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**An Investigation of Learners' and Teachers'  
Attitudes towards the Use of Cooperative  
Learning Method in EFL Speaking Classes  
The Case of First Year Students of English**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Master Degree in  
Didactics of English

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### **Dedications**

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

I have the honor to dedicate this humble work to:

my dear **Mother** and beloved **Father** who have guided me in every step,

my adorable sister, **Amira**,

my dearest brothers, **Abderhim** and **Mostafa**,

my best friend **Nadia** with whom I shared the University life with its lights and shadows and  
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### **Abstract**

The present study tends to investigate learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method in English as a Foreign Language speaking classes. It is assumed that the majority of English teachers and learners hold positive attitudes towards the use of such method in the Oral Expression classes. This study was conducted with first year students following the descriptive method; the questionnaire and the teachers' interview were used as the main data gathering tools in this study. The questionnaire was directed to seventy first year students out of 325, while the teachers' interview was conducted with four Oral Expression teachers. The research findings have revealed that Oral Expression teachers have positive attitudes toward using such method in their classes. Although most of students face difficulties when speaking English, they have the sense of enjoyment whenever they are arranged to work together and hold positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method. Based on the obtained results, some recommendations were presented.

**Key Words:** Cooperative learning method, The Speaking Skill, Learners' and Teachers' Attitudes, Oral Expression.

**Table of Abbreviations**

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**L1:** The Native (First) Language

**L2:** The Second Language

**LMD:** License Master Doctorate

**OE:** Oral Expression

**Q:** Question

**SL:** Second Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**STAD:** Student Team Achievement Divisions

**STL:** Student Team Learning

**TV:** Television

**Vs:** Versus

**ZPD:** Zone of Proximal Development

### List of Tables

<b>Table 1:</b> The Students' English Level.....	46
<b>Table 2:</b> The Most Difficult Skill According to the Students.....	46
<b>Table 3:</b> The Students' Speaking Level .....	47
<b>Table 4:</b> Students' Difficulties in Speaking English.....	48
<b>Table 5:</b> Students' Feeling When Speaking English .....	48
<b>Table 6:</b> The Reasons behind Students' Fear of Speaking.....	49
<b>Table 7:</b> The Frequency of Participating in the Speaking Session .....	50
<b>Table 8:</b> The Type of Activities Used by the Teacher .....	50
<b>Table 9:</b> The Students' Attitudes towards the Speaking Activities.....	51
<b>Table 10:</b> Students' Opinions about Teachers' Creation of a Good Atmosphere .....	53
<b>Table 11:</b> Students' Preference of Working in the Speaking Sessions.....	54
<b>Table 12:</b> Students' Feeling when Working Cooperatively.....	54
<b>Table 13:</b> The Basis on which the Students are Gathered into Groups.....	55
<b>Table 14:</b> The Size of the Groups .....	55
<b>Table 15:</b> The Role of the Teacher when the Students are Grouped Together .....	56
<b>Table 16:</b> Raising the Awareness toward Group Work Importance .....	57
<b>Table 17:</b> Understanding of the Task when Working in a Group.....	57
<b>Table 18:</b> The Students' Encouragement of Each Other .....	58
<b>Table 19:</b> Students' Responsibility when Working Together.....	58
<b>Table 20:</b> Students' Presentation of Ideas when Working in Groups.....	59
<b>Table 21:</b> Students' Perceptions towards the Efficiency of Small Groups .....	60
<b>Table 22:</b> Students' Perceptions towards the Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Method .....	60
<b>Table 23:</b> Students' Frequency of Sharing Ideas .....	61

<b>Table 24:</b> Students' Opinions about the Effectiveness of Group Work in Liking the Speaking Session .....	62
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## Table of Contents

Dedications .....	1
Acknowledgements .....	2
Abstract .....	3
List of Abbreviation.....	4
List of Tables.....	5
Table of Content.....	7

### General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem.....	10
2. Aim of the Study .....	10
3. Research Questions.....	10
4. Research Assumption .....	11
5. Means of Research.....	11
6. Structure of the Study.....	11

### Chapter One: The Literature Review

#### Section One: The Speaking Skill

Introduction.....	12
1.1.1. Definition .....	12
1.1.2. The Importance of the Speaking Skill.....	13
1.1.3. The Relationship Between Speaking and Listening.....	14
1.1.4. The Speaking Skill Components.....	15
1.1.5. Common Difficulties in Speaking.....	17
1.1.5.1 Linguistic Problems .....	17
1.1.5.2. Non-linguistic Problems .....	19
1.1.6. Speaking Activities .....	20



1.1.7. Assessing Speaking.....	23
Conclusion .....	24

## **Section Two: Cooperative Learning Method**

Introduction.....	25
1.2.1. Definition of Cooperative Learning Method .....	25
1.2.2. Elements of Cooperative Learning Method.....	26
1.2.3. Cooperative Learning Method vs. Collaborative Learning... ..	29
1.2.4. Definition of Group Work.....	30
1.2.5. Roots of Cooperative Learning Method .....	31
1.2.6. Types of Cooperative Learning Method.....	33
1.2.6.1. Formal Cooperative Learning Method .....	34
1.2.6.2. Informal Cooperative Learning Method .....	35
1.2.6.3. Cooperative Base Groups.....	35
1.2.7. Second Language Acquisition Theories and Cooperative Learning Method.....	36
1.2.8. Cooperative Learning Methods .....	37
1.2.8.1. Structured Team Learning Methods .....	37
1.2.8.2. Informal Group Learning Methods .....	38
1.2.9. Benefits of Cooperative Learning Method.....	39
Conclusion .....	41

## **Chapter Two: Field Work**

Introduction.....	42
-------------------	----

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

2.1.1. Data Collection Instruments .....	42
2.1.1.1. Description of the Questionnaire.....	42
2.1.1.2. The Description of the Interview... ..	44

2.1.2. Sampling and Setting...	45
2.1.3. Limitations of the Study.....	45
<b>Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion</b>	
2. 2. 1. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire .....	46
2. 2. 2. Analysis of the Teacher Interview... ..	62
2.2.3. Discussion of the Results .....	68
Conclusion .....	70
<b>General Conclusion .....</b>	<b>71</b>
Recommendations and Suggestions .....	72
References	
Appendices	

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Teaching English as a foreign language requires learners' exposure to what is called the foreign language skills. Speaking is considered an important skill to be developed if the aim is learning a second/foreign language. Although most students have knowledge in English grammar and vocabulary, they are not able to use it while communicating with others.

Being ourselves English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and after discussing our difficulties with other EFL learners, we think that students still have difficulties in speaking because the teaching methods merely focus on delivering materials in which students are not involved. The main problem that can be raised is the lack of the teaching strategies that can help students speak in an effective way. To minimize such problem, it is important to use appropriate methods and techniques for teaching, one of which is cooperative learning method. The latter may help learners to enhance their speaking skill.

### **2. Aim of the Study**

The present study aims to investigate learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of the cooperative learning method in EFL speaking classes at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia Jijel, at the Department of English Language and Literature, in order to help learners in enhancing their speaking performance.

### **3. Research Questions**

The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do oral expression teachers use cooperative learning method in their classes?
2. What are the attitudes of oral expression teachers towards the use of cooperative learning method?
3. Does the use of cooperative learning method help learners to enhance their speaking skill?

4. Do learners hold positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method?

#### **4. Research Assumption**

On the basis of what we have said before, and in an attempt to answer the questions above, it is assumed that the majority of EFL teachers and learners hold positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method activities in the Oral Expression classes.

#### **5. Means of Research**

This research is based on a descriptive method. The study takes place at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya University in Jijel with first year LMD students at the Department of English, as the whole population. We dealt with 70 students, chosen randomly, as a sample. In addition to this sample, we have selected four Oral Expression teachers to get more information about the study. Concerning data collection instruments, we administered a questionnaire to first year student as the main research tool, and in order to have a clearer picture about our investigation, we had structured interviews with oral expression teachers.

#### **6. Structure of the Study**

This work is divided mainly into two parts; a theoretical part, and a practical one. The first section of the theoretical part outlines some theoretical issues related to the speaking skill, while the second section is devoted to cooperative learning method. The practical part, in turn, comprises two sections; the first section deals with the research methodology, and the second with the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the students' questionnaire, and the teachers' interview.

## **Chapter One: The Literature Review**

### **Section One: The Speaking Skill**

Introduction

1.1.1. Definition

1.1.2. The Importance of the Speaking Skill

1.1.3. The Relationship Between Speaking and Listening

1.1.4. The Speaking Skill Components

1.1.5. Common Difficulties in Speaking

1.1.5.1. Linguistic Problems

1.1.5.2. Non-linguistic Problems

1.1.6. Speaking Activities

1.1.7. Assessing Speaking

Conclusion

### **Section Two: Cooperative Learning Method**

Introduction

1.2.1. Definition of Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.2. Elements of Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.3. Cooperative Learning Method vs. Collaborative Learning

1.2.4. Definition of Group Work

1.2.5. Roots of Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.6. Types of Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.6.1. Formal Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.6.2. Informal Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.6.3. Cooperative Base Groups

1.2.7. Second Language Acquisition Theories and Cooperative Learning Method

1.2.8. Cooperative Learning Methods

1.2.8.1. Structured Team Learning Methods

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

### 1.2.8.2. Informal Group Learning Methods

### 1.2.9. Benefits of Cooperative Learning Method

### Conclusion

## **Chapter One: The Literature Review**

### **Section One: The Speaking Skill**

#### **Introduction**

The journey of EFL teaching and learning is difficult and remarkable at the same time. Thus, English language teaching-learning process was and stills one of the biggest challenges that both teachers and students are involved in. In the last decades, various approaches appeared to make the teaching-learning process more effective. One of the basic assumptions that were brought to this field is the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT). With the emergence of CLT approach, there was a great emphasis on learners' skills of using English language rather than on their knowledge about that language. That is, the interest was shifted from what the students know about the target language to how to use that knowledge in real communicative contexts.

In this section, we shed light on the most important aspects of the speaking skill, particularly, its definition, its importance, its relationship to the listening skill. Then, we provide a careful description of the speaking components and the difficulties that EFL learners face in this skill. Finally, we end up by presenting the most common activities in the speaking classroom and how the students' achievements are assessed.

#### **1.1.1. Definition**

According to Hughes (2011), "Speaking is 'primary' . . . messy and difficult to define . . ." (p. 51). Since speaking is the heart of the learning process of any foreign language, as English, both teachers and learners give much interest to this skill. According to Nation (2011), "speaking is typically seen one of the four skills of language use, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing" (p. 444).

Accordingly, it can be defined as the ability to implement the internalized knowledge that learners acquire in a language in a vocalized form. It is considered to be the most

important interactive skill which speakers rely on to convey different meanings and various viewpoints fluently and accurately. Moreover, “speaking is a process during which speakers rely on all the available information (background and linguistic) to create messages that will be understandable and meaningful to the intended audience” (Drozdziel-Szelest, 2011, p. 132). To sum up, speaking is tricky to define; it can be defined either as a language skill or as a process. In this study, we will refer to the two terms by ‘speaking.’

### **1.1. 2. The Importance of the Speaking Skill**

English is not merely written. Without doubt, speaking is the art that transforms the written scripts into vivid use of language in various contexts for various goals. Nowicka and Wilczynska (2011) stated that “speaking is widely considered to be the principal skill that stands for an overall knowledge of a foreign language” (p. 24).

Since English has become the most widely spoken language around the world, it is very important to use it as a tool to communicate with other speakers of the language. When we say communication, we basically mean speech. A real communication, in turn, requires a high level of proficiency in speaking. For this reason, the speaking skill really deserves all the attention and care that are given to by EFL teachers and learners. In this regard, Luoma (2004) suggested that “. . . speaking is special because of its interactive nature” (p. 170). In fact, being a competent language learner necessitates a competent speaker who uses the language to express his thoughts, feelings and various meanings.

Moreover, for English language learners, success in speaking is considered to be a criterion and a measure of success of the whole learning process. Concerning this point, Richards (2008) claimed that “. . . learners often evaluate their success in the language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency” (p. 19).



### **1.1. 3. The Relationship between Speaking and Listening**

The relationship between speaking and listening is deeply rooted. In fact, the two skills are interrelated, inseparable and dependent on each other. Actually, without listening no production of language will occur.

Listening is the way that allows the learners to speak in a second or a foreign language. Nation and Newton (2009) claimed that “listening is the natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person’s first language (and in naturalistic acquisition of other languages) are dependent on listening” (p. 37). By exposing the learners to the target language input, they will acquire certain knowledge about that language and understand its different aspects. This package of the target language knowledge enables them to speak that language without any problem. Learning to speak a language requires listening to models from that language. Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, and Pincas (1980) suggested the following:

Clearly, it is impossible to expect a student to produce a sound which does not exist in his mother tongue or a natural sentence using the stress, rhythm and intonation of a native speaker of the foreign language without first of all providing him with a model of the form he is to produce. (p. 65)

The exposure to the language input makes the learners aware of different aspects of that language, especially, that which are related to pronunciation, rhythm and intonation. In addition, through listening to models from the target language, the students can spot the differences in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of various accents of English. It allows them to know the way native speakers use their language in real contexts. At the same point, Harmer (1998) pointed out, “one of the main reasons for getting students to listen to spoken language is to let them hear different varieties and accents-rather than just the voice of their teacher. . .” (p. 97).

#### **1.1.4. The Speaking Skill Components**

According to Harris (1969), Speaking is a complex skill that comprises five elements which are interrelated to each other, namely; pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

The first component of the speaking skill is pronunciation. Ur (1991) indicated that the pronunciation concept involves some aspects, such as articulating sounds (vowels and consonants), word stress, sentence stress, intonation (falling and rising), rhythm, and so on. When a learner speaks English, it is very important to produce a clear language. According to Nation (2011), “our pronunciation is a particularly sensitive part of our personality because it is a particularly noticeable part of the way with which we display our knowledge of a language” (p. 449). In other words, each individual has a different personality from others; the way he speaks reveals his personality and how confident he is, for instance.

The second component of the speaking skill is grammar. According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2009), grammar is referred to as the set of rules that allow us join various words of English to make larger units. Another definition was provided by Ur (1991) in which he claimed that “grammar is sometimes defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences” (p. 75). Nevertheless, this capability to manipulate the grammatical instances in a correct form is not enough to achieve the grammatical accuracy. Also he suggested that,

Grammar does not only affect how units of language are combined in order to ‘look right’, it also affects their meaning. . . . it is no good knowing how to perceive or contrast a new tense of a verb if you do not know exactly what difference it makes to meaning when it is used. (p. 76)

Knowing and understanding the grammatical rules of a particular language system allows the foreign language speaker to use that language accurately without being afraid of making

mistakes. If the learner has limited knowledge about the grammatical system, a lot of mistakes would appear in his speech which, in turn, slows down his conversation.

The third component of the speaking skill is vocabulary. It includes certain words related to different domains that are frequently used by the native speakers. This involves such words about family, clothing, weather, jobs, directions, supermarket, and so on. According to Hatch and Brown (1995), “the term *vocabulary* refers to a list or set of words of a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use” (p. 1). In the learning process, vocabulary occupies a central position especially when it comes to speak the language. For this reason, using the appropriate words in the right context plays a vital role in the success of the conversation. Speaking requires not only having a wide range of words, but also having the needed information about a certain word, such as its meaning, its spelling and its pronunciation. This knowledge allows the learner to use the right word in the right context, and this in turn keeps the conversation going smoothly.

The fourth component of the speaking skill is fluency. According to Segalowitz (2010),

. . . *Fluency* is sometimes used to refer to the ability to express any idea in L2 that one can also express in L1, or the ability to speak with little or no accent in L2, or to be able to use a large vocabulary, or to speak with few grammatical errors. (p. 4)

In fact, fluency includes all of the previous aspects. It is usually associated with using the target language freely, confidently, accurately and smoothly, with a fast speed of speaking and with less pauses. Fluency becomes an important aspect of the speaking skill that, roughly, most of EFL learners want to achieve. Richards (2008) claimed that “fluency became a goal for speaking courses. . . ” (p. 2). Being fluent in English requires rich vocabulary and fully mastered grammatical rules, so that the learner can feel comfortable and less hesitant when using the language.

The last component of the speaking skill is comprehension. Comprehension in speaking can be defined as the ability to understand a given discourse. This understanding protects the conversation, and helps both the speaker and the listener to avoid communication break downs and misunderstandings. According to Rozi (2013), “**Comprehension** denotes the ability of understanding the speaker’s intention and general meaning Good comprehension refers to good understanding. If someone’ language understanding is good, it will affect the speaking ability” (p. 9).

### **1.1.5. Common Difficulties in Speaking**

Despite the importance of English oral proficiency, many English learners could not achieve it, as a result of different problems they face when speaking. Goh and Burns (2012) suggested “although second language learners may understand the importance of speaking, it can be stressful for some, if not most of them” (p. 26). The problems that English learners face can be classified into two main categories. According to Heriansyah (2012), “the difficulties faced or felt by the students in speaking can be divided into two kinds of problems namely linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems” (p. 40).

#### **1.5.1.1. Linguistic Problems**

The linguistic problems are those problems that are related to the formal language aspects i.e., grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. In order to speak a language, learners have to be mature enough and possess the needed knowledge about that language. The lack of this knowledge is considered to be a big obstacle when speaking the language.

The first linguistic problem is the lack of knowledge about grammar. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), “. . . grammar is an integral part of language use: it is a resource to be accessed for effective communication” (p. 234). The status of grammar is crucial when speaking English, that is why EFL teachers focus on teaching the grammatical rules to their learners. Nevertheless, grammar rules have so far become a problem that learners face when

speaking English. Many foreign language learners may consider grammar as boring or not important in learning the language. Whatever the reasons are, many learners may not have enough package of how English grammar is used. When it comes to speaking, the learners cannot find the grammatical rules and structures that fit what they are going to say. An example of this is when a learner wants to speak about a previous experience, but does not know the rules of the past tense and its uses; he would be incapable to speak. In addition to this, grammar in the spoken form differs from grammar in the written form in the sense that speech is produced in a limited time, that is why it is considered as difficult for them.

The second linguistic problem that EFL learners may face is the lack of vocabulary. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), “vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first, second, or foreign” (p. 284). Thus, an English learner must be armed with the needed knowledge about certain words, and the way they are used in particular speech events, such as apologizing, advising, or greeting. A written word may have several meanings depending on the context in which it is used, such words are known as ‘homographs’. A second or a foreign language learner may face difficulties in differentiating between two or more words that have the same spelling. This leads to confusion. In addition, if the learner knows only limited number of words, then he would feel incapable to convey the intended meaning.

The third linguistic problem that the learners may face is the lack of knowledge about pronunciation. Spoken English is very different from the written one. For this reason, the knowledge about the English pronunciation has a crucial role in speaking the language. When we say pronunciation, we basically mean what words sound like, but other aspects, such as stress and intonation are involved. According to Thornbury (2005), “the ‘lowest level’ of knowledge a speaker draws on is that of pronunciation” (p. 24). The problem of lacking the knowledge about English intonation is a commonly known problem that EFL learners may

face. In this area, many learners do not know how to use the right pitch when speaking. Harmer (2007) stated that “intonation is a notoriously tricky area since very many students. . . find it difficult to hear changes in pitch direction-or rather they sometimes cannot identify which direction it is” (p. 39). The other aspect of pronunciation that learners face problems with is stress, especially that which is related to sentences. Sentence stress is very important when conveying meanings of sentences, and changing a stress in that sentence may change its whole meaning. However, many learners do not know when to stress a word in a sentence that is why it is considered as a problem for them when speaking English.

#### **1.1.5.2. Non-linguistic Problems**

Some learners may have memorized a wide range of words, learned how they are pronounced, and know the needed grammar rules to hold any speech in English. However, they cannot use this knowledge inside the classroom for many reasons. Ur (1991) pointed out, “learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts” (p. 121).

One of the factors that hinder students from speaking inside the classroom is the fear of making mistakes. Many English learners ignore the fact that making mistakes is a natural part of being a language learner. Instead, they think that mistakes are signs of their incapability to use the language accurately. This fear makes them hesitant and unwilling to say anything in English which, in turn, impedes their progress of learning. In other words, improving English fluency and accuracy requires learners who take every single chance to speak in order to make their speech better each time through correcting their mistakes.

The second factor that prevents learners from speaking is the fear of criticism of their classmates. The learners feel afraid from the others’ judgments and comments on their speech. They fear that their classmates laugh at them, or give negative feedback about their

speech which results in embarrassment for them. In order to avoid criticism, the learners start thinking about every word they want to say several times, but eventually they would keep silent and prefer not to express their feelings and viewpoints. Moreover, the learner may start comparing his wordiness to those of his classmates, so he may feel that his thoughts are silly comparing to his class fellows. All in all, the fear of criticism is considered to be one of the problems that prevent EFL learners from participating and expressing different thoughts freely in front of the whole class.

The third factor that hinders learners from speaking is shyness. Shyness is an emotional factor that many learners feel when speaking English in front of their classmates. According to Zimbardo (1977), “to be shy is to be afraid of people, especially people who for some reason are emotionally threatening. . .” (p. 12). Some learners want to stay out of the limelight, and consider speaking in front of other people as one of their biggest fears. Shyness is illustrated in lacking self-confidence to use the language while the teacher and other students are watching and listening. In fact, shy learners miss the opportunities that are given to them in the speaking classes to express their viewpoints. “Shyness makes it difficult to meet new people, make friends, or enjoy potentially good experiences” (Zimbardo, 1977, p. 12).

#### **1.1.6. Speaking Activities**

Harmer (2007) recommended some activities to promote the speaking skill inside the classroom. They include acting from script, communicative games, discussion, prepared talks, and simulation and role-play.

The first type of the speaking activities is acting from a script. It refers to acting scenes from short dialogues that the students have written themselves or from their textbook. In this type of activities, the teacher is considered to be a guide for his students, an observer of their speaking, and a feedback provider in which he raises the awareness toward the use of

stress, intonation, as well as the fluency of speech. Also, he is supposed to give the learners the needed time to rehearse and practice their speech before they act it out in front of their classmates, starting by extrovert students to the shy ones in order to make a comfortable atmosphere for them in the classroom.

The second type of the speaking activities is communicative games. They are those types of activities that require a sort of communication between members of groups to solve a problem. They aim to make learners interact with each other, and speak fluently. Harmer (2007) distinguished two subtypes of the communicative games; information-gap games, and television and radio games. Information-gap activities are those activities in which students are supposed to solve a given task, which needs interaction between the students in order to find the missed information. These types of activities include solving puzzles, spotting differences, arranging things or phrases, and so on. This kind of games is very useful in second and foreign language classrooms because it extends the learners' opportunities to speak the language through interaction. Hence, it raises the learners' motivation, and they would have a sense of enjoyment when doing a given task. Television and radio games involve using some games adopted from radio and TV shows that aim to allow learners to talk fluently inside the classroom. Harmer (2007) mentioned the most famous games taken from the two means of mass media. The 'Twenty Questions' is a game in which one learner thinks about something, while the rest of learners try to predict what is it by asking the chairperson up to twenty questions that are answered either by 'yes' or 'no'. Another famous game is 'Just a Minute'. In this game, each student is supposed to talk about a certain topic for one minute or more without break downs in speech. Concerning this point, Harmer (2007) pointed out, "each participant has to speak for 60 seconds on a subject they are given by the chairperson without hesitation, repetition or deviation" (p. 349).



The third type of the speaking activities is discussion. Discussion is a vitally important activity in the speaking classrooms. One cannot ignore its role in strengthening the learners' critical thinking, accepting new opinions, getting new vocabulary, as well as having a sense of amusement during the speaking sessions. It includes buzz groups, instant comment, formal debates and reaching a consensus. The first subtype of discussion is buzz groups. It is a type of quick discussions in which learners are asked about their prediction of the topic to be learned, their reactions after the topic is learned, or their suggestions for topics to be learned. The second subtype of discussion is instant comment. It is a type of discussions in which the teacher shows the learners pictures or utter words or phrases, and asks them about what goes in their minds when they first see the picture or hear the word. Therefore, Harmer (2007) pointed out that "another way in which we can train students to respond fluently and immediately is to insert 'instant comment' mini-activities into lessons" (p. 350). The third subtype of discussion is formal debates. According to Harmer (2007), "in a formal debate, students prepare arguments in favour or against various propositions" (p. 350). In this type of discussion, the teacher selects some students to be involved in the debate while the others would be the audience who intervene from time to time to express their view points about the subject. Reaching a consensus is a subtype of discussion that is mainly based on a scenario created by the teacher. The students are supposed to give different alternatives to reach a general decision that all the students agree upon. Harmer (2007) illustrated this type in a scenario in which a teacher catches a student cheating in an exam. In this situation, the students have to choose between various options as ignoring the situation, informing the student's family, warning him, and so on.

The fourth type of the speaking activities is prepared talks. The prepared talk is probably the most commonly used activity in the speaking classrooms. It can be individual or a group work. In this type of activities, a student or a group of students present(s) something

about a particular subject which is already prepared, while the other students are supposed to give feedback and ask questions about the topic. Harmer (2007) explained that “the point is that presentations have to involve active listening as well as active speaking” (p. 352). Without doubt, presentations allow the learners to get more knowledge about the various language aspects in the sense that they can improve and expand their understanding of grammar, phonology and vocabulary.

The last type of speaking activities is simulation and role-play. Both simulation and role-play are two important tools that teachers rely on in their speaking classes. The only difference between the two is about characters. In simulation, the students are supposed to act as being themselves in a real life context in which they imagine themselves in various situations and they are supposed to behave accordingly as guests in a party, in a job interview, in a hotel, supermarket, and so on. According to Harmer (2007), “students simulate a real-life encounter (such as a business meeting, an interview or a conversation in an aeroplane cabin, a hotel foyer, a shop or a cafeteria) as if they were doing so in the real world” (p. 352). On the other hand, when the students perform a role of an imaginary character rather than being themselves, the simulation becomes a role-play. The students may act as being famous people, kings, pop stars, and so on. Usually, both simulation and role-play are used in the speaking classrooms in order to develop the learners’ fluency and self-confidence when speaking English.

#### **1.1.7. Assessing Speaking**

Assessment is a way used by the teachers to measure and document the learners’ achievements. According to Brindley (2001), “the term **assessment** refers to a variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's language ability or achievement” (p. 137). Thornbury (2005) distinguished two types of assessment; namely, informal and formal assessments.

Informal assessment can be defined as “. . . those spontaneous forms of assessment that can easily be incorporated in the day-to-day classroom activities and that measure the students’ performance and progress” (Abdao, 2015, para. 3). The informal assessment is based mainly on documenting the students’ performances inside the classroom using some tools such as classroom observation, checklists, and rating scale. The classroom observation deals with observing live oral performances of the learners as an attempt to reach certain conclusions. Using checklists is another means of informal assessment that involves collecting data through checking if some criteria are achieved or not, these checklists follow the ‘yes/no’ format without adding any comments. In contrast to checklists, rating scale includes degrees of frequency; i.e., there is no ‘all or nothing’, the teacher also can provide some comments and feedback about the learners’ performances. About the rating scales, Luoma (2004) said that “They allow raters to note down comments about the unique features of different performances quickly” (p. 188).

The other type of assessment is the formal assessment. In the words of Abdao (2015), “**Formal assessments** are the systematic, pre-planned data-based tests that measure what and how well the students have learned”(para. 1). Unlike informal assessment, formal assessment involves tests which have been tried on other learners before they are administered and scored.

### **Conclusion**

This section casted light on an overview about the speaking skill. At the outset, it provided a definition of that skill, its importance, and how it is related to the listening skill. Furthermore, it highlighted the speaking skill components, the commonly known problems that EFL learners face in the oral classes. Moreover, the current section displayed the most common speaking activities, and how they are implemented inside the classroom. Eventually, it elaborated how the speaking skill is assessed.

## **Section Two: Cooperative Learning Method**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, one of the greatest changes in foreign language pedagogy has been the shift from the teacher-centered model to the student-centered model. That is to say, it is the change from the focus on teaching to the focus on learning. In the past, classrooms were often all about the teacher, who possessed the knowledge and the values transmitted to the students, where he plays a dominant role in the classroom. However, these days, the learner-centered teaching employs certain strategies and principles which would make learning more active, and also make a better and more effective learning environment for learners. i.e., it is easy for the teacher to talk for an hour but not as easy to create an environment where learners take the central part of learning. The learner-centered instruction includes techniques that focus on the learners' needs, styles, and goals. One of these techniques that give some control to the student is group work.

In this section, we examine how cooperative learning method can possibly be used in the EFL speaking classes through presenting its definition, its major elements, its roots, its types and theories, its methods, and its benefits.

#### **1.2.1. Definition of Cooperative Learning Method**

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1999; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2006). Cooperative learning method is about moving from rote learning to learning how to think critically and in changing circumstances. Johnson and Johnson (1990) defined cooperative learning method as, "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and one another's learning" (p. 69). It usually completes the teachers' instruction by giving learners an opportunity to discuss information or practice skills originally presented by the teacher. According to Gillis (2003), conducting cooperative learning method does not mean that we just let learners sit next each

other at the same desk and ask them to do their own task. Within cooperative situations, individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial and valuable to themselves and also to all other group members. According to Johnson (1997), “cooperative learning method is one of the best-researched approaches in education, and that when the public asks educators what we know that works in education, cooperative learning method is one of our surest answers” (p. 7). There are many quite different forms of cooperative learning method, but all of them imply that students work in small groups or teams to help each other learn academic materials. Different researches have different definitions of cooperative learning method. For Farmer (1999), “cooperative learning method involves a structured group of people who have a specific learning task to accomplish together” (p. 1). Moreover, Sharan (as cited in Tran, 2013) defined it as, “a group-centered and student-centered approach to classroom teaching and learning” (p. 101); while Slavin (as cited in Tran, 2013) referred to cooperative learning method as, “instructional methods in which teachers organize students into small groups, which then work together to help one another learn academic content” (p. 101).

### **1.2.2. Elements of Cooperative learning method**

Cooperative learning method is based on five basic elements being organized in each cooperative lesson; positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and social skills, and group processing. In order to engage the learners in learning, these five elements must be presented in the cooperative classroom.

- **Positive Interdependence:** The first and the most important element is positive interdependence. According to Deutsch (1962), positive interdependence occurs when the group members perceive that they are associated with each other in a way that one cannot succeed unless all the group members succeed. i.e., if one fails, all the group fails. According to Ballantine and Larres (2007), if group members are not relying on each other and fail to have shared interest in working together to complete the tasks,

the success of the group will decrease. That is to say, if one group member fails to accomplish his or her learning task, all the other group members will suffer from the results of that members' poor presentation. In addition, Yager (2000), Jensen, Moore and Hatch (2002), defined positive interdependence as that in a cooperative learning method situation; learners are required to work together as a team to reach the learning objectives. In other words, learners must make sure that other members in their group complete the task and achieve the academic outcomes. Moreover, according to Johnson and Johnson (2009), learning situations are not cooperative if students are organized into groups without positive interdependence. And more specifically, according to Mesch, Johnson, and Johnson (1988), one group member's performance influences the success of other group members and tends to create 'responsibility forces' that increase each member's efforts to reach.

- **Face to Face Promotive Interaction:** The second element of cooperative learning method is face to face promotive interaction. Positive interdependence results in reciprocal interaction among individuals, which encourages each group members productively. The promotive interaction exists as individuals encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to accomplish the groups' goals. According to Johnson and Johnson (2008), in cooperative learning method groups, learners are needed to interact verbally with each other on learning tasks, and in addition to this, according to Ballantine and Larres (2007), exchange opinions, describe things, teach others and present their understanding. Furthermore, the status of interaction relies on the size of the group, and frequency of the learners' cooperation on their learning tasks. Slavin (2011) added that the quality of group interaction relies on the learning environment. If a positive learning environment is established, learners in the cooperative group learn and work together effectively.

- **Individual Accountability:** The third essential element of cooperative learning method is individual accountability. According to Johnson (2009), individual responsibility means that learners ask for collaboration, do their best work, present their ideas, learn as much as possible, take their tasks seriously, and help the group to operate well and take care of each other. It is considered as the degree to which the achievement of the group is dependent on the individual learning of all group members. According to Johnson and Johnson (2008), positive interdependence is realized to create 'responsibility forces' that increase the individual accountability of group members to complete shared work and facilitate other group members' work. Similarly, Hooper, Hannafin and Clark (1989) found in an examination of cooperative learning method on students' learning that cooperation resulted in higher achievement when the individual accountability was structured rather than when it was not, and argued that the lack of individual responsibility may reduce feelings of personal accountability. Accordingly, it may be structured through keeping the size of the group small; the smaller size of the group, the greater individual responsibility may be. In addition, Gerard, Wilhelmy and Corolley (1965); Messick and Brewer (1983) added that when the size of the group becomes smaller, group members tend to interact more frequently, which may increase the amount of information used in arriving at a decision, and therefore, the group must be accountable for achieving its goals. In other words, each member must be accountable for contributing his or her share of the work.
- **Interpersonal and Social Skills:** The fourth essential element of cooperative learning method is interpersonal and social skills. According to Johnson and Johnson (1991), the students must be taught the social skills required for high quality collaboration, and be inspired to utilize them if cooperative groups are to be productive. The whole

field of group dynamics is based on the logic that social skills are the key to group productivity. Moreover, placing socially unskilled learners in a group and telling them to cooperate does not guarantee that they have the capacity to do so effectively. i.e., we are not born instinctively knowing how to interact effectively with others, and in reality, the learners cannot work effectively if socially unskilled learners are organized and grouped into one group.

- **Group Processing:** The fifth essential element of cooperative learning method is group processing. It exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Johnson et al., (as cited in Tran, 2013) defined group processing as “reflecting on a group session to help students : (1) describe what member actions were helpful and unhelpful ; and (2) make decisions about what actions to continue or change” (p. 104). Moreover, according to Ymarik (2007), group processing helps to improve the effectiveness of the members in contributing to the shared efforts to attain the group’s goals via reflection on the learning process.

In summary, if these five essential elements of cooperative learning method are included and added in the cooperative learning method groups, learners achieve better, experience more positive relationships among members of the group, build their self-esteems and attitudes, and demonstrate superior learning skills. According to Johnson et al., (1994), once these five elements are structured in cooperative settings, the role of the learners and the teacher will be changed remarkably. Therefore, the teacher becomes not the “sage on the stage”, but “the guide on the side”.

### **1.2.3. Cooperative Learning Method Vs Collaborative Learning**



For some educators, cooperative learning method is synonymous with collaborative learning. Both learning theories assign specific tasks, both use groups, and both of them require the students to compare and share their findings.

Cooperative learning method was first used in America and can be traced back to John Dewey's philosophy of the social nature of learning. It is a methodology that employs a variety of learning activities to improve students' understanding of a subject by using a structured approach which involves a series of steps, requiring students to create, analyze, and apply concepts (Kagan, 1990). Moreover, cooperative learning method provides a clear conceptual structure and a set of clear procedures for instructors who wish more directions.

However, collaborative learning has British roots and it is based on the findings of English instructors who explored ways to help students take a more active role in their learning. It is a teaching methodology in which the students team together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project. Moreover, collaborative learning is based on the theorizing of Vygotsky (1978), Britton (1990) noted that just as the individual minds derived from society, a student's learning is derived from the community of learners, in which this community is developed by the students. Therefore, it has historically been much less structured and more student directed than cooperative learning method.

All in all, cooperative and collaborative learning are so closely related that the two terms are often used interchangeably, and both stress the centrality of interdependence. Romney (1997) noted that collaborative learning as the term is used to describe older students learning together, and saw cooperative learning method as the term used in primary and secondary education. Whereas, Chung (1991) saw collaborative learning as an umbrella term that includes cooperative learning method as one part.

#### **1.2.4. Definition of Group Work**

Group work is a learner-centered way of teaching. It is used as a means for learning in the classroom at all levels in educational system which highlights cooperation and teamwork. Roney (2010) described group work as a classroom practice where learners work together as a team to complete a defined task through collaborative interaction (as cited in Morris, 2016, p. 1). There are two main concepts of discussing cooperation in groups. On the one hand, working in a group, or cooperation, refers to situations where learners are setting together in a group but working separately on a given task. On the other hand, working as a group, or collaboration, refers to situations where learners work together and use the group members' skills to attain a common goal.

According to Gillies (2003), learners are more motivated to achieve better when they work together in preference to work individually (as cited in Chiriac, 2014, p. 2). Hence, many educators use group work to develop their students' learning; the goal behind the use of such a method could be to improve learners' understanding of the content, to enhance a particular skill, or a combination of the two. According to Brown (1992), "groupwork provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals" (p. 8).

### **1.2.5. Roots of Cooperative Learning Method**

According to Slavin (1999), one of the prominent success stories in the history of educational innovation is cooperative learning method. Nowadays, cooperative learning method strategies are so common-place; they are often seen as a standard part of the educational practice, not as innovation. There are some aspects of theory that may be helpful in understanding the historical development of cooperative learning method like; social psychology, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology.

Baron, Byrne and Suls (1989) (as cited in Brown, 2006) defined social psychology as, "the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior in

social situations” (p. 6). According to Alport (1954), who worked on the objective of facilitating effective group dynamics and the investigation of how best to help people from a variety of racial groups to live together more harmoniously, there are three conditions that he thought essential for interaction and also to result in more productive relations and greater harmony ; first, interaction must be of equal status ; secondly, they must have common goals and shared interest; and finally, their collaboration should be officially authorized. Moreover, Alport (1954) in his work acknowledged that social behavior results from interaction between people and also, he introduced the notion that the presence of others, and the social groups, can facilitate certain behaviors. i.e., the social psychology is about understanding the individual behavior in a social context.

There have been many prominent thinkers and researches who have carefully studied human cognition as it progresses in the course of a lifetime, two of the most notable developmental psychologists of the twentieth century are Jean Piaget and Lev S. Vygotsky. According to Piaget, each person constructs his/her own personal understanding of the world around him/ her through a search for equilibration. Within this vein, the concepts of Slavin (1995) have been widely interpreted as supporting the creation of classroom environments in which students play active roles as they engage in real tasks. Piaget’s epistemological view about psychological development assumed that the growth of consciousness progresses through preordained. In addition, Piaget considered development to be a precoded aspect of our biology, the attempt to accelerate development through learning with the guide and help of teachers or others is highly restricted. In contrast, For Vygotsky; a child is at once surrounded by sociocultural context that exerts an immediate influence on development through interaction, i.e., for him the social learning tends to come before development. Also, Vygotsky (as cited in Halzman, 2010) argued that “in play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour ; in play it is as though he were a head taller than

himself” (p. 27). Moreover, he stressed the view that semiotic mediation becomes the primary vehicle for human cognitive growth. Therefore, one of the major themes in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (as cited in Tudge, 1990) defined it as, “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 157).

Both of Piaget and Vygotsky’s pedagogy would focus on the individual within the group and the students’ use of inquiry-based instruction, in which the teacher is there to instruct first, but the students are the ones who solve the problem. Accordingly, developmental psychology hold that interaction among peers enhances and develops their mastery of critical concepts.

Cognitive psychology assumes that cooperative learning method enhances achievement by giving children an opportunity to master information in which, they summarize and restate their current understanding in working with peers. Also, it helps students acquire critical thinking skills. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1986), because cooperative learning method creates a situation in which learners must explain and discuss different perspectives, a greater understanding of the material is obtained, and elaborative thinking is developed because learners give and receive explanations more often.

### **1.2.6. Types of Cooperative Learning Method**

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1993), cooperative learning method groups may be used to teach specific content through formal cooperative learning method groups, to ensure active cognitive processing of information during a lesson through informal cooperative learning method groups, and to provide long-term support for academic progress through cooperative base groups. In other word, there are basically three ways in which

cooperative learning method may be formulated in the university classrooms, and the three types of cooperative learning method complement and support each other.

### 1.2.6.1. Formal Cooperative Learning Method

Formal Cooperative learning method involves learners working together, for one class period for several weeks, to reach learning and complete cooperatively specific tasks and assignments, such as decision making or problem solving. In other words, these groups may last from several minutes to several class sessions, and any course assignment may be reformulated cooperatively. In this type of cooperative learning method groups the teachers;

- **Specify the objectives for the lesson:** In each lesson, there should be an academic objective describing the concepts and strategies to be learned, and a social skill objective describing the interpersonal or small group skill to be used and mastered during the lesson.
- **Make a number of pre-instructional decisions:** The teacher has to decide on the size of the group, the method of assigning learners to groups, the role learners will be assigned, the materials needed to conduct the lecture, and the way the room will be arranged.
- **Explain the task and the positive interdependence:** The teacher clearly explains the assignment, teaches the required concepts and strategies, identifies the positive interdependence and individual accountability, gives criteria for success, and explains the expected social skills to be used.
- **Monitor student's learning and intervene within the groups to provide task assistance or to increase student's interpersonal and group skills:** The teacher systematically notices and collects data on each group as it works. When it is needed,

the teacher intervenes to aid and support the learners in completing the task accurately and in working together effectively.

- **Assess students' learning and helping students process how well their group functioned:** Students' learning is carefully assessed and their performances are evaluated. Members of the learning groups then discuss how effectively and productively they worked together and how they can improve in the future.

#### **1.2.6.2. Informal Cooperative Learning Method**

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2006), informal cooperative learning method involves learners working together to achieve a joint learning goal temporary, it lasts from a few minutes to one class period. The members are often chosen randomly and will relate on a regular basis. Moreover, informal cooperative learning method groups are often organized; so that, students engage in three-to-five minutes focused discussion before and after a lesson and two-to-three minutes turn-to-your partner discussions distributed throughout a lesson. During a lecture, informal cooperative learning method can be used to focus learners' attention on the material to be learned, make sure that learners cognitively process and rehearse the material being taught, and summarize what has been learned.

#### **1.2.6.3. Cooperative Base Groups**

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2006), cooperative base groups are long-term, and heterogeneous cooperative learning method groups with fixed membership. They give the help, support, and encouragement to each member, regarding the needs, to make academic progress and develop cognitively and socially in a good way. Also, these groups are permanent. i.e., they last from one to several years, and they provide the long-term, caring peer relationships necessary to influence members consistently to work hard in school. In addition, base groups may be responsible for letting absent group members know what went

on in class when they miss a session. Hence, the larger the class, the more learners you have in a class and the more complex and difficult the subject matter; the more important it is to have base groups organized.

### **1.2.7. Second Language Acquisition Theories and Cooperative Learning Method**

Many theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and general education can be seen as supportive of the use of cooperative learning method in L2 instruction.

The Input Hypothesis assumes that SLA is driven by comprehensible input (Krashen, & Terrell, 1983), that is, learners acquire language when they understand the input through reading or hearing. In contrast, when the input is so far above the learners' current level of L2 proficiency; i.e. not comprehensible, they need to be exposed to an input which is a bit easier and at the same time beyond their current level ( $i+1$ ) to be comprehensible and to help them acquire the language. In 1983, Krashen and Terrell argued that despite the fact that in interaction students may hear incorrect forms of L2 from each other, student production must be used as a part of the syllabus.

The Interaction Hypothesis highlights the role of social interaction in increasing the amount of comprehensible input that learners receive. Researches that support this hypothesis have emphasized the need for communication and believe language acquisition should be a natural process. Through the negotiation of meaning the comprehensible input increases (Oliver 1998; Pica 1996; Schinke-Llano & Vicars 1993). There are ways of negotiating meaning include learners asking for clarification, repetition, and help when they do not understand input. According to Long (1996) (as cited in Cook, 2016) negotiation of meaning is defined as "the process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived

comprehension” (p. 245). Long (1981) suggested that it is not what students hear but how they are interacted with that matters.

The output hypothesis (Swain 1985) stated that, although comprehensible input is necessary for L2 learning, students also need to speak and write. i.e., produce the output. Moreover, for learners to increase their SL proficiency, they need to produce language via speech or writing. Accordingly, when working with a group of students the output can be increased adequately. Freeman and Freeman (as cited in Jacobs and McCafferty, 2006) maintained that because, “language develops in contexts of functional use, “teachers should “create situations in which all their students use language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of people” (p. 21). The constructivist teaching puts the student at the centre of the learning process, especially in terms of the input received and the output produced. Additionally, the basic assumption of constructivist theory is that people are said to learn when they have attained experience from what they learn. That is, people produce their own meaning through experience.

### **1.2.8. Cooperative Learning Methods**

There are many different forms of cooperative learning method but all of them involve having learners work in small groups to help one another learn academic material. Cooperative learning method methods fall into two main categories; the first set is ‘structured team learning’, while the second set is ‘informal group learning methods’, which covers the methods that focused more on social dynamics, discussion, and projects like, Jigsaw.

#### **1.2.8.1. Structured Team Learning Methods**

‘Structured team learning’, comprises rewards to teams based on the learning progress of their members, and they are identified by individual accountability, which means that the



success of the team depends on the individual learning such as, Student Team learning and Student Team Achievement Divisions.

Student Team Learning (STL) techniques were developed and researched at Johns Hopkins University in the United States. It stresses the use of team goals and collective definitions of success, which can only be reached if all members of the team learn the objectives being taught. That is, in STL the importance is to learn something as a team not to do something together. There are three major concepts which are central to all Student Team Learning methods; team rewards, in classes using STL, teams earn certificates or other team rewards if they attain above a designed standard; individual accountability, which means that the success of the team depends on the individual learning of all team members; and equal opportunities for success, in which students contribute to their teams by developing over their past performances, so that high, average, and low performances are equally challenged to do their best.

In Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD), learners are specified to four member learning teams which are mixed in performance level, gender, and ethnicity. The teacher presents the lesson, and the learners work within their teams to make sure that all the members of the team have learned and mastered the lesson. By the end, all learners take individual questions on the material, at which time they are not allowed to help one another. Hence, STAD is a cooperative learning method program in which the learners work in four members heterogeneous groups teach to assist and help each other to understand academic context and teachers follow a plan of teaching, team work, and individual accountability.

#### **1.2.8.2. Informal Group Learning Methods**

The initial Jigsaw technique was originally developed by Elliot Aronson and his colleagues in the early 1970s. In Aronson's Jigsaw method, learners are assigned to six

members teams work on academic material that has been divided into sections for each member, and each team member reads his or her section. Then, members of the different teams who have studied the same section meet in “expert groups” to study and discuss their sections together. After that, the students return to their teams and teach that section to their teammates about what they have learnt with the others. The only way learners can master and learn material is to listen carefully to their teammates, by showing interest to one another’s work and supporting them. Slavin (1994) developed a modification of Jigsaw and he included it in the Student Team Learning program. This technique called Jigsaw II, in which learners work in four or five members team as in STAD.

### **1.2.9. Benefits of Cooperative Learning Method**

Panitz (1996) lists over 50 benefits provided by cooperative learning method. These benefits can be summarized into four major categories; social, psychological, academic and assessment.

Cooperative learning method develops social interaction; thus, students benefit in various ways from the social perspective. By having the students explain their reasoning and conclusions, cooperative learning method helps developing the oral communication skills. According to Vygotsky (1978), the social interaction among students extends the students’ zone of proximal development. Besides, Yager (1985) argued that research showed that cooperative learning method also builds diversity awareness among learners, and it motivates learners to use their differences to help each other. A much deeper understanding of cultural and individual differences can be developed.

Learners benefit psychologically from cooperative learning method. According to Johnson and Johnson (1989), cooperative learning method experiences develop more positive attitudes towards learning and instruction than other teaching methodology. Also, it helps to

enhance the interpersonal relationships among students, and create the opportunity to present their ideas in smaller groups. Moreover, according to Janke (1980), learners also tend to be motivated by instructors who take the time to plan activities which develop an encouraging environment.

Learners also benefit from cooperative learning method academically in the sense that there is more of a potential for success when learners work in groups. According to Johnson and Johnson (1990), the individuals tend to give up when they get stuck, whereas a group of learners is more likely to find a way to keep going.

There are also some benefits of cooperative learning method from the aspect of assessment. It provides instant feedback to the students and instructors because the effectiveness of each class can be observed with cooperative learning method, instructors can utilize more authentic assessments such as, observation, peer assessment etc.

In addition to these benefits of cooperative learning method, there are others' which include; first, cooperative learning method helps students learn language better than the drill and practice of traditional language training. According to Neves (1983), it would appear that peer interaction in the natural settings is the perfect use of language that is necessary for successfully acquiring second language skills. Also, the use of cooperative learning method helps students clarify concepts and ideas through discussion and debate. According to Brufee (1993), it is an ideal way to practice the customs of debate and discussion and to facilitate the learning of language which exists in the classroom. Moreover, according to Marzamo (1992), in a cooperative setting, the learners can analyze the effects of the group and suggest tasks and activities which will enhance positive interactions or deal with conflicts of personality problems within each group. Finally, the performances are improved among weaker students when they are grouped within higher achieving students because the stronger students model successful reasoning processes.

**Conclusion**

Cooperative learning method is a new approach in the field of language learning and teaching where the learner is responsible not just for his/her success but also for his/her mates' success. The present section introduced a general overview of the cooperative learning method through presenting its basic definition, its theories and its types. It also covered its main elements and methods. And finally, some benefits of cooperative learning method were mentioned.

## **Chapter Two: Field Work**

Introduction

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

2.1.1. Data Collection Instruments

2.1.1.1. Description of the Questionnaire

2.1.1.2. Description of the Interview

2.1.2. Sampling and Setting

2.1.3. Limitations of the Study

### **Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion**

2.2.1. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

2.2.2. Analysis of the Teacher Interview

2.2.3. Discussion of the Results

Conclusion

## **Chapter Two: Field Work**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, we have reviewed some literature related to the speaking skill, as well as some theoretical issues related to cooperative learning method. However, the present chapter is an attempt to get a coherent analysis of the use of cooperative learning method in the EFL speaking classes. At the first place, this chapter aims at answering the questions that we have set out in the study. The current chapter is divided mainly into two sections. The first section is devoted to the research methodology used in this work including the tools used in this research, a careful description of the research tools, and sampling and setting. While, the second section is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the data obtained.

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

#### **2.1.1. Data Collection Instruments**

Because of the descriptive nature of the research, it seems to be more practical to choose questionnaire and the interview as the main tools to gather the needed information from our sample and the interviewees. For this reason, a questionnaire was administered to first year students of the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia/Jijel, and a structured interview was held with four Oral Expression teachers in order to get more reliable findings.

##### **2.1.1.1. Description of the Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire aimed at exploring the learners' attitudes toward the use of the cooperative learning method in EFL speaking classes, and finding out whether this strategy helps them to enhance their speaking performance.

Brown (2001) defined a questionnaire as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react, either by

writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (as cited in Nunan, 2009, p. 126).

The questionnaire is composed of 24 questions which are organized in a logical order and divided into two main sections. Most questions are close-ended; learners select the correct answer from a limited number of options. There are some open-ended questions which require the respondent to elaborate their viewpoint. The questionnaire is made up of two sections. The first section involves 09 questions concerning the speaking skill. In question one, two, three, and four students are asked about their level of English, the most difficult skill to be acquired and if they have difficulties in speaking English or not. In the fifth and the sixth questions, students are asked about their feelings when they speak English inside the classroom and how often they do participate. The question seven, eight and nine deal with the type of activities used by the teacher and how students find these tasks.

The second section aims at gathering information about Cooperative learning method as a teaching method. The first question is designed to see whether teachers make a good learning atmosphere when teaching speaking. Question two seeks to see how students prefer to work in the oral expression module. The third question seeks to reveal how confident the students are when learning in groups. In question four, the students are asked about the basis on which the team members are gathered. For the question five they are asked about the size of each group when ranging them in groups. Question six and seven, investigate whether the teacher controls the groups and raises the students’ awareness toward the importance of working as a team. As for question eight, nine, ten, and eleven, they are designed to describe the group members’ interaction with each other. In the twelfth question, the students are asked about their opinion concerning their confidence when speaking in a group. Question thirteen deals with the students’ reactions towards Cooperative learning method as a strategy to improve their speaking skills. The fourteenth question is about the frequency of student’

share of ideas when they work together. The students in the last question are requested to say whether they like the speaking session more when they work together as a team.

### **2.1.1.2. The Description of the Interview**

According to Fox (2000), “the interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject”(para. 1).

In the present study, a total of four Oral Expression teachers were asked twelve open-ended questions in the sake of getting information about their perceptions towards the implementation of the cooperative learning method in the EFL speaking classes. The teachers' interview aims at investigating whether they use cooperative learning method as a technique in their classes, their role, their knowledge about the method, and what kind of problems may happen when applying it.

First of all, our interviewees were asked about the period they spend teaching the Oral Expression module. The second question aims at figuring out the difficulties that first year students are facing when speaking English. The third question is about the kinds of techniques the teachers adopt when teaching speaking. In the fourth question, they were asked about the best teaching methods, for them, when teaching the Oral Expression module. In the fifth question, they were asked about how often they use cooperative learning method activities inside the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers were asked some questions about the implementation of cooperative learning method inside the classroom including; the way in which they group their students, problems that their students face when working in groups and how they fix those problems, the way in which they monitor the groups, and their role when the students are working. Likewise, our interviewees were asked about their knowledge about cooperative learning method elements, and about their attitudes towards the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in enhancing the learners' speaking skill. Finally, they were



asked about their opinion about implementing this method as an effective strategy when teaching speaking.

### **2.1.2. Sampling and Setting**

Due to the difficulties encountered to collect data from the whole population, the questionnaire was administered to 70 first year EFL students from the Department of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. The sample was selected randomly from about 250 students. The questionnaire was administered online during the period from 28<sup>th</sup> of June to the 21<sup>st</sup> of July by using Facebook as a tool to keep in touch with first year students. The questionnaire was posted in first year Facebook group, as well as several Facebook pages of Jijel University.

Concerning the second tool of research, it was planned to hold interviews with all first year Oral Expression teachers. However, because of some circumstances, one teacher could not take a part in our study. The interview was distributed during the period from 24<sup>th</sup> of June till 27<sup>th</sup> of August. Because of Covid-19 pandemic, the questions and answers were sent and received using email.

### **2.1.3. Limitations of the Study**

As any work, this one has some limitations. The major problem that seriously affected our study is Covid-19 pandemic. The latter prevented us from collecting the needed answers quickly since Universities were closed for a long time. We have been waiting for almost one month to reach the needed number of the students' responses. It also prevented us from using the third tool of research which is classroom observation, and from face to face contact with each other as well as with our supervisor. Another problem is the difficulty of making interviews with teachers, and having a contact with first year students who wanted to participate in our study.

## Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

### 2. 2. 1. Analysis of the Student Questionnaire

The student questionnaire comprises a series of several kinds of questions which the students are required to answer. Without doubt, these answers should be analyzed in a logical way in order to obtain the needed results.

#### Section One: The Speaking Skill

##### Q1. How do you consider your level of English:

*Table 1: The Students' English Level.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
Very good	10	14.3%
Good	43	61.4%
Average	16	22.9%
Weak	1	1.4%
Total	70	100%

The table above reveals that ten students (14.3%) considered their level of English as very good, forty three students (61.4%) considered it as good, sixteen students (22.9%) as average, while one student (1.4%) considered his level of English as weak. This indicates that the majority of first year students feel that their level of English is good, although they did not spend a long period learning the language.

##### Q2. Which skill do you think is the most difficult to acquire when learning English:

*Table 2: The Most Difficult Skill According to the Students.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
Listening	13	18.6%

<b>Speaking</b>	35	50%
<b>Reading</b>	1	1.4%
<b>Writing</b>	21	30%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The results taken from the table show that (18.6%) of the students admitted that listening is the most difficult skill when they are learning English, whereas thirty five students (50%) declared that speaking is the most difficult one, only one student (1.4%) considered reading as the most difficult skill to acquire while learning English, while the other twenty one students (30%) considered writing as the most difficult skill to acquire. Since a big proportion of students consider speaking as the most difficult skill to acquire, this field should be investigated more to know the reasons behind its difficulty.

### Q3. How can you define your level in speaking:

*Table 3: The Students' Speaking Level.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	2	2.9%
<b>Good</b>	32	45.7%
<b>Average</b>	30	42.9%
<b>Low</b>	6	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The table above demonstrates that only two participants (2.9%) considered their level of speaking as excellent, thirty two students (45.7%) saw it as good, while thirty students (42.9%) considered it as average, and six participants (8.6%) as low. We can see a contradiction when we compare these results with the first question's results; although our

participants claimed at the beginning that they have very good, and good levels in English (10+ 43), they did not confirm these claims when the speaking skill is considered, only (2+ 32) consider their level of speaking as excellent and good.

**Q4. Do you have difficulties in speaking English:**

*Table 4: Students' Difficulties in Speaking English.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	48	68.6%
<b>No</b>	22	31.4%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

As the table shows, forty eight (68.6%) participants face difficulties, while the other twenty two (31.4%) participants do not face any difficulties when speaking. This reveals that the majority of first year students are facing problems when speaking English.

**Q 5. Do you feel afraid when speaking English inside the classroom:**

*Table 5: Students' Feeling when Speaking English.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	42	60%
<b>No</b>	28	40%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The table above shows that the highest percentage opted for "yes". That is to say, (60%) of the students have fears of speaking English inside the classroom. While 28 of the participants representing (40%) indicated that they did not experience such state when they speak. Accordingly, this feeling can be justified differently by our participants, that is why the following question was asked.

➤ **If yes, is it because of:**

- a) **Lack of self confidence**
- b) **Shyness**
- c) **Lack of vocabulary**
- d) **Fear of making mistakes**
- e) **Other, specify**

*Table 6: The Reasons behind the Students' Fear of Speaking English in the Classroom.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>a. Lack of self confidence</b>	15	21.7%
<b>b. Shyness</b>	20	29%
<b>c. Lack of vocabulary</b>	10	14.5%
<b>d. Fear of making mistakes</b>	21	30.4%
<b>e. Other</b>	3	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	69	100%

In this question, the students were allowed to choose one or more options. Relying on the table above, it is illustrated that (21.7%) of the students who answered question with “yes” revealed that they suffer from the lack of self confidence, shyness is another factor that make students afraid to speak with a percentage of (29%), ten of the students representing (14.5%) stated that they felt afraid to speak the English language because of the lack of vocabulary, and twenty one of the subjects representing (30.4%) indicated that fear of making mistakes is one of the factors that made them afraid to speak. The remaining students (4.3%) opted to mention other difficulties including lack of fluency and the unwillingness to learn the language. Relying on the results, we can see that all the already mentioned difficulties are serious problems which should be solved either by the teacher through using different

methods and techniques, or by the students themselves by trying to overcome those problems using some learning strategies in order to make their speaking better.

**Q6. How often do you participate in the oral expression module classes:**

*Table 7: The Frequency of Participating in the Speaking Session.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Always</b>	22	31.4%
<b>Sometimes</b>	22	31.4%
<b>Rarely</b>	22	31.4%
<b>Never</b>	4	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

As shown in the table above, 31.4% of the students stated that they do participate always, the same percentage (31.4%) of the students opted for sometimes, and 22 of the subjects representing (31.4%) indicated that they do participate rarely. However, (5.7%) of the participants admitted that they never participate in the oral expression module. The statistics of this question illustrate that a considerable number of students do not participate in oral expression classes. This can be due to different circumstances including those which are mentioned in the fifth question.

**Q7. In the oral expression module classes, does your teacher ask you to:**

*Table 8: The Type of Activities Used by the Teacher.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>a. Act scenes from short dialogues</b>	20	12%
<b>b. Solve problems together</b>	20	12%
<b>c. Discuss certain topics</b>	57	34.1%

<b>d. Present something about a specific topic</b>	49	29.3%
<b>e. Perform a play</b>	21	12.6%
<b>Total</b>	167	100%

From the data provided in the table above, (12%) of answers are about act scenes from short dialogues, and the same percentage (12%) about solving problems together. A considerable number of responses is devoted to the task of discussing a certain topic which resembles (34.1%) of the total answers. (29.3%) of answers are devoted to the presentation task. The rest of responses (12.6%) are devoted to performing plays. Relying on the table, we can notice that both discussions and presentations are widely used activities by EFL teachers.

**Q8. Do you find these activities beneficial in improving your speaking skill? Please, explain.**

*Table 9: The Students' Attitudes towards the Speaking Activities.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	64	91.4%
<b>No</b>	6	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The purpose behind asking such a question is to investigate learners' perceptions towards the use of such a type of activities; whether the type of activities used by the teacher beneficial in improving the students' speaking skill or not. The majority of the students (91.4%) stated that they see these type activities useful. However, the remaining percentage (8.6%) demonstrated that they see them as impractical. The former; who mentioned their

positive attitudes towards the speaking activities, admitted that these kinds of activities help them to build their self confidence, memorize the new words and expressions, and improve their speaking skill. The latter; who stated that they have a negative attitude towards the speaking activities used by their teachers, illustrated that their teachers do not pay attention to everyone.

**Q9. In your opinion, what is the most useful and beneficial task, and why?**

This question is an attempt to find out which activities are suitable, beneficial, and preferable to our participants. Some students revealed that the task of acting scenes from dialogues is the best task. According to them, it teaches them to speak the native like accent and vocabulary, and correct their mistakes relying on the teacher's feedback.

Others admitted that solving problems together is the best way to improve their speaking skill. They justified their answer by saying that this activity is motivating, comfortable, and useful in providing communication between students.

The participants who answered with "discussing topics" provide multiple answers, but they all have mutual points of view. They argued that discussing topics helps them to get new ideas from their classmates, learn new vocabulary and also learn how to communicate and give their opinions freely to overcome shyness and build self-confidence.

Other participants admitted that presenting about a topic is the most beneficial task. They justified their choice by claiming that presentation increases their self-confidence, makes them feel comfortable, allows them to learn new vocabulary and new information, and helps them to correct previous knowledge about the topic itself and about the different aspects of language in order to avoid the problem of fear of making mistakes.

For those who confirmed that "performing plays" is the best task; they considered it as funny, a good strategy to overcome shyness and stress, and the best way to correct the pronunciation mistakes.



The rest of them suggested other activities. Some students suggested “free talks” as the most useful activity that encourages them to express themselves freely, and feel comfortable in the speaking session. Some students suggested “doing more listening tasks” because it is the only way for them to get new words and expressions, and learn the way in which they are used. Some suggested “doing competitions” by admitting that it is the only way to push students to work and speak inside the classroom. The last suggestion of “doing some vocabulary games” is justified by saying that it allows students to enrich their vocabulary unconsciously.

**Q10. Does the teacher create a good atmosphere when teaching speaking? If yes, justify how.**

*Table 10: Students' Opinions about Teachers' Creation of a Good Atmosphere.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	36	51.4%
<b>No</b>	34	48.6%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

This question was directed to the subjects to find out whether their teachers create a suitable atmosphere when they teach speaking. Half of the students (51.4%) stated that when learning speaking the teacher creates a good atmosphere. While the rest (48.6%) indicated that their teachers do not create such an atmosphere. Those who choose “Yes” justified their answer by stating that the teacher encourages, supports and directs them to speak without fear, involving every student in the discussion, and makes competitions between them. Also, by using idioms, jokes, create funny stories and bringing to them interesting topics, videos... Accordingly, teachers use and create different ways to establish a friendly environment while

teaching speaking so that students who have had negative experiences will feel safe and relaxed.

## Section Two: Cooperative Learning Method

### Q 1. In oral expression sessions, do you like to work?

*Table 11: Students' Preference of Working in the Speaking Sessions.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage%
Individually	13	18.6%
In pairs	20	28.6%
In a group	37	52.9%
Total	70	100%

As shown in the table, students were asked to provide information about their preferable class work for practicing the speaking skill. The majority of the subjects (52.9%) answered that they liked to work cooperatively, about (28.6%) of them stated that they preferred to work in pairs, while (18.6%) demonstrated that they preferred to work individually may be to avoid the group work problems.

### Q2. When working in groups do you feel?

*Table 12: Students' Feeling when Working in Groups.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage%
More confident	62	88.6%
Less confident	8	11.4%
Total	70	100%

This question aimed at investigating students' feeling when the teacher asks them to work together in groups. The majority of the students (88.6%) stated that they were more

confident when they were involved in group work, and 8 students representing (11.4%) felt less confident when they work cooperatively. Hence, it can be claimed from the result above of this question that the students had positive attitudes toward group work.

### Q3. On what basis are the students gathered into groups?

*Table 13: The Basis on which the Students are gathered into Groups.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
Randomly	56	76.7%
Gender	3	4.1%
Students with the same ability	1	1.4%
Students with different abilities	13	17.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the table demonstrates, when the students were asked about the basis that the teacher relies on when grouping them, the majority of the participants (76.7%) claimed that they are ranged in groups randomly, three of them (4.1%) said that they are grouped according to gender, only one student (1.4%) said that the students who have the same abilities are grouped together and thirteen participants (17.8%) claimed that students who have different abilities are grouped together. This reveals that the majority of the groups formed at random because random groups are quick and easy, and it seems fair to the subjects to be selected in this way.

### Q4. When you are ranged in groups what is the size of each group?

*Table 14: The Size of the Groups.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
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<b>Two students</b>	11	15.7%
<b>Three students</b>	10	14.3%
<b>Four students</b>	39	55.7%
<b>More than four students</b>	10	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

As it can be seen from the table, eleven participants (15.7%) admitted that they are grouped in pairs, ten students (14.3%) claimed that each three students are grouped together, thirty nine (55.7%) declared that the size of each group is four students, while the other ten students (14.3%) said that the size of the group is more than four students. Hence, more than half of participants declared that each four students are grouped together. That is to say, four members in each group seems to be the most popular size.

#### **Q5. When working in groups, does your teacher**

*Table 15: The Role of the Teacher when the Students are Grouped Together.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Monitor the groups to facilitate the process of team work</b>	29	37.7 %
<b>Make sure that all students are doing the task</b>	48	62.3%
<b>Total</b>	77	100%

The table above shows the following: twenty nine students (37.7%) said that the role of the teacher when they are grouped together is to monitor the groups in order to facilitate the process of team work and forty eight of our participants (62.3%) admitted that his role is

only to make sure that all the students are doing the task. This reveals that when students work in groups, the teacher takes the roles of both monitoring the groups and making sure that all students in the group are doing the task cooperatively.

**Q6. Does your teacher raise the awareness toward the importance of working in groups? If yes, please explain how s/he does?**

*Table 16: Raising Students' Awareness toward Group Work Importance.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
Yes	22	31.4%
No	48	68.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table demonstrates that twenty two participants (31.4%) answered by 'yes' when they were asked about whether the teacher raises the awareness toward working in groups, while the other forty eight (68.6%) answered by 'no'. Those who answered by 'yes' gave multiple answers. The majority of them claimed that their teachers remind them each time about the importance of working together to get more information, learn from the other's abilities, and learn social skills. While others consider that the teachers' application of group work principle is a sign of its importance. Hence, having a percentage of (68.6%) shows that most of the teachers do not raise the students' awareness towards the value of working in groups.

**Q7. Do you think that doing a task in a small group helps you to better understand it with your classmates?**

*Table 17: Understanding of the Task when Working in a Group.*

Responses	Participants	Percentage %
Yes	67	95.7%

<b>No</b>	3	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

In this question, the participants were asked to indicate whether doing a task in small groups helps them to understand it better with their classmates or not. A high percentage of (95.7%) thought that doing the task in a small group helps them to realize it better. However, only 3 students (4.3%) thought that doing the task together does not help them to understand it well.

**Q8. Do learners work as a team and encourage each other to complete the groups' goal?**

*Table 18: The Students' Encouragement of each other.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	54	77.1%
<b>No</b>	16	22.9%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The data of this table clearly showed that the majority of the participants (77.1%) opted for "Yes". That is to say, the students encourage each other and work cooperatively to reach the group's objective. While, 16 students (22.9%) opted for "No". That is, the students do not support each other's effort. This reveals that most students work together as a team and facilitate each other's effort to reach the learning objectives.

**Q9. Is each member of the group responsible for his/her own learning and helps the whole team to accomplish the task successfully?**

*Table 19: Students' Responsibility when Working Together.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
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<b>Yes</b>	59	84.3%
<b>No</b>	11	15.7%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

Concerning this question, students were asked to say whether each member in the group is responsible for his/her own learning or not. The majority of the participants (84.3%) opted for “yes”. That is to say, they help each other and work as a team to accomplish the task successfully, and only 11 of the students representing (15.7%) opted for “No”. Accordingly, the results got from this question show that most of the subjects are responsible for their own learning and help each other to complete the task successfully. The achievement of the group is dependent on the individual learning of all group members.

**Q10. Do learners present their ideas and help the group to operate well?**

*Table 20: Students' Presentation of Ideas when Working in Groups.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	62	88.6%
<b>No</b>	8	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

Concerning this question, participants were asked to say whether each student in the group presents his/her ideas and help the group to operate well or not. More than half percent of the students (88.6%) illustrated that each student presents his/her ideas. Conversely, (11.4%) of students admitted that each student in the group do not present his/her own ideas. This reveals that the majority of the students share their ideas and help the group to operate well when working in groups. So, each member in the group must be accountable for contributing his/her share of the work.

**Q11. Working in small groups helps me to speak English confidently.**

*Table 21: Students' Perceptions towards the Efficiency of Small Groups on speaking English Confidently.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	28	40%
<b>Agree</b>	34	48.6%
<b>Disagree</b>	5	7.1%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

According to this table, the students were asked about their opinion about speaking English confidently when they work in small groups. Most of students (48.6%) agree with the statement. 28 of the informants representing (40%) stated that they strongly agree. By contrast, only 5 students disagree with the statement and 3 students (4.3%) strongly disagree. Hence, the majority supports the use of small groups and confirm their usefulness in raising students' self-confidence.

**Q12. Do you think that cooperative learning method helps you to improve your speaking skill? Please justify your answer.**

*Table 22: Students' Perceptions towards the Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Method*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	62	88.6%
<b>No</b>	8	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%



In this question, the informants were asked to indicate if they considered the cooperative learning method as a technique in improving their speaking skill. According to the table above, the majority of the informants 62 representing (88.6%) opted for “yes”. That is to say, the majority of the students thought that this strategy helps them to improve their speaking skill. However, (11.4%) of the participants opted for “no”, they illustrated that this strategy do not improve their speaking skill because the students who are good in English do not give a chance to the others to participate in the task and also when they are arranged in groups they talk a lot so not all of them can share their ideas. The ones who said “yes” admitted that this strategy helps them to speak confidently without being afraid of making mistakes, to overcome shyness, feel more comfortable, and also it gives them the opportunity to enhance their level of English as well as their speaking skill by exchanging ideas and thoughts. Hence, from the obtained results, it is safe to say that this method helps students to develop their speaking skill.

**Q13. When working together in a small group, how often do students share ideas to perform oral tasks?**

*Table 23: Students' Frequency of Sharing Ideas when working in Groups.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Always</b>	35	50%
<b>Sometimes</b>	32	45.7%
<b>Rarely</b>	3	4.3 %
<b>Never</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

This question was directed to students in order to gather data about the frequency of sharing ideas to perform oral tasks. The results above shows that half of students (50%) stated

that they always share ideas, 32 students representing (45.7%) declared that they sometimes share ideas and only 3 students (4.3%) stated that they rarely share ideas to perform oral tasks when working together in small groups. Accordingly, half of the students present their ideas and take care of each other when working in small groups.

**Q14. When I work in a group, I like attending the speaking session more.**

*Table 24: Students' Opinions about the Effectiveness of Group Work in Liking the Speaking Session.*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	23	32.9%
<b>Agree</b>	34	48.6%
<b>Disagree</b>	10	14.3%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The results taken from the table above indicate that twenty three (32.9%) students do strongly agree with the statement “When I work in a group, I like the speaking session more”, thirty four (48.6%) agree with it, while ten students (14.3%) disagree, and only 3 (4.3%) strongly disagreed with that statement. Hence, this reveals that the majority of the participants prefer to work cooperatively as a team in the speaking session.

**2. 2. 2. Analysis of the Teacher Interview**

The teacher interview is used in this study to get more in-depth understanding of the teachers' attitudes towards the use of the cooperative learning method in the EFL speaking classes. Their answers are analyzed in an organized way in which the already set out study's questions could be answered.

**Q1. How long have you been teaching speaking?**

The question above was asked in order to know the experience of each of our respondents. Their responses revealed that they have different experiences in teaching speaking. Two teachers answered by saying that they have been teaching speaking for two years, one teacher by four years, while the last one answered by twelve years. Accordingly, it can be claimed that the teachers who have been teaching speaking for a long period of time are more aware of their students' needs and problems and the way to solve them.

**Q2. In your opinion, do your students find difficulties when speaking English? If yes, what are they?**

Relying on the respondents' answers, all the teachers agreed on the point that their students are facing difficulties when speaking English. This validates the students' answers previously stated in the questionnaire, in the fourth question.

Our interviewees listed the major difficulties that their students are facing; they include the lack of knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. One teacher said: "while speaking, they may face difficulties in grammar such as verb tenses, pronunciation mistakes, lack of vocabulary. . .". Others considered shyness, lack of confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes as serious problems that may hinder students from speaking English fluently and accurately. A respondent claimed: "Yes, they find many difficulties which are: fear of making mistakes. . . lack of confidence, shyness, and anxiety speaking in front of their peers" . On the whole, the teachers' responses demonstrate that almost all of them agree that their students do face difficulties when speaking English due either to the lack of knowledge about the language or to some psychological states.

**Q3. Do you encourage them to speak inside the classroom, if yes, how?**

All of our interviewees answered by 'yes' when they were asked about whether they encourage their students to speak inside the classroom or not.

Concerning how they do so, they provided multiple answers including; creating a comfortable atmosphere, asking their students about their areas of interest, giving positive feedback even for wrong answers, reminding them about the importance of speaking, trying to make them talk together using group/pair works, and playing games. One respondent said: “I have my own way in encouraging my students to speak; I always remind them that OE class is different from other classes in which they are required to speak more than I do, I also encourage them to speak and make mistakes, I always praise them after they finish even their speech was full of mistakes, I always give feedback and correct their mistakes in a friendly way so they will not feel embarrassed nor demotivated, I always raise a debatable question at the end of the class where they are all (without exception) invited to give their opinion”. All the already mentioned endeavors to encourage the students to speak are among the best ways to make students less stressed to use English in front of their classmates.

**Q4. In your opinion, which approach do you think is suitable in the EFL speaking classes?**

This question aims at investigating the teachers’ perception toward the most useful approach for teaching speaking. All the respondents’ answers were approximately the same. One teacher revealed that the communicative approach is more suitable in EFL speaking classes, while another claimed that both communicative and interactive approaches are useful because students are required to speak more than the teacher, one respondent claimed that she prefers to rely on tasks that are conducted in groups, because she believes that the students learn from each other more than they do from the teacher. The last teacher believed in the effectiveness of Task Based Language Teaching approach in the speaking classes. This shows that communication has a vital role in EFL speaking classes in terms of making students interact with each other as well as with their teachers using the target language.

**Q5. How often do you use cooperative learning method in your classroom activities?**

When the teachers were asked about how often they use cooperative learning method in their classes, two teachers admitted that they used cooperative learning method most of the time. One of them claimed that he uses it once a week. While one respondent said: "I started to use it this year in my classes". The teachers' use of cooperative learning method revealed that they do believe in the effectiveness of this technique.

**Q6. When ranging students in groups what is the size of each group? And on the basis of what do you group your students?**

Concerning the first part of the above question, some teachers arranged their students in groups composed from up to four members. Another teacher admitted that the size should not exceed five members.

For the second part of the question, almost all of the respondents argued that the students are grouped together on the basis of their level. One respondent stated that "students are grouped depending on their levels and each group must have approximately similar level to the other". Our interviewees believed that each group should be heterogeneous, comprising excellent students as well as students with lower abilities.

**Q7. Do your students have problems working together? If yes, which kind of problems? And how do you try to solve such problems?**

When teachers were asked whether their students have problems working together, all the respondents stated that their students do not face problems during the group work. One teacher stated: "on the contrary, I always notice that they feel happy whenever they are arranged in groups to work on oral assignment". Generally speaking, the teachers' answers revealed that the majority of their students do not have problems when working together.

**Q8. How do you monitor group activities in your classroom?**

Generally, the teachers' answers were approximately the same; they stated that they make sure that the students are doing the tasks. One of them admitted: "I set them to work in

groups and I keep walking around the rows to see whether some of them need help and to make sure everybody in the group is contributing to the performance of the task”. Another teacher declared: “I generally keep an eye on my students in case they require an explanation or a certain vocabulary”. Another one shared the same opinion: “... devote much time to move around groups and answer every question”. The other teacher stated: “I monitor the group activities with clear pedagogical instruments”. In sum, the teachers’ answers demonstrated that all of them help their learners when they are working cooperatively as a group.

**Q9. What is your role when students are working in their groups?**

Almost all of the interviewees admitted that they have various roles when their learners work in groups. The teachers stated that in some situations they act as guides who give explanations, other times, act as checkers and observers who clarify things and answer the students’ questions. One of our interviewees explained the different roles he often does when his students work in groups and said: “I pass by each group and check their work, clarify and explain things, or answer their questions if they have any, and more importantly encourage them to work”. Another teacher stated: “I do play the role of guide, monitor, assessor, checker...”. Generally speaking, the teachers’ answers revealed that the majority of them ensure that each student in the group is participating in his/her own learning.

**Q10. Are you aware of cooperative learning method elements? If yes, which one you are mostly aware of?**

When the teachers were asked about their awareness of cooperative learning method elements, and which one they are mostly aware of, their answers differ. Two teachers admitted that they are aware of all cooperative learning method elements. One of them stated: “Yes, I am aware of the cooperative learning method elements and I’m mostly aware of the positive interdependence of the students”. The other teacher said: “All the five elements:

individual accountability, face- to face promotive interaction, positive interdependence, group processing and interpersonal and small group skills are the five pivotal ingredients that make CL works efficiently". However one of interviewees declared: "Yes, I am aware of some cooperative learning method elements, which are: positive interdependence, face- to face interaction, and group processing". And another one said only positive interdependence.

Generally speaking, the teachers' answers to this question revealed that not all of them are aware of all cooperative learning method elements, but all of them were mostly aware of the element "positive interdependence".

**Q11. Does cooperative learning method enhance students' speaking skill? If yes, explain how?**

Generally, the teachers' answers were approximately the same; all of them admitted that cooperative learning method enhances students' speaking skill. One teacher stated: "Yes, it does! Cooperative learning method encourages students' participation in interactional environment, and develops self- confidence and reduces classroom inhibition". Another teacher shared the same opinion: "Working in groups will totally maximize students' confidence in each other. Their vocabulary level will increase too and shyness will disappear through practice". Another one said: "In cooperative learning method groups, students learn interpersonal and small group skills like discussing their work goals, making decisions, dividing roles...etc". The other teacher affirmed: "Indeed it does, especially for introvert learners who are afraid and shy of taking risks to talk in front of the teacher. It helps them a lot in raising their noticing of mistakes. It is worthy as a method as it increases learners' chances of speaking and promotes their feeling of belonging to the group. It gives them opportunities to learn vocabulary items from their mates".

Overall, all the teachers' answers were the same. We noticed from their responses that they believe in the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in enhancing their

students' speaking skills, because it helps their students to learn from each other better than learning from the teacher, thus, they develop their self confidence and get rid of shyness.

**Q12. Do you consider cooperative learning method as a good strategy?**

When the interviewees were asked whether they consider cooperative learning method as a good strategy, all of them said "yes". One of the interviewees admitted: "Cooperative learning method is a very good strategy because it involves the students in what is being taught...So, working in groups creates both fun and interest resulting in a better performance". Two teachers shared the same opinion; they stated that teachers must use this strategy in their speaking classes.

Generally speaking, all the respondents' answers reveal that they consider cooperative learning method as a good technique because it helps learners and enhances their speaking skill.

### **2.2.3. Discussion of the Results**

Speaking is considered to be an important skill and one of the major skills that learners need to master at University. The students who were involved in this study believed that this skill plays a crucial role in learning English as a foreign / second language. However, there are some aspects that might prevent students from being successful in speaking; and make them feel uncomfortable when speaking the language.

From the analysis of the students' questionnaire, it was noticed that working in groups seemed to be a preferable way of learning for the majority of students. Nevertheless, some students prefer to work individually may be to express their ideas freely, and to avoid disagreement with others. The majority of students feel less stressed, and speak the English language confidently when they work cooperatively as a group. Consequently, the teachers' role is to encourage the students by creating a suitable atmosphere and raising their awareness toward the importance of working in groups. Also, the teacher should be a monitor, a



facilitator of the learning process and make sure that all students are doing the task. The majority of students who were involved in this research considered cooperative learning method as a good strategy to improve their speaking skill.

On the basis of the analysis of the interview provided by the teachers of Oral Expression module, it was noticed that all of their responses demonstrate that most of their students face difficulties when speaking English such as anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge, etc. The findings showed that first year students like to work cooperatively as a team because they have a sense of enjoyment whenever they are arranged in groups and they encourage each other to participate, as a result, the interaction inside the classroom increases.

From the interviewees' answers we can also deduce that the majority of the students do not have problems working together. That is to say, the students are motivated to work together in groups. We can also notice from the teachers' responses that cooperative learning method involves the students in what is being taught and helps them to do better so, they consider it as a good strategy in improving the students' speaking skill. However, not all the teachers were aware of all the cooperative learning method elements, hence, they would consider cooperative learning method and group work to be the same.

In short, the current chapter achieved its goal of answering the already asked questions at the outset. The teachers' and the learners' answers revealed that OE teachers do use the latest technique. The teachers' answers demonstrated that all of them have positive attitudes towards its use to encourage their students to participate, to develop their self-confidence and vocabulary level, to help them learn interpersonal skills and dividing their roles. Both of the teachers and the students believe in the effectiveness of such technique in improving the learners' speaking skills, as well as in increasing the interaction inside the classroom. The answers showed that first year students like to work in groups and have positive attitudes toward its use in the speaking classes for its positive effects of correcting each other's

mistakes, building self-confidence, exchanging ideas, and creating a comfortable atmosphere inside the classroom. In sum, both learners and teachers hold positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method as a technique to enhance the speaking skill.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the chapter in hand fulfilled its aim of answering the study's questions through providing further insight into the students' perceptions and the teachers' attitudes toward the speaking skill as well as cooperative learning method. Indeed, the teachers' answers complemented the ones obtained via the students' questionnaire such as the answers concerning the students' difficulties in speaking English, the teachers' role in their classes, and the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in enhancing the students' speaking skill. Although the teachers' positive attitudes toward the adaptation of cooperative learning method in EFL speaking classes, some of them lack the sufficient knowledge about its elements.

## **General Conclusion**

Mastering EFL requires mastering the four main language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Because of the interactive nature of the speaking skill, it is considered to be the most important and the most desirable to be learned by EFL learners. Nevertheless, they may face difficulties when speaking English due to some linguistic and non-linguistic problems. In order to minimize those problems, several methods and techniques are adopted in the speaking classes, among them the method under investigation. In the last decades, cooperative learning method emerged as a new technique of teaching and learning that made the teaching-learning process easier. This work aims at investigating teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method in EFL speaking classes at the Jijel English Department. To look into its use, we provided one hypothesis in which we assumed that the majority of EFL teachers and learners hold positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method in the speaking classes.

In the light of investigating this hypothesis, we begun by a chapter of literature review which is comprised of two sections. The first section presented some theoretical issues related to the speaking skill, through this section we found out that this skill is a very complex and difficult. However, it is very important to master it in language learning which needs more careful attention from the learner's and teacher's part. The second section provided a better understanding of the cooperative learning method, its types, and its underlying elements. Along this section, we discovered that cooperative learning method is a useful technique which facilitates the process of teaching and learning by creating a good atmosphere which motivated the students to learn more. The second chapter was devoted to the practical part in which the data obtained from the research tools was described and analyzed. We concluded this chapter by confirming the given hypotheses. Throughout the analysis of the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview, we found out that both of

the learners and the teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of cooperative learning method in the speaking classes. This work to some extent gives an overview of the way in which cooperative learning method is applied by first year oral expression teachers in the department of English at the University of Jijel. However, some teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about the technique's elements.

To put it in a nutshell, cooperative learning method is an area which deserves interest for future research. For this reason, we consider this work as a starting point for other researchers to investigate different perspectives concerning this technique. Indeed, this study is helpful for teachers who are interested in teaching the language skills to know more about cooperative learning method, and the way in which it is used in EFL classes.

### **Recommendations and suggestions**

Relying on the findings deduced from the questionnaire and the interview's results, we suggest some recommendations.

- EFL teachers should use cooperative learning method in their daily teaching in order to avoid the monotony of teaching as well as to enhance the students' speaking skills.
- The teachers should enlighten their students about the crucial role of the speaking skill and create a suitable and a friendly atmosphere in order to make learners feel more comfortable to speak English.
- Also, they should give enough time to their students to interact with each other and encourage them to speak without fear even though they do not have enough words and ideas.
- Moreover, the Oral Expression teachers should recognize that cooperative learning method is a technique which needs an in-depth sight into its elements to be applied correctly in the classroom.

- Teachers should also raise the students' awareness toward the importance of working in groups by showing them its effectiveness and its benefits in developing the speaking skill.

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## Appendix I

### The Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire which is a part of our research work. It seeks to investigate the use of cooperative learning method in EFL speaking classes. We would be thankful and grateful if you answer the questions below to help us complete our study. Your answers are very important, please read the questions carefully and tick (✓) the option(s) that correspond to your answer, and specify it when needed.

Thank you in advance.

#### Section One: The Speaking Skill

1. Do you consider your level of English
  - a) Very good
  - b) Good
  - c) Average
  - d) Weak
  
2. Which skill do you think is the most difficult to acquire when learning English?
  - a) Listening
  - b) Speaking
  - c) Reading
  - d) Writing
  
3. How can you define your level in speaking?
  - a) Excellent
  - b) Good
  - c) Average
  - d) Low

COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

4. Do you have difficulties in speaking English?

a) Yes

b) No

5. Do you feel afraid when speaking English inside the classroom?

a) Yes

b) No

➤ If yes, is it because of:

a) Lack of self confidence

b) Shyness

c) Lack of vocabulary

d) Fear of making mistakes

e) Other, specify .....

.....

6. How often do you participate in the Oral Expression module classes?

a) Always

b) Sometimes

c) Rarely

d) Never

7. In the Oral Expression module classes, does your teacher ask you to:

a) Act scenes from short dialogues

b) Solve problems together

c) Discuss certain topics

d) Present something about a specific topic

e) Perform a play

COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

8. Do you find these activities beneficial in improving your speaking skills? Please, explain.....  
.....

9. In your opinion, what is the most useful and beneficial task, and why?  
.....  
.....

10. Does the teacher create a good atmosphere when teaching speaking?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please justify how? .....  
.....

**Section Two: Cooperative learning method**

1. In oral expression sessions, do you like to work:

- a) Individually
- b) In pairs
- c) In a group

2. When working in groups do you feel:

- a) More confident?
- b) Less confident?

3. On what basis are the students gathered into groups?

- a) Randomly
- b) Gender
- c) Students with the same ability
- d) Students with different abilities

COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

4. When you are ranged in groups what is the size of each group?

- a) Two students
- b) Three students
- c) Four students
- d) More than four students

5. When working in groups, does your teacher

- a) Monitor the groups to facilitate the process of team work
- b) Make sure that all students are doing the task

6. Does your teacher raise the awareness toward the importance of working in groups?

- a) Yes
- b) No

➤ If yes, please explain how he does?

.....

.....

.....

7. Do you think that doing a task in a small group helps you to better understand it with your classmates?

- a) Yes
- b) No

8. Do learners work as a team and encourage each other's effort to complete the groups' goal?

- a) Yes
- b) No

COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

9. Is each member of the group responsible for his/her own learning and helps the whole team to accomplish the task successfully?

a) Yes

b) No

10. Do learners present their ideas and help the group to operate well?

a) Yes

b) No

11. Working in small groups helps me to speak English confidently

a) Strongly agree

b) Agree

c) Disagree

d) Strongly disagree

12. Do you think that cooperative learning method helps you to improve your speaking skill?

a) Yes

b) No

Please justify your answer.....

.....

.....

.....

13. When working together in a small group, how often do students share ideas to perform oral tasks?

a) Always

b) Sometimes

c) Rarely

d) Never



COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

14. When I work in a group, I like the speaking session more.

- a) Strongly agree
- b) Agree
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly disagree

Thank you!

**Appendix II**

**The Teachers' Interview**

Dear teachers,

We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions concerning the use of cooperative learning method as a teaching method in the EFL speaking classes. Your answers will be so helpful for this research.

1. How long have you been teaching speaking?

.....

2. In your opinion, do your students find difficulties when speaking English? If yes, what are they?

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

3. Do you encourage them to speak inside the classroom, if yes, how?

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

4. In your opinion, which approach do you think is suitable in the EFL speaking classes?

.....

5. How often do you use cooperative learning method in your classroom activities?

.....

6. When ranging students in groups what is the size of each group? And on the basis of what do you group your students?

COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

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

7. Do your students have problems working together? If yes, which kind of problems?  
And how do you try to solve such problems?

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

8. How do you monitor group activities in your classroom?

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

9. What is your role when students are working in their groups?

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

10. Are you aware of cooperative learning method elements? If yes, which one you are  
mostly aware of?

.....  
.....

11. Does cooperative learning method enhances students' speaking skill? If yes, explain  
how?

.....

12. Do you consider cooperative learning method as a good strategy?

.....

**Résumé**

On considère le travail en petits groupes l'un des moyens et des techniques les plus importants effectués par le professeur afin d'améliorer le niveau de prononciation des apprenants de langue anglaise, et l'utiliser d'une façon correcte et de se faire aimer également aux séances de l'expression orale et de leur faire moins tendus lors de l'utilisation de la langue devant leurs camarades. Ce travail est considéré comme recherche pour investiguer attitudes de professeurs et étudiants envers l'utilisation de la méthode du travail coopératif dans des petits groupes lors des séances de l'expression orale. Et pendant notre utilisation des questionnaires destinés aux étudiants de première année du département d'anglais et l'entretien effectué avec quatre professeurs chargés de module d'expression orale, il montre que les enseignants et les apprenants ont des attitudes positives envers la technique déjà mentionnée.

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN THE SPEAKING CLASSES

ملخص :

تقتضي طبيعة التعلم الاجتماعية تواصلًا مستمرًا بين الطلاب من مختلف المستويات و البيئات. لهذا السبب، تعتبر كفاءات تطبيق هذا التواصل من النقاط الجوهرية التي يجب التطرق إليها ومعرفتها و تطبيقها تطبيقًا صحيحًا. و يعتبر العمل في مجموعات صغيرة واحدة من أهم الطرق و التقنيات التي يلجأ إليها الأستاذ من أجل تحسين مستوى نطق الطلبة للغة الانجليزية و استعمالها استعمالًا صحيحًا و تحبيبهم في حصص مقياس التعبير الشفوي و جعلهم أقل توترا عند استعمال اللغة أمام زملائهم. كرس هذا العمل من أجل معرفة مواقف الأساتذة و الطلبة على حد سواء من استعمال التقنية المذكورة آنفاً. من خلال استعمالنا للاستبيان و المقابلة، تبين أن لدى الأساتذة و الطلبة مواقف جد ايجابية حيال استعمال هذه التقنية.