Intercultural Communication and Cooperative Learning

A seminar course for MA students
Lesson 3: What is cooperative learning (CL)?

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Week 3: Cooperative learning (1)

Preview of session

Activity 1 The Carlos story
Activity 2 Jigsaw: The principles of cooperative learning
Activity 3 Word rotation: What are the benefits of CL?
Week 3: Cooperative learning (2)

Activity 1 The Carlos story (1)

1. Recall the story of Carlos.
2. Form pairs and retell the story so that one of you says a sentence and then the other continues with another sentence.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (3)

Activity 1 The Carlos story (2)

Whole group discussion:
What lessons can we draw from this story?
Week 3: Cooperative learning (4)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (1)

1. Form four groups of 4 to 6 members.
2. Each group will be responsible for one of the principles of CL.
3. Every member of each group will become an expert of the principle assigned to the group.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (5)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (2)

4. Read the principle and take notes individually.
5. Discuss within your group how you could best summarize the principle.
6. Think of examples that will help other groups understand what your principle means in practice.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (6)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (3)

7. When everyone in the group is an expert, then form new groups according to the number on your card.
8. In your new group everyone will be an expert of a different principle of CL.
9. Take turns in teaching each other and sharing examples until everyone knows all principles.
10. Go back to your original groups and check if everyone knows all the four principles.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (7)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (4)

Principle 1: Equal participation / Equal access

We should promote equal participation with the help of appropriate learning structures. This means that we should arrange activities so that every participant has equal opportunities for access and participation. This is why it is good to set up heterogeneous micro-groups (regarding levels, skills, abilities, motivation, etc.). In every micro-group every participant should be granted a certain period of time for speaking, asking questions, giving solutions, or presenting ideas. Sometimes role cards have to be distributed to ensure that everyone has a specific task and also a certain amount of time at their disposal. This way, reserved and soft-spoken students will not be suppressed by more confident and dominating personalities.

Week 3: Cooperative learning (8)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (5)

Principle 2: **Simultaneous interaction / Parallel interaction**

The number of interactions during a certain period of time is important. In CL we need as many interactions as we can have. So this principle leads to micro-groups (2 to 4 persons in a group). When students or trainees are working in pairs we have the largest number of parallel interactions. Personally inclusive means that we should organize the learning structures so that every participant should be involved. For example when you have groups of four (in a group of 20 participants) you have parallel interactions on the whole group level but no guarantee that you will have all of the participants involved. Working in pairs is a structural guarantee for every person to be involved even if they do not want to be involved.

Week 3: Cooperative learning (9)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (6)

Principle 3: **Positive and encouraging interdependence**

Positive in this case means that we should structure the activities so that the participants can only complete the task by cooperation. A classical form of this is called jigsaw activity. In jigsaw you divide the material into as many pieces as many group members you have in a micro-group but at the end of the activity every participant has to be familiar with the whole material. We call this kind of positive interdependence encouraging interdependence because following this principle you encourage the participants to cooperate by structuring the activity (instead of emphasizing ideological issues why they should work together). Positive interdependence is constructive from the viewpoint that we organize activities in which every participant should be able to build on every other participant’s knowledge.

Week 3: Cooperative learning (10)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (7)

Principle 4: Individual accountability / Personal responsibility
We should arrange learning structures so that all of the participants have personal responsibility when they carry out the task. We can help this process by assigning roles to every member of every micro-group. For example, in jigsaw every group member will obviously see which group mates have learnt their own section of the material – so in jigsaw individual accountability is very clear. To guarantee personal responsibility and individual accountability you should first work with basic groups that are consciously formed groups of four and work together most of the time during the session or course. When cooperation increases you can re-form the groups and in the end you can form groups randomly.

Week 3: Cooperative learning (11)

Activity 2 The principles of cooperative learning (8)

Debriefing questions for a plenary discussion:
1. How did you feel during this activity?
2. To what extent was the jigsaw activity that we used in line with all four principles of cooperative learning?
Week 3: Cooperative learning (12)

Activity 3 What are the benefits of CL? (1)

1. On the basis of the readings and our experience with the jigsaw technique what are the benefits of cooperative learning?

2. Write a list individually first.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (13)

Activity 3 What are the benefits of CL? (2)

3. Then share your ideas with a partner.
4. Using word rotation, let’s take turns and listen to one idea from each pair.
5. Pay attention as you’re not supposed to repeat what has already been said by another pair.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (14)

Activity 3 What are the benefits of CL? (3)

6. The partner of the student who shares an idea that is accepted by the whole group as valid and important will write up their contribution on the board.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (15)

Activity 3 What are the benefits of CL? (4)

For example:

- Patience
- Friendly atmosphere
- Self-esteem
- More fun – fewer illnesses
Assignment for Week 4

Compare the 4 principles of CL we learned about today to the principles of CL as described in a very useful chapter on cooperative learning by Ferenc Arató (pp. 22-32) in Mompoint-Gaillard, P. & Lázár, I. (Eds.) (2015). *TASKs for Democracy: 60 activities to learn and assess transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge*. Pestalozzi Series No. 4. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. 

**TASKs for Democracy**

Bring your notes about the differences to class next week.
Week 3: Cooperative learning (17)

Suggested further reading on cooperative learning:

