

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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Learners' Perceptions towards Using Cooperative Learning in Oral Sessions

The Case of Third Year LMD Students of English at Abderrahmane Mira University of
Béjaia,

Subject: Oral Expression

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS in the Didactics of English at Bejaia University.

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June, 2013

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Dedication

To my 'mother'

You are the ideal mother a daughter could ever ask for!

To my sister Asma

Without you I can't even move

To my friends: 'Aicha, Mounia, Fatiha, Fatima, Karima, Seddik, Adel and Roukaya'. Thank you so much for your support. I will never forget you; you make my days at University memorable.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank ALLAH for giving me courage and health to accomplish my work;

My special thanks and gratitude for my supervisor Mrs. Nadia AHOUARI-IDRI for her help and insightful advice and guidance, thank you so much Ms.

I would like to thank Mr. Sofiane MAMMERI and Ms. Noura TOUCHE for accepting to read my work and being members of jury.



Abstract

The present research is an endeavour to find out how EFL students perceive Cooperative Learning use in oral sessions and how do they think it affects their interaction as well as their oral production. We hypothesised that if third year LSD students possess positive perceptions towards Cooperative Learning use during oral sessions in their EFL classes, this will facilitate the production of more output and will give more opportunities to interact. In a trial to confirm our hypothesis, we resort to the use of a Questionnaire as a tool to collect data. We worked on 150 EFL students at Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia. Descriptive and arithmetic analyses were used as methods of data analysis. Results showed that students have positive perceptions towards using Cooperative Learning in oral sessions. They revealed that students appreciate the idea of using Cooperative Learning in oral sessions and claim its benefits on them. Hence, most of third year LSD students suggest working cooperatively in all the modules and acknowledging the fact that it gives them more opportunities to interact; they feel motivated to speak and take part in class discussion. Accordingly, our research hypothesis is validated.

Key words: Cooperative Learning (CL), learners' perceptions, interaction and oral production.



List of Abbreviations

CL: Cooperative Learning

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

FLL: Foreign Language Learning

LMD: Licence-Master-Doctorate

LSD: Language Sciences and Didactics

L2: Second Language

SL: Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SLL: Second Language Learning

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Definition of terms

Cooperative Learning: “The instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning.” (Johnson et al. 1990 cited in Leigh Smith & McGregor, 1992)

Jigsaw: “Special form of information gap in which each member of a group is given some specific information and the goal is to pool all information to achieve some objective.” (Brown, 2001)

Perceptions: Ability to perceive something. The way of seeing or understanding something. (Oxford: Learners’ Pocket Dictionary, 2008)



General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

The key component for learning any language is 'practice'. Students of the English language are being encouraged to use the language, i.e. practise it. However, the use of the English language, in a foreign language context, is restricted to the classroom that is why most of students are suffering from lack of interaction. In early studies, the learner is at the center of research and learner's perceptions and beliefs towards learning are considered as an important issue in S/FLL. Hence, in conducting research at Bejaia University, we would be trying to determine the extent to which learners' perceptions towards using cooperative learning during oral sessions affect the students-student interaction and students' oral production. As a matter of fact, many researches (McCafferty et al., 2006; Hedge, 2000; Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1999) encouraged the use of CL since it gives better results, i.e. students perform and interact with one another better than when working individually. Moreover, it has been tested as one of the most effective and constructive teaching strategies (Zhang, 2010). In addition to that, learners' perceptions towards CL use have a great influence on learning in general and in dealing with small groups, i.e. the degree of acceptance of working in small groups has effects on the students' speaking skill and participation in the classroom.

The central problem of the present research is to determine how learners' perceptions towards CL use can affect their output and foster student-student interaction by giving equal opportunities for third year LMD, option LSD students of English at Abderrahmane Mira-Bejaia University to participate and take part in class discussion.

2. Research Questions

There are some questions to be answered throughout our research work and they are related to the above-mentioned problem:

- Do learners' perceptions towards CL use in oral sessions affect their oral production?
- Does CL foster student-student interaction?

3. Hypothesis

To solve the current problem, we resort to provide solution in a form of the following hypothesis:

- If third year LSD students possess positive perceptions towards CL use during oral sessions in their EFL classes; this will facilitate the production of more output and will give more opportunities to interact.

4. Aim of the Study

The current study aims at:

- Knowing how third year LSD students of English perceive the use of CL during oral sessions.
- Identifying the effects of positive perceptions towards CL use on students' output.
- Determining the role of CL in enhancing student-student interaction.

5. Significance of the Study

Many researchers (Pica and Doughty, 1985; Platt and Brooks, 1994; McCafferty et al., 2006) believe in the effectiveness of using CL and the extent to which it improves classroom interaction through using many techniques and tasks such as information-gap and required information exchange as well as the use of jigsaw (Special form of information gap activity) (MacCafferty et al., 2006). Moreover, Freeman and Anderson (2011) conducted an experience and found that in CL students are encouraged to think in terms of 'positive interdependence' and language acquisition is facilitated by students' interacting in the target language (Freeman, 2011). According to Hedge (2000) there is a principle underlying current ELT practice that interaction pushes learners to produce more accurate and

appropriate language that is why pair work and group work have become common features of contemporary classrooms (Hedge, 2000). Students' perceptions towards CL are very important and determine the success or failure of CL use in oral sessions.

The significance of the research at hands will be derived from the results of our work. By confirming our hypothesis, the results will give another dimension for students and teachers of oral expression for the use of CL. Firstly, knowing students' perceptions help teachers to design activities and tasks that make the learners produce output and take part in classroom discussion, i.e. to participate and all the students have equal opportunities. Secondly, implementing CL in oral session will help the students to learn more and integrate the students that seem shy to speak in front of the whole class in discussion. Here, students-student interaction is fostered and everyone would express her/himself.

6. Design and Procedures of Data Collection

The nature of the present research indicates that it is a descriptive research since it describes students' perceptions towards using CL in oral sessions. As a means of collecting data we resort to the use of questionnaire. A list of questions to be answered by third year LMD students of English, option LSD. Furthermore, the questionnaire helps us to gather much information in a short time and the fact that they are anonymous, students answer the questionnaire without hesitation and freely. It also helps us to get data to find out a solution for the afore-mentioned problem. The questionnaire is distributed for the students when having a lecture in the amphitheatre and it is collected just after that.

7. Description of the Study

This Thesis encompasses two chapters:

Chapter One is entitled '*Theoretical Background*', it is the theoretical part. It is in turn divided into three sections; Section One entitled '*Students' Beliefs and Perceptions*'; Section Two entitled '*Using Cooperative Learning*'; Section Three entitled "*Motivation, Anxiety and Beliefs toward using Cooperative Learning*".

Chapter Two is entitled '*Research Methods, Results and Discussion*'; it is the practical part. It comprises four sections; Section One is about '*Theme's Feasibility and Pilot Study of the Questionnaire*'; Section Two is entitled '*Design and Procedure of the Study*'; Section Three is entitled '*Analysis of the Questionnaire*'; Section Four is about '*Discussion of the Results and Pedagogical Recommendations*'. The study is finished by a general conclusion.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Introduction

There is a widespread interest in language learning and the extent to which beliefs can influence the learners' language learning in general and oral performance in specific through using cooperative learning.

Learners' perceptions to using cooperative learning in oral sessions determines how successful would be the implementation of CL and how this structured teaching method can affect positively the students' oral expression and fluency. According to the findings of some studies such as (Mills et *al.*, 2006 cited in Welsely, 2012), learners perceptions towards the learning process can affect positively or negatively on their own learning, i.e. learners' perceptions have consequences on the learning outcomes.

The first chapter of the present research work entitled "Learners' Perceptions towards Cooperative Learning Use" where the literature about the learners' beliefs and Cooperative Learning is highlighted. It is divided into three sections. Section One entitled "Students' Beliefs and Perceptions"; Section Two entitled "Using Cooperative Learning"; Section Three entitled "Motivation, Anxiety and Beliefs toward using Cooperative Learning".

1. Students' Beliefs and Perceptions

1.1. Definitions of Learners' Beliefs and Perceptions

In language learning, the learner is the central of this process. Moreover, learners' learning strategies, beliefs, learning styles are all focused in research about language learning and above all Second Language Learning (SLL). However,

learners' beliefs are the matter of interest for many scholars that looked for possible relationship between beliefs and SL/ FL learners' use of strategies, motivational paradigm, readiness for autonomy, approaches to language learning, attitudes towards language learning, learning materials, learning tasks and L2 culture (Gabillon, n.d). Ernest (1989) and Schoenfeld (1998 cited in Österholm, 2010) describe beliefs and knowledge as two separate categories. *“Included knowledge about teaching and learning, and beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning; the former can be included in the domain of pedagogy while the latter perhaps cannot be included (it may be included in the domain of philosophy)”* (Österholm, 2010). In addition to this, there is the individual perspective which refers to what an individual regards as belief is something that is more uncertain than knowledge. For Ellis (2008), beliefs constitute an individual difference variable notably different from the other variables. Many studies (Wenden, 1986; Flavell, 1979) using cognitive orientations considered beliefs as an internal autonomous property of the mind.

So, it is clear from the above definitions that there is no one definition for 'beliefs' because it is a very complex variable to be searched but it is needed for understanding the learners' personality as well as facilitating their learning.

Beliefs are individual and social. They are individual because each learner has his/her own way of thinking and perception of things. However, beliefs are also socially constructed since individuals belong to the society, so they share the same ideas but still every individual has his/her proper ideas. Pajares (1992 cited in Mansour, 2009) refers to belief as a *“messy construct”*, i.e. beliefs are shaped as a construction that is comprehensive. It includes all what happens in the mind; mental processes, perspectives, principles as well as social norms.

“...travel in disguise and often under an alias of attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptual system, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice principles, perspectives, repertories of understanding and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.”

(Pajares, 1992 cited in Monsour, 2009)

So, beliefs are socially, psychologically, cognitively and socioculturally constructed. Pajares' definition of beliefs refers to the external factors and the knowledge acquired from the environment and the influence of them on the learner's construction of beliefs.

In this regards, beliefs about FLL are very important. They can influence the learning process on the whole and FLL in particular as far as the learning outcomes are concerned. As Horwitz (1987) points out that there is a number of factors influence the outcomes of the language learning process. One of the challenges facing language teachers relates in particular to the extent to which the beliefs of students can influence the efforts put into learning new languages (Horwitz, 1987 cited in Boakye, 2007).

1.2. Attitudes, Perceptions and Beliefs

Attitudes, perceptions and beliefs are three concepts that are interconnected in their nature. To make things clear, we have opted to mention some characteristics of each concept. To begin with, learners' attitudes have often been addressed in relation to two different targets: attitudes toward the learning situation (Gardner, 1985) and attitudes toward the target community. Both of them have been addressed in recent work by Yashima (2009) that developed the idea into the notion "international posture", it is related to how students see themselves as "*connected to the international community and readiness to interact with people [from the target culture]*" (Yashima, 2009 cited in Wesely, 2012).

Learners' perceptions refer to perceptions of themselves. These have often been defined as how students understand and make sense of themselves and their own learning (Liskin-Gasparro, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1999 cited in Wesely, 2012). Learners' perceptions of the learning situation have included how students experience and understand aspects of the classroom, like instructor behaviours (Brown, 2009 cited in Wesely, 2012).

Although learners' beliefs are rarely distinguished from learners' perceptions, there is a slight difference between the two concepts. According to

Horwitz (1988), learners' beliefs are "*student opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning*" (Horwitz, 1988 cited in Wesely, 2012). Here, beliefs refer to beliefs about the learning situation, the target community, language, and culture as well (Wesely, 2012).

From the above mentioned, we say that in the literature learners' perceptions and learners' beliefs are used, most of the time, interchangeably. They refer to learners' ideas, awareness and perceptions of the learning process, the learning situation and context as far as the target language community is concerned.

In our research work, we focus on learners' perceptions of the learning process though the main focus is on the learners' perceptions of oral practice and their beliefs to improve their oral fluency and produce output through CL.

1.3. The Importance of Learners' Beliefs

Beliefs are very often associated with 'self'. Rogers believed that individual needs positive regard both from the self and from the other (Pajares & Schunk, 2002 cited in Mansour, 2009). However, cognitive psychologists claim that language learners today are seen as active and responsible participants who learn from their experiences (Meskill & Rangelova, 2000; Williams & Burden, 1997 cited in Mansour, 2009).

Castelloti and Moore (2002) claim that social groups shared images about other language and learning these languages can influence learners' attitudes towards other languages. Here, when students work in small groups or in pairs can facilitate the learners' learning as well as their output production because within the group students feel less anxious and more secure since members of the group share the same attitudes.

Generally, when learners feel secure, they express themselves more often and more easily. Since Cooperative Learning is based on learners' help to each other, each member of the group feel responsible for his/her own learning as well as the group's learning. These attitudes towards working in small groups are socially and culturally constructed as far as the individual's cognition is concerned.

1.4. Research into Beliefs in FLL

According to Dufva (2003, cited in Gabillon, n.d) there are two perspectives: Cognitive Approach and Social Psychological and Sociocultural Approach. For the Cognitivist viewpoint, the language learner is viewed as an active participant in the learning process, using mental strategies to sort out the system of the language to be learned (William & Burden, 1997 cited in Mansour, 2009). In this perspective, Cooperative Learning is very suitable because it fosters the learners' creativity, enriches vocabulary and gives more opportunities for learners to interact. In this way, learners are active and they transform the information and elaborate it. For instance, in role-playing learners are given just statements and they are asked to transform these statements into dialogue and here the learners' creativity as well as the communication competence are playing a significant role in this process.

For the social psychological and sociocultural mainstreams, although they have slightly different perspective, they share some major claims that (Gabillon, n.d):

- Beliefs are context-dependent and they cannot be looked into without considering the context in which they are formed.
- Beliefs should be examined as regards the individual's past and present experience.
- Beliefs are both static and dynamic
- Beliefs are both personal and social
- Beliefs are flexible and changeable; thus, they can be influenced and mediated. (Gabillon, n.d).

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), beliefs are investigated using three different approaches: the Normative Approach, the Metacognitive Approach, the Contextual Approach (Barcelos, 2003 cited in Ellis, 2008). The first approach is the normative approach. Here, beliefs are seen as "preconceived notions, myths or misconceptions". That is to say beliefs are ideas that the learner holds in his/her mind about language learning. It is worth noted that these ideas are not necessarily correct; sometimes they are erroneous, so they are formed without enough knowledge about the language learning process. Here, the latter can affect

negatively on the learning outcomes. According to this approach, the learners' beliefs can be studied by means of Likert-style questionnaires such as the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory – BALLI (Horwitz, 1987a cited in Ellis, 2008). The second approach is the metacognitive approach. It views learners' metacognitive knowledge about language learning as “theories in action” (Weden, 1999 cited in Ellis, 2008). These are examined by means of the content analysis of learner self-reports in semi-structured interviews (Ellis, 2008). According to this approach, beliefs are considered as the learners' knowledge about the learning process and their awareness of own's mental processes (Williams & Burden, 1997). Finally, the third approach is the contextual approach. It views the learners' beliefs as varying according to context. Barcelos (cited in Ellis, 2008) argued that this approach is superior because rather viewing beliefs as “a mental trait”; it takes into account the ‘experience-based nature of beliefs.’ (Ellis, 2008)

The above mentioned approaches are consistent about language learning. In relation to the normative approach, learners before engaging in learning a FL/SL, they generally hold ideas about the target language. The more the beliefs are positive, the more the learning outcomes will be positive, and vice versa. In our context, when learners have positive perceptions towards CL, they will inevitably react positively to group work. According to the metacognitive approach, learners' knowledge about the learning process affects this process. In FL/SL learning, learners' awareness of the process of learning can help them to cope with the different difficulties that may face along the process. Being aware of the group processing, help the students to engage in the group and reach the intended outcomes. Concerning the contextual approach, FLLs/SLLs are being influenced by the context of the target language. In our context, the English language is taught as a FL, i.e. FL context. So, the target language is being learned in formal setting, the classroom. Moreover, CL, as a constructive method of teaching, helps the students to interact and use the target language since the classroom is, almost, the only place where students of English language have the opportunity to practice it.

2. Using Cooperative Learning

2.1. Definitions of Cooperative Learning

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a teaching methodology of nowadays classrooms. It is mainly based on communication. CL, as a teaching method, gives opportunities for students to interact, i.e. student-student interaction and it fosters communication that is why CL goes hand in hand with CLT. Hence, pair work and group work have become common features of contemporary classrooms (Hedge, 2000). According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993) CL is using small groups for the sake of learning to take place.

“It [Cooperative Learning] is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning.” (Cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006:3)

Cooperative Learning is instructional in its nature. It is guided by the teacher as he/she divides students into small groups and gives them instructions so as to fulfill the task in hand. In fact, CL is structured and its main goal is that learning takes place and guarantees that each member of the group has learned and understood the task. This makes CL distinctive from group work where the group product is the main emphasis. Hence, CL can be characterized as a social process in which knowledge is acquired through the successful interaction between the group members (Cohen, 1994; Weidner, 2003). In this Slavin (1995, cited in Fehling, n.d.: 1) claims that:

“Cooperative Learning refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content. In Cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other’s current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other’s understanding.”

So, according to Slavin, CL is mainly based on small groups and students’ help to one another. This makes CL very helpful for students to interact with one another because when students feel comfortable to try out the target language and make mistakes (Nunan, 1992), they maximize their output. Here, interaction is maximized, too. When students negotiate for meaning, discuss and clarify ambiguous issues for each other, student-student interaction is reinforced.

According to Brown (2001), when students work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come to each other's aid; and this is one form of CL. They are a "team" whose members must work together in order to achieve goals successfully; a pre-requisite of CL to succeed. Research has shown an advantage for CL (as opposed to individual learning) on such factors as "promoting intrinsic motivation, heightening self-esteem, creating caring and altruistic relationships, and lowering anxiety and prejudice." (Oxford, 1997, cited in Brown, 2001)

In our context, CL, as a teaching method, can be implemented in EFL classrooms and more specifically in oral sessions so as to give more opportunities for learners to interact, produce output and receive input. In what follows, we shall present a number of theoretical perspectives on Second Language Learning (SLL) and L2 teaching that have been investigated in relation to CL.

2.2. Cooperative Learning in EFL Classroom

2.2.1. The Input Hypothesis. According to the Input Hypothesis, Second Language Learning is driven by comprehensible input that is the language read or heard which is just a little beyond what the learner has already acquired; a notion Krashen stated in theoretical terms as $i+1$ (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). When using Cooperative Learning in EFL classrooms, learners are exposed to input from each other, so the notion of Krashen is applicable. Even if the input received is adjusted and may contain errors, but it remains beneficial for learners since it is comprehensible and stimulates student-student interaction during oral sessions.

2.2.2. The Interaction Hypothesis. The Interaction Hypothesis (Hatch 1978a, Long 1981) emphasizes the role of the learner in social interaction. The theory claims that communication and the negotiation for meaning increases the amount of comprehensible input. Rulon and McCreary (1986, cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006) held that groups promote negotiation of meaning because "*the more intimate setting provides students with the opportunity to negotiate the language they hear, free from stress and rapid pace of the Teacher-fronted classroom.*" This means that when students negotiate meaning, try out the target language or ask for clarification without the presence of the teacher, they feel free and comfortable to express themselves.

2.2.3. The Output Hypothesis. Swain (1985) proposed the Output Hypothesis which states that for learners to increase their second language proficiency; they need to produce language via speech or writing (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). The opportunity for students to talk to one another and work together; i.e. working cooperatively makes learners produce more output as the results by Long & Porter (1985) make clear:

“ Long and Porter (1985) found that in an L2 class of 30 students, under typical teacher-fronted, or lockstep, produces the average time that a student spoke was only 30 seconds per 50- minute lesson. However, when students worked in groups of three for just one quarter of a 50-minute period, the quality of student talk increased more than 500 percent.” (Cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006)

According to Long & Porter students talk is maximized using Cooperative Learning. Hitherto, using CL in oral sessions, the opportunity for speaking is given for all students and the amount of students’ oral production is increased much more than working individually. Furthermore, groups provide a setting closer to real life, in which students have the opportunity to practise aspects of communicative competence such as conversational management (Long & Porter 1985 cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006).

2.3. Aspects of Cooperative Learning

When implementing Cooperative Learning in EFL classrooms, some crucial elements are needed to be taken into consideration. These elements are five in number:

2.3.1. Positive Interdependence. It is established when everybody understands that each member’s contribution is important in helping the group to achieve its goal (Gillies, 2007, cited in Fehling). It is the feeling that what helps one member of the group helps the entire group and what hurts one member of the group hurts the whole group too. According to Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1991, as cited in Millis, 2002) positive interdependence refers to the creation of a learning atmosphere in which the success of the group is dependent upon the success of every individual in the group. Through careful planning, positive interdependence

can be established by having students achieve: (a) mutual goals, (b) mutual rewards, (c) structured tasks, and (d) interdependent roles. Diane Larsen- Freeman and Marti Anderson (2011) conducted an experience and found that in cooperative learning students are encouraged to think in terms of ‘positive interdependence and language acquisition is facilitated by students’ interacting in the target language (Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

As a matter of fact, learners during oral sessions depend on each other in fulfilling the task. While presenting they feel more comfortable as well as motivated to interact and produce output since groups promote negotiation of meaning and free from the stress of teacher-fronted classroom (McCreary, 1986, cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006).

2.3.2. Face-to-Face Interaction. Face-to-Face Interaction tries to engage the student in explanations of their learning process to fellow students. This idea is to get students to teach each other (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1991 cited in Millis, 2002). Gillies (2007 cited in Fehling, n.d.) added that this aspect involves working in small groups where students can see each other and are engaged in face-to-face interaction. In fact this aspect is very important for learners when using CL in oral sessions and this can be seen when negotiating meaning and helping each other in completing sentences and enriching vocabulary, clarifying, negotiating meaning etc. Face-to-Face Interaction also helps students to check whether each member of the group understands the task at hand or not because the facial expressions and the para-linguistic features are very helpful in assessing the students’ understanding. Dealing with the group does not mean neglecting the individual’s contribution; each member of the group should be responsible for his/her own learning as far as the group is concerned.

2.3.3. Individual Accountability. *“involves students’ understanding that they will be held accountable for their individual contributions to the group, that free-loading will not be tolerated, and that everyone must contribute”* (Gillies, 2007 cited in Fehling). This aspect refers to the learners’ responsibility; i.e. each member of the group is responsible for his/her own learning and shares knowledge with other members of the group.

In oral expression classrooms, students that are engaged in solving a task should feel responsible for accomplishing it and being sure that every member has understood because this aspect goes further than individual assessment. Feedback to the entire group of individual performances is a critical part of individual accountability.

2.3.4. Collaborative/Social Skills. For Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1991, cited in Millis, 2002) Collaborative / Social skills refer to the need to teach students how to function within a group. They should have an understanding of group dynamics, active listening methods, conflict-management, and other social skills necessary to function effectively in a group. During oral sessions, there is in almost time debates and learners when working in groups should have enough understanding of those skills so as to cope with each opinion and make these debates beneficial for learners to interact and receive input and produce output. Hence, opportunities to talk are available for all students.

2.3.5. Group Processing. According to Gillies (2007) group processing refers to the assessment of CL. It can be described as a formative assessment that focuses on students' feedback on the learning process, including the students' reflection on what they still need to do to accomplish their objectives.

Group processing tries to engage students in a self-evaluation exercise. Smith (1994) suggests having the students answer the following two questions: 1- What is something each member did that was helpful for the group? And 2- What is something each member could do to make the group even better tomorrow? In oral expression session, when students work in small groups; for instance, preparing a role play activity. They work on it for a period of time; after they performing it, they will check the mistakes done while presenting the role play and try to avoid it later on.

2.4. Grouping

Teachers of the English Language generally tend to use grouping so as to enhance the quality as well as the quantity of interaction among students above all in EFL classrooms.

“Groups can directly facilitate L2 learning. This influence is due to group processes being greatly responsible for (1) the quantity and quality of interaction between members; (2) cooperation between students and the extent of individual involvement; (3) student behavior, order and discipline in the classroom; (4) students’ relationships with their peers and the teacher; and finally, (5) student and teacher confidence and satisfaction” (Dörnyei and Malderez, 1997:67).

Cooperative Learning is mainly based on small groups that facilitate student-student interaction. As it is mentioned by Dörnyei and Malderez (1997), groups should involve all the basic principles of Cooperative Learning in order to ensure learning and each student should be involved and accountable for his/her own learning as well as the group’s understanding. Furthermore, groups should be arranged in a way that helps students to use the target language.

2.4.1. Types of Grouping

a. Grouping students according to their Preferences. In this regards, students choose the members that they feel comfortable to work with. Sometimes, students are more likely to work with students with the same working style (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006).

b. Grouping students randomly. The main advantage of random groups is that they are easy and quick to be formed. It seems fair to students to be selected this way (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006).

c. Grouping and Mixing students by Ability. Many researches have been done about grouping and mixing students by ability or what is called homogeneous ability grouping. They are experimental studies and they tend to find out the effects of within class ability grouping on students’ achievement (Kulik, 1992; Kulik & Kulik, 1987; Lou et al., 1996; Slavin, 1987, 1990). The results of the meta-analysis by Slavin and Kulik and kulik showed that students in grouped classes perform better than students in ungrouped classes.

Another type of grouping is based on grouping and mixing students by ethnicity and gender. Hence, research studies show that students' interaction and learning are "shaped by a combination of their own characteristics and those of the group they are in" (Webb & Palincsar, 1996 cited in Wilkinson & Fung, 2002). This type helps students to see a variety of perspectives (Ruddock, 1978 cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006).

In our context, generally students are grouped by themselves, randomly, but rarely by the teacher or by ability. Students prefer to choose their group members with whom they feel comfortable and willing to work with.

2.4.2. Group Size. Group size is very important when using CL in oral sessions because it determines whether all group members are going to participate and take part in interaction as well as solving the task or not. In this perspective, Levine and Moreland (1990) commented that *"as a group grows larger, it also changes in other ways, generally for the worse. People who belong to larger groups are less satisfied, participate less often, and are less likely to cooperate with one another."* (Cited in Wilkinson & Fung, 2002) Large groups generally decrease motivation for some learners since they feel unwilling to interact with one another. Furthermore, forming large groups in oral sessions, with time restriction, students would not have the opportunity to use the target language. As a matter of fact, two is ideal size because greater participation is encouraged (Kagan 1994; Kowal & Swain 1994 cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). Also larger groups have advantages as well; for more complex tasks.

In our context, group size is between two students and four students. With this size CL can take place because in CL students need to interact, to activate their potential, and to produce output. So, this size is in the advantage of the students.

2.5. Cooperative Learning Tasks and Activities

There are many tasks and activities that are based on structured, instructional small groups (Brown, 2001). Among these tasks, we have chosen the ones that can be dealt with during oral expression sessions.

1. Games: are very enjoyable and beneficial at the same time for students to interact and use the language. Guessing games are common language classroom activities.

When students enjoy the activity, they learn more and feel comfortable to speak. This kind of activities is used in our context.

2. Role-play: it involves giving a role to one another or more members of a group and assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish.

In fact, role-play is a popular activity. It refers to students prepare a role-play and working cooperatively to present a scene.

3. Simulations: involve a more complex structure and often larger groups (of 6 to 20) where the entire group is to solve some specific problem.
4. Drama: it is a more formalized form of role-play or simulation, with a pre-planned story line and script.
5. Interview: a popular activity for pair work, but also appropriate for group work; interviews are useful at all levels of proficiency.
6. Information-gap: information-gap activities include a variety of techniques in which the objective is to convey or to request information. The two focal characteristics of information-gap techniques are (a) their primary attention to information and not to language forms and (b) the necessity of communicative interaction to reach the objective.

A quick glance on these activities shows that just two of them (games and role-play) are used in our context. Yet, the other tasks and activities are not used or rarely used. However, all the afore-mentioned activities can be used in our context. Implementing CL in oral sessions gives an air of change to class usual activities. Dealing with CL makes teachers think to vary the tasks so as to satisfy students' needs for communication and interaction. Activities such as simulation and drama are very crucial in oral sessions because it pushes the students to engage in working cooperatively, activating their background knowledge, help each other to fulfill the task and learn more vocabulary.

3. Motivation, Anxiety and Beliefs toward using Cooperative Learning

When defining beliefs from an individual perspective, it is generally referred to the relationship between belief and knowledge. Leatham (2006) says,

“there are some things that we ‘just believe’ and other things that we ‘more than believe- we know’. Those things we ‘more than believe’ we refer to as knowledge and those things we ‘just believe’ we refer to as beliefs.” (Leatham, 2006 cited in Österholm, 2010:156)

Relating Leatham’s definition of beliefs to language learning, we find that learners’ beliefs towards language learning in general and CL in specific can mainly be ideas hold about using CL in oral sessions. Learners’ beliefs and perceptions are distinct from one student to another, and this distinction is mainly related to motivation and anxiety. This means that when students are motivated to learn a FL/SL and to perform in the target language, learning will take place. Though, when students feel anxious in performing in a FL/SL, the learning outcomes will not be satisfying.

Motivation and anxiety are considered as the most important in either promoting output; i.e. students’ production or causing students’ reluctance to participate in classroom interaction (Nunan, 1992), respectively. They are two related concepts; they have been placed in causal relationship with learner attitudes, perceptions and beliefs (Wesely, 2012).

3.1. Motivation and Learners’ Beliefs

Motivation is so important in language learning. It determines how language learning would be successful. In addition to this, motivation plays an important role in the learners’ learning outcomes. This internal drive is the key element in language learning and in practising the target language. Hence, outside any classroom there are attitudes to the English language learning (Harmer, 2001).

Motivation has been closely connected with “the affective characteristics of the learner, referring to the direction and magnitude of learning behaviour in terms of the learner’s choice, intensity, and duration of learning.” (Dörnyei, 2009 cited in Welsely, 2012). As a matter of fact, motivation is related to the learner and the learner’s affective domain. It is characterized by the learner’s purpose behind choosing to learn a FL/SL. Moreover, the learner’s perception to learning the target language is also important. It refers to learner’s perceptions towards learning, the context of learning the target language as well as the duration of learning.

The literature on Cooperative Learning acknowledges that cognitive, motivational and affective benefits of group learning activities are more likely to be achieved (Kimmel & Volet, 2012). So, learners’ perceptions and readiness towards using Cooperative Learning, i.e. perceptions towards the group, help them practice the target language – the English language. Knowing the learners’ perceptions towards using Cooperative Learning determines the learners’ readiness for interacting with group members as well as helping each other; the most important outcome is producing output and using the language much more than when working individually. Most research (Harris & Convey, 2002; Bernaus, Cenoz, Espi & Lindsay, 1994 cited in Djigunovic, 2012) points out a positive relationship between attitudes and motivation with language achievement (Djigunovic, 2012).

3.2. Anxiety and Learners’ Beliefs

The second important related concept is ‘anxiety.’ Aida (1994, cited in Welsely, 2012) explained that Horwitz and her colleagues have conceptualized Foreign Language Anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and uniqueness of the language learning processes.” (Horwitz et *al.*, 1991 cited in Aida, 1994) Here, anxiety is directly related to the classroom atmosphere as well as the language learning process in general. Tasks and activities used in the classroom and classroom arrangement can influence the learner’s anxiety and motivation too. How learners perceive the task and the oral performance also is related to learner’s anxiety. Graham (2004) and Yan and Horwitz (2008) conducted research and found that more positive learner’s attitudes and perceptions were associated with more positive outcomes (more enjoyment of the task at hand, higher achievement and lower anxiety). In addition, Aida (1994 cited in Welsely,

2012) connected learners' attitudes and fears about the class to their performance in class.

Anxiety has a debilitating effect on FL/SL acquisition; so, it is important to help learners to cope with and reduce this anxiety so as learning takes place. To reduce L2 anxiety some factors to this anxiety should be identified. Young (1991 cited in Cheng, 2001) reviewed the literature and summarized six possible sources of this anxiety and the most important one is learner beliefs about language learning. It is important because beliefs may be accessible to be changed. FL/SL students' language learning is based on the learner's experience with anxiety, so when a learner faces the same situation, but with different conditions, he/she may change their beliefs into positive one. For instance, a learner performing an individual oral task in teacher-fronted classroom; the learner feels anxious and less secure. In this case, the learner constructs beliefs about oral performance as harmful and causes anxiety and the learner perceives the oral session negatively. However, if the same learner experience working in small group and performing cooperatively the same task, the learner will enjoy the task as well as the oral performance. So, the learner would change his/her perceptions towards oral expression sessions into positive view.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, learners' perceptions towards using CL in oral sessions are very important because they influence the learning outcomes and more specifically the oral output. When learners have positive perceptions of using CL it would be helpful for them to express themselves and interact with group members as well as working in small groups collaboratively and having the same purpose to be achieved. In recent researches, learners' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes have gained interests from many researchers because the learner is the heart of the learning process. Giving importance to learners' beliefs helps teachers to set clear objectives to be met according to learners' needs. Teachers also have the responsibility to help learners who hold negative beliefs so as not to influence the learners' learning outcome. Using CL may give equal opportunities to the students

to participate in class activities as every member is assigned a particular role within his/her group such as a checker, manager, secretary and reporter (Ghaith, 2001).

Chapter Two: Research Methodology, Results and Discussion of Results

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in this research. It comprises three sections; the first one focuses the theme's feasibility and provides a description of the piloting phase of the questionnaire. The second section presents research methodology, research participants and data collection tool. Hence, the third section encompasses the results and discussion of results; some recommendations about Learners' Perceptions towards using CL in Oral Sessions are also given within this section.

1. Theme's Feasibility and Pilot Study of the Questionnaire

1.1. Theme's Feasibility

Before engaging in any research work, there should be a phenomenon that exists, i.e. a problem that exists somewhere and should be detected so as to find solutions or provide some recommendations.

In conducting research about Learners' Perceptions towards using Cooperative Learning in Oral Sessions we have gone through a pre-study to check whether there is something worth investigating or not. We have attended five observation sessions (c.f. Appendix 01: observation checklist) with two groups of third year LSD. Through our observation we have noticed that when learners work individually:

- The output is minimized
- Low opportunities for learner-learner interaction

- Some students avoid speaking (They seem shy)
- Hesitation; most of students were reluctant to speak
- Some students dominate the class discussion (Monopoly)

As a matter of fact, we suggest CL as a way out to diminish this kind of problems. In CL all students supposed to have the opportunity to speak and interact, and most of students feel secure and talk freely in a friendly atmosphere. Yet, the teacher-fronted classroom is still an obstacle for many students.

Learners' Perceptions towards Using CL during Oral Sessions are very important so as to get better outcomes. When learners are aware of using CL and accept it, the learning outcomes would more likely be fruitful.

1.2. Pilot Study of the Questionnaire

All data gathering instrument should be piloted to test how accessible and / or ambiguous the questions are for students. *"The purpose of a pilot exercise is to get the bugs out of the instrument."* (Bell, 1987:65), i.e. determining the difficulties and / or the ambiguity that may students encounter when answering the questions. Through this step, we can remove some items or revise them so as to make them clearer and to guarantee a better understanding. When piloting the questionnaire some questions were removed while the others were revised and reformulated or paraphrased.

In our research work fifteen (15) copies were distributed for third year LSD students of English at Béjaia University. The fifteen copies were answered and returned; according to the students' answers, our questionnaire could be revised. The pilot questionnaire contains three sections; the first one is entitled General Background. It covers six items. The second section entitled Learners' Perception towards Using Cooperative Learning with seven questions and the last section is about Further Suggestions and Recommendations.

The fifteen copies were distributed for students in the amphitheatre when having a lecture of Neurosciences (the teacher was absent), we distributed the copies of

questionnaires for students and waited till they finished and then we collected the questionnaires. All the copies were returned back.

This study helps us to modify the questionnaire. In section one “*General Background*”, the second question is re-ordered and is become the third question and another question is added as number two. The latter is added so as to get more information about the most important language skills for students. The third question is removed. Question four is added and it is about the extent to which students want to improve their speaking skill. Furthermore, question number (04) is become number (05) and number (06) is become number (08) and the fifth question is divided into two questions. The first one is about whether learners like to participate in the classroom or not and the second one is about the frequency of participation of students in the classroom. In section two “*Learners’ Perceptions towards Using Cooperative Learning*”. The first question is about whether students were working in small groups in previous years; this question is reformulated and instead of Yes/ No options, it is turned into frequencies. The second question is removed, so question number (03) is become number (02) and a forth option is added to that question. Question (04) is re-ordered into number (03); it is about the language that is used by students when working in small groups. Yet, question (05) is become number (04) and the sixth one is become number (05); the latter is about how much learners agree on using small group work in oral sessions and here an option is added. Question number (07) is removed and replaced by a question with options and a justification, “Do you think that working in small groups during Oral Sessions gives you more opportunities to interact and produce output?” why ? A question about “How does CL affect learners’ performance” is added as number (07) and it is the last question in section two of the questionnaire.

2. Design and Procedure of the Study

2.1. Design

The study at hand is a descriptive design. It describes students’ attitudes towards using CL during oral sessions. The research at hand supports the fact that quantitative research method is suited to this study in order to achieve our objectives and collect information. The quantitative method permits us to collect

data through the use of questionnaire. We designed a questionnaire for learners; it is directed for third year LMD students, option LSD at Bejaia University. The questions are related to our research topic so as to get more information about it and complete our research work. And to reach our research objective which is to find out learners' perceptions towards using cooperative learning in oral sessions.

2.2. Research Variables

-The independent variable in the present work is the Learners' Perceptions. Learners' perceptions towards CL use are very important; they can determine how successful CL is.

-The dependent variable is CL use in oral sessions. Here, CL use and its outcomes on learners' interaction, output and performance are all dependent on learners' perception towards CL use in oral sessions.

2.3. Research Subjects

- Population

There are two specialties of third year LMD students of English which are Literature and Civilization option, and SLD option at the University of Bejaia. As the specialty is concerned we have chosen to carry out the research with LSD students. There are 08 groups of the specialty of LSD; the average number of students is 40 for each group.

- Sample

The research subjects are 150 students of third year LSD students of English at Bejaia University. We have chosen to conduct our research work with this level because they have already dealt with CL in oral sessions in previous years, so they can answer our questionnaire and provide us with answers that help us to complete our research work.

2.4. Data Collection Tool

In the present work, we have chosen to use the questionnaire as a means of collecting data. We have designed a questionnaire that is directed to the third year students. The questionnaire is the suitable tool in collecting data about the topic under investigation since learners' beliefs and perceptions are not tangible or observable. Hence, the anonymity of the questionnaire makes the students answer spontaneously.

2.5. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire covers three sections; the first section entitled '*General Background*'. It contains eight items. The second section entitled '*Learners' Perceptions towards Using CL*', and it includes seven items about learners' attitudes and perceptions towards using CL in Oral Sessions. '*Further Suggestions/Recommendations*' is the third section and it is an open question for students to give their suggestions about using CL in Oral Sessions.

Section one: "*General Background*"; this section comprises 08 questions. The first question is about the most interesting English language skills/sub-skills for students (listening- speaking- reading- writing- grammar- vocabulary- pronunciation). The second question asks the students to rank the language skills/sub-skills according to their importance for them from 1 to 7. The third question is related to the previous questions and it is in case of choosing (speaking- vocabulary or pronunciation) the learners should justify their choice. The fourth question is concerning the extent to which students want to improve their speaking skill (to speak correctly- to speak fluently- to speak accurately and fluently- to reach native-like speaking- other). The fifth question is related to what students do to improve their speaking skill (watching English channels on TV, videos, listen to audio materials- discussing with teachers outside the classroom- speaking with the classmates in English outside the classroom- reading and/or thinking aloud-participating in the classroom as much as possible-others). The sixth question is whether the students like to participate in the classroom or not. The seventh question is concerning the frequency of students' participation in the classroom (always- often- sometimes-

rarely- never). The eighth question is about the students' preferences when working in oral expression session (individually- in pairs- in small groups).

Section two: "*Learners' Perceptions towards Using Cooperative Learning*"; it contains seven questions. The ninth question is related to the frequency of using small groups in oral sessions in previous years (always- often- sometimes- rarely- never). The tenth question is about how comfortable the students are when working in small groups (very comfortable- comfortable- not at all- it depends on) and why? The eleventh question is about the language used by students when working in small groups (the English language- the English language with French or mother tongue- the mother tongue or French language- other). The twelfth question is concerning the activities that students prefer more in oral expression sessions (whole class discussion- individual oral presentation- playing games- role-playing- free talk- others). The thirteenth question is about how much students agree on using group works in oral expression sessions (strongly agree- agree- neither agree nor disagree- disagree- strongly disagree). The fourteenth question is about whether students think that working in small groups during oral session gives them more opportunities to interact and produce output (strongly agree- agree- neither agree nor disagree- disagree- strongly disagree) with justification. The fifteenth question is concerning the students' attitudes towards the effects of CL on their oral performance.

Section three: "*Further Suggestions/ Recommendations*"; this question is for students to add any suggestions about using small group work in oral expression sessions.

3. Analysis of the Questionnaire

One hundred and fifteen copies were distributed for third year LSD students of English. 135 copies were returned back; two of the 135 were unanswered, so the total that we are going to work with is 133. Table 01 shows the number of handed and returned copies of the questionnaire.

Table 01: Number of Handed and Returned Copies of the Questionnaire

Copies	Number	Percentage
Handed	150	100%
Returned	135	90%

Section One: General Background

**Question1: What are the most interesting Language Skills/ Sub-skills for you?
(You can choose more than one)**

Table 02: Students' Interests in English language Skills/ Sub-skill

Option	Number	Percentage
Listening	5	3.76%
Speaking	12	9.02%
Reading	0	0%
Writing	0	0%
Grammar	0	0%
Vocabulary	1	0.75%
Pronunciation	0	0%
All of them	62	46.62%
Speaking, vocabulary and pronunciation	53	39.85%
Total	133	100%

Above table shows that about half of the students are interested in all the language skills and sub-skills and this is noticeable from the highest percentage which is almost 47% of students that chose all the options whereas 40% of students are interested in the three language skills: speaking, vocabulary and pronunciation. 9% of third year students are interested in speaking skill.

Students' interest in developing all the language skills and the sub-skills reflects their importance in learning the English language. In fact, all of them are interrelated. Hence, students are also aware of the importance of the three language skills/sub-skills speaking, vocabulary and pronunciation. 39.85% of the respondents are interested in those skills; this means that oral expression is so crucial for students' practicing of the English language.

Question 02: Rank the language skills/ sub-skills according to their importance for you from 1 to 7

Table 03: Students' Ranking for Language Skills/ Sub-skills according to their Importance

The ranks Options	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	6	%	7	%
Listening	31	23.31	16	12.03	12	9.02	17	12.78	15	11.28	16	12.03	26	19.55
Speaking	48	36.09	36	27.07	21	15.79	09	6.77	09	6.77	07	5.26	03	2.25
Reading	04	03	12	09.02	20	15.04	23	17.29	21	15.79	22	16.54	32	24.06
Writing	09	6.77	07	5.26	17	12.78	26	19.55	29	21.80	25	18.79	20	15.04
Grammar	13	9.77	11	8.27	18	13.53	20	15.04	19	14.28	28	21.05	24	18.05
Vocabulary	14	10.53	19	14.28	27	20.30	22	16.54	25	18.79	20	15.04	06	4.51
Pronunciation	14	10.53	32	24.06	18	13.53	16	12.03	15	11.28	15	11.28	22	16.54
Total	133	100	133	100	133	100	133	100	133	100	133	100	133	100

Students' ranking for the skills/sub-skills from 1 to 7 is different from one student to another. This table shows that 36.09% of students give much importance to the speaking skill and this reflects the students' willingness to speak and use the target language. 23.31% of students choose the listening skill as the most important

for them. The other skills/sub skills are given less importance; the percentage is between 3%, as the least important, for the reading skill and 10.53% for the pronunciation and the vocabulary.

This highest percentage (36.09%) means that most of the students are very interested and more likely to improve their speaking skill. Hence, this can be related to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis that claims that learners of a Foreign Language should produce output so as to lead to a better acquisition of the target language. 10.53% of the respondents give importance to vocabulary and pronunciation and the latter goes hand in hand with the speaking skill. In order to improve the pronunciation, students' have to listen and speak, and speaking needs vocabulary. That is why 23.31% of students chose listening and 36.09% for speaking; 10.53% for vocabulary and pronunciation.

Question 03: in case of choosing, b, f or g, say why

Table 04: Students' justification for choosing b, f or g

Option	Number	Percentage
To practice the English Language	29	21.80%
They are needed and used most of the time	47	35.34%
To produce comprehensible output and facilitate communication	51	38.35%
No justification	06	4.51%
Total	133	100%

The students' reasons are turned into options and the above table shows that 38.35% (51) of the respondents justify their choice for the speaking skill, pronunciation and vocabulary by referring to their willingness to produce comprehensible output and facilitate communication. 35.34% of third year students justify their answer by saying that the three skills /sub-skills are needed and used most of the time. Furthermore, 29 (21.80% of students) chose the three options because they need them to practice the English language whereas 04.51% of students did not answer.

We deduce from this statistical reading that most of students focus on producing comprehensible output, i.e. being understood by others. Also, students give importance to those three options (speaking - vocabulary and pronunciation) for the sake of practicing the target language.

Question 04: To which extent do you want to improve you Speaking Skill?

Table 05: Students' Willingness to improve their Speaking Skill

Option	Number	Percentage
To speak correctly	19	14.28%
To speak fluently	11	8.27%
To speak accurately and fluently	60	45.11%
To reach native-like speaking	43	32.33%
Other	0	0%
Total	133	100%

As noticed from the above table we see that 45.11% of students want to improve their speaking skill so as to speak accurately and fluently and 32.33% of students want to reach native-like speaking whereas 14.28% of students are interested in accuracy. 8.27% of the whole respondents are likely to be fluent speakers.

As an interpretation for the above table we can say that most of students would like to speak accurately and fluently; this reflects the extent to which the

learners want to improve their speaking skill and how important it is. Reaching native-like speaking is also an aim of 43 students.

Question 05: What do you do to improve your Speaking Skill?

Table 06: Students’ strategies for improving their speaking skill

Options	Number	Percentage
Watching English channels on TV, videos, listen to audio materials, etc	56	42.11%
Discussing with teachers outside the classroom	2	1.51%
Speaking with your classmates in English outside the classroom	41	30.83%
Reading and/ or thinking aloud	06	4.51%
Participating in the classroom as much as possible	24	18.04%
Others	0	0%
All of them	4	3.00%
Total	133	100%

The statistical reading for the above table we notice that 42.11% of learners say that they improve their speaking skill through watching the English channels on TV, video or listening to audio materials. 30.83% are tended to speak with their classmates outside the classroom whereas only 18.04% of the respondents participate in the classroom to ameliorate their speaking skill. However, 4.51% and 1.51% are the lowest percentages and this reflects the students’ use of reading and/ or thinking aloud, discussing with teachers outside the classroom strategies, respectively. Hence, 3% of the respondents use all the strategies to improve their speaking skill.

As an interpretation of the above-mentioned results we can say that most of students rely on themselves in what concerns improving their speaking skill and they use different strategies so as to do so. From these results we notice that just 18.04% of the respondents that participate in the classroom so as to improve their speaking skill and this is a problem. This reflects the lack of interaction in the classroom. Regarding these results, CL can foster the students’ participation in the classroom as they work in small groups, they would have many and equal opportunities to interact and express themselves.

Question 06: Do you like to participate in the classroom?

Table 07: Students' like of participation in the classroom

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	105	78.95%
No	28	21.05%
Total	133	100%

The table 07 indicates that the majority of the respondents (78.95%) like participation in the classroom whereas 21.05% of the students dislike participation.

From the above statistical reading of the table, we can say that students are willing to speak and express themselves in the classroom and look for the opportunity to participate.

Question 07: How often do you participate in the classroom?

Table 08: Students' frequency of participation in the classroom

Options	Number	Percentage
Always	18	13.53%
Often	25	18.80%
Sometimes	74	55.64%
Rarely	14	10.53%
Never	02	01.50%
Total	133	100%

A statistical reading for the above table shows that 55.64% of third year students do sometimes participate and 18.80% often participate. However, only 18 students always participate. 14 students do rarely take part in classroom participation and 2 of them do never participate.

Most of students do sometimes participate. This reflects the classroom interaction, its role and the opportunities given for students as well as the students' willingness to participate reflect the amount of interaction in the classroom and its impact on students' speaking skill. However, it is not enough because the classroom is the atmosphere where, normally, all students have the right to participate and have equal opportunities above all when speaking about oral

sessions. Hence, CL would provide some solutions for the low opportunities of student-student interaction since it is based on small group work.

Question 08: In Oral Expression Sessions, do you prefer working

Table 09: Students’ Preferences of working during Oral Sessions

Options	Number	Percentage
Individually	28	21.05%
In pairs	47	35.34%
In small groups	58	43.61%
Total	133	100%

Table 09 shows that 43.61% of students prefer working in small groups and 35.34% like working in pairs whereas 28 students from 133 students prefer working individually.

Most of students prefer working in small groups in oral sessions and this reflects students’ readiness for working cooperatively. These results reflect also the students’ positive perceptions towards CL, so implementing CL during oral sessions would give better results about interaction and producing output.

Section Two: Learners’ Perceptions towards Using Cooperative Learning

Question 09: In previous years, were you working in small groups during Oral Expression Sessions?

Table 10: Students’ Frequency of working in Small Groups during Oral Sessions

Options	Number	Percentage
Always	35	26.32%
Often	22	16.54%
Sometimes	50	37.59%
Rarely	18	13.53%
Never	8	06.02%
Total	133	100%

From the above table we notice that 35.59% of students were sometimes working in small groups during oral sessions in previous years and 26.32% were always working in small groups; whereas, only 06.02% of the respondents were never using small groups in oral sessions.

As an interpretation for the above table, we can say that since most of the respondents have experienced working in small groups during oral sessions, they can provide us with the data needed. Hence, they can express their attitudes accordingly.

Question 10: How comfortable do you feel when working in small groups?

Table 11: Students’ Feelings when working in Small Groups

Options	Number	Percentage
Very comfortable	45	33.84%
Comfortable	63	47.37%
Not at all	9	6.76%
It depends on	16	12.03%
Total	133	100%

Table 10 shows us that 47.37% and 33.84% of students feel comfortable and very comfortable when working in small groups, respectively. 06.76% of the respondents say that they do not feel comfortable when working cooperatively whereas 12.03% say that it depends on:

- Members of the group
- The number of the group members
- The subject discussed

From this statistical reading we deduce that most of students feel comfortable when working cooperatively and like the idea.

Question 11: When working in small groups, do you use ...

Table 12: The Language(s) Used by Students when Working in Small Groups

Options	Number	Percentage
The English Language	36	27.07%
The English with French or mother tongue	90	67.67%
The mother tongue or French language	7	5.26%
Other	0	0%
Total	133	100%

The above table shows that 67.67% of the respondents use the English language with French or mother tongue when working in small groups whereas only 27.07% of students use the English language. The lowest percentage is 5.26% and represents the students that use the mother tongue and/or French interference.

As an interpretation for the above statistical reading we can say that the use of English with French and/ or mother tongue when working cooperatively is considered as a disadvantage for using CL in oral sessions.

Question 12: Which activities do you prefer more in oral sessions?

Table 13: Students' preferences of activities

Options	number	percentage
Whole class discussion	30	22,56%
Individual oral presentation	9	6,77%
Playing games	23	17,29%
Role-playing	48	36,09%
Free talk	23	17,29%
Others	0	0%
total	133	100%

A statistical reading for the above table shows that 36.09% of the respondents prefer role-playing activity and 17.29% of third year LSD students

prefer playing-games and free talk activities. 22.56% prefer whole class discussion whereas 6.77% prefer individual oral presentation.

From these statistics we notice that most of students prefer the role-playing activity and this activity goes hand in hand with CL; furthermore, playing-games activity can also be used with small groups. These results are consistent with the fact that learners' perceptions towards small group work would influence their interaction. The activities chosen by the students are all based on interaction and performance. Hence, their positive attitudes to small group work would influence their oral production as well.

Question 13: How much do you agree on using group works in oral expression sessions?

Table 14: Students' agreement on using group works in oral sessions

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	49	36.84%
Agree	65	48.87%
Neither agree nor disagree	17	12.78%
Disagree	2	1.51%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	133	100%

From the above table we notice that 48.87% of the students agree on using small group works in oral sessions and 36.84% of the respondents strongly agree on using it whereas 12.78% of third year students neither agree nor disagree on using small groups in oral sessions. Only 1.51% disagrees and no one strongly disagree.

Now we move on to the interpretation. From the above statistics we find that the majority of students do agree on using small groups in oral expression sessions. This means that students feel comfortable and from their experience in previous years they notice the benefits of using CL and its effects on their interaction and output production.

Question 14: Do you think that working in small groups during Oral Sessions gives you more opportunities to interact and produce output?

Table 15: Students' Attitudes towards the effects of CL on their output and interaction

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	57	42.86%
Agree	54	40.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	17	12.78%
Disagree	5	3.76%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	133	100%

According to the above table (15), 42.86% and 40.60% of the students strongly agree and agree on the benefits of using small groups in oral sessions. They believe that CL affects their interaction positively and gives them opportunities to produce output, i.e. the practice of the English language. However, some students (12.78%) neither agree nor disagree and only 3.76% of the respondents disagree on the fact that using CL gives them more opportunities to interact and produce output. No one strongly disagree.

The following table is about the student's justification of the previous question. Students' justifications are turned into options.

Table 16: Students' justifications for their agreement about the effects of CL on their output and interaction

Options	Number	Percentage
It motivates us	43	33.59%
It reduces anxiety and stress	47	36.72%
We feel responsible and autonomous	38	29.69%
Total	128	100%

Students' justifications are almost the same. 33.59% justify their answer by saying that CL gives them more opportunities to produce output and interact

because they feel motivated when working in small groups. Hence, 36.72% of the respondents say that using CL reduces their anxiety and stress since they feel comfortable and 29.69% of the students say that CL makes them feeling responsible for their own learning and it makes them free from teacher-centeredness. Hence, it develops learner autonomy.

The above analysis of the table shows students beliefs; they believe that CL is motivating for them and they feel comfortable and free from stress and anxiety. That is why they produce output more than when working individually. Furthermore, according to them, working in small groups pushes them to interact and use the English language. They added also the fact that in CL all students have the same opportunity to speak rather than when working individually where some students dominate the class discussion.

Question 15: How does Cooperative Learning (working in small groups) affect your performance?

Table 17: Learners’ Attitudes towards the Effects of CL on their Performance

Options	Number	Percentage
CL reduces students’ shyness	33	24.81%
CL motivates students and lets them perform free from anxiety	36	27.07%
It infuses students with self-confidence and speak without hesitation	25	18.80%
Activate students’ potential and put it into practice	39	29.32%
Total	133	100%

A statistical reading of the above table shows that the percentages are almost the same. 29.32% of the respondents say that CL affects their performance by activating their potential and put it into practice. 27.07% of students believe that using CL in oral session motivates them to perform without anxiety and 24.81% of them say that CL reduces their shyness while performing whereas 18.80% of the respondents claim that CL infuses them with self-confidence and permits them to speak without hesitations.

As an interpretation for the statistics we deduce that students say that CL affects positively their oral performance. By claiming that CL reduces their anxiety and shyness while performing and it permits them to speak without hesitations with self-confidence. Furthermore, third year students say that CL gives them the opportunity to participate and practise their English language.

Section Three: Further Suggestions/recommendations

This section was answered by only 46 students among 133 of them. These suggestions are summarized and they are as follows:

- Using activities that motivates students such as games and role-playing that make the learner feels more enthusiastic in speaking,
- Add more hours for oral expression sessions,
- Using CL in all the modules,
- Avoid using individual work in oral sessions,
- Using technology in oral sessions,
- Give the freedom for students to choose the topic and sometimes the activities.

4. Discussion of the Results and Recommendations

4.1. Discussion of the Results

Through the analysis of the questionnaire we figure out the answer to our related questions and confirm our hypothesis. Concerning the first sub-question “Do learners’ perceptions towards CL use in oral sessions affect their oral production?” we find that learners’ perceptions towards CL use have an impact on their oral production and this is deduced from the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire. The majority (81%) of third year LSD students of English feel comfortable when working in small groups. In the literature review, we find that Gabillon (n.d.) refers to the way learners’ beliefs should be examined. She claimed that beliefs should be examined as regards the individual’s past and present experience. Here, the students’ feel comfortable when working in small groups reflect their past experience since almost 90% of the respondents have already

experienced working in small groups in previous years. Also, we have almost 86% of the students agree on using CL during oral sessions and these findings are consistent with previous studies (Brantmeier, 2005; Donato, Tucker, Wudthayagorn, & Igarashi, 2000; Graham, 2004; Mills et al., 2006, 2007) that claim that the more positive learner attitudes, perceptions and beliefs were, the more positive were the outcomes. Here, learners' agreement on using CL during oral sessions reflects their positive attitudes towards its use. As a matter of fact, learners' feel comfortable when working in small groups and agree on using CL would give better results, i.e. students would produce more output since they are motivated. In fact, working cooperatively in small groups to solve a given task help students to learn from each other about language such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and this is mentioned in the literature review as aspects of CL. Gillies (2007, cited in Fehling, n.d.) refers to this as Face-to-Face interaction; this aspect involves working in small groups where students can see each other and are engaged in face-to-face interaction. In fact this aspect is very important for learners when using CL in oral sessions and this can be seen when negotiating meaning and helping each other in completing sentences, enriching vocabulary, helping each other in problem-solving tasks or in preparing a role-play activity and playing games. Asserting what is said previously, the item four in the second section of the questionnaire is about the students' preferences of activities in oral sessions. We find that almost 54% of the respondents prefer role-playing and games; these results reflect the students' willingness to work cooperatively since the aforementioned activities are mainly based on small group works.

Besides, the data attained point out that the answer for our second related question "Does CL foster student-student interaction?" that student-student interaction is fostered when working cooperatively. These results affirm what we have mentioned in the review of literature about the role of CL in enhancing interaction among students. Rulon and McCreary (1986, cited in Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006) focus on the role of working in groups and claim that the atmosphere of the group give the learners the opportunity to interact freely without being afraid from the teacher's feedback. Therefore, the sixth question of the second section of the questionnaire concerns students' beliefs about whether or not CL gives them more opportunities to interact and produce output. We have

obtained almost 84% of third year LSD students that believe in the effects of CL on their oral production as well as the opportunities of interaction given when working cooperatively. Students' justification for their beliefs is mainly related to motivation and the reduced anxiety when working in small groups that make them talk and interact freely. These findings are closely related to the theoretical part where we have mentioned that most research (Harris & Convey, 2002; Bernaus, Cenoz, Espi & Lindsay, 1994, cited in Djigunovic, 2012) draw attention to a positive relationship between attitudes and motivation with language achievement (Djigunovic, 2012). Relating it to our findings, third year students believe that CL motivates them to produce output and interact more. In addition, knowing students' perceptions towards CL use in oral sessions is very important and it is determined for the learning outcomes in general and oral production in specific. The data obtained represent an answer to our research problem and validate our hypothesis that states that "if third year LMD students possess positive perceptions towards CL use during oral sessions in their EFL classes, this will facilitate the production of more output and will give more opportunities to interact."

4.2. Pedagogical Recommendations

The validity of the findings of any research work should be applicable to the setting so as to provide solution to a given problem. In this perspective, Gorard (2013) say: "*The validity of any findings refers to their real-life applicability and to their robustness when examined skeptically.*" (Gorard, 2013) The validity of our hypothesis and the positive results obtained from our study can be applicable to our setting, i.e. Bejaia University's students of English. Yet, some recommendations can be given to FLLs and teachers of oral expression about using CL in oral sessions and showing the importance of students' perceptions towards English language learning in general and CL in specific.

- Cooperative Learning is a systematic instructional method and has positive effects on a wider range of outcomes (Zhang, 2010). As a matter of fact, teachers of oral expression should use it so as to maximize students' interaction.
- Giving students opportunities to express themselves by letting them speaking freely without interruption.

- It is advised to assess students' perceptions towards oral expression sessions at the beginning of the year and design activities that suit them well.
- Take students' preferences into consideration.
- Use interactive tasks and activities to help students improve their oral fluency.
- Give equal opportunities for students to produce output.
- Using small groups to solve tasks help shy students to speak and overcome their shyness.
- Using multimedia in oral sessions (suggested by students).
- Add more hours for oral expression sessions (suggested by students).
- Give a certain freedom for students to choose the topic of discussion and, why not, the activities and tasks.

Conclusion

In a few words, we can say that the results attained confirm our hypothesis that states that “If third year LMD students of English perceive positively the use of CL during oral sessions, they will produce more output and have more opportunities to interact.” Also, from the analysis of the data gathered, we deduce that the majority of the students have positive perceptions towards CL use in oral sessions and this affects the student-student interaction. Thus, students' agreement on using CL in oral sessions means that they notice its benefits on their learning process and oral production.

General Conclusion

The shift paradigm from research about teaching and the teacher to the learning process and the learner is beneficial for learners. In recent years, the psychology of the learner is also given importance. In fact, dealing with learner's psychology or beliefs and the way of thinking is a complex issue. It can affect the learner's view towards learning in general and language learning in specific.

This investigation is conducted so as to enlighten the importance of the students' perceptions and their effects on their learning process. Hence, the main focus of our study is students' perceptions towards CL use during oral sessions. Here, we are opted to attend with two groups of oral sessions so as to observe the phenomenon and notice the difference between individualistic work and cooperative one. Through the use of the Questionnaire, we have obtained data that revealed that the majority of students prefer working in small groups rather than working individually. This means that according to their experience they came to the conclusion that when working cooperatively, they produce more output and their interaction is maximized. Hitherto, knowing students' perceptions towards any aspect of the learning process can fit the learners' needs as well.

In a nutshell, the underlying significance of the present study is to shed light on the students' perceptions and their importance in learning a FL. To make the students speak and interact in the classroom is an issue that deserves importance and investigation as well. It is also worth noticing that CL represents a significant role in maximizing students' opportunities to interact and practicing the target language.

As suggestions for further research, some points can be given. The present research work is a descriptive study where we have described students' perceptions towards CL use. In fact, investigating CL effects on students' performance and oral fluency can be investigated using the experimental design by implementing it oral sessions. Also, because this work interests more in students' beliefs and perceptions towards CL use, we have not dealt with the techniques and disadvantages of CL, so further research can highlight those points.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

Any research work is faced by some limitations. When conducting the research at hand at the beginning of the year we were working on “The effects of Using Cooperative Learning on Students’ Oral Communication Skills”. Hence, it was an experimental research. We have worked on it till the month of March. We attended five observation sessions with two groups of third year LSD students during oral expression sessions so as to conduct the experiment. However, when we came to implement CL by doing the experiment the teacher had changed the mind and did not want to give us the class to conduct the experiment. As a matter of fact, we were obliged to change our title, one variable and the method as well. Working about learners’ beliefs and perceptions is a very tough issue above all when dealing with it in a short time. Time restriction is also a limitation in our work.

The present research is conducted with 150 LSD students of English at Bejaia University, so the results cannot be generalized to the whole population.

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Appendix 01: Observation Checklist:

Date:

Time allotted:

Number of students:

Observation checklist 01:

Tasks and Activities	Yes	No
Do the activities maximize students' output?		
Do the tasks give the students the opportunity to interact?		
Are the activities based on individual work or small group work?		

Observation checklist 02 :

Students' behaviour	Yes	No
Do the students participate ?		
Do all students take part in class discussion?		
Do the students interact together?		
Are all the students engaged in the activity?		
Do students use the English language?		

Observation checklist: 03

Students' performance	Yes	No
Are students hesitant to perform?		
Are all the students willing to perform?		
Do students perform well individually or in small group work?		

Observation checklist : 04

The aspects of CL	Yes	No
Positive interdependence		
Face-to-face interaction		
Individual accountability		
Collaborative skills		
Group processing		

Additional comments:

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.....
.....

Appendix 02: Questionnaire

Dear Students,

We would be very grateful if you devote some of your time to answer this questionnaire so as to complete our research work about using Cooperative Learning during Oral Expression Sessions. Your answers will be treated anonymously.

Answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓), or by providing a full answer where necessary.

I. General Background

1. What are the most interesting English Language skills/ sub-skill for you? (You can choose more than one).

a-Listening

b-Speaking

c-Reading

d-Writing

e-Grammar

f-Vocabulary

g-Pronunciation

2. Rank the language skills/ sub-skill according to their importance for you from 1 to 7

a-Listening

b-Speaking

c-Reading

d-Writing

e-Grammar

f-Vocabulary

g-Pronunciation

3. In case of choosing, b, f or g, say why.....

4. To which extent do you want to improve your Speaking Skill?

a-To speak correctly

b-To speak fluently

c-To speak accurately and fluently

d-To reach native-like speaking

e- other

5. What do you do to improve your speaking skill?

a-Watching English channels on TV, videos, listen to audio materials, etc

b-Discussing with teachers outside the classroom

c-Speaking with your classmates in English outside the classroom

d-Reading and/ or thinking aloud

e-Participating in the classroom as much as possible

f-Others.....

6. Do you like to participate in the classroom?

a-Yes

b-No

7. How often do you participate in the classroom?

a- Always b- Often c -Sometimes d-Rarely e- Never

8. In Oral Expression Sessions, do you prefer working?

a-Individually b-In pairs c -In small groups

II. Learners' Perception towards Using Cooperative Learning

9. In previous years, were you working in small groups during Oral Expression Sessions?

a- Always b- Often c -Sometimes d-Rarely e- Never

10. How comfortable do you feel when working in small groups?

a-Very comfortable b-Comfortable c-Not at all

d-It depends on.....

11. When working in small groups, do you use.....

a-The English Language

b-The English with French or mother tongue

c-The mother tongue or French language

d-Other.....

12. Which activities do you prefer more in Oral Expression Sessions?

a-Whole class discussion

b-Individual oral presentation

c-Playing games

d-Role-playing

e-Free talk

-Others.....

13. How much do you agree on using group works in Oral Expression Sessions?

a -Strongly agree b-Agree

c-Neither agree nor disagree d-Disagree e-Strongly disagree

14. Do you think that working in small groups during Oral Sessions gives you more opportunities to interact and produce output?

a -Strongly agree b-Agree

c-Neither agree nor disagree d-Disagree

e-Strongly disagree

Why?.....
.....
.....

15. How does Cooperative Learning (working in small groups) affect your performance?

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.....
.....
.....

III. Further Suggestions/Recommendations

Would you please add any suggestion about using small group work in Oral Expression Sessions?

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Thank you for your collaboration. Miss. A. Benkhelouf