, 2008). However, this offended the people of the then East Pakistan province (now Bangladesh), who demanded that Bangla should have equal status with Urdu. Largely as a result of this dispute, English was retained as the official language, despite Urdu being the national language of the country (Khalid and Khan, 2006). Since then, pressure to replace English with Urdu as the official language has oscillated according to who was in power. Some leaders, such as General Ayub Khan (president from 1958) and General Yahya Khan (from 1969), who were both trained by the British army, have tended to favour English. Others, such as General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (president from 1977), have favoured Urdu, usually in association with the ‘Islamisation’ of society.

The Pakistani constitution of 1973, which is still in force, included clauses about language policy. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then prime minister, was actually in favour of retaining English as the official language because he was aware of its association with modern scientific development worldwide. Nevertheless, he reached a compromise with the local language development bodies and the pro-Urdu opposition parties, namely the National Awami Party and Jamat-i-Islami (Rahman, 1996; Mahboob, 2002). This compromise envisaged a 15-year period during which English would gradually be replaced by Urdu:

251 *National language.*

- (1) *The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.*
- (2) *Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.*

The Constitution of Pakistan, Article 251, clauses 1 and 2

Although Urdu did not replace English as Pakistan’s official language within the timescale envisaged in the constitution, efforts to implement the change still continue.

On 14 May 2015, the Pakistani cabinet decided to implement Article 251 of the constitution, making Urdu the official language of the country. In practice, this means that government departments have been instructed to use Urdu for all internal correspondence, and that government websites, utility bills, passports, licences and other documents will also carry Urdu text. Furthermore, it is intended that, from 10 July 2015 onwards, the President, the Prime Minister, and all other ministers and government officials would give speeches in Urdu both at home and abroad (Haider, 2015). There are three possible reasons for this move. Firstly, Pillalamarri (2015) argues that the Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, may have been influenced by the Indian Prime Minister's recent use of Hindi instead of English at international levels. Secondly, the Prime Minister has been under pressure from the Supreme Court of Pakistan to implement the 1973 constitution in this respect (The *Express Tribune*, 29 July 2015). Finally, it is believed that Mr Sharif has been swayed in favour of Urdu both by his own Islamic ideology and by the religious parties, which see English as a bad influence that leads to Pakistani people being westernised and giving up their national language and dress (Source: Inside Story, Aljazeera 16 July 2015). Although these directives on the use of Urdu are likely to be praised by the masses, they might not be welcomed by the elite classes and the Pakistani youth. The elites and the youth of Pakistan still argue that English language is the language of socio-economic and technological development, and that replacing it with Urdu would have negative effects on the country's future (Inside Story, Aljazeera, 16 July 2015; The *Express Tribune*, 29 July 2015; Pillalamarri 2015). Thus, the recent directives, as always in the history of Pakistan, have done little to resolve the language controversy that has been pervasive in the country since its establishment.

Policies on the use of English in the Pakistani educational system have not reflected entirely the political controversies over the use of English as the official language of Pakistan. Although the focus of Pakistani education policies from 1947 to 1988 was to spread Urdu as a national language, 'in 1989, a major policy change was initiated, to introduce English in the early years ... in public sector schools' Shamim (2008, p. 239). The objective was to make the masses literate in English in order to address and reduce social disparities. The National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009, pp. 11 and 27-28) recognises that 'English is an international language, and important for competition in a globalized world order', that 'it is not easy to obtain a white

collar job in either the public or private sectors without a minimum level proficiency in the English language’ and that these facts ‘have generated an across the board demand for learning English language in the country’. In line with this recognition, the document outlines an English language policy which it recommends should be implemented ‘in the shortest possible time, paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups and lagging behind regions.’ The aim of this policy is to ensure that children from all backgrounds learn English at school. As a result, English has been introduced as a compulsory subject in all Pakistani schools, from primary level onwards. The specific provisions include the following policy actions:

4. *The curriculum from Class I onward shall include English (as a subject) ...*
6. *English shall be employed as the medium of instruction for sciences and mathematics from class IV onwards ...*
8. *Opportunities shall be provided to children from low socio-economic strata to learn English language.*

National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009, p. 28)

1.4 English language and education in Pakistan

Despite the official policy, access to effective English tuition in Pakistan is actually very inequitable. During the British Raj, English-speaking Indians were needed to act as translators and interpreters, as well as to provide army recruits and clerical staff to work in administration. However, it was not feasible to establish a universal system of education across the whole subcontinent, and so the British aimed to create a two-tier system, in which only a subsection of the population was educated in English language and culture. This policy was spelled out in the Minute on Education written in 1835 by Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was at the time a member of the Supreme Council of India:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

Macaulay 1835

According to Rahman (1999; 2006), since the independence of Pakistan, the ruling elite classes have carried on with a dualistic policy in which they have supported the promotion of Urdu for the education of people in general, while educating their own children in English. The masses have considered Urdu to be the language of Islam and national identity; the ruling elite have appeased them by supporting the use of Urdu as the national language and the medium of instruction in public vernacular-medium schools. These schools also supply the ruling classes, like the British before them, with clerical staff and other people literate in the national language to serve them in their offices and homes. At the same time, the elite use English for their own advantage as it symbolises power, western culture and socio-economic development.

Pakistan has five main types of school, which are distinguished by the level of fees charged, if any, and by the language used as the medium of instruction (Coleman and Capstick, 2012, p. 15). These are:

1. Elite private schools, which charge very high fees and use English as the medium of instruction;
2. Military schools, which use English as the medium of instruction and vary in the fees charged, if any;
3. State schools, which charge no fees and use Urdu, or sometimes other Pakistani languages, as the medium of instruction, except for science and maths, which are taught in English from class IV (primary level) onwards;
4. Non-elite 'English-medium' schools, which charge modest fees and claim to use English as the medium of instruction (although the extent to which they actually do this has been questioned: see further discussion below);
5. Madrasas, which do not charge fees and usually use the local language as the medium of instruction.

The National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009) acknowledges the disparities in this system:

The rich send their children to private run English medium schools which offer foreign curricula and examination systems; the public schools enrol those who are too poor to do so. This divide can be further categorised across low cost private schools and the elite schools.

National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009, p. 16)

The elite private schools and Military schools cater to the upper echelons of society, the former for economic reasons and the latter by virtue of a highly competitive entry examination. These elite schools, which educate a very small proportion of the population, are fully equipped with up-to-date teaching and learning equipment, and the teachers are well qualified and relatively well paid (e.g. Rahman, 2001). In contrast, vernacular-medium schools and Madrasas in Pakistan have always lacked modern teaching and learning facilities, and the teachers are not so well trained or highly qualified (Coleman, 2010; Shamim, 2011). As far as tuition in English language is concerned, it is questionable whether the policy of access for all can work; as Coleman and Capstick (2012, p. 15) put it, ‘it seems likely that few primary teachers possess the language skills required’. Even at secondary level, the method of teaching English in the non-elite institutions is not communicative, and students are taught through traditional (and less effective) rote-learning techniques (Rahman, 2004; Shamim, 2008).

Because of the failure of the public system to provide adequate English language teaching, and the perception of many people in Pakistan that proficiency in English is a key to socio-economic mobility, a public demand for low-priced English-medium schools has developed. In the last two decades, there has therefore been a huge increase in the number of private schools offering low-cost education in English to meet this demand (Manan, Dumanig and David, 2015). However, Coleman and Capstick (2012, p. 15) caution that the claims of these schools to use English as the medium of instruction ‘must be treated with care’, and Bano (2008, p. 19) argues that non-elite private English-medium schools ‘might be marginally better than the government schools but are still providing very low quality education’. Overall, the National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009, p. 27) recognises that ‘most private and public schools do not have the capacity to develop the requisite [English language] proficiency levels in their students [to obtain a white collar job]’. More recent research suggests that, despite the good intentions of the policy, this situation has not changed. On the basis of data collected from eleven low-fee English-medium private schools, Manan, Dumanig and David (2015, p. 1) report that ‘direct and contextualized use of English is a rare feature ... Grammar-translation methodologies and classrooms activities leave little potential for communicative competence, concept formulation and linguistic internalization’.

1.5 English language teaching in universities

In contrast to the variety of languages used in schools in Pakistan, all teaching in the country's universities takes place in English. Students from the elite schools are well equipped for this, but they constitute a small proportion of university entrants and, in any case, many of them go to private universities (Rasool and Mansoor, 2009). Most of the students that enrol in Pakistani public universities, such as Sindh University (UoSJP), are from public vernacular-medium schools and therefore lack the English proficiency needed for study at higher education level (Rahman, 2003; Shamim, 2008; 2011). Consequently, the public universities in Pakistan find it necessary to provide language support for their students through classes in English as a second language (ESL) (Mansoor, 2003). At UoSJP, for example, all students - irrespective of the subject of their degree - are required to attend compulsory English classes intended to enhance their communicative and academic skills. In the first year of undergraduate studies these classes are called *Remedial English*, while in the second year they are called *English Compulsory*; both courses are credit bearing and have 48 hours of timetabled teaching per semester. Masters students are also required to attend courses in English language and to pass the assessments, although they do not carry credits at postgraduate level.

Although Pakistani universities provide English language support, because the preferred method of teaching at the higher education level is lecturing, language support classes are not as effective as they could be (Khan, 1997; Warsi, 2004; Bughio, 2013; Soomro, 2013). In the language-teaching literature, there is currently a consensus that the successful teaching of any language requires interactive methods that involve students in the process of learning by actively using the language for communicative purposes (Allwright, 1984; Savignon, 2002; Richards, 2006). However, most teachers of English in higher education institutions in Pakistan do not use communicative methods, but replicate traditional lecture-style teaching through which they themselves were taught (Shamim, 2011; Raja, 2012; Bughio, 2013).

One reason for the tendency of English language teachers in Pakistani public universities to use lectures is that their teaching usually takes place in extremely large classes. Due to a lack of funding, public universities in developing countries

like Pakistan can neither build the classrooms nor appoint the number of teachers that would be necessary to support a significant reduction in class size (Hattie, 2005; Aly, 2007). Consequently, teachers in these universities find themselves teaching very large classes of up to 300 students (Rahman, 2003; Bughio, 2013). There is evidence that teachers resort to lecturing in such large classes because they believe it avoids problems, such as classroom disruption (e.g. Coleman, 1989c; Sabandar, 1989, Naidu, et al., 1992; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006; Bughio, 2013). Although lecturing does not produce a communicative environment, teachers believe that it does at least facilitate classroom management. In contrast, interactive activities such as group work are thought to take a great deal of time to set up and to risk producing chaotic situations in which students keep moving about and engaging in non-academic activities such as off-task talking (Naidu, et al., 1992; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). The larger the class, the greater the apparent potential for such disruption. Firstly, more students generate more noise. Secondly, above a certain number, it becomes impractical for the teacher to assign individual students to particular groups, so students have to organise themselves into groups, which takes longer and can result in considerable confusion.

Teachers' concerns about classroom management may be heightened at UoSJP because of the generally poor standards of classroom behaviour and the negative effects of the political environment (see below for details of political environment). In my experience - both as a student and as a teacher - it is not uncommon for students, especially those at the back of classes, to be talking to their neighbours, using their phones or even walking in and out of class, perhaps to meet friends who appear at the window. This means that classes tend to be noisy, even when the teacher is lecturing, and this high level of background noise might heighten teachers' anxiety about letting the noise get out of control. Furthermore, there is a history of violent incidents at the university, made all the more serious by the ready availability of guns in Pakistan. Most of the violence involves clashes between rival student political groups but, in some cases, threats have been made towards staff members who have attempted to enforce discipline. This has led to a sense of insecurity among teachers (Education News Archive, 2007-2013). Student gun culture was particularly severe in the years immediately before and after I started my PhD in 2011, and perhaps reached a peak in 2012, when a senior professor was murdered on

campus. In such an environment, it is not hard to understand why some teachers might prefer to stick to the traditional forms of teaching that could be perceived as minimising risks of confrontation.

In addition to heightening concerns about classroom management, the political environment at UoSJP also adds to the time pressure experienced by teachers. There have been numerous boycotts, some called by students and others by staff, which have resulted in the university being closed, sometimes for months at a time. These boycotts have been called in response to various events, including some incidents involving extreme violence. Sometimes, print and electronic media are used to inform teachers and students in advance that classes will not take place on a particular day or days. To confirm that the academic process is really suspended, student political activists visit different faculties and departments in groups. If they find any class is still being conducted, they beat some students and sometimes threaten or insult teachers. When issues arise after the university academic activities have started for the day, these political student activists suddenly appear at the doors of classes, calling them off there and then. Obviously all this interrupts teaching, so that students often receive less than the timetabled 48 hours of language support per semester. For example, during the semester-long intervention phase of the present study, in 2012-2013, I was only able to conduct a total of 18 lessons because of extended boycotts called in response to the murders of a professor and two students. This reduction in teaching hours may increase the pressure felt by teachers to get through the syllabus, and make them more reluctant to do anything that could possibly be perceived as ‘wasting time.’

Measures to control violent incidents at the main campus are occasionally implemented, but there is evidence suggesting that these are not always followed through. For example, a former Vice Chancellor of UoSJP, Dr Nazir A. Mughal, installed a metal-detector door at the main gate of the Faculty of Arts (Koondhar, 2012). But it transpired from a recent phone interview between the author and the Director of the University’s Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL), that the door was subsequently removed because it stopped functioning. On the other hand, the IELL Director said that due to the presence of Pakistan Rangers at the main campus, there had been a considerable reduction in student boycotts since 2013. Yet the presence of the Pakistan Rangers is only a temporary solution and it is not clear

what the university will do when the government recalls them. Moreover, although students are calling fewer boycotts and strikes, there is evidence that teachers still continue to do so, for example in protest against perceived ‘government interference in university affairs’ (Ilyas, 2014). Furthermore, at the time of writing, violent incidents and student boycotts still continue at other University of Sindh campuses, as evidenced for example by the recent news of clashes between the university administration and students at the Larkana campus (Gorar, 2015).

There are other reasons why English language teachers in Pakistani public universities tend to prefer lectures: these include the form of assessment and the teaching facilities. In UoSJP, for example, the main coursebook (*English for Undergraduates* by D. H. Howe, T. A. Kirkpatrick and D. L. Kirkpatrick, 2006), which is prescribed for both Remedial English and English Compulsory classes, is actually designed to support a communicative approach to teaching. According to the publisher’s blurb, the course ‘reflects the new trends in language teaching and provides students with graded developing practice in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The emphasis is on a purposeful and communicative approach to language learning’. However, the process of teaching and learning in these classes focuses chiefly on securing decent grades in the course-based examination. And since this examination consists almost entirely of reading comprehension and grammar exercises, with no speaking or listening and almost no extended writing, this means that students are given very little or no feedback on their oral and written tasks (Bughio, 2013). Furthermore, even if teachers wanted to focus on listening skills, they could not use the exercises in the book because of the lack of audio-visual equipment in the classrooms. Thus, there still remains a gap between good pedagogical practices and the communicative intentions of the course book, on the one hand, and the classrooms in which the book is used, on the other (Bughio, 2013; Soomro, 2013).

Notwithstanding the very real problems described in the preceding paragraphs, probably the main reason why English language teachers in Pakistani public universities rely on lecturing is that they are usually not professionally trained in teaching methods and therefore do not know how to implement interactive activities, or how to deal effectively with the size and composition of the classes (Shamim, 2011; Ahmed, 2012; Bughio, 2013). At UoSJP, for example, the only qualification

necessary to become a lecturer is the possession of a Master's degree. Moreover, most of the English language lecturers at UoSJP, myself included, actually have an MA in English Literature, rather than Applied Linguistics or English Language Teaching. In fact, it is only recently that the university has started offering a masters course in Language and Linguistics. Although institutions such as the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) have initiated many English language teaching workshops and training programmes in Pakistan, it is difficult for all relevant teachers to benefit from them. This is partly because of their busy teaching schedules, and partly because the majority of such training takes place in Islamabad. Furthermore, the teaching courses themselves tend to be delivered through conventional methods that focus on the transmission of knowledge, which limits the extent to which they help teachers with professional development (Kasi, 2010). In the absence of appropriate teacher training, teachers have to rely on their own limited experience as teachers and students (Bughio, 2013). Therefore, they continue teaching English language using the same traditional methods by which they were taught.

Because of the difficulties described in the preceding paragraphs, English language teaching in Pakistani public universities is problematic, with students making little real improvement in their language skills (Shamim, 2011). Despite efforts to improve English language teaching on the part of the government, the results fall greatly short of expectations (Memon and Badger, 2007). At the end of the twentieth century, only 18-20% of college students nationally were passing the compulsory English test, which meant failure in the entire University examination (Abbas, 1998, reported by Mansoor, 2003). This situation has improved, and recent figures for UoSJP indicate that about 70% of the second-year students passed their ESL compulsory written examination in the year 2014-2015 (see *Appendix 2B*). But because the exam only tests reading comprehension and grammar, high marks are not necessarily indicative of good communication skills (Bughio, 2013). Shamim (2011) argues that when students are rarely given the opportunity to express themselves or engage in interactive activities in their English classes, they have little chance of achieving the high level of language proficiency needed for higher professional jobs. Unsurprisingly, Pakistani graduates are frequently found to lack

English competence, which has created dissatisfaction among employers and job seekers alike (Shamim, 2011).

1.6 My experience

Before I started my PhD, my own experience of teaching the compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP was very much as described above. Although there was a new, communicatively oriented text book, I did not know how to exploit the activities it contained. I would lecture the whole class and then ask students to work individually on the tasks in the book. When they were finished, the students would raise their hands, and I would try to check their answers. But owing to the large number of students, usually between 100 and 300 in a class, I could not correct everyone's work, and the stronger students, who finished first, would get most of my attention. Some exercises contained conversation and dialogue practice, so I called students to come forward and practise the dialogue or conversation in front of the class, but again the active participants were the stronger students. I was very concerned about the lack of participation by the majority of students, and how little feedback I was able to give them. However, when I attempted to use group work, the resulting noise and disorderliness were really discouraging, and still only the stronger students participated in the activities I tried to set up. Consequently, I tended to fall back on lecturing and setting work for students to complete individually. In general, I did not know how to adopt modern communicative methods, or how to group students in order to use group work effectively.

Although large class sizes, limited teaching facilities, examination requirements and political activities all have negative effects on the teaching of English language at UoSJP, there is relatively little that an individual teacher can do to change the situation in these respects. In contrast, the problem of ineffective pedagogical practices can be much more directly addressed, and I therefore decided to make this the focus of my study. When teaching *Remedial English* and *English Compulsory* classes, I often asked myself if there was any way of making them more effective. Not only are these classes extremely large, but the students are heterogeneous in terms of ability and socio-economic background, and it is therefore exceedingly difficult to meet their various needs, especially using out-dated teaching techniques (Shamim, 2011; Raja, 2012). I thought about students who came from very distant

places to study at UoSJP, and what they got in return: traditional lecturing. If that was all we could offer to improve their English language, why should they bother attending the huge, noisy ESL classes at the university when there were far better lectures on similar topics available online? The chance to follow up appropriately on my concerns about these classes and their problems was provided when I was admitted to undertake a PhD in the UK. I decided to investigate how I could change my teaching practice to improve students' experience of, and engagement with, the learning process, given the contextual constraints described above.

1.7 Objectives of the study

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the objective of the study is to answer the following research question:

How can I change my teaching practice to improve students' experience of and engagement with the learning process in large ESL classes at UoSJP?

My starting point included my own experience of teaching these classes, and also the work of my colleague, now Dr Faraz Ali Bughio, who was completing his PhD (Buglio, 2013) at about the same time as I was starting mine. Buglio (2013) tested whether group work and other elements of communicative language teaching could be used effectively to increase student participation in the large ESL classes at our institute. Both he and a colleague (who assisted in his project) tried using group work in their compulsory ESL classes for one term. Feedback from the students was positive and Buglio reports that communicative methodology does offer a solution to the problems. However, the colleague who also participated in the research summarised her experience as follows:

I would say that keeping in mind the resources and the work load it does not seem doable by every teacher of language. If given the choice I would use it but only bits and pieces here and there mingled with my own teaching style. ... Using all of them together is great but is not manageable in larger classes.

Comments by 'Teacher C' (Buglio 2013, p. 189)

Bughio (2013) concludes that administrative responsibilities and teaching load make it impractical for teachers to habitually use communicative approaches, such as group work, in our context. He argues that:

In order to improve the quality of a teachers' performance there is a need to create a balance between their administrative duties and teaching, along with providing them ample opportunities for professional development (Buglio 2013, pp. 237-238).

I am in complete agreement that a reduction in administrative duties and teaching load, as well as additional training, would assist teachers to improve the learning experience of students in these classes. At the same time, the issue of large classes arises because of lack of funding for the public universities, and this same lack of funding means that neither a reduction in workload nor additional teacher training are likely in the foreseeable future. The aim of my study is therefore to investigate whether, given the situational constraints, I can find a way of using group work regularly in our large classes, so as to improve student engagement without the procedure being excessively disruptive and time consuming.

In order to achieve this objective, I used an action research methodology; this methodology was chosen because it allows the roles of teacher and researcher to be taken by the same person, and it therefore allowed me to investigate how to improve my own teaching. The approach involves a cycle of planning, action and reflection, and is particularly suitable for research in education. My initial planning stage included an extensive review of the relevant literature, which led me to the conclusion that an approach to teaching known as cooperative learning might offer a way forward, since it provides a highly structured framework for the implementation of group work. I subsequently adapted this approach to my context, and developed it through a series of action research cycles, before a final evaluation. The results show that a highly structured approach to group work, using permanent groups, can serve to increase student engagement in language support classes at the University of Sindh.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The following two chapters cover the initial planning (so-called reconnaissance) stage of the action research process: Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on large-class teaching, which leads to the idea that cooperative learning might help me achieve my objective; Chapter 3 surveys the literature on cooperative learning and its theoretical basis. The next two chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, together describe the design of the study. Chapter 4 discusses action research both in general and as applied to my own research. Chapter 5 describes and justifies the methods used to collect and analyse data. Chapter 6 is a detailed situation analysis of the compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP and, with the literature reviews, completes the reconnaissance stage of the study. Together, these three chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 6) underpin the cycles of action and reflection that follow. Chapter 7 covers the planning and preparation for the initial action (the intervention), and Chapter 8 details the process of intervention, that is to say, how cooperative learning was implemented in my large ESL class. The implementation phase actually consists of a series of smaller action research cycles of planning, action and reflection. Chapter 9 presents the final evaluation of the intervention and its overall impact on student language learning. Chapter 10 concludes the entire thesis, and discusses its significance and contribution.

1.9 Contribution to knowledge

- The study's main contribution is to demonstrate an improvement in learning and teaching practice: specifically, that a highly structured approach to group work, using permanent groups, can serve to increase student engagement in language support classes at the University of Sindh, without placing excessive demands on the teacher's time.
- As this is an action research project, the study has also helped me develop professionally. The process of research has improved my own practice and I hope that, when I return to teaching after completion of my PhD, my improved practice will influence others and thus contribute to a more general positive change in the pedagogical practices of our institute.
- Finally, the study offers insights that are applicable to the implementation of cooperative learning in other places, especially in majority world contexts where classes are large and resources are scarce.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has outlined the status of the English language in Pakistani society and of English language teaching and learning in Pakistan's schools and universities. Despite a continuing debate about whether or not English should be an official language of the country, and extremely uneven English language input at school level, English continues to be the medium of instruction in all universities. Because many students lack proficiency in the language, universities are therefore obliged to provide language support classes. However, the effectiveness of these classes is constrained by the fact that they are delivered to very large groups of students, usually as lectures. Although there is evidence that more interactive group work can enhance learning in such situations, teachers are reluctant to use it because of concerns about class discipline, pressure of time and lack of appropriate support and training. The aim of this research project is therefore to find a way of implementing group work that will address these concerns and will be sustainable within the constraints of the compulsory English language classes at UoSJP. It will be conducted through a process of action research in the researcher's own class.

2 Effect of class size

2.1 Introduction

There is a clear consensus amongst teachers and learners that large classes can be problematic. A survey of the literature on large classes reveals that problems are experienced in a wide range of educational settings in various countries, but are particularly acute in educational institutions in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Thailand and China (Kumar, 1992; Shamim, 1993; Bughio, 2013). Yet from my personal experience of teaching large ESL classes at UoSJP and my contacts with my teacher colleagues, I have observed that we teachers rarely take action to address these problems. The main reason for this, perhaps, is the limited teacher training to equip teachers to meet the demands of large classes. This literature review aims to establish a foundation for the argument that large classes can be made more effective in terms of the teaching and learning of English language at UoSJP. The study as a whole will attempt to address the issues of large ESL classes through a structured approach to group work, namely cooperative learning.

Over the last quarter of a century, a considerable body of research has been conducted into the effects of class size, especially large class sizes, on learning and teaching. This research largely addresses the following three questions:

- How are the effects of class size on teaching and learning perceived by teachers and learners?
- What are the actual effects of class size on student learning and attainment?
- How can learning best be facilitated in large classes?

Although many of the studies addressing these questions have been conducted in schools or in classes for subjects other than language, there are also some that have involved language teaching in Higher Education. This combination of setting and subject, as found in the ESL classes that are the focus of this study, brings with it a particular constellation of potentially relevant factors. Firstly, students of higher education are adults, and so the results of studies on schoolchildren may not be applicable and, secondly, lectures to large groups are the widespread norm in higher

education worldwide, whereas the same is not true of school teaching. On the other hand, language learning differs from many other academic subjects in being skills-based rather than content-based; in fact, it could be argued that language learning is unique, in that the language is both the medium and the content of instruction. The review that follows will therefore focus, as far as possible, on studies of language teaching in higher education, addressing each of the main questions in turn.

2.2 Teachers' perceptions and experiences of class size effects

2.2.1 What constitutes a large class?

Probably the most seminal work on the perceived effects of class size on language learning and teaching was the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project (henceforth Lancaster-Leeds Project), initiated by Dick Allwright at the University of Lancaster in the 1980s. This project, which gave rise to the publication of twelve reports in 1989, included the analysis of questionnaires completed by English language teachers in a variety of contexts, including universities in Japan (Coleman, 1989a; McLeod, 1989; LoCastro, 1989), Nigeria (Coleman, 1989b; McLeod, 1989) and Indonesia (Coleman, 1989a; Sabandar, 1989). These studies started by attempting to define exactly what is meant by a 'large class'. To do this, the researchers asked teachers: 'What class size do you consider to be uncomfortably large?' The results reveal considerable variation in the exact number given, not only between studies, but also within each study. The largest variation is that reported by LoCastro (1989), where the figure for a large class ranges from 9 to 100 learners. On the basis of this data, the authors conclude that the figure given by a teacher for the number of learners that constitutes a large class is subjective and context dependent (Coleman, 1989a; Coleman, 1989b). For example, LoCastro (1989) surveyed teachers in Japan who were teaching in a variety of contexts, including not only universities and secondary schools but also private language schools, where classes are usually much smaller. The lower the class size typically experienced by the teachers in the study, the lower the figure they gave as the size at which size-related problems begin (LoCastro, 1989, p. 8). More recently, Todd (2006a), based on a meta-analysis of fourteen studies, has confirmed the finding that 'large class' is a relative term. Generally speaking, the larger the class size to which a teacher is accustomed, the greater the figure they give: a teacher accustomed to

classes of 30 might regard 40 as a large class, whereas a teacher accustomed to classes of 20 might regard a class of 30 as large (Todd, 2006a).

Todd (2006a, p. 2) suggests that, in addition to previous experience, other factors that might affect teachers' perceptions of class size include the subject being taught, the age of the learners, their academic level and degree of motivation, and the physical size of the classroom. As far as learners' age is concerned, the majority of teachers surveyed for the Lancaster-Leeds Project worked at colleges and universities, and therefore taught adults, while others taught at primary or secondary schools. The way the data is presented in these studies makes it quite difficult to analyse the results overall by type of institution - especially as many of the participants taught at more than one level - but it is possible to extract subsets of the data which can reliably be taken to refer exclusively either to higher education or to school teaching. Coleman (1989a) reports the results from 41 lecturers, 20 at a university in Jordan, 10 at a university in Turkey and 11 at a teacher training institute in Indonesia. Overall, the average size given for an uncomfortably large class is 43 students. This is remarkably similar to the overall average given by teachers at schools. Coleman (1989a) reports results from 19 school teachers, 5 from Greece, 8 from Spain and 6 from Chad or Burkina Faso, who on average also give 43 students as the size of an uncomfortably large class. As part of the same project, Peachey (1989) obtained questionnaire data from fourteen teachers from South Africa and Botswana who were attending a course at Leeds University. On average, the teachers gave a figure of 44 students for the number at which 'large class' problems begin. It therefore seems that, unless they were accustomed to much smaller classes, for example because they worked in private language schools, the participants in the Lancaster-Leeds Project converged on a figure just over 40 students as being problematically large.

The methodology employed in the Lancaster-Leeds Project has been criticised on a number of counts, including the design of the questionnaire, the opportunistic nature of the sampling and the lack of statistical rigour in the analysis of the responses (Oladejo, 1992). However, a number of subsequent studies have also examined English language teachers' perceptions of large classes at school level (e.g., Shamim, 1993; Hayes, 1997; Shamim, et al., 2007), and have found similar results. Shamim (1993) looked in some detail at the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of

class size. On the basis of interviews with twenty teachers of English in Pakistani secondary schools, she concluded that teachers' perceptions of what constitutes a large class were mainly influenced by "their previous experience in classes of varying size, the average class size in the immediate educational context and the physical conditions in the classroom" (Shamim 1993, pp. 140-143). Certainly, it seems understandable that a class will feel problematically large if the room is not big enough to accommodate it, irrespective of the actual number of students. But on average, like the participants in the Lancaster-Leeds Project, the Pakistani teachers interviewed by Shamim (1993) regarded classes of 44 or more as 'large'. So despite the variation in detail, there is general consensus that, across contexts and learner ages, English language classes start to become problematically large at above 40 students. Todd (2006a), in his review of articles about teaching large English language classes, finds that the figures mentioned vary between 40 and 65 students. When the focus is on assessment, however, smaller classes start to feel large. Brady (2011), in a study of assessment in large EFL classes, reports a survey of English language teachers in over 30 countries. Irrespective of how many students they typically taught (between 20 and 150), most respondents felt that a class became large with about 30 students. The literature therefore clearly confirms that the ESL classes at UoSJP, with 100 or more students, fall within the category of 'large' classes.

2.2.2 Problems experienced by teachers

Whatever their notion of a large class, English language teachers almost always report that they teach classes which exceed their perceived ideal class size, especially in developing countries (Coleman, 1989a; Shamim, 1993; Bughio, 2012). This underlines the fact that large classes are generally perceived as less than ideal. At the most basic level, teachers of large classes often cannot learn their students' names and, perhaps partly because of this, feel that they cannot develop positive and trusting relationships with them. In two of the main studies from the Lancaster-Leeds Project (LoCastro, 1989; McLeod, 1989) teachers reported that in large classes it was difficult for them to remember learners' names, to create rapport and assess learners' mood or interest, and to maintain eye contact with all students. Jimakorn and Singhasiri (2006) surveyed 75 Thai-university English language lecturers' perceptions using a Likert scale questionnaire rating statements from 1 (very easy) to

5 (very difficult). A majority of the participants believed that large classes make teaching and learning inevitably more difficult and less effective, and many indicated that it was difficult for them to create ‘a good relationship between the teacher and students’ (mean score 4.11) and to know ‘students individually’ (mean score 4.51) (Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006, p. 19).

Teachers find that classroom management becomes more difficult with increasing class size. A common perception is that in larger classes students tend to more easily engage in disruptive behaviour, such as chatting to people near them, so that their participation in the class falls and the general noise level rises (e.g., LoCastro, 1989, p. 20). High noise levels further distract student and teacher attention, making it difficult for teachers to maintain discipline, and forcing teachers to raise their voices so that addressing the class becomes more tiring and stressful for them (Coleman, 1989b; Mcleod, 1989; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). Although it is often mentioned that teacher talking time should be reduced and that group and pair work is desirable (e.g., Coleman, 1989b), there is also a perception that such activities are difficult to set up and monitor in larger classes (Coleman, 1989b; LoCastro, 1989; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). Overall, the majority of teachers interviewed and surveyed in the literature believe that large classes reduce student participation to a significant extent. There is a perception amongst English language teachers that, although they would like to provide all students with an equal chance to participate and practise the target language, large classes make this difficult to achieve (Coleman, 1989a; McLeod, 1989; LoCastro, 1989; Sabandar, 1989), and this perceived difficulty can lead to avoidance. For example, in LoCastro (1989, p. 19) the teachers of large classes indicated both that they found it difficult to set up communicative tasks and that they tended to avoid activities that were ‘demanding to implement’. The implication is that they felt compelled to avoid interactive activities. In Naidu, et al. (1992), a group of English language teachers at institutions of higher education in Bangalore, South India, reported that they frequently used the lecture method in large classes, even though they acknowledged that this put limitations on learners’ contributions, because trying to use other interactive teaching methods created management and discipline problems. Elsewhere, teachers mentioned in their questionnaire responses that, even when they did manage to set up communicative tasks, it was problematic for them to identify whether learners were

participating or not, because of the difficulty of monitoring a large number of students (Sabandar, 1989).

Lack of individual attention given to students is perhaps the most frequently mentioned concern for teachers of large language classes in higher education, and almost all relevant studies have pointed to the issue. For example, LoCastro (1989) surveyed university teachers in Japan to investigate their perceptions and attitudes about second language instruction in large classes. The teachers reported that they could not give individual attention to all their students due to the large number of students per class. Coleman (1989b) administered the same questionnaire to 33 lecturers. The participants were the attendees at a workshop conducted by the researcher at Bayero University in Kano, Nigeria, and were teaching 'Remedial English' courses to undergraduates. The responses indicated that the majority of the participants (23 out of 33) faced difficulties in giving attention to individual students because of large class size. Studies outside the Lancaster-Leeds Project have found similar results. For example, Naidu, et al. (1992) held discussions with teachers, and collected anecdotal accounts of their experience of teaching at a pre-university level in Bangalore, South India. The teachers reported that large class sizes made it very hard for them to meet the individual students' needs, especially because the large classes usually included students at a variety of different levels. Ur (2004, p. 302) points out that even a class of two people is heterogeneous, since no two learners are exactly alike, either in terms of language level or of other variables such as aptitude, motivation, preferred learning style, and so on. It follows that, since every learner is different, overall diversity is likely to increase with class size. In general then, increased heterogeneity is a concomitant problem of large classes: not only does the number of students who need to share the teacher's attention increase with class size, but their needs are also likely to become more diverse.

Inability to provide individual attention extends not only to teaching but also to assessment. McLeod (1989) analysed the questionnaire responses of 133 college and university teachers in Japan, Nigeria, and other African countries. She found that teachers felt unable to assess individual students' performance because of the large size of their classes. Another study, Sabandar (1989) - also part of the Lancaster-Leeds Project - surveyed 28 lecturers at 'Universitas 45', Indonesia, and found that they considered it problematic or even impossible to mark students' assignments

individually in large classes. In fact, studies of large class teaching invariably mention the problem of marking large numbers of assignments (Coleman, 1989b; LoCastro, 1989; Sabandar, 1989; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). Bughio (2012, p. 122), who interviewed teachers of large English classes at my own institution (UoSJP), found that ‘Marking examination copies is stressful for teachers. It is a huge burden as the number of students is high’.

Physical resources have also been perceived by teachers as having a considerable impact on the process of learning and teaching in large classes. The Lancaster-Leeds Project identified two related problems. Firstly, if the classroom is too small for the number of students in the class, everyone is uncomfortable and the teacher cannot easily move around to monitor students’ work. In McLeod (1989), teachers indicated that overcrowded classrooms and limited space made it difficult for them to move around in the university classes in Japan, Nigeria and other South African countries. Secondly, if the room is large, but lacks audio-visual equipment such as a projector or microphone, then students at the back may be unable to see what the teacher is writing or hear what they are saying. In Sabandar (1989), teachers highlighted problems with teaching equipment. Unavailability of teaching aids, such as audio-visual devices, created acoustic and visibility problems for both the teachers and students of large classes. It became difficult for the teachers to make their voice reach students because of the noisy atmosphere and students were unable to see the teacher and black/whiteboard due to the large size of the class (Sabandar, 1989). These problems were found to be particularly acute in developing countries. On the one hand, the educational institutions in these countries had large classes, and on the other hand, their classrooms were poorly equipped and had limited space compared to the numbers of students accommodated in them (McLeod, 1989; Peachey, 1989).

As 25 years have passed since the publication of the Lancaster-Leeds Project reports, there may have been developments and improvements in some cases, such as better teaching resources. Certainly there is some evidence that expectations have risen. For example, Jimakorn and Singhasiri (2006) found that lecturers teaching English language to large classes at tertiary level in Thailand felt that technological aids such as projectors, videos, microphones and even closed-circuit televisions, were essential for success. However, as evidenced by my own experience and documented by Bughio (2013, p. 126), space and equipment remain in short supply at UoSJP. The

lack of space is further exacerbated by the fact that in many of the classrooms the chairs are fixed in place, so that there is little scope for trying alternative arrangements. The literature suggests that, as educational infrastructure fails to keep up with increasing enrolments in higher education, lack of space for large classes remains a problem in many countries. For example, Al-Jarf (2006, p. 25), studying English language classes at a university in Saudi Arabia, reports that ‘students are squeezed in and some cannot find a chair to sit on and cannot squeeze in extra seats’, and that, although some audio-visual equipment is available, it is inadequate for the numbers of students and the size of the classes.

In addition to the studies mentioned above, which focussed on English language teaching at universities, a number of research studies have been carried out on English language teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes a large class at school level (e.g., Shamim, 1993; Hayes, 1997; Shamim, et al., 2007). Despite the differences in learner populations, the findings of these studies are remarkably similar to the findings of studies in higher education. Language teachers of large school classes report difficulty with giving sufficient individual attention to pupils, establishing teacher-learner rapport, facilitating student participation and interaction, managing class activities and motivating themselves and their pupils, as well as problems related to the physical environment (e.g., Peachey, 1989; Shamim, 1993; Hayes, 1997; Shamim, et al., 2007; Kuchah and Richard, 2011). For example, Hayes (1997) investigated Thai secondary-school English teachers’ perceptions through a questionnaire and found that teachers reported the following problems created by the large size of their classes: discomfort, lack of control, insufficient individual attention, lack of evaluation and ineffective learning. Similarly, Shamim, et al. (2007) collected questionnaire data on the perceptions of school and college English language teachers in a workshop at the Hornby School in Ethiopia. The teachers reported similar problems, which they attributed to the large size of their classes: insufficient student participation, classroom management problems, difficulties related to assessment and feedback, and insufficient learning and teaching resources. Kuchah and Richard (2011) record the extreme physical constraints on teaching English language to large classes at secondary level in Cameroon, both in terms of lack of space and lack of equipment.

Todd (2006a) suggests that large classes might be less problematic in subjects which involve ‘the transfer of factual knowledge’ (Todd, 2006a, pp. 1-2) than for subjects such as English language which involve the development of practical skills. However, there is some evidence that the heterogeneity of level and ability associated with large classes is perceived as a problem across a variety of disciplines (see e.g., Humbert, 2004). Furthermore, Cooper and Robinson (2002) report that frequent adoption of lecture-style teaching in large classes in higher education has adverse effects on students’ cognitive development and critical skills. The style fosters short-term knowledge retention gained from lecturing, which can only be recalled until the final written examination. Moreover, large continuous lectures lessen student motivation and create distance between the teacher and learners (McKeachie, 1986).

2.3 Perceptions and experiences of learners

Studies on student perceptions of large English language classes are much smaller in number than those on teacher perceptions. At tertiary level, Bughio (2013) interviewed students about their perceptions of the large ESL classes at UoSJP. He found that the main problem perceived by students was a disparity in the level of class participation available to them depending on their level of English. The students reported that their ESL classes were dominated by contributions from a few students with good English, so that those with less proficiency in English felt intimidated and became discouraged. This suggests that students’ demotivation in large classes is caused, at least partly, by insufficient participation. At secondary level, Shamim (1993) explored the perceptions of Pakistani secondary school students of compulsory ESL classes through group interviews. The students reported that overcrowded classes, with limited workspace and furniture to sit with ease, made learning difficult for them. They could not sit comfortably, and the state of indiscipline and noise created by the large number of students distracted them. The students believed the teachers could not attend to them or interact with them individually, and this demotivated them. In terms of English language classes, then, a considerable similarity is evident between the perceptions of students and those of teachers in different contexts and at different levels.

Other studies have examined the perceptions of university students across disciplines. Wulff, Nyquist and Abbot (1987) surveyed 800 university students' perceptions of the effect of large classes in the context of content teaching in the USA. The students indicated that large classes hindered the smooth flow of their learning. For example, large classes made them less responsible and more passive because they were not noticed and seldom assigned work by teachers. Moreover, the large number of students created noise and disturbances which negatively affected their learning. Mulryan-Kyne (2010) reviewed literature on student perceptions and found that students perceived large classes as reducing interaction between students and the teacher, which created anonymity and passivity among learners. Student participation was negatively affected and their engagement with course content was reduced. Large classes, as reported by students in many studies, led students to adopt misbehaviour by coming late into the class and leaving early. Due to the anonymous nature of large classes and consequent sense of lessened responsibility, students became inclined to make noise and cause distraction for other students. Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul (2010, p. 38) explored the relationship between student satisfaction and class size amongst MSc students, using end-of-course evaluations. They found that students were 'significantly less satisfied in departments with larger average class sizes, controlling for the overall number of students enrolled in the department'.

On the whole, teachers and students both in language teaching and content-teaching contexts at all levels perceive large classes as negative and problematic, and there is extensive agreement on what the perceived problems are. They can be summarised as: difficulty in learning names and establishing rapport; excessive noise and poor discipline; overcrowding and lack of equipment; lack of individual attention for students despite increased heterogeneity of need; difficulty in providing assessment and feedback; lack of opportunities for participation, linked to the difficulty of setting up and monitoring interactive activities in large groups; and all of this resulting in anonymity, passivity and demotivation. However, it should be noted that the evidence presented thus far has been based on the perceptions and self-reported experiences of teachers and learners, and is therefore essentially subjective. In the next sections, I will move on to consider to what extent these subjective views are supported by objective empirical evidence.

2.4 Effects of class size on student engagement and attainment

2.4.1 Observational and experimental studies of large classes

There are two studies that have reported observational data for large English language classes at university level, namely Todd (2006b) and Bughio (2013). Todd (2006b) analysed the student-teacher discourse during a lesson comprising mini lectures, teacher-centered interaction, group work and presentations. The lesson was given by the same teacher to two English language undergraduate classes, one small (23 students) and the other larger (41 students), at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand. Todd (2006b) found that, on the whole, there was no significant effect of class size on teaching, except that the teacher more frequently referred to individual students by name in the small class. There were no significant differences in teacher questions, in teacher feedback, in teacher repetition or rephrasing of questions, or in teacher talking time. However, it should be noted that this study is limited in at least three ways. Firstly, being based on only one class, the results are not generalisable. Secondly, neither of the groups exceeded the size at which language classes are generally felt to become problematically large (about 43-44 students). Thirdly, technical difficulties with the recording equipment meant that it was only possible to analyse those parts of the lesson where the teacher was interacting with the whole class, and there was no analysis of whether these sections took up more or less time in the two groups.

Bughio (2013) compared teachers' and students' interview reports with classroom observations of the large ESL classes at UoSJP. His findings largely corroborate the perceptions of large classes reported in the literature. There were serious problems of lateness and absenteeism, so that classes varied significantly in composition from one session to the next, making it difficult to establish any sense of continuity, let alone rapport. The rooms were large and, in those that did not have a microphone, teachers struggled to make themselves heard, especially when noisy ceiling fans were switched on. Although teachers used some pair work and student presentations, lessons were predominantly teacher-centred and teacher talking time always exceeded student talking time. There was considerable heterogeneity in the classes in terms of language proficiency, and participation - which consisted mainly of answering teachers' questions - was almost entirely restricted to the stronger

students. Even when teachers did make an effort to address questions to weaker students, they would often end up answering for them because of time pressures. Students received almost no individual feedback, either on their work in class or on their written assignments, which were not returned to them. During their interviews with the researcher, the teachers participating in this study attributed the problems to the very large size of the classes. However, Bughio (2013) himself concluded that the problems resulted less from class size than from the teaching techniques employed. His study revealed a discrepancy between what teachers thought they did, and what they actually did. For example, even though teachers asserted in their interviews that they tried to engage all the students in their lessons, classroom observation revealed very little systematic effort on the part of teachers to do this. Bughio (2013) attributed this not to a lack of willingness on the part of the teachers, but rather to a lack of training. Most of the teachers observed had an MA in English Literature but almost no training in language teaching.

Observational studies of large English language classes at school level include Kumar (1992), Shamim (1993) and Harfitt (2012). Kumar (1992) analysed the number of short and long turns of speaking taken by teachers and learners in English language classes in an Indian middle school. He reports that class size is less significant than teaching style on student participation. The results suggest that the classes (both small and large) taught through a student-centred approach enhanced student engagement and interaction, whereas the classes taught through a teacher-centred approach had the opposite effect. Hence, Kumar (1992, p. 45) concludes that though small class size may provide more opportunities for student engagement, it does not lead to the desired learning outcomes if the teaching style is teacher-centred. The study is limited in at least two respects. Firstly, only four lessons were analysed, one for each possible combination of large or small with student-centred or teacher-centred. Secondly, the 'large' class only had 45 students, so that it was borderline in terms of the consensus about what constitutes a problematically large class. Nevertheless, the study does highlight that 'class size alone may not be responsible for greater or fewer interactional opportunities being made available to learners' (Kumar, 1992, p. 45).

Shamim (1993) observed 232 lessons given by 22 teachers to classes of various sizes at 6 secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. In terms of the physical conditions in

large classes, her observations confirmed the perceptions of pupils and teachers that classes were often overcrowded and noisy. In terms of classroom interaction, she found that teachers tended to use the same core teaching methods irrespective of class size, namely reading and explaining text, explaining the meaning of words and writing the answers to exercises on the board. She attributed this homogeneity of approach to the constraints imposed by exams and prescribed text books, as well as the prevailing view in Pakistani society that teaching and learning consists of the transmission of information from teacher to learner. Nevertheless, there were observable differences in the activities employed in the larger and relatively smaller groups: activities regarded as ‘enhancing’, such as story-telling, creative writing or inviting pupils to write on the board, were more likely to be used in the smaller classes. Shamim (1993, p. 318) writes that ‘with an increase in numbers, teaching and learning in the classroom is gradually stripped of all its enhancements as the teachers in large classes are often too busy in their efforts to survive’. Particularly in larger classes, Shamim (1993) noticed a strong effect of location on students’ ability to participate in the lesson. All the action tended to take place at the front of the class: not only could pupils in the front rows clearly see the board and hear the teacher, unlike those at the back, but teachers also tended to direct questions to students at the front, so that they had disproportionate opportunity to contribute. Students at the back were largely passive, and the overall picture painted closely mirrors the picture painted by Bughio (2013) of language classes at university level in Pakistan. Shamim (1993, p. 321) concluded from her study that much of the stress experienced by teachers in larger classes results from them trying to do ‘the same kinds of things/activity types in their larger classes that they are accustomed to doing (or believe they can do) more easily in classes of a smaller size’. For example, there was an assumption that teachers should check and correct all the written work produced by their pupils: even when the numbers made it impractical to do this, teachers felt guilty because they felt they were not fulfilling their duties (Shamim, 1993, p. 308).

Harfitt (2012) observed lessons given by three secondary school language teachers in Hong Kong, to large classes (of at least 40 students) and to classes in which the number of students had been experimentally reduced. The findings of the study show quite a noticeable variation in the ways teachers interacted with pupils, depending on

the size of the class. On average, small classes offered more opportunity for teachers to vary their question types and to interact more extensively with pupils. There was more group work, more instances of individualised interaction, more instances of teacher humour, and the teacher addressed more students by name in the smaller classes. This study found that there was little evidence that the teachers adapted their teaching approach to the different class sizes. Harfitt (2012) suggests that, without pedagogic change, class size reduction (CSR) is unlikely to bring about changes in learning. However, this assumes that the increased teacher-pupil interaction and individualisation he observed in the smaller classes would not in itself bring about the desired changes: an assumption for which no evidence is offered.

Concerning higher education in general, Bligh (1998), asked ‘What’s the use of lectures?’ He found that the results of the majority of the studies he reviewed either supported the use of the lecture method for transmitting information or did not show a statistically significant difference between the lecture method and other methods such as discussion and face-to-face instruction. However, lectures were found to be relatively ineffective for teaching behavioural skills (such as language) and also for promoting thought, teaching values associated with subject matter, inspiring interest in a subject or bringing about personal and social adjustment (Bligh, 2008, p. 3). A decade later, Mulryan-Kyne (2010) also reviewed various studies of teaching at tertiary level and found that, although traditional lecturing was still the dominant mode of teaching to large groups of undergraduates, more active and student-centred approaches were also being used. She concluded that these alternative approaches could go some way towards addressing the problems encountered by teachers and students in large classes. Other studies suggest that large class size per se may impede interaction, irrespective of the teaching approach taken. Iaria and Hubball (2008) examined the effect of class size on student engagement by observing two classes of medical professionals and therapists at the University of British Columbia, Canada. One class had 150 and the other had 17 students, but the teacher, content and pedagogical approaches were identical in both classes. The results clearly indicated that the large class hindered students from participating more in the active learning classroom process, and the small class provided more opportunities for students to interact with teachers and other students. However, being based on just

one lesson to a single group of each size, these results tell us nothing about what happens in other situations.

Larger-scale studies of school children in general education suggest that large and small classes promote interaction of different kinds, at least for the youngest children. Blatchford, et al. (2003) investigated the relationships between class size and classroom practices, through systematic classroom observations of UK pupils aged 4-7. They found that smaller classes are more suitable for enhancing student engagement in relation to on-task behaviour. Moreover, smaller classes enhanced students' initiations, interaction with teachers and responses to the teachers' queries, whereas half of the students in large classes remained off task. However, in terms of peer relations, the overall results of the study suggest that larger classes enhanced more peer contacts, both in terms of interaction about the task, and about social matters, i.e. off-task. There was some slight evidence for worse peer relations in smaller classes in forms of aggression and disapproval of peers. Thus, at least for this age group, smaller classes may be more effective in terms of academic achievement, whereas they may not be necessarily effective in terms of developing social/peer relations. Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2005) conducted a similar study involving children aged 10-11. As in the study with younger children, they found that small classes enhanced individual task-related interactions between the teacher and students. However, no effect of class size on student off- or on-task behaviour was found, nor on student-student interaction. The authors suggest that large classes can be made effective through the use of activities that decrease reliance on direct teacher-learner interaction, such as group work 'in the sense of pupils learning together with a deliberate attempt to minimize the teacher's input' (Blatchford, Bassett and Brown, 2005, p. 466).

The studies reviewed in this section provide evidence for an interaction between class size and teaching methodology in terms of enhancing students' engagement. On the one hand, there is some evidence that, across a range of subjects and learner ages, small classes do provide more opportunities for student-teacher interaction (Blatchford, et al., 2003; 2005; Iaria and Hubball, 2008; Harfitt, 2012). On the other hand, it may be possible both to enhance the benefits of small classes and to reduce the disadvantages of large classes by choosing methodologies that maximise opportunities for participation, increase learner independence and reduce reliance on

direct interaction with the teacher (Kumar, 1992; Blatchford, Bassett and Brown, 2005; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Harfitt, 2012; Bughio, 2013). The potential for doing this will depend both on appropriate teacher training and, where necessary, adjusting the expectations of teachers, learners and society at large about what constitutes learning and teaching (Shamim 1993; Bughio 2013).

2.4.2 Class size and student attainment

Thus far, it has been assumed that increasing student engagement will lead to improvements in learning. Consequently, we might predict that if large classes reduce classroom interaction, they will also be detrimental to learning. This assumption may be particularly strong in the case of language learning, where it is apparent that students need to practise the language in order to become proficient. However, because of other variables, such as teaching methodology and other methodological constraints, it is difficult to establish the extent to which class size per se has an impact on students' attainment.

In the context of English language teaching, the only study to have looked specifically at the effects, if any, of class size on student attainment is Todd (2012), which investigates the relationship between student grades and class size in foundation English classes at a Thai university. On the basis of data from 984 classes, ranging in size from 10 to 103 students, with a mean size of 35.8, Todd (2012) found that learners enrolled in larger classes tended to obtain lower grades, while those in smaller classes achieved higher grades. He found no evidence that different teachers tended to teach classes of different sizes, nor that different teaching techniques were used in different-sized classes, and therefore concluded that the differences in grades could reliably be attributed to the differences in class size. Furthermore, particularly sharp drops in average grade were seen above threshold sizes of 25 and 45 students, irrespective of whether the classes were focussed mainly on productive or receptive skills. It is interesting that the higher of these figures corresponds very closely with the threshold at which teachers in similar contexts report that classes start to be problematically large, and this suggests that there may indeed be something about classes of more than about 44 students that hinders language teaching and learning.

The literature on content teaching in higher education also clearly indicates that CSR leads to improvements in attainment. For example, De Paola, Ponzio and Scoppa (2009) analysed the student enrolment data from two degree classes in Law and Economics, at the University of Calabria, Italy. The results suggest that large class size has a substantially negative effect on student grades and the probability of passing an exam. According to ordinary least squares regression estimates, a 50-student increase in a class caused a reduction of 0.25 standard deviations in student grades, and a reduction of 8.7% in their probability of passing an exam. Similarly, Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul (2010) evaluated administrative records of MSc students in a leading UK university. An increase of one standard deviation in the size of a class reduced a student's test score by 0.074 standard deviations of the total distribution in the test scores. This result suggests that large class size has a considerable negative effect on student grades. However, the class-size effect on students' test scores is non-linear over the range of classes observed in the study. The effect is significant for the smallest class sizes in the study (up to the mid-thirties in terms of numbers of students) and most detrimental for the largest class sizes (104-211), but class size did not appear to have a significant effect in the intermediate range. The finding of a threshold in the mid-thirties once again corresponds closely to teachers' perceptions about where large class dynamics come into play. Machado and Vera Hernandez (2009) analysed administrative data from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid in the core subjects of the Business degree. The study showed that, overall, class size had no significant effect on student achievement. However, closer analysis revealed that, whereas the low and high achievers did not seem to be affected by class size, medium achievers were adversely affected by large size, both in terms of their grades and probability of passing the exam.

The most extensive studies of the effects of class size on student attainment have been conducted at school level. Of these, probably the largest was the highly influential Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) Project, carried out in Tennessee from 1985 to 1989, in three phases: on kindergarten pupils, and then on second and third grades. All the phases aimed to investigate the effect of smaller class size in the early grades on short-term and long-term pupil performance. To assess and compare the class-size effects on the performance of 6,572 pupils in 331 classrooms of 76 schools, standardised and curriculum-based tests were used. In the

study, the notion of 'small class' ranged from 13 to 17 pupils; the regular-sized classes, both with and without teacher aides, ranged from 22 to 25 pupils (Mosteller, 1995). According to Mosteller (1995) and Finn and Achilles (1999) the outcomes of the project indicated that smaller class size in initial schooling improves children's academic performance. Moreover, the findings say that small classes not only have positive effects on academic performance and behaviour in class, but that these effects persist in later grades in larger classes, because they develop children's skills for further challenges to come. Similarly, in the UK, Blatchford, et al. (2003) investigated class-size effects on the academic achievements of pupils aged 4-7, through test scores. The findings indicated that a reduction from 30 to 20 students resulted in an increase in achievement of about 0.25 standard deviations. On the other hand, it has been argued that the STAR Project had some important weaknesses. The project suffered from attrition issues, re-assignment of students under pressures from parents and school management, and the drift of actual class sizes (Hanushek, 1998). Furthermore, the findings of Hoxby (2000), who analysed long sets of data on enrolment and kindergarten cohorts in Connecticut school districts in 649 elementary schools, do not support the results of the STAR Project. This study finds that CSR does not effectively improve students' achievement. Overall, the effects of CSR in elementary school are the source of some controversy. However, in the present context this controversy need not directly concern us, since none of the classes in these studies would be regarded as large by the criteria discussed in Section 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above.

On balance then, there is evidence that reducing class size, particularly to fewer than about 40 students, can lead to improvements in attainment. However, as pointed out by Hattie (2005), the mechanisms by which this improvement is achieved are unclear and, in any case, the effect is small compared with other possible interventions. Based on a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses of factors that affect achievement, Hattie (2005, p. 401) shows that the most significant predictors of attainment are the amount of feedback and direct instruction given, both with an effect size of 0.81, compared with an average effect size of only 0.13 for CSR. Moreover, even if CSR has positive effects on student learning, its implementation is not feasible in developing countries like Pakistan, due to the low level of funding for education. Therefore, developing countries are either destined to struggle indefinitely with large

classes or reliant on teachers, researchers and educationalists to establish some appropriate teaching and learning methods to enhance their effectiveness. The evidence cited by Hattie (2005) suggests that teaching strategies will be beneficial if they maximise the feedback given in the context of high student numbers. Furthermore, most studies discussed above suggest that smaller classes are associated with changes in student behaviour rather than changes in teacher behaviour, with students participating more actively in smaller classes (Hattie, 2005, p. 410). Thus, strategies that encourage similarly active participation in larger groups might produce as much improvement as CSR. In the next section, I will go on to consider the teaching strategies that have been recommended for teaching large classes, especially in the context of English language teaching.

2.5 Group work in large classes

In the mainstream literature on Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages, the received wisdom is that group work minimises the adverse effects of large classes on student learning. For example, Nolasco and Arthur (1988) reason that, because pair and group work allows learners to work simultaneously, it not only maximises students' language practice time, but also means that they are less likely to become uninterested or bored because it actively involves them. Hess (2001) also argues that the most important and effective technique to help students practise the target language in a large language class is the adoption of group work. In brief, with the use of pair or group work, students become the centre of learning, and the teacher performs as a facilitator who provides an environment that allows learners to work together smoothly. The adoption of collaborative learning activities greatly increases the number of learners who can be actively contributing at any one time. It can be a tremendous opportunity for students to develop autonomous learning skills (Wharton and Race, 1999). However, there are many necessary factors that teachers need to take into account before using group work. For example, they need to think about the purpose of the task as well as the structure, size and nature (permanent or temporary) of the groups. Wharton and Race (1999) suggest using permanent groups because changing group configuration takes time that could be put to better use.

Nunan and Lamb (1996) argue that a mixed ability group structure is often an effective way to improve weak students' skills and knowledge through group work.

It can also be very beneficial for the stronger students, who get the maximum benefit from the strategy when they consolidate their own learning through teaching others. However, there is a risk that the stronger students can dominate the weak students, leaving very few chances for them to participate. Group work with mixed ability groups therefore requires careful management by teachers. When any group work is being conducted, it is very important for the teacher to monitor both group and individual students' contributions. For example, teachers can note who shares and who does not, who assists and who does not, if the environment is positive or not, whether students are actively participating or not. As group work is in progress, the teacher should walk around, listen to students' discussions, check their work, suggest, encourage, value their efforts and allow students to present their work before the whole class (Shamim, et al., 2007). Above all, the most important thing that teachers need to do before starting pair or group work is to instruct students clearly about how to begin, continue and stop the process (Harmer, 2007, pp. 125-126; Bughio 2013).

Nunan and Lamb (1996) also assert that pair and group work can significantly enhance students' speaking and listening in large classes. However, they say that group and pair work can be difficult to organise if the class is large and the teacher is inexperienced and unaware of classroom management techniques. Group and pair work activities can be ineffective if not organised properly. For example, disorganised and unplanned group work can waste time, can make effective monitoring of student talk impossible, and can cause discipline problems. Furthermore, students of large classes are mostly accustomed to teacher-fronted teaching and may not easily accept group work. Moreover, although group work is considered to be one of the most effective techniques for practising the target language, it can also provide an opportunity for students to free ride, thinking that the group's progress is automatically their progress. Therefore, the adoption of group work, especially in large groups, needs patience, consistency, and careful planning and preparation if it is to lead to effective outcomes (Hess, 2001).

Despite the ready availability of advice about teaching large ESL classes, relatively few empirical studies have been undertaken to test the effectiveness of the strategies recommended. A notable exception in the context of higher education is Bughio (2013), who implemented group activities for a whole semester in two large ESL

classes of over 100 students at my own institution, UoSJP. He found that the process of working in groups enhanced student engagement by providing students with more opportunities for participation, and by increasing interaction with other students and with the teacher, interest in learning, cooperation and competition among students. Moreover, students reported that working in groups increased their confidence, improved their language skills, and helped them overcome shyness and fear. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own and their friends' learning. This evidence suggests that students are ready to embrace communicative learning activities in their large English classes. Moreover, some young faculty members also affirmed in their interviews that they believed the only cause of students' passivity and demotivation was the lecture method, which reduced participation. Given this view, it is not entirely clear why teachers did not use interactive activities like group work more often, although Bughio (2013) suggests that the main problem was lack of appropriate training. However, another barrier may be the perceived and actual difficulties of organising group work with so many students. Although Bughio (2013) enlisted student group leaders to help with classroom management, he encountered multiple problems of disorganisation. One of the problems was group formation. Students wasted a large amount of time and made too much noise while forming groups. However, in the long run, Bughio (2013) found that the use of group work helped him manage the class: although in the beginning, the intervention classes lacked discipline, in due course, students got used to it and the management issues started to disappear. Unfortunately, in his account of the project, Bughio (2013) does not indicate the size of groups or exactly what activities he used, so the study is of limited value as a template for others to follow. This is one of the gaps that the present study is intended to address.

Similar to language teaching in higher education, group work and pair activities have been found to be beneficial in large language classes in other contexts. If the teacher wants to increase student talking time, working in small groups will provide many opportunities for the students to speak. Moreover, allowing students to give short presentations in smaller groups is obviously less stressful for them than speaking in front of the large group. Kuchah and Richard (2011), through a narrative account of Kuchah's teaching experience in a large English class (composed of 235 students) in a secondary school in Cameroon, report that group work activities not only enhanced

student talking time, but increased engagement generally by harnessing and developing students' autonomy as learners.

Although pair and group-work can significantly enhance the quantity of student speaking and listening in the class, there may also be challenges when implementing this approach in large language classes. For example, Nunan and Lamb (1996, pp. 142-143) point out that 'Such activities can consume precious class time, they can make effective monitoring of student talk all but impossible, and they can lead to discipline problems' if the settings are not well planned and teachers are inexperienced with group work. Shamim, et al. (2007) worked with school and college English language teachers in a workshop at the Hornby School in Ethiopia: although they advocate the use of group and pair work for improving student engagement and participation, they also acknowledge that group formation is time consuming, and planning and managing groups can be difficult. When group work is in progress, teachers become unable to monitor a large number of groups and are therefore unaware of the exact amount of learning taking place in the class (Shamim, et al., 2007). The Thai secondary-school English teachers who took part in the in-service teacher training programme described by Hayes (1997) also reported many discipline-related issues such as lack of control and noise during group work in their large classes, with students who were not interested in the classes disturbing the others. To avoid many of the problems connected with the practice of group and pair work activities, various methods, including proper planning, have been suggested and found to be effective. These methods will be discussed in Section 2.7 (below).

Group work has also been investigated in large-class contexts other than language teaching. For example, O'Sullivan (2006), observed lessons taught by four teachers in a Ugandan primary school, and found that three out of the four teachers organised group work in order to provide all learners with chances to get involved with the lesson material. These teachers had evidently already set up handy group-work routines to keep the classroom properly managed. In higher education contexts other than language teaching, there is considerable research on the use of cooperative learning, which is a more structured approach to group work (e.g., Cooper and Robinson, 2002; Smith, 2000). For example, through a review of empirical studies on cooperative learning and personal contacts with the faculty members, Smith (2000) and Cooper and Robinson (2002) found that, on the whole, the use of

cooperative learning strategies enhances students' critical thinking because they get students engaged in arguments and reasoning. They also enhance the community bond by helping students to get to know each other and forget differences. Moreover, cooperative learning techniques facilitate instant feedback to students, firstly from their peers and secondly from teachers. However, these studies indicate that cooperative learning is often used in either science or maths classes, and has seldom been used in large language classes (see Chapter 3 for more details).

From the literature on student-centred learning, and specifically on group and pair work, it may be inferred that these techniques have the potential to significantly enhance student learning in large classes. Numerous studies in both language and content teaching at all levels have found that groupwork strategies produce satisfactory results. However, various problems arise during their implementation in large classes, especially in terms of structuring and managing the groups. The next sub-section will therefore look into the methods proposed for ameliorating these problems and thereby facilitating the adoption of teaching strategies based on pair or group work in large classes.

2.6 Facilitating the adoption of group work

Perhaps the most important factor in facilitating group and pair work activities in large language classes is teacher commitment. Introducing new interactive activities in large classes is not an easy task and requires committed efforts on the part of the teacher, both in the long term and in every lesson (Bughio, 2013). However, there is evidence that the challenges of large ESL classes can successfully be met if the teacher is committed enough to arouse students' interest in taking responsibility for their own learning (Kuchah and Richard, 2011).

Along with commitment there needs to be careful planning, both at the level of introducing new strategies and at the level of individual lessons. At the strategic level, Shamim (1993, p. 291) concludes that innovation in large classes is most effective when it is carried out with the help of a socio-cultural approach where the teacher considers the social, cultural and economic constraints of the context: 'Socio-cultural understanding of the host culture is necessary before any innovations can be introduced in that culture'. Shamim, et al. (2007) also suggest a socio-cultural approach to innovation, which takes into account various characteristics of teaching

and learning contexts, such as culture, situation and resources. One element of a socio-cultural approach to innovation in teaching methods is the involvement of students' views. Innovations work better when they are devised 'bottom up', because the bottom-up approach accustoms all participants to the changes, and provides them with an opportunity to understand the nature of the situation more closely (Kuchah and Richard, 2011). Naidu, et al. (1992) suggest that collaboration and reflection on the part of the teacher is perhaps the first thing teachers should consider when attempting to make large classes more interactive. Group work and other student-centred activities can only be successful when teachers work collaboratively, exchanging their ideas and experiences to devise action plans based on reflection (Hayes, 1997).

When introducing pair and group work in contexts where it has not previously been used, spending some time orienting students to the new approach at the beginning of the term/year will always give better results. In the context of language teaching, this may comprise telling students the benefits of group and pair work and the communication it generates. This orientation is likely to create interest and willingness in students (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007). More specific training in the techniques to be used might also be necessary. For example, Bughio (2013) included student training in peer assessment and feedback as part of his introduction of group work to the large ESL classes at UoSJP.

For the successful delivery of group work, group size and structure play an important role. Bughio (2013) argues that large groups should be avoided because they create management and control issues; he aimed to use groups of 4 to 6 students. Similarly, Harmer (2007) and Shamim, et al. (2007) suggest, respectively, 5 and 6 members in each group because such groups are neither too large nor too small, and suitable for the large class setting. Moreover, assigning an efficient group leader for each group keeps management under control. Trained group leaders are necessary for the smooth conduct of group work (Bughio, 2013; Shamim, et al., 2007). Also, assigning different rotating roles (such as facilitator, note-taker, secretary, timekeeper, recorder) within the group will make students feel responsible and not bored with same roles day after day (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007; Shamim, et al., 2007). To save the time spent on group formation, groups should be

formed for longer periods than a single class, 'which will avoid the time-consuming daily reorganization of groups' (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007, p. 15).

To address discipline issues, teachers and students should establish rules of conduct, through dialogue. When the teacher adopts a dialectical attitude, students consider themselves a part of the process; they show more interest in avoiding discipline problems (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007, pp. 13-14). The majority of discipline problems are caused by boredom and estrangement in students. If students are interested and paying attention, issues of discipline are likely to diminish. At the start of the term or year, students should be asked to work in small groups and write down rules they consider are reasonable for classroom attitudes and the penalties for breaking the rules. If the rules are decided by the learners, they are more likely to follow them willingly (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007). It is also important for teachers to establish a dialogue with students on teaching methods, and be open to suggestions for improving teaching. Students may feel appreciated and suggest many things, specifically creating rules for better classroom management (Kuchah and Richard, 2011).

A common focus in the TESOL literature for improving large-class teaching concerns the planning and preparation of lessons, both in terms of individual lessons and of regular routines. Large TESOL class lessons need thorough and careful planning for better and effective results. Wharton and Race (1999), Ur (2004) and Harmer (2007) argue that large classes require the teacher to be fully organised before conducting any lesson. The larger the class, the more the teacher has to be organised and needs to have planned what she or he is going to do before the lesson starts. Nunan and Lamb (1996, p. 43) consider that the possible success or failure of a lesson is often related to the extent of planning and preparation teachers undertake. Poor planning of the lesson often leads to classroom management problems. Learning in large classes can effectively be enhanced if teachers spend some time planning their lessons: 'creating mental pictures of how the students should be spending their time and devising an action plan of what to do if reality does not match expectations' (Nunan and Lamb, 1996, p. 43). For effective management of a large class, teachers need to establish routines that they and their students recognise straight away. These routines may include taking the register, setting and collecting homework, and getting into pairs and groups. If learners already know what is

expected, routine jobs will be done more quickly and more efficiently. It should be borne in mind that establishing routines will take some time in the beginning. In the long run, however, this will save time (Harmer, 2007).

Finally, group and pair work activities are unlikely to be effective after a single round of implementation; they need an approach that gives teachers and researchers flexibility to adopt them and then reflect on the weaknesses of the process before continuing. Therefore, different research studies have emphasised the use of the action research approach for successful implementation (Shamim, et al., 2007; Renaud, Tannenbaum, and Stantial, 2007). Teachers need to plan innovation, implement it, observe it, reflect on it and repeat the cycle after the required changes until all goes well (see details about action research in Chapter 4).

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on various aspects of teaching and learning in large classes, including teachers' and learners' attitudes to large classes and the problems they experience in relation to them. The chapter has also focussed on the methods of coping with large classes. The studies reviewed indicate that the subject of large classes is difficult and provocative in various ways. Debate over the definition, problems and the methods of handling large classes are not easy to solve. The recurrent solution suggested is the implementation of student-centred strategies. However, the implementation of such strategies is not straightforward, particularly in contexts where previous educational experience and prevailing beliefs about the role of teacher and learner may be potentially at odds with a student-centred approach.

The purpose of this literature review is to build the foundation of the present study. Based on the methods suggested for coping with large classes, I have attempted to probe the strategies that could enable teachers to meet the challenges of large English language classes at UoSJP. Most studies on large classes have been conducted either in content teaching, or language teaching in contexts other than higher education. I have attempted to explore large class learning and teaching in various socio-cultural contexts to understand how innovations in teaching methods were brought about in different situations. This will assist me to investigate the contextual problems of large-class language teaching at UoSJP and to select and formulate suitable pedagogical strategies for intervention in that particular context.

The literature in the chapter shows a noticeable lack of studies on large-class language teaching in higher education, and only one such study in the context of Pakistan. This study, Bughio (2013), established that group work could be used effectively to address the problems of the large compulsory ESL classes at our institution, but also acknowledged the difficulty in setting up groups and concluded that further teacher training would be necessary to introduce the approach more generally. However, the details of the type(s) of group work used and of the training required are seriously underspecified in the written account of the project. The present study therefore aims to build on the work of Bughio (2013) by investigating whether a much more structured approach to group work which has not previously been widely adopted in language teaching, namely cooperative learning, could be adapted to the UoSJP context. The potential advantages are firstly that such a structured approach would cut down on the chaos associated with organising groups in class, and secondly that it would be relatively easy to pass on to other teachers. So that the reader might better understand the nature of cooperative learning and its use, a detailed review of the literature on cooperative learning will be carried out in the next chapter.

3 Cooperative learning: A review

3.1 Introduction

As a result of the literature review discussed in the previous chapter, the practical aim of my project became to find a way of facilitating the use of small-group work in the large ESL classes at UoSJP. A review of the literature on large classes had revealed a broad consensus that the challenges of learning and teaching in such classes can be largely overcome by the use of activities that require learners to work in small groups. However, organising group work can itself be challenging, especially for teachers who have no relevant training or experience. My literature review (Chapter 2) revealed that many teachers find that group work wastes class time and leads to problems with classroom management, and therefore avoid it. In the specific context of large-class ESL teaching at UoSJP, Bughio (2013) showed that group work could be used effectively but also concluded that it could not be introduced generally without an associated programme of teacher training. However, the resources available for teacher training in this context are limited. My aim was therefore to develop an approach to group work that could be easily adopted by ESL teachers with a minimum of training. Cooperative Learning, which is a particular, highly structured form of group work, provided the foundation for such an approach.

Cooperative Learning has a variety of characteristic features which, I hypothesised, would help to make group work more accessible to my colleagues. Two aspects seemed particularly promising, namely the use of permanent student groupings and the adoption of a limited number of highly structured activity types. Firstly, I realised that organising students into permanent groups would eliminate the need to form groups in each class period, along with the associated potential for unproductive noise, time-wasting and confusion. Secondly, using a limited number of highly-structured group activities would enable teachers and students to become familiar with the activities so that progressively less direction would be needed, again reducing uncertainty and time spent on logistics. Although there are other structured approaches to group work that use permanent groups, the nature of the structure differs. Cooperative learning is unique in the extent to which the activities

of the groups themselves are orchestrated, and for that reason I chose it as the basis for my intervention.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows: Section 3.2 gives an overview of cooperative learning, including its relationship to other forms of group work and the reasons why I chose to use it in the present study; Section 3.3 outlines the theoretical origins and philosophical stance of cooperative learning, while Section 3.4 presents the empirical evidence for its effectiveness; Section 3.5 discusses cooperative learning with particular reference to language teaching and Section 3.6 focuses on its potential application in the large ESL classes at UosJP; finally, Section 3.7 summarises the chapter.

3.2 What is cooperative learning?

The philosophy of cooperative learning – that learning is most effective when learners work together cooperatively – is extremely old, dating back at least two thousand years (Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1995). However, the term ‘cooperative learning’ as used in this thesis refers to a particular highly structured form of group work that originated in the 1970s with the work of David and Roger Johnson (e.g. 1974), Spencer Kagan (e.g. 1977), Robert Slavin (e.g. 1977) and, in the field of mathematics teaching, Neil Davidson (e.g. 1971). It is a method that actively involves students in working together in within-class mixed-ability groups to achieve a particular task or assignment in such a manner that students help one another to learn, and all members of a group benefit equally from their team work (Slavin, 1995; Johnson and Johnson, 1999a; 1999b). Davidson and Worsham (1992, pp. xi-xii), for example, define cooperative learning as group work that is:

...carefully organized and structured so as to promote the participation and learning of all group members in a cooperatively shared undertaking. Cooperative learning is more than just tossing students into a group and telling them to talk together...Students actively exchange ideas with one another, and help each other learn the material. The teacher takes an active role, circulating from group to group, providing assistance and encouragement, and asking thought-provoking questions as needed.

In formal cooperative learning, students may work in the same group for several weeks, ‘to achieve shared learning goals and complete jointly specific tasks and assignments’ (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 2008). Advocates of cooperative learning argue that learning is enhanced when students work cooperatively in groups, rather than individually or in competition with one another (Johnson and Johnson 1994, p. 8). Furthermore, there is a general consensus that, in order for group work to be truly cooperative, certain elements must be present. However, there is not complete agreement about what these essential features are. Table 3.1 summarises the defining characteristics of successful cooperative learning as identified by the leading authors in the field, and these are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Table 3.1: Essential components of Cooperative Learning according to various authors

Slavin (1988)	Johnson and Johnson (1994)	Kagan and Kagan (2009)
Group goals	Clearly perceived positive interdependence	Positive interdependence
Individual accountability	Clearly perceived individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group’s goals	Individual accountability
	Considerable promotive (face-to-face) interaction	Simultaneous interaction
	Frequent use of the relevant interpersonal and small-group skills	Equal Participation
	Frequent and regular group processing of current functioning to improve the group’s future effectiveness	

Positive interdependence is identified by both Johnson & Johnson (1994) and Kagan & Kagan (2009) as being one of the defining characteristics of cooperative learning. Interdependence means that students need to work together to complete a task; in the strongest form of interdependence, the task is impossible to complete unless everyone contributes. The term *positive* interdependence adds the requirement that the degree of success of any group member is positively correlated with the degree of success of all other group members: if one person does better, so does everyone else (Kagan 2009 pages 12.2 - 12.4). Johnson & Johnson (1994) identify four ways in which positive interdependence can be engendered in the classroom, namely:

- Positive Goal Interdependence
- Positive Reward-Celebrate Interdependence
- Positive Resource Interdependence
- Positive Role Interdependence

Positive Goal Interdependence is established when learners are set a group task in which they cannot succeed without cooperating. In language learning, for example, the task might be to ensure that all members of the group have learnt a particular set of vocabulary items: although each member could learn the items individually, they can only ensure that everyone else has learnt them by working together. Positive Reward-Celebrate Interdependence means that all members of a group receive the same reward for the group's performance, which may or may not be in the form of a group grade for the task. Positive resource interdependence occurs when group members either have to share resources and materials or each have only part of the information necessary to complete the task (the 'jigsaw' technique). Finally, positive role interdependence means that different members of the group are assigned different roles, each of which is necessary for task completion. Slavin (1988) reviewed the literature on cooperative learning and concluded that not all forms of positive interdependence are equally successful in terms of enhancing students' achievement. He found the essential thing is that there should be group goals, roughly corresponding to positive goal interdependence and/or positive reward-celebrate interdependence.

All authorities agree that individual accountability is an essential element of cooperative learning. This means that each student is responsible for their own performance, both in terms of their contribution to the group and in terms of their own learning. Cooperative learning strategies aim to ensure that no one can 'hitchhike' on the work of others (Johnson and Johnson, 1994, p. 3). There are various ways this can be achieved, for example by using individual tests, by asking a student at random from each group to present the group's work to the rest of the class (Johnson and Johnson, 1994) or by rewarding groups according to the average of their individual members' quiz scores (Slavin 1988). Kagan and Kagan (2009) argue that, to ensure individual accountability, students must be required to undertake an 'individual public performance', which is to say that students need to produce a piece of work without help from anyone else, which they show to another person or people. For example, individual tests are seen by the teacher or peer marker, and individual presentations of the group's work are seen by the whole class.

Both Johnson and Johnson (1994) and Kagan and Kagan (2014) discuss the kinds of interaction that characterise group work in cooperative learning. Johnson and

Johnson (1994) focus on the nature of the interaction, and regard 'face-to-face promotive interaction' as an essential element of successful cooperative group work. Whereas positive interdependence is established essentially through the nature of the task and other aspects of class management, face-to-face promotive interaction is the process by which learners are able to complete the task. This kind of interaction is characterised by 'individuals encouraging and facilitating each other's efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and produce in order to reach the group's goals' (Johnson and Johnson, 1994 page 3). It might include, for example, group members sharing resources, giving feedback on one another's contributions, or questioning and challenging one another's assumptions, reasoning and conclusions. Johnson and Johnson (e.g. 1994) also emphasise the importance of interpersonal skills for successful cooperative learning and advocate the inclusion of explicit social skills training for learners in the cooperative classroom. Such skills training includes trust building, e.g. through getting-to-know one another activities, communication skills such as active listening, decision-making strategies, conflict resolution techniques and leadership skills. The Johnson and Johnson model of cooperative learning also includes regular use of 'group processing', by which they mean explicit reflection on how effectively groups are working together, and consideration of what actions should be continued or changed to maintain or improve effectiveness.

Rather than the quality of the interaction, Kagan and Kagan (e.g. 2014) focus on the structure and quantity of interaction in the cooperative classroom. They argue that, since students learn by interacting with one another and with the material they are learning, it is important that all students have an equal opportunity to participate and that this opportunity is maximised by allowing students to participate simultaneously. Techniques such as turn-taking, allocating equal time to each student's contribution, allowing students time to think before speaking or responding, establishing class rules of engagement, and assigning roles to students, can all be used to promote equal and equitable participation. Extensive use of pair work maximises participation, because it means that 50% of the class can be speaking at any one time (Kagan and Kagan 2014).

Although the features of group work discussed in the preceding paragraphs are regarded as essential components of cooperative learning, they are not in fact unique to the approach. There are other structured approaches to group work that also use

permanent or semi-permanent groupings, and involve positive interdependence, individual accountability and significant small group interaction. Such approaches include, for example, collaborative learning, team-based learning and problem-based learning. Davidson and Major (2014) reviewed the literature on cooperative learning, collaborative learning and problem-based learning, and concluded that the three approaches all share the following characteristics:

- A common task or learning activity suitable for group work
- Small-group interaction focused on the learning activity
- Cooperative, mutually helpful behaviour among students
- Individual accountability and responsibility
- Interdependence in working together

Davidson and Major (2014 page 29)

Some authors actually use the terms ‘cooperative learning’ and ‘collaborative learning’ synonymously (e.g. Romney 1996, 1997; Laal and Laal 2012), whereas others differentiate between the two approaches (e.g. Bruffee 1999, Cooper and Robinson, 1997; Rockwood, 1995a; 1995b). Yet others regard cooperative learning as one end point on a continuum of collaborative learning (e.g. Cuseo 1992; Kaufman, Sutow and Dunn 1997). Generally speaking, when a distinction is made, cooperative learning is regarded as more highly structured than collaborative learning (Cooper and Robinson, 1997; Rockwood, 1995a; 1995b), or as the most structured form of collaborative learning (Cuseo 1992; Kaufman, Sutow and Dunn 1997). One difference concerns the role of the teacher. In cooperative learning, the teacher remains the central authority in the class, with group tasks commonly more closed-ended and sometimes having explicit answers. In contrast, in (other forms of) collaborative learning, the teacher relinquishes more of his or her power to the small groups, who are given more open-ended, multifaceted tasks. There is also a difference in the roles of group members: collaborative learning makes less use of explicitly assigned roles than does cooperative learning. Furthermore, in collaborative learning there is not always the same level of expectation that all group members will be committed to ensuring the learning of others (Olivares, 2005).

The terms ‘cooperative learning’ and ‘collaborative learning’ also tend to have been used in different contexts, with the term ‘cooperative learning’ being used at school

level, while ‘collaborative learning’ is used at college level. Bruffee (1999, p. 81) suggests that this is not simply a difference in choice of terminology, but rather a difference in the appropriate approach at different levels, with collaborative learning picking up at the place (college level), where cooperative learning leaves off (school level). This change in approach is said to be necessary because cooperative learning supports the more close-ended education of school pupils, whereas collaborative learning aims to develop deeper and higher-level skills for adults (Bruffee, 1999). Rockwood (1995a; 1995b) suggests that both approaches can be used at college level, depending on the educational maturity of students. He argues that the more structured cooperative learning style is appropriate for the foundational knowledge typified in gateway courses, while collaborative learning is appropriate for higher level, less foundational knowledge content and for enhancing free critical thinking (Rockwood, 1995a; 1995b). However, this argument is not entirely borne out by the evidence. Empirical research shows that the implementation of cooperative learning across an extensive range of subjects and age groups (Cohen, 1994, Slavin, 1995) has improved students’ higher thinking and critical reasoning (Webb, 1991; Qin, Johnson and Johnson, 1995).

In the present study, I was attracted to cooperative learning for a number of reasons. Firstly, my main concern was to find an approach to group work that would reduce the management problems associated with its implementation in large classes. I was concerned that models of collaborative learning that focus on constructing knowledge through dissent and competition (Bruffee, 1995; Olivares, 2005) might create a chaotic situation. On the other hand, cooperative learning focuses on constructing knowledge through cooperation in a highly structured environment, which I hoped would reduce the potential for chaos. Secondly, because of its structured nature, cooperative learning is well suited to supporting students in mastering specific topics. For this reason, I deemed it to be contextually appropriate for the highly structured, recall examination-based English curriculum at UoSJP. Thirdly, although in the context of the present study, the students are adults, they have always been taught by traditional teacher-centred methods and would therefore be new to any more student-centred interactive approach. I reasoned that, because of this, they might initially find it hard to take full responsibility for their learning and decision-making processes. I therefore decided to start with cooperative learning, in

which the teacher retains a central role, but with the possibility of moving to less structured forms of collaborative learning when the students became more experienced in taking responsibility for their learning. Nevertheless, I recognised that to meet the needs of the adult students and to give them responsibility for their learning as much as possible, the selected strategies of cooperative learning would need to be adapted according to the context. The teacher needs to maintain his/her authority only in terms of decision-making regarding grouping, adjustment in groups and planning tasks and lessons. Finally, I also wanted to ensure that every student in my class could learn as much as possible. In collaborative learning there is no commitment to group members that each will learn and be successful as a result of the process. On the other hand, the elements of cooperative learning (if carefully used) are intended to ensure that every member of a group learns in the group.

There are other forms of group work, such as Team-Based Learning, that are perhaps as highly structured as cooperative learning. However, I was attracted to cooperative learning not just by the degree of structure but also by the nature of that structure. Cooperative learning tends to use a limited range of highly-structured types of group activities, which made it especially suited to my objectives. The teachers in the context of the present study are always over burdened with workload due to the large size of classes. Besides, lack of facilities (See Chapter 2) makes the situation even worse for them. Therefore, they are not able to create and re-create and implement and re-implement a vast number of newly created group activities. I reasoned that a limited number of highly-structured collaborative techniques were likely to enable teachers and learners to get easily familiarised with the activities so that increasingly less direction might be required. This would further lessen uncertainty and the state of indecision and time spent on the process of creating and testing new activities and forming new groups (because cooperative learning also allows long term grouping). Despite the fact that there are other organised methods of group work that use permanent grouping, cooperative learning is unique in the extent to which it uses a battery of tried and tested activities. Overall, cooperative learning seemed well suited to my objective of enhancing student engagement in large classes without being adversely affected by classroom management issues.

The most commonly empirically tested activities of cooperative learning are *Student-Teams Achievement Divisions* (STAD) (Slavin 1980); *Jigsaw* (Aronson, et al. 1978);

Jigsaw-II (adapted by Slavin, 1987); and *Think-Pair-Share* (Lyman 1987). In STAD, the group is made up of four to five mixed ability members. Firstly, the teacher lectures to brief students on a topic. Then all students work together in a team. After that students take quizzes individually on the subject. Here, they do not help one another. Individual members are given scores, and their scores are summed up to make the group score. The groups achieving higher scores are rewarded with prizes. Jigsaw was initially devised by Aronson, et al. (1978). In Jigsaw-I, groups of six students are made to master some textual material that is broken into six pieces; one piece for each member. Next, members of groups who have studied the similar text-pieces ‘meet in expert groups to discuss their sections.’ Subsequently, they come back to their original teams to teach one another what they have learnt in the ‘expert groups’ by turns (Slavin, 1991, p. 73). In Jigsaw-II, students work in a group of four to five members as in STAD and read a common subject ‘such as a chapter, a story.’ From here onward, Jigsaw-II has similar steps as Jigsaw-I with only one difference. That is, in the end, students take individual quizzes as in STAD. Their quizzes are marked individually first, and then the scores of the individual students are summed up to give a common group score (Slavin, 1991, p. 75). In Think-Pair-Share (Lyman 1981), students listen to ‘a question or presentation, have time to think individually, talk to each other in pairs, and finally share responses with the larger group’ (McTighe and Lyman, 1988, p. 19).

3.3 Theoretical underpinnings of cooperative learning

According to Sharan (2010), the pedagogic practices of cooperative learning, as defined in this thesis, have their theoretical origin in the work of three thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch. The philosopher John Dewey was a leading figure in the ‘progressive education’ movement during the late 19th century. Dewey (e.g. 1897) emphasised the social and interactive nature of education, believing that the social and psychological aspects of learning were equally important and could not take place one without the other. He believed that ‘the school is primarily a social institution ... the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing ... education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living’ (Dewey 1897). He also believed that the curriculum should be derived from the interests of the learners, rather than

consisting of facts imposed by the teacher, and he advocated a form of education in which small groups of learners worked cooperatively with a teacher to plan and undertake inquiry-based learning.

Like Dewey, the social psychologist Kurt Lewin believed that ‘learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process and when pursued collaboratively’ (Sharan 2014 page 88). However, whereas Dewey’s ideas can be seen as underlying the inquiry-led nature of cooperative learning, Lewin’s ideas contribute more to the interpersonal aspects. Lewin (e.g. 1939) studied the dynamics of group interactions, and his experiments and observations led him to the conclusion that ‘it is not the similarity or dissimilarity of individuals that constitutes a group, but interdependence of fate’ (Lewin 1939). This insight was further developed by Lewin’s student, Morton Deutsch, who spelled out that such interdependence could be either positive or negative in nature. In positive interdependence ‘one person’s success either directly facilitates others’ success or, in the strongest case, is actually necessary for those others to succeed also... In negative interdependence – known more usually as competition – one person’s success is another’s failure’ (Brown 1988 page 30). In Lewin’s original conception, interdependence of fate could be literally a matter of life and death, in situations of high danger. However, it more often takes the form of a shared goal other than raw survival. Deutsch (1949) experimentally studied groups working under conditions of positive and negative task interdependence. He found that groups with positive interdependence were more cooperative, for example in terms of coordination of efforts, attentiveness to fellow members, mutual comprehension, productivity per unit time, quality of product and of discussions, friendliness during discussions, and favourable evaluation of the group and its products (Deutsch 1949 page 230). In other words, ‘people may come to a group with very different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve it’ (Smith 2001).

Because cooperative learning emphasises the importance of learners being active participants in learning rather than passive receivers of knowledge, it fits within the general philosophical stance of constructivism, which holds that all knowledge is constructed by human beings rather than representing any external reality. In the context of education, constructivism holds that learners must construct their own

understanding through interaction with the materials and ideas they study. The roots of this philosophy can be dated back at least to Aristotle, but its resurgence in the 20th century is generally attributed to the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget. Piaget systematically studied the cognitive development of children, using a system of structured interviews with the children themselves (e.g. Piaget 1952), and devised a theory to account for his findings. The theory is therefore mainly concerned with the processes through which infants, and then children, grow into individuals who can think and argue using propositions (DeVries, 2000). Piaget believed that children construct mental representations of the world using building blocks of knowledge that he called schemata. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, when a child encounters a new situation, experience or piece of information, the child can either interpret the new information using his or her existing mental schemata - a process called assimilation - or the child can modify his or her schemata, or construct a new schema, to accommodate the new information - a process called adaptation (Matusov and Hayes, 2000). Piaget theorised that the cognitive development of children progresses through four stages (sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational), and that biological maturation drives development from one stage to the next (Piaget, 1959; DeVries, 2000). Because Piaget's theory focuses primarily on children's cognitive development, it has been widely applied to learning in the early years, where it has underpinned experiential approaches to education (Cunningham, 2006; Blake and Pope, 2008).

While the constructivist epistemology of Piaget (1967) is primarily concerned with the cognitive development of the individual, that of Vygotsky (1978; 1986) places far greater emphasis on the importance of social interaction in the construction of knowledge. In his socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky divides the individual's learning and mental development into two levels. One is inter-psychological/inter-mental, which occurs when the child interacts with people. The other level is intra-psychological/intra-mental, which occurs when the child applies his/her own creative efforts to learning after having learnt from the people and cultural environment around him/her (Wertsch, Rio and Alvarez, 1995). An individual's cognitive development begins with reliance on friends, family members and other close adults, then proceeds to higher levels as learning becomes internalised (John-Steiner and

Mahn, 1996). This dialectical process of development can be understood in terms of the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD), which Vygotsky defined as:

...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Vygotsky (1978, p. 86)

In simple words, the ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what s/he can do with help (see Figure 3.1).

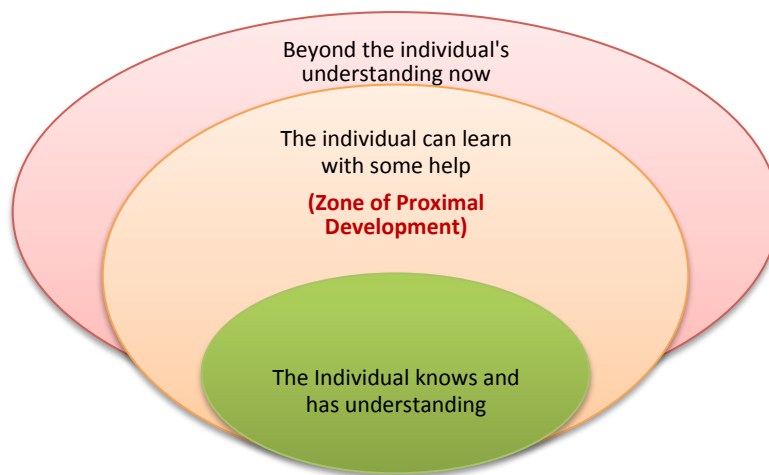


Figure 3.1: Zone of proximal development

Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory has been a great help in designing and adapting classroom pedagogical activities that focus on cooperation and co-participation (Forman and McPhail, 1993). For example, the use of heterogeneous groupings in cooperative learning can be seen as a way of utilising the ZPD in the classroom. In cooperative learning activities, teachers and peers (especially more able peers) share their existing knowledge with students and other peers to collaboratively co-construct understanding. Low-ability learners can receive assistance from high-ability peers to solve a problem, perform an activity or accomplish a target which they could not carry out without assistance (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976; Daniels, 2001; Blake and Pope, 2008). Furthermore, the high ability students can similarly be assisted by the teacher when needed, because in such classrooms teachers are

sufficiently freed from lecturing to be able to help individual students. Newman and Holzman, (1993, p. 73) argue:

Vygotsky's strategy was essentially a cooperative learning strategy. He created heterogeneous groups of... children (he called them a collective), providing them not only with the opportunity but the need for cooperation and joint activity by giving them tasks that were beyond the developmental level of some, if not all, of them. Under these circumstances, children could create a ZPD for each other...

Socio-cultural theory also suggests that cooperative learning is well suited to language learning, because language is essentially social in nature. According to Magnan (2008, p. 354), for example, 'language develops from the social foundation in which the individual resides.' Many researchers and theorists (e.g., John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996; Lantolf, 2008; Lantolf and Poehner, 2008; Grabois, 2008; Magnan, 2008) have related Vygotskian ideas to ESL learning and argued that interactive cooperative learning methods which enhance social interaction in organised ways tend to be the most suitable (McCafferty, Jacobs and DaSilva Iddings, 2006). It is argued that ESL teaching and learning requires teachers and learners to start with the dynamics of the learning community, in which both teacher and learners are engaged in the techniques of teaching and learning:

...in regard to L2 classrooms and cooperative learning, socio-cultural theory emphasizes the social nature of learning, that symbolic, physical, and mental space are mediated through interaction in cultural-historical contexts. Students utilize themselves (their own histories), each other (as groups), artefacts (especially language and other forms of communication), and the environment in their efforts to make meaning of and in the L2.

McCafferty, Jacobs and DaSilva Iddings (2006, p. 23)

Doolittle (1995) argues that all five of the essential elements of cooperative learning identified by Johnson and Johnson (e.g. 1994) can be understood in terms of the ZPD. For example, positive interdependence is as basic to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, as it is central to cooperative learning (Doolittle, 1995), since the development of children is held to be reliant upon communication with other

children and adults. In other words, every individual in a society is ‘dependent upon other members of society to provide the resources necessary for development’ (Doolittle, 1995, p. 13). Individual accountability, on the other hand, mirrors the development of each group member within their own ZPD: ‘Vygotsky believed that each member should grow and develop – the members should be able to do today, what they could only do in collaboration yesterday’ (Doolittle, 1995, p. 17). In cooperative learning, individual accountability therefore means that each group member should develop to a point where their ZPD has progressed beyond the task to be learned.

3.4 Empirical Evidence for the effectiveness of cooperative learning

Literature on cooperative learning is very much in line with Vygotskian ideas (see Section 3.3) and suggests that cooperation and social interaction between students lead to improvement in students’ participation in learning (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1998), academic achievement (Kyndt, et al., 2013), cognitive development (Qin, Johnson and Johnson, 1995) and self-esteem and motivation (Slavin, 1990). It is empirically found that cooperative learning techniques create an environment in which students are found in constant cooperative and interactive conditions (Slavin, 1980; Johnson, et al., 1981; Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1998). Johnson et al. (1981) discovered that cooperation created by cooperative learning activities, both with and without intergroup competition, has more significantly positive effects on student learning than interpersonal competition and individual efforts.

There is evidence that students’ engagement in cooperative learning activities improves academic achievement. The meta-analysis conducted by Johnson, et al. (1981) shows that such cooperation has more significantly positive effects on student learning than whole class competitive or individualistic teaching methods. These results are consistent across all subjects ‘language arts, reading, math, science, social studies, psychology, and physical education ... for all age groups ... although the results are stronger for precollege than for college students’ (Johnson, et al., 1981, p. 57). Slavin (1983) conducted a meta-analysis of forty-six experimental studies that were conducted in elementary or secondary schools. The results indicated that the effects of cooperative learning strategies on students’ academic attainment were

significantly positive. Similarly, Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) analysed 168 studies in order to compare the relative effectiveness of cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning on 18-year old learners' achievement. The results of the studies showed that cooperative learning strategies have substantially more positive effects on individual attainment than do competitive or individualistic learning methods. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2000) also analysed 158 studies (at both school and college level), focussing on the effects of eight different cooperative learning strategies on students' academic achievement. The study found that all eight strategies showed significantly positive impact on student achievement, compared with competitive/individualistic learning. Kyndt, et al. (2013) in the context of Asian countries conducted a meta-analysis of sixty-five studies to assess the effect of cooperative learning on student achievement, attitudes and perceptions. These studies included students in higher education institutes as well as classes in mathematics, sciences, languages and social sciences in elementary or secondary school. The results of the study showed that cooperative learning had more affirmative effects on student achievement than traditional methods of teaching and learning.

In addition to academic achievement, the empirical evidence suggests that cooperative learning has substantially positive effects on students' skills in problem-solving tasks. Qin, Johnson and Johnson (1995) conducted a meta-analytic study of forty-five studies to examine the effects of cooperation and competition on students' problem-solving skills. The problem-solving tasks were classified into two categories: linguistic or non-linguistic and well-defined or ill-defined. The participants in the studies were classified into two categories: younger (preschool, primary school and intermediate students) and older (junior high students, senior high students, college students, and adults). The findings suggest that students who worked through cooperation achieved higher-quality problem solving than those who worked individually in competitive learning settings. Although cooperation resulted in greater problem solving than did competition on all the four types of problems, the size of the effect for non-linguistic problems was higher than for linguistic problems. No significant difference between the problem-solving skills of the younger and older students was found. Likewise, Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) also found that cooperative learning had a positive effect on students' cognition, and improved

students' capability for knowledge acquisition, retention, accuracy, creativity and meta-cognitive reasoning. The results support evidence for language activities such as reading, writing, and presentations, as well as mathematical tasks. Thus, cooperative learning realises in practice the benefits predicted in theory by Vygotsky, whereby social interaction with more able peers leads to cognitive development (see Section 3.3).

Empirical evidence shows that the factors of social interdependence and interaction in cooperative learning have positive effects on students' self-esteem and motivation for learning (Slavin, 1983; Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1998). Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) discovered that cooperation tends to promote higher self-esteem and intrinsic motivation than does competition. Slavin (1983) found that cooperative learning strategies had robust and stable affirmative effects on students' race-relations and self-esteem, as well as their motivation to study more in order to enhance their own and their peers' learning. However, Slavin (1983) found that only those cooperative learning strategies which offered extrinsic team rewards such as *Team-Games Tournament* (TGT) and *Student Team Achievement Division* (STAD) had significantly positive results on students' motivation. Hence, according to Slavin (1983; 1990) cooperative learning can be a great help in improving students' self-esteem and motivation if the strategies follow extrinsic reward structures. However, Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) argue that it is not only reward structure that enhances motivation, but that social interdependence and group cohesion also improve motivation. According to Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998, p. 29) since cooperative learning is also based on social interdependence theory, its efforts are 'based on intrinsic motivation generated by interpersonal factors and a joint aspiration to achieve a significant goal'. Johnson and others (1991, p. 53) argue:

Striving for mutual benefit results in an emotional bonding with collaborators liking each other, wanting to help each other succeed, and being committed to each other's well-being. These positive feelings toward the group and the other members could have a number of important influences on intrinsic motivation to achieve and actual productivity.

Despite the fact that it is claimed that cooperative learning has positive effects on students' learning, some authors argue that it is not always successful. 'However

using cooperative learning is not a guarantee of success; student teams do not always function the way they ought to' (Abrami and Chambers, 1996, p. 74). Therefore, when students face failure in a group-learning setting, it might have substantially negative effects (Ames, 1981). Hammond, et al. (2010) argue that some studies have found that although students value the social features of learning with their peers, they are less likely to approve of cooperation for helping them attain better in measured tasks. However, Joyce (1991, pp. 73) asserts that 'the literature contains stunning examples where students of a wide range of academic histories profited dramatically from the environment of a very cooperative classroom.'

Although mixed-ability grouping is often recommended by proponents of cooperative learning (e.g., Slavin, 1987), it is argued that it is not always effective for high-ability students. For example, Robinson (1990) and Matthews (1992) have argued that more able students are likely to feel demoralized in mixed ability groupings. Joyce (1991), on the other hand, found that high achieving learners made substantial gains in cooperative learning settings. Although their academic achievements, when compared to other teaching approaches, were not significantly greater, the study clearly showed no negative effects of cooperative learning on students. From their meta-analysis, Lou, et al. (1996) found partial results; many of the studies demonstrated positive effects for mixed-ability groups. However, the results from the studies that directly compared the effect of same-ability grouping with mixed-ability grouping were varied. Slavin (1996a; 1996b) argues that although there is disagreement over whether the use of mixed-ability grouping in cooperative learning may have negative effects on high-achieving students, these negative effects do not appear to be supported by the research in this area. The criticism of heterogeneous grouping, perhaps, calls for more research because the available research is not sufficiently disaggregated by the subject area and age. Most of the existing literature regarding cooperative learning with heterogeneous grouping is about school level in smaller-sized classes, and it is difficult to extrapolate from that whether those findings may be applicable to large ESL classes at higher-education level. Learners in higher education are adults and might perform teacher-learner roles more easily to help one another and share responsibilities for their learning.

3.5 Cooperative learning and language teaching

In the mainstream literature on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), where Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the dominant paradigm, there has long been an assumption that the best approach to teaching large language classes is to adopt strategies that increase opportunities for students to use the target language. CLT is an extensively adopted teaching approach in the field of ELT in the Western World and aims to develop learners' communicative competence. Communicative competence does not mean the development of speaking competence only. Competence should be viewed as 'the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language which the speaker-listener possesses' (Hymes, 1972, p. 63). For example, the notion of communicative competence involves knowledge of the target language and ability to use that knowledge in specific contexts (Savignon, 2001). CLT 'pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view' (Littlewood, 1981, p. 1). Littlewood (1981) further states that CLT activities help:

learners develop both fluency of behaviour and clarity of understanding in their use of the foreign linguistic system. In each kind of activity, too, the linguistic form may be more or less strongly related to communicative function and non-linguistic reality.

Littlewood (1981, p.8)

The most important aspect of CLT is 'getting them [learners] communicating' because communication in the classroom is held to provide an important and creative platform to transfer classroom learning to the outside world (Allwright, 1984, p. 156). Advocates of CLT argue that learning any language requires a communicative atmosphere in which students can engage and communicate frequently with one another and with the teacher to enhance their language skills (Allwright, 1984; Savignon, 2002; Richards, 2006). Clearly there is a convergence between the desiderata of CLT and the characteristics of cooperative learning, especially in terms of equal participation and simultaneous interaction, such that cooperative learning can be seen as one way of implementing CLT (cf. Littlewood 2013, p. 14).

When it comes to the practice of CLT in contexts other than the Western World, teachers often face numerous difficulties. Hiep (2007) finds that these difficulties:

... range from systemic constraints such as traditional examinations, large class sizes, to cultural constraints characterized by beliefs about teacher and student role, and classroom relationships, to personal constraints such as students' low motivation and unequal ability to take part in independent active learning practices, and even to teachers' limited expertise in creating communicative activities like group work.

Hiep (2007, p. 200)

It has been argued that pedagogical methods always develop from socially and culturally situated contexts (Sakui 2004; Hiep 2007), and that any method established in one part of the world can be problematic when used in exactly the same form in another. In a white paper produced for the TESOL International Organisation, Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012) introduce the notion of a 'Principles-Based Approach' for English Language Teaching policies and practices. They argue that approaches to learning and teaching that have evolved in developed countries may not be helpful for teachers in majority world contexts, 'who face a variety of unique context-specific issues in their classrooms'. They conclude that:

When faced with a variety of methodologies and material imported from Western contexts and promoted by international organizations, educational institutions and consultants, the local experts, policymakers, researchers, and teachers within these contexts must determine what is and is not suitable for use within their particular contexts and classrooms.

Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012, page 10)

The world-wide marketing of CLT has been particularly criticised in this regard, as representing 'a sort of naïve ethnocentrism prompted by the thought that what is good for Europe or the USA had to be good for KwaZulu' (Chick, 1996, p. 22). However, Hiep (2007) also points out that it would be biased to decide beforehand that the use of CLT is inappropriate in other contexts just because it originated in the West. If CLT cannot be used in the exact same form as it is used in the West, perhaps, with situational analyses, adaptations and innovations, it can yield desired

results in other cultures too (Littlewood, 1981; Nunan, 1987). Harmer (2003, p. 292) argues that CLT should not be seen as a methodology in itself, but rather as a set of ideas that can be 'amended and adapted to fit the needs of the students who come into contact with them'. Such adaptations require careful analysis of situations and cultures (West, 1994; Khan, 2007). Savignon (1991) argues that there is an incongruity between the theory and practice of CLT, and that, in order to recognise this, the views of teachers should be examined. Situation analysis can offer insight into perceptions and views of teachers and learners and thus can help in making a language programme more suitable to their needs (Nunan, 1987; Richards, 1990). It can also assist teachers and learners to take ownership of changes and innovations in pedagogic practice.

The literature suggests that the implementation of cooperative learning has mostly been conducted in schools and on content teaching of subjects other than language. However, there are some studies in the context of Asian countries which have used cooperative learning in language classes at both school and higher education level. In the specific context of ESL/EFL teaching and learning in Asian cultures, cooperative learning has been found to be a very effective method for the improvement of students' academic achievement in language learning. For example, Khan (2008) Khan and Ahmad (2014) found that students taught through cooperative learning outperformed those students who were taught through whole class teaching in Pakistani schools. Similarly, the three Middle-Eastern studies conducted in Lebanon (Ghaith, 2002; 2003) and Iran (Jalilifar, 2010) have found positive effects of cooperative learning on students' social skills, self-esteem and academic achievements in language classes. However, Ghaith and Yaghi (1998) found mixed effects of cooperative learning on Lebanese school-children's academic performance, self-esteem and feelings of isolation. In the context of higher education ESL/EFL teaching, Basta (2011), Webb (1982; 1991; 1995) and (Chen, 2006) found that the use of cooperative learning improved students' long-term learning skills and critical thinking, problem-solving skills and English proficiency and foreign language skills. Moreover, it also enhanced students' motivation, confidence and self-esteem in large ESL classes in higher education (Suwantarathip and Wichadee, 2010; Chen, 2006).

3.6 Adaptation of cooperative learning to ESL classes at UoSJP

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests that the use of group work offers a possible solution to the issues of large classes, specifically large ESL classes in higher education. However, it has also been found that the implementation of group work is not easy and comes with a host of management issues such as time spent in group formation, disruptive student behaviour, and noise. The review of the literature on cooperative learning in this chapter supports the idea that group work using the principles and techniques of cooperative learning is likely to enhance student engagement with language learning processes and address the management issues created by other forms of group work. However, current thinking in the field of TESOL indicates that cooperative learning would need to be adapted to the context of UoSJP in order to be acceptable and accessible to my students and colleagues. Nevertheless, I hypothesised that cooperative learning might effectively be adopted in large ESL classes at UoSJP when contextually adapted. In this section, I undertake an initial consideration of the types of adaptation that might be necessary, focussing on the critical attributes of cooperative learning, especially positive interdependence and individual accountability.

Davidson and Major (2014, page 30) argue that one of the ways cooperative learning differs from other highly structured forms of group work is that, in cooperative learning, the teacher considers adopting all available techniques in order to nurture positive interdependence, including goal, reward, role and resource interdependence. Based on my experience of teaching at UoSJP and my understanding of the Pakistani educational system, I believed that all these types of positive interdependence could indeed be created within the constraints of the context, albeit to varying degrees.

Goal interdependence, perhaps, is the main form of interdependence that cooperative learning needs to achieve (cf. Slavin 1988). It requires that learners have goals they can only attain by cooperating with one another, and these goals often involve the completion of a task or tasks. In the ESL classes at UoSJP, as described in Chapter 1, learning tasks are largely pre-determined by the prescribed syllabus, set course book and final examination. However, I saw no reason why these tasks should not be incorporated into the structures of cooperative learning. For example, groups could

be assigned the goal of ensuring that every member of the group could answer all the comprehension questions following a particular text in the book. Since the students at UoSJP are adults, it seemed reasonable to suppose that they would potentially be able to support one another in the learning process. On the other hand, the students had never experienced anything like cooperative learning, having always been taught by traditional, teacher-centred methods. It was possible, or even likely, that I would meet resistance to the new methodology if students felt threatened by being asked to take responsibility for their own learning. I therefore realised that considerable explanation and learner training would be necessary in order to enable the students to realise their cooperative potential. I decided that, before planning my intervention in detail, I would conduct a thorough situation analysis, including a survey of the attitudes and experience of my students and colleagues.

When it comes to reward interdependence, there is considerable debate in the literature on cooperative learning about whether this should include the use of group grades. On the one hand, some authors argue that group grades encourage cooperation by ensuring that learners genuinely ‘sink or swim together’ (e.g. Johnson and Johnson 1994). Group grades are also seen as providing good preparation for the ‘real world’, where a diversity of groups, including e.g. sports teams and businesses, really do succeed or fail as units (Johnson and Johnson 2003). On the other hand, some authorities on cooperative learning argue that group grades are unfair because ‘two students with exactly the same ability and motivation, one assigned to work with weak teammates and the other who happens to have strong teammates, may receive different course grades’ (Kagan and Kagan 2009, 1.9). There is also some evidence that expected (i.e. offered in advance) tangible rewards, such as points or tokens, undermine intrinsic motivation (e.g. Cameron, Banko and Pierce 2001).

In the context of the present study, I was spared the decision about whether to use group grades because, at UoSJP, students are awarded grades and degrees only on the basis of their individual scores in the final exam, and there is no possibility for an individual teacher to do otherwise. The exam system at UoSJP therefore curtails the potential for group reward interdependence. Nevertheless, I was mindful of Slavin’s (1983) finding that only those cooperative learning strategies which offered extrinsic team rewards such as *Team-Games Tournament* (TGT) and *Student Team*

Achievement Division (STAD) had significantly positive results on students' motivation. I realised that positive reward interdependence could be partially established through the use of teacher-made in-class tests conducted before the final exam. The scores of individual students could be summed up to form a common group score as suggested by Slavin and other advocates of cooperative learning, and extrinsic rewards or prizes could be given to groups as a whole based on the group score.

Role interdependence would, I thought, be relatively easy to achieve at UoSJP. Cooperative learning suggests assigning roles among group members for strengthening positive interdependence and individual accountability (Slavin, 1983). These roles include e.g. leader, recorder, presenter and spokesperson, and are supposed to be rotating so that every group member has the chance to perform each role (Millis, 2002; Davidson and Major, 2014). Provided I was able to give adequate training and guidance about what the roles involved, I expected that assigning roles would greatly facilitate the success of my intervention. This was because the students were unaccustomed to working in groups and might not initially know how to behave in that situation. Having a clearly defined role would, I hypothesised, give them a structure that would build confidence by making it clear what was expected of them, while reducing the risk of disruptive behaviour or disengagement.

Finally, since UoSJP is poor with large classes, and lacks teaching and learning equipment, resource interdependence is unavoidable. For example, three worksheets might need to be shared among six students in a group. In the context of cooperative learning, this can be seen as an advantage, since it facilitates and encourages pair-wise discussion of the contents.

While positive interdependence would need to be actively cultivated as part of introducing cooperative learning to UoSJP, individual accountability is already the norm, most clearly manifest in the university examination system. However, I wanted to extend this accountability in such a way that it would encourage engagement in the group work. The literature on cooperative learning suggests several ways of doing this, for example by using individual tests, by asking a student at random from each group to present the group's work to the rest of the class (Johnson and Johnson, 1994) or by rewarding groups according to the average of

their individual members' quiz scores (Slavin 1988). All of these seemed potentially compatible with the context, since the students were accustomed both to individual testing and to presenting their work to the class. Individual tests, marked by the teacher with scores returned to individual students, might motivate students to work hard to improve their individual scores. Furthermore, as discussed above, groups could be rewarded on the basis of their summed individual scores. On the other hand, the workload involved for the teacher would mean that this strategy could only be used occasionally. An alternative would be to use oral presentations but, since the classes in the context of the present study are so large, it would not be possible to ask all the groups to come and present their task in every lesson. Nevertheless, random selection of individuals to present their group's work would help to foster individual accountability, because all the students would want to be ready in case they were called upon. I decided to make a more detailed plan about how to use these different strategies once I had conducted my situation analysis.

One of the most dominant features of the ESL classes at UoSJP is the huge syllabus and consequent pressure on time. Because of this, I decided that it would be inappropriate in the first instance to spend classroom time on explicit social skills training or reflection on group processes, especially as not all authorities regard these elements as essential for successful cooperative learning. On the other hand, I thought it was likely that the experience of group work would encourage students to reflect and self-evaluate their shortcomings and successes, and I therefore decided to include effects on students' social and interpersonal skills in my evaluation.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on various aspects of cooperative learning, including the characteristics of cooperative learning, its relations to other forms of group work, the theoretical underpinnings on which it is based, its general claims and its implementation in a variety of contexts. The chapter has focussed on how and why cooperative learning is beneficial for student learning, for both adults and children, in content and language teaching. The review suggests that cooperative learning, being a form group work, can be used as a method of communicative language teaching. However, like all other pedagogic approaches, cooperative learning will require contextual adaptation in order to be maximally effective in any

given situation. For this reason, the next stage of my research will be a detailed situation analysis of the large ESL classes at UoSJP. The results of this situation analysis are presented in Chapter 6, following a detailed description of the methodology of my study in Chapters 4 and 5.

4 Design of the study: Action research

4.1 Introduction

Being mindful of the nature and situation of my project, I selected action research as the most appropriate methodological approach. There were two main, related reasons for this. Firstly, action research allows for the researcher and teacher to be the same person, and permits teacher-researchers to investigate their own practice through reflection (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Secondly, there is evidence that for educational enquiry, traditional positivistic research is not very effective. Rather, naturalistic, self-reflective and context specific forms of enquiry, such as action research, may be more effective when the aim is improvement in academic practices (Somekh, 2006). Thus, action research was deemed to be particularly suitable for the present study, since I aimed to develop my own academic practice and improve my students' learning in the institution where I am employed as a teacher. Although the term 'action research' actually covers a diversity of approaches, all forms of action research have several factors in common. These central characteristics are that action research is action-oriented, cyclical, participatory and reflective.

Action research is action-oriented and uses planned action to bring improvement in a situation. The planned action is systematically implemented and critically evaluated to generate contextualised knowledge (Somekh, 2006). Therefore, action research is about *praxis*. '*Praxis* is informed, committed action that gives rise to knowledge as well as successful action' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 20). In the context of education, action mostly takes the form of the implementation of suitable pedagogic approaches in order to address pressing problems encountered in the process of teaching and learning (Tripp, 2005). McNiff and Whitehead (2010) argue that it is informed because the action-research process takes into account the opinions and feelings of a variety of participants, it is committed in terms of values that are studied, questioned and improved, and is equipped to defend these improved values. It is about discovering methods to improve one's practices, and therefore is about producing knowledge. The knowledge generated through action is the knowledge of practice. Exploring how the action has added to improvement becomes a knowledge-creation process.

Action research is cyclic, which is to say that it is conducted through repeatable cycles of certain steps. The exact number of steps identified varies from writer to writer. Lewin (1946, p. 38) described the cycle in three steps: ‘planning, action and fact-finding’. Efron and Ravid (2013, p. 8) state that ‘action research is much more dynamic, fluid...’ and mention a cycle containing six steps of identifying an issue or problem, gathering background information through a review of the literature, designing the study, collecting data, analyzing data, writing, sharing, and implementing the findings. Mertler (2012) uses four steps: planning action; implementing the plan; developing an action plan for upcoming cycles, and reflecting on the process. Tripp (2005) indicates three steps: planning, implementing and evaluating. Stringer (2007, p. 8) describes the cycle as ‘*a simple yet powerful framework - look, think, act ... that enables people to commence their inquiries ...*’ Dick (2015, p. 439) argues that although different writers indicate different steps of the action research cycle, these all have the same objective, i.e. ‘action alternating with reflection. A common elaboration has four elements of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Teaching Action Research), as popularised by Kemmis and McTaggart (1982)’.

Dick (2015, p. 434) argues that, despite the diversity, almost all action-research approaches are participatory. However, some are less participatory and others more (Stringer, 2007; Dick, 2015). In the context of education, action research is a joint activity among the people of a university/school/college aiming to find solutions to the problems faced, or to improve everyday experience and achievement (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McTaggart, 1997). Somekh (2006, p. 7) argues that collaboration in action research can be of many kinds. It may be between practitioner-researchers and students and colleagues in that researcher’s organisation, or it may consist of different groups of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, instituting their own operational interactions. The agents of participatory action research conduct their research as a social practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). After the problems are identified, they collaboratively try to solve them by bringing about positive change for improvement, instead of dealing with detached theoretical problems (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Elliot, 1991).

Action research is reflective. Somekh (2006, p. 7) argues that action research encompasses ‘a high level of reflexivity and sensitivity to the role of the self in

mediating the whole research process'. Through reflection and self-reflection of their practices, practitioners evaluate and improve them. In reality, it is a reflective process which helps people work collaboratively to improve their practices through iterative cycles of 'critical and self-critical action and reflection' (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, p. 282). McNiff and Whitehead (2010) and Dick (2015) argue that reflection is dialectical in the action research process, whether the practitioner-researcher reflects in collaboration or alone (self-reflection) with the help of notes and diaries by asking critical questions of him or herself. On the other hand, Dick (2015, p. 438) argues that, despite the fact that both types of reflection occur in action research, 'Collective reflection offers increased opportunities for reappraisal, especially if the style of interaction is both supportive and challenging.'

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows: Section 4.2 gives the background to Action Research, Section 4.3 discusses the models of Action Research used in this study, Sections 4.4 - 4.6 give further details of its implementation, and Section 4.7 concludes.

4.2 Background

Although the methods and concepts that underpin the approach can be found in earlier literature, the term *action research* is usually traced back to the 1940s. The notions of action and research were perhaps first linked by John Collier (1945) in connection with his work with native American tribes. Collier (1945, p. 300) argued that social research should ideally be 'evoked by needs of action, should be integrative of many disciplines, should involve the administrator and the laymen, and should feed itself into action'. Furthermore:

We have learned that the action evoked, action serving, integrative and layman-participating way of research is incomparably more productive of social results than the specialised and isolated way (Collier 1945 p. 300).

At about the same time, the German-American socio-psychologist, Kurt Lewin, was developing similar ideas. In addition to his contribution in the field of cooperative learning, outlined in Chapter 3, Lewin was perhaps the first person who explicitly used the phrase *action research*. As conceptualised by Lewin (1946, p. 34) action research is 'research which will help the practitioner', where practitioners for Lewin

(1946) are representatives of various communities or organisations, including, for example, schools, government departments and minority groups. Lewin asserted that ‘rational social management ... proceeds in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action’ (Lewin, 1946 p. 38). This spiral of steps became a core element of the concept of action research, an action-reflection cycle of planning, acting, monitoring and reflecting (Carr, 2006) (see Figure 2.1).

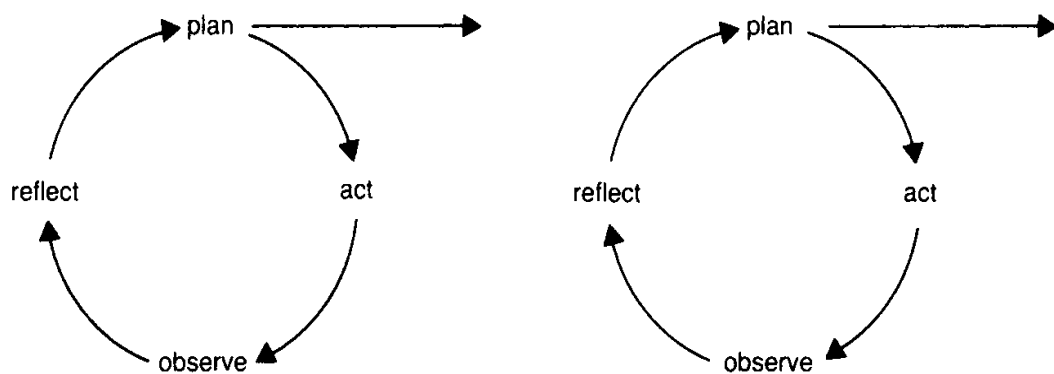


Figure 4.1: Structure of action-reflection cycles (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002, p. 41)

After brief popularity in the USA, action research declined in the 1950s due to the overwhelming influence of positivistic research in the social sciences at the time (Carr, 2006). Positivistic research, based on the scientific method traditionally used in the natural sciences, aims to collect objective data from a sample of individuals, either by experiment or by observation, and to analyse that data in such a way as to draw conclusions that are generalisable to the population from which the sample is drawn.

By the 1970s, it was becoming apparent that positivistic research had serious limitations in the context of the social sciences, and especially in the field of education. Firstly, it is very difficult to get a representative sample of a whole population. Since educational settings vary culturally all around the world, it is always difficult to select a sample that can yield results that are generalisable to all these settings. Secondly, even if the study is restricted to a particular context, it is very difficult to control all variables except the variable of interest. Kember (2003, p. 91) argues that educational problems ‘are complex with many variables involved’.

Therefore, traditional experimental studies focussing on limited variables ‘result in oversimplification because they deal with only a few of the relevant factors’. Thirdly, the researcher cannot investigate how the situation would be without them in it. This means that the researchers, being outsiders, might themselves have an effect on the situation they are trying to investigate. Finally, it may in any case be difficult for researchers who are outsiders to really understand what is going on in a social situation. They observe what other people are doing in an alien setting, which makes it difficult for them to create rapport easily with the situation and participants, where participants may not honestly cooperate (Chandler and Torbert, 2003; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). In addition, the use of experimental designs in the naturalistic educational context could arguably raise ethical implications. For example, one or more groups given different treatments may be disadvantaged (Clark, 1983; Kember, 2003). ‘How can students, who have paid their tuition fee, be told that they will receive no teaching because they have been drawn in a control group?’ (Kember, 2003, p. 91).

Research shows that, for educational inquiry, experimental methods are not as effective as naturalistic and self-reflective approaches that investigate problems in specific contexts (e.g., Kember, 2002). Academic practices cannot be completely separated from the context in which they take place (Somekh, 2006), so research that aims to improve academic practices should take the context into account. Action research not only acknowledges the importance of the context, but is fundamentally contextual in nature. It is a naturalistic form of inquiry which attempts to change and improve the practices and behaviours of people, without attempting to control situational variables to any significant extent (Stringer, 2007). Furthermore, action research is a flexible approach that provides opportunities to change the course of action during on-going processes of inquiry (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McNiff, 2006). McNiff and Whitehead (2010) contend that this is one of the main reasons for its popularity, because it allows practitioners to control their own practices.

The development of action research has largely taken place in the field of education because educationists have found it advantageous as a way of improving professionalism in education - particularly for teacher education. They examined and clarified its steps, its principles such as democratic practices, respect and care for the

individual and the need for organised research approaches (McNiff, 2002). Teacher-researchers or practitioners use action research as a practicable model for adapting, transforming, and improving their teaching and learning processes. This kind of action research is also labelled *practitioner research*, *teacher research* or *classroom research*, and in each case the teacher acts as the researcher. Efron and Ravid (2013) argue that *action research* and *practitioner research* are frequently used interchangeably. In both forms, practitioners conduct investigations in classrooms and schools. They take it as an inquiry that ‘enhances their ability to grow professionally, become self-evaluative, and take responsibility for their own practice’ (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 2). They carry out their enquiries scientifically, reflectively and critically by using approaches that are suitable for their practice. Being insiders and familiar with the setting, they are naturally subjective and directly involved. It does not bother them if the knowledge attained through their investigations is generalisable and replicable in other situations. They aim to enhance their practice and nurture their professional development by ‘understanding *their* students, solving problems, or developing new skills’ (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 4).

While the situation-specific nature of action research makes it particularly attractive to educationists, it also gives rise to perhaps the chief criticism levelled against action research. This criticism is that, unlike traditional research, action research is not liable to generalisation (Corey, 1954) and its findings remain limited to a specific context or organisation. However, Gustavsen (2008) argues that, in action research, ‘the point is not to make general theory out of limited local experience but to make limited local experience interact with other limited local experiences to constitute broader waves of development (Gustavsen, 2008 p. 433). I take this to mean that researchers can take ideas generated through action research in one context, which they judge to be sufficiently similar to their own, and try out the same ideas, suitably adapted, through a process of action research in their own context. In this way, a body of knowledge can be gradually built up within a community of practitioners. Somekh (2006, pp. 27-28) expresses a similar idea:

Because of its contextualized nature, knowledge generated from action research is cautious in its claims, sensitive to variations and open to reinterpretation in new contexts.

McNiff and Whitehead (2010) also argue that findings of action research cannot only be used for the specific situation, but rather can create a set of new knowledge that may contribute to society in general, along with their specific target. However, in order for future researchers to be able to judge to what extent the mechanisms and findings of a particular study might be applied to another context, it is very important that action researchers show ‘the authenticity of the evidence base, explaining the standards of judgement used, and demonstrating the reasonableness of the claim’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p. 98). Stringer (2007) also asserts that action research projects establish their trustworthiness from the rigorous methods used in them. This trustworthiness in action research ensures that ‘researchers have rigorously established the veracity, truthfulness, or validity of the information and analyses that have emerged from the research process’ (Stringer, 2007, p. 57).

Since its origins, and with increased popularity, action research has diversified and the term is now used as an umbrella term for a variety of approaches. According to Dick (2015), these approaches mostly vary in terms of participation: both who the participants are and the extent to which they participate. In the context of education, action research approaches vary according to the role the teacher plays, especially in terms of precisely who retains control during the conduct of a project (Grundy, 1982). The array of its models ranges from teacher-oriented research - aiming to improve one’s practice - to research-oriented projects constructed around more general questions, with the potential to direct the whole community of teachers involved in bringing positive change within their respective field through innovation (Eilks and Ralle, 2002).

Grundy (1982, p. 23) identifies three models of educational action research: ‘technical’, ‘practical’ and ‘emancipatory’. These labels have been widely adopted and were subsequently further developed by Carr and Kemmis (1986), Kemmis (1993) and McKernan (1991). In technical action research, the aim is ‘to render an existing situation more efficient and effective’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, page 349). Participants in this form of action research are ‘regarded as the instruments, rather than the agent of change’ (Grundy, 1982, p. 26). The aim is to fix a problem. The action researcher ‘takes an existing practice’ from some other context and adopts it in his ‘own field of practice’ to bring positive improvement

(Tripp, 2005, p. 13). Grundy (1982, p. 25) argues that in technical action research, the researcher is a facilitator, 'technician or engineer' and the eventual accountability for the success of the study lies with him/her. It is also 'product-centred, so action is designed to 'produce', 'make' or 'create' something'. In contrast, the two other kinds of educational action research, i.e., practical and emancipatory, both aim at enhancing the participation of those involved in the research process.

The practical mode of action research, unlike the technical mode, is reflective and deliberative; it not only aims to produce theoretical knowledge, but also aims to defend decisions taken about the practice, based on the reflective cyclic process (Mckernan, 1991). The researcher does not act as an external scholar offering answers to problems, but rather as 'a consultant whose task is to assist teachers to arrive at sound practical judgments' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 30). Practical action researchers aim to understand practice and to respond to the immediate, problematic situation through continuous research processes, rather than through the 'end product of inquiry' (Mckernan, 1991, p. 21). Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 203) argue that in practical action research, the researcher's role is Socratic, in the sense that he or she provides 'a sounding-board against which practitioners may try out ideas' in order to learn more about their own action and about the process of self-reflection.

In the emancipatory model of action research, participation is taken a step further, since 'participants themselves take responsibility for the Socratic role of assisting the group in its collaborative self-reflection'. Kemmis (1993, p. 3) argues that emancipatory action research is always associated with collective action because it aspires to change 'the social (or educational) world for the better through improving shared social practices', and the action researchers' knowledge of these practices, and 'the shared situations in which these practices are carried out'. Grundy (1982) suggests that the emancipatory mode of action research is more powerful than its technical and practical modes. Although, in general, it still similarly aims to improve professional practices, it also aims to liberate the participants from traditional practices. It is therefore critical, because it is about ceaselessly attempting to understand and improve situations, and the practices that occur in these situations. Furthermore, it aims to generate a system of shared learning by doing. Thus, it aims to support people in comprehending themselves as the medium, and also the

products of change (Kemmis, 1993). Grundy (1983, p. 28) argues that emancipatory action research, unlike technical and practical action research:

...does not begin with 'theory' and end with 'practice', but it is informed by theory and often it is confrontation with theory that provides the initiative to undertake action research. The dynamic relationship between theory and practice in emancipatory action research, however, entails the change and expansion of both during the course of project. Thus theory may inform but not legitimate practice.

4.3 Action research in the present study

In the present study, I used a classroom-based critical emancipatory model of action research. Starting from the perspective of an insider, I tried to improve my teaching and my students' learning. I did not act as a guide in the study, but rather as a practitioner-researcher. In collaboration with my students and colleagues, I attempted to improve the process of English language teaching and learning and to generate shared learning by doing (cf. Kemmis, 1993). Unlike in technical and practical action research, I did not guide students or the colleagues who observed me during the intervention stage of my project; rather we guided the process collaboratively towards a better direction. Together, we co-constructed knowledge (cf. Gustavsen, 2008). This emancipatory model is considered a democratically empowering model. Processes used in the model empower participants to struggle more rationally, justly and democratically (Elliot, 1991). What makes the critical emancipatory approach different from both the technical and practical approaches is that it focuses less on the practitioner and research as separate entities detached from the setting, problem and practice. Instead, it emphasises 'understanding the social and political context in which their practice occurs' (Norton, 2009, p. 54).

Since the present study is an educational project, I decided to base it on the definitions provided by McNiff, Whitehead, Carr, Kemmis and McTaggart in their various works on the application of action research in educational settings. McNiff and Whitehead (2010) define it as a research process in which educators and practitioners engage to evaluate a problem, observe and record different phases of inquiry, examine the data collected and lastly make applicable decisions which can

be continued to improve the circumstances and actions under investigation. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 162) define action research in the following way:

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

The qualities of action orientation and iteration in action research helped me plan and take systematic action to improve my teaching and address the issue of students' lack of engagement with the language learning process. I wished to transform the existing scenario of the English language teaching and learning in the university where I work as a lecturer, and believed the change would only be possible when a planned cyclic action was taken. Moreover, I believed that change would provide more effective results if brought about by action planned, implemented and evaluated collaboratively. Therefore, I decided to follow the ideas provided by Carr and Kemmis (1986, pp. 165-166):

It can be argued that three conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for action research to be said to exist: firstly, a project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement; secondly, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; thirdly, the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice, and maintaining collaborative control of the process.

Even though action research is contextual and contains subjective elements, it does not mean that it is not scientific. It uses scientific methods to make claims, hypothesises about problematic situations, and takes action based on its theoretical perspectives in order to address those situations. It is usually associated with three theoretical underpinnings: Firstly, since its basic aim is to bring positive change, it follows generative transformative theory. Secondly, since change is in fact intended to liberate oneself from the old system, it follows emancipatory theory. And thirdly,

since it is based on practitioners' own theories and efforts, it flows from living theory.

Since the present study is an action-research project and attempts to bring improved change in my own teaching and in the institution where I work, it builds on Generative Transformational Theoretical perspectives (cf. McNiff, 2002 and McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 36) argue that 'all things are in a constant state of self-renewal and change; this is the nature of life itself'. Action researchers hypothesise that with newer times come newer methods and practices which require positive change in the existing ones, following the needs of the situation in time and space. However, the transformation brought about by action research is not random, but rather scientifically systematic and aiming to change in order to improve. This means that it firstly generates knowledge and understanding of practices and settings, and then it attempts to change and improve the practices and settings based on this acquired understanding and knowledge. Action research projects should not only aim to transform the particular people by and for which these are conducted, but the framework in which they are conducted should also inspire and transform the people who might not 'naturally' be participants in the processes of doing the research and taking action (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, p. 298). McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 55) argue:

A theory which is interesting and has potential for developing new forms of understanding cannot be static; it has to be developmental, capable of turning into new forms which are already latent within the present form. The theory itself has to demonstrate its own capacity for growth in life-enhancing directions - in one sense, therefore, this has to be a theory which is inherently educational.

In keeping with the generative transformative nature of action research, I have tried to improve the teaching and learning practices and situation where I work with special focus on students' engagement with learning processes. In developed countries, education is constantly changing and developing to meet students' needs. I believe that it is essential to adopt such an approach to education also in Pakistan to transform the current out-dated and disadvantageous educational practices, which are detrimental to students' learning. Walker (1996) argues that transformation aims to

reduce inequality and injustice prevailing in our societies. Individuals in their social worlds are transformed in such a way that they feel capable enough to shape and protect the edifices and measures of justice. Thus, within Generative Transformative Theory, I have attempted to generate my own practice theory of how a more democratically comprehensive practice of education can have a transformative effect on my teaching and students' learning (cf. Sullivan, 2006).

Action research also theorises liberty and empowerment; therefore, it is based on critical emancipatory theory. It not only aims to liberate practitioners, it also offers ways and methods to empower practitioners and learners so that they feel emancipated to take responsibility for their practices (McKernan, 1988). Grundy (1982, p. 28) contends that action research believes in emancipating participants from 'the dictates of compulsions of tradition, precedent, habit, coercion as well as from self-deception.' The central aim of critical emancipatory theory is not only to liberate participants or organisations, it should also aim to evolve society in general (Gustavsen, 2008). For example, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000, p. 282) argue that participatory action research is emancipatory because its goal is to help people recuperate, and liberate themselves from, 'the constraints of irrational, unproductive, unjust, and unsatisfying social structures that limit their self-development and self-determination.' Action research methods help people investigate the ways in which their practices are formed and controlled by broader socio-political organisations, and to reflect and conduct interventions to free themselves from such constraints. If they cannot completely free themselves, action researchers explore ways to lessen the intensity of these constraints, especially in so far as they 'contribute to irrationality, lack of productivity (inefficiency), injustice, and dissatisfactions (alienation)' (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p. 282).

In my study, I adopted the Critical Emancipatory Theoretical Perspective of action research by attempting to liberate my students, colleagues and myself from traditional teaching and learning methods. The critical emancipatory underpinnings of action research aim to liberate those who live under circumstances that they do not want to live in (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). I aimed to empower my students to critique the pedagogical practices used at UoSJP and select effective learning methods that could benefit their language skills. I believed that the students would thereby become more likely to be emancipated from teacher-centred

pedagogical practices and become autonomous learners, where they could take responsibility for their own learning and decide what was right for them. McKernan (1996, p. 54) argues that action research emancipates both the teacher and learner. The teacher is empowered to take charge of their own professional practices and students are empowered to take responsibilities for 'thinking and learning, making rational choices, and so forth'.

However, these decisions were not random. The decisions of students to take responsibility for their own learning came through scientific methods of inquiry. Based on the evidence gained through reconnaissance and action-research cycles, my students and I came to the conclusion that only by sharing responsibility for learning could they learn effectively and enhance their language skills. Thus, we found that the adoption of cooperative learning might be a suitable strategy to liberate students and teachers from traditional teaching and learning methods, and help students to take responsibility for their own learning. Action research does not only liberate practitioners, but it also allows 'such a strategy to empower students so that they are emancipated as learners' (McKernan 1996, p. 54).

The third theoretical influence on my approach to action research was Living Educational Theory. According to Whitehead (2008, page 104):

A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work.

In discussing the notion of living theory, Whitehead (2008, page 112) explains that an action research cycle is initiated when the teacher-researcher notices a discrepancy between their educational values, i.e. how they believe education should proceed, and their actual practice. In my own case, for example, my action research project grew out of my noticing that, although I believe that students develop their language skills through practice with feedback, I was not finding a way of enabling the majority of them to gain such practice, or to receive any feedback, in my classroom. In the process of investigation, action-researchers articulate and clarify their own values. 'The values flow with a life-affirming energy and are expressed in the relational dynamics of educational relationships' (Whitehead, 2008, 112). This underscores the significance of the distinctiveness of each individual's living

learning and teaching theory in refining practice and producing knowledge (Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead, 2008). The living theory in action research emphasises the prominence of ‘individual creativity’ in contributing to enhancing the practitioner’s practice and understanding of ‘historical and cultural opportunities and constraints in the social contexts of the individual’s life and work (Whitehead, 2008, p. 103).

Whitehead (2008; 2009) elaborates a living theory methodology, which involves research questions of the form: *How do I improve what I am doing?* From this root question I developed the following two questions: *How do I improve my teaching and thus students’ engagement with language learning? And what do I do to accommodate the contextual requirements in my teaching to improve my students’ learning?* As reflected in these questions, I intended to improve my teaching and students’ learning in relation to the acceptance of the fact that these cannot be separated from societal values and norms. I probed into my own practices and looked for better models of teaching that would fit in my context. I also investigated the English language teaching and learning practices in large classes at the institution where I teach more generally. I found that the existing pedagogical methods improved students’ language skills very little and concluded that an adapted student-centred approach, which could help enhance student engagement, might improve students’ experience of learning. Based on the results of the investigation, I tried to improve the teaching and learning practices through the adoption of a student-centred learning approach.

Finally, in the process of my study, I have tried to follow the advice of McNiff, (2007, p. 24) who argues that, by researching their own practice, practitioners can:

... show the potential significance of their work for innovative forms of practice, and for showing the methodological rigour of the research processes they used to investigate how they could improve their practice. By extension, they can explain how they are defining themselves as morally committed practitioner researchers, who are realising their capacity to contribute to debates about quality in practice...’

Thus, action research served me in three ways: firstly, it helped me address the problematic educational settings in my own institute; secondly, it improved my

personal knowledge; and thirdly, it assisted me in bringing vitality to the natural settings and conditions in which I work (cf. Mckernan, 1991).

4.4 The Action cycle



Figure 4.2: Action-research cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; 2000)

Action research was used to implement and evaluate cooperative learning in ESL classes at UoSJP through the cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting summarized in Figure 4.2 and in the following quote from McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003, p. 58):

- *We review our current practice,*
- *identify an aspect we want to improve,*
- *imagine a way forward,*
- *try it out,*
- *and take stock of what happens.*
- *We modify our plan in the light of what we have found and continue with*
- *the 'action',*
- *evaluate the modified action,*
- *and reconsider the position in the light of the evaluation.*

The different stages are described in the following paragraphs.

I based the study on the models of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988; 2000) and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003). I started my project with an initial general idea: a recognition that my teaching did not very much help students engage in language learning processes. I then considered what I was doing, how I was teaching my ESL classes, why my teaching was not helping enhance students' engagement with learning, and what I could do to improve my teaching and student engagement, given the available resources. My assumption was that engagement is a prerequisite for successful learning.

The actual planning of an action-research cycle usually begins with reconnaissance. The term *reconnaissance* was introduced by Lewin (1946). Although the term is not used explicitly in all action-research projects and books, it always exists implicitly. Lewin called reconnaissance the fact-finding stage for action, used ‘to identify problems and hypothesize solutions based on theoretical insights that could be tested by planning and implementing action strategies’ (Somekh, 2006, p. 11). Dillon (2008) divides reconnaissance into two phases: unintentional (pre-proposal work) and intentional (post-proposal work). In unintentional reconnaissance the problem is identified without using very empirical methods and a research proposal is formulated. In intentional reconnaissance, the researcher, after acceptance of the proposal, moves to a systematic literature review and an investigation of the situation. Similarly, Tripp (2005) indicates that reconnaissance is a situation-analysis phase in which literature is reviewed and the situation is investigated. However, Tripp (2005) does not include a pre-proposal phase within reconnaissance. Elliot (1991) argues that reconnaissance recurrently occurs during the cyclic activities, rather than only occurring at the start of a project. For Elliot (1991), Lewin’s model is less flexible and may be suitable for those who assume that the initial general idea can be determined in advance, where reconnaissance is merely taken as fact-finding, and implementation is just a process. In contrast, Elliot (1991) suggests:

- *The general idea should be allowed to shift.*
- *Reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact-finding and should constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than occur only at the beginning.*
- *Implementation of an action step is not always easy, and one should not proceed to evaluate the effects of an action until one has monitored the extent to which it has been implemented (Elliott, 1991, p. 70).*

In the present study, following Tripp (2005), my reconnaissance included both a thorough review of the literature (Chapters 2 and 3) and a situation analysis, in which I analysed the immediate context/situation of the project (Chapter 6).

Following my initial idea, I wanted to check if the same problem also existed in other parts of the world and, if so, what solutions were suggested. Therefore, as part of the reconnaissance phase of my study, I first conducted a review of the literature

on large classes (see Chapter 2). I found that, although both teachers and learners considered that group work could make these classes more effective, it was not adopted very often. The reason given was that it created many management issues such as time-wastage, noise and disorderliness. Based on the conclusion of this literature review, I hypothesised that an organised approach to group work, namely cooperative learning, might address the management issues that group work raised.

The second part of my reconnaissance was a review of the literature on cooperative learning (see Chapter 3). The aim of this review was to explore further whether cooperative learning might be adopted as a solution to improve student engagement with ESL learning processes and might help to address the management issues created by group work in general (see Chapter 2). The review concluded that cooperative learning enhances students' engagement with learning processes by helping students share the responsibility for their own learning in organised ways. However, since cooperative learning was developed in the western world, it cannot be used in exactly the same form in other culturally different educational settings. Both the reviews indicated that any Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method needs contextual adaptation before its adoption in different cultural settings, and many advocates of CLT emphasise the need for a careful situation analysis before deciding how to implement it in cultural settings other than the western culture. I therefore decided to carry out a situation analysis of the large compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP.

The situation analysis constituted the third stage of my reconnaissance; it consisted of an exploration of the immediate context in which the intervention was to be carried out. I investigated the teaching and learning environment from the point of view of both teachers and learners through questionnaires, interviews and live observation of their classes. Thus, I was able to understand the socio-cultural and the ESL learning and teaching environment in these classes. The situation analysis allowed me to finalise the initial planning step for action, i.e. implementation of cooperative learning. Ultimately, the results assisted me in selecting and adapting two cooperative-learning strategies, namely Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Think Pair Share (TPS). For details of adaptations see Chapter 7. In addition, the situation analysis phase enabled me to plan how I would evaluate the

intervention, since the data collection instruments for the whole study were selected, piloted and adapted during this phase (see Chapter 6 for details of the piloting).

In the action stage of the study, I implemented cooperative learning through 18 cycles of action, observation, reflection and adaptation (see Chapter 8). In each cycle, I implemented STAD and TPS, and then used information from various sources in my reflection and evaluation. These sources of information included student lesson-evaluation forms, meetings with students, qualitative responses from other teachers who observed the lessons, video recordings of the classes and my own subjective experience recorded in a diary. Using these various instruments, I observed, reflected on and evaluated the process of implementation with my teacher colleagues and students, and finally planned the next cycle based on our reflection and evaluation. The well-organised cycles allowed me to investigate the classes stepwise. In the action-research process, reflection and action are bound in a dialectical state, each updating the other through a course of planned change, observation, reflection and adjustment (Carr and Kemmis 1986).

At the end of the intervention, the data collected through student questionnaires, student group interviews, class-observation instruments and field notes were analysed to examine the overall effects of cooperative learning on students' engagement with language learning processes. See Chapter 9 for details of the instruments and findings.

4.5 Participation

The participatory aspect of action research was used to gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting both students and teachers. Action research emphasises the co-generation of knowledge of practices, and aims at improvement through collaboration and involvement (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McTaggart, 1997). With my students and colleagues, I discovered what problems each faced during the English teaching and learning processes at UoSJP and then we collaboratively attempted to solve the problems through the implementation of cooperative learning strategies and reflection on the process of implementation (cf. McTaggart, 1997). Although I did not involve students and colleagues in the design of the initial processes, through meetings, interviews, questionnaires, observations and their comments on other data-collection instruments, they helped in reflecting on the

process and in adapting these strategies. I did not act as a guide-researcher to direct students what to do or what not to do, but rather my decisions about change and improvement came from a reflective process that was collaborative. Thus, as already said, the action research model used in my study was participatory, and more critical emancipatory than practical or technical.

Throughout the project, I participated as a teacher-researcher because the ultimate aim of investigating the situation where I work was to improve my own teaching and my students' engagement with learning processes (cf. McTaggart, 1997). However, the methodological framework and findings of the study might help my teacher colleagues, should they similarly wish to address the issues. During the situation analysis, as a teacher-researcher, I investigated the learning and teaching process in collaboration with my students and teachers in large ESL classes at UoSJP. This investigation enhanced my insight into the situation, and helped me select, adapt and implement strategies for the improvement of my own practice of teaching these classes. During the intervention stage, being a teacher-researcher, I did not teach the class as a traditional teacher, but rather performed as an organiser, manager and facilitator in my class. As an organiser, I organised and planned the whole process of intervention. I organised the strategies used, formed mixed-ability groups, and made decisions about the group size. Furthermore, I organised the steps of the intervention process: how it should begin, how it should be continued, and how it should end. As a manager, I took utmost care to maintain class management. I created rules with students to control absenteeism, late-coming and noise. In the role of a facilitator, during the intervention process, I kept moving around the class to facilitate students' work. For example, I guided them in their understanding of the task, gave them feedback, provided them with handouts and provided photocopies of the units from their course books.

Teachers and students of the English Compulsory classes participated as my collaborators. In the situation analysis, the students came from the Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL), the Department of Sociology, and the Department of Zoology, in order to include representative views from across the university. These students, as well as my ESL teacher colleagues, were 'detached collaborators' in this phase of the project: their critical feedback allowed me to

reflect, evaluate and plan for the action stage. Due to constraints of time and other resources, the intervention took place in just one English Compulsory class, in IELL. Both the students of the intervention class and those colleagues who helped me by observing the intervention lessons and by giving feedback, were my regular collaborators in the project (see Chapters 8 and 9). They regularly provided me with constructive feedback to reflect on and evaluate the process in order to make improvements. With the help of the teacher-colleagues' feedback provided through their observation, and students' feedback gained through their daily lesson-evaluation forms and meetings, I was able to re-plan each cycle to further improve the process.

4.6 Reflection

The action research cycle involved reflection and self-reflection. My own reflection and the reflections of students and colleagues before, during and after the process of implementation allowed me to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the process from different angles. Practitioners have a principal role in action research. As a teacher-practitioner, I conducted action research in my own ESL class to address the following questions, re-phrased from McNiff and Whitehead (2002; 2010): *What is happening now? What is problematic about it? What can I do to solve the problem?* I attempted to address these questions through the process of reflective inquiry summarised in Figure 4.3.

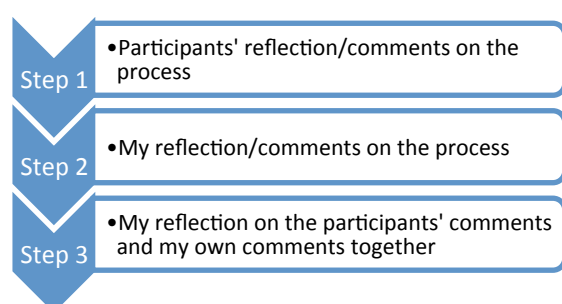


Figure 4.3: Reflective process in the present study

As previously indicated, I both reflected on the process alone, and also with my colleagues and students through their comments. This process of reflection had three steps. First I produced my own diary notes, then I looked at the feedback from my students and colleagues, and finally I reflected on my notes and participants' comments together (see Figure 4.3). The reflective nature of action research enabled

me to take an inquisitive stance as I questioned my teaching practices as an educator. With the help of my students and colleagues, I continuously questioned the methods used to address the problem before, during and after the implementation of action cycles (cf. Schön, 1995). Reflective inquiry is one of the most significant features of action research (Mckernan, 1991; Elliot, 1991; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Critical reflection on one's practices assists in evaluating them in terms of their efficacy. Elliott (1991) argues that for the improvement of practices it is necessary for practitioners to engage in continuous processes of reflection. Thus, the project not only helped me improve my teaching and students' engagement with language learning processes at a practical level, but also also helped us to have deeper understandings of those practices (cf. Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

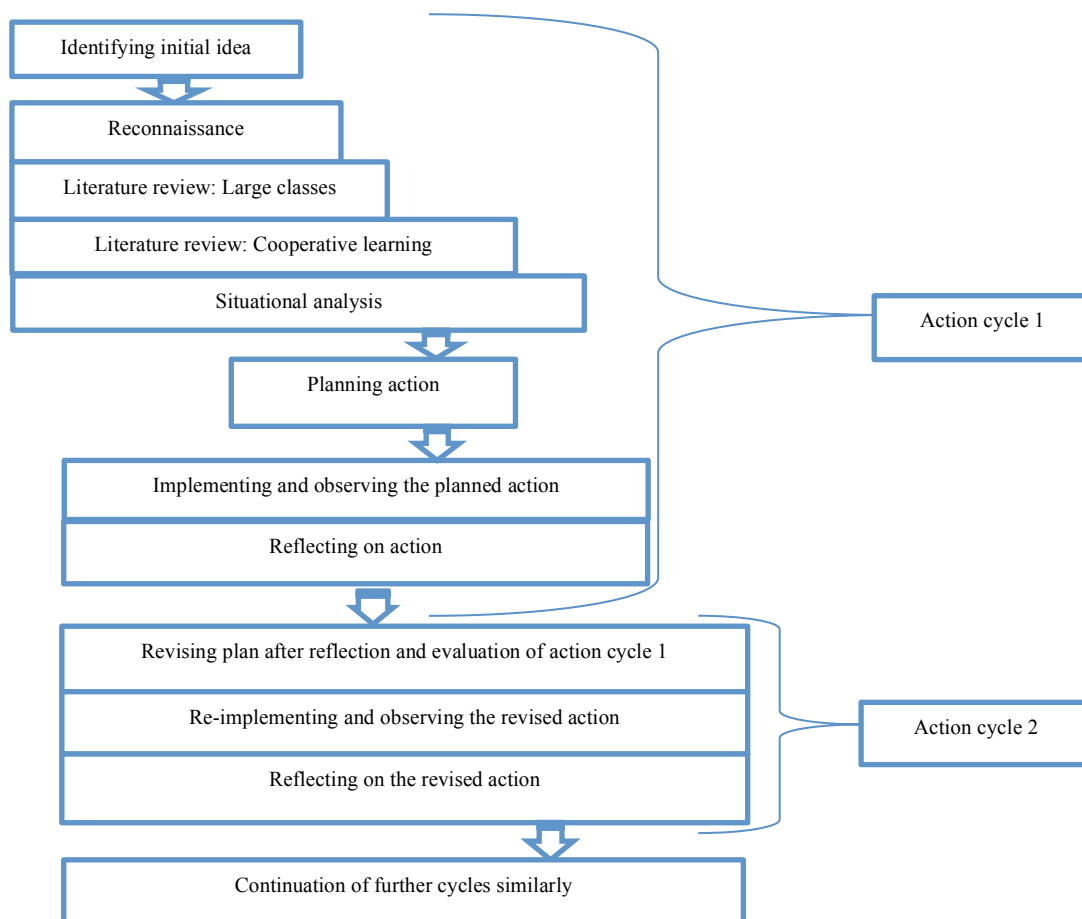


Figure 4.4: The conceptual framework

4.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced action research, explaining what it is, how and why it is used, and how and why it was used in the present study. Three essential elements of action research were identified - namely that it is cyclical, participatory and reflective - and the place of these three elements in the present study was discussed in detail. Having thus considered the overall approach and process of the research, the next chapter will describe the specific methods and instruments that were used to collect and analyse data.

5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 elaborates on the research methods used in the present study. Section 5.2 sets the scene by outlining the philosophical worldview that underlies the study and its consequences for the overall research design. Section 5.3 describes the data-collection methods used, Section 5.4 covers data analysis, Section 5.5 discusses the issues of reliability and validity, and Section 5.6 covers ethical considerations. The chapter is summarised in Section 5.7.

5.2 Research paradigm and approach

All action research involves the use of qualitative data collected by a variety of methods including questionnaires, interviews, observations, photography and archives (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Some action researchers, e.g. Dick (1993) prefer to use exclusively qualitative data, while others, e.g. Efron and Ravid (2013) and Creswell (2012), use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. Efron and Ravid (2013) argue that the decision about which types of data to use should be made by the practitioner, and depends on the nature of research questions, the focus of the study, and the specific context in which the inquiry is conducted. For example, qualitative research improves practitioners' sensitivity to the distinct world of a specific educational institute and classroom life, and quantitative studies provide an operative instrument to evaluate, describe, and analyse other features of the institute (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 9). As discussed in Chapter 4, action research was adopted by researchers in education and other social sciences partly as a solution to the shortcomings of positivistic research. However, non-positivistic research is not monolithic and there are actually several alternative paradigms, including pragmatism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, materialism and post-positivism (Guba, 1990; Creswell, 2014).

I selected post-positivism for the present study because it promotes the investigation of phenomena from both objective and subjective perspectives (Wildemuth, 1993; Petter and Gallivan, 2004). Like positivists, post-positivists believe in an objective reality, but unlike positivists, they recognise that it can only be known imperfectly through the subjectivity of the researcher. In my case, although consideration of the

context and the subjective experience of the participants is deemed to be necessary for action research in education (Somekh, 2006), I also wanted to include an element of objectivity in my investigation. Post-positivism is pluralist in its function and balances both positivist and interpretivist approaches. It does not aim to reject the scientific and quantitative elements of positivism in research, rather it emphasises a proper understanding of the directions and perspectives of any research study from multiple dimensions and multiple methods (Guba, 1990; Fischer, 1998). It thus attempts to recognise and reduce the effects of the personal biases and prejudices of the researcher and the participants (Phillips 1990; Wildemuth, 1993; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Miller, 2000; Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Phillips and Burbules, (2000, pp. 86-87) describe post-positivism in the following lines:

...the post-positivist view of research..., is a certain pluralism of method. It is not the particular type of research that makes it scientific, on this view. One can study individuals or groups; one can study personal actions or patterns...; one can pursue experimental, interview, observational, statistically oriented or interpretive research - or some combination of these (even if some will say these can't be combined).

Within the paradigm of post-positivism, it is natural to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, in a mixed methods research design. Mixed-methods research is defined as an approach to data collection and analysis which helps the researcher gather and evaluate data, integrate the results, and reach conclusions 'using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry' (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007, p. 4). The use of mixed methods in a study can be argued to improve its overall strength. For example, Creswell (2014) argues that mixed-methods research not only gathers and evaluates quantitative and qualitative data, but also unites both of these methods so closely that a study's overall strength is of greater value than either qualitative or quantitative research alone. An important element of a mixed methods research design is triangulation, which means exploring how quantitative and qualitative findings, obtained through multiple methods, converge or diverge, contradict or relate to each other and why (Sandelowski, 2000; 2014; Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). Some researchers have seen triangulation of qualitative and quantitative

findings as a way of cross-validating numerous instruments used in the same study to reinforce the validity and reliability of results (cf. Bryman, 2006; Sandelowski, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). However, this view is controversial, and others have argued that triangulation is actually an alternative to validation, whereby using multiple methods can help facilitate deeper understanding of a phenomenon because different methods reveal different aspects of the same phenomenon (Flick, 1992).

There are several ways of combining quantitative and qualitative data including ‘the convergent parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the exploratory sequential design, the embedded design and the transformative design’ (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011, p. 69). In the present study, a convergent parallel design was adopted, because such a research design uses qualitative and quantitative data gained through multiple sources to gain a better understanding of phenomena through triangulation of both types of results (Creswell, 2014). This was in keeping with my own objective to develop a more complete understanding of my research problem by obtaining different but complementary types of data. In the convergent parallel design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently in a single phase, then analysed separately, and finally their results are merged and compared (triangulated) to see ‘if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 219) (see Figure 5.1).

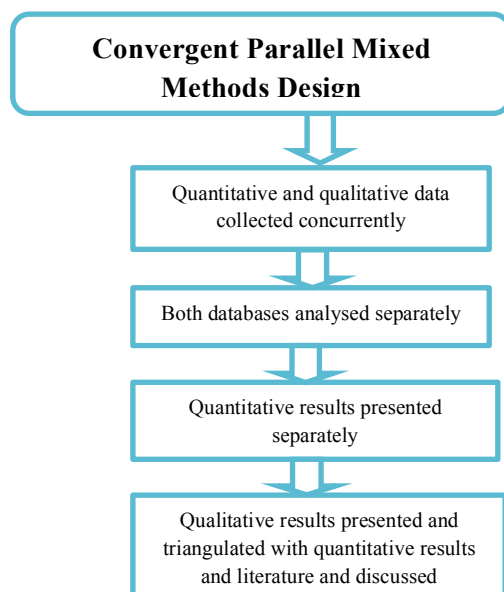


Figure 5.1: Convergent parallel mixed-methods design: Steps and process (Creswell, 2014)

The chief idea with this type of design is to gather both types of data using the ‘same or parallel variables, constructs or concepts.’ For example, if the concept of ‘self-esteem’ is examined through quantitative data, the same is further explored through qualitative data (Creswell, 2014, p. 222). In the present study, a side-by-side comparison technique is used. The quantitative results are reported first and then the qualitative results are discussed with consideration of the extent to which they either support or contradict the statistical quantitative findings (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Although both the quantitative and qualitative data are given equal weight, the study, being a post-positivistic project, uses the quantitative data as the starting point for the analysis (Wildemuth, 1993; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Relevant literature is also cited against all the important findings to shed further light on convergences, and also on any divergences.

5. 3 Data collection

The study, being a mixed-methods project, used all those instruments and methods through which both quantitative and qualitative data could sufficiently be gathered to address the issue. The instruments and methods used were: questionnaires, class-observation forms, interviews, and field notes/diaries.

Questionnaires were used to gather a large amount of generalisable data (Strange, et al., 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Harris and Brown, 2010). The main advantage of the questionnaires in the study was that they facilitated the collection of data from a large population (about 400 student and teacher participants in both the situational analysis and Action-Stage) (see Chapters 6 and 9 for details of participants and sampling) in a short period of time and at low cost (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The use of questionnaires also facilitated greater confidentiality and anonymity. The use of questionnaires naturally ensures participants’ anonymity because, unlike in an interview, the researcher does not come face-to-face with participants. Furthermore, the participants were not required to state their names or classes on the completed questionnaires (cf. Strange, et al., 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). However, questionnaires also have several limitations, including a risk of collecting inaccurate information and insufficient opportunity for the researcher to develop rapport with participants

(Jekayinfa, 2007; Harris and Brown, 2010). To compensate for these limitations, interviews, and class observations were also conducted. Moreover, to increase the chances of honest responses from participants, there were a few open-ended items in the questionnaires, as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007).

Semi-structured interviews were used to supplement the questionnaires (Kvale, 2007; Flick, 2009) (see Chapters 6 and 9 for the details of sampling and instruments). The interviews not only allowed participants to give fuller answers than were possible in the questionnaires, but they also enabled me to ask for clarification and to obtain more in-depth interpretations of the issues. To avoid the possible limitations of interviews, such as bias and difficulty in maintaining anonymity, several precautions were taken. For example, the interviews were conducted confidentially in an office, questions were carefully designed to elicit the relevant information, participants were provided with a relaxed and open platform to discuss their experience and ideas and, above all, they were assured that the information gained from their responses would be disseminated anonymously using pseudonyms (cf. Kvale, 1994; Flick, 2009; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The interviews were designed to elicit qualitative information from participants, which was matched against the information gained from questionnaires during the process of triangulation. While questionnaires were used to gather data from a large number of participants, the data collected through the interviews allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the behaviour, beliefs, and activities of participants (cf. Harris and Brown, 2010). In addition to individual semi-structured interviews conducted as part of the situational analysis, student group interviews were also conducted soon after the completion of the intervention (six students in each group) (see Chapter 9 for details). The student group interviews further supplemented the field notes, observers' notes and the student-questionnaire responses. Williams and Larry (2001) argue that group interviews can also greatly help to enrich the results of survey questions by asking a great deal of the same information. Furthermore, group interviews facilitated the collection of a large amount of data in a short time (cf. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007).

Class observation was used to establish a live interaction with the classroom processes and procedures (cf. Sandelowski, 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Creswell (2012, p. 154) argues that the advantage of observation data is that

the investigator can ‘identify an individual’s actual behaviour...’ The most important characteristic of class observation in the study was that it presented an opportunity to collect live data from a socio-culturally natural situation. As a research tool, class observation enabled me to explore the context of the project in particular, and examine factors and events that might otherwise have been overlooked. The class observation both assisted in further corroborating the information obtained through the questionnaires and interviews, and helped me to discover perspectives that the participants might have not mentioned in their responses (cf. Sandelowski, 2003; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The main disadvantage of observation as a research instrument is that it is time consuming (Creswell, 2012). Because of this, I used observation sparingly to observe only specific classes (see Chapters 6, 8 and 9 for details).

Lessons were video recorded, which helped in multiple ways. It was helpful in making sense of the situation by giving a complete visual picture of participants, their actions, gestures, postures, clothing, facial expressions and the social set-up of the situation (Gass and Houck, 1999; DuFon, 2002). Video recording gives richer and deeper data than field notes give, because it stores every movement and word, whereas in field notes it is difficult to capture non-verbal communication (DuFon, 2002). In addition, these recordings enabled me to re-visit the class retrospectively to verify my field notes and those of the teacher observers (Jewitt, 2012). Moreover, it also helped me to re-examine and explore important incidents, and to find facts, such as the frequency of students’ interaction with the teacher during the intervention, which might have remained unnoticed by the observers (Jewitt, 2012; DuFon, 2002). It was used to record only specific classes by keeping the cameras installed at specific places (see details in Chapters 6 and 8).

5.4 Data analysis

5.4.1 Quantitative analysis

The questionnaires used Likert scale questions which generated ordinal quantitative data; this was analysed with the help of appropriate packages of the statistical software SPSS and graphically represented through box plots. The Likert scale data was ordinal because the responses could be ranked (e.g. ‘strongly agree’ is stronger than ‘agree’), but not put on a uniform scale (e.g. the difference between ‘agree’ and

‘strongly agree’ is not necessarily quantitatively equivalent to the difference between ‘agree’ and ‘uncertain’). Furthermore, the responses were not normally distributed, but were skewed, with many outliers. When data variables are ordinal, when they are not normally distributed, and when the purpose of data is to describe findings, then the most appropriate unit of central tendency is the median and the best measure of spread is the inter-quartile range (IQR) (Butler, 1985). The median remains unaffected by extreme low or extreme high values because, being based on rankings, it only emphasises the middle value and does not take end values into consideration (Bryman and Cramer, 2002). I therefore decided to use the median to represent the central tendency in my data, and IQR to represent the dispersion. The box plot is the most suitable graphical method for visually representing the median and IQR (Pallant, 2005). Furthermore, because they represent the central tendency and dispersion of data pictorially, box plots are seen as a useful way of quickly comparing numerous sets of data, such as the responses to each of the questions on my questionnaires (Jones, 1997; Bakker, Rolf and Cliff, 2004, p. 164). By placing several box plots side by side, or one above another, the researcher allows the reader easily to see variation in the distribution of data in several groups simultaneously (Biehler, 1997; Liu, 2008; Pallant, 2005). In the evaluation stage, I therefore used grouped box plots to visually summarise the responses to the Likert scale questions on my questionnaires.

5.4.2 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative data gained through the interviews, class observation and free-text items on the questionnaires were analysed through Qualitative Content Analysis. In Qualitative Content Analysis two approaches are used: inductive and deductive. In the inductive approach, the analysis focuses on exploring new categories and theories and does not intend to test existing knowledge or theory. In the deductive approach, data are used to test existing knowledge and theory (Mayring, 2000; Elo and Kyngas, 2008). In the present study, the deductive approach was used. I used this approach because my starting point was the previous research on large classes and cooperative learning; I used this literature to identify basic variables as preliminary categories for the coding of my data (cf. Mayring, 2000). However, the deductive approach to qualitative content analysis is not only used to develop existing categories, but also to find new information. Despite the fact that in this

approach the main categories or concepts are derived from existing theory or research, it also looks into emerging themes, concepts or categories. For example, Marsh and White (2006, p. 34) argue that, as the researcher reads through data, examining them thoroughly to identify concepts and patterns, ‘some patterns and concepts may emerge that were not foreshadowed but that are, nevertheless, important aspects to consider’. Results may provide supporting and non-supporting evidence for an existing theory. Existing theory or prior research may also be used to further critique current findings. Thus, newly found categories confirm or disconfirm phenomena and might further develop and augment the theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The process of coding in this approach can begin immediately with the preconceived codes. The text chunks that cannot be coded are marked and analysed later in order to determine if these denote ‘a new category or a subcategory of an existing code’ (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1281).

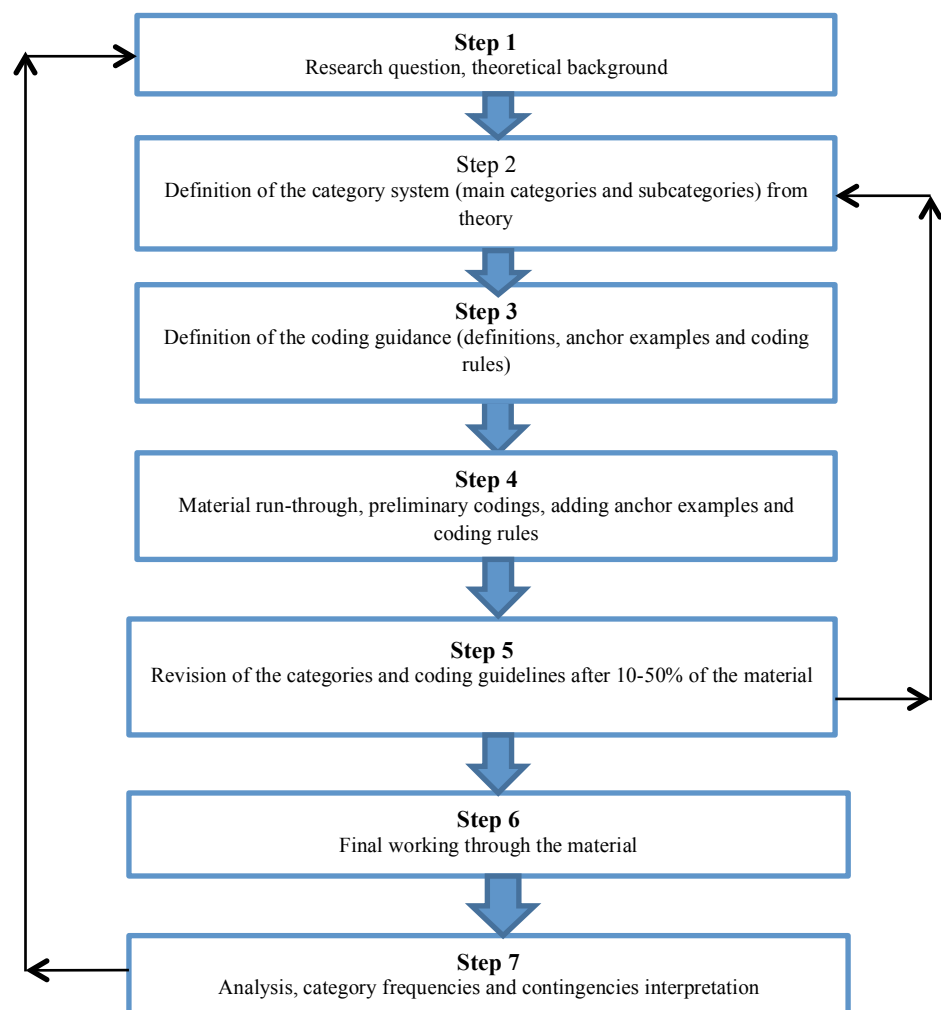


Figure 5.2: Deductive qualitative content analysis process (Mayring, 2014)

The qualitative data analysis in the present study is mostly guided by the framework of Mayring (2014), who advocates the seven-step framework shown in Figure 5.2. Analysis begins with the preconceived idea or concepts based on the research questions or a theory. Then, categories and coding guidelines are defined. After that, the text is read and re-read for coding and re-coding so that new categories and themes or sub-themes may be created. Finally, the created categories and themes are finalised through revision and are interpreted.

Although the deductive approach to qualitative content analysis is commonly recommended and used in research studies which attempt to re-test existing research, no specific coding system is recommended. Mayring (2014) argues that coding is mostly subjective and is determined by researchers and the context of the study. For the present study I mostly used open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is the initial attempt to analyse the already transcribed text into codes by underlining or highlighting the most striking sentences, phrases, passages or paragraphs. Therefore, I initially repeatedly read through the text, and highlighted the striking lines which fitted into my category framework. In axial coding, the selected chunks of text are grouped under the determined categories or themes, thus I copied the highlighted chunks of text and grouped them under the relevant categories. In the final stage, i.e. selective coding, the core categories were selected and re-selected. I reduced the categories by merging them, thus selecting the most significant core categories and themes. The process from open coding to selective coding was iterative and overlapping throughout the analysis; coding started after I had transcribed the text and read it several times. For more details of how I went through the data analysis process see Figure 5.3 and *Appendix 5*.

I chose manual analysis because the data collected were not massive, and I could read and highlight the codes in order to make connections and form categories and themes. During this process, the main categories were mostly derived from the structure of the interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations. However, the underlying primary sources of categorisation were the research questions, since they had been used as the basis for formulating and adapting the interview points, questionnaires and observation instruments. Within the categories, themes and sub-

themes emerged from the texts of interview transcriptions, free-text questions and class observation transcriptions.

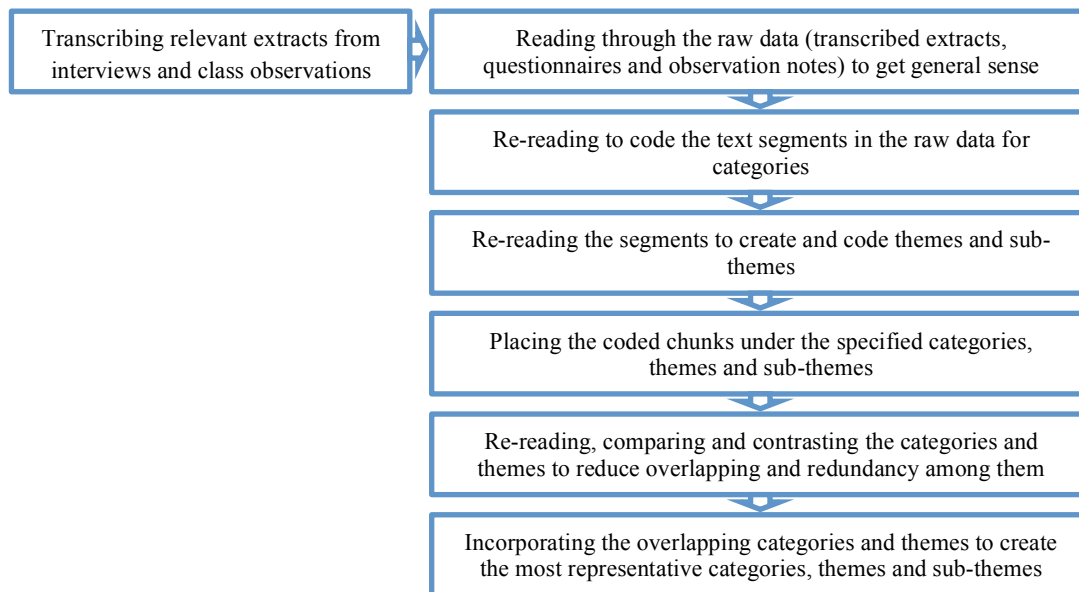


Figure 5.3: Procedure for analysing qualitative data

5.5 Reliability and validity

The validity of a research design refers to whether it tests what it sets out to test; reliability refers to whether the results produced are stable and consistent. Creswell (2014, p. 190) argues that qualitative and quantitative forms of research vary in connotations of validity and reliability. In quantitative research, validity refers to whether one can make inferences from statistics on specific instruments. Furthermore:

The three traditional forms of validity to look for are (a) content validity (do the items measure the content they were intended to measure?), (b) predictive or concurrent validity (do scores predict a criterion measure? Do results correlate with other results?), and (c) construct validity (do items measure hypothetical constructs or concepts?) (Creswell, 2014, p. 150).

Qualitative validity is established when ‘the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 190). Validity in qualitative data strengthens qualitative research and determines if the results are

trustworthy, authentic and credible from the viewpoint of the researcher, participants or readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Reliability in quantitative data is established when the researcher checks that the measures used are 'stable over time when the instrument is administered a second time' (Creswell, 2014, p. 233). Reliability in qualitative data shows that there is consistency, trustworthiness and replicability in findings (Nunan, 1999; Creswell, 2014). However, it is not easy to obtain identical findings in qualitative research (Nunan, 1999) because data are subjective and in narrative form. Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that, instead of focusing on identical findings, the researcher should attempt to improve dependence and consistency in data findings. Creswell (2014) argues that in order to increase the reliability of the research, the different processes, stages and rationale of investigation need to be made explicit. This will help other researchers to replicate the methods used easily. Furthermore, triangulation of data obtained through diverse methods and instruments i.e. questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations in mixed methods research can enhance the reliability of data and findings.

In order to accomplish greater reliability, I based my study on the post-positivist paradigm which offered multiplistic approaches for carrying out my research from various perspectives, from data collection to data analysis. Therefore, I used multiple methods, instruments and approaches to study and address the issues of large ESL classes so that they could be studied from various angles and addressed through several methods (see Section 5.2 and 5.3). In addition, almost all the instruments were either piloted or, if not, they were discussed with experts and participants to ensure there were no technical hitches to cause confusion for the participants. Furthermore, the action research approach itself is designed to minimise errors and hitches through its cyclical structure. The repeated cycles of planning and implementation of the cooperative learning strategies allowed me to identify and correct the hitches in the process, as they arose.

A variety of systematic probabilistic sampling was used to enhance the reliability of the findings (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The participants sampled were from different social, cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds. They also comprised both genders - male and female - and were of different ages, with students ranging

from 17-26 and teachers ranging from 22-65. This variety in participants in all aspects further reduced the risk of insufficient external validity and reliability. The sample selected for the study was representative of the whole population. Three large ESL classes from three main faculties of UoSJP were systematically selected through purposive stratified sampling (Neyman, 1934). Neyman, (1934, p. 471) argues that this 'is a special case of stratified random sampling by groups', since in this type of sampling the participants are not human individuals, 'but groups of these individuals'. Therefore, it involves a variety of characteristics of human individuals and 'does not necessarily involve a negation of the randomness of the sampling'.

The inclusion of outsider observers in the intervention stage of the study established inter-observer reliability (cf. Gwet, 2008). The external observers judged the process of the intervention and converged substantially in their judgements. When external observers significantly agree on the one rating scale, it shows that the study has achieved inter-rater reliability (Gwet, 2008; Gomm, 2009) (see Chapter 9). The consistency in the observers' rating pointed to the observation instrument being a well-planned aspect of the study, suggesting that the same method could be replicated elsewhere with slight contextual adaptations.

5.6 Ethical considerations

In relation to ethical considerations, the rules and principles of Anglia Ruskin University were complied with. Voluntary participation of participants, their anonymity and the confidentiality of their names and records were all fully guaranteed. Moreover, the data collected have been kept confidential and used for research purpose only.

Appropriate methods were used to enter the field and collect the data of the study. Official permission for collecting the data from the students of ESL classes and using classroom facilities for research was sought in advance from the Director of IELL, UoSJP (see *Appendix 2A*). Prior to the process of data collection, participants were informed about the purpose, scope and nature of the study and were assured of the confidentiality of all information. The participants' names were kept anonymous throughout, and they are referred to by coded names in the thesis.

The issue related to video recording was explained and clarified. Both teachers and students understood the importance of video recording for the research purpose and, therefore, showed no resistance. Moreover, during the video recording students did not appear to be very conscious of the existence of cameras in the class. However, to keep the rules and ethical considerations clear, prior to the video recording the use and purpose of the video recording was explained to the participants, and they were asked for consent. The participants were told that the recording would be conducted by the researcher by fixing the cameras at one place most of time, and no third party would be present for the recording.

The consent form (see *Appendix 1B*) and information sheet were carefully articulated so as to address the main concerns and fears of participants. The participants in the study were frequently informed about privacy and confidentiality and were reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage of data collection. Copies of the consent form and information sheet, explaining the nature of the study and assuring the participants of their right to withdraw at any point, were distributed to them. Students and teachers signed and returned a copy of the consent form. Transcriptions, video-audio tapes, hard copies of questionnaires and observation instruments and data-related information have been kept safe.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has described the methods used to collect and analyse data in the present study, together with the rationale for their use. Issues relating to validity, reliability and research ethics in the study have also been discussed.

6 Situational analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the situational analysis that was part of the reconnaissance phase of my research (see Chapter 4). Tripp (2005) defines *situational analysis* as an action research stage in which ‘a broad overview of the action research context, current practices, participants, and concerns’ is empirically conducted. My review of the literature on large classes and cooperative learning, had led me to the following conclusions:

- Group work could be used to enhance learning in large classes, and might even be essential in large language classes, where the aim is to improve students’ communicative competence
- The difficulties I had experienced in trying to use group work in my large classes were not unique, and possibly even typical
- Cooperative learning offered a possible solution to the problems of classroom management and hence a way for maximising the potential for learning in these classes.

However, my reading also pointed to the need for further groundwork. Firstly, the literature on Communicative Language Teaching underscores the importance of a thorough analysis of the teaching context as part of any curriculum development. Shamim (1993 p. 291) also advocates a socio-cultural approach to introducing pedagogic innovations, in which ‘innovations are organically developed after a realistic appraisal of the learning and teaching situation’. Secondly, what differentiates action research from ordinary reflective practice is that action research ‘is more systematic and collaborative in collecting evidence on which to base ... group reflection’ (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 21). Thirdly, in order to test the validity of my own context-specific perceptions as a teacher, I wanted to triangulate them both with the perceptions of others in the same context, and with my own perceptions as an observer. For this purpose, I used situational analysis to:

- obtain a more comprehensive picture of practices in the compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP, and hence of students’ experiences;
- benefit from the experiences and ideas of colleagues and students;

- anticipate the problems I might encounter and assets I could utilise in introducing cooperative learning.

Tripp (2005, p. 15) points out that, in order to assist with planning the first action-research cycle, it is sometimes helpful to ask what he calls reconnaissance or situational analysis questions. Such questions are different from the overall research question in that they focus only on the current situation and serve to help the researcher understand the situation more completely. The questions on which I based my situational analysis were the following:

- What do students and teachers believe about the importance of learning English?
- How do students and teachers currently perceive and experience English Language learning and teaching in the large ESL classes at UoSJP?
- What ideas, if any, do students and teachers have about how the experience of learning and teaching in the large ESL classes could be improved?

The first question was intended to explore whether some of the lack of engagement I perceived in my students might be related to a lack of motivation, if they failed to see English as relevant to them and their future aspirations, or if they were opposed to the learning of English for religious or political reasons. The second question was intended to allow me to triangulate my own experience and perceptions with those of the students and colleagues with whom I collaborated for this part of the study. I particularly wanted to explore the extent to which group work was already being used, how it was perceived, and the reasons for its use or lack of use. Finally, the third question was intended not only to tap into the creative resources of others' ideas, but also to gauge their likely receptiveness to new ideas.

6.2 Methodology

6.2.1 Participants

The participants were the ESL teachers at UoSJP and students in second-year undergraduate compulsory ESL classes. For the situational analysis, I decided to involve second-year undergraduates because they already had experience of learning in large ESL classes at the university and might therefore be able to provide more authentic and informed views than the first-year students. Third- and fourth-year

students do not have compulsory English and so, although I could have asked for their reflections, contacting them would have been less straightforward and I could not have triangulated their responses with direct classroom observation because the students in third and fourth year have no compulsory classes. Compulsory support classes are offered until second year.

6.2.2 Piloting

Prior to the main situational analysis, all the instruments were piloted by small numbers of participants. The purpose of the pilot stage was to check that the instruments generated the sort of data intended, that none of the questions were incomprehensible, misleading or ambiguous, and to bring to light any other unexpected problems. The class observation instrument was piloted by observing one ESL class, selected because it contained a variety of students from three different departments. Students from the same class also piloted the student questionnaire and the student interview. The questionnaire was completed by thirty-three students who were selected systematically according to their seating position in the class, and who stayed behind at the end of a class to complete it. The student interview was piloted by three students selected at random - one from each student list of the three departments represented in the class. The teacher questionnaire was completed by six teachers, selected by systematic sampling from the alphabetically ordered staff list. The teacher interview was piloted by two teachers who were selected to represent the full range of teaching experience in the Institute of English Language and Literature, one being our newest teaching assistant and the other being my longest-serving colleague.

Some noticeable modifications and omissions were made in the questionnaires. The modifications and omissions were made only in the Likert-scale items in both teachers' and students' questionnaires. In the students' questionnaire, I made a total of six omissions and three modifications (see *Appendix 3.1A and 3.1B*). In the teachers' questionnaire, I made five omissions and five modifications (see *Appendix 3.2A and 3.2B*). I omitted these items because these were not directly related to the objectives and research questions of the study, and I made these modifications to clarify ambiguities. Since there were only 33 students in the class, I was able to discuss the questionnaire and difficulties with them easily. Moreover, I received feedback on the questionnaire in the class, both from the questions the students

asked at the time to gain clarification, and from their suggestions. The six teachers who completed the questionnaire were easily accessed in their offices to discuss any ambiguities in their questionnaire. These discussions, and their requests for clarifications, helped me to make modifications and amendments to the questions.

Since I used a semi-structured interview in the situational analysis, I based my questions on points rather than on prepared questions. These points were the same for both teachers and students. There were not many changes suggested by the teachers or students on the interview points. Indeed, in the discussion with my colleagues and students, I found that only one point (see *Appendix 3.3A and 3.3B*) was confusing and unrelated, and needed to be omitted. This point attempted to inquire about their expectations of compulsory classes before experiencing them.

In respect of the class observation instrument, initially it was decided to gain both quantitative and qualitative data. However, I realised later that the Likert-scale data would not be very useful because, since I observed five lessons only, it was not sufficient to gain statistical data. Therefore, I decided to use the free-text comments to gain qualitative data for the main data analysis and presentation of the findings. Furthermore, since the same lessons were recorded, I always referred back to the recordings of lessons whenever I felt that there was any detail missing, or where I needed more information during the data analysis. However, after piloting, I found that some other items were needed to gain more detailed and comprehensive information (see *Appendix 3.4A and 3.4B*).

6.2.3 Sampling

UoSJP has 62 departments in eight faculties, as shown in Table 6.1. Students in all of these departments are required to take compulsory English. In order to get a representative cross section of views for my situational analysis, I used purposive stratified random sampling. I first selected three faculties: the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arts. The first two were chosen because they are the largest faculties, and the latter was chosen because it is the faculty in which I am based and where I intended to conduct the main intervention cycles of my study. From each of these three faculties, I selected one department. In the Faculty of Arts, I selected my home department, the Institute of English Language and Literature; in the Faculty of Social Sciences, I selected the

largest department, the Department of Sociology, and in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, I selected the Department of Zoology, which had a single large English Compulsory class of comparable size to the other two (some of the larger departments need more than one class).

Table 6.1: Faculties and enrolments at UoSJP

Faculty	Number of departments	Male students	Female students	Total
Faculty of Natural Sciences	22	5621	2231	7852
Faculty of Social Sciences	17	3740	727	4467
Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration	2	2143	439	2582
Faculty of Arts	7	845	555	1400
Faculty of Education	6	701	653	1354
Faculty of Pharmacy	4	640	247	887
Faculty of Islamic Studies	2	217	88	305
Faculty of Law	1	32	7	39
TOTAL	62	13939	4947	18886

6.2.4 Instruments

The following data-collection instruments were used in the situational analysis:

- Student questionnaire
- Teacher questionnaire
- Student interview
- Teacher interview
- Class observation field notes

The questionnaires, adapted from Thaher (2004) and Jimakorn and Singhasiri (2006), contained mainly Likert-scale questions to generate quantitative data, as well as a few open questions to generate qualitative data. The class observation instrument, adapted from Chapman and King (2005), and the semi-structured interviews, adapted from Shamim (1993), generated qualitative data.

See Table 6.2 below for the various instruments used and the participants involved.

Table 6.2: Summary of data collected for situational analysis

Research instrument	Participants
Student questionnaire	300 second-year undergraduate students
Teacher questionnaire	22 teachers teaching ESL classes
Student interview	21 second-year undergraduate students
Teacher interview	5 teachers teaching ESL classes
Class observation field notes	2 teachers and approx. 300 students in 3 ESL classes

Student questionnaire

I visited each of the selected classes by prior arrangement with the teachers concerned and distributed the questionnaire to all students present, who completed and returned the questionnaires in the class. A total of 265 student questionnaires were returned, of which 208 were subsequently included in the analysis. The remainder were excluded because the information they contained was judged to be invalid on the basis of the criteria described in the next sub-section. The average age of those who submitted valid questionnaires was 20 years, with a range of 17-26, and 114 of the 208 (55%) were male.

Criteria for student questionnaire exclusion

The following criteria were used to exclude questionnaires:

- almost incomplete (Only 1-3 items ticked haphazardly);
- partially carelessly completed by leaps (first few completed in the beginning, some in the middle and some at the end);
- entirely carelessly completed (triangulated items completed with similar scales);
- the same Likert scale ticked throughout;
- two or more scales ticked throughout.

Teacher questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by all 22 available teachers at the Institute of English Language and Literature (i.e. excluding those on leave). Of these 22 teachers, 15 (68%) were male and 7 (32%) were female. They were given the questionnaire and were asked to return it that day or the next day, which they all did. All 22 copies were included in the analysis because they were fully completed with valid answers.

Student interview

A 40-50 minute semi-structured interview was conducted with 21 students selected through a combination of systematic and snowball sampling techniques. Initially, eight students were selected from each of the three classes by taking names at regular intervals from the class register. These 24 students were contacted and informed about the nature and process of the interview, including the fact that it would be audio-recorded and transcribed. Since not all of these students agreed to participate or subsequently turned up, it was necessary to repeat the process two more times.

Simultaneously, I asked the students who did turn up to ask others who might be willing to contact me. Of the 21 students eventually interviewed, 12 were selected randomly from the registers and nine volunteered through the snowball method. Those who volunteered reported that they saw the interview as an opportunity to practise their English. Four students opted to be interviewed in two local languages (Sindhi or Urdu), but the majority attempted to answer in English. For those students who answered in Sindhi or Urdu, their responses were translated into English during transcription. The interviews were conducted over a period of ten days with, on average, two or three interviews a day.

Teacher interview

Five teachers were selected for interview on the basis of their length of teaching experience, which is summarised in Table 6.3. One teacher was selected at random from each of the five ranges indicated.

Table 6.3: Teachers at the Institute of English Language and Literature

Teaching Experience	Number of teachers
Up to 1 year	2
1-5 years	8
6-10 years	8
11-15 years	1
More than 15 years	3
Total	22

Of the teachers randomly selected, only one declined to be interviewed, and that teacher was replaced by the one immediately before them on the staff list within the same group. The teachers' interview, like the students' interview, was formulated to take approximately 40-50 minutes. However, in reality, the teachers' interviews usually took about an hour, because the teachers generally gave more detailed answers than the students. The language used for the teachers' interview was always English because they were all well-versed in English communication.

Class observation

The teachers and students of the three classes included in the situational analysis all consented to my observing their classes and video recording them. I observed a total of five 50-minute lessons, two in the English Department, two in the Zoology Department and one in Sociology. Although I had planned to observe a second lesson in the Sociology Department, this was prevented by a boycott that closed the university.

6.3 Quantitative data analysis and results

The Likert-scale questions on both questionnaires generated quantitative data, which were analysed visually using box and whisker plots; all other instruments generated qualitative data, which were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

The quantitative data cover four main areas: perceptions of class size; student and teacher perceptions of learning and teaching in large English classes; student and teacher experience of learning and teaching in these classes; and the level of difficulty experienced by teachers during teaching.

6.3.1 Class Sizes

Student and teacher participants were asked three questions about class sizes in their questionnaire: firstly, to report the usual size of their ESL classes; secondly, to give their views on the size at which teaching and learning become difficult and less effective because of large class size; and thirdly, to specify the ideal size that they think would make their learning and teaching easier and more interactive. The results are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Experience and perceptions of class size

	Usual class size	Problematically large size	Ideal size
Mean student response	134	102	58
Mean teacher response	104	69	38

Table 6.4 shows that on average the students normally study in larger classes (134) than the size they perceive to be problematically large (102), where learning English becomes difficult for them. The average ideal size reported (58) is much smaller, which indicates that students seldom experience learning in the class of their ideal size. Thus, the overall results show that on average the students learn in classes they perceive to be problematically large, and far bigger than their imagined ideal class. On average, the teachers have indicated smaller numbers for the three sizes: the size they usually teach (104), the size they perceive to be problematically large (69) and the size they consider to be ideal (38). However, the results suggest that teachers, like students, normally experience classes as being so large as to make their teaching difficult. The responses clearly confirm the relative nature of the concept ‘large class’, as reported in the literature and discussed in Chapter 2: The relatively large numbers given reflect the fact that the participants are accustomed to very large

classes. Despite this, it is interesting that the average figure given by the teachers for an ideal class falls just below the figure of about 40, which is the size at which most studies suggest that language teaching starts to be impeded by large-class problems (see Chapter 2).

6.3.2 Perceptions of learning and teaching in large ESL classes

To elicit their perceptions of learning and teaching English language in large classes, participants were asked to respond to a series of statements using a 5-point Likert scale on which 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The data produced by such a questionnaire are ordinal: that is to say that the responses can be ranked in terms of the level of agreement they indicate, and these ranks are represented by the numbers on the scale. On the other hand, there is no absolute sense in which the difference between, for example, 'agree' and 'strongly agree' is of equal magnitude to the difference between, for example, 'uncertain' and 'agree'. This means that the data are indeed ordinal rather than interval or scalar. For ordinal data, the appropriate measure of central tendency is the median, and the appropriate measure of dispersion is the inter-quartile range (IQR) (Butler, 1985).

For the analysis of these quantitative data, a descriptive method is used and the results are displayed graphically using box and whisker plots (see Chapter 5). The box part of each plot represents IQR, the range within which the central 50% of the values lie. The dark line in the box represents the median. The whiskers (the horizontal lines at either side of the box) represent the overall range of values, with outliers indicated by the dots and asterisks. More information about the use and rationale for box plots is given in Chapter 5.

In the charts in this section, each box plot represents the range of responses to a particular question on one of the questionnaires. The statements appear in two colours: red and green. Red has been used to highlight an overall negative response from the participants about learning and teaching in large English classes and green has been used for positive responses. The colours are assigned when responses to the statements exhibit substantial consensus, operationalised as cases where the interquartile range includes either 'agree' or 'disagree', but not both.

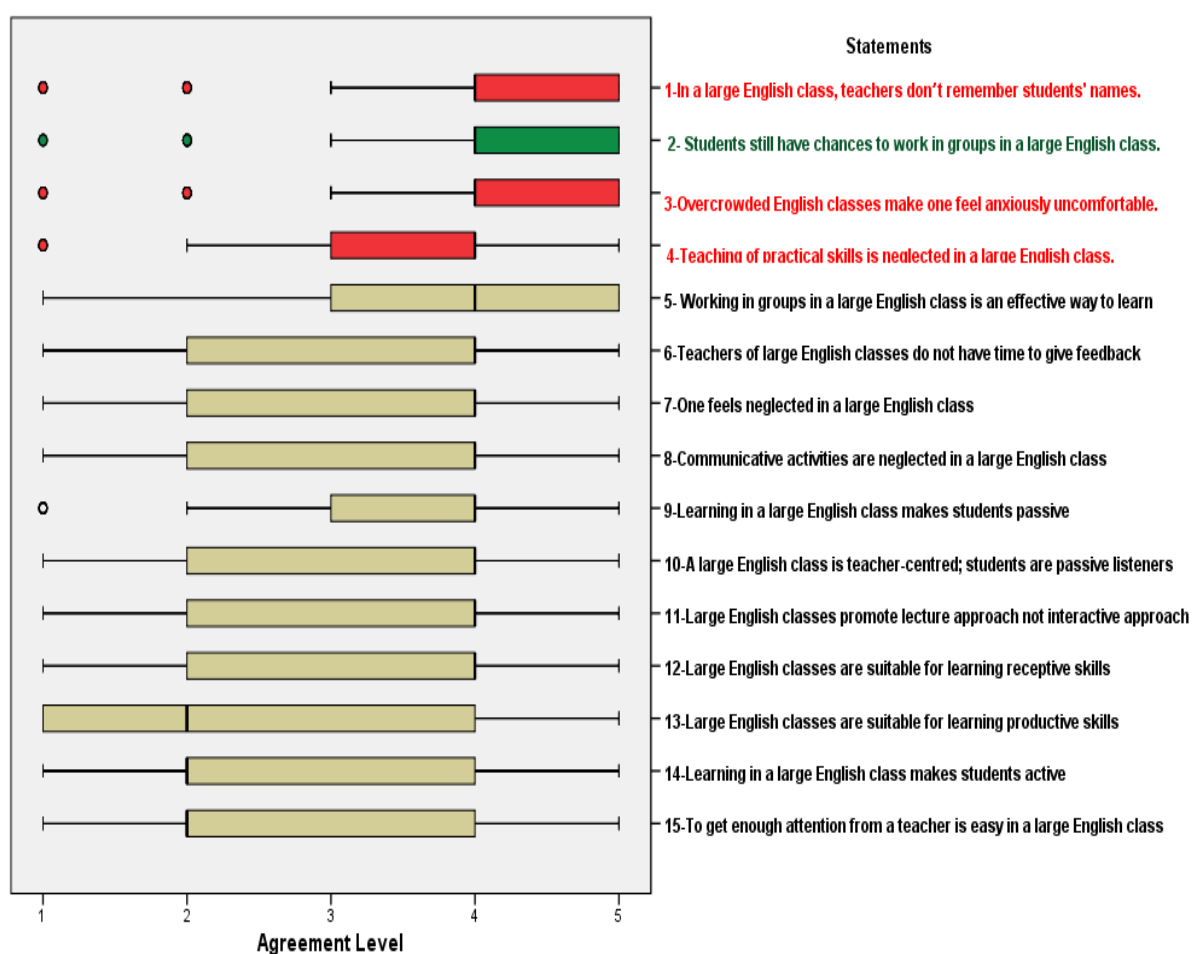


Chart 6.1: Student perceptions of learning in large ESL classes (N=208)

Student perceptions

Chart 6.1 represents the responses of student participants to 15 statements about the possible advantages and disadvantages of learning English language in large classes. It is noticeable that out of 15, only five statements elicit substantial consensus. Statements 1, 2 and 3 have the highest level of agreement and statements 4 and 5 have a little less, but still a noticeable consensus. Statements 1, 3 and 4 indicate negative perceptions of the students about large English classes. The majority of the students agree that teachers do not remember student names, the large class size makes students uncomfortable and practical teaching is neglected. However, the responses to statements 2 and 4 indicate that many students believe that group work may possibly be an effective method of learning English language in these classes. The responses to the remaining statements are indicative of a wide range of opinions amongst the students, and no generalisation can safely be drawn. Given the consistency with which problems associated with large classes are reported in the literature, it is perhaps surprising to find such a range of opinion amongst this group.

Nevertheless, there is a clear consensus that teachers do not remember students' names; overcrowded classes cause discomfort for them and practical language skills are neglected.

On a positive note, it is encouraging to see that most of the students surveyed believe that group work may be a useful way forward. This is in contrast to the findings of Shamim (1993), who reported that learners in Pakistan were resistant to group work. There are several possible reasons for this difference. Firstly, the learners in Shamim's (1993) study were pupils at a secondary school, whereas the learners in the present study are adults; it might be, for example, that younger learners are more dependent on direct teacher contact and that adults are more able to see the benefits of working independently. Secondly, in the 20 years that have passed since Shamim's study, Pakistani cultural attitudes to learning and teaching, to which she attributes most of the resistance, may have started to change. Finally, at UoSJP in particular, attitudes to group work may have started to shift as a result of the pioneering work undertaken by Bughio (2013). The practical ways to implement group work will be further explored in the qualitative data analysis and intervention phase of this study.

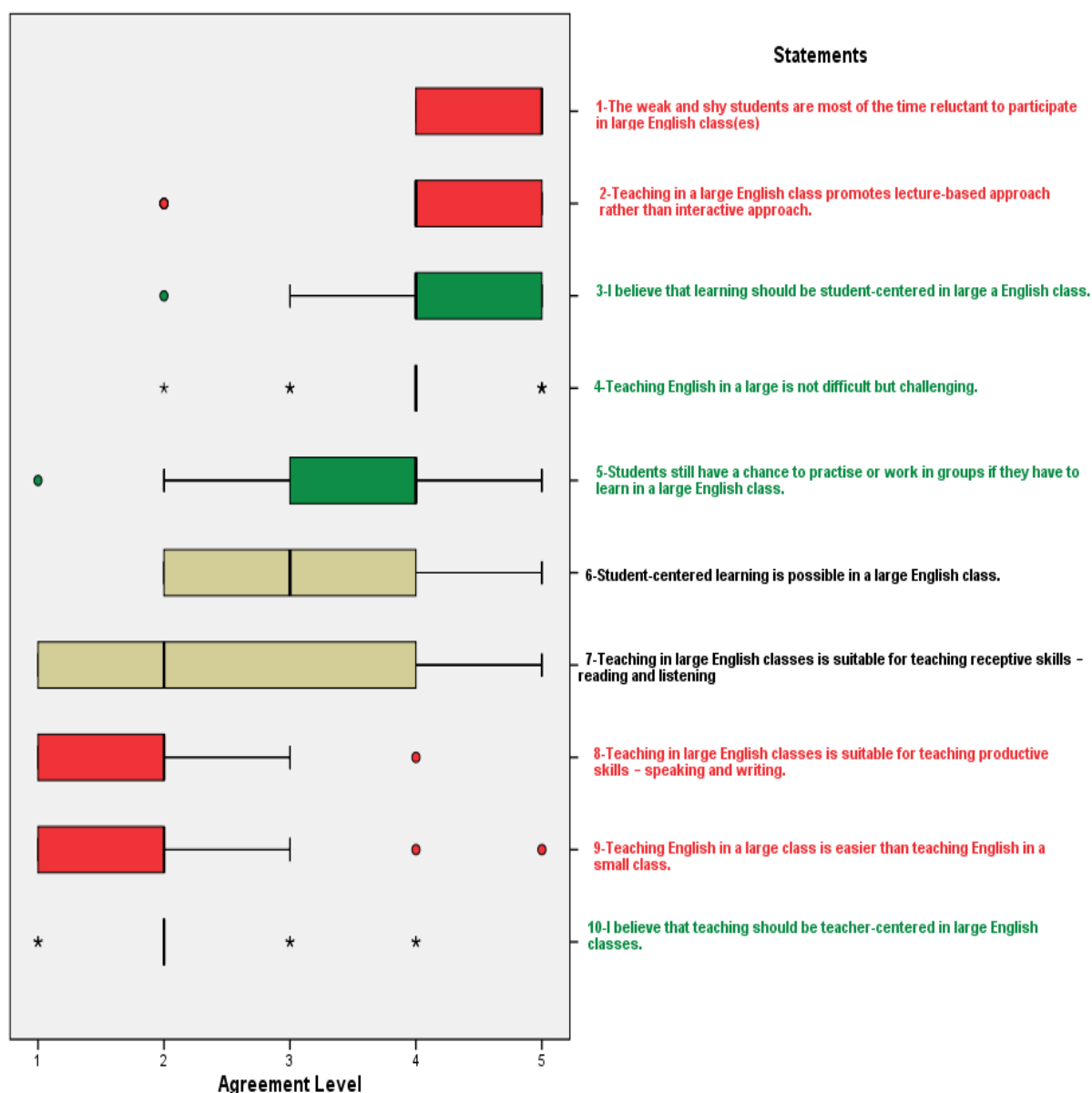


Chart 6.2: Teacher perceptions of teaching in large ESL classes (N=22)

Teacher perceptions

Chart 6.2 illustrates that, in comparison to the students, the teachers showed a much greater level of agreement with one another. Almost none of the teachers felt that teaching English in large classes was easier than teaching in small classes (statement 9), but almost all agreed that large classes were challenging rather than difficult (statement 4), which indicates a positive attitude towards the situation. Nearly all believe that learning and teaching should be student-centred rather than teacher-centred (statements 3 and 10), but there is considerable disagreement or uncertainty about whether this is possible in large classes (statement 6). The responses to statement 2 show that nearly all the teachers perceive that these classes promote a

lecture approach, rather than interactive teaching and learning. This belief is also reflected in the responses to statements 7 and 8: there is a general consensus that large classes are not suitable for teaching productive skills, and some disagreement about whether they are even suitable for teaching receptive skills. This reflects the strong consensus amongst students that the teaching of practical skills is neglected in large classes. The highest agreement amongst the teachers is with statement 1: all the teachers surveyed believe that having a large number of students in a class creates reluctance in the weaker and shyer students to participate. Again, this may reflect the students' perception that overcrowded classes make them feel anxious. There is rather less consensus amongst the teachers about whether group work can effectively address this problem (statement 5). Overall, these results are indicative of a tension between what the teachers believe should happen, i.e. student-centred learning, and what they perceive to be actually possible in very large language classes. These issues will further be explored through analysis of the qualitative data.

6.3.3 Experience of learning and teaching in large ESL classes

Whereas the previous section dealt with the perceptions of students and teachers of large classes in general, the statements in this section refer more concretely to their actual experiences in the large ESL classes at UoSJP. Participants were presented with a series of statements relating to their experiences and asked to rate them on the same 5-point scale as before, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Chart 6.3 shows the responses of the students to 26 statements.

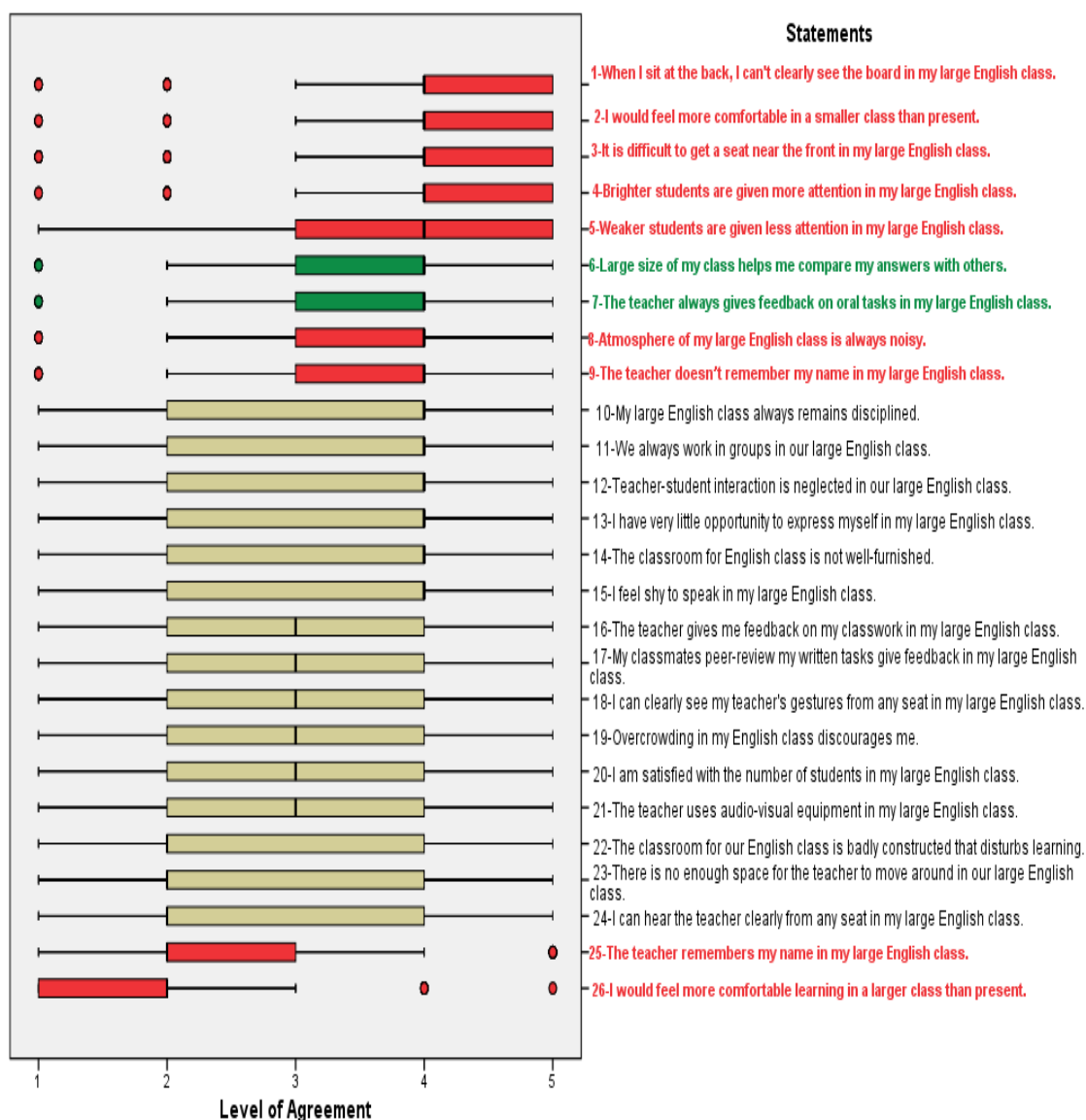


Chart 6.3: Student experience of learning in large ESL classes (N=208)

Student experience

As with the more general perceptions discussed above, there is considerable disagreement or uncertainty about many of the issues related to class size; however the responses to statements 1-9 and 25-26 exhibit clear consensus. The students agree that they would feel more comfortable in smaller classes (statements 2 and 26). In their present classes, they find it difficult to get a seat near the front (statement 3), but if they sit at the back they cannot see the board (statement 1). The classes are always noisy (statement 8), their teachers do not remember their names (statements 9 and 25), and the brightest students get most of the attention (statements 4 and 5). These responses closely mirror the findings of Shamim (1993) that physical position in the classroom plays a major role in determining a student's ability to participate in

large classes, and of Bughio (2013) that most of the teacher's attention in these classes is directed towards the strongest students. In the light of the picture painted here, it may be found surprising that the students agree that their teachers always give feedback on oral tasks (statement 7); however, this should be understood in the context of the explanation given by Bughio (2013) that oral tasks in these classes usually consist of student presentations. Also on the plus side, the students agree that being in a large class helps them compare their answers with others' (statement 6); this is a factor that could potentially be channelled away from mere copying and towards a cooperative approach to learning, such as the opportunity to experience peer-review of one another's tasks.

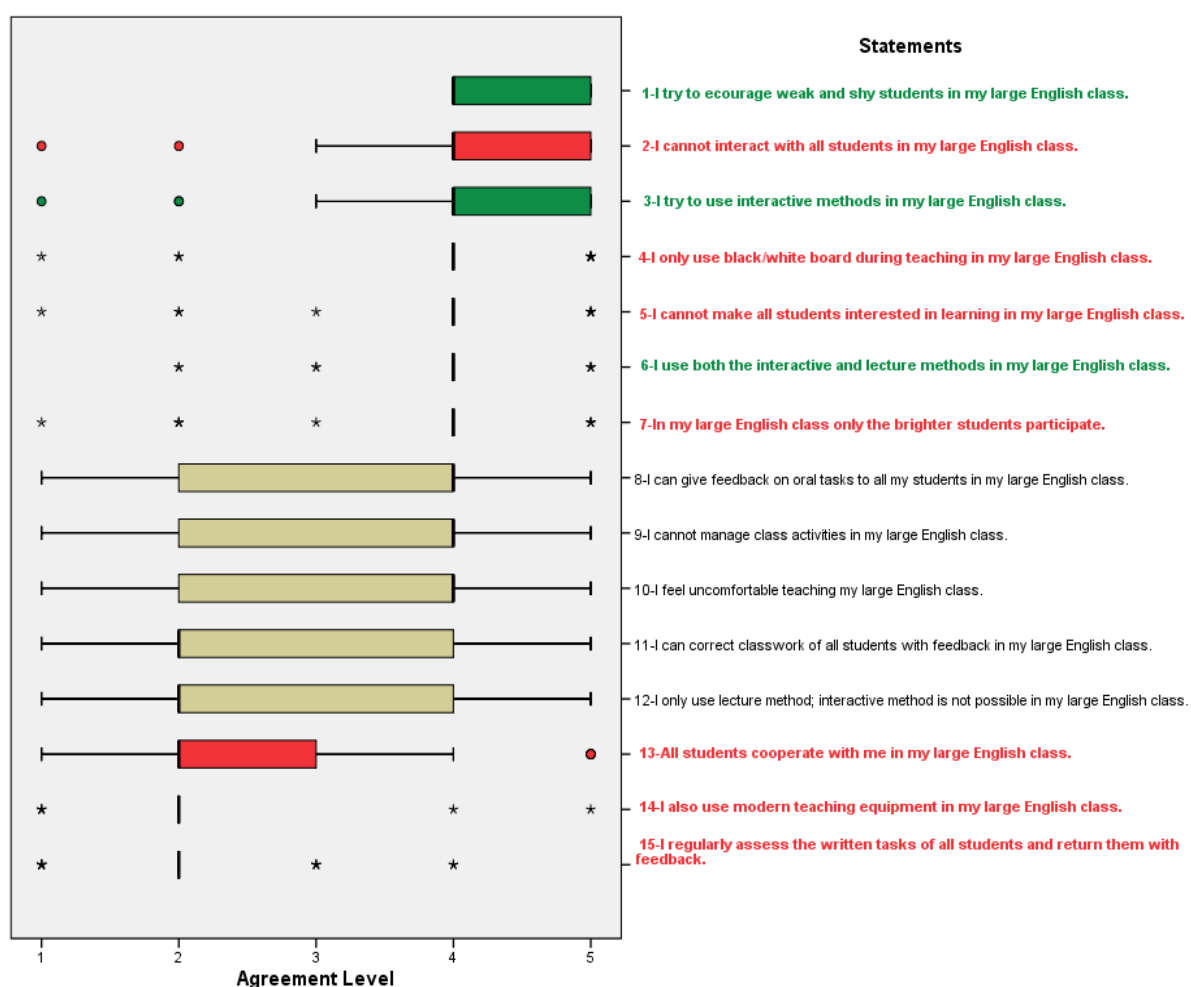


Chart 6.4: Teacher experience of teaching in large ESL classes (N=208)

Teacher experience

Chart 6.4 illustrates the responses of the teachers to 15 statements about their experiences in the large ESL classes at UoSJP. Again, we see the tension between what the teachers would like to do, and what they find possible. Almost all of the

teachers try to use some interactive methods as well as lectures (statements 3 and 6), and try to encourage weak and shy students (statement 1). Nevertheless, there is a clear consensus that they cannot interact with all students (statement 2) and cannot make them all interested in learning (statement 5); not all students are cooperative (statement 13), and only the brightest participate (statement 7). The teachers don't have access to modern teaching equipment (statement 14) and therefore they only use black/whiteboards (statement 4). They also find it difficult to assess and give feedback on students' written tasks (statement 15).

Overall, the responses of the students and teachers corroborate each other. The only discrepancy is between statement 7 on the student chart and statement 8 on the teacher chart: whereas the students feel that they are usually given feedback on oral tasks by their teachers, the teachers are less sure about this. The question of oral feedback will be explored further in the qualitative data analysis. Apart from this one discrepancy, the views of the teachers confirm those of the students. All agree that the physical conditions in the classrooms are not conducive to learning. The teachers do not have any projection equipment, so the students at the back of the room cannot see what is written on the board. Furthermore, there is strong agreement that only the more proficient students participate in the classes, presumably with the result that the gap between the weak and strong students inexorably grows. In the light of this situation, it seems obvious that what is required is some system that either prevents the same students from always sitting closest to the board or, even better, moves the focus away from the board altogether. One may wonder why teachers persist with a system that has such clear and well-understood disadvantages. The answer may lie in the perceived difficulty of overcoming these disadvantages, and this is investigated through the next set of statements.

6.3.4 Difficulties for teachers in implementing activities

This section further explores where and when teachers find it difficult to manage their large classes effectively. The teachers were asked to rate 17 different aspects of class management for the difficulty of implementing them in their large ESL classes. The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1=very easy, 2=easy, 3=neither easy nor difficult, 4=difficult and 5=very difficult. The results are summarised in Chart 6.5.

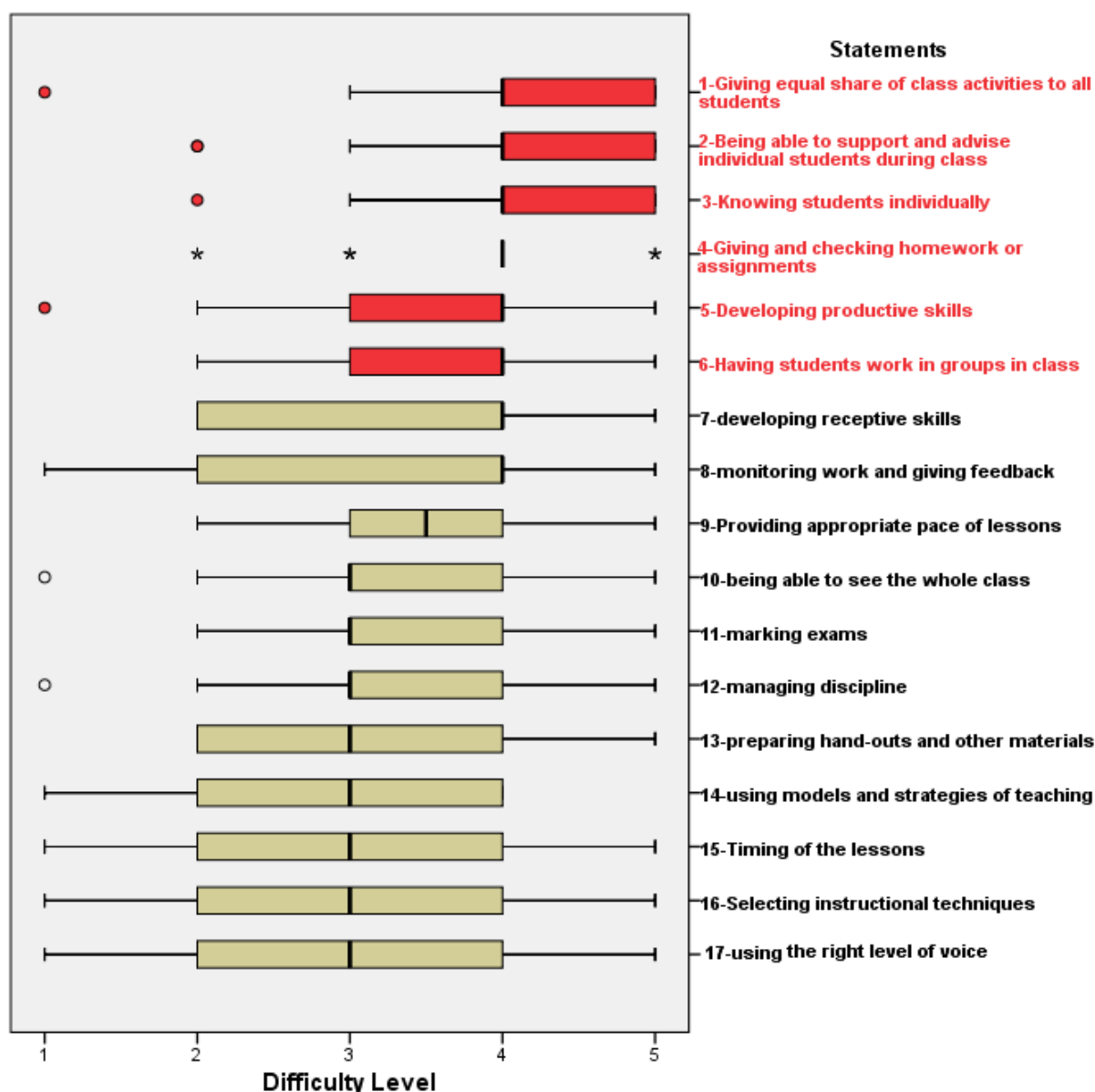


Chart 6.5: Relative difficulty for teachers in implementing various activities (N=22)

One of the most noticeable features of the results is that the median response is never less than 3. In other words, on average the teachers do not find any aspect of their large classes easy to manage (see Chart 6.5). However, it should also be acknowledged that there is very wide variation in most of the responses, possibly reflecting the range in the teachers' level of experience, summarised in Table 6.3. Overall, the greatest consistency of response coincides with those activities that are found to be most difficult, namely knowing or supporting students individually, involving students equally, and marking homework. These results are unsurprising, and confirm the findings described in the previous sections. Strikingly, however, the

next greatest source of difficulty relates to both developing productive skills and having students work in groups in class. This suggests that, although on average, the teachers believe that group work could potentially give students more opportunity to practise their productive skills (see Section 6.3.2), they also find it very difficult to implement, and this may be one of the main reasons why the lecture method persists as the dominant form of teaching in these classes. These issues will be further explored in the analysis of the qualitative data.

6.4 Qualitative findings and their triangulation

The qualitative data includes:

- 21 students' (7 female and 14 male) and 5 teachers' (3 female and 2 male) interviews;
- 208 students' and 22 teachers' free-text comments from their questionnaires;
- transcription and notes from classroom observation of five lessons with three groups.

The main categories explored in the qualitative data were:

- the importance of English;
- teaching methods used;
- problems faced by teachers and students;
- suggestions for improvement.

These will be discussed in turn in the following sections.

6.4.1 Importance of English

All the students and teachers said that learning English is very important. Two main themes arose, shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Themes related to importance of English

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Importance of English	International communication and competition	
	Education and employment	

The first theme concerned English as an international language. Regarding this theme one student very strongly stated: *'English is an international language and the language of communication with foreigners anywhere in the world'* (SEM5, male student, interview 6). Similarly, the students in Bughio (2013) considered English to

be the only global language and the source of communication. The teachers' views with similar intensity supported students' views. For example, one teacher stated: *'...we can easily communicate [sic] all the people, like with all the communities because this is the language which everyone knows'* (TEF2, female teacher, interview 4). However, a different view was expressed by a teacher that considered English to be the language of competition: *'...in order to cope with the competitive measure that the world is developing now, we have to be proficient in English communication'* (male teacher, interview 2).

Students typically thought that English was important for their careers. They stated that it helps in accessing higher education, improving their knowledge, getting a job, and carrying out the duties of the job. It was thought that if they did not know English, employers would not hire them. Besides, it was the official language of Pakistan, so they needed it to carry out official correspondence. This can be summed up in the words of two students, who strongly expressed:

We see every subject is in English including science, so to understand them, we need to know English. Especially for those who study in a university, it is a must for them (SEF1, female student, interview 1)

...English helps to get job quickly because those who know English are preferred by companies (SEM3, male student, interview 4).

These views of students very much confirm those of the students in Bughio's (2013) survey.

Teachers on the other hand, focussed on English learning in terms of communication and education which is clearly represented in the following comments of a teacher who emphatically reported that English is important because: *'...every discipline of the university...the mode of communication is English and the books and syllabus also'* (TEM1, male teacher, interview 1).

The students interviewed demonstrated a high level of instrumental motivation for learning English. However, they constituted only a small minority of the students in the classes and, unfortunately, no comparable item inquiring about their motivation was included on the questionnaire, so there is no way of knowing how representative these views are overall. Although systematic sampling for the interviews was

routinely used, some (about 9 out of 21) of the students selected randomly through systematic sampling did not turn up, and the sample was subsequently augmented by the snowball method, i.e. by interviewees recruiting their friends. This could mean that the interviews could partially represent the views of the most participative students, who might also be the most highly motivated. It is therefore not possible on the basis of the data to assess the relationship between motivation and participation: on this issue, therefore, it is possible that those who do not participate in the English classes do not perceive a strong need to learn English, or lack motivation for other reasons. Fortunately, with respect to the other categories of the qualitative data, there are the quantitative data available for triangulation.

6.4.2 Teaching methods used in large ESL classes at UoSJP

Three main themes arose from this category, shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Themes related to experience of large ESL classes at UoSJP

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Teaching methods used	Traditional lecture method	
	Interactive activities with lecture	
	Group and pair activities	

Traditional lecture method

In response to a question about the teaching methods commonly used by their teachers, the students most frequently and strongly pointed to lecturing. For example, Student SZM1 representatively expressed that their teacher uses: ‘*Lecture, reading from books, telling meaning of difficult words and explaining the passages*’ (male student, interview 10). The class observation notes and recordings tend to support the student-interview responses.

This view was further corroborated by class observations. The teachers of *Group B* and *Group C* depended on lecturing. Although they did ask some questions, these were directed to the whole class rather than individual students, and only the students in the front rows responded, very much as described by Shamim (1993) and Bughio (2013). In these groups, the teachers did not come with a pre-planned lesson. For example, the teacher of *Group C* came in and greeted the class with ‘*How are you?*’ He asked students to open Unit 1 of the course book *English for Undergraduates*. He started to read the unit by reading sentences aloud and explaining the meanings of the words in them. Before explaining the sentence or the word, the teacher asked

questions like ‘*what does.... mean/do you know.../is it clear...?*’ and the students answered together. The teacher did not move and stood by the lectern for the entire duration of the class, reading and explaining things (**Group C, Class 1**).

Similarly, the teacher of *Group B* used the traditional teaching method with only one exception: when he asked a question, he moved through the aisle (narrow space between the two blocks of the chair-rows to the middle of the room) and once that question was answered by many students at a time, he came back to the rostrum and continued with explanations. Most of the time he read modal verbs one by one from the course book *Oxford Practice Grammar* and explained their usage. Throughout the duration of the class, he read simple affirmative sentences from the book and asked the students to use a suitable modal verb with each sentence to make questions about *permission*. Only the more able and front-row students responded, by uttering and repeating questions in unison, but the teacher did nothing to address the fact that the backbenchers and shyer and weaker students were not participating. (**Group B, Class 2**) (see Picture 6.1 and 6.2).



Picture 6.1: Students listening to a lecture in their ESL class



Picture 6.2: Teacher lecturing in an ESL Class

Interactive activities with lecture

Despite the predominance of lecture-style teaching reported by the student-interviewees, most of the teachers stated on their questionnaires that they used both interactive and lecture methods in their large English classes (see Section 6.3.3).

This was reinforced in the teachers' interviews, which can be summed up in Teacher TEM1 comments:

It depends on the nature of the topics, for if I am going to teach them dialogue writing, first I will lecture on what dialogue writing is and in the end I call upon two students from each gender, they come and start discussions on dialogue writing...(male teacher, interview 1).

This view of a teacher respondent was also found in some students' interviews, but it was neither as common nor expressed in such strong terms. Some students reported that sometimes their teacher used other teaching methods alongside lecturing, such as presentations and group activities. Student SZM4 summarises this by commenting that their teacher: '*Lectures, reads from books and explains, sometimes he used presentations and group work*' (male student, interview 15) which was further strengthened by the class observations.

Only the teacher of *Group A* was seen using group or pair activities and presentations. She avoided lecturing and, in the first of her classes that I observed, had the students work in pairs or groups of three, with some success. The reason for the use of pairs or groups of three in the activities may be none other than the seating arrangement, because it could have been difficult for her to arrange the seats for larger groups. The teacher tried to monitor the students working in groups/pairs, but the seating arrangement made it difficult for her to monitor every pair or group closely. Nevertheless, the students also appeared to get involved and to enjoy working in groups. However, when she was interviewed, the same teacher of *Group A*, coded as TEF4 (*female teacher, interview 6*), was very candid, and reported that she did not use group work regularly:

It is very difficult to divide students in groups in such large classes... I tried to use group work in one class, but the whole time went away and I couldn't conduct it properly.

The second of her classes that I observed included student presentations. However, only six willing and more able students came forward to give presentations. They presented for about 2-3 minutes on the topics assigned to them in the previous class. The teacher did not give feedback to the presenters during or after their

presentations. After they had finished, she asked the class questions about the passage. She did not ask questions of specific individuals, and only let those answer who raised their hands. **(Group A, Classes 1 and 2).** Teacher C's attitude in the classes, if not completely, at least to a noticeable extent, corresponds with results of Kumar (1992). Despite being conducted at middle-school level, Kumar (1992) found that class size has very little effect on teachers' pedagogical practices. Instead, it depended on how teachers adopted their teaching.

Group and pair activities

Group and pair work activities were a recurring theme in the interviews with the teachers. They strongly reported that they used group and pair activities because these established student-student and student-teacher interaction and encouraged shy students to participate. In terms of group work, Teacher TEM2 (*male teacher, interview 2*) expressed this idea with specific clarity and emphasis: *'So I divide them among groups there and when they are doing it, I ask them to interact with one another there with the teacher and with the other groups also.'* However, another teacher TEM3 differed a little from TEM2 and experienced difficulty in the use of group work, and found pair activities easier to implement because, as he reported: *'Pair work seems most useful, group [activity] is also useful and I do give them group work, but the faulty seating arrangement makes it a bit difficult'* (TEM3, *male teacher, interview 3*). However, when asked how often they used group or pair activities in their large ESL classes, both these (representative) teachers were remarkably candid in telling that they used these activities infrequently because of the large size and many other physical constraints. This idea can be very clearly expressed in the comments of TEM2 (*male teacher, interview 2*), who reported: *'It is not regularly, I use it once in a month and I depend on lecture and presentations.'* The teacher further reported that: *'Regular use of group work is not possible in large classes and also we need to teach them grammar and huge syllabus which is not possible through group work.'*

These statements about the use of group work were typical and strongly expressed in the data. This means that the teachers blamed class size rather than their teaching-style. These data confirm the findings in the quantitative analysis: that the teachers try to use interactive methods but find it difficult to organise group work (see Section 6.3.3 and 6.3.4). Moreover, Bughio (2013) also found discrepancy in

teachers' reports and their teaching. For example, the teachers in Bughio (2013) reported in their interviews that they used interactive activities in their classes, but when observed, they were found using teacher-oriented teaching.

The students indicated that presentations and group work were their favourite learning activities because they built their confidence and gave them more command over the topic. This idea is most strongly expressed in the comments of two students who liked presentations *'because in presentation a student plays as a teacher and this builds his/her confidence'* (SEM6, male student, interview 8) and with its use: *'...topics become clear when I prepare myself for that'* (SZM3, male student, interview 3). Regarding presentations, from the students' statements, it appeared that they regarded trying to rise to the same level as the stronger students as a challenge.

6.4.3 Problems faced by teachers and students

The students and teachers pointed to broadly similar problems in their interviews and questionnaires, but the teachers had a slightly more positive tone. They believed interactive teaching in these classes was possible to a certain extent, which could make them effective. Four main themes arose from this category, as shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Problems faced by teachers and students

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Problems faced	Classroom management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noisy atmosphere Use of mobiles Indiscipline
	Neglect of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient individual attention Insufficient frequency of teacher feedback
	Insufficient student participation/interaction	
	Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of modern teaching equipment

Classroom management

Among the problems concerning management, the most frequently and perhaps most strongly reported problem, by both the students and teachers, was the noisy atmosphere in their classes. Noise made it difficult for them to concentrate on learning tasks in the class. Typical comments came from the two following students who strongly and candidly expressed this view. Student ZR reported that learning English in a large class *'is difficult because there is so much noise in the class that I*

can't concentrate and hear the teacher' (male student, questionnaire 97). Student SZF1 reported: *Noise and disturbance make it difficult for us to understand...* (female student, interview 9).

The students also frequently and emphatically referred to the problem of indiscipline which can best be summarised in the following comments of three students: *'...the teacher can't keep an eye on every student and so there remains a lack of discipline'* (SZF1, female student, interview 9). Student SEF1 stated: *'The teacher can't manage the class because most of students...make mess of the class'* (female student, interview 1). *'...because the large number of students doesn't listen to the teacher and remain busy in talking to one another'* (ZBJ, male student, questionnaire 141).

It was noticed that all the students repeatedly and strongly highlighted the use of mobile phones in the class, in reply to the question about class management. This is particularly and clearly expressed in the comment of SZF who stated: *Because of use of mobiles and gossips make [sic] us uncomfortable [sic] and make...learning difficult* (female student, questionnaire 138). Although the teachers also indicated this problem, they seemed slightly less disturbed than the students were. This idea is perhaps clearly expressed in the comments of two teachers. Teacher TEM1 complained: *'Of course noise is there, the use of mobile phone is there and inattentiveness in the class is there'* (male teacher, interview 1). Teacher T stated: *'It is difficult for the teacher to manage the class'* (male teacher, questionnaire 20). Although as previously noted, the teachers generally believed that managing their class was possible, they did say that when they tried to use interactive activities, some slight disorderliness was created for a short period of time. This view is most appropriately expressed in the following two teachers' statements. Teacher TEF1 identified *'When I do a kind of group work, hustle and bustle starts all of sudden'* (female teacher, interview 3) and Teacher TEM1 believed: *'Of course noise is there ... but once again it depends upon the teacher...If the teacher is technical, there can't be noise'* (male teacher interview1). This finding is also mirrored in the quantitative data of the student questionnaires (see Section 6.3.3). The teachers also found it difficult to manage and monitor practical activities in their classes because of a noisy atmosphere and lack of discipline (using mobiles, having chit-chat etc.).

In the three classes observed, the level of noise was not intolerably uncomfortable. Some noise was noticed, specifically in *Groups B* and *C*, when the teachers asked students questions during lecturing and many students replied all together, which created quite a disturbing noise. From this finding, it seems evident that the lecture style helped teachers keep the noise level under control, while the use of interactive activities created a noisy atmosphere. For instance, in Lesson 1 of *Group A* continuous noise was observed during students' discussions in groups, but the noise level was not excruciatingly high and annoying. This finding is very much in line with the literature on large classes. A high noise level has stressful effects on teaching and teachers, and makes it difficult for teachers to address the class smoothly and tirelessly (see Coleman, 1989b; Locastro, 1989; Mcleod, 1989; Shamim, 1993; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). Moreover, the literature cross-validates the finding that teachers use lecturing to avoid discipline issues (e.g., Coleman, 1989c; Naidu, et al., 1992; Bughio, 2013). The class observation notes also provide evidence that *Group A* and *Group C* lacked discipline. The backbenchers did not pay attention to the lecture and remained busy in other activities, such as talking, and using mobile phones. The most disruptive factor observed in these classes was that many students continually arrived 15-20 minutes after the start of class.

Overall, the results in this category corroborate my previous conclusion that the teachers of these classes tend to avoid group work largely because they want to maintain discipline. However, there is an important difference between the kind of noise created by students interacting purposefully using the target language during a communicative activity, and the noise created by students talking on their phones or chatting to their neighbours in a lecture. The results suggest that teachers may be avoiding the former out of fear that it will degenerate into the latter.

Neglect of students

After the problem of class management, the students indicated that the second most-frequently occurring problem for learning in these classes was insufficient teacher attention. This supports the findings both of the quantitative analysis (see Section 6.3.3) and of the literature (e.g., LoCastro, 1989; Coleman, 1989b; Naidu, et al., 1992; Bughio, 2012). From the content of statements, it appears that there were two blocks of students: one block blamed large class size and other blamed the teachers.

However, the responses from the students in block 2 appear to be expressed in stronger terms. The views of block 1 are reflected in students SSZF3's and SI's words: '*... the teacher can't give equal attention to every student*' (SSZF3, female student, interview 14). Student SI described: '*It is impossible because learning of English requires teacher attention, but that is absent in large classes*' (female student, questionnaire 167). Regarding block 2, the students reported that teachers paid attention to only a few of the more able and front-row students, and the weaker and the back-row students were neglected. This can be summed up by another student's comment: '*...only few front benchers get the teacher attention, but others are neglected.....*' (SEM6, male student, interview 8).

The teachers accepted that backbenchers were neglected. However, they blamed the large size of their classes for making it difficult for them to teach them: Two teachers' comments summarise this idea in the following words: '*... there is no room for the teacher to walk around or to look at the students sitting at the back*' (TEF3, female teacher, interview 5). Teacher F reported: '*...it is difficult to locate and give attention to the weaker students*' (male teacher, questionnaire 06). The class-observation notes and recordings confirm that these classes lacked teacher-student and student-student interaction. The lessons in *Group B* and *Group C* were conducted through lecture-style teaching and therefore student-teacher and teacher-student interaction was entirely absent. In Lesson 1 of *Group A*, interactive activities like group and pair work were used and student-student interaction was observed to be evident to a certain extent, but teacher-student interaction was very limited.

The students identified having had insufficient feedback on their written tasks, but they were given some feedback on their oral presentations. Though the feedback on their oral presentations was appreciated by the students, they did not have it regularly, and their responses represented stronger [gloomy] opinions on the lack of feedback. The words of SZM1 and EAQ perhaps are strongly expressive of the view presented: '*No, they [teachers] don't give feedback*' (male student, interview 17). Another student stated: '*It is difficult for the teacher to give feedback, so students can't improve their mistakes due to the lack of feedback*' (EAQ, male student, questionnaire 43). However, one student stated less strongly that they were given feedback on their oral tasks sometimes, as summarised in his words: '*Sometimes, he [teacher] gave feedback on presentation...*' (SZM1, male student, interview 10).

These comments somewhat undermine the students' quantitative responses, which indicated that they frequently got feedback on their oral tasks (see Section 6.3.3).

Similarly, in all three of the classes observed (five lessons in all), no provision of feedback was witnessed. The teachers of *Group B* and *Group C* used traditional lecturing and did not provide feedback. Although the teacher of *Group A* was quite interactive in her teaching method, she did not focus on feedback. In her second lesson, all six presenters went back to their seats without receiving feedback on their presentations. The teachers also noticed the insufficient frequency of teacher feedback, and attributed it to the large size of the class. They reported that oral feedback was possible to a certain extent in these classes, but giving written feedback on a regular basis was not possible. This view is represented in the following comments of a teacher: *'In large classes, I think it is quite impossible to give written feedback, but oral feedback yes, we give sometimes'* (TEF3, female teacher, interview 5). Teachers have similarly reported the insufficient frequency of teacher feedback in the studies conducted on large class problems (e.g., McLeod, 1989; Coleman, 1989b; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006), and it has been acknowledged that, in large classes it is not reasonable to expect the teacher to be able to give feedback to all learners, all the time (e.g., Shamim, et al., 2007). Nevertheless, abandoning any attempt to give feedback, as seems sometimes to be the case in the ESL classes at UoSJP, is clearly not the solution. A structured approach to group work, such as cooperative learning, maximises teacher feedback (Smith, 2000; Cooper and Robinson, 2002) as compared to traditional teaching - even in very large classes - because the teacher is moving around to listen to and comment on student work.

Insufficient student participation/interaction

The insufficient frequency of student-participation and interaction was also reported by the students to be a problem in these classes. Similar to other problems, this was more strongly, more commonly and more pessimistically expressed in the students' reports in comparison with those of the teachers. The comments of students SEM1 and EBU representatively express this concern of all students: *'...the large number confuses and discourages me to participate'* (SEM1, male student, interview 2). Another student stated that students do not participate: *'because the large size of the*

class makes students shy to speak and participate' (EBU, male student, questionnaire 73).

Similarly, some teachers reported in the free-text questionnaire queries that there was insufficient participation of students in class activities, but that teachers find it difficult to address the students' fear and anxiety of participating in front of a large number of students, which is summed up by a teacher: *'...most of the students are unwilling to participate in class activities' (H, male teacher, questionnaire 08)*. In contrast, the students' reference to the teachers' interaction with, and attention to, front-benchers was recurring, and typically powerfully expressed. Teachers interacted with front-benchers only, and the majority at the back and in the middle of the class did not interact with the teacher and other students. This idea is strongly expressed in the comments of the following students: *'No...interaction is maintained by teachers' (male student, interview 2)*. Student SG also confirmed: *'Definitely [emphatically expressed] there is little interaction between the teacher and students' (male student, questionnaire 165)*. In contrast, although the teachers believed that the problem of insufficient interaction existed in their classes, they considered it manageable. Teacher TEF1's statement typically describes this view: *'It can be manageable... we will have to work the types of activities so that it is possible for us to interact with students' (female teacher, interview 3)*. However, a different view, which is closer to the students' comments, is expressed by Teacher I who stated: *'It is very hard to reach all students and interact with them' (female teacher, questionnaire 09)*.

In the quantitative findings, Chart 6.4 (Teacher experience) corroborates students' comments on lack of participation. Statements 7 and 13 pointedly indicate that teachers could not make all students participate in the class (see Chart 6.4 and Section 6.3.3). Additionally, both the empirical and observational (e.g., Shamim, 1993; Harfitt, 2012; Bughio, 2013) and literature-review studies (e.g., Mulryan-Kyne, 2010) on large classes suggest that large size has negative effects on student engagement and participations.

Physical environment

The five lessons observed were labelled: *Group A* (IELL); *Group B* (Department of Zoology) and *Group C* (Department of Sociology). Each group was taught by a

different teacher. All three classes were mixed ability and mixed gender, but girls and boys sat in two separate blocks of rows: one for male students and the other for female students. Students' admission in the university is preceded by one general placement test. The results of the test decide which department/institute students are to be admitted to. Then they all sit together in one class in their respective departments/institutes for compulsory and major classes. No specific English proficiency test is taken to measure and determine their level of English proficiency.

The student turn-out in these classes ranged from 80 to 100 or more. The IELL classrooms on average were in good physical condition, because this institute moved to a new building a few years back in 2009, and therefore these were at least sufficiently spacious, adequately lit and ventilated. Besides, some student-created charts and pictures were seen on the walls of the IELL classrooms. However, the classrooms of the Department of Zoology and the Department of Sociology were in bad physical condition because the buildings of this department were a decade old. They lacked proper lighting; only a few tube-lights were lit, others were not. The classrooms were not properly painted. From the perspectives of modern technology and seating arrangements, these three classrooms were unequipped. For example, the rows of chairs were so compacted that there was little space for teachers to move in-between the chair rows. The only space they had was down the aisle between the two blocks of chairs. Although the chairs were not fixed, they could not be used for groupings easily because they were arranged in congested rows. There were no separate desks and tables on which students could keep their belongings. The chairs had only writing pads attached to them for students to write and keep books. The classes only had a sound system with a wired microphone which during the class observation, the teachers did not use.

Some of the student interviewees referred to the lack of modern teaching and learning equipment in their classes. This lack of teaching and learning equipment was, however, not a widely reported problem. Nevertheless, those students who raised the issue of lack of equipment, clearly reported that it made the situation worse for them because they were not able to listen clearly to the lecture and understand it. This view is presented through the comments of two students: *'We can't listen to the teacher ...because we don't have Audio aids in the class' (SEMI, male student, interview 2)*. Some teachers also pointed to the lack of modern

teaching equipment: *'There is lack of resources and modern technology' (H, male teacher, questionnaire 08).*

The teachers also complained of inappropriate seating arrangements, which the students did not mention in their interviews. It may be that the poor seating arrangements in these classes are more of a problem for teachers than students, because they make it difficult for the teachers to use interactive learning and teaching activities. One teacher's comment representatively expresses this problem: *'...when we are having fixed chairs and unorganised seating arrangement, it's quite difficult to use communicative methods....'* (TEF3, male teacher, interview 5). The class-observation notes evidence that the teacher of *Group A* faced difficulty in communicating with all groups during group and pair activities because the congested seating arrangement prevented her from monitoring group and pair work in Lesson 1.

Bughio (2013, p. 126) also finds that space and equipment remain in short supply at UoSJP. This lack of space is further exacerbated by the fact that in many of the classrooms, chairs are fixed in place, so it is not possible to move furniture around to form alternative seating arrangements. The literature suggests that, as educational infrastructure fails to keep up with increasing enrolments in higher education, lack of space for large classes remains a problem in many countries. In the context of higher education, both Bughio (2013) and Al-Jarf (2006) are in line with this finding. Particularly, the findings of Bughio (2013), alongside the present study, suggest that public universities in Pakistan still need the installation of proper modern teaching equipment. However, in the context of school, about 23 years back Shamim (1993) also indicated a similar problem.

Despite all the reported problems, some students believed that there were certain benefits of learning in large classes. For instance, they described gaining a variety of ideas and confidence by learning with a large number of students. This idea is summarised by a student: *'We get many ideas and we have so many students to help'* (SSM3, male student, interview 19). Some teachers believed these large classes gave motivation, created competition and built confidence in students. Teacher TEF3's words clearly and typically express this view: *'...when two or three students are participating, the rest of them get motivation... and the presenters get confident'*

(TEF3, female teacher, interview 5). The goal of the intervention phase of this study will be to harness these potential benefits, and use them to address the problems. However, both the students' and teachers' statements about these benefits appeared to be weakly expressed, given the overall situation.

6.4.4 Suggestions for improvement

Both the teachers and students were able to put forward suggestions for improvement in their interviews and questionnaires. Four main themes and two sub-themes arose from this category (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.8: Themes related to suggestions for improvement

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Suggestions for improvement	Use of interactive methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work activities • Presentations
	Provision and use of modern teaching equipment/furniture	
	Teacher behaviour and qualifications	

Use of interactive methods

The students suggested that lecture-style teaching should be stopped and interactive teaching methods should be used in order to make the class more effective. This idea is, perhaps, most strongly expressed by a student in his comments: *'Lecture-teaching should be stopped; the teacher should speak only for five minutes and other time should be given to students to learn through different activities'* (SEM3, male student, interview 4). An almost total reduction in lecturing and the use of student-centred activities in the class was the strongest suggestion given by the students. This shows that students really want to take responsibility for their learning and engage with learning processes. However, the teachers' suggestions emphasised that it was student motivation, rather than the use of interactive activities that affected participation. The teachers, as indicated previously, believed that students were demotivated; however, they were making efforts. A female teacher expressed this idea with particular clarity: *'The teachers should use and design such activities in order to get students motivated...'* (TEF3, female teacher, interview 5). Suggestions from both the teachers and students about the use of student-centred activities are reflected in the quantitative data findings (see Section 6.3.2 and 6.3.3).

The most frequently and emphatically suggested measures by the participating students for the improvement of teaching and learning in these classes, was group

work. The students considered their large ESL classes suitable for learning with the help of group activities. Student SZF3, SEF2, EBI and ZAI most strongly expressed this idea by describing the benefits of group work in detail:

The other way to involve and give attention to students is group work; if our teacher conducts group activities, interacts with a group of 10 students it means he interacts with all ten students and all ten students interact with one another and teacher at the same time (SZF3, female student, interview 14).

'...the use of group work creates unity among the members of the group and the members take interest to compete with other groups' (SEF2, female student, interview 7).

'Group learning...would make weak students work more, and create competition among groups' (EBI, male student, questionnaire 61)

'...it strengthens cooperation' (ZAI, female student, questionnaire 114).

The use of group work is, perhaps, considered by teachers and students in all studies (including the present study) to be the best way to enhance teaching and learning in large classes (e.g., Hayes, 1997; Harmer, 2007; Shamim, et al., 2007; Bughio, 2012). However, minimal evidence is found for its implementation, at least in the context of Pakistan. For example, although teachers in the present study suggest the use of group work to improve teaching and learning of English in large classes, they rarely reported it and were rarely observed using it.

Many students suggested the use of presentations to make learning and teaching of English effective in these classes. They thought that these presentations made language-learning effective, because language learning needs practice of speaking skills with other skills. Moreover, the practice of presentations made the possibility of participating more equitable and offered them the experience of teaching. The comments of three students represent this view with strong emphasis:

...for effective learning [of English] the teacher should take more and more presentations from students (ZAH, female student, questionnaire 113).

...because they [presentations] give equal chance to everyone (ZBY, male student, questionnaire 157).

Sometimes students should be given chance to teach the class through presentations (EAK, female student, questionnaire 37).

Provision and use of modern teaching equipment/furniture

The other emphatically suggested measure by both teachers and students was the provision and use of modern teaching equipment - specifically audio-visual aids. The students reported that it would at least make it easier for them to listen to and understand the teacher. SZM4 clearly summarises this suggestion: *'Audio-visual aids should be installed and used because then we can hear and understand, otherwise 100 students make it difficult'* (SZM4, male student, interview 15). Some teachers also suggested, in response to open-ended questionnaire queries, that modern teaching equipment could bring some positive improvement in teaching and learning. This can be summed up in Teacher A's comments who said teaching large classes *'...is possible with the use of modern teaching techniques and technology'* (male teacher, questionnaire 01).

Similarly, the teachers in the statistical section of the questionnaire indicated that the lack of audio-visual equipment for teaching in large classes made the matters worse (see Chart 6.4, Section 6.3.3 and statements 4 and 14). Moreover, the problem of inadequacy of modern teaching equipment has also been frequently reflected in the literature (e.g., Sabandar, 1989; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006; Todd, 2006a). But although this problem has constantly been raised by the English teachers of developing countries, no concrete efforts have yet been taken to equip classes with modern technology. I have evidenced this in my ten-year teaching experience at UoSJP. We still use only black or white boards with the addition of microphone and speakers, which most of the time, do not work.

Teacher behaviour and qualifications

It is interesting that many teachers believed that teacher commitment could bring positive change, and they should take responsibility for making these classes interactive and effective. The statements of two teachers very clearly and candidly express this view:

Teachers should get it in a positive manner because when teachers think that the large class is a problem, it becomes problem, I think it is not a problem (TEF3, female teacher, interview 5).

It is possible if the teacher is well trained and engages the class in tasks and activities (H, male teacher, questionnaire 08).

Bughio (2013) also referred to issues of positive teacher behaviour and teacher commitment in large classes. For instance, according to him, the successful intervention of group work in large ESL classes in his study was only made possible by his commitment. Many students considered the teacher's strict behaviour and qualifications to be important factors in the improvement of the large class English teaching. Student EAX proposed: *'The teacher should be strict to misbehaving and noisy students to discipline the class'* (male student, questionnaire 50). Student EE recommended: *'The teacher should be trained and active'* (male student, questionnaire 05).

6.5 Conclusion and discussion

From the situational analysis presented in this chapter, a clear and consistent picture emerges of the learning and teaching situation in the large ESL classes at UoSJP. This has been corroborated by analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data from the students, teachers and classroom observation. The results support the view commonly held by teachers, that large classes tend to promote teacher-centred teaching, with its attendant problems (e.g., Coleman, 1989a, 1989b; LoCastro, 1989; McLeod, 1989; Shamim, 1993; Jimakorn and Singhasiri, 2006). Specifically, a picture emerges of a situation in which class participation and interaction with the teacher is extremely uneven and restricted to a few more able students. This uneven interaction results from the inadequate physical environment, because the students at the back cannot see or hear the teacher, and also contributes to it, because students who are not involved in the lesson tend to be disruptive. Students receive little, if any, feedback on their work.

Many teachers and students expressed the view, in both the quantitative and qualitative data, that the use of group work may be an effective method to teach and learn in these classes. This finding is very much in line with the literature on class size (see Chapter 2). Yet, although some teachers reported having implemented group work occasionally, none had used it on a regular basis. The main reason, as indicated by both the teachers and learners, is the large size of their classes, which prevents them from using interactive activities more often. Specifically, the

implementation of group work is seen as threatening classroom discipline and the formation of groups takes too much time. However, class observation partially confirms the teachers' difficulty in managing and monitoring interactive activities in the class. For example, the teacher of *Group A* attempted to use and manage group and pair work, but she did not have completely planned steps for the activities and left everything to the students, which made it difficult to involve everyone. However, she could manage and monitor group work to a moderate degree, which suggests that interactive activities could be used in large classes if planned in advance and properly organised. The situation is essentially the same as that described by Bughio (2013), which predates the present study by about three years (see Chapter 2).

Group work is most often considered the only approach in which students are given the responsibility to teach and learn from one another. However, the term 'group work' is very general. It requires teachers to work out some strategies on their own, demanding them to devote a considerable amount of time to formulating and experimenting with these activities. Group work, as often indicated by teachers, can be detrimental to discipline before, during and after its implementation, unless it is very carefully structured. Hence, it can be hypothesised that there is a need for a more structured approach to group work, which may help teachers save time and conduct group activities more smoothly, with already established activities and rules for students to follow. Many studies, reviewed in the present work (see Chapter 3), advocate the use of cooperative learning because of its more structured approach to group work. The use of cooperative learning allows teachers to avoid the problems of designing group activities, wasting time on group formation and loss of classroom discipline. If, as hypothesised, these problems are the reasons why teachers do not use more interactive activities in their classes, then cooperative learning might enable them to do so. In the next chapter, I will describe how I selected two particular cooperative learning activities - which I judged to be the most suitable for the particular situation at UoSJP - and how I implemented them in a large ESL class.

7 Planning and orientation

7.1 Introduction

The situational analysis described in the previous chapter revealed that, as predicted by the literature review on large classes and in confirmation of my own subjective experience, the following issues are the main impediments to learning for the majority of students in the large compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP:

- only a few, more-able, students participate in the classes;
- only a few, more-able, students interact with the teacher;
- students at the back cannot see or hear the teacher;
- students who are not involved in the lesson tend to be disruptive;
- students receive little, if any, feedback on their work;
- interactive activities are used infrequently;
- attempts to use group work create discipline problems;
- formation of groups for group work takes up too much class time.

I concluded that the main problem was not the size of the classes per se, since the literature clearly indicates that, given appropriate teaching strategies, learning can be effective in large classes. Nor was it the cultural context, since my situational analysis showed that both students and teachers believed that group work could help the situation and were willing to try it. Rather, the problem was that the teachers, including myself before I started my PhD, did not know how to implement group work in such a way as to address the potential problems of large class size while, at the same time, avoiding the creation of new problems of classroom management. This not only confirmed the findings of Bughio (2013), but also indicated that the situation had not improved in the three years since his study.

My literature research had led me to the hypothesis that cooperative learning offered a solution. Since cooperative learning is a highly structured and organised kind of group work, I hypothesised that the approach would effectively act both as a set of instructions for teachers about how to implement group work, and as a container for students' potentially disruptive behaviour. I further hypothesised that the approach would have the benefit of involving weaker students, whose current lack of

involvement was one of the main problems to emerge from the situational analysis. This is because cooperative learning gives equal status and opportunities to all students, and increases cooperation and positive interdependence among group members by binding stronger, average and weaker students in one equal whole (Johnson and Johnson, 1992; 2009; Slavin, 2010). However, as described in Chapter 3, cooperative learning is a broad umbrella term for a wide variety of techniques and so, at this stage of my initial action research cycle, I needed to plan exactly how I would implement it. I chose to adapt elements from different cooperative learning strategies, mainly ‘Student Teams Achievement Divisions’ (STAD) (Slavin, 1980) and ‘Think-Pair-Share’ (TPS) (Lyman, 1987), in such a way as to address the problems identified in my situational analysis.

In Section 7.2, I will briefly describe how I adapted elements from different cooperative-learning strategies in such a way as to address each of the problems listed in the first paragraph above. The rest of the chapter describes how I prepared myself and the students for the intervention, through field visits (Section 7.3), orientation (Section 7.4) and lesson planning (Section 7.5). Section 7.6 concludes the chapter.

7.2 Cooperative learning strategies

7.2.1 Permanent groups

I decided to use permanent student groupings in order to address the following two problems:

- Formation of groups for group work takes up too much class time;
- Interactive activities are used infrequently.

A number of approaches to cooperative learning (broadly defined), such as Team-based learning (Michaelsen and Sweet, 2011), involve the use of permanent student groupings. As found by Bughio (2013) and confirmed in my own situational analysis, one of the main reasons why teachers tend not to use communicative methods in the large ESL classes at UoSJP is the desire not to waste class time on the process of forming groups. Having permanent groups that students work in during every class period, and actually sit in throughout the class period, overcomes

this problem. Furthermore, the arrangement of students in groups for the whole of the teaching time means that group work becomes the default mode of working.

Michaelson and Sweet (2011) argue that the teacher has a moral responsibility to organise students into groups rather than allowing students to choose their own groupings, as allowing students to choose can lead to discrimination and unhealthy group dynamics. Furthermore, I wanted to arrange mixed-ability groups, and therefore needed to arrange the groups myself, as only I had access to all students' scores from the previous semester. Each group normally included one high achiever, two medium achievers and three low achievers, so that they could learn from one another. Mixed-ability grouping is in line with Vygotskian theory (see Chapter 3). Mixed-ability groups mean that weaker-performing students can learn from stronger students, and that all teams can perform on an equal basis. Mixed-ability grouping is an explicit element of many cooperative learning techniques such as STAD. For all of these reasons, I decided to form my class into permanent teams. I gave careful thought to the size of these teams. One of the main cooperative learning strategies I planned to use, STAD (Slavin, 1980), has a recommended group size of 4-5 students. However, I predicted that such a small group size would have led to the formation of an untenably large number of groups, in terms of being able to arrange the chairs so as to leave enough space to move between the groups. I therefore decided to use slightly larger groups of six students. In fact, the recommended team size for the permanent groups in team-based learning is 5-7 (Michaelson and Sweet, 2011) students, but I chose six because I wanted as far as possible to have an even number in the groups to facilitate pair work.

7.2.2 Regular routine

In order to manage the class effectively and address the issue of discipline problems, I decided to introduce a regular routine to my classes; since much of the literature on communicative language teaching suggest that routines help avoid behaviour problems (e.g., Hess, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007). To this end, I decided to implement a limited number of cooperative learning strategies, so that the students could become thoroughly familiar with them. Because I thought it would be monotonous for students to work with one structure in every lesson, I decided to use two strategies. The strategies I chose were STAD (Slavin 1980) and TPS (Lyman, 1987). The reasons for choosing these two particular

strategies were largely related to the issue of class management. Some cooperative learning strategies require students to move around the classroom (e.g. Jigsaw) or even to work outside the classroom (e.g. Group Investigation), and I thought that both of these things would be time consuming and could lead to discipline problems. However, STAD and TPS lend themselves well to students working in fixed groups in the classroom.

The basic routine of my classes was initially adapted from the first of my chosen strategies, namely STAD. STAD is probably the most commonly used cooperative learning technique (Kagan 1994; Johnson and Johnson 1998, van Wyk, 2012). This strategy aims to improve motivation and interaction among students, develops social and cognitive skills and can be adapted to be used flexibly in a variety of contexts (Slavin, 2010). Slavin (1996a, p. 21) states ‘the main idea behind STAD is to motivate students to encourage and help one another master skills presented by the teacher.’ Firstly, the teacher gives a lecture to brief the students about a subject, then the students work together in teams of four-to-five, mixed-ability members to master the topic. The third stage involves a quiz, which the students take individually without conferring. The individual scores of team members are summed up to make the group score, so all students have an incentive for ensuring that their team-mates have understood the material. Slavin (*ibid*, p. 22.) emphasises that STAD is a way of ‘organising the classroom’ not a method for teaching any particular subject.

I took the basic stages of STAD as a foundation for the regular routine of my classes. I planned that each class would start with a short (5 minute) mini-lecture given by me, where I would introduce the text to be studied and clarify the task or tasks to be carried out. Then the students would work in groups to complete the tasks provided in the coursebook or on a separate worksheet. These tasks included, for example, both closed and open-ended comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises and exercises designed to develop awareness of language-usage patterns. Rather than finishing the class with a quiz, however, I decided to finish with 5-minute student presentations, in which group representatives, chosen at random, would present the answers agreed by their group or, where relevant, an account of their group discussion. I intended that if two students gave a presentation at the end of each class, every student would get a chance to present at some point during the semester. I did this because the results of the situational analysis showed that the presentation

was one of the most popular class activities with students. I expected that including a popular activity would increase the likelihood of the students wanting to participate. Furthermore, if the presenters were picked at random, this would ensure that every student needed to be prepared, and therefore to have engaged with the activity.

I decided to include an individual test just once every two weeks, i.e. in every sixth lesson. It is clear from empirical studies that cooperation *within* groups provides superior learning outcomes compared with individual competitive modes of learning across a wide range of indicators (Johnson, et al. 1981, 2000; Kyndt, et al., 2013). This is true irrespective of whether there is competition or cooperation *between* groups (Johnson, et al., 1981). However, the literature is much less conclusive when it comes to whether cooperation without intergroup competition is superior to cooperation with intergroup competition. I decided that I would award prizes to the three highest-performing groups after each test; I hypothesised that competition between groups would act as an incentive for the students to try their best and also to help their team-mates be as well-prepared as possible.

7.2.3 Pair work

My second choice of strategy, Think-Pair-Share (TPS) (Lyman, 1987), is, as its name indicates, a development of pair work. It was introduced to overcome concerns that only a few, more-able, students participate in the classes and that students who are not involved in the lesson tend to be disruptive. In this TPS technique, students listen to ‘a question or presentation, have time to think individually, talk to each other in pairs, and finally share responses with the larger group’ (McTighe and Lyman, 1988, p. 19). The teacher cues students to move from the thinking process to pairing, and then to sharing. TPS gives students time to process information in the form of wait-time. Wait-time improves students’ cognitive power. Students think of the ideas, share with their partner and then with the whole class. This step-by-step process makes students ready for discussions in larger groups (McTighe and Lyman, 1988 and Azlina and Ismail, 2010). Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2010) used TPS in large ESL classes in higher education, and reports that it improved participation and was well received by the students.

I chose to use a pair-based strategy as a way of maximising opportunities for all students to participate in the classes for two reasons. The first reason was that the main aim of my intervention was specifically to increase participation. The second was because I hypothesised that maximising participation would keep students involved and thereby reduce disruptive behaviour. There were several reasons why I thought pair work would maximise opportunities for all students to participate. Firstly, in group work, some students might 'hide' and others may dominate discussions, taking up more than their fair share of the time. I thought that pair work would give students more equal chances. Secondly, in pair work, the listener is more likely to remain focussed because s/he is the only listener, and also because s/he knows that the next turn of speaking is hers or his. Finally, pair work increases, in absolute terms, the amount of time each student can spend talking. In addition, some of the teachers in the situational analysis suggested that pair work keeps students more calm and disciplined than group work, and I therefore hypothesised that it would contribute to my overall aim of improving participation without creating management problems. In the basic structure of TPS, students are required to think individually on a subject matter, then discuss in pairs and finally share their work with the whole class. I adapted the last step slightly by requiring students to share with their group after the pair work, rather than with the class as a whole.

7.2.4 Roles in groups

I decided to use roles in groups in order to address the following issues: only a few more-able students participate in the classes and students who are not involved in the lesson tend to be disruptive. The issues of the lack of participation of especially weaker/shyer students and the disruption created by the off-task students were solved by adapting the roles from cooperative learning in general and with the use of TPS elements. Different roles were given to students to enhance their sense of individual accountability, and improve and enhance all students' engagement and participation equally. Cooperative learning requires distribution of work, as much as possible, through different roles given to group members, including inquirer, recorder and timekeeper. Therefore, in the present study, as well as a permanent leader, each group had three rotating roles: inquirer, presenter and timekeeper. These roles were intended to keep students engaged and, therefore, less disruptive. The responsibility of the different roles is as follows:

Group leader's (permanent) responsibility was to:

- report back the overall group's performance and each individual student's response during the task to the teacher;
- listen to other members' concerns and attempt to resolve them by interacting with the teacher;
- manage and coordinate group discussion.

Inquirer's (rotating) duty was to:

- ask the teacher questions for further clarification on behalf of the group

Presenter's (rotating) role was to:

- demonstrate the group's work through presentations

Timekeeper's (rotating) part was to:

- keep the record of the time of each step in the task and inform other group members, so that they could complete the task on time and be ready for the presentation at the end

In every lesson these roles rotated. I made sure myself that in each lesson there was a different timekeeper, presenter and inquirer by keeping the record in my diary. To ensure that students in these roles performed their duties, I monitored them. For example, when they asked me, I made sure that it was the inquirer who asked. Similarly, I consulted my diary notes and checked with every group if the timekeeper was different from the one in the previous lesson(s).

7.2.5 Devolved responsibility

The problems such as only a few more able students interact with the teacher; students receive little if any feedback on their work, and interactive activities are used infrequently. The issues mentioned above were further dealt with through devolution of the learning responsibility. The elements of these strategies helped me to achieve my objective of enhancing student engagement with language-learning processes by devolving responsibility to the students. Cooperative learning objectives indicate that interaction with the teacher is not the only way of learning. Therefore, it aims to transfer this responsibility to students and enhances interaction

among them. However, paradoxically, the devolution in responsibility has two benefits for the students. On the one hand, students are made to engage in interaction with one another, and on the other hand, the teacher is released from lecturing, and therefore can easily monitor students, attend to individual needs, and give feedback.

7.2.6 Position of the teacher

The issue of back-benchers not being able to see and hear the teacher was dealt with by changing my position. The groups were positioned so that the centre was left sufficiently spacious for a teacher to stand and move around. Although lecturing was reduced, instructions were given from the central position where the students could easily see and hear me. However, since I was not lecturing and therefore freer, I intended to keep moving around, monitoring, giving feedback and attending and encouraging off-task students - especially during individual work. This position tended to keep the students alert and myself easily accessible to all the students. This tends not to be so easy in a large class, in which the teacher stands at the front and cannot move around due to the congested rows of chairs.

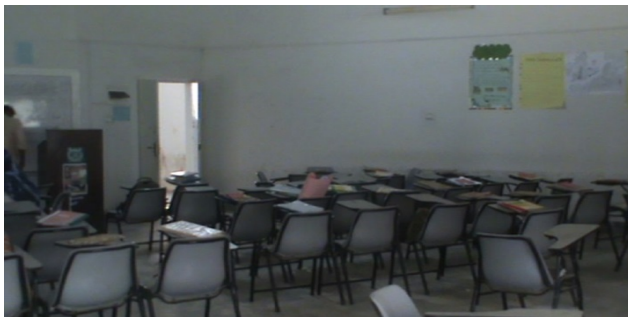
7.3 Field visits

In order to facilitate the process of organising the administrative support required, I selected the class in my home department, the Institute of English Language and Literature. Before the intervention process, I wanted to get information about the situations/field where these activities were to be introduced. Therefore, the first thing I decided was to meet the Head of the Institute of English Language and Literature, the institute where these activities were planned to be implemented. The meeting with the head was positive. He was very encouraging and assured me of every possible help from his side. His first help came in the form of allowing me to teach a compulsory English class for the purpose of the intervention.

I also needed to know the views of the students in whose class I was going to conduct the intervention. Although it was not possible to meet all students of the class, I managed to have a meeting with the Class Representative (CR). I told him about my plan. Through him, I wanted to know how the other students would react to the plan, and what suggestions they could come up with. I assumed that these students would tell him everything frankly and objectively. Therefore, I asked the CR to inform them about the planned intervention and asked for their reactions and suggestions.

At the next meeting, the CR reported that the students were motivated and eager to learn through these types of activities. The only concern that the students voiced was that they did not want a third party for the class video recording. They either wanted me to record the class, or to fix the cameras. Two main reasons were given for this: firstly, the female students would not like any other person to record them, and secondly, it would make students nervous. This was very helpful and changed the course of my initial planning. In the initial planning, I decided to hire some professional people to cover the whole process accurately and closely in the recording.

I visited the classroom where the intervention was to be carried out in order to see the physical set-up and determine the places for fixing the cameras. During the visit, one of my colleagues accompanied me to the classroom and helped me to decide the right angles. From the infrastructure perspectives, the class had an average look and lacked modern audio-visual aids. Only a micro-phone system was available. However, luckily, it was furnished with movable chairs, which would be of great help in forming groups (see Picture 7.1).



Picture 7.1: Classroom used for intervention

7.4 Orientation

Before the full intervention, I held orientation meetings with students and the colleagues who were to observe the intervention. The colleagues were informed in their respective offices about the intervention process and the observation instrument so that they could become acquainted with the process and feel comfortable during observation. Students were oriented in the classroom through multimedia presentations in five classes (see Picture 7.2). Firstly, they were informed about cooperative learning and its strategies generally. Secondly, they were told in detail about STAD and TPS and the planned process of their intervention specifically.

Students were also told about the classroom routines and rules of conduct (see Section 7.6).



Picture 7.2: Orienting students

Writers on cooperative learning (e.g. Slavin, 1991) advocate using mixed-gender groups. It is obvious that single-sex groups limit the potential for the sharing of ideas and experience by restricting students' access during group work to only half the class, and only to other students with similar gender-based experience. In order to maximise the potential for the cross-fertilisation of ideas, I would have liked to use mixed-gender groups in my class. However, as described in Chapter 6, male and female students usually sit separately at UoSJP. I knew from experience that, in the cultural context of Pakistan, some female students would refuse to work in groups with men and might stop attending class if I insisted that they did so. During the orientation, I therefore discussed this issue with the class. On the whole, the male students were in favour of mixed-sex groups, but many of the women were against the idea. It is unfortunately the case that some male students behave inappropriately towards their female classmates, for example by continuously staring at them. Furthermore, families might object to their daughters or sisters working in groups with male classmates. It was beyond the scope of my study to address these issues and, since my main aim was to improve participation in general, I wanted to avoid anything that might potentially reduce attendance. I therefore decided to use single-sex groupings.

In the last two classes of the orientation, a total of thirteen groups (each group having six members) were finally formed. However, later, during the intervention process, group adjustments were made and the members of one group were merged with members of other groups; this left us with twelve groups in the end (see Chapter 8:

Sub-section 8.2.4). Students named their groups according to their choices. Table 7.1 displays the groups' names.

Table 7.1: Groups with their names

S.No	Group Name	S.No	Group Name
1	Meritorious Anglicans	7	Immkan
2	The Suffering Champions	8	Survivors
3	The Rising Anglicans	9	Ferrari
4	Innocent	10	The Leading Fraternity
5	Horizon	11	The Wieldiest Creatures
6	Sparks	12	The Emerging Anglicans

As previously described, each group had a group leader. Since both action research and cooperative learning are social and promote democratic processes, I asked the groups to select their leaders. Both cooperative learning and action research aim to promote students' or participants' autonomy. Therefore, students were not just participants, but they were the collaborators in the projects and were asked to take responsibility for their learning independently. Their legitimate choices and decisions were respected. If I had selected their leaders, it would still have been a traditional method. If they had been selected using competitive measures, it would not have been compatible with the criteria recommended both by cooperative learning and action research. Both action research and cooperative learning aim to enhance cooperation and participation, not competition (Johnson and Johnson, 1994; 2009 and Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

7.5 Rules of conduct and common routines

For the successful conduct of the implementation of any modern student-centred method in large classes, it is always suggested that rules of conduct and routines are established (Hess, 2001; Harmer, 2007). These rules and routines keep students informed about processes and keep them disciplined. The following rules and routines were established in the orientation in collaboration with students (listed below in section 7.5.1). Every possible effort was made to implement the rules of conduct and common routines during the intervention process. However, during the process of intervention, new issues were also raised. To address these new issues, some of the existing rules and routines needed to be adjusted. This is mentioned and discussed with the process of each action-research cycle (Chapter 8: Cycle 1-4).

7.5.1 Rules of conduct

- Students must listen to others and share one by one.

- All members must get and be given equal chances of sharing. No one will dominate in sharing and no one will lag behind in the same.
- Group leaders and the teacher must make sure everyone contributes actively and equally.
- Maximum use of L2 (English) must be ensured by group leaders and the teacher.
- Students must use polite ways of communicating during discussion/arguments.
- Group leaders must be responsible for ensuring polite behaviour. If students continue with ill-mannered behaviour and language, they will be subjected to a sanction in the form of expulsion from the class and their names will be sent to the Director of IELL.

7.5.2 Common routines

Fixing of cameras, hand-out distribution, clear instruction through a mini-lecture, and taking the register were common routines in every lesson. To make the process quicker and to save time, I trained two group leaders to help me with camera-fixing. The act of fixing cameras was not difficult. There were two cameras, which were already attached to tripods and only needed to be put in the corner. The same group leaders, one was the CR, helped me in the distribution of hand-outs, while I started to instruct the students and inform them about new decisions taken for the efficacy of the process of the intervention. Once the hand-outs were distributed to the groups, I continued with instructions about the process and lessons through a mini-lecture of 3-5 minutes. However, the process of instruction was an on-going action, which continued even after students started working on tasks. I kept moving and instructing those who were still unclear and needed more information. I took the register of the missing students after the students started working on their task. I only noted the names of the absent students in each group, as it was easier than taking the register of all the students in the class. In the following lesson, I called out the registered names, asked the reason for their absence and warned them.

7.6 Lesson planning

The compulsory ESL classes at UoSJP follow a prescribed syllabus approved by the Higher Education Commission. As mentioned in Section 1.5, the main coursebook for these classes is *English for Undergraduates* by D. H. Howe, T. A. Kirkpatrick

and D. L. Kirkpatrick (2006). The syllabus is based mainly on this book, and essentially consists of dividing the book into four sections, one section to be covered in each semester of the two years. For the reasons described in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.2.1, above), I had chosen second-year students for my situational analysis and I therefore also chose to teach a second-year class for the intervention stage of the study. To fit in with the timing of this research study, I taught the second semester, and therefore had to cover the final quarter of the coursebook.

The textbook is designed to support a communicative approach to teaching, and each of the eleven units incorporates exercises intended to develop the four language skills. Following these units, there is a section at the back of the book called 'Extended Reading', which consists of 15 literary texts of varying lengths, from a few lines of poetry to a four-page story, accompanied by comprehension questions. Possibly, the coursebook writers intended that these reading passages should be used to supplement the main units. However, because of the way the syllabus has been designed at UoSJP, with a quarter of the book assigned to each semester, the text for the final semester consists entirely of this Extended Reading. The course objectives for this final semester are 'to expose students to a variety of literary works, consisting of English, American, Pakistani, original and translated literary pieces' (see *Appendix 4.1A*). So the course is part literature and part reading comprehension, yet every undergraduate student at the university, irrespective of their subject of study, has to take this course. In terms of communicative language teaching, the syllabus for this semester clearly leaves much to be desired. It was beyond the scope of my PhD to try to tackle the problem of the syllabus, although as a result of my studies I hope to address this in the future. For the purposes of my intervention, my aim was to use the prescribed reading passages as a vehicle for discussion and interaction in the medium of English, while at the same time enabling students to develop their vocabulary and global reading skills by better engaging with the material. To this end, I used both the comprehension questions provided in the book, as well as supplementary exercises that I created myself.

Lesson plans were prepared from the exercises in the prescribed book (see Chapter 1). Since STAD and TPS have already organised steps, it was not difficult to prepare the lesson plans. The tasks in these lesson plans were prepared following the steps of the strategies. The instruction on task-hand-outs provided clear instructions and well-

organised steps for students to go through the task (see *Appendix 4.1B and 4.1C*). In consultation with my supervisory team, the lesson plans included all those elements that helped to enhance students' engagement with language learning processes through various exercises. These focussed on:

- group tasks and discussions;
- individual tasks leading to group tasks and discussion;
- reading comprehension;
- writing;
- speaking;
- listening;
- student-student interaction;
- student-teacher interaction;
- peer-review or peer-assessment;
- teacher feedback.

In the last class of orientation, a demonstration was made for 35 minutes in which the student groups were asked to complete two tasks picked from their coursebook *English for Undergraduates* (see Chapter 1), with the help of STAD and TPS. I briefed the tasks through a mini lecture first. In TPS, they were given a paragraph taken from the passage provided in Unit 10 *English for Undergraduate* (see Chapter 1). I asked them to read a paragraph individually and to try to guess the meaning of four underlined words in about five minutes. They were then asked to discuss the paragraph and meaning with a partner sitting next to them in seven minutes, and finally each pair was asked to present their findings before the whole group in four minutes. In STAD, the groups were asked to answer two open-ended questions taken from the paragraph. They were instructed to read the paragraph again in groups and discuss the possible answers. At the end, one group was asked to present their findings before the whole class in the form of a presentation. These processes of STAD were to be done in 15 minutes. I alerted the timekeepers in each group to keep a record of the time and ask their group members to work within the time prescribed for processes with both the strategies. Also, the instructions on the hand-outs clearly specified time for each item in the tasks.

7.7 Summary

In this chapter the planning for the first cycle of the implementation of cooperative learning is described and discussed. I have delineated how and why I selected and adapted the elements of STAD and TPS for the implementation, in order to address the problems discovered in the situational analysis, and how I worked out the field requirements. Finally, I have explained how I oriented the students and teacher-observers for the implementation, and how I planned lessons.

8 Intervention

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the intervention stage of my project, conducted while I was teaching the second year undergraduate English Compulsory class in the Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL) at UoSJP during the second semester of 2013. This stage actually consisted of a series of mini action research cycles. I took action, i.e. taught the class, on the basis of my initial planning and, after each lesson, evaluated my action in the light of my aims, and adjusted my plan before the next class. The evaluation after each lesson relied on the following sources of information:

- A student lesson-evaluation form
- Meetings with the student group leaders
- Qualitative comments made by my colleagues who observed the classes
- My own reflection, recorded in a diary

The student lesson-evaluation form (adapted from Grundman, 2002) consisted of six short open-ended questions to enable me to get a quick snapshot of the students' experience on a regular basis (*see Appendix 4.1E*); this form was circulated after every lesson. I also planned to meet regularly, once a week, with the group leaders to reflect together on the progress of the intervention and plan for the following week; in practice, however, only two meetings took place. All my colleagues who teach English language at IELL were invited to act as observers to monitor the process of intervention. However, not all of them could come to observe, and it was not possible to have an observer in every session because of their busy schedule. However, in-class live observation was arranged for seven lessons, involving 6 different observers (one of these observers monitored two lessons). Finally, I kept a record of my own experience using a reflective diary, as adopted by Grundman (2002).

English Compulsory classes run for one hour, three times a week, theoretically for 16 weeks per semester, giving a total of 48 hours. In practice, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is rare that all 48 hours are delivered because of student boycotts and

other disruptions to teaching. Lessons are cancelled for two main reasons: student involvement in politics and student self-granted leave. Student involvement in political activities was perhaps the most disturbing issue that affected teaching during the intervention process. Due to clashes between different student political parties and the administration, the teaching and learning at the university frequently gets suspended because the student political parties call class boycotts. Class boycotts are called for multiple reasons, including to pressurise the administration to accept the party's demands, for example, to hold a day of mourning for their leaders' deaths or arrests, and to celebrate an event in praise of their party or leaders. In the semester of my intervention, 5 classes were missed because of such boycotts. 'Self-granted leave' is when students unanimously decide through their class representatives that they will not attend classes for a specified period. The duration of this leave ranges from one to thirty days or more. Students go on self-granted leave mostly for two reasons: firstly, for some social or religious festivals like Eid; and secondly for the preparation of upcoming examinations (midterm or final exams). Due to students' self-granted leave for Eid-ul-Fitr, the start of the intervention process of the study was delayed by a month. Later, students once again went on leave for one week because they wanted to prepare for the midterm exam in October. For these various reasons, in the semester of my intervention, only 23 of the scheduled classes actually took place. Of these, I used the first five for the orientation process described in the previous chapter, and the remaining eighteen for my cycles of action and reflection.

In the rest of this chapter, I first discuss the cycle for each of the first four lessons separately and in detail. Then, from lesson 5 to 18, all the lessons are described and discussed together, because from the fourth lesson onwards the intervention went smoothly except for a few lingering problems.

8.2 Intervention: Report on process

The Intervention of these strategies was carried out through action research. I started to teach an ESL class at the university with the help of the planned strategies. The action research cyclic process of intervention was observed through the colleague-observers (see Picture 8.1), was reflected on and modified for improvement when needed.



Picture 8.1: The observer and the teacher-researcher

8.2.1 First cycle: 11th of September, 2013

In the first lesson for intervention, about seventy students were present in the class. STAD was implemented (see *Appendix 4.1B*). It began with a slow pace because students were not familiar with everything. Although they had been prepared, via orientation, they still consumed some time, about eight minutes in forming groups. When all students were settled in their respective groups, I, with the help of the CR, distributed hand-outs to students, which also took some time. Once the class started, the students got absorbed in tasks following the steps given in the hand-out text. I kept moving about and encouraging the students to share, especially those who were reluctant to participate.

Benefits: Students

The students liked working in the cooperative learning setting because it was a new and interesting learning method for them, which increased their knowledge, interaction and participation. Furthermore, they were happy because it was like fun, gave them chances to participate and encouraged the shy students who did not share in their previous classes. The main benefits experienced by them were that cooperative learning enhanced the following elements: group discussion; interaction; participation; knowledge; and cooperation among students; as reflected in the following comments:

Activity provides new trends in language teaching [sic] through this type of activity we increase our knowledge.

It helps us to get more knowledge from teammates.

It was fun to discuss and find out different potentials among group members.

Through this activity, students got chance to speak and learn specially [sic] those who were not active previously.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 11-09-2013)

Problems faced by students

Alongside benefits, several shortcomings were also witnessed by the students. The main shortcomings that they experienced were: the quiet and shy behaviour of some group members; volume of noise; time constraints; lengthy tasks; and homogenous gender grouping. They mentioned that some of the group members were either shy or were passive during discussion which disturbed the flow of the activity. Moreover, noise, lengthiness of tasks and time constraints kept the students tense about the task-completion. They wanted me to restructure groups into mixed-gender grouping for enhancement of their confidence. However, it was not clarified by the male students how their working with the female students would enhance their confidence. This comment (see below) indicates that their interest was in using the female students as a means of enhancing confidence, rather than gaining academic benefits. Perhaps, from this comment the reasons why the majority of the female students refused to work in mixed-gender groups might be implied (see Chapter 7). However, this aspect could further be investigated in future, from the perspectives of both male and female students, to gain clearer picture. These problems are mirrored in the students' comments:

Uncooperative and shy behaviour of some students

Lack of interest in some members

Noise

Short time duration created tension [sic] we could not do the way it should have been done.

Boys and girls should be mixed in groups to enhance confidence of male students.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 11-09-2013)

Observer's comments

The observer's comments were positive, he (observer was a male in this lesson) found that cooperative learning enhanced student participation and encouraged them to actively engage in the process of discussions and interaction with their classmates and the teacher. This idea is strongly represented by the observer in the following comments:

This activity is praiseworthy...students get full information from their classmates and ask from teacher... students share their knowledge about topic...80% students ask from teacher [sic] [when] they need any help.

(Comments from observer's instrument, 11-09-2013)

My observation

The majority of students seemed to be fully involved and happy with the process. The process went well; the students' and the observer's comments provided evidence that it was constructive. However, it appeared that it needed more planning which will be discussed later. I also performed an active role as a facilitator (see Picture 7.2) and kept moving around the class answering the students' queries, helping them with the ambiguities they faced and also ensuring that the passive students participated.



Picture 8.2: Teacher performing as a facilitator

Despite the fact that it was a smooth intervention, as evidenced in the students' and observers' comments (see Section 8.2.1), there were two other problems which were not observed by the students and the observer. They were: the students consumed more time (5-6 minutes) during settling into their respective groups and some more time consumed (4-5 minutes) on distributing hand-outs.

Moreover, things in the beginning were very hectic for me. I faced two types of extra difficulties: prior-to-intervention difficulties and during-intervention difficulties. In the prior-to-intervention difficulties, I had to spend extensive amounts of extra time and money on planning lessons, preparing hand-outs and printing them. This difficulty has to do with my research. Since I was conducting research, therefore, I spent extra money and time on hand-outs, which can otherwise be made easier in everyday teaching if teachers use black/white board and can spend less time in preparing hand-outs. However, I believe that planning lessons in advance, should be

an official duty of an ESL teacher. In the during-intervention difficulties, my constant moving around in the class, answering and listening to students' queries and problems, reinforcing the benefits of the approach to the passive off-task students, controlling the active off-task students and other class management issues were main problems. However, these difficulties were an outcome of my being new to these types of experiments and, as the project progressed, I realised they were not felt so much.

Reflections and decisions taken for next cycle

It was here, during the first cycle, that I observed and reflected that STAD needed one more adaptation and decided to add another step to the strategy: that is, working individually on the topic before discussing in groups. Initially, I decided to ask the students to begin working in groups soon after the mini-lecture. But I realized that they, being inexperienced in group work, could not manage go directly into the group work part of the strategy after the mini-lecture. Being expected to do this confused them, especially the low achievers, in terms of initial understanding of the topic and made them depend on the understanding of the high achievers. Therefore, I decided to add another step to the strategy. that is, working individually on the topic before discussing in groups. In the traditional STAD structure, students are supposed to decide among themselves how to go through the topic after the mini-lecture, which might have forced them to make decisions but with a consequence of consuming more time. Before this step, the students had very little to discuss and share and very little knowledge about the topic they were listening to or discussing. Moreover, this adaptation added another step to the real structure of STAD and made the students work in an even more organised way.

Among the problems mentioned and faced by the students, two problems i.e. the limited time duration and homogenous gender grouping were beyond my reach, therefore, could not be addressed. These were related to the administration and female students' consent. The remaining problems were reflected upon and efforts were made to address them.

To address the problem of the passivity of some members in groups, I arranged a meeting with the group leaders to discuss the issue and asked them to continue encouraging the shy/passive members. I also decided to explain and convince them

about the benefits of cooperative learning in the next class which was then, in the following week after four days (because there were three classes each week). However, it was clear that the shy students would take some time to get accustomed to the situation. As far as the issue of noise was concerned, it was more productive than destructive because it was the product of group discussions therefore inevitable (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). To address the complaints of the task being lengthy, I decided to keep it short and simple, but I had to cover the syllabus. Although the syllabus was not too lengthy to be covered in 48 lessons, given the reduced time period after boycotts and other disruptions (see Section 8.1), I judged I could not complete the topic if I kept the tasks very short. Moreover, to address the issue of the time consumed when settling in groups, I told the group leaders to ask their group members to settle down in their respective groups before my arrival in the class, and anyone not sitting in the group and still outside would not be allowed in the class after my arrival. I also asked the CR and another group leader to help me in distributing hand-outs so that we could save time.

8.2.2 Second cycle: 16th of September, 2013

At the beginning of the lesson, I discussed the problem of the students' passive attitude and explained the benefits of the approach to the shy and passive students and suggested to them that, if they participated more, their language skills would develop more and their problems of understanding the task or text would decrease. I also asked the group leaders and other group members to help their group mates in clarifying and explaining the task, and text and to ensure that everyone participated. Before I started to discuss this, I had already asked the CR and another group leader to hand over the hand-outs to the groups, thus when I finished, they had already distributed the hand-outs which saved time. Moreover, in this lesson, the students also settled down easily, and took less time (about 3-4 minutes). Late-comers were reminded of the rules and were strictly informed that, if they came later than the teacher in the next class, they would not be allowed into the class.

Benefits: Students

The students' responses (via their lesson-evaluation forms) referred to similar benefits to those mentioned in cycle 1 (see above). They thought that by working through cooperative learning, they had the chance to know one another and to share and get different ideas. Moreover, they appreciated that in the cooperative learning

setting, they had several minds working together which was more effective than working individually. The following comments from the students reflect these benefits:

I liked the cooperation of group mates concerning with the interesting exercise. I liked it because I realized that I could not have done that exercise in a short time without the help of my group members.

This gave me a chance to know others and their ideas.

I really enjoyed cooperative learning because instead of 1 mind 5 minds produced better results.

I liked the exchange of ideas in this activity, because it enriched my knowledge and enhanced cooperation.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 16-09-2013)

Problems faced by students

In the second lesson the number of problems mentioned reduced. However, the problem of some students' passivity was still raised by their fellows. Moreover, they complained of limited time duration of the class, which only allowed one group to give presentations at the end of the task. Two typical comments below sum up these problems.

Uncooperative [passive] attitude of some group members

Limited time, only one group could come for presentation.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 16-09-2013)

Observer's comments

The second observer's comments were also encouraging and positive like the first one's (see 2nd observer's comments below). He commented that the students were comfortable, actively involved and were given feedback. However, he pointed that some students were still passive during the discussions because they were inexperienced with this interactive form of learning:

Students were actively involved.

All feedback was positive.

Some remain passive. A little passive, as it's their first experience.

(Comments from observer's instrument, 16-09-2013)

In addition, a new problem of absenteeism was indicated by the students in their lesson evaluation forms. They commented that the absence of one or two group members disturbed the activity. This is expressed in the following statements:

I disliked the absence of teammates.

Those students who are absent effect [affect] [sic] groups...

(Comments from evaluation forms, 16-09-2013)

My observation

Careful attempts were being made to conduct the class. I observed that the students were noticeably excited and were engaged in doing the task step by step as described in the hand-out (See *Appendix 4.1B and 4.1C*). I was moving around the class, and trying to approach those students who seemed disengaged and passive. I went to them and inquired of the reasons of their passivity and disengagement. The main reason for their passivity (as explained by them) was their poor English. Due to this reason, either they could not understand the text, when working individually, or, when working in groups, they did not understand their group members or could not participate because they were not very fluent in English. I told them that when they did not understand anything in the text; they could either consult me for clarification of the problem, or ask any member of their group, instead of sitting passively. Furthermore, I tried to explain to them how, by listening to other group members, they would become more able to understand, and share actively. I also warned the group leaders and other group members to help the passive members with their difficulties. I also noticed that all groups asked me questions through the inquirer. Moreover, the two other rotating roles, timekeeper, and presenter were also fulfilling their responsibilities.

Reflections and decisions taken for next cycle

I wished to meet the group leaders after every lesson but, due to their busy schedule of classes, it was hard for me to catch them immediately after this class. This time, as mentioned, two problems were occurring i.e. the issue of passivity of some group members (as already mentioned in the first lesson) and, the second, the absence of some group members, as a new problem that was noticed by the students in this second lesson. About the first problem, I still believed that the shy and passive students would start participating actively very soon after some lessons were conducted. However, the problem of absenteeism seemed out-of-reach because at

UoSJP there is no complete check on the register of students. As a result, the students might not have any fear of being excluded from the examination due to attendance that is lower than required. Moreover, I also decided to arrange another meeting with the group leaders in the same week at their convenience.

8.2.3 Third cycle: 17th of September, 2013

The lesson began as usual. In the lecture, firstly, I announced the decision about taking the register regularly and informed the students that, if their attendance was lower than 75%, they would not be permitted to take the final examination for compulsory English. Besides, I once again explained to the passive/shy students how they could best facilitate their engagement and reduce passivity by asking me or their group members for clarification, and I also asked the group leaders to inform me about any passive/shy students, during the class, so that I could talk to them on a one to one basis. After that, the steps of the activity were clarified through instructions. However, as soon as, I finished with the instruction, one of the group leaders waved and told me that they could not openly identify passive students because this would affect their friendship with them and might cause hostility. Therefore, I decided to keep a vigilant eye on all the passive students myself.

Lesson 3 was conducted through STAD. The students seemed busy in their tasks and, to be frank, I was even busier. I had to run around explaining, giving feedback and encouraging the shyer students throughout 40 minutes (because around ten minutes were consumed on common routines every day). However, the process was getting better, and I realized that the students seemed to understand the steps of the activities. They asked less about the activity than in the first two lessons, which was a positive achievement and suggested that intervention with any new teaching and learning method improves with the passage of time. For example, the observer of this lesson commented that all the students were following the steps and ‘...*only few students need to be encouraged*’ (see Section 8.2.2). This finding, of students gaining confidence with new approaches and processes is corroborated by other studies (e.g. Carpenter, 2006; Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007; Kuchah and Richard, 2011).

Benefits: Students

From the students’ comments, it was clear that the majority of them liked learning in the cooperative learning set-up. For example, a student commented in his lesson

evaluation form: *'I am totally happy with cooperative learning because by doing this we learn lots of things'*. The students' comments were getting more positive about their learning. They pointed out that these techniques enhanced their confidence, practice, communicative skills, vocabulary, knowledge and cooperation. The following students' comments very strongly represent these benefits of cooperative learning:

I liked working in cooperative learning because in this way we build up our confidence.

This activity is the nicest because we increase our knowledge and confidence.

I liked discussion in this activity, because we share knowledge, vocabulary and thoughts.

This activity is interesting because it creates cooperation.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 17-09-2013)

Problems faced by students

Most importantly, the students' comments were getting less negative and problems were diminishing. Their comments for this lesson did not indicate the problem of passive and unresponsive behaviour of some students, which was definitely encouraging news. However, the problem of absenteeism continued, which I expected would also decrease once the routine of taking the register starts regularly which was started in this lesson. Beside the issue of absenteeism, another issue was raised by the students i.e. they complained that some group members did not bring their coursebooks, which disturbed the task.

Observer's comments

The observer's comments were positive; especially with regard to encouragement for my efforts as a teacher. He pointed out that my action of moving around in the class and reassuring and explaining to the students made them more active and mobilised. However, he also pointed that some students were still hesitant to participate and needed more attention but, on the whole, the process was appreciated by him:

Yes sure, the steps of the activity have clearly been explained to students by the teacher.

Yes, the teacher was continuously monitoring as well as taking notes.

Yes, the teacher approaches the off-task students for mobilising them.

Yes, most students are following the steps of the strategy.

There is a balanced attitude among students.

Some students were hesitant because of the traditional methods in most of classes.

(Comments from observer's instrument, 17-09-2013)

My observation

The process of intervention was improving in each successive lesson which was a positive factor. The observer's and students' comments were also positive and promising, which made me continue the same with extra efforts. The issues raised were not so serious and the time management of lessons was under control.

Reflections and decisions taken for next cycle

As mentioned earlier, the two issues were asked by the students to be addressed in this lesson. The issue of absenteeism, which I believed would wane with the passage of time because I had started taking the register. Furthermore, a new issue of not bringing the coursebooks in the class by some group members was not very serious. I decided to ask the students to bring the books regularly. I also kept a photocopy of every unit/text that was to be discussed in every upcoming class at the photocopy shop, which was just outside the class in the same building. I asked the students if they could not bring their books due to any reason, they might get a photocopy of the unit/text from the shop easily at a regular price.

8.2.4 Fourth cycle: 18th of September, 2013

In the fourth cycle of the intervention, both the activities, STAD and TPS were used. Apart from the routine procedures, which were carried out as usual, the whole process continued smoothly without any noticeable hindrance. At the beginning of the lesson, the students who were absent in the previous lesson were warned to be present, if not, they would suffer the consequences of their lack of attendance. Those students who did not bring their books that day were asked to go and get a copy of the unit/text from the photo-copy shop, which also went well. Moreover, the group leaders and other members were once again reminded to help the passive/shy students by explaining and clarifying the task.

Benefits: Students

Until now, the students' comments indicated that they were noticeably satisfied with the implementation of cooperative learning. Their comments were becoming more positive and supported the process. The important benefits stated by them are reflected in their comments that follow:

This activity taught how to differentiate [sic] two things.

...everyone shares ideas.

...we get confidence, we share information. We understand things easily through it.

...it gives equal chances to every student to share ideas.

I enjoyed it a lot because I daily learn something new.

I enjoyed, there was nothing that I didn't like.

(Comments from evaluation forms, 18-09-2013)

Problems faced by students

In this lesson, the issue of passivity of some group members rose again, which was not indicated in the last lesson. Some students still complained that some members still did not fully participate especially in contributing to group discussion by sharing ideas. Moreover, the absence of some group members was also mentioned by some students in their evaluation forms. *'All members of the group were not present, which hindered our learning'*. However, the issue of unavailability of the books with some members was solved successfully, and surprisingly, to save the money spent on buying photocopies of units every day, many started to bring the book regularly.

Observer's comments

The observer's comments were also promising. He commented that the teacher was moving about the class *'very actively'* and assisting the students *'whenever needed'*. *'Feedback and learning are positive'*. Conversely, this observer also noticed that some students were still passive and were not actively involved. I do not challenge the views of the observer, but it might be the case that he was observing students who were listening actively to other group members. This was also the part of the activity that, in each group, one member had to speak at a time, and others were to listen to him/her. Whatever the reasons might be, it was clear that the intervention was going smoothly excluding the problem of passivity or unresponsiveness of some members which was witnessed by the observers and also experienced by the students. The observer further commented:

Teacher gave assistance whenever needed.

Cooperation among students is clear.

Average and below average are getting assistance.

Feedback and learning are positive.

Some learners still have passive role but are learning well.

(Comments from observer's instrument, 18-09-2013)

My observation

The implementation process seemed to improve in every lesson. The students and observers' comments indicated that the majority of students were considerably serious about learning through cooperative learning. Although some shy students in some groups continued to remain passive, to some extent, the frequency of the students' comments about the issue was reduced.

Reflections and decisions taken for next cycle

I held a meeting with the group leaders the next day because this was the last lesson of this week, and we had no class that day. The focus of the meeting was how to help the passive group members and control the register issue. The group leaders complained that some members, however, were not shy but did not like cooperative learning very much because they liked listening to lectures. Therefore, they either bunked the classes or, when they attended the class, they did not share eagerly. For example, GLF5 reported: *'in my group all members are very cooperative, but one member is not cooperating, I don't know why,... Even, I have tried to encourage many times, but she is not coming forward.'* However, on the whole, the group leaders' views were very positive. They commented:

We all are very active, and progressing except the one student, she remains absent most of the time.

...very important thing is that our presentation skills are developed very much and because we have to speak, discuss, and give presentation, our confidence is developed a lot.

...we have to work step by step so we have become organised and critical.

We have developed our speaking, reading, listening and writing skills.

My all members in the group are very cooperative and the progress that we have made is presentation skills, and also speaking skills.

(Comments from group leaders 05-12-2013)

From this meeting, it was found that some about 6-7 students were not happy with the intervention process and were absent in most of the lessons. GLM10 reported: *'Some students don't like this activity and remain absent or only come to disturb'.* They had already decided that they would not listen to the teacher or their group

leaders. Some group leaders asked me to give them new and cooperative group members, because: *'one or two group members in their groups are always absent'*. This demand of the group leaders was valid because to fulfil the requirements of the strategies, an even number (6 members) of members was necessary, specifically, during the conduct of TPS.

I, therefore, decided to do some re-adjustment in the groups. I decided to make a separate group made up of those students who were frequently absent. However, this group was rarely present, therefore, has not been included in the study. The gap of these members in the groups was filled by members from another group. One group was broken up, with their consent, and the members were merged into five other groups. This step was not encouraging, but I had to take this decision for the betterment of the groups and students. However, before forming a new group of these absent and unresponsive members, I announced in the class that if anyone was not interested in learning in this class, they could be accommodated (with their consent) in another ESL class at the university where the same syllabus is taught. These classes were conducted at the same time everywhere in the university. No student came forward for this and so I had no option but to make the re-adjustment. After the re-adjustment, the issues of passivity and complaints of absenteeism in the groups were controlled noticeably. However, some shy students still needed some more reinforcement and explanation to support their active participation.

Henceforth, lessons will not be discussed separately. I will give detailed analysis and discussion of all the remaining 14 lessons together, because from the fourth lesson, the intervention went smoothly except for a few problems. I will analyse the students' and the observers' comments about the on-going interventions, together with my own reflections. Then, I will discuss the main decisions taken after my reflections.

8.2.5 Analysis of cycles 5-18

The process described above was continued in all the remaining cycles, with planned lessons, and every effort was taken to make them run smoothly. Both STAD and TPS were used either by turns or sometimes together. All the previously decided routines were followed regularly and every step was taken to keep problems under control.

Benefits: Students

The majority of students liked learning through cooperative learning and expressed their satisfaction through their comments via the lesson-evaluation instrument. The students' focus remained on the advantages which have been mentioned earlier (see above). The major themes accumulated from their comments were: enhancement in confidence, sharing of ideas, knowledge, participation, interaction, practice and language skills. The students' comments in their lesson evaluation forms strongly represent these themes:

...my teammates share many new ideas and I learn from them (Lesson-5: 25-9-2013).

...[it] leads to better understanding (Lesson-6: 30-9-2013).

...it is only way to build confidence (Lesson-8: 2-10-2013).

I improve my writing skills (Lesson-11: 09-10-2013).

I liked the way students participated in activity (Lesson-12: 4-11-2013).

It was bit challenging and bit different from other activities (Lesson-15: 11-11-2013).

Observers' comments

The observers similarly continued with positive comments. Their comments mostly appreciated the teacher's efforts to keep the students and class lively and active. However, they also appreciated students' involvement and cooperative learning as an engagement-enhancing strategy:

The teacher was trying to involve each student (Observer 6, lesson 7: 01-10-13).

The teacher frequently monitors off-task students (Observer 6, lesson 7: 01-10-13).

The majority of the students were following the strategy (Observer 6, lesson 7: 01-10-13).

Yes, the teacher is moving about the class, thus students' attention remains intact (Observer 10, Lesson 11: 09-10-13).

The strategy engages all levels of students (Observer 10, Lesson 11: 09-10-13).

Problems

The problems mentioned by the observers and students in the beginning were many, but as the process went on, these started to decrease. It shows that the

implementation of cooperative learning needs time, consistency and regularity so that students become accustomed to this way of working.

Problems identified by students

The issues of absenteeism and quietness of some group members continued in students' comments throughout, but with far lesser frequency than in the beginning. The students identified that the absence of group members kept their groups incomplete. The incomplete groups meant they were left with fewer minds in their groups and therefore they gained fewer ideas. Sometimes, it was observed that as many as five members were absent, and only one member was present, so that I had to adjust the groupings. Unresponsiveness of some group members, due to their shyness, lack of confidence, knowledge or interest, frustrated their team-mates.

Our group members are absent. I don't like this (Lesson-6: 30-9-2013).

[I disliked] the unconfident [passivity] group members (Lesson-13: 5-11-2013).

The issue of noise was also mentioned now and then by the students, *'I do not like noise in class (Lesson-6: 30-9-2013)*. However, as mentioned earlier, in cooperative learning during the group discussion, it is quite inevitable. The 12-13 groups comprising six students in each would definitely create noise. However, I made sure that one member per group spoke at a time so that the noise level should remain under control.

Problems identified by observers

The observers witnessed that some students showed hesitation in sharing their ideas and remained passive. Moreover, some of the students were not completely candid in sharing ideas and thoughts and did not seem very active in evaluating and giving feedback on others' contribution:

...some students were not looking so participative (Observer 6, lesson 7: 01-10-13).

Few students were not showing interest (Observer 7, Lesson 8: 02-10-13).

Problems identified by me

The main problems that I experienced in teaching the class were largely the same as those I experienced when using the lecture approach. Although the intervention was smooth, I was still worried about getting through the syllabus in the short time

available. The hot weather and the fluctuation of electricity also made teaching difficult.

The problems observed and noticed in the beginning by the observers, students and me, noticeably decreased with the passage of time. However, despite the introduction of the register-taking, the issue of the absence of some students continued until the end of the process.

Reflections and dealing with problems

The problems observed and noticed were dealt with using class rules, both those established in the orientation and some created during the intervention. The students were continuously re-informed about the class rules and these rules were also implemented.

To save the time consumed by group adjustment in every lesson due to the absence of group members, I announced in the class that when in one group only one or two members were present, they should join those groups in which one or two members were absent without asking me. However, when half or more members were present in a group, they were asked to continue in their groups with the members available and allow students join them from groups where more than half the members were absent.

Hence, after emphasis on and observance of the rules, the problem of constant coming late to class, noise during presentations and teacher talk, group re-adjustment, and passivity and unresponsiveness of some group members were brought under control. Until the last class of the intervention, the students commented having liked the activities and followed their steps properly (Chapter 9). The observers' comments and feedback were also more positive about the process and suggested the same approach should also be used in other classes and should be made regular use of in future.

8.3 Conclusions and discussions

The use of cooperative learning greatly helped me to control the class management issues, such as noise and disorder, which can arise during the implementation of group work in general (Shamim, et al, 2007). Teachers indicated, during the situational analysis, that chaotic situations created by group work deterred them from

using interactive activities. In contrast, cooperative learning helped me reduce these issues during its implementation in my class. Specifically, the use of permanent groups in cooperative learning and its already structured strategies assisted me with positive classroom management. For example, due to permanent grouping, in each lesson students settled down in groups easily. Also, the structured steps of STAD and TPS saved me ample time by reducing the amount of new planning that I needed to do for each class. The perceived planning burden is one of the factors that discourages teachers from using group work (cf. Fathman and Kessler, 1993).

The teacher's energy needs to be channelled in a different direction during the use of cooperative learning. Both lecturing and cooperative learning require some work and planning before the conduct of lessons. However, during the lessons themselves, the kind of work required is different in the two approaches. In lecturing, the teacher requires energy to project their voice, and to maintain the attention of the whole group for fifty minutes. In cooperative learning, this energy is redirected to moving around the class and monitoring group work, so as to be able to intervene where needed. But although teachers use almost the same energy while lecturing, they may initially find it easier than the use of interactive activities, if they are accustomed to lecturing from their own experience as students. My experience indicates that if teachers re-channel the energy spent on lecturing towards the conduct of cooperative learning, it will become easier as they get used to it, and will improve their own teaching and students' experience of learning.

The next chapter evaluates the overall effect of cooperative learning on the students' engagement. The results from data gathered at the end of the intervention, through student questionnaires, student group interviews and observers' questionnaires, are presented.

9 Evaluation

9.1 Introduction

Based on my understanding from the reconnaissance phase of the study (see Chapter 4 and 6), I decided to conduct intervention using cooperative learning in my large ESL class to answer the core research question: *Can cooperative learning be used to improve my teaching and students' experience of and engagement with the learning process in large ESL classes at UoSJP?* This chapter analyses and discusses the quantitative and qualitative data findings gathered at the end of the intervention process. As in Chapter 6, the quantitative data are analysed and discussed separately and then the qualitative data are evaluated and their results are triangulated with the quantitative data-findings. In this chapter, the following issues are studied: student experience of learning through cooperative learning in a large ESL class; the observers' rating of the intervention; advantages and problems witnessed by the students and observers during the intervention; and suggestions given by the students and observers for making the adoption of cooperative learning more effective.

9.2 Methodology

9.2.1 Participants and sampling

The participants were 120 second-year undergraduate students of my own compulsory ESL class in my home department. For the details and rationale about sampling see Chapters 5 and 6.

9.2.2 Instruments

The following data collection instruments were used in the evaluation.

- Student questionnaire
- Observation instrument
- Student group interview
- Class observation field notes

The student questionnaire, adapted from Seng (2006), Carpenter (2006) and Brown (2008) contained mainly Likert-scale questions to generate quantitative data, as well as a few open questions to generate qualitative data (see *Appendix 4.2A*). The observation instrument, adapted from Grundman (2002) and Brown (2008), was

intended to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. It contained Likert-scale items to generate quantitative data, as well as spaces against each item and two more open items at the end to generate qualitative data (see *Appendix 4.2D*). The student group interview, adapted from Seng (2006), Carpenter (2006) and Brown (2008), generated qualitative data (see *Appendix 4.2B and 4.2C*). See Table 9.1 for summary details of instruments and participants. All these instruments were discussed with supervisors, teacher-colleagues and student group leaders to check that none of the items on the instruments were ambiguous or misleading, and to bring to light any other unforeseen problems.

Table 9.1: Summary of data collected for evaluation

Research Instrument	Participants
Student questionnaire	120 second-year undergraduate students
Observation instrument	17 teachers teaching ESL classes
Student group interview	5 groups (6 in each group)second-year undergraduate students
Class observation field notes	120 students in an ESL classes, 18 lessons and 17 colleagues

After the last lesson of the intervention (see Chapters 5, 7 and 8), all the students in the class were given copies of the questionnaire (about 120 copies). 83 copies were returned, of which 74 copies were included. The remainder were excluded because the information they contained was judged to be invalid on the basis of the criteria described in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.4. My colleague-teachers observed the intervention lessons using the observation instruments (see Section 9.3.2 below for details).

A 90 -120 minute semi-structured group interview was conducted with 5 groups (6 students in each group). The students were selected through systematic sampling techniques (Iachan, 1982; Bryman, 2006). Initially, I decided to interview 6 groups and selected every 2nd group from the list of 12. In the last class, I asked groups numbered 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 on the list to come for the interview on the specified date and time. However, one group did not turn up for the interview. All the groups opted to answer in English. The interviews were conducted over a period of three days with, on average, two per day.

9.3 Quantitative data findings

The quantitative section in the chapter covers two segments: the students' experience of learning through cooperative learning and the observers' rating of the intervention in a large ESL class.

9.3.1 Student experience

The following chart displays the summary of the student responses about their experience of learning through cooperative learning in their large ESL class at IELL, UoSJP. Two main cooperative learning strategies (see Chapter 8) were implemented throughout the semester (in total 18 lessons). At the end of the intervention, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire to which the responses are presented in Chart 9.1. (below). The questionnaire contained thirty-one statements based on a Likert scale rating (1-strongly agree, 2- agree, 3-uncertain, 4-disagree and 5- strongly disagree) and three other qualitative items for further clarification (see *Appendix 4.2A*)

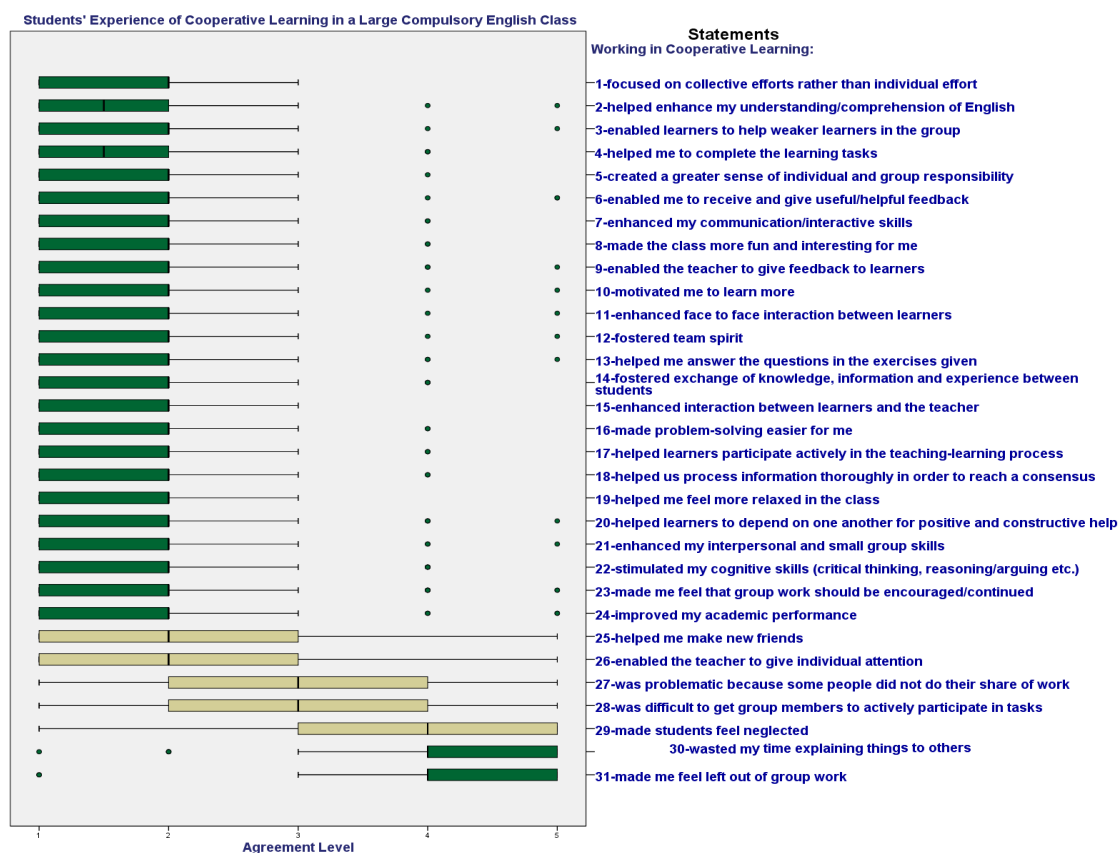


Chart 9.1: Student experience of cooperative learning

The students' responses, as displayed by the chart, suggest that their experience of cooperative learning has not only been academically beneficial but also enjoyable for them. For most statements (26 out of 31), there is a clear consensus in the students' responses, and this consensus indicates that students found the experience of cooperative learning to be a positive one. The remaining five statements (25 to 29 in light green) do not show consistency in the responses.

The results show that the students felt more relaxed in the class (as compared to a lecture-style class) and considered learning interesting and fun, which motivated them to learn more and participate more actively in learning processes (see 1-24). By working through cooperative learning, they were helped in completing learning tasks individually and in groups which created a greater sense of individual and group responsibility in them. Thus, cooperative learning enhanced team spirit among the students and they depended upon one another positively for constructive help in terms of practice and knowledge. The students stated that they developed their interpersonal and small group skills which helped them to completely process information and reach conclusions with the help of one another. Moreover, according to their responses, the weaker students were helped to enhance their capabilities, knowledge and communicative skills.

The findings suggest that the implementation of these cooperative learning strategies in an ESL class helps students in multiple ways. For example, the use of cooperative learning enabled the students to peer assess one another and to easily get feedback from their teacher. Most importantly, the students reported that cooperative learning enhanced their cognitive skills (critical thinking, reasoning/arguing etc.), academic performance, communicative skills, face-to-face interaction, ability to answer the questions, exchange of knowledge and experience and student-student and student-teacher interaction.

In addition, the students disagreed with the idea that they felt neglected and left out of group work (see Statement 31). They believed that they did not waste their time explaining to others, but rather they learnt from and taught one another (Statement 30).

9.3.2 Observers' rating of intervention process

All the colleague-teachers were invited as observers to monitor the process of intervention. However, not all of them could come to observe the class in every lesson because of their busy schedules. In-class live observation could only be arranged for seven lessons, involving 6 different observers (one of these observers monitored two lessons). Eleven other colleagues viewed the video-recordings of the remaining lessons and commented. The observers' experience of teaching English language ranged from 2-16 years. An observation-instrument was given to all the observers to complete while observing/viewing the lesson. The instrument contained both quantitative scale rating (1-highest to 4-lowest) and qualitative comments on each of their ratings and also their further overall comments and suggestions at the end. All the 18 copies of the observation-instrument were included, which the teacher-observers completed during the observation of the intervention class. More information about these instruments is given in Chapter 5. Chart 9.2 below summarises the observers' rating responses.

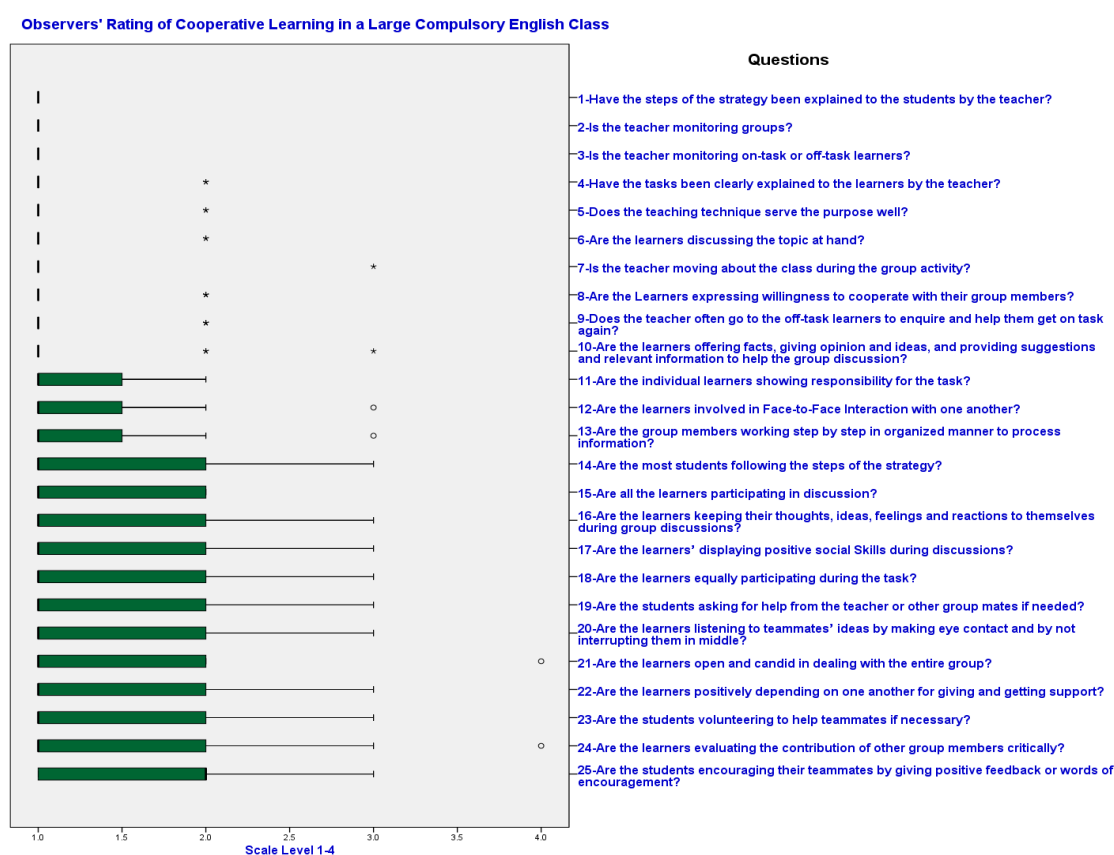


Chart 9.2: Observers' rating of intervention process

Chart 9.2 shows that the observers agree that the implementation of cooperative learning in large ESL classes brings many positive changes in the teaching and learning process, specifically in terms of students' involvement and the teacher's monitoring.

Responses to more than half of questions (13 out of 25) show the highest agreement that the structured set-up of cooperative learning enhanced the students' and teacher's active participation in the classroom processes. The observers witnessed that, due to the organised setting in the classroom, the teacher stood compelled to explain the steps of strategies and tasks and monitor the groups and on or off-task students (see questions 1-13).

From the observers' rating, it is clear that they perceived that these cooperative learning strategies served their purpose properly. These strategies assisted the students to work step by step in an organised manner to process information. Ultimately, the structured design of cooperative learning was seen to enhance discussions, cooperation, individual and group responsibility and face-to-face interaction among the learners to the higher level.

Moreover, on average, the students were observed showing positive social skills, getting equal chances for participation, receiving teacher feedback, peer-assessing one another, depending positively on one another for giving and receiving support and encouraging one another. However, the response to Question 16 indicates that the students were not candid in sharing their ideas with other teammates which contradicts with the response of its triangulating Question 21 which, on the other hand, suggests that they openly shared and discussed. This information will further be explored in the qualitative responses of the observers in the qualitative analysis section.

9.4 Qualitative findings and their triangulation

This section analyses and discusses: the results of student-group interviews (five group interviews: 5-6 students in each group); the observers' notes/comments; free-text answers of students' questionnaires; and researcher's field notes. Information about the data analysis is given in Chapters 5 and 6. The planned intervention of cooperative learning, its process and findings from both the quantitative and

qualitative data collected during and after the completion of the intervention are triangulated. The main categories in the qualitative data are found to be:

- Cooperative Learning v/s Traditional Teaching Style
- Group Organisation: Student Views
- Advantages of Cooperative Learning
- Problems Faced
- Suggestions for Improvement

9.4.1 Cooperative learning vs traditional teaching style

In their group interviews (see *Appendix 4.2B and 4.2C*), the students were asked to describe their experience of learning through cooperative learning in comparison to their previous experience of learning through lecturing. The students reported having enjoyed more while learning through cooperative learning because it provided them with a variety of activities and they considered the lecture-method totally uninteresting. The comments of Student EDE and ECE were representative of this opinion: *...in cooperative learning we did a variety of activities which we enjoyed, and did not get bored...* (EDE, male student, Interview, 2) and student ECE reported: *'In traditional class, we don't take any interest in study....we get bored sometimes we sleep'* (ECE, female student, group interview 5).

Another student, AED, pointed to another different idea which was also typical by reporting that in the cooperative learning setting, they were compelled to work and create their own ideas. Whereas the lecture-method makes students dependent on the lecture-notes, therefore, they don't work on their own. Thus, they cannot become creative. This can be summed up in her comments:

... we were compelled to work with our own, whereas in traditional class, most of students depend on the teacher... and it doesn't build up a sort of creativity in you (female student, group interview, 4).

The statements here very much are in line with the findings of the situational analysis in which the students statements suggested that they did not like learning through lecturing and recommended interactive activities (see Chapter 6). Therefore, the dislike of lecturing among the students was typical and commonly echoed in their responses throughout the study.

Similarly, Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2010) (see Chapter 3) found that cooperative learning enhanced student-student and student-teacher interaction in a large university ESL class. Also, the students were motivated to participate and learn more in comparison to the lecture-style teaching. The quantitative data findings of the present study also support cooperative learning. The students' and observers' responses in Chart 9.1 and 9.2 (above) overwhelmingly support the use of cooperative learning over lecture-style teaching.

9.4.2 Group organisation: Student views

The students liked the group organisation, especially the mixed-ability setting of groups. From this category two themes emerged which are summarised in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2: Themes related to group organisation

Category	Themes
Group organisation: Student views	Mixed ability
	Group size

Mixed ability

Each group was formed of six students having mixed-ability levels. The students' levels were determined on the basis of their previous semester scores. Every group normally had one high, two medium and three low achievers (see Table 9.3 below for details).

Table 9.3: Student level details

Level	Scores (obtained out 100)
High achievers	70-60 (Results sheet showed that no student scored more than 70)
Medium achievers	59-51
Low achievers	50 and below

The majority of students praised the mixed-ability group composition. Their comments show that if all brighter students or all weaker students sit together there is very little benefit, but when students of different levels and abilities sit together in a group and discuss, they learn more from one another (cf. Nunan and Lamb, 1996; Ur, 2004). They reported that group work was previously rarely used by their teachers and whenever it was used, all the stronger students make their own groups, therefore very few students benefit from them. For example, Student AEA expressed this idea with a particular clarity:

...in general groups [structure], the brighter students always sit together because they are friends; likewise the weaker are friends...but in cooperative group we have a group mixed up..., So in this way, the weaker and medium can benefit from the brighter.. (male student, Interview 1).

On the other hand, the students, especially the weaker and shyer ones, appreciated the mixed-ability composition of their groups, and reported to have benefitted to a great extent. For example, Student ECD stated: *'Mixed-ability group is ok, because, especially I got very [sic] support and ideas from my friends who were brighter than me' (female group interview 4).*

Moreover, not only did the weaker students benefit from the stronger students, but the stronger students also reported having learnt from their weaker counterparts in two ways: firstly, from discussing and knowing their ideas, and secondly from teaching them because they believed that teaching is learning. A typical comment regarding this idea came from Student ECD who said:

...it was very beneficial for the weak students to understand, and it was very beneficial for us (bright). When we helped (taught) them we also tried to understand (female student, Interview 4).

This finding is in line with the world literature (e.g., Abrami and Chambers, 1996; Lou, et al., 1996; Joyce, 1999; Wilkinson and Fung, 2002) on cooperative learning. For example, Joyce (1991) discovered that higher-ability students significantly improved in heterogeneous groupings. Wilkinson and Fung (2002) found mixed-ability groupings lessened demands on teachers' time, by offering them opportunities to attend the learners who needed more attention. The researchers also reason that instructors might use variety in heterogeneity as resources to support learning. The mixed-ability setting is in line with Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue that the use of mixed ability grouping enhances academic and cognitive development through scaffolding (the ZPD).

Group size

The decision of keeping six-member groups also seemed to be satisfactory for many students. The students seemed to understand the situation and seemed to be contented with the size on average. Student EFA's summarised this view by giving

rationale that: *‘According to the size of our class, six students (group) is enough; so the group of six to ten may work in the situation, but not more than 10’ (male student, Interview, 1).*

According to the students, a group of six was suitable because it provided opportunity to interact and discuss with more students and get more ideas which would not have been possible for them in a smaller group of four or three. This is perhaps typical in the words of Student ECB who reported: *‘...six is suitable because we have then more minds and more ideas. If we have less number then we have [sic] [fewer] ideas (male student, Interview, 2).*

However, some students expressed an opposite view. They wanted to have smaller groups because this would have allowed them to interact and get more information from their friends easily. To them the six-member groups created noise and management problems. This is summarised by a student: *‘...group of 3-4 students is adjustable in which students can share the ideas easily, but in the group of 6 they can’t... due to noise (EDA, male student, Interview, 1).*

The students’ concern here seems to be very much valid, but given the size of the class, the groups could be kept smaller than that size. If a hundred plus student class is divided into groups of three or four students, there would be too many groups to control and leave enough space for the teacher to move about.

9.4.3 Advantages of cooperative learning

Multiple advantages of cooperative learning were reported by the students in their interviews and evaluation instruments. The themes and sub-themes of this category are summarised in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: Themes related to advantages of cooperative learning

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Advantages of cooperative learning	Cognitive development	
	Student participation	
	Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-student interaction • Teacher-student interaction
	Teacher attention vs learner autonomy	

	Student motivation	
	Teacher feedback	
	Individual accountability	
	Positive interdependence	

Cognitive Development

The students indicated that learning through cooperative learning developed their cognitive powers, specifically: critical thinking/reasoning; problem-solving abilities; and memory retention. They reported that they started to argue and criticise one another's ideas openly. This is represented in two students' comments that follow: *'when we discussed, we argued which developed our thinking powers'* (EBA, male student Interview, 2). Another student, EAD reported that when they argued they gave: *'reasons so our thinking faculty does increase...'* (female student, Interview, 4).

Moreover, the adoption of cooperative learning enhanced the students' understanding and problem-solving abilities and helped them to solve the problems they faced during their task very easily with the help of other group members. This idea is expressed by Student ESI who reported:

...we helped each other to solve any difficulties. ...Cooperative learning improved our understanding to solve difficulties; we discussed [sic]; our topic became very easy to understand (Questionnaire 12).

Cooperative learning did not only enhance the students' knowledge and problem-solving abilities, but it also enhanced their memory retention. Thus, they were able to retain the information discussed for a longer time. They did not need to take much effort to completely re-study and memorise subject matter again for the examination because working stepwise in groups helped them keep the information fresh in their minds. Student EEE's comments are very representative of this idea:

...we studied the same topic individually first; then we discussed the same in pairs, and then we discussed in groups, and finally we presented it in presentation. So we did not need to study it hard for the test; they were fresh in the mind (female student, Interview, 5).

The findings concerning cognitive development are also validated by the quantitative data findings in Statement 22 (see Chart 9.1; above) in which a substantial number of the students believed that by working through cooperative learning their cognitive powers were stimulated. Moreover, this finding confirms Vygotsky's theoretical views that, in a social setting, development is initiated by socio-cultural effects and communications which lead to higher mental growth and functions (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Blake and Pope, 2008). Empirical studies further corroborate this finding i.e. the implementation of cooperative learning in ESL/EFL classes in higher education enhances student cognitive skills (e.g., Webb, 1991; Qin, Johnson and Johnson, 1995; Warawudhi, 2012). For example, in relation to large English classes, Liao's (2006) results indicated that cooperative learning in comparison to the whole class-teaching in large English language classes developed students' cognitive skills. Due to that, they could assess their ability more independently with improved interest in learning.

Student participation

The lack of student participation is, perhaps, one of the main problems encountered in lecture-style teaching; only a few bright students get opportunities to participate because the teacher likes them or believes that only they have knowledge. This problem is reflected in a typical comment of a student who reported: *...in traditional class, only those students are given chances to participate who are considered good by teachers or preferred by teachers' (ECE, female Student, Interview, 5)*. This problem was also one of the most commonly and strongly reported problem by the students in the situational analysis (see Chapter 6).

In contrast, in the findings of intervention, the improvement in student participation and interaction was one of the most recurrently reported benefits of cooperative learning. The students recounted that the cooperative learning strategies enhanced their participation to *'the greatest level'* (EAB, male student, Interview 2). Thus, cooperative learning provided equal opportunities to all the students for participation which is not possible in the lecture method. This benefit of cooperative learning is characteristic in the comments of Student EAB:

Cooperative learning motivated me to learn and share. ...when we compare cooperative learning with the traditional lecture style classes, it is much

better because cooperative learning,... gave equal opportunities to every student, but in traditional classes, only few good students were given chances to participate (male student, Interview, 2).

Both the students' and observers' responses in the quantitative data results corroborate that cooperative learning enhanced student participation substantially (see Section 9.3.1, Chart 9.1, Statement 17 and Section 9.3.2, Chart 9.2, Question 15). Similarly, many studies on cooperative learning are in line with this finding (e.g. Cooper and Robinson, 2002; Smith, 2000; Warawudhi, 2012). Specifically, in the context of large ESL/EFL classes, Warawudhi (2012) found that STAD enhanced student participation in a class of eighty-two students to a greater level as compared to the group of students who were taught in similar size class through lecturing.

Interaction

Cooperative learning, as reported by the students, improved student-student and teacher-student interaction. This improvement ultimately enhanced their communicative skills to a considerable level. The students noted significant improvements in student-student interaction in their class conducted through cooperative learning. They reported that in lecturing, student-student interaction is equal to zero where the teacher speaks and students listen to him. Moreover, in lecture-style teaching, the seating arrangement and class set-up deprives students of talking or interacting with one another. On the other hand, in the cooperative learning setting, group seating-arrangements and the strategies aim to enhance student-student interaction. The comments of Student EBB represent this view, reporting that in cooperative learning:

[student-student interaction]...increased because cooperative learning organisation has that aim. As it is 'cooperative' which means it wants to increase cooperation which is interaction between students (male student, Interview 2).

Another student supported the similar view with very particular clarity from structural perspectives by stating:

...there was more and more student-student interaction which is almost absent in lecture class because in that students are only facing the teacher

and listening, but in cooperative learning groups students are facing to each other and interacting (EEB, male student, Interview 2).

The quantitative data findings from both the students' and observers' responses support this finding (see Section 9.3.1, Chart 9.1, Statement 11 and Section 9.3.2, Chart 9.2, Question 9 and 12). However, the responses of the observers in question 16 oppose their own responses slightly in which they agree that the learners kept their thoughts, feelings and reaction to themselves. Although the intensity in the responses of question 16 is far lesser than questions 9 and 12, this may need further research.

Moreover, a similar finding is revealed in the literature (e.g., Chen, 2006; Basta, 2011; Warawudhi, 2012; Kyndt, et al., 2013). In the context of large ESL classes, all these studies in one way or other indicate that the first and foremost development cooperative learning strategies bring in is student-student interaction and social skills. The two most crucial objectives of cooperative learning, positive interdependence and face-to-face promotive interaction can, perhaps, be attained when positive interdependence and student-student promotive interaction is developed. These two objectives are so interlinked that without student-student promotive interaction, student positive interdependence is not possible and vice versa. Therefore, all the studies conducted on cooperative learning first made sure that student-student interaction was promoted positively.

The students also stated that student-teacher interaction or vice versa (although not to as great a level as student-student interaction) improved to a noticeable degree in the cooperative learning class in comparison to the lecture-style class. Similar to student-student interaction, the students gave the credit of improvement in teacher-student interaction to cooperative learning, which can be mirrored in the words of Student EDA who said:

...because the teacher is not bound to lecture, he can easily communicate, [and] he can easily walk here and there... when any student has [sic] problem...he comes and interacts (male student, Interview 1).

Similarly, this finding is reflected in the quantitative data results (see Section 9.3.1, Chart 9.1, Statement 15 and Section 9.3.2, Chart 9.2, Question 9) and also in the literature (e.g., Warawudhi, 2012; Kyndt, et al., 2013).

However, a very different opinion was expressed by some students who said that they did not need much to interact with the teacher in such a setting because cooperative learning wanted them to be independent learners. The view was typically articulated by student EAB: *'...in cooperative learning, students do not need teacher interaction more...it is cooperation between students...it tries to make us independent learners'* (EAB, male student, Interview 2).

Teacher attention vs learner autonomy

Similar to teacher-student interaction, teacher attention to individual students improved in comparison to the traditional class, though not as much as student-student interaction increased (personal observation and field notes). According to the advocates of cooperative learning, making autonomous learners is one of its main objectives (e.g. Fathman and Kessler, 1993; Slavin, 1995; 2010; Johnson and Johnson, 1999b; 2009 Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne, 2000; Cooper and Robinson, 2002). In addition, Warawudhi (2012) found, through the teacher diary notes, that students became more independent in helping each other and doing reading exercises in the *STAD* setting. The students in the present study seemed satisfied with teacher attention. Students observed that seating arrangements made teacher attention to students noticeably possible. The comments of Student ECA represent this view in the following words:

...seating arrangements in groups, gave the teacher easy access to every student. Therefore, you reached every student and discussed problems, which is not possible in a large lecture-class... (male student, Interview, 2).

The Vygotskian theoretical underpinning of cooperative learning supports the idea that students should mostly depend on one another for their learning and get teacher attention only when needed. The teacher attends to students when s/he thinks they need it, however, in general, students learn independently following the instruction given by the teacher (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). It is argued that the teacher intervention often reduces students' chances of more participation and interaction (Littlewood, 1981; Cohen, 1994). The lesser the teacher authority gets, the more

students learn confidently (Thanasoulas, 2000). Learner autonomy has been recognised as a very necessary factor for the development of students' language skills and competence in the field of CLT (e.g., Littlewood, 1981; Allwright, 1984; Thanasoulas, 2000; Najeeb, 2013). Thus, it can be reasoned that if cooperative learning enhances learner autonomy and curtails teacher-dominance, it is likely to enhance language learning.

On the other hand, Statement 26 in Chart 9.1 shows that the students were not sure if teacher attention to individual students was improved. However, the observers' rating of teacher attention (see Chart 9.2) quite substantially challenges the students' responses in this regard. The observers witnessed that the teacher was monitoring both off-task and on-task students equally and was continuously going to the off-task learners to inquire of their problems which is also clear in their qualitative comments (presented in Chapter 8), as evidence.

Student motivation

Cooperative learning not only enhanced the students' knowledge and communicative skills, but it also enhanced their enjoyment of the lessons and motivated them to work more. Along with increased participation, the most emphatically pronounced advantage of cooperative learning in the student interview and free-text responses in the questionnaire is enhancement in motivation and confidence. The students repeatedly indicated that, by working in the cooperative learning setting, their shyness started to diminish; they began to participate more bravely, and they enjoyed working through a variety of activities. On the other hand, in their lecture-style classes, they got bored by only listening to lectures, and they did not get any variety either in ideas or in activities. The effect of working through cooperative learning on the students was so motivating that they felt like working even if they were not in the mood to study. This idea was expressed in the comments of EEB, EAD and EDD:

[I enjoyed]...and got a variety of activities which did not bore us (EEB, male student, Interview 2).

...in cooperative learning, I can say sometimes when you are even not in [sic] mood to learn, you have to learn (EAD, female student, Interview 4).

...before cooperative learning class, I was not even able to speak in front of the whole class, but now I have built my confidence (EDD, female student, Interview 4).

In addition, the quantitative data findings (in chart 9.1, above) confirm this finding. The students' responses show that learning through cooperative learning was fun and interesting which encouraged them to learn more.

These students' comments challenge Slavin (Slavin, 1995; 1996b; 2010) and other supporters of extrinsic reward structures in cooperative learning. Although the three best groups were given rewards on their academic achievement in the fortnightly tests, the students nowhere mentioned that they were motivated due to extrinsic group-structure of STAD. But rather they were intrinsically motivated because cooperative learning encouraged them to share and learn from one another. Chen (2006) suggests that an experimental group taught through cooperative learning was greatly motivated to learn. Students believed they improved their four language skills more and their fear and anxiety of learning in large classes began to disappear. They stated that the shy students, who never asked the teacher for help, were sufficiently confident to ask for and give help to their group members. Thus, not only does cooperative learning theorise enhancement in student motivation, but evidence suggests that it also actually enhances it. Johnson and Johnson (1999b, p. 73) argue that cooperative efforts enhance 'personal ego-strength, self-confidence, independence and autonomy'. These efforts offer a chance to exchange information and solve personal difficulties, which in turn enhance a student's pliability and skills to deal with 'adversity and stress' (Johnson and Johnson, 1999b, p. 73). The more cooperatively students work, the more they perceive themselves as valuable.

Teacher feedback

When asked about the frequency of teacher feedback, the students showed satisfaction with its frequency in comparison to a lecture-method class. The students reported that the teacher was always there to help them with their written and spoken tasks because he was not busy in delivering lecture as in lecture-style classes. A comment of student EAB sums this up: '*...whenever we felt any difficulty, we called you, and you came and commented on our work and guided us*' (male student, Interview 2).

However, another student expressed a slightly different view by stating that due to the large size of the class, one teacher usually cannot give feedback to every individual student. However, I was able to give feedback to the whole group on their written tasks at once, which can be summarised with his comments:

...feedback was quite satisfactory...in the huge class, of course, the teacher can't give feedback to every individual, but on the level of groups, it was fine (EAD, female student, Interview, 4).

Moreover, my routine comments and feedback on their oral presentation taken from the representatives of three groups at the end of each lesson were appreciated by many of the students very much. Student EAA summarises this in his comments which were typical: *'...when all students gave presentations at the end, the teacher spoke about their presentations; it means that it is the feedback'* (EAA, male student, Interview, 1).

The quantitative findings also confirm the enhanced frequency of feedback as compared to a lecture-method class (see Chart 9.1 and Chart 9.2). Moreover, the same is argued by Cohen (1994) and Johnson and Johnson (2009) that cooperative learning provides the teacher more opportunity to give feedback to individual students and to groups as whole. This is further supported empirically that the use of cooperative learning enhances the teacher feedback to individual students in large classes by Cooper and Robinson (2002) who found that it improved instant teacher feedback on the task students were working on.

Individual accountability

The cooperative learning setting in the present study did not only aim at improving group cohesion, but it also enhanced a sense of individual responsibility in the students. The students were encouraged to complete their own part of the task and discuss with their group members for further clarification. The group leaders had responsibility to ensure that everyone was doing his/her work and sharing. The design of strategies compelled every member to first work alone and then share and discuss with the whole group. Moreover, three other rotating roles (see Chapter 7 and 8), other than group leaders, were given to members to further consolidate the existence of individual accountability. Two students approved this factor and stated: *'...they all performed their individual task well. We felt that we have three*

responsibilities..., first doing work individually, then in pair and then in group' (ECD, female student, Interview 4). In the context of the rotating roles one student reported: '...we had different duties like inquirer, presenter and time keeper, so everyone showed individual accountability' (EBD, female student, Interview 4).

The observers' and students' responses in the quantitative data also strengthen that cooperative learning enhanced students' individual accountability (see Section 9.3.1, Chart 9.1, Statement 5 and Section 9.3.2, Chart 9.2, Question 11). The literature on the use of cooperative learning and its functions also cross-validates this finding (e.g. Fathman and Kessler, 1993; Johnson and Johnson 1994; Kagan and Kagan, 1998; Johnson and Johnson, 1999b). Furthermore, Liao (2006) found that cooperative learning not only prepared a ground for students of a large ESL class to do their part of work individually, but it also developed their self-efficacy to assess their ability and work more independently with enhanced attention in learning.

Positive interdependence

Cooperative learning strengthened group cohesion and positive interdependence among the students; they depended on one another when they needed to receive or give help. It was not over-dependence, but mutual dependence in which they helped and were helped. All members' ideas and points were appreciated and respected. The students improved knowledge by sharing ideas, and thought it became a case of prestige for them to share and gain knowledge. In contrast, in a lecture-style class, they rarely shared and gained. Some students reported that by sharing their ideas they understood things more clearly. These ideas are represented in the comments many students which can be summed up in the words of four students who reported:

We depended on one another positively. When I was doing something, and I don't know that, so I was quite hopeful that my group mates will help me (EAA, male student, Interview, 1).

In cooperative group work, I learnt a lot by sharing my knowledge and getting knowledge from the friends (ESP, Questionnaire 16).

...it became the case of our prestige that...we should share and that really helps the group (EDD, female student, Interview 4).

...we share ideas with each other, and we can easily understand the things (Student ESN, Questionnaire 14).

Furthermore, the existence of positive interdependence created unity among the students. They were all united in a common goal which they had to achieve through collaborative efforts, because they knew that if one member fails, they all fail (Johnson and Johnson, 1994), and they knew if they help other members they help themselves in a way. This idea was, perhaps, typically expressed in the words of Student EEB who described: *'If I work individually, I don't understand many things because there is no one to help me, but in cooperative learning, we all are joined to help each other'* (male student, Interview 2).

Many other students reported that cooperative learning strengthened social connections in the shape of friendship, which helped them make new friends and enhance social bonding. The comments of two students represented this view: *'understanding with friends'* (Student EHS, Questionnaire 34). Student JES reported: *'I felt really good because I make [sic] few new and nice friends'* (Questionnaire 59). However, the student responses for *'working in cooperative learning helped me make new friends'* (see Chart 9.1) in the quantitative data are not consistent and do not confirm the finding. This finding needs further exploration. However, Cooper and Robinson (2002) through a meta-analysis found that students strengthened community and friendship bonds in the cooperative learning setting.

Interpersonal skills and group processing

The evidence provided above shows that cooperative learning was found to clearly achieve its three main elements. However, elements of cooperative learning are sometimes so overlapping and intertwined that it is not always possible to separate them. For example, when we say positive interdependence, in a way we mean group members' dependence on one another for positive and constructive help. This will definitely require interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills and group processing. The last two elements are the skills which cooperative learning aims to achieve with the help of the other three elements i.e. positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction and individual accountability. The evidence in the present study suggests that students were developing interpersonal skill and skills of group processing. The following two comments from two students

reflect that cooperative learning helped the students to develop their interpersonal and group processing skills:

[Interpersonal Skills]-We worked step by step in an organised way.... for example when one person was doing something, and he [sick] don't know that, so all group mates will help him through discussion and solve [sick] problem (ECA, male Student, Interview, 1).

[Group processing] ...so I think it built the ability in every student that how to ask the question, how to interact with the teacher, and how to present; so cooperative learning class was better than the traditional class in terms of student participation (EBD, female student, group interview, 4).

This was also supported by the quantitative findings in which the observers' believed that the learners' were developing social skills, and worked in an organised way to process the information (see Chart 9.2, and Question 13 and 17). Similarly, the students' responses also indicate that they were fostering interpersonal and group processing skills (see Chart 9.1 and Statement 6, 12, 18, 20 and 21)

Johnson and Johnson (1989; 1994; 1999) argue that cooperative learning is a successful method of learning because it is based on positive and structured interdependence and promotive interaction that leads, through the other three elements of cooperative learning, to greater achievement. Johnson and Johnson (1999, p. 72) argue that the outcomes of cooperative learning gained through its five basic elements may be:

...subsumed within the three broad and interrelated categories of effort exerted to achieve, quality of relationships among participants, and participants' psychological adjustment and social competence.

Positive interdependence and promotive interaction both influence each other. Through the structured and bonded processes of cooperative learning, students start to care about one another and put greater efforts to achieve reciprocal goals of their learning. With the increase of care, increases the sense of individual responsibility to accomplish one's part of the work. Due to group members' care for one another, members feel motivated and persistent to work towards targeted goal and achievement. They all undergo pain and disappointments together, therefore, become

a source of support, compassion and encouragement for more efforts on the next tasks (Johnson and Johnson, 1994; 1999; 2009). Thus, all these socio-psychological processes incorporated in learning contribute to groups' productivity.

9.4.4 Problems faced

From the evidence provided in this chapter and in Chapter 8, one can say that the intervention of cooperative learning was more of a success than a failure. However, during the process of intervention, many problems were faced by both the teacher and students see Table 9.5 below.

Table 9.5: Themes related to problems faced during intervention

Category	Themes
Problems faced	Absenteeism
	Unresponsiveness of students
	Time constraint
	Infrastructure/management issues

Absenteeism

The group members' absence hindered the smooth flow of the activities. *TPS* required an even number (2-4 or 6) of students. If one member was absent, it created problems for the whole group. Student EAD reported: *'if one group member is absent, it affects the whole group'* (female student, Interview 4). For example, *TPS* required the students to work individually first, then work in pairs and finally discuss with the whole group (for details see Chapter 7 and 8). The absence of one member destroyed the tempo of the activity: *'...when we used to study in 'Think Pair Share', then we had problem due her absence'* (Student EEE, female student, Interview 5).

Unresponsiveness of students

In addition to absenteeism, the students encountered the problem of unresponsiveness and shyness. Some students in some groups did not participate completely or honestly and remained passive; it was difficult for other group members, especially the group leader, to encourage these students to share and participate fully. This problem was represented in the words of two students who said:

Some students did not sincerely share the points, and this created problem during group work (ECA, male Student, Interview, 1).

it was quite difficult to boost up all the students, especially, someone you are not familiar (EAD, female student, Interview, 4).

Wichadee (2005) also found some students complaining about the shy behaviour of some students in groups. For example, one student hated to wait until shy students spoke to contribute. I think shyness or passivity of some students was quite natural, and cooperative learning is not a method to ensure 100% participation. Only a small minority were unresponsive, as the students reported in their interviews. The majority of students fully responded and cooperated. Moreover, since these activities were used all of a sudden in the environment of traditional teaching and learning, they were unlikely to give one hundred percent satisfactory results. There is evidence that where new teaching methods are introduced quite suddenly and implemented within a short time frame they do not always give the desired results. These methods need to be continued until they get merged into the system (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial, 2007).

Time constraint

The students' feeling of enjoyment was further curtailed by the short time duration of the lessons which were only fifty minutes. The students wanted to have more time to discuss and complete the tasks, which is clearly expressed by two students: '*...the timing of the class did not allow us to do the work completely*' (EBD, female student, Interview 4). Student EDE reported that due to time-constraint they: '*were not getting a chance...for presentation daily*' (female student, Interview 5).

Infrastructure issues

Poor infrastructure also affected the smooth flow of the intervention negatively. The students pointed to the unavailability of audio-visual aids, defective seating arrangements, fluctuation of electricity and noise. Student EDA stated: '*...infrastructure creates problems such as unavailability of Audio-visual devices and load-shedding*' (male student, Interview 1).

9.4.5 Suggestions for Improvement

The students suggested that absenteeism should be stopped and time duration should be increased. Moreover, the use of cooperative learning was suggested in other subjects (other than English) and its use was suggested to be continued in future (see Table 9.6).

Table 9.6: Themes related to suggestions for improvement

Category	Themes
Suggestions for improvement	Check on absenteeism
	Increase in lesson time duration
	Future use and in other subjects

Check on absenteeism

The students perhaps wanted to make the cooperative learning implementation more effective; therefore, they were concerned about absenteeism, which in a way affected their learning negatively. The suggestion for check on absenteeism was most typically expressed in students' comments. For example, Student ESK said: *'Attention to absentees and implement new strict rule for absentees because group suffers a lot because of that' (Questionnaire 11).*

Increase in lesson time duration

The students frequently suggested for the increase in time duration of their lesson, because in the given limited time duration, they could not get more chances for participation: *'Time of the class should be increased for the class of such type activity so that all groups may get a chance to give a presentation every day' (EBE, female student, Interview, 5).*

Future use and in other subjects

The students liked working through cooperative learning so much that they suggested that it should also be used in other subjects. Moreover, they suggested that its implementation should be continued in future so that they may get more benefits from it academically. This is reflected in the words of two students who reported:

...cooperative learning should be used in other subjects' class as well, especially history (EAE female student, Interview 5).

These types of activities should be continued in future' (Student EPS, Questionnaire 42).

9.5 Conclusion and discussion

The overall results indicate that the implementation of cooperative learning in the ESL class at UoSJP was largely successful. At the beginning of the intervention several problems emerged, but many of these were brought under control.

Nevertheless, some problems continued throughout the intervention, most noticeably absenteeism.

Despite the problems encountered, the findings reveal that a fully planned implementation of cooperative learning can improve students' experience of and engagement with learning processes in large ESL/EFL classes. The organised steps in cooperative learning strategies assisted the students in the study to interact with one another and the teacher easily. The positive interdependence in cooperative learning motivated the students to learn and discuss; they felt encouraged to take responsibility for their own and others' learning. Therefore, all the students tried to master the subject matter in two ways. Firstly, by studying that individually as much as possible and secondly, by discussing with their group members.

Moreover, the organised structure of these strategies improved the capacity of the teacher to provide individual attention and feedback in a class of large size, which is not possible when lecturing. The students' interview responses and observers' ratings clearly indicate that in a cooperative learning setting, the teacher was adequately free to attend those students who needed attention. However, cooperative learning's aim is to limit teacher attention as much as possible and let the students help one another, with the teacher giving attention only when needed. Because one teacher cannot simultaneously give attention to every student, the aim of mixed ability grouping in cooperative learning is to fill this gap by making students share responsibility for learning by teaching and learning from each other.

The issues of time constraint and other infrastructure problems are related to the administration of UoSJP and are beyond the scope of the present study. However, the problems of absenteeism and passivity of shyer and weaker students, which continued throughout the intervention phase, are of a more direct concern. I hypothesise that the problem of passivity could gradually be overcome if the implementation of cooperative learning in these classes is made permanent. With its permanent use, and associated increase in opportunities for practice, not only will the shyer students get sufficient confidence to cooperate, but also those few students who did not respond to cooperative learning would be more likely to take interest. These indifferent students did not take interest because they knew that I was using

cooperative learning for the purpose of research and therefore thought that it would not be used in future.

Overall, the evaluation of my intervention provides clear evidence that, in comparison to the existing lecture method, cooperative learning can increase student engagement in the large ESL classes at UoSJP.

10 Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes my thesis. In Section 10.2, I summarise the conceptual framework, methodology and findings of my project; in Section 10.3, I elucidate my contributions to knowledge; in Section 10.4 I outline the limitations of the present study and the potential for future research; Section 10.5 is the final conclusion.

10.2 Overview

Through the present study, I aimed to improve both my own pedagogical practices and the engagement of my students with the process of English language learning at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan. I therefore addressed the following main research question:

How can I change my teaching practice to improve students' experience of and engagement with the learning process in large ESL classes at UoSJP?

Since the study was conducted within a specific context, Chapter 1 gave the background to this context, describing the situation that led to my research question and the importance of the insights to be gained from the study.

Throughout the project, I kept in mind the following question, recommended to guide teacher inquiry by Whitehead (2008; 2009): *How do I improve what I am doing?* (Chapter 4). This helped me keep my attention on the main question. It assisted me to reflect on and improve my teaching and students' learning in my large English support classes. The question, *what I am doing?* made me assess how effectively I was teaching English language through traditional methods before this project, and what improvement students were making. I began from an insight that effective language learning not only requires active engagement at a cognitive level, but also needs students to use the language at a practical level. Thus, engagement could be seen as doubly important in language learning, and lack of engagement as doubly damaging to the learning process. This naturally led to the second part of the question: *How do I improve?*

Guided by this inquiry question and my research question, I first started with a review of the literature on large class teaching and learning, to better understand the phenomenon and to find out what solutions have been proposed that I could usefully adapt to a new context. From this review, I concluded that large classes create management issues for both teachers and learners, and teachers are unable to use student-centred learning methods that could enhance student engagement, falling back instead on teacher-centred methods (Chapter 2). Also as a result of this review, I hypothesised that cooperative learning, which is a very structured approach to group work, might offer an innovative solution within my teaching context. In the next step, I therefore reviewed the literature on cooperative learning (Chapter 3). This review reinforced my hypothesis. Both reviews also suggested that, before attempting to implement any new teaching methodology, it would be wise to conduct a careful analysis of the socio-cultural context and to consider how the methodology should be adapted to enhance the chances of success (Chapter 6). My situational analysis, therefore, helped in planning the initial action cycle of my research (Chapter 7). I then adapted two cooperative learning strategies, STAD and TPS, and implemented these through a total of 18 cycles of action, reflection and further planning (Chapter 8). Lastly, a final evaluation was conducted to assess the overall impact of cooperative learning on students' engagement (Chapter 9).

The study was conducted from a philosophical stance of post-positivism, within which I adopted a mixed methods design. I collected quantitative and qualitative data to examine the relevant phenomena from both objective and subjective perspectives, and triangulated the results by investigating convergences and divergences between these two types of data. Whenever the quantitative findings highlighted the existence of certain issues, it was always very helpful to explore the issues qualitatively to better understand why the issues arise, and what their solution may be, for instance, by asking personal opinions of the respondents. The study was also underpinned by socio-cultural theory, as manifest both in the nature of cooperative learning, and in my contextual adaptation of it. Vygotsky's theory and his concept of the ZPD (Chapter 3) can be used to support a model of cooperative learning. In the context of language learning in higher education, Vygotskian socio-cultural theory of learning implies that student-student and student-teacher interaction will enhance students' communicative skills, and critical thinking.

Perhaps most significantly, I used the paradigm and methodology of action research. This was a particularly suitable approach to my research question, for two main reasons. Firstly, action research is context-specific. Educational and social science research always encounters multiple variables, and it may not be possible for the researcher to control these variables or even to anticipate which ones are likely to be significant (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kember, 2003). Because action research is situation specific, this is not a problem: the results are taken to apply to those values of the variables that pertain in the given situation. Since my aim was to find a way of improving student engagement in the specific context of UoSJP, action research was appropriate. Secondly, action research is participatory. Unlike traditional research, action research does not separate the participants from the researchers, but rather values their views and reflections (Elliot, 1991; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). McNiff and Whitehead (2010) argue that in traditional research only one or a few researchers collaborate and reflect, which might not result in the best solution to a problem that is mostly related to the participants. On the other hand, involving participants' views and reflection in the process of action research leads to better understanding both of the problem under investigation and of other problems that arise in the course of the project. In the present study, the regular feedback on the intervention from the students and observers helped me reflect and plan for the next cycle. The involvement of the observers, in particular, also increased the validity of the study. Since they were not so directly involved in the research process, their comments were likely to be more balanced; they therefore provided a useful point of reference against which I could check my own perceptions and those of the students (Chapter 8).

The results of the evaluation phase, reported in the previous chapter, provide clear evidence that, in comparison to the existing lecture method, cooperative learning can increase student engagement in the large ESL classes at UoSJP. The significance and contribution of these results are spelled out in the following section.

10.3 Significance and original contribution to knowledge

The main contribution of the study is positive change in action brought about by action research. Through this study, I have made an original contribution to pedagogical knowledge and theory by offering a fresh understanding of the

implementation of cooperative learning through action research cycles which can have resilient impact on my own and others' teaching and learning practices (cf. Hughes, 1996; Sullivan, 2006). The use of action research in the present project, in collaboration with students and colleagues, created a new knowledge about pedagogical practices at UoSJP and was emancipatory both in challenging unhelpful teacher-centred pedagogy and in enabling students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The contributions made by the study can be summarised as follows:

- The study's main contribution is to show an improvement in learning and teaching practice, specifically, that a highly structured approach to group work, using permanent groups, can serve to increase student engagement in language support classes at the University of Sindh, without placing excessive demands on the teacher's time.
- As this is an action research project, the study also makes a contribution of another kind. The process of research has improved my own practice, particularly with regard to fuller understanding of cooperative learning processes and I intend that, when I return to teaching after completion of my PhD, my improved practice will influence others and thus contribute to a more general positive change in the pedagogical practices in our institute.
- Finally, the study offers insights that are applicable to implementation of cooperative learning in other places, especially in majority world contexts where classes are large and resources are scarce.

These contributions will be discussed in turn in the following paragraphs.

My literature review showed that there is compelling evidence that learning is most effective when students are actively engaged in the learning process; the supposed detrimental effects on learning attributed to large classes are more accurately attributed to the teaching methods used in these classes, which encourage student passivity. Particularly for language learning, in keeping with the Vygotskian ideas of social learning and the Zone of Proximal Development, students need to be actively engaged not only at a cognitive level but also at the level of skills, actually practising the use of the target language. This can be achieved, even in large classes, by the use of communicative language teaching methodology that involves students spending

much of their class time working and communicating in small groups. Despite this clear finding from the literature, and even an empirical study by Bughio (2013) showing that communicative language teaching could be used effectively at UoSJP, my own experience was that I continued to use the lecture method because that was how I had been taught myself and, although I had heard that group work and communicative language teaching were useful, I had no idea how to implement them successfully or regularly. My situational analysis confirmed that I was by no means alone in this; lecturing was, and as far as I know still is, overwhelmingly the dominant method used for English language teaching at my institution.

Bughio's (ibid.) study concluded that, although communicative techniques had many advantages, they could not straightforwardly be adopted across our university. Firstly, the English language teachers did not have any training in CLT, so their attempts to use group work often led to chaos in the classroom; secondly, their administrative and teaching workloads did not leave them with time to undertake any labour-intensive preparation for new activities; thirdly, the pressure to get through the syllabus combined with class stoppages meant that setting up groups was perceived as a waste of class time. As an individual lecturer, there was little I could do to address the training needs of my colleagues and myself, or to change the administrative and political constraints of my situation. However, given the opportunity to undertake a PhD, I decided to investigate whether, through my own practice, I could find a way of implementing group work that would be sustainable within the constraints of my particular social and cultural context. In other words, I wanted to find a way of using methods that would enhance my students' engagement without placing an intolerable burden on me as a teacher. My intention was that, if I could find such a solution, it would also be accessible to my colleagues without them needing substantial extra training. Of course such training is clearly needed, but my immediate aim was to look for an improvement that might be immediately accessible, until such time as training becomes more widely available.

The notion of communicative language teaching is a very broad one, encompassing a wide range of approaches and techniques; consequently, for a teacher who has never encountered a communicative classroom, it can be hard to know where to start. One of the reasons for the so-far limited impact of Bughio's (2013) study might be that he was attempting to implement CLT generally. I decided that a good way forward

would be to choose one approach within CLT that could be adapted to my context and easily explained to colleagues who might want to try it themselves. As a result of my literature review, I identified cooperative learning as such an approach. Since cooperative learning uses various highly structured techniques to enhance student engagement, amongst other positive outcomes, I hypothesised that I could adapt elements of cooperative learning to address my research question. Specifically, I considered that a highly structured and regular approach to group work would allow me and my students to establish a routine within which we could access the benefits of group work while avoiding the pitfalls. The main benefits I wanted were to enhance student engagement, in two senses. Firstly, I wanted to increase the amount of class time students spent actively using the English language. Secondly, I wanted to increase their level of engagement with the texts they were reading, and the ideas contained therein, so as to develop their critical thinking through discussion of these ideas with their peers. Most importantly, I wanted to extend these benefits to all students, not only the few who already participated. The pitfalls to avoid included wasting class time on forming groups, creating a disruptive atmosphere in which little work would take place, and creating an unsustainable workload for the teacher (cf. Bughio 2013 and Chapter 6).

Note that the syllabus for the semester I taught is based almost entirely on reading texts from the coursebook. Although this is far from what would be considered in the west as a communicative language teaching syllabus, I decided to stick to it during my intervention for a number of reasons. Firstly, the syllabus is set for all compulsory ESL classes across the institution, and I would have faced significant, possibly insurmountable, administrative obstacles if I had tried to change it for one class. Secondly, I was not myself trained in communicative methodology; it would have extended my PhD far beyond the time and funds made available to me if I had needed to undertake a significant period of training before collecting my data. But most importantly, my aim was to find a way of enhancing participation within the constraints of our existing system. I wanted to find out whether it was possible for teachers in my situation to use group work without putting themselves under intolerable pressure. If the answer was yes, then I wanted to be able to demonstrate this to my colleagues, both at UoSJP and in similar situations more widely. To do this, I needed to show that even the existing syllabus could be used in this way; i.e. I

needed to show that it was possible to enhance participation and engagement without having to go to great lengths to prepare specialist materials, for which my colleagues and I might have neither the time nor the expertise.

In this endeavour, I enjoyed a considerable degree of success, as evidenced by the various types of data collected from my students and the observers, both during my intervention (Chapter 8) and in the final evaluation (Chapter 9). This is therefore my main contribution to knowledge. I have shown that, even in the environment of UoSJP, where the pedagogical possibilities for teachers are highly constrained for economic, cultural and political reasons, a structured approach to group work, using permanent groups, can serve to increase student engagement in language support classes, without placing unsustainable demands on the teacher. In contrast to Bughio (2013), who concluded that the introduction of communicative language teaching at UoSJP would require a programme of teacher training, I have shown that significant improvements are possible through a fairly simple but highly structured approach to classroom management, even using the existing syllabus and materials. I should clarify at once that I completely agree that a programme of teacher training would greatly benefit the English language teachers at UoSJP, as well as their students. However, in the current economic climate, the possibilities for such training are severely limited and so my aim was to look for alternative low cost and attainable solutions. Both the adapted version of cooperative learning that I developed, and the process of action research itself, represent such solutions. Furthermore, through the publication and dissemination of this study, I will also extend the notion of action research and its processes to my colleagues and others working in similar situations. Thus, I might help them learn and develop insights for improving their learning and teaching through professional inquiry. The seeds of this extension have already been sown through the collaborative nature of my project, in which I involved as many of my colleagues as possible as participants.

This brings me to the second element of my contribution. As this was an action research project, one of the aims was to improve my own practice. From the feedback I received, and from my own reflection, I feel this has certainly happened; I am now much more confident about using group work and feel I have developed skills that will help me to engage more of my students more of the time with the material we are studying. However, I do not see my PhD as the end of this process,

but rather as a step on the journey. Having become an action-researcher, my intention is to continue cyclically to improve my own teaching practice, and especially to continue to use and develop cooperative approaches to learning appropriate to my own context. I further hope that I will be able to influence my colleagues in a variety of ways. Firstly, I expect that my study will encourage others to adopt cooperative learning with permanent groups in their English language classes at UoSJP. I have already sown the seeds of this development by involving six of my colleagues in my project as observers. When I return to full time teaching I plan to continue working in this way and I will be able to support interested colleagues to do the same. There will also be opportunities to give formal presentations about my research, certainly at UoSJP and potentially also at other institutions in Pakistan. It is important to note, however, that although I have contributed to an approach that can be used to enhance student engagement in our classes, and although I plan to support my colleagues to do the same, I would also encourage them to become action researchers themselves. My main contribution is to show that, even given our external constraints and lack of training, teachers in my situation can use principles of cooperative learning and approaches to classroom management that greatly enhance student engagement. I would strongly encourage my colleagues to try these principles out, especially the use of permanent groups and extensive use of pair work. But at the same time, I would not wish to say ‘do exactly as I have done’; rather, ‘here is what worked for me - please feel free to try it out and develop it in ways that work for you’. Finally, I hope that if I am successful in gaining my PhD, I will be able to have some influence in matters such as the development of our curriculum. For example, it would be a fairly straightforward and low-cost exercise to rearrange the way we currently use our coursebook, and to make changes that would better integrate the development of the four language skills.

One of the things that struck me most forcibly during the intervention phase was just how very difficult some students found the work set. Some students were almost completely unable to contribute to group discussions, either because they were too shy and self-conscious to speak in English, or because they could not understand the reading passage sufficiently well to be able to respond. In the lecture mode of teaching, the extent of their difficulty had been largely masked, since they just sat passively at

the back. Although they initially also sat passively in the small groups, the problem thus became much more apparent, partly because other students complained in the feedback about their team-mates' lack of active contribution. This complaining was probably not entirely constructive, and perhaps contrary to the cooperative principles I was aiming to engender. On the other hand, freed from whole-class lecturing, I was able to circulate and, when I saw that a student was not engaged in the exercise, I could speak to them individually to explore the nature of their problem and try to help. In fact, the reduction in whole-class lecturing increased the feedback students received in two ways - not only could they receive feedback from their team-mates, but I was also able to give more individual feedback as I circulated (Chapter 8).

In collaboration, my students and I developed our own theories and created knowledge about our own practice and demonstrated 'the transformative process of coming to know' (cf. McNiff and Whitehead, 2002, p. 104). The students and I were part of knowledge-generation, because in the project, students were not merely participants, but rather they were researchers and were researching to find out better methods for their learning (cf. McTaggart, 1997). McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 187) argue that in 'action research, the knowledge is knowledge of practice. The theory is embedded in the practice, and the practice itself offers explanation for why it takes the form it does'. When the practitioner-researcher says that he has learnt something, he is making an original claim to the knowledge which was unknown before (Elliott, 1991; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). I involved my colleagues to further strengthen my theories. Action research being a scientific approach to research always requires evidence from others such as observers. The theories produced by action researchers remain conjecture if they do not provide evidence that has been confirmed by others such as colleagues and students. McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 97-108) argue that in action research, the involvement of 'others as critical friends and validators' is important for validity and reliability of the data and findings. These critical others should function as critical examiners of the data. Based on their critical scrutiny, original claims to knowledge are made. The feedback given by my colleagues during the process of intervention worked as critical feedback and evidence to support my theories.

The third contribution of my study concerns its applicability to other contexts, especially other majority world contexts where classes are large and resources are

scarce. Although the knowledge created was internal and contextual, and therefore limited in its generalizability, it could nevertheless form the basis for action research in other similar contexts (e.g., Somekh, 2006; Gustavsen, 2008; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010) (See Chapter 4). Besides, the study has contributed to knowledge by presenting new adapted versions of two cooperative learning techniques: STAD and TPS. Since cooperative learning strategies were originally devised for smaller classes, I reasoned that they would need careful contextual adaptation before their adoption in large language classes. To achieve the maximum benefit from the two selected strategies, they were therefore contextually adapted based on the results of my situational analysis (see Chapters 6 and 7). This is in contrast to the majority of studies on the implementation of cooperative learning, which did not adapt the strategies to context (See Chapters 2 and 3). The contextual adaptations, namely the inclusion of presentations, tests and pair-work (TPS) in the basic structure of STAD, ignited students' enthusiasm. Presentations at the end of classes were perhaps the most popular adaptation. Students enjoyed presenting their group efforts in front of the whole class and, had time permitted, would have preferred that every group should be given a chance to share in every lesson. My insights and adaptations to cooperative learning strategies will be helpful for others in majority world contexts where there are large classes, limited resources and traditional teaching methods. Teachers in these contexts can use my insights about using cooperative approaches to engage more students as a starting point to analyse their own situation and discover what works for them.

10.4 Limitations and potential for future research

Like any study, the present study was not without its limitations. Perhaps one of the most serious limitations was the fact that not all students returned the questionnaires in the final evaluation stage. Although the feedback I received was mainly positive, this was based on only 62% of the class. One does have to wonder what the other 38% were thinking, perhaps especially those students who stopped attending. Even the positive feedback, both from the students and from my colleague-observers might have been partly influenced by a desire to please me and not hurt my feelings, since it must have been obvious that the success of the project was important to me. It is perhaps a limitation of this kind of research that the teacher-researcher's enthusiasm will always tend to have a positive effect on the learning experience, and

perhaps also to influence the way students respond in requests for feedback. A further limitation is that the study was fairly small scale, limited to one class for one semester, and with many lessons cancelled. Because of this, the extent to which the findings can be generalised are restricted. However, as discussed throughout the thesis, the nature of education means that all educational research involves a degree of context specificity. It is therefore necessary to conduct studies in a wide variety of contexts to build up the body of knowledge overall.

There is clearly the potential for future research in terms of investigating the effects of implementing cooperative learning strategies at UoSJP on a longer-term basis, and in a wider variety of classes. It is crucial to research the extent to which cooperative learning strategies can be successfully implemented by other teachers who might initially be less committed, or even sceptical about its merits. There is also scope for trying out other aspects of cooperative learning, for evaluating cooperative strategies other than STAD and TPS, and for further developing effective routines for structured group work.

Infra-structural issues such as extreme shortage of modern teaching equipment and time constraints affected the study negatively. Insufficient availability of modern teaching equipment made the process very tiring for me. Most importantly, the lack of basic equipment made it impossible for me to conduct pre and post-tests to assess students' academic attainment. Therefore, future studies should attempt to assess whether cooperative learning also enhances students' academic achievement alongside their engagement in the learning process. Such research should investigate not only the effects on student engagement, which were the focus of this study, but also the effects if any on student achievement in all four language skills.

The issue of students who remain quiet during group work is another clear area for future research. Although my study showed that permanent groupings and structured group work can go quite some way towards increasing participation, I hypothesise that the reading passages in the coursebook might be either too difficult or uninteresting for some students, and that basic comprehension checking exercises do not adequately develop their reading skills to allow them to participate. There is clearly enormous scope for research in the area of ESL curriculum development at UoSJP, over and above questions of classroom management such as those addressed

in this thesis. The problem of absenteeism also merits investigation, since at the moment the reasons for the very high non-attendance rates in this study are unclear. Since registers are not normally taken, it is even unclear whether the absence rate in my cooperative learning class was higher than, lower than or similar to rates in the traditional classes. It could be that small group work simply drew attention to absences that would normally go unnoticed in large lecture classes. Finally, another interesting but more thorny area for research concerns the use of mixed-sex groups in the classroom: what advantages it would offer, if any, what the barriers are to its implementation, and what changes would be necessary to make it feasible.

Lastly, due to the lack of learning and teaching equipment, student engagement was not measured more scientifically and closely. Measurement of student engagement was mainly based on student self-reports, and the field notes of observers and the researcher, which is also a limitation of the study. Therefore, it is suggested that other more advanced and technology-related methods of measuring student engagement such as experience sampling (Shernoff and Schmidt, 2008) and student-level observations (Fredricks, et al., 2011) should be used in future studies to get a clearer picture of engagement at a broader level.

10.5 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the thesis, underlined its contribution to knowledge and discussed its limitations and potential for further investigation. In completing the writing of this thesis, I am aware that a PhD is only a beginning. I have shown that there is the potential for positive change within the constraints of my pedagogic situation, and I look forward to building on this achievement in future research. Moreover, similar methods and processes could be useful and effective for other researchers who are teaching large classes in similarly challenging circumstances.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1A: Ethics approval from FREP



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Milton
Cambridge

24 September 2012

Dear Abdul

Project Title: Investigating English Language Teaching and Testing Cooperative Learning in Large Compulsory English Classes at University Level. A Case Study of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

Thank you for submitting the revision requested by the Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP).

I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Panel Chair under the terms of Anglia Ruskin University's *Policy and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research with Human Participants* approval is for a period of three years from 24 September 2012.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with Anglia Ruskin University's Policy and Code of Practice for Research with Human Participants and specifically:

- The procedure for submitting substantial amendments to the committee, should there be any changes to your research. You cannot implement these changes until you have received approval from RESC for them.
- The procedure for reporting adverse events and incidents.
- The Data Protection Act (1998) and any other legislation relevant to your research. You must also ensure that you are aware of any emerging legislation relating to your research and make any changes to your study (which you will need to obtain ethical approval for) to comply with this.
- Obtaining any further ethical approval required from the organisation or country (if not carrying out research in the UK) where you will be carrying the research out. Please ensure that you send the RESC Secretary copies of this documentation.
- Any laws of the country where you are carrying the research out (if these conflict with any aspects of the ethical approval given, please notify RESC prior to starting the research).
- Any professional codes of conduct relating to research or research or requirements from your funding body (please note that for externally funded research, a project risk assessment must have been carried out prior to starting the research).
- Notifying the RESC Secretary when your study has ended.

Information about the above can be obtained on our website at:

<http://web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/rdcs/ethics/index.phtml>

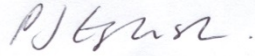
Please also note that your research may be subject to random monitoring by the Panel.



The Government Standard

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. May I wish you the best of luck with your research.


Yours sincerely



Dr Penny English
Chair of Arts, Law and Social Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Panel

Cc Beverley Pascoe, Secretary RESC
Sarah Brown, Chair FRDSC
Sara Donner-Langstone, Secretary FRDSC
Melanie Bell, Research Supervisor

Appendix 1B: Consent form

**Anglia Ruskin University**
Cambridge & Chelmsford

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: _____

Title of project: **Investigating English Language Teaching and Testing Cooperative Learning in Large Compulsory English Classes at University Level. A Case Study of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan**

Main investigator and contact details:
If you have any questions or would like any further information about this project, please contact the researcher, Abdul Hameed Panhwar by email: abdul.panhwar@student.anglia.ac.uk or telephone: (+92) 03133236151 or (+44) 07574564261.

Cambridge Campus
T: 0845 271 3333
Int: +44 (0)1223 363271
www.anglia.ac.uk

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University¹ processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant (print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP





If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: **Investigating English Language Teaching and Testing Cooperative Learning in Large Compulsory English Classes at University Level. A Case Study of the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan**

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____ Date: _____

¹ "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges



Appendix 2A: Field work approval



UNIVERSITY OF SINDH **Faculty of Arts**



No. IELL/146
Dated: 20/4/12.

Institute of English Language and Literature

Dear Dr Penny
English Chair of Faculty
Research Ethic Panel
Faculty of Arts
Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge.

Subject: **Permission to conduct research at IELL, University of Sindh**

Dear Madam

I am pleased to write that Mr. Abdul Hameed Panhawar, Lecturer of English at the Institute of English Language & Literature (IELL), University of Sindh, Jamshoro, is doing research with you and is willing to conduct his field work at IELL. I am to intimate you that this office will have no objection if Mr. Panhwar comes to do the same here. We will rather do our best to facilitate Mr. Panhwar to conduct his field work in the best possible way.

I wish him best of luck.

Regards

Truly yours

Dr M K Sangi
Incharge Director
Institute of English Language & Literature
University of Sindh,
Jamshoro
Incharge Director
Institute of English Language & Literature
University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Appendix 2B: ESL students' pass figures -2011-2015 at UoSJP



UNIVERSITY OF SINDH

Faculty of Arts

Institute of English Language and Literature

Dr. Rafique Memon
Director



No. IELL/


90

Dated: 02-2-16

To Whom It May Concern

Following is the year wise figure in percentage of the regular candidates of BS-II enrolled in various programs in the University of Sindh.

Year	Class	Enrolled	Appeared	Pass % (with atleast 50% Marks)
2015	BS-II	4000	3875	70%
2014	BS-II	3995	3800	72%
2013	BS-II	4215	4125	68%
2012	BS-II	4128	4075	60%
2011	BS-II	3920	3900	65%


Director
Institute of English Language & Literature
University of Sindh, Jamshoro
DIRECTOR
Institute of English Language & Literature
University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Appendix 3: Situational analysis data collection instruments

Appendix 3.1A: Situational analysis student-questionnaire pilot study version

Research theme: Learners' beliefs and experience of large-class English learning and teaching at university level

Part I: Personal Details

Please complete the following areas.

1. Gender Male Female

2. Age _____

3. University: _____

Part II: Facts and Opinions about Large Classes

Please answer the following questions.

4. What is your usual class size?

5. What is the ideal number of students for a class to have, in your opinion?

6. At what number of students do you consider a class to be large?

8. At what number of students does the size of a class start to create problems?

9. Do you think it is possible to learn English in large classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

And why? Please give reasons for the answer above.

Part-III: Process of Teaching and Learning in Large Classes

10. Read the statements about *your general perceptions of large English classes* and then put a tick in the box that best represents your opinion.

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	The teaching of practical skills is neglected in a large English class.					
2.	The atmosphere in a large English class is teacher-centred. Students have no role; they are passive listeners.					
3.	Students like taking exams in a large English class because there is an opportunity for them to cheat.	Omission-1: <u>This item does not seem to be directly related to the main theme of students' perception about learning in large classes so it was omitted it.</u>				

4.	Teachers of large English classes do not have time to mark and give feedback about homework					
5.	In a large English class, communicative activities are neglected.					
6.	Large English classes are suitable for learning productive skills - speaking and writing.					
7.	Large English classes are suitable for learning receptive skills - reading and listening.					
8.	Students still have the chance to practise or work in groups if they have to learn in a large English class.					
9.	Large English classes promote the lecture-based approach rather than an interactive teaching approach.					
10.	Working in groups in a large English class is an effective way to learn.					
11.	In a large English class, teachers don't remember our names.					
12.	To get enough attention from one's teacher is easy in a large English class.					
13.	In a large English class, one feels neglected.					
14.	Overcrowded English classes make one feel uncomfortable and anxious.					
15.	In a large English class, one feels proud to get high marks.	Omission-2: <u>This item also seems vague and disconnected with the research questions.</u>				
16.	Learning in a large English class makes students passive.					
17.	Learning in a large English class makes students active.					

11. Read the statements below about *your experience of learning in large English Compulsory classes* and then put a cross in the box that best represents your opinion.

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I am satisfied with the number of students in my					

	English Compulsory class.					
2.	We always work in groups in our large English Compulsory class.					
3.	My English Compulsory class always remains disciplined in spite of its being large.					
4.	In our large English Compulsory class, the best students are given more attention.					
5.	In our large English Compulsory class the weak students are given less attention.					
6.	Teacher-student interaction in my English Compulsory class is neglected because of the large size					
7.	The opportunity to express myself in my large English Compulsory class is rare.	Modification -1: In this item, the word “rare” appeared to be difficult to students so it is replaced with “very little” (see item 7 in the revised version in <i>Appendix 3.1B</i>)				
8.	We use the language laboratory equipment to practise English pronunciation in our English Compulsory class.	Omission-3: No language Lab is available in the whole university, so this item seemed disconnected.				
9.	I can hear and understand what teachers say in my large English Compulsory class.	Modification -2: The item needed to be clarified by placing the word “clearly” and phrase “from any seat in the classroom” (see item 8 in the revised version in <i>Appendix 3.1B</i>)				
10.	In my English Compulsory class, it is difficult to get a seat near the front, because of the large class size.					
11.	When I sit at the back of the classroom during English Compulsory, I can't see clearly the words on the board because it is a very large and overcrowded class.					
12.	In our large English Compulsory class the teacher uses audio-visual equipment.					
13.	I am able to see the gestures of my teacher during my English Compulsory class in spite of the overcrowded room and large class size.	Modification -3: The sentence was clarified and was shortened and similar changes were made as in Modification-2 (see item 12 in the revised version in <i>Appendix 3.1B</i>)				
14.	The classroom for our English Compulsory class is usually not well-furnished.					

15.	There is not enough space for the teacher to move around in our classroom during our English Compulsory class.					
16.	The classroom for the English Compulsory lessons is usually badly constructed and its physical structure disturbs our learning.					
17.	In English Compulsory, I feel relaxed because my classmates and teachers do not know my name due to the large class size.	Omission-4: <u>The item was removed because it was not directly connected to the main questions.</u>				
18.	I feel shy when I have to speak in English Compulsory class because it is very large.					
19.	In my large English Compulsory class, I feel bad if I receive low marks.	Omission-5: <u>Refer to Omission-4 for the reason.</u>				
20.	In my large English Compulsory class, I don't feel bad if I receive low marks because there are other students getting similar marks.	Omission-6: <u>Refer to Omission-4 and 5 for the reason.</u>				
21.	The atmosphere is noisy and stressful in my English Compulsory class,					
22.	The overcrowding in my English Compulsory class discourages me from studying hard and proving my worth.					
23.	The teacher doesn't remember my name in my English Compulsory class because of the large class size.					
24.	The teacher remembers my name in my English Compulsory class in spite of its being large.					
25.	I would feel more comfortable if the size of my English Compulsory class was smaller than at present.					
26.	I would feel more comfortable if the size of my English Compulsory class was larger than at present.					
27.	The teacher of my English Compulsory class always corrects and gives me					

	feedback on the written work that I produce in the class.					
28.	The teacher of my English Compulsory class always corrects and gives me feedback on my oral presentations in the class.					
29.	The large size of my English Compulsory class helps me compare my answers with my classmates' answers which in turn helps me to evaluate myself.					
30.	In my large English Compulsory class, my classmates peer-review my written tasks and give feedback.					

12. Please answer these questions.

12. a. Do you think learning in large classes is difficult for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No. Why?

12. b. Please suggest some methods which could make the process of learning and teaching more effective in a large class:

Appendix 3.1B: Situational analysis student-questionnaire revised version

Research theme: Learners' beliefs and experience of large-class English learning and teaching at university level

Part I: Personal Details

Please complete the following areas.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age _____

3. University: _____

Part II: Facts and Opinions about Large Classes

Please answer the following questions.

4. What is your usual class size?

5. What is the ideal number of students for a class to have, in your opinion?

6. At what number of students do you consider a class to be large?

8. At what number of students does the size of a class start to create problems?

9. Do you think it is possible to learn English in large classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

And why? Please give reasons for the answer above.

10. Read the statements about *your general perceptions of large English classes* and then put a tick in the box that best represents your opinion.

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	The teaching of practical skills is neglected in a large English class.					
2.	The atmosphere in a large English class is teacher-centred. Students have no role; they are passive listeners.					
3.	Teachers of large English classes do not have time to mark and give feedback about homework					
4.	In a large English class, communicative activities are neglected.					
5.	Large English classes are suitable for learning productive skills - speaking and writing.					
6.	Large English classes are suitable for learning receptive skills - reading and listening.					
7.	Students still have the chance to practise or work in groups if they have to learn in a large English class.					
8.	Large English classes promote the lecture-based teaching approach rather than an interactive teaching approach.					
9	Working in groups in a large English class is an effective					

	way to learn.					
10.	In a large English class, teachers don't remember students' names.					
11.	To get enough attention from one's teacher is easy in a large English class.					
12.	In a large English class, one feels neglected.					
13.	Overcrowded English classes make one feel uncomfortable and anxious.					
14.	Learning in a large English class makes students passive.					
15.	Learning in a large English class makes students active.					

11. Read the statements below about *your experience of learning in large English Compulsory classes* and then put a cross in the box that best represents your opinion.

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I am satisfied with the number of students in my English Compulsory class.					
2.	We always work in groups in our large English Compulsory class.					
3.	My English Compulsory class always remains disciplined in spite of its being large.					
4.	In our large English Compulsory class the best students are given more attention.					
5.	In our large English Compulsory class the weak students are given less attention.					
6.	Teacher-student interaction in my English Compulsory class is neglected because of the large size					
7.	I have very little opportunity to express myself in my large English Compulsory class.					
8.	I can hear the teacher clearly from any seat in my large English Compulsory class.					
9.	In my English Compulsory class, it is difficult to get a seat near the front, because					

	of the large class size.					
10.	When I sit at the back of the classroom during English Compulsory, I can't see clearly the words on the board because it is a very large and overcrowded class.					
11.	In our large English Compulsory class the teacher uses audio-visual equipment.					
12.	I can clearly see my teacher's gestures from any seat in my large English Compulsory class.					
13.	The classroom for our English Compulsory class is usually not well-furnished.					
14.	There is not enough space for the teacher to move around in our classroom during our English Compulsory class.					
15.	The classroom for English Compulsory is usually badly constructed and its physical structure disturbs our learning.					
16.	I feel shy when I have to speak in English Compulsory class because it is very large.					
17.	In my English Compulsory class, the atmosphere is noisy because of the large number of students.					
18.	The overcrowding in my English Compulsory class discourages me from studying hard and proving my worth.					
19.	The teacher doesn't remember my name in my English Compulsory class because of the large class size.					
20.	The teacher remembers my name in my English Compulsory class in spite of its being large.					
21.	I would feel more comfortable if the size of my English Compulsory class was smaller than at present.					
22.	I would feel more comfortable if the size of my					

	English Compulsory class was larger than at present.					
23.	The teacher of my English Compulsory class always corrects and gives me feedback on the written work that I produce in the class.					
24.	The teacher of my English Compulsory class always corrects and gives me feedback on my oral presentations in the class.					
25.	The large size of my English Compulsory class helps me compare my answers with my classmates' answers which in turn helps me to evaluate myself.					
26.	In my English Compulsory class my classmates check my assignments/class-work and give me helpful feedback in spite of the large class size.					

12. Please answer these questions.

12. a. Do you think learning in large classes is difficult for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No. Why?

12. b. Please suggest some methods which could make the process of learning and teaching more effective in a large class:

Appendix 3.2A: Situational analysis teacher-questionnaire pilot study version

Research theme: Teachers' beliefs and experience of large-class English teaching and learning at university level

Part I: Personal Details

Please complete the following areas.

1. Gender : ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Teaching experience:

☐ 1. Up to 1 yr. ☐ 2. 1-5 years ☐ 3. 6-10 years ☐ 4. 11-15 years ☐ 5. More than 15 years

3. Education: ☐ 1. Master's Degree ☐ 2. M.Phil. Degree ☐ 3. Doctoral Degree

4. University: _____

Part II: Facts and Opinions about Large Classes

Please answer the following questions.

5. What is your usual class size?

6. What is the ideal number of students for a class to have, in your opinion?

7. At what number of students do you consider a class to be large?

8. At what number of students does the size of a class start to create problems?

9. Do you think it is possible to teach English in large classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No why? give reasons for the answer above:

15. Read the statements below about *your general perceptions of large English classes* and then put a cross in the appropriate box according to the rating scale:

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Teachers save time and energy when teaching in a large English class as they do not need to repeat the same lessons many times.	Omission-1: <u>Teachers considered it out of the context. On discussion with them, they did not want to save time; rather they had very short time to teach.</u>				
2.	Teaching in large English classes is suitable for teaching productive skills - speaking and writing.					
3.	Teaching in large English classes is suitable for teaching receptive skills - reading and listening.					
4.	Students still have a chance to practise or work in groups if they have to learn in a large English class.					
5.	Teaching in a large English class promotes the lecture-based approach rather than interactive approach.					
6	In large English classes assessment focuses on tests and examination rather than homework or continuous	Omission-2: <u>This item was not directly related to the research questions, the research questions focus teachers' experience during teaching and learning, not the assessment.</u>				

	assessment e.g. tasks, assignments, group projects.					
7.	Teaching English in a large class is not difficult but challenging.					
8.	Teaching English in a large class is easier than teaching English in a small class.					
9.	The weak and shy students are most of the time reluctant to participate in large English class (es).					
10.	I believe that learning should be student-centred in large English class (es).					
11.	I believe that teaching should be teacher-centred in large English class (es).					
12.	Student-centred learning is possible in a large English class.					

16. Read the statements below about *your teaching experience in large English*

Compulsory classes and then put a cross in the appropriate box according to the rating scale:

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel uncomfortable teaching large compulsory English classes.					
2.	I cannot manage class activities in a large compulsory English class.					
3.	I cannot interact with all students in large compulsory English classes.					
4.	I cannot make students interested to learn English in a large compulsory English class.	Modification-1: <u>The sentence structure is changed and the word “all” before the word “students” is added to make the statement clearer to understand (see item 4 in in the revised version in Appendix 3.2B).</u>				
5	Teaching compulsory English classes is a pleasant experience at the University of Sindh because of their large size.	Omission-3: <u>The idea in this item seemed obscure to teachers and was not directly connected to teachers’ experience of the learning and teaching process.</u>				
6.	I try to use interactive methods in compulsory English class in spite of the large number of students.					
7.	I only use the lecture method in compulsory English class because the use of interactive activities is not possible in such a large class.					

8.	I use both the interactive and lecture methods to make the situation balanced in my compulsory English class in spite of the large number of students.					
9.	Students co-operate with me during learning and teaching process in large classes of compulsory English.	Modification-2: <u>Similar change as mentioned in Modification -1 above (see item 8 in in the revised version in Appendix 3.2B).</u>				
10.	I only use black/white board during teaching in large compulsory classes of English.					
11.	I also use modern teaching equipment during teaching in large compulsory classes of English.					
12.	I regularly check my students' written assignments and return them with constructive feedback in compulsory English classes in spite of their being large.	Modification -3: <u>Similar change as mentioned in Modification -1 and 2 above (see item 11 in in the revised version in Appendix 3.2B).</u>				
13.	I can correct and give feedback to students on their written tasks in compulsory English classes in spite of the large number of students.	Modification -4: <u>Similar change as mentioned in Modification -1, 2 and 3 above (see item 12 in in the revised version in Appendix 3.2B).</u>				
14.	I can correct and give feedback students on their oral tasks in compulsory English classes in spite of a large number of students.	Modification -5: <u>Similar change as mentioned in Modification -1, 2, 3 and 4 above (see item 13 in in the revised version in Appendix 3.2B).</u>				
15.	I can assess all the assignments and exam scripts of the large number of students of compulsory English class on time properly.	Omission-4: <u>Refer to Omission-2.</u>				
16.	I can assess all the assignments and exam scripts of a large number of students of compulsory English only superficially because of over-work.	Omission-5: <u>Refer to Omission-2 and 4.</u>				
17.	In my large compulsory English class (es) only the brighter students participate.					
18.	I try to encourage the weak and shy students to participate too in my large compulsory English class (es).					

17. How do you find these categories if you have to teach English in large classes? Please give a rating for each item according to the criteria below by putting a cross in the appropriate column.

No	Statement	Very difficult	Difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Easy	Very easy
1.	Timing of the lessons					
2.	Using models and strategies of teaching					
3.	Selecting instructional techniques of teaching					
4.	Preparing hand-outs and other materials.					
5.	Being able to see the whole class					
6.	Using the right level of voice					
7.	Having students work in groups in class					
8.	Being able to give support and advice to individual students during the class					
9.	Giving equal share of class activities to all students					
10.	Providing appropriate pace of lessons					
11.	Giving and checking homework or assignments					
12.	Marking exams					
13.	Knowing the students individually					
14.	Developing productive skills, i.e. Writing and speaking					
15.	Developing receptive skills, i.e. reading and listening					
16.	Monitoring work and giving feedback					
17.	Managing discipline					

Please answer these questions.

13.a. Do you think teaching in large classes is difficult for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No. Why?

13.b. With an ideal number of students in my class, I could:

Appendix 3.2B: Situational analysis teacher-questionnaire revised version

Research theme: Teachers' beliefs and experience of large-class English teaching and learning at university level

Part I: Personal Details

Please complete the following areas.

1. Gender : ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Teaching experience:

☐ 1.Up to 1 yr. ☐ 2. 1-5 years ☐ 3. 6-10 years ☐ 4.11-15 years ☐ 5. More than 15 years

3. Education: ☐ 1. Master's Degree ☐ 2. Mphil Degree ☐ 3. Doctoral Degree

4. University:

Part II: Facts and Opinions about Large Classes

Please answer the following questions

5. What is your usual class size?

6. What is the ideal number of students for a class to have, in your opinion?

7. At what number of students do you consider a class to be large?

8. At what number of students does the size of a class start to create problems?

9. Do you think it is possible to teach English in large classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No why? give reasons for the answer above

10. Read the statements below about ***your general perceptions of large English classes*** and then put a cross in the appropriate box according to the rating scale:

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Teaching in large English classes is suitable for teaching productive skills - speaking and writing.					
2.	Teaching in large English classes is suitable for teaching receptive skills - reading and listening.					
3.	Students still have a chance to practise or work in groups if they have to learn in a large English class.					
4.	Teaching in a large English class promotes lecture-based					

	approaches rather than interactive approach.					
5.	Teaching English in a large class is not difficult but challenging.					
6.	Teaching English in a large class is easier than teaching English in a small class.					
7.	The weak and shy students are most of the time reluctant to participate in large English class (es).					
8.	I believe that learning should be student-centered in large English class (es).					
9.	I believe that teaching should be teacher-centered in large English class (es).					
10.	Student-centered learning is possible in a large English class.					

11. Read the statements below about ***your teaching experience in large English Compulsory classes*** and then put a cross in the appropriate box according to the rating scale:

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel uncomfortable teaching large compulsory English classes.					
2.	I cannot manage class activities in a large compulsory English class.					
3.	I cannot interact with all students in large compulsory English classes.					
4.	In a large compulsory English class, I cannot make all the students interested in learning English.					
5.	I try to use interactive methods in compulsory English class in spite of the large number of students.					
6.	I only use the lecture method in compulsory English class because the use of interactive activities is not possible in such a large class.					
7.	I use both the interactive and lecture methods to make the situation balanced in my compulsory English class in spite of the large number of					

	students.					
8.	In the large English Compulsory classes, all the students cooperate with me in the process of learning and teaching.					
9.	I only use black/white board during teaching in large compulsory classes of English.					
10.	I also use modern teaching equipment during teaching in large compulsory classes of English.					
11.	I regularly check all my students' written assignments for English Compulsory and return them with constructive feedback, in spite of the classes being so large.					
12.	I can correct the written tasks students do during English Compulsory classes and give feedback to all the students, despite the class being so large.					
13.	I can correct and give feedback on oral tasks to all my students in English Compulsory classes in spite of the large number of students.					
14.	In my large compulsory English class (es) only the brighter students participate.					
15.	I try to encourage the weak and shy students to participate too in my large compulsory English class (es).					

12. How do you find these categories if you have to teach English in large classes? Please give a rating for each item according to the criteria below by putting a cross in the appropriate column.

No	Statement	Very difficult	Difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Easy	Very easy
1.	Timing of the lessons					
2.	Using models and strategies of teaching					

3.	Selecting instructional techniques of teaching					
4.	Preparing hand-outs and other materials.					
5.	Being able to see the whole class					
6.	Using the right level of voice					
7.	Having students work in groups in class					
8.	Being able to give support and advice to individual students during the class					
9.	Giving equal share of class activities to all students					
10.	Providing appropriate pace of lessons					
11.	Giving and checking homework or assignments					
12.	Marking exams					
13.	Knowing the students individually					
14.	Developing productive skills, i.e. Writing and speaking					
15.	Developing receptive skills, i.e. reading and listening					
16.	Monitoring work and giving feedback					
17.	Managing discipline					

Please answer these questions.

13.a. Do you think teaching in large classes is difficult for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No. Why?

13.b. With an ideal number of students in my class, I could:

Appendix 3.3A: Situational analysis student-teacher interview points pilot study version

- Importance of English
- Class size
- Participants' perceptions of large English classes
- Participants' expectations of the English Compulsory class before experiencing it themselves such as (what size they expected it to be, what sort of activities they

expected and so on, as well as asking what they expected from English Compulsory in general)=Omitted

- Their experience of large English Compulsory classes
- Negative aspects of large English Compulsory classes
- Positive aspects of large English Compulsory classes
- Methods and activities used by the teacher and students to learn English in large English Compulsory classes.
- Teacher feedback and its effects on the students
- Suggestions for improvement.

Appendix 3.3B: Situational analysis student-teacher interview points revised version

- Importance of English
- Class size
- Participants' perceptions of large English classes
- Their experience of large English Compulsory classes
- Negative aspects of large English Compulsory classes
- Positive aspects of large English Compulsory classes
- Methods and activities used by the teacher and students to learn English in large English Compulsory classes.
- Teacher feedback and its effects on the students
- Suggestions for improvement.

Appendix 3.3C: Situational analysis student interview main questions

- How far is English language learning important for you?
- How many students are there in your English Compulsory class?
- Do you think the number you have indicated is large, small or ideal number for learning English?
- Are you satisfied with the number of students in your class?
- How many students make a large class?
- How many students make a small ideal class?
- If you were given a choice, how many students would you prefer to have in your English class? Why?
- How do you perceive learning of English in your English Compulsory class?
- How do you experience learning of English in your English Compulsory class?
- What difficulties do you face while learning in English Compulsory classes?
- What things do you like about your present English class?
- Is there anything that you do not like very much about your present English class?
- Is attending the English class helpful for you?
- What teaching methods/activities are used by your English teachers?
- Do you ever work in groups with other students?
- Where do you usually sit in the class?
- Can you easily hear the teacher?
- Can you easily see the blackboard from where you sit in the classroom?
- Does your teacher give you feedback on your written and oral task?

- Do you think that teacher feedback is useful for learning English?
- Do you feel that you are learning English in your present class?
- Would you like to suggest some ways to improve learning-teaching in your English Compulsory class?

Appendix 3.3D: Situational analysis teacher interview main questions

- How far English language is important in your opinion?
- How do you perceive and experience teaching of English in compulsory classes?
- Are you satisfied with the number of students in your English Compulsory class (es)?
- How many students are usually in your English Compulsory class?
- In your opinion, how many students make a large class?
- How many students make a small ideal class?
- How would you describe your present English class on the following continuum of class size?
- Very large, Large, small and neither small nor large
- How do you experience teaching of English in your English Compulsory class (es)?
- What things do you like about your present English Compulsory class (es)?
- Is there anything that you do not like very much about your present English class (es)?
- What teaching methods do you usually use in your large English compulsory class?
- Do you use the communicative activities in your class?
- Do you use group activities in your classes?
- Do you think that your teaching helps your students learn English in compulsory English class?
- How would you feel if the size of your class was larger than your present class (es)?
- How would you feel if the size of your class was smaller than your present class (es)?
- Do you face any kinds of problems while teaching your compulsory English class (es)?
- What teaching methods do you use in your English compulsory class to make your teaching effective?
- How do you behave in your English compulsory class?
- Are there any other kinds of things that you find impossible to do in your present class?
- Would you like to suggest some ways to improve learning-teaching in your English Compulsory class?

Appendix 3.4A: Situational analysis observation instrument pilot study version

Class _____ Department/Institute _____

Subject _____ Date _____

S. No	Physical environment	Comments
1.	Presents an inviting, relaxed environment for learning.	
2.	Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	
3.	Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	
4.	Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	
5.	Is arranged for teacher and student movement during work sessions.	
6.	Provides work areas for individual needs, including knowledge/ability levels.	
7.	Reflects current content or skills through student displays and Objects	

S. No	Teacher behaviour/method	Comments
1.	Works with total groups, individuals, and small groups.	
2.	Monitors individuals and small groups.	
3.	Uses a variety of on-going assessment tools such as checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records.	
4.	Applies assessment information to guide instruction.	
5.	Addresses academic, emotional, social, and physical student needs.	
6.	Provides time for students to actively process information.	
7.	Gives specific feedback to individuals and/or small groups.	
9.	Engages students in activities that employ their interests and the ways they learn.	

10.	Tailors lessons with student-focused activities.	
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S. No	Student behaviour/method	Comments
1	Shows that learning objectives are clear to him/her.	
2.	Exhibits on-task behaviour while working alone.	
3.	Works effectively in small groups.	
4.	Works on his/her individual knowledge or ability levels.	
5.	Uses materials/resources on the student's own level of success.	
6.	Feels respected and emotionally safe.	
7.	Uses self-discipline.	
8.	Asks questions from teachers, other students.	
9.	Answers to the questions from teachers and other students.	
10.	Raises hand to ask for clarification.	

S. No	Materials/resources	Comments
1.	Include published print materials/ textbook(s).	
2.	Include a variety of reading levels that are related to the subject or topic.	
3.	Are accessible to students.	
4.	Support the standards and topic.	
5.	Are age-appropriate.	
6.	Are up-to-date.	
7.	Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	
8.	Include appropriate reference sources and materials.	
9.	Include student created material.	

S. No	Instructional strategies	Comments
1.	Use teacher-centred methods only.	
2.	Use a variety of assessment tools before, during, and after	

	learning.	
3.	Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities to teach standards.	
4.	Meet the diverse needs of learners.	
5.	Relate learning to the students 'worlds/context.	
6.	Engage students in various flexible grouping designs.	
7.	Engage students in group discussion.	
8.	Engage students in individual presentation.	
9.	Engage students in group presentation.	
10.	Engage students with projects and/or problems-solving activities.	
11.	Present students with choices in learning activities.	
12.	Link the targeted standards with individual needs.	
13.	Nurture the social and emotional aspects of the students.	
14.	Ignite each student's desire to learn.	
15.	Foster teacher-directed questions and answers.	
16.	Engage students in note-taking.	
17.	Engage students in summarizing.	
18.	Focus on writing of students only in class.	
19.	Focus on reading of students only in class.	
20.	Focus on speaking of students only in class.	
21.	Focus on listening of students in class.	
22.	Use Cooperative Learning strategies.	
23.	Use time in assessing homework.	

Appendix 3.4B: Situational analysis observation instrument revised version

Class _____ Department/Institute _____

Subject _____ Date _____

S. No	Physical environment	Comments
1.	Presents an inviting, relaxed environment for learning.	
2.	Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	
3.	Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	
4.	Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	
5.	Is arranged for teacher and student movement during work sessions.	
6.	Provides work areas for individual needs, including knowledge/ability levels.	
7.	Reflects current content or skills through student displays and Objects	
8.	Provides modern equipment.	Insertion-1: <u>These items were inserted to gain more comprehensive information.</u>
9.	Have sufficient lightings.	
10.	Is ventilated.	
11.	Is spacious.	

S. No	Teacher behaviour/method	Further details and Comments
1.	Works with total groups, individuals, and small groups.	
2.	Monitors individuals and small groups.	
3.	Uses a variety of on-going assessment tools such as checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records.	
4.	Applies assessment information to guide instruction.	
5.	Addresses academic, emotional, social, and physical student needs.	
6.	Provides time for students to actively process information.	
7.	Gives specific feedback to individuals and/or small	

	groups.	
9.	Engages students in activities that employ their interests and the ways they learn.	
10.	Tailors lessons with student-focused activities.	
11.	Reads from book and explains.	Insertion 2: Refer to Insertion 1.
12.	Moves around the class.	

S. No	Student behaviour/method	Comments
1	Shows that learning objectives are clear to him/her.	
2.	Exhibits on-task behaviour while working alone.	
3.	Works effectively in small groups.	
4.	Works on his/her individual knowledge or ability levels.	
5.	Uses materials/resources on the student's own level of success.	
6.	Feels respected and emotionally safe.	
7.	Uses self-discipline.	
8.	Asks questions from teachers, other students.	
9.	Answers to the questions from teachers and other students.	
10.	Raises hand to ask for clarification.	
11.	Is focussed and attentive.	Insertion 3: Refer to Insertion 1.
12.	Is detached and involved other activities i.e. games, mobile use, talking e.t.c.	

S. No	Materials/resources	Comments
1.	Include published print materials/ textbook(s).	
2.	Include a variety of reading levels that are related to the subject or topic.	
3.	Are accessible to students.	
4.	Support the standards and topic.	
5.	Are age-appropriate.	
6.	Are up-to-date.	
7.	Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	

8.	Include appropriate reference sources and materials.	
9.	Include student created material.	

S. No	Instructional strategies	Comments
1.	Use teacher-centred method only.	
2.	Use a variety of assessment tools before, during, and after learning.	
3.	Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities to teach standards.	
4.	Meet the diverse needs of learners.	
5.	Relate learning to the students 'worlds/context.	
6.	Engage students in various flexible grouping designs.	
7.	Engage students in group discussion.	
8.	Engage students in individual presentation.	
9.	Engage students in group presentation.	
10.	Engage students with projects and/or problems-solving activities.	
11.	Present students with choices in learning activities.	
12.	Link the targeted standards with individual needs.	
13.	Nurture the social and emotional aspects of the students.	
14.	Ignite each student's desire to learn.	
15.	Foster teacher-directed questions and answers.	
16.	Engage students in note-taking.	
17.	Engage students in summarizing.	
18.	Focus on writing of students only in class.	
19.	Focus on reading of students only in class.	
20.	Focus on speaking of students only in class.	
21.	Focus on listening of students in class.	

22.	Use Cooperative Learning strategies.	
23.	Use time in assessing homework.	

Appendix 4: Intervention

Appendix 4.1A: Syllabus: English Compulsory IV (Compulsory)

2nd Semester: **Course No. Engl.401** **Credit hrs: 03 Marks: 100**

Course Objectives: The purpose of this course is to expose students to a variety of literary works, consisting of English, American, Pakistani, original and translated literary pieces.

Contents:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ernest Hemingway | <i>A Day's Wait</i> |
| 2. Mackinlay Kantor | <i>A Man Who Had No Eyes</i> |
| 3. Nasim Kharl | <i>The Thirty- Fourth Gate</i> |
| 4. Jamal Abro | <i>Pirani</i> |
| 5. Francis Bacon | <i>Of Studies</i> |
| 6. Martin Luther King, Jr. | <i>I have a Dream</i> |
| 7. Faiz Ahmed Faiz | <i>Homage to Tolstoy</i> |
| 8. William Shakespeare | <i>Sonnet</i> |
| 9. William Collins | <i>Ode Written in 1746</i> |
| 10. Alfred Tennyson | <i>The Eagle</i> |
| 11. Percy Bysshe Shelley | <i>Ode to the West Wind</i> |
| 12. Robert Frost | <i>After Apple Picking</i> |
| 13. William Wordsworth | <i>Lucy Gray</i> |
| 14. Shaikh Ayaz | <i>Ghazal</i> |
| 15. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai | <i>Kalyan</i> |

Appendix 4.1B: Intervention lesson plan and hand-out-I

Hand-out: 1

Lesson: 1

Cooperative Learning Technique: *Student Team Achievement Division (STAD)*

Main Objective: Enhancing student engagement with English learning processes

Learning objectives:

Improving students:

- reading comprehension skills,
- vocabulary,
- interaction and group discussion skills
- presentation skills
- cognitive and critical reasoning skills

Target Class: Second year compulsory ESL class

Material Required

Students:

- The coursebook *English For Undergraduates*
- Pen/pencils
- Notes books/copies

The teacher:

- Board
- Marker
- Other teaching aids (if available)

Time Available: 50 minutes

Topic: *Thirty-fourth Gate (story)* from the course book (pp. 172-175).

Process: Students working in groups of six mixed ability members

Step 1: Teacher mini lecture to introduce the topic (5-8 minutes)

Step 2: Read the Story in groups and answer the following questions critically in the light of your understanding (35 minutes).

- Who caught sight of a dead body?
- Whose dead body was it?
- What does the writer mean by the phrase “the bigger court” (line 16)?
- What does the phrase “timid knocks” mean (line 31)?
- What command does the surveyor give the gauge reader?
- How does the gauge reader remove the Subedar’s suspicion about his being murderer?

Step 3: Presenters of two or three randomly selected groups should present the final answers of the questions (7-10 minutes).

Appendix 4.1C: Intervention lesson plan and hand-out-IV

Hand-out: 4

Lesson: 4

Cooperative Learning Technique: *Think-Pair-Share*

Main Objective: Enhancing student engagement with English learning processes

Learning objectives:

Improving students:

- interaction and pair or group discussion skills
- presentation skills
- cognitive/critical reasoning skills

Target Class: Second year compulsory ESL class

Material Required

Students:

- The coursebook *English For Undergraduates*
- Pen/pencils
- Notes books/copies

The teacher:

- Board
- Marker
- Other teaching aids (if available)

Time Available: 50 minutes

Topic: *A Man who had no Eyes (Short story)* from the course Book (pp. 170-171)

Process: Students working in groups of six mixed ability members

Step 1: Teacher mini lecture to introduce the topic (5-8 minutes)

Step 2: Think critically about the similarities and dissimilarities of the characters of Mr Parson and Markwardt individually (10 minutes)

Step 3: Then discuss the similarities and dissimilarities of the characters of Mr Parson and Markwardt in pair with your neighboring partner (15 minutes)

Step 4: Next all members in groups together should discuss and write down briefly the main similarities and dissimilarities of both the characters (10 minutes)

Step 5: Presenters of two or three randomly selected groups should present the final draft/points about the main similarities and dissimilarities of the characters of Mr Parson and Markwardt. (7 minutes).

Appendix 4.1D: Cooperative learning progress report

COOPERATIVE LEARNING PROGRESS REPORT

Date: _____

Week: _____

Lesson Topic: _____

Describe Critical or Interesting Incidents: _____

Successes: _____

Problems: _____

My Thoughts: _____

Ideas to Improve Future Cooperative Learning Lessons: _____

Appendix 4.1E: Intervention student lesson-evaluation form

Date: _____

1. What did you like about the activity and why?

2. What did you NOT like about the activity and why?

3. How did you help your teammates?

4. What is one thing you did today and why?

6. Suggestions for making the lesson better

Appendix 4.2: Intervention final evaluation

Appendix 4.2A: Intervention final evaluation student questionnaire

Research theme: Student-participant's experience of learning with cooperative learning strategies

Please complete this questionnaire about your experience of cooperative learning in your English Compulsory class. It is for research purposes. You need not write your name.

Choose a number on the scale 1 to 5 as you respond to each item. 1= "strongly agree", 2= "agree", 3= "neither agree nor disagree" 4= "disagree", 5= "strongly disagree". Tick the box that best represents your experience.

No	Working in cooperative groups:	1	2	3	4	5
1	helped enhance my understanding/comprehension of English					
2	fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience between students					
3	made problem-solving easier for me					
4	stimulated my cognitive skills (critical thinking, reasoning/arguing etc.)					
5	helped me feel more relaxed in the class					
6	enabled me receive and give useful/helpful feedback					
7	enabled the teacher to give feedback to learners					
8	enabled the teacher to give individual attention					
9	motivated me to learn more					
10	focused on collective efforts rather than individual effort					
11	helped learners to depend on one another for positive and constructive help					
12	created a greater sense of individual and group responsibility					
13	enabled learners to help weaker learners in the group					
14	enhanced my communication/interactive skills					
15	enhanced face to face interaction between learners					
16	enhanced interaction between learners and the teacher					
17	enhanced my interpersonal and small group skills					
18	improved my academic performance					
19	helped learners participate actively in the learning and teaching process					
20	made the class more fun and interesting for me					
21	helped me make new friends					
22	fostered team spirit					
23	I wasted my time explaining things to others					
24	it was difficult to get group members to actively participate in tasks					
25	made students feel neglected					
26	made me feel that group work should be encouraged/continued					
27	helped me to complete the learning tasks					
28	was problematic because some people did not do their share of work					
29	made me feel left out of group work					
30	helped me answer the questions in the exercises given					
31	helped us process information thoroughly in order to reach a consensus					

1. Briefly state the things which helped you while working in Cooperative group work.

2. How did it feel working together on these activities?

3. Further opinions/comments

Appendix 4.2B: Intervention final evaluation student group interview points

- Group Size, organisation and its suitability
- Experience of learning in cooperative groups: Benefits and Negatives
- What liked and disliked
- Teacher Individual attention
- Teacher-student and Student-interaction
- Teacher Feedback
- Difference between learning individually and in cooperative group
- Difference between general group learning and cooperative group learning
- Academic benefits of learning in cooperative groups
- Cognitive development
- Motivation
- Interdependence
- Individual accountability
- Face to face interaction

Appendix 4.2C: Intervention final evaluation student group interview main questions

- What would you say about group structure, i.e., number of members, organisation (mixed ability) used in your cooperative learning class?
- How did you experience learning in cooperative learning groups?
- What specific benefits do think cooperative learning has when you compare it with lecture style teaching?
- What disadvantages did you find during learning in cooperative learning setting by comparing it with lecture style teaching?
- Do you think learning through cooperative learning increased teacher attention to individual students?
- To what level did teacher-student or student-teacher interaction increase in cooperative learning class?
- While comparing lecture method class with cooperative learning class, which class do you think enables the teacher to give more feedback?
- What difference do you find in working cooperative learning group and general group activity?
- What main differences do you find by learning with cooperative learning strategies and a traditional lecture method class?
- After working in cooperative learning, did you find any development in your critical thinking powers/skills?

- Did working in cooperative learning motivate or demotivate you to learn more?
- Was everyone taking his responsibility in your group?
- Was there positive interdependence among group members?
- What negative things you observed while learning through cooperative learning?
- If you compare cooperative learning class with a traditional lecture method class what main differences do you find?
- When comparing both a traditional lecture method class and a cooperative learning class, which class gave you more chances to participate in the class process?
- To what extent do you think learning through cooperative learning increased teacher attention to individual students as compared to a traditional lecture method class?
- While comparing a cooperative learning class with a traditional lecture method class what do you think which class brings increase in student-student interaction and teacher-student interaction or vice versa?
- While comparing a lecture method class with a cooperative learning class, which class do you think enables the teacher to give more feedback to students?
- Do you have any further suggestions for the improvement of the process of cooperative learning in the context of large English Language classes?

Appendix 4.2D: Intervention final evaluation cooperative learning observation instrument

Teacher name	Class	Subject	Date	Class-time period	
DEPARTMENT/INSTITUTE:					
The Specific Learning Target of today's lesson is:					
Cooperative Learning Strategy (ies) used:					
Instructions: Please rate the following statements from the highest (1) to the lowest (4).					
Guiding questions	1	2	3	4	Comments
Have the tasks been clearly explained to the learners by the teacher?					
Have the steps of the strategy been explained to the students by the teacher?					
Is the teacher moving about the class during the group activity?					
Is the teacher monitoring groups?					
Is the teacher monitoring on-task or off-task learners?					
Are most students following the steps of the strategy?					
Does the teacher often go to the off-task learners to inquire and help them get on task again?					
Are the individual learners showing responsibility for the task?					
Are the learners positively depending on one another for giving and getting support?					
Are the learners displaying positive social Skills during discussions?					
Are the learners listening to teammates' ideas by					

making eye contact and by not interrupting them in middle?					
Are the students encouraging their teammates by giving positive feedback or words of encouragement?					
Are the learners equally participating during the task?					
Are the students volunteering to help teammates if necessary?					
Are the students asking for help from the teacher or other group mates if needed?					
Are the learners involved in Face-to-Face Interaction with one another?					
Are the group members working step by step in organized manner to process information?					
Does the teaching technique serve the purpose well?					
Are the learners discussing the topic at hand?					
Are all the learners participating in discussion?					
Are the learners offering facts, giving opinion and ideas, and providing suggestions and relevant information to help the group discussion?					
Are the Learners expressing willingness to cooperate with their group members?					
Are the learners open and candid in dealing with the entire group?					
Are the learners keeping their thoughts, ideas, feelings and reactions to themselves during group discussions?					
Are the learners evaluating the contribution of other group members critically?					
Notes /Comments/ Suggestions/Missed Opportunities for Cooperative Learning:					
Other Student Engagement Notes					

Appendix 5: Qualitative data analysis procedure

This procedure was iterative and overlapping and was not done in one attempt. The protocol below only focuses on generating the various themes for one category from the text codes.

Main Category: Advantages of Cooperative Learning Open Coding: Interview 1

Text Chunk	Coding
We got very good experience from that and we got a lot of things...in cooperative learning we have to do something which is our responsibility and get a knowledge...in cooperative learning we fully concentrate on the topic under discussion with the things having in mind that we have to this and present in before the class and the	<p>we have to do something (Code-1 Participation)</p> <p>which is our responsibility (Code-2 Individual responsibility)</p> <p>get a knowledge (Code-3 Gaining knowledge)</p> <p>we fully concentrate on the topic (Code-4 attention)</p>

teacher.	the things having in mind (Code-5 Gaining knowledge)
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Open Coding: Interview 2

Text Chunk	Coding
<p>...working in cooperative learning strategies has increased our confidence level because you gave us chance to express our ideas with our friends in group first, then you gave us opportunities to come and present our ideas before the whole class. And it is not easy to give presentations before 100 plus students. And I think that this also encourages weaker and shy students...they will learn to share their ideas and gain confidence.</p> <p>...we could have a chance to do the tasks that built our confidence... Due to this class of cooperative learning we have built our confidence of speaking and discussing in front of other students, in front of our group members that we didn't know or do before. Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts and build up confidence and in front of all class we could present the answers of our task in presentation...</p>	<p>increased our confidence level (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>gave us chance to express our ideas with our friends in group (Code-7 Sharing) and (Code-8 Interaction)</p> <p>gave us opportunities to come and present our ideas (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>will learn to share their ideas (Code-7Sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge)</p> <p>gain confidence (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>...we could have a chance to do the tasks that built our confidence. . Due to this class of cooperative learning we have built our confidence (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>speaking and discussing in front of other students, in front of our group members that we didn't know or do before (Code-8 Interaction)</p> <p>that we didn't know or do before (Code-3 Gaining knowledge)</p> <p>Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-7 Sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge)</p> <p>build up confidence (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>or chance of participation through group discussion or presentation (Code-9 Participation)</p>

Open Coding: Interview 3

Text Chunk	Coding
<p>...what the best thing I learnt in cooperative learning that I make new friends and the second thing is that while speaking English with teacher I feel hesitation and confused but by speaking English with my friends it really helped me....</p>	<p>I make new friends (Code-10 New friends)</p> <p>that while speaking English with teacher I feel hesitation and confused but by speaking English with my friends (Code-11 Decline in hesitation)</p> <p>a good experience in learning (Code-3 Gaining</p>

	knowledge)
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Open Coding: Interview 4

Text Chunk	Coding
...cooperative learning experience for me was awesome...because there are some points we do not get while learning individually because and similarly these points my friends might know and I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me. So in this way we could have come up with some final conclusion and learn more with different ideas. ...in cooperative learning everyone gets chance to show their abilities and in group work there is a benefit you have to be conscious and attentive every time. ...you have to participate every day. ...So in cooperative learning we have to give 100% every day and we have to be conscious and we have to perform well anyhow whether we want or we don't.	<p>I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from (Code-7 Sharing).</p> <p>learn more with different ideas (Code-3 Gaining knowledge)</p> <p>everyone gets chance to show their abilities (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>there is a benefit you have to be conscious and attentive every time (Code-4 Attention)</p> <p>you have to participate every day (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>So in cooperative learning we have to give 100% every day and we have to be conscious (Code-4 Attention)</p> <p>...we have to perform well anyhow whether we want or we don't (Code-12 Motivation).</p>

Open Coding: Interview 5

Text Chunk	Coding
[Teacher] individual attention in cooperative learning no doubt increases, the teacher focuses more generally on all students, but in traditional lecture class teachers only focus on one side (brighter students) or they either focus boys or girls like the teachers (names taken), so in cooperative learning when we sit in circles so the teacher have focussed on each group and attended all students equally. ...in cooperative learning it is approximately 70% to 80% the teacher focuses on the individual students....it was very first time that a teacher was noticing all the students...in the group activity (Cooperative Learning) we were divided into six member groups, so I think the teacher was giving full individual attention	<p>...the teacher focuses more generally on all students (Code-13 Teacher attention)</p> <p>it was very first time that a teacher was noticing all the students in that cooperative learning (Code-13 Teacher attention)</p> <p>we were divided into six member groups, so I think the teacher was giving full individual attention (Code-13 Teacher attention)</p>

Axial Coding

Code: Properties	Codes grouped under themes
we have to do something (Code-1 participation)	1. Individual responsibility
which is our responsibility (Code-2 Individual responsibility)	• which is our responsibility (Code-2 Individual
get a knowledge (Code-3 gaining Knowledge)	

<p>we fully concentrate on the topic (Code-4 attention)</p> <p>the things having in mind (Code-5 gaining knowledge)</p> <p>increased our confidence level (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>gave us chance to express our ideas with our friends in group (Code-7 Sharing) and (Code-8 interaction)</p> <p>gave us opportunities to come and present our ideas (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>will learn to share their ideas (Code-7Sharing and Code-3 gaining Knowledge)</p> <p>gain confidence (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>...we could have a chance to do the tasks that built our confidence. . Due to this class of cooperative learning we have built our confidence (Code-6 Confidence)</p> <p>speaking and discussing in front of other students, in front of our group members (Code-8 interaction)</p> <p>that we didn't know or do before (Code-1 Participation and Code-3 gaining knowledge)</p> <p>Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-7 sharing and Code-3 gaining knowledge)</p> <p>build up confidence (Code-6 confidence)</p> <p>or chance of participation through group discussion or presentation (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>I make new friends (Code-10 New friends)</p> <p>that while speaking English with teacher I feel hesitation and confused but by speaking English with my friends (Code-11 Decline in hesitation)</p> <p>a good experience in learning (Code-3 gaining knowledge)</p> <p>I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-7 Sharing and Code-3 gaining knowledge).</p> <p>learn more with different ideas (Code-3 gaining knowledge)</p> <p>everyone gets chance to show their abilities (Code-9</p>	<p>responsibility)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>2. Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get a knowledge (Code-3 Gaining Knowledge) • the things having in mind (Code-5 knowledge use) • will learn to share their ideas (Code-7Sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge) • Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-7 sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge) • a good experience in learning (Code-3 Gaining knowledge) • I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-7 Sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge). • I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-7 Sharing and Code-3 Gaining knowledge). • learn more with different ideas (Code-3 gaining knowledge) <p>3. Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased our confidence level (Code-6 Confidence) • gain confidence (Code-6
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<p>Participation)</p> <p>there is a benefit you have to be conscious and attentive every time (Code-4 Attention)</p> <p>you have participate every day (Code-9 Participation)</p> <p>So in cooperative learning we have to give 100% every day and we have to be conscious (Code-4 Attention)</p> <p>...we have to perform well anyhow whether we want or we don't (Code-12 Motivation).</p> <p>...the teacher focuses more generally on all students (Code-13 Teacher Attention)</p> <p>it was very first time that a teacher was noticing all the students in that cooperative learning (Code-13 Teacher Attention)</p> <p>we were divided into six member groups, so I think the teacher was giving full individual attention (Code-13 Teacher Attention)</p>	<p>Confidence)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...we could have a chance to do the tasks that built our confidence. . Due to this class of cooperative learning we have built our confidence (Code-6 Confidence) build up confidence (Code-6 Confidence) <p>4. Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gave us opportunities to come and present our ideas (Code-9 Participation)we have to do something or chance of participation through group discussion or presentation (Code-9 Participation) everyone gets chance to show their abilities (Code-9 Participation) you have participate every day (Code-9 Participation) we have to do something (Code-1 Participation) that we didn't know or do before (Code-1 Participation and Code-3 gaining knowledge) <p>5. Teacher Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in teacher individual attention (Code-13 Teacher
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	<p>attention)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...the teacher focuses more generally on all students (Code-13 Teacher attention) • it was very first time that a teacher was noticing all the students in that cooperative learning (Code-13 Teacher attention) • we were divided into six member groups, so I think the teacher was giving full individual attention (Code-13 Teacher attention)
	<p>6. Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we fully concentrate on the topic (Code-4 Attention) • there is a benefit you have to be conscious and attentive every time (Code-4 Attention) • So in cooperative learning we have to give 100% every day and we have to be conscious (Code-4 Attention)
	<p>7. New Friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I make new friends (Code-10 New friends)
	<p>8. Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave us chance to express our ideas with

	<p>our friends in group (Code-8 Interaction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaking and discussing in front of other students, in front of our group members (Code-8 interaction)
	<p>9. Sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gave us chance to express our ideas with our friends in group (Code-7 Sharing) will learn to share their ideas (Code-7Sharing) Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-7 Sharing) I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-7 Sharing)
	<p>10. Reduction in Hesitation</p> <p>that while speaking English with teacher I feel hesitation and confused but by speaking English with my friends (Code-11 Decline in hesitation)</p>
	<p>11. Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...we have to perform well anyhow whether we want or we don't (Code-12 Motivation).

Selective Coding

Category	Themes and codes regrouped and re-selected
4. Advantages of Cooperative Learning	<p>4.1 Cognitive Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> get a knowledge (Code-3 Gaining Knowledge)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the things having in mind (Code-5 Gaining knowledge) • will learn to share their ideas (Code-3 Gaining Knowledge) • Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-3 Gaining knowledge) • a good experience in learning (Code-3 Gaining knowledge) • I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-3 Gaining knowledge). • I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-3 Gaining knowledge). • learn more with different ideas (Code-3 Gaining knowledge)
	<p>4.2 Student Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave us opportunities to come and present our ideas (Code-9 Participation)we have to do something • or chance of participation through group discussion or presentation (Code-9 Participation) • everyone gets chance to show their abilities (Code-9 Participation) • you have participate every day (Code-9 Participation) • we have to do something (Code-1 participation) • that we didn't know or do before (Code-9 Participation)
	<p>4.3 Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we fully concentrate on the topic under discussion (Code 8 Interaction) • express our ideas with our friends in group (Code 8 interaction) • they are not participating in the beginning but with the passage of time (Code 8 Interaction) • they will learn to share their ideas (Code 8interaction) • have a chance to do the tasks (Code 8 Interaction) • speaking and discussing in front of other students, in front of our group members (Code 8 Interaction)
	<p>4.4 Teacher Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in teacher individual attention • ...the teacher focuses more generally on all students (Code-13 Teacher attention)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it was very first time that a teacher was noticing all the students in that cooperative learning (Code-13 Teacher attention) • we were divided into six member groups, so I think the teacher was giving full individual attention (Code-13 Teacher attention)
	<p>4.5 Student Motivation</p> <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...we have to perform well anyhow whether we want or we don't (Code-12 Motivation). <p>Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased our confidence level (Code-6 Confidence) • gain confidence (Code-6 Confidence) • ...we could have a chance to do the tasks that built our confidence. . Due to this class of cooperative learning we have built our confidence (Code-6 Confidence) • build up confidence (Code-6 Confidence) <p>Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we fully concentrate on the topic (Code-4 Attention) • there is a benefit you have to be conscious and attentive every time (Code-4 Attention) • So in cooperative learning we have to give 100% every day and we have to be conscious (Code-4 Attention) <p>Reduction in Hesitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that while speaking English with teacher I feel hesitation and confused but by speaking English with my friends (Code-11 Decline in hesitation)
	4.6 Teacher Feedback
	<p>4.7 Individual Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have to be conscious and attentive every time (Code 2 Individual responsibility)
	<p>4.8 Positive Interdependence</p> <p>New Friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I make new friends (Code-10 New friends) <p>Sharing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gave us chance to express our ideas with our friends in group (Code-7 Sharing) • will learn to share their ideas (Code-7Sharing) • Through cooperative learning we could frequently share our thoughts (Code-7 sharing) • I will from her and some points she doesn't know, she will learn from me (Code-7 Sharing).
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