AN ACTION RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO TEACHING SPEAKING

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1.Background of the study

- Increasing demand for English speaking people
- Shift from traditional grammar translation to communicative approach
- Missing linking between training and reality of the classroom practice
- Promoting interest in classroom research for an appropriate English teaching method

2. Statement of the problem

- Problems in implementing groupwork in classroom
- Problems in teaching speaking at DE, GTTC
- The benefits of CL in English teaching
- The successes of CL implementing programs
- Advantages of CL principles in solving problems of groupwork and speaking activities

3. Scope of the study

Teaching speaking to second year-students at DE, GTTC in the second semester via a cooperative learning application program

4. Aims of the study

- To investigate the effects of CL on students' participation in oral communication activities
- to investigate the effects of CL on students' achievement in speaking skills
- To give some pedagogical implications and suggestions for further studies

5. Methodology

- ❖ Participants: 23 second-year students at DE, GTTC who are at pre-intermediate English proficiency and at mixed levels of English speaking competence.
- ❖ Instruments:
- Two sets of observation forms
- Pre- and post- speaking tests
- Students' journals
- ❖ procedure:
- Problem diagnosis
- Plan of action
- Data collection and analysis
- Discussion of the finding results

6. Research questions with sub-questions

1. What are the effects of CL on students' participation in group activities?
   - Are the students motivated to participate?
   - Is the amount of students' participation increased and divided equally?
   - Is the nature of students' participation improved?
2. What are the effects of CL on students' achievement?
   - Do the students get higher achievement ?
   - What oral communication skills do the students develop?
3. What is the students' attitude towards CL?

The study

1. Problem diagnosis
2. Plan of action
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis
5. Findings and discussion of the research questions

1. Problem diagnosis

Procedure:

- Test scores of three previous semesters were called up and analyzed
- Mean and standard deviation were calculated
- Observations were carried out to record students' participation in some ordinary instructional activities

Problems identified:

- Students' unequal and dominance-oriented participation
- Students' slow progress
- Inhibition, nothing to say …

2 . Plan of action (the CL training and implementing program)

Stage	Activities	Time
1	**Determine students' needs in continuous classroom interaction**	Feb. 2005
2	**Organize groups**	Feb.2005
3	**Implicitly and explicitly raise students' awareness on CL theory**	March, 2005
4	**Thoroughly train necessary collaborative skills through simple and easy CL activities basing on interesting topics**	April,2005
5	**continue implementing CL structured activities basing on the coursebooks and start the observation and journals**	May,2005
6	**Test on students' speaking proficiency**	June,2005
7	**Data analysis and findings**	July and

3. Data collection

- One set of observation forms is used to record frequency and distribution of students' participation before and after the action
- One set of observation is used to record nature of students' participation before and after the action
- Pre- and post- tests are used to get students' performance in speaking before and after the action
- Journals with optional prompts focusing on the issues of the study are written by the students regularly every week to get their reflection on CL activities (their attitude towards CL).

4. Data analysis

- **Quantitatively:**
- **frequency and features of students' participation in each activities were counted, the numbers were presented on tables and demonstrated by graphs to compare students' participation**
- **Means, modes, median, range and standard deviation were calculated and analyzed to compare students' achievement**
- **Qualitatively:**
- Journals were transcribed to find out students' attitude towards CL, the speaking skills they developed and even their participation

5. findings

- The increased amount of students' participation after the action
- The improved nature of students' participation after the action
- The students' improvement in performance
- Oral communication skill development after the action
- Students' positive attitude towards CL activities

5.1. the amount of students' participation

- Frequency of the good students' participation in post-activities was lower than in pre- activities
- Frequency of the weak students' participation in post-activities was higher than in pre-activities
- The amount of most good students' participation decreased in almost all post-activities, however, no one made a significant decrease.
- The percentage of students' participation in post-activities was more equal
- The difference among the good and weak students' participation in post-activities was smaller than in pre-activities

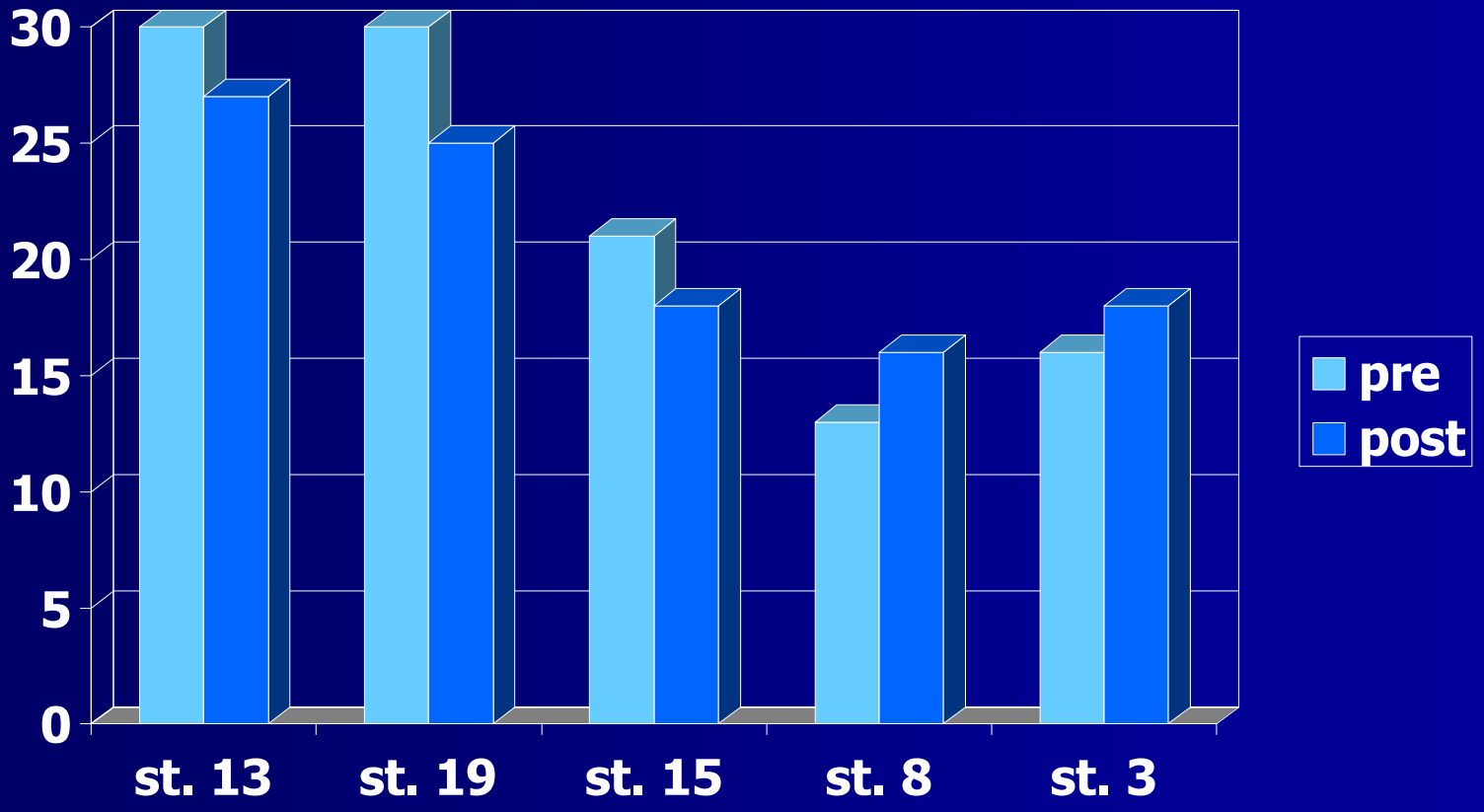
5.1 The amount of participation

FREQUENCY OF STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN PRE- AND POST- ACTIVITIES – GROUP 1

Fre. / St.	Activity 1		Activity 2		Activity 3		Activity 4	
	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
13	30 (27,27%)	27 (25,96%)	60 (36,58%)	24 (20,33%)	49 (37,98%)	37 (23,12%)	39 (36,44%)	40 (24,53%
19	30 (27,27%)	25 (24,03%)	42 (25,6%)	26 (22.03%)	36 (27,90%)	39 (24,37%)	41 (38,31%)	34 (28,85%
15	21 (19,09%)	18 (17,3%)	28 (17,07%)	25 (21,18%)	22 (17,05%)	33 (20,62%)	V	32 (19,63%
8	13 (11,8%)	16 (15,38%)	12 (7,31%)	23 (19,49%)	14 (10,85%)	22 (13,75%)	16 (14,95%)	28 (17,17%
3	16 (14,54%)	18 (17,3%)	22 (13,41%)	20 (16,94%)	8 (6,2%)	29 (18,12%)	11 (10,28%)	29 (17,79%

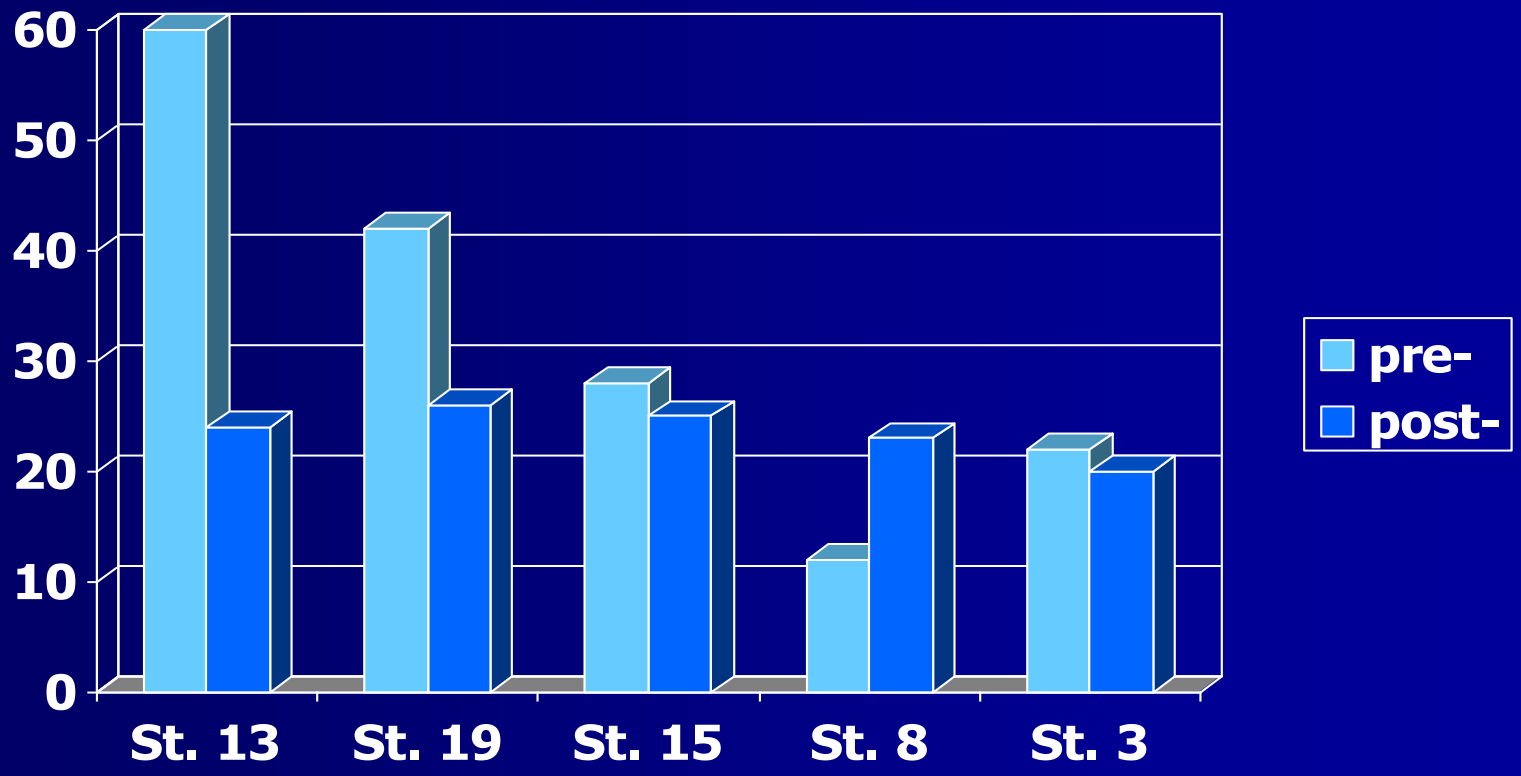
5.2 The amount of participation

students' participation comparison – group 1 – activity 1



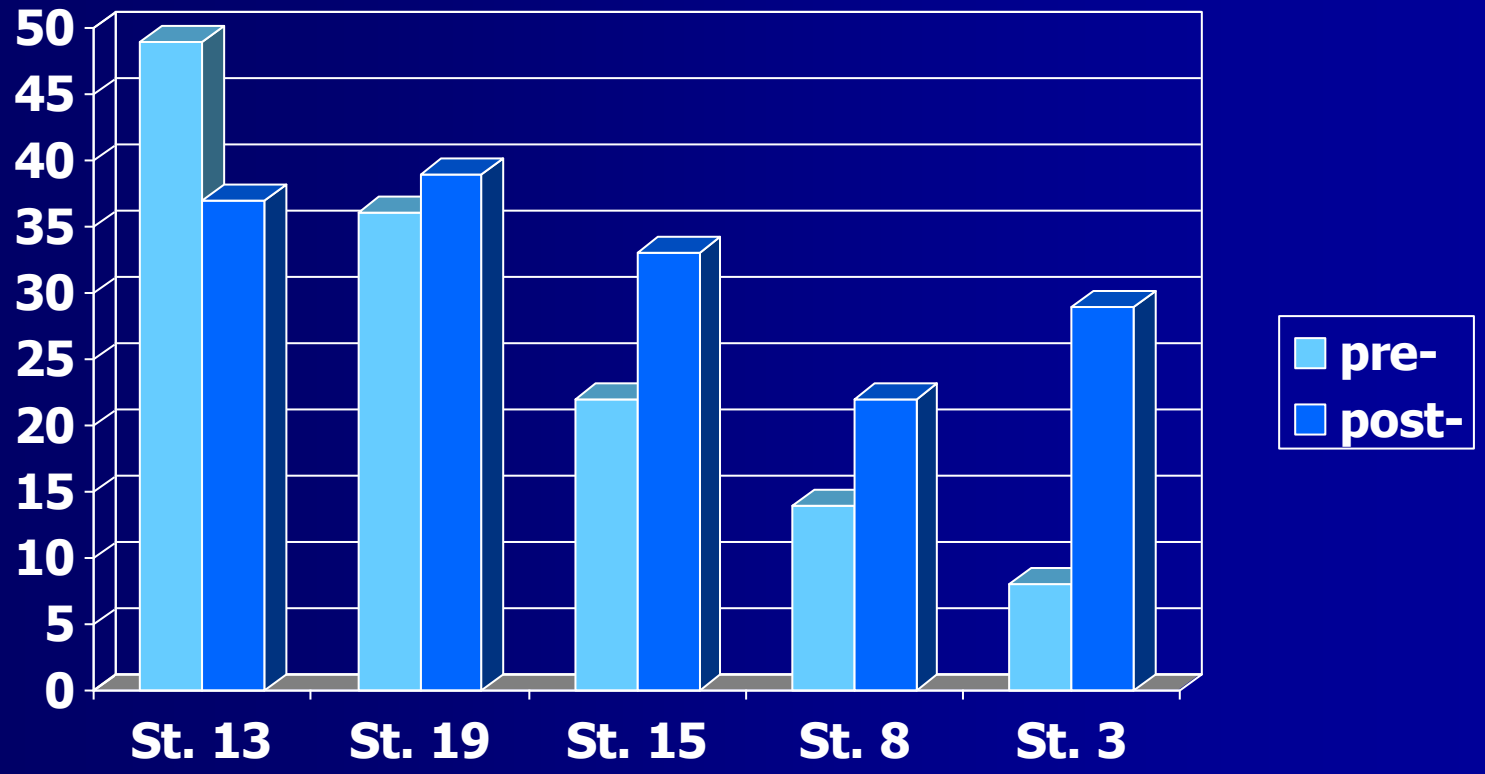
5.2 The amount of participation

students' participation comparison – group 1 - activity 2



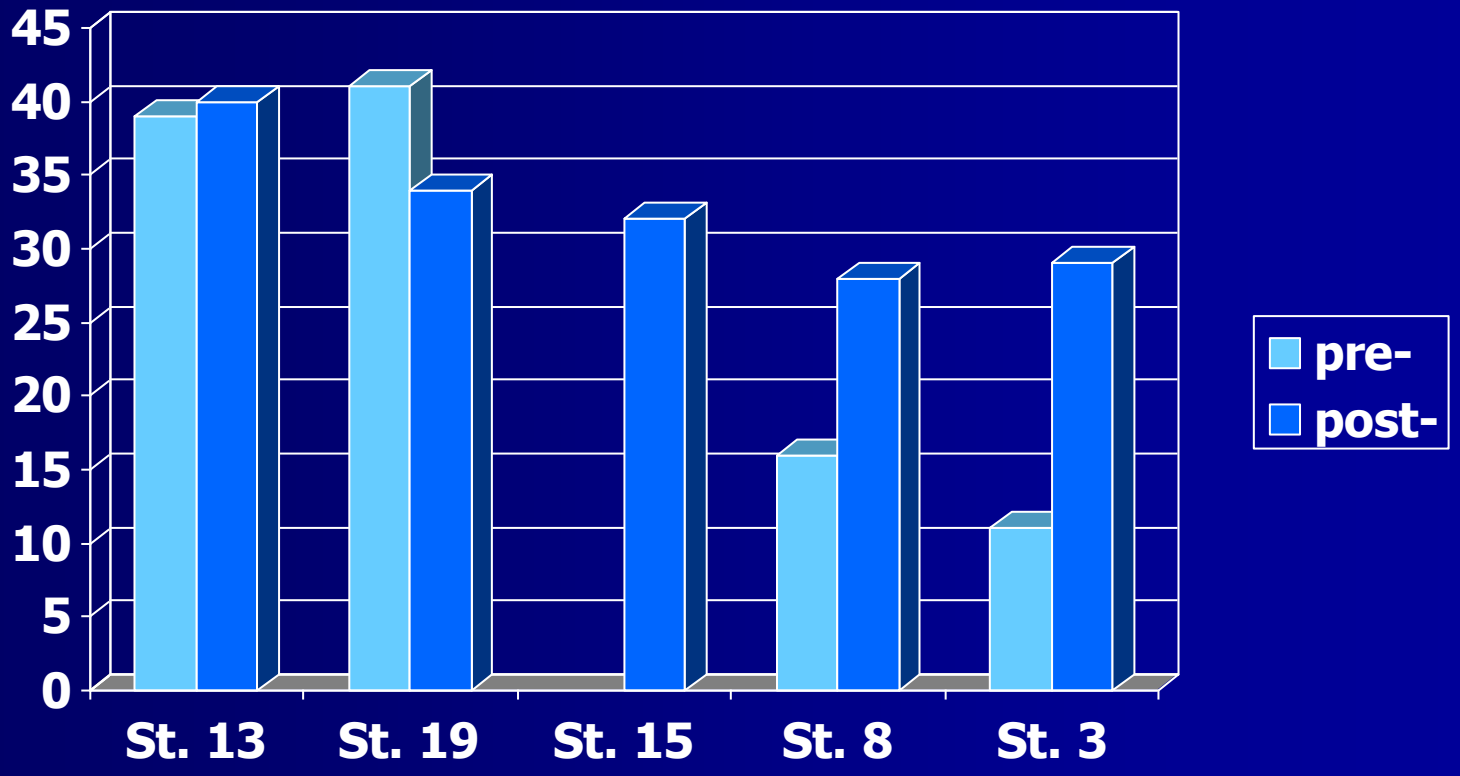
5.2 The amount of participation

students' participation comparison – Group 1 – Activity 3



5.2 The amount of participation

Students' participation comparison – Group 1 – Activity 4



5.3 The nature of participation

- Most students actively participate in the activities
- The participation was less dominance-oriented (initiating, formulating ideas, structuring move, questioning … were divided among the students)
- The categories of students' participation were more various
- The students' responses were more developed (agreement with development and disagreement with reasons)

5.4. students' improvement in performance

- Students in the post-test outperformed themselves with higher mean, mode and median
- Single marks in the post-test were more tightly grouped around the mean (students' post tests results varies less).

5.4. students' improvement in performance

	Central tendency			dispersion			
test	mean	mode	median	low	high	range	SD
1	5,869	5	5,5	4	9	6	1,153
2	5,565	6	5,5	4	8	5	0,970
3	6,130	5	6	5	8	4	1,033
4	7,086	7	7	6	9	4	0,829

5.5. oral communication skill development

Students made encouraging progress in some basic oral communication skills:

- Pronouncing
- Listening
- Questioning and responding
- Explaining and clarifying

5.6. students' attitude towards CL activities

Students found CL activities both beneficial and difficult

- Benefits: better cooperation, better motivation (more comfortable, more interested, more responsible, more assistant,) and achievement (academic and social skills)
- Difficult: limited collaborative skills, disagreement in groups, limited time, responsibility placing burden

5.7. Conclusions

Benefits of CL application

- More equal participation
- Less dominance – oriented participation with diverse interactions
- Better performance of oral communication
- Better motivation in learning speaking

difficulties of CL application

- A lot of time needed for training collaborative skills
- Good classroom management rules required
- Assessment of various types needed
- Abundant resources necessary for CL activities
- Appropriate techniques to …….. students

6. Pedagogical implications

- CL training and implementing really proves its effects
- Positive results strongly suggests the application of CL to teaching speaking
- Self-designed activities are very important and effective in implementing CL
- The study proves the practicality of CL in teaching English in Vietnamese college context
- Some techniques of CL are especially helpful for Vietnamese students as they can help them to improve higher thinking level skills, critical thinking skills, working independently and collaboratively
- Assessment of speaking should be of various types (both individual and group assessment)
- In implementing CL, it is important to consider: conducting CL classroom, establishing a CL activity, organizing groups effectively, managing group activities successfully,

7.Limitations of the study

- Time for the study (training and action) was Limited
- The Number of participants was limited
- The observers' knowledge of CL was insufficient
- The study was somehow effected by the administrative reasons and requirements
- The nature of students' participation was not fully exploited
- The study would be better if carried under true experimental condition

8. Suggestions for further studies

- this study can be developed into a full study on :
- How to design CL activities?
- How to do grouping effectively?
- How to manage CL activities
- How to clarify students' problems in CL activities?
- What the suitable interaction between teacher and students in CL activities
- Continuous study on the same population can be carried out in their third year
- CL Application to teaching other skills can be carried out with the same or different population
- We also wish to have a chance to carried the research under a experimental condition

Conclusion

Doing this action research, We have been able

- to find some solutions for our classroom problems
- gain some experience in applying CL
- Gain some experience in doing research

However,

- The study certainly owns some shortcomings, we would be willing to hear and grateful to get constructive comments so that it would be improved

Thank you very much!