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# Group Work in the English Classroom: Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine how students manage their roles when they work in groups on a task designed for cooperative (roles assigned) or collaborative (no roles assigned) learning. Apart from these two manners of learning, group work, per se, is also studied in order to observe what it has to offer. A theoretical framework is also needed to contextualise and address these matters. In the theoretical section, the difference between cooperative and collaborative group work and what group work consists of is discussed. For the empirical part of the dissertation, qualitative data has been extracted from field notes and from two recordings of different 1<sup>st</sup> grade of ESO groups to analyse their roles and management of a task which is used as language support in the teaching unit of the practicum. An action research perspective is adopted to improve teaching methods by observing how the task is carried out by these two different groups.

**Key words:** Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, group work, action research, role management.

L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és observar com els estudiants gestionen els seus rols quan treballen en grups de manera cooperativa (rols assignats) o col·laborativa (sense rols assignats). A més d'aquestes dues maneres d'aprendre, també s'estudia el treball en grup per observar què pot aportar. S'ha necessitat un marc teòric per contextualitzar i afrontar aquests aspectes. En aquesta secció teòrica, s'ha indagat la diferència entre el treball cooperatiu i col·laboratiu i l'essència del treball en grup. Per la part empírica del estudi, s'ha utilitzat informació qualitativa extreta de les observacions a classe i de dos vídeos de diferents grups d'alumnes per analitzar els seus rols i la seva gestió d'una tasca dissenyada com a suport lingüístic a la seqüència didàctica del pràcticum. Per tant, s'ha adoptat una perspectiva d'investigació-acció per millorar la manera d'ensenyar després d'analitzar com es duu a terme la tasca per aquests dos grups de treball.

**Paraules clau:** Aprenentatge cooperatiu, aprenentatge col·laboratiu, treball en grup, acció-investigació, gestió de rols.



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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse the observable differences between cooperative and collaborative learning in group work. The main interest of this study is to identify the roles students adopt when working in these two different manners and the guidance they need depending on the type of task. Group work is defined in this dissertation as a task that is carried out by several members who need to discuss, share ideas and make decisions together, and the role is the purpose a student has when working in groups on tasks. Group work is believed to be beneficial for students and focusing on these aspects can help us improve our teaching practice.

Teachers must be aware of the diverse possibilities that exist in order to help students engage in the activities. Therefore, an action research approach will be conducted, as an intervention in the class will be planned to collect data during the Master's practicum and analyse it after having considered the study of collaborative and cooperative learning. The task that is proposed can be approached both collaboratively and cooperatively since the instructions given by the teacher and the roles students have will determine the type of learning. Finally, the results from both tasks (completed tasks, videos, transcriptions and field notes) will be compared and discussed to obtain an idea of what these two types of learning and group work, per se, have to offer. The students' and the teachers' perception after carrying out the group work tasks will also be considered.

Moreover, this study is directly related to the educational curriculum in Catalonia, which is based on competences. Collaborative and cooperative group work is required in order to boost students' confidence and strengthen their relationships, which are essential to develop their learning. This methodology contributes, especially, to their communicative and interactional competences, which are at the centre of foreign language teaching and learning. Students are expected

to express themselves, accept different ideas, take turns, share knowledge, etc., apart from the linguistic competence that may also be enhanced by the different agents participating in the tasks. Languages need to be spoken and group work promotes it and provides students with several opportunities to practise and improve their abilities. The view that learning is facilitated by students' interaction is related to the sociocultural approach to cognitive development.

The broader sociocultural and educational contexts also have to be taken into account when analysing data extracted from a lesson due to the fact that the learning environment has a direct impact on students and teachers. In this section, the school where the research takes place will be contextualised thanks to some school documents, which need to be kept anonymous as requested by the school. I had the opportunity to do the practicum of the Master's in a high school which is located in a town near Barcelona. It is a high-complexity school because of the unfavourable socioeconomic situations families are in. One clear indicator of this particular context is the average income, which is €11,800 a year, considerably inferior to the Catalan average. The neighbourhood consists of subsidized housing which was built in the 70s and which was inhabited primarily by working-class people from Andalusia. Nowadays, the percentage of newcomers has slightly increased, people of Moroccan origin being the most common group of recent migrants. Moreover, the Gypsy population stands at about 15%.

The teachers at this high school are constantly trying to overcome those problems that may arise due to the aforementioned socioeconomic conditions. There are, however, only 6 civil servants out of, approximately, 50 teachers. Therefore, the teachers are more likely to change and that is not beneficial for the school projects. Regarding methodology, the teachers at this high school were instructed in Project-based learning in 2016 in order to gradually implement this new manner of teaching in their lessons. English teachers were the first ones to adopt this methodology and now more and more subjects are going in that

educational direction. This was possible thanks to the help of UAB, which established a project of 4 years at this high school with students that were born in 2004 to improve their competences in English and to work with teachers to generate different methodologies. Furthermore, this project brings a teacher's assistant who can offer students personalized attention.

In short, the present study focuses on twelve and thirteen-year-old students from 1<sup>st</sup> grade of ESO classes, which are mixed-level. Most of these students have a strong Spanish language background, as their families have ties to other parts of Spain, and they are, in general, reluctant to speak in other languages. Consequently, their command of English is scarce. Finally, as it has been mentioned above, this study aims to provide answers to improve teaching based on the analysis of empirical data.

These are the main research questions that guide the present dissertation:

- 1) How do students manage their roles when working on a similar group work task designed for cooperative or collaborative learning?
- 2) How does the group work contribute to students' learning processes?

## 2. Theoretical framework

The difference between cooperative learning and collaborative learning needs to be clarified before introducing the action research methodology in the following section of this dissertation, which is required to address the questions and objectives mentioned above. Thus, in this section, a literature review is carried out to shed light on cooperative and collaborative learning (Oxford, 1997) and to highlight what group work consists of and why it is important in education (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). The two main pieces of literature reviewed also provide teachers with ideas on how to improve their teaching methods. In the following section, summaries of these two major theoretical contributions drawn on in this dissertation will be presented.

Oxford (1997) claims that cooperative and collaborative learning are strands of communicative language teaching that have different connotations and, consequently, it is essential for teachers to be aware of them when implementing their lessons. In Oxford's study, cooperative learning is defined as a "set of classroom techniques that foster learner interdependence as a route to cognitive and social development" (Oxford, 1997, p. 443). It is important to highlight that students are dependent on their classmates. That is to say, students rely on each other as everyone has to contribute to achieve a common goal. Therefore, they are not only focusing on their own learning but also promoting others' since there are defined rules and clear criteria that focus on both individual and group performance. Moreover, as Oxford (1997) explains thoroughly, this type of learning implies having more structured and guided activities for group work that motivate students and increase task achievement. Hence the need for assigned roles, which are crucial to promote interdependence and make the activity work smoothly. Another factor to take into account when working cooperatively is the heterogeneous organisation of groups, which is beneficial to enhance social and communicative skills (Oxford, 1997).

On the other hand, Oxford (1997, p. 443) states that collaborative learning “views learning as construction of knowledge within a social context and which therefore encourages acculturation of individuals into a learning community”. Unlike cooperative learning, the teacher provides assistance and guidance (scaffolding is provided when it is necessary) because there are no roles assigned and, therefore, group work is not defined in such detail. The focus resides in the social environment as learning takes place when students communicate (situated cognition). This approach is “oriented to negotiating and fulfilling the potential (traversing the Zone of Proximal Development) of each L2 learner” (Oxford, 1997, p. 449). The ZPD is essential to understand how collaborative learning works as the social context is where students can find their potential learning helped by the agents participating in that particular environment.

According to the sociocultural approach to learning, which relies on research that has been carried out throughout many years although originating in the work of Vygotsky, it is believed that the learning process takes place when we talk to each other as this interaction helps us think, share and discuss a topic and, therefore, learn about it. Cohen and Lotan (2014, p. 6) put forward that view and define group work as “a superior technique for conceptual learning, for creative problem solving, and for developing academic language proficiency. Socially, it will improve intergroup relations by increasing trust and friendliness”. In other words, when group work tasks are implemented, the focus is not only on intellectual (this offer students many opportunities “to learn content and develop language” [Cohen & Lotan, 2014, p. 6]) but also on social learning goals. Furthermore, Cohen and Lotan (2014) argue that classroom management is also improved due to the fact that low-achievers tend to be more on-task when they are in groups and learn more thanks to their peers’ feedback, and the teacher can invest time in advising one group at a time. Moreover, it is fundamental that these groups are heterogenous in order to tackle the different academic levels in the same class, a situation that

is particularly common in low socioeconomic contexts, such as the high school this study is focused on. “Low-achieving students clearly benefit from heterogeneous groups and classrooms where there are more academic resources available to them” (Cohen & Lotan, 2014, p. 23).

Cohen and Lotan (2014, pp. 1-2) also emphasize the necessity of delegating authority to the small groups created in class (which need to be small to allow everyone to participate easily) in order to let them take different responsibilities and conduct the task themselves with more or less guidance from the teacher. The type of task (cooperative or collaborative), as mentioned above, will determine how students manage their roles. Nevertheless, in both cases, as it is group work, all of them are supposed to intervene and be part of the effort to conduct the task. “Students take over some of the teaching function by suggesting what other people should do, by listening to what other people are saying, and by deciding how to get the job done within the time and resource limitations set by the instructor” (Cohen & Lotan, 2014, p. 2). This quotation refers to the functioning of a group work task in which organization is fundamental to guarantee success and everyone needs to contribute as equally as possible. Finally, Cohen and Lotan (2014, pp. 120-121) mention that introducing specific managing roles, apart from the task each of them has to do, also benefits the group. These are the roles they suggest: facilitator, checker, setup, materials manager, safety officer and reporter.

Summing up this section, the reviewed literature provides a theoretical background which is necessary to proceed with the analysis of the empirical data collected and the subsequent conclusions. Both papers agree on the necessity of having heterogeneous groups in the classroom, but while research by Oxford clarifies the characteristics and differences between collaborative and cooperative learning, research by Cohen and Lotan focuses on the essence of group work.

### 3. Methodology

The action research has been conducted in two 1<sup>st</sup> grade of ESO classes. Two groups of 4 or 5 students in each class were recorded to avoid making students feel singled out. The videos with the best sound quality were selected, therefore, data has only been analysed in depth from two videos (each one representing cooperative or collaborative work). These activities last approximately 50 minutes and the first part of the lesson consists of the teacher's explanation and instructions, which need to be brief in order to keep students attentive, and most of the time left is for students to work together. At the end of the activities, they shared with their classmates and the teacher the work they had done. Thus, the activity was designed by the teacher, but it was student-centred so as to motivate them and engage them in the task. The overall task is the same for all groups but, in some classes, they were asked to work cooperatively (i.e. roles were assigned) and in other classes they worked collaboratively (i.e. no roles were assigned). The idea was to work on texts that would function as language support for further activities in the teaching unit implemented as part of the Master's practicum.

This group work task included different questions and activities (Appendix I) that students had to answer collectively after reading a short text (Appendix II and III). The task was designed to promote students' different language skills and reasoning by searching for synonyms, by answering reading comprehension questions and explaining their choices, by translating those words they did not understand and by drawing. Therefore, they had to collaborate (no roles assigned) or cooperate (roles assigned: translator, reader, writer, drawer and spokesperson). In both cases the teacher commented on the importance of helping each other and participate equally.

Nussbaum's work (2017) has been taken into account to proceed with this study. This author is concerned with the issue of how to



conduct research in schools to promote teaching innovation. Action research in classrooms, which is the methodology used in this dissertation, is carried out by the teacher, not solely by a researcher, and is defined as a “process of reflection on teaching and learning in order to intervene in them and hence bring improvement” (2017, p. 48). However, Nussbaum (2017) stresses the importance of having both the researchers and the teachers involved in the research due to the fact that the results benefit from this collaboration. In other words, collaborative research is recommended. In the case of this dissertation, the researcher is the student-teacher, who worked collaboratively with other student-teachers and the English teacher-mentor in the process.

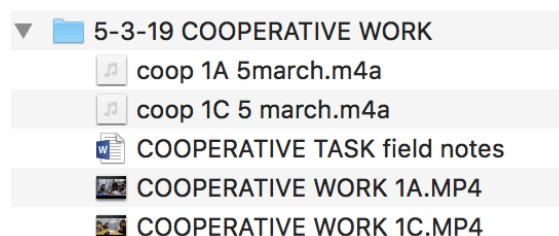
Nussbaum (2017, pp. 49-50) illustrates action research by using a diagram of its different phases, which have been followed to conduct this project. Firstly, the teacher needs to observe and identify any possible problem that may arise in order to search for solutions in articles and in discussions, for instance. Secondly, planning and applying a classroom intervention is necessary as it allows to collect data that will be later analysed. Thirdly, the teacher has to evaluate the results and disseminate them. New challenges can be suggested afterwards.

Finally, in this dissertation the data is gathered from the conversations students are having. Consequently, the qualitative and interpretative analysis of transcriptions provides useful information regarding linguistic and multimodal aspects of students’ repertoire such as body language or movements that students use to interact with each other. “These data enable us to reconstruct situated cognitive processes” (Nussbaum, 2017, p. 63). This allows us to observe how students manage their roles when working on a similar task but designed for cooperative or collaborative learning. Field notes are used as well to know what students think and to assess the process and the result.

### 3.1. Data collection

This qualitative data used in this dissertation includes videos which were recorded by using a camera, audio recordings collected by using a mobile phone to have a clearer understanding of students' talk and transcriptions of these recordings. Field notes have also contributed to having a wider view of the teaching and learning processes and the teachers' and students' perceptions of it. These field notes consist of the teacher's observations while students were working in groups and notes about questions asked of the students once the activity was finished to know their opinion about the activity itself and how they had worked together. These are the questions they answered: How have you worked together? Has everyone participated? Did you divide the work into different parts?

The data (videos, audio recordings and field notes) was stored in different folders (the date is written) on the author's computer depending on the type of group work: cooperative or collaborative.



#### *1. Example of the data collected regarding cooperative group work*

The recordings (both audio and video) of some groups of students in class help answer the driving questions set out at the beginning of this dissertation.

In class, students were explained the task step by step to ensure that they all understood the questions. The roles in the cooperative task were assigned by the teacher after negotiating with the students. The groups that had a spare table nearby to place the camera and that were in one of the corners (to avoid noise) were recorded. There were some problems during the data collection that required online decisions. The

camera, for instance, was charged between lessons so as to continue recording. When I realised the class was too noisy to hear what the students were saying properly, I recorded the audio with my mobile phone and I edited and improved the audio from the videos already recorded by using a program. As Moore and Llompart (2017) claim, mobile phones can be excellent tools to collect data and audio can be enhanced by programs that reduce environmental noise. Moreover, to ensure that everyone was participating, teachers told students repeatedly that it was a group task because some of them were off-task.

Finally, “the researcher and/or research team will always obtain informed consent from all parties involved in the research prior to implementing the research project” (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017, p. 353). The permission from school and participants to record was obtained by a document signed by the headmaster and these recordings are only used for the present study. Students were already asked for a permission at the beginning of the academic year. Their identities are being protected by using pseudonyms and blurring their faces if screenshots are used to analyse multimodal features.

## 4. Results and discussion

Transcriptions from the videos recorded in class (Appendix VIII) are used in this section to discuss how group work is conducted. Field notes and literature will also be taken into consideration as they provide a useful context.

#### 4.1. Cooperative group work

The first excerpt to be analysed is the transcription of a group who was working cooperatively. In this type of group work, students were assigned 5 roles: writer, drawer, translator, reader and spokesperson. In this case, there were 4 students and one of them had two roles. The teachers suggested that the reader and the spokesperson could be the same person. In this case, Rocío was the reader, Juan was the drawer, Mario was the writer and Ana was the translator and the spokesperson. For a different, although complementary analysis of this same data, refer to Roviralta (2019).

##### Excerpt 1

- 1 Teacher: you are the reader (.) but you can help her (0.3) okay ↑  
2 Rocío: **no voy a entender nada**  
3 *I'm not going to understand anything*  
4 T: don't worry ((moving his hands up and down to calm her down))  
5 R: **se van a poner nerviosos [si no entiendo nada**  
6 *they are going to get nervous if I don't understand anything*  
7 T: slowly] (.) step by step (1) come on  
8 R: **es verdad**  
9 *that's true*  
10 Juan: xxx  
11 Mario: **empieza**  
12 *start*  
13 R: **a ver** (0.4) hello (.) UH (.) I (.) am (.) from (.) Cerdanyola  
14 *let's see*  
15 J: **el uh ese te lo guardas**  
16 *you keep that uh for yourself*  
17 R: **>pero que no sé leer ya os lo he dicho< (.)**  
18 *I don't know how to read I already told you*  
19 M: **hola (.) yo me llamo Marc (.) y vivo [en Cerdanyola**  
20 *hello my name is Marc and I live in Cerdanyola*

21 Ana: **en** Cerdanyola]  
 22 R: **en** Cerdanyola]  
 23 A: I am (.)  
 24 R: **tengo 11 años no**  
 25 *I am 11 years right*  
 26 A: **ESO↑ (.) ves como lo entiendes ↑ ((nodding her head))**  
 27 *That's it you understand it*  
 28 R: **ahora lo entiendo más**  
 29 *now I understand it more*

This excerpt demonstrates how the role (reader) that has been assigned to Rocío is beneficial for her, since it allows her to participate in the task as well. It should be mentioned that she usually works on her own because she is a special needs student and she is given adapted material. It can be observed that her self-esteem is low, and she does not feel confident to read in English, but her classmates are encouraging and helping her and in line 28, it can be said that she may feel better just some seconds later. Consequently, trust and friendliness are being increased and a low-achiever is being helped in this heterogenous group (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). In this short excerpt, it can be seen that there is an interdependence in this heterogenous group, which is emphasized by Oxford (1997) when the concept of cooperative learning is defined. Further, the members of this group are not only focusing on their individual learning, but also on others' learning, as they are going towards a common goal while depending on each other. This aspect is pointed out by the teacher at the beginning in order to let them know that having roles does not stop them from helping each other.

In the following excerpt, Rocío, who was not very confident at the beginning of the task, continues reading and her classmates help her by translating.

### Excerpt 2

- 1 Rocío: it's fascinating (.) also believe (1) that PE is UH (.) important  
2 because (1)  
3 Ana: **es fascinante (.) y también creo que educación física es**  
4 **importante porque te mantiene (3) te mantiene (.) sano (.)**↓  
5 *it's fascinating and I also believe that PE is important because it*  
6 *keeps you keeps you healthy*  
7 Mario: **en fi:::t↑ (.)** ((“showing” his biceps)) **en (.) forma (.)**  
8 *fit* *in shape*  
9 A: **te mantiene sano y activo**↓  
10 *It keeps you healthy and active*  
11 M: **en forma**  
11 *in shape*

This excerpt suggests that when students work in groups they share their own background and experience and, therefore, they learn from each other's interventions (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). Ana was the translator and she had committed herself to that role. She looked the words up in the dictionary and translated the text after Rocío finished reading, which was a useful language support for everyone. When Ana was trying to translate the sentence “it keeps you healthy and active”, the expression “keep fit”, which is connected with the idea of staying healthy, occurred to Mario, who shared that with his classmates. This dynamic can contribute to maintaining the students' interest and attention.

In this last excerpt, the group is trying to answer the questions on the answer sheet collectively.

### Excerpt 3

1 Ana: **di la pregunta lento y nosotros te la respondemos**

2 *ask us the question slowly and we answer it*

3 Juan: [**la Rocío contesta** ((pointing at her))

4 *Rocío answers*

5 Mario: **cuál es el personaje del texto]**

6 *who is the character in the text*

7 J: [**tú contesta también** ((pointing at her))

8 *you have to answer too*

9 M: **el personaje del texto]**

10 *the character in the text*

11 Rocío: **eeeh [el Marc ese no**

12 *it's Marc isn't it*

13 J: **cómo se llama↑] (.) Marc (.) el Marc (.) Marc**

14 *what's his name*

15 A: Marc (.) **muy bien**

16 *very good*

17 M: the character

18 R: [**ves (.) de algo me he enterao ↓**

19 *see I understood something*

20 A: the character]↑ is Marc (1.5)

21 J: **cómo se llama su madre↑ (.)**

22 *what's his mother's name*

23 R: **ni idea ↓**

24 *no idea*

25 A: [**muy mal**

26 *very bad*

27 J: **no lo sabe] porque no sale ↓**

28 *she doesn't know because it's not in the text*

29 A: **te lo has inventado** ((laughing))

30 *you made it up*

The students' interdependence can also be perceived in this excerpt since they are all participating to complete the task. Now the writer is

doing his part, but all the members of the group are helping him answer the questions and they are working smoothly, even joking (lines 21-29). Thus, assigned roles have contributed to task achievement (Oxford, 1997), as they provide students with some guidance and organization. In fact, teachers intervene 7 times throughout the process, but the students are very autonomous and they manage their roles without having significant problems. The students were asked individually after the task about it, and Juan, for example, said that it was difficult to manage the roles because Rocío was very negative, but, after all, they worked properly, and they completed the task. Rocío admitted again that in spite of being bad at English, everyone worked more or less the same. Whereas students had that opinion, we, as teachers, were delighted with the results because Rocío was part of a team and she started to overcome her fear towards English thanks to her classmates' help. They succeeded in the task (Appendix VI) and, as regards social skills, they encouraged each other, and everyone's intervention counted.

#### 4.2. Collaborative group work

In this section, an interaction representing collaborative group work is analysed. Only one detailed excerpt has been selected since it summarises how the entire process was:

##### Excerpt 1

- 1 Maria: **como escribo yo pues todo el mundo me mira a mí ehh**
- 2       *as I am the one who is writing everyone is looking at me*
- 3       **perdemos el tiempo** ((taking the piece of paper, looking at
- 4       her classmate and at the camera)) (1.0)
- 5       *we are wasting time*
- 6 José: maticulos (.) ↓



- 7 Adrián: maticulus (.) maticulus (1) ((José takes the paper to check the  
8 spelling)) **ahí tenemos una** (1.5)  
9 *we have got one there*
- 10 José: meticulous ↓ ((he gives it back to his classmate)) (.)
- 11 Adrián: [meticulous ↑ (.)
- 12 Maria: **a ver deja cómo se escribe**] ((pointing at the text and then  
13 moving her mouth to get the spelling right)) (.)  
14 *how do you spell it*
- 15 J: meticulous ↓ (4.5)
- 16 M: **se me ha olvidado** (1)  
17 *I forgot it*
- 18 Sara: maticulus (1)
- 19 J: meticulo:us ↓ (.)
- 20 M: METICOLOUS (.)
- 21 J: meticulous ↓ (.)
- 22 M: xxx ((laughing while looking at José)) (.)
- 23 Sara: maticulus (1)
- 24 M: **tú me quieres** [**ayudar de una vez** ↑ (.)  
25 *can you help me once and for all*
- 26 A: mat]
- 27 J: **si: pero** (.) **estoy buscando una palabra que** (1)  
28 *yes but I'm looking for a word that*
- 29 A: mathematical (1)
- 30 M: **va pues ayudadme eh** (.) Where will he she work when he she  
31 grows (.) up ↑ (1) ((she is looking at her classmates))

- 32     *help me please*
- 33 J: **en su casa** ((while turning the pages of the dictionary)) (4.2)
- 34     *at home*
- 35 M: **hola** ↑ ((after not getting a reply from her classmates and looking
- 36     at Adrián who is playing with the text)) (1)
- 37     *hello*
- 38 A: **qué** (.)
- 39     *what*
- 40 M: **claro es que tú no haces nada** (.)
- 41     *you are not doing anything at all*
- 42 A: ehh (.) **he ido a buscar el diccionario >NO NO me lo vas a**
- 43     **quitar ahora a mí**<
- 44     *I picked the dictionary up and no no you are not going to take it*
- 45     *from me*
- 46 M: **pero tú me escuchas lo que digo yo**↑ (.) **que me ayudes a**
- 47     **construir la frase**↑ (.)
- 48     *are you listening to me*           *help me write the sentence*
- 49 M: >**todas las frases las hemos construido yo y el José**<↓(.)
- 50     *José and I have written all the sentences*
- 51 A: **el qué** ↑ (.)
- 52     *what*
- 53 M: **todas las frases** (1)
- 54     *All the sentences*
- 55 A: **si em** (.) **esa** ((pointing at the piece of paper)) (1.7) **la esto** (.)
- 56     **quién la ha hecho**↓



82 M: **José deja de mirar eso un momento y ayúdanos a construir**

83 **la frase**

84 *Stop looking at that and help us write the sentence*

In this collaborative group work, it can be observed that Maria is taking most of the roles and she acts as a leader, since she is the one ensuring that the task is going to be completed by constantly asking for help and by writing everything down. Taking over these teaching functions is what happens in group work, as Cohen and Lotan (2014) claim, and that is needed to succeed in the task. She is the member of the group that is checking who is and who is not participating. Even though she verbalises that José is the member that has helped the most (line 49), when he is not effective, she also questions his collaboration (line 82). The same happens in line 35, when she sees that his other classmate is playing with the text. That demonstrates that seeking for “justice” (everyone’s equal intervention) is essential in group work. Therefore, she is organising, reading and writing. She is aware of her responsibilities in the group and this can be observed in her statements (lines 1-3 and 46-49). She also complains about the amount of work she is in charge of, but she does not delegate any tasks (writing or reading) to her classmates, she is asking for help on how to fill in the task they are given.

On the other hand, José has taken the dictionary and he is focusing on the translation task (he has assigned his own role to contribute to the group work), but he is simultaneously checking every step his team is taking and understanding what they need to do (he even jokes about it in line 33). In line 19, he also highlights how the word is written and how it should be pronounced, and he manages to make his team continue practising and paying attention to its spelling. It could be said that he has mainly worked as a translator and as a reader.

Adrián has taken the text that has to be used to carry out the different tasks, but he gets distracted because the only thing he is doing

is reading and he does not have the questions in front of him. In fact, he points out the word mathematical [mind], which is one of the skills they were supposed to identify in the text, but as he does not have the questions, this turn is finally ignored. He offered to adopt the role of the drawer towards the end of the task.

Finally, Sara has, in general, a passive attitude, especially in this excerpt. She does not have any material and she does not show any participation in the group work, apart from practising pronunciation and writing few words. Since there are no roles assigned by the teacher, she does not seem to be willing to assign one to herself and she is the only one that does not take the text to have a look at it on her own.

Overall, as explained by Oxford (1997), this type of group work is not defined in detail and students need to be even more organised (this is what Maria was trying to ensure). The teachers intervened 10 times approximately throughout the recording to guide and help them. In the excerpt, it can be observed how students discuss, argue, listen to each other, process information in those moments of silence and even speak some English. It shows how they use their social skills and the importance of working in groups in order to learn (by asking and answering, their brains are making an effort to understand and process information, and they are practising English). Moreover, the results (Appendix VII) demonstrate that the group managed to succeed, despite the difficulties. They could have perfected their task by sharing the questions more, which were owned by one member most of the time, and with better communication; situated cognition could have been developed much more potentially as Oxford argues (1997). According to the students and, surprisingly, they said that they had all participated equally and worked properly and they had liked the task.

## 5. Conclusions

In this study, cooperative and collaborative group work has been discussed in order to provide teachers with a broader view of two different types of learning and to consider different approaches to group work in foreign language education. This paper aims to support improvements in teaching methods by analysing group work in the English class. Moreover, both students' and teachers' perceptions have been compared to test whether they differ slightly or considerably in their views on group work processes.

First of all, the analysis of group work has offered some details on how the students' learning process may work in groups; the transcriptions help "reconstruct situated cognitive processes" (Nussbaum, 2017, p. 63). Those moments of silence, which could be interpreted as something negative, demonstrated that students were processing their own information and understanding, which is essential in the learning process. In addition to that, the data confirm how crucial group interaction is to develop students' potential because they shared their own knowledge and connected different ideas. They are in charge of their own learning, which is maximised by others. These transcriptions suggest that students feel more comfortable to share and to participate in groups and that it is beneficial to students' progress in the language because they help each other in their ZPD, as Oxford (1997) argues. Furthermore, in the brief excerpts studied, it can be observed how students learn to work in group by accepting ideas, taking turns, organising the tasks, and so on, which are fundamental skills in society that they need to acquire.

Regarding collaborative group work, the data indicates that the students from the excerpt struggled more to conduct the task than the cooperative group work due to the lack of guidance. The learning environment was not hostile, but they argued more because not everyone was participating equally. In fact, as it can be seen in the field

notes (appendix IV), in one group which was not recorded, this lack of guidance led to a heated argument because there was one student that was not working and when her classmates complained, she felt attacked and she refused to work. These difficulties may be faced by simply providing more material in order to let everyone see what the task consists of. They only had one text to look at and one answer sheet and since they were 4 or 5 members, some of them could only listen and that may end up being a problem and a distraction. The teachers insisted on the importance of helping each other constantly, but in some groups, this message was not taken into account. Dividing students into smaller groups of 3 people may also benefit the management of the task and solve the problem. There was a group of three students who had the same participation problem, but we planned different activities throughout the teaching unit and, in general, when they were three, they worked better. Nevertheless, this collaborative group work was useful for them to work on their social skills, to organise the tasks and to be autonomous.

On the other hand, the group from the video that worked cooperatively had an enriching learning environment and the task was smoothly carried out. The special needs student's involvement in the activity has to be emphasized because she is usually doing activities on her own and the task brings an excellent opportunity for her to learn in this heterogeneous group (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). According to the Catalan curriculum, students need to be in an inclusive school and this is a clear example of how teachers enable special needs students to be part of their class. Moreover, all the groups (both collaborative and cooperative) were heterogeneous, and this fact enhances social and communicative skills, such as tolerance and learner-to-learner tutoring (Oxford, 1997, p. 446). In this case, there were also problems related to equal participation. It is observable that roles offered students guidance and organisation, which, in general, promoted commitment and motivation, but they simultaneously decreased some students' interest in helping others. In other groups, there were students who had their

role assigned and they simply did their part due to this organisation. In spite of having a role, the teachers insisted on the importance of helping each other. Cohen and Lotan (2014) remark that some managing roles such as the “checker”, the “facilitator” and “the reporter” may facilitate cohesion within the group and more involvement with the task. The data also suggest that the task itself could be improved to ensure more interdependence between the group members.

After having analysed the data, I am determined, as a teacher, to implement group work tasks in class because they ensure inclusivity in the classroom and offer many opportunities to work on students’ competences, not only linguistic but also social, since tolerance is crucial. Students need to know how to tackle difficulties and how to cooperate or collaborate with other people. It is a fundamental competence that they need to acquire not only for the future, but also for the present because they are part of society in the here and now. When I was a high school student I was not used to working in groups and when we did, the type of tasks did not ensure everyone’s participation and that was the reason why I did not like it. Therefore, the idea of group work I had then differs significantly from the one I have today. The videos and their transcriptions analysed in this dissertation are evidence of what group work has to offer in education and also provide a view of what needs improvement. The task is definitely going to determine how students are going to address the task and tackle the difficulties that may arise. Accordingly, the type of task has to be carefully planned to engage all the students in it. Interdependence may be ensured by assigning extra roles (Cohen & Lotan, 2014), which focus on organisation and problem-solving, both in a cooperative and collaborative group work. This is what lacked in the task proposed for the study; this would have provided students with extra roles in the cooperative group work to ensure that having a role does not stop students from helping each other, and it would have provided students who were working collaboratively with some guidance and, consequently and possibly, with a better learning



environment. Apart from roles, if the task itself had been designed differently (type of questions and activities), it could have promoted interdependence more. Giving a piece of the text to each student would have been an alternative, for instance. To summarise, both cooperative and collaborative group work tasks have their advantages and disadvantages and teachers need to decide what their students need to work on and how. However, students should accustom themselves to working in these two different manners.

Finally, despite the fact that further research is needed to continue analysing and discovering how to improve group work in the classroom and cooperative and collaborative tasks, now I know that I need to concentrate on the planning of the task carefully because I thought that roles could control organisation and interdependence, but it is not enough. Therefore, these are some questions that have arisen after having carried out this paper:

- 1) What elements do group work tasks need in order to ensure interdependence?
- 2) Do managing roles such as “the checker” and “the reporter”, along with other task roles (e.g. “the writer” and “the translator”) solve the organisation problem and ensure equal participation in group work?

As a teacher, I would like to work on these aspects and answer these questions throughout my teaching career, as this dissertation has allowed me to observe how enriching and beneficial assessing my lesson can be.

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## 7. Appendixes

### Appendix I: Task designed for the group work.

WHO is the character in the text?	
HOW old is he/she?	
WHERE was he or she born?	
WHAT does he/she like doing in his/her free time?	
WHAT are his/her <b>skills</b> ? Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	
Find synonyms for the word "like". Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	
WHAT job will you recommend to him/her? Why?	

WHERE will he/she work when he/she grows up?	
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Words	Translation

**Activity 3.4.** Draw the character in his/her future workplace.



## Appendix II: Text that was given to the group that worked cooperatively.

Hello! I am Marc and I am from Cerdanyola. I am 11 years old and I live with my father, my mother and my brother. When I am not at school I play hockey and I also watch Netflix TV series about hospitals. I am keen on the interesting stories about patients and doctors! At school I love PE and Science, I think they are very fun! I enjoy Science because I learn things about the human body, it is fascinating! I also believe that PE is important because it keeps you healthy and active. In the future I think I will have a job in which I can take care of people and help them. If I can I will try to make people happy.

## Appendix III: Text that was given to the group that worked collaboratively.

Hi! My name is Mario. I am 16 years old and I was born in Badia. I live with my mother and I have a little sister. This is my last year at high school and I am very nervous because I don't know what I will do next. I know what I am passionate about, though. In the mornings I go to school, but in my free time I love playing Fortnite and cooking! I always watch Masterchef and my favourite judge is Pepe. I like it because I can learn how to cook and I do it in my house. When I grow up I think I will appear in MasterChef and I will be an expert at cooking cakes! I think you need to be meticulous and mathematical when you are cooking as recipes are full of different measures.

## Appendix IV: Field notes.

Observations, students' task and comments during the answers to the teacher's questions at the e

**COOPERATIVE TASK (5<sup>th</sup> March).** The grid that the students had to complete was explained step by step by the teacher and they were asked to work in groups. The teachers negotiated with them which role each of them was going to have, depending on their skills, as they had to be comfortable working together. Some of them were motivated and even practise for later (spokesperson) and others were stuck in their roles and did not participate in the activities while they were being done. It could also be observed that some roles forced or helped the other members to take part. The teachers intervened and said that “having r can't help each other to complete the task” from the whole class and also the group that was recorded.

### 1C at 8h

- “Estamos espesos hoy, podríamos haberlo hecho mejor”. Students were not very activated, and it took a lot of time for them to organize what they had to do.
- “Unos hemos trabajado más que otros y hay que participar desde el principio no solo al final. Mientras yo escribo, ellos pueden intervenir”.
- “Nos ha costado con los roles porque a X no le iba bien ningún rol y lo hemos hecho los demás”.

### **1A at 9h**

- “Ha sido difícil coordinarnos, pero ha salido bien. Es verdad que había una persona que no quería hacer nada porque decía que no sabía e intentamos repartirnos las tareas según lo que pudiese hacer, pero era muy negativa”.

- “Bueno, yo es que no me entero, pero más o menos hemos trabajado todos”.

- “Me ha gustado mucho y creo que nos ha salido bastante bien”.

A lot of diversity in this class (many students with special needs). That situation made them involve themselves even more and help their classmates. Even though, they were told to participate and help each other, they sometimes stuck to their roles and that was all. The activity encouraged some of them to practice first and be engaged in the task (as there were spokespeople).

**COLLABORATIVE TASK (28<sup>th</sup> February). The grid that the students had to complete was explained step by step by the teacher and they were asked to work in groups. They decided how to proceed. It can be observed that they assigned some roles according to their abilities. Everyone was supposed to participate at the same time. The following notes are from the whole class and also the group that was recorded.**

### **1B at 8h**

- “Él ha puesto esto. Yo he hecho las preguntas largas y él las cortas” (group of 3, one of them is not working).

- In a different group, one student took the paper and he was the only one writing and making decisions, even though we told them to share the work and participate.

- Depending on the table, students were more engaged or less.

- “No has hecho nada”. In this group, one student was not working at all and her classmates complained. The teacher tried to talk with her, but she did not change her mind. She felt attacked by her classmates’ comments, so she got angry and separated the table.
- 2 groups out of 5 were actually collaborating.
- The group that was recorded was asked how they had worked together and they all agreed that, in general, they had worked properly, everyone participated the same and they liked the activity.

#### **1D at 10:15h (after the first break)**

- The group that was recorded in this class started the activity by reading a piece of the text each of them and during the activity, there was one girl that did not show much interest, so the teacher approached, talked with her and made her get closer to her classmates by moving her chair. At the end, she drew because she was good at that and she barely knew what the text was about as she was only told what she had to draw. Another boy did not work and when the group was asked about the result, they said that he had not worked because he did not want to.
- 3 groups out of 4 were collaborating, but not all the members in the same way.

Appendix V: Symbology adapted from the Jeffersonian transcription notation.

T	Teacher
S	Student
SS	Students
↑	Rising pitch or intonation
↓	Falling pitch or intonation
(.)	A brief pause
(# of seconds)	Timed pause
(( ))	Annotation of non-verbal activity
° °	Whisper, reduced volume, or quiet speech
:	Prolongation of a sound
[text]	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech
Underline	The speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech
xxx	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript
<text>	The enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker
>text<	The enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual



<b>CAPITAL LETTERS</b>	Indicates shouted or increased volume speech
<b>Bold letters</b>	Indicates that the language used in the speech is a different one from English
<i>Italic letters</i>	Indicates the translation into English of the speech in a different language

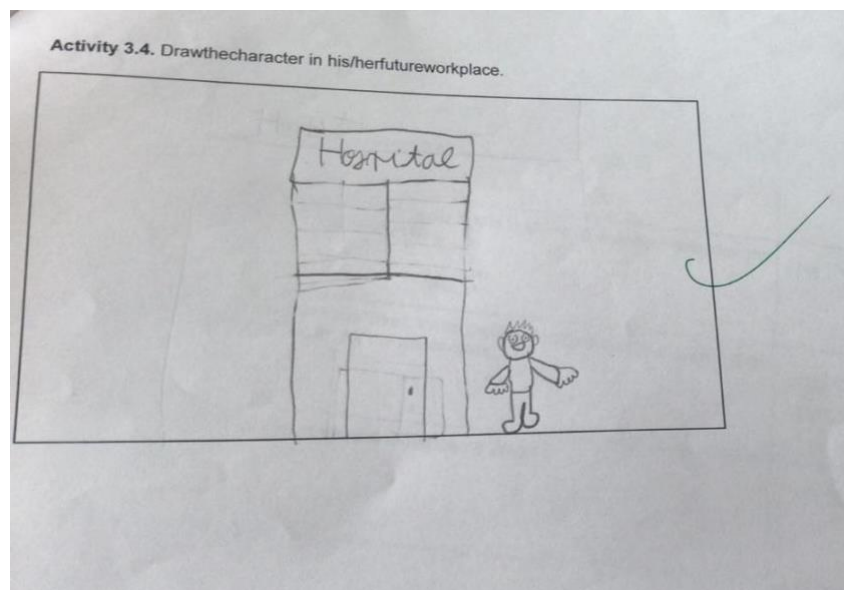
## Appendix VI: Results of the cooperative group work

WHO is the character in the text?	The character is Mario. ✓
HOW old is he/she?	He is eleven years old. ✓
WHERE was he or she born?	He was born in Castaneda. ✓
WHAT does he/she like doing in his/her free time?	He likes to play hockey and watching Netball. ✓
WHAT are his/her skills? Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	His skills are that he is active and healthy. take care → people help
Find synonyms for the word "like". Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	Keep on, love
WHAT job will you recommend to him/her? Why?	Doctor because he likes Science. ✓

WHERE will he/she work when he/she grows up?	At a hospital. ✓
--	------------------

Words	Translation
Keep on	Maggie's ✓



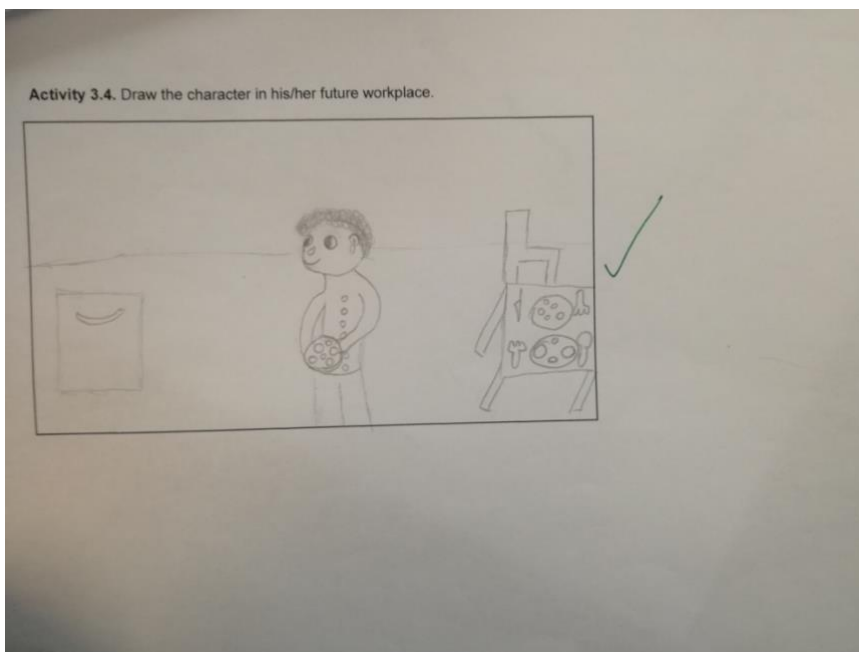
## Appendix VII: Results of the collaborative group work

WHO is the character in the text?	The character in the text is Mario ✓
HOW old is he/she?	He is 16 years old ✓
WHERE was he or she born?	He was born in Badia ✓
WHAT does he/she like doing in his/her free time?	He likes play, <sup>in</sup> fortnite and cooking ✓
WHAT are his/her skills? Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	Mario is expert at cooking cakes an - meticulous - mathematical
Find synonyms for the word "like". Write them in this grid and in a google docs that the teachers will open for the whole class.	Love, passionate ✓
WHAT job will you recommend to him/her? Why?	I recommend <sup>working as a cook</sup> to Mario the job of Cook, because <sup>he</sup> is very good <sup>at</sup> cooking cakes ✓

WHERE will he/she work when he/she grows up?	When he grows up Maria will work in a restaurant ✓
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Words	Translation
<u>Meticulous</u> ↳ that is a <u>skill</u>	Meticulos



## Appendix VIII: Group work videos

[Cooperative group work video](#)

[Collaborative group work video](#)