COOPERATIVE LEARNING AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF OTHER WAYS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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Undoubtedly, the society is developing very fast. Each new day brings its new requirements for every member of the society and the success depends on his abilities to build a good and effective cooperation. Therefore, at the end of the 20th century, a relatively new approach to teaching English came into being: Cooperative Learning (CL) which involves students in working together to attain a common aim. It was actively applied in 21st centuries. In the course of the research regarding CL a number of cooperative strategies and techniques were developed by such prominent educational specialists as Dr. Spencer Kagan, R.Slavin, D.Johnson and R.Johnson, E.Aronson, S.Sharan and Y.Sharan.

Having considered some of the advantages of Cooperative Learning such as amelioration of students' critical thinking, social and interpersonal skills; ability to develop both productive and receptive skills; creation of active, involved, exploratory learning atmosphere; development of cooperation and leadership skills, it became important to track them comparing Cooperative Learning (CL) to some other modern approaches, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task – Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Olga Kozar in her article Towards Better Group Work: Seeing the Difference between Cooperation and Collaboration referring to Smith (1995) defines CL as working together to achieve common goals [3, p. 16]. George M. Chinnery in his article VoIM – Mediated Cooperative Tasks for English Language Learners referring to Olsen and Kagan defines CL as group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is responsible for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others [2, p. 29]. According to Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, CL is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. (Richards and Rodgers 2002: 192)

As for the connection between CLT, TBLT and CL, it is necessary to define the notions of CLT and TBLT. According to Jack C. Rodgers, one can perceive CLT as a set of principles about the aims of teaching a language, how learners study a language, the types of classroom activities that can best facilitate learning, and also the role of trainers and learners in the classroom [5, p. 22].

As to the TBLT, H. Douglas Brown affirms that it is a method that puts task at the centre of methodological focus. It views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve, the purposes of which extend beyond the practice of language for its own sake [1, p. 50].

David Nunan in his Task – Based Language Teaching affirms that CLT is not a unitary approach, but a family of approaches. And as in a family not all members (approaches) exist in harmony. They have both similarities and differences. One of such members of the family of CLT is TBLT. David Nunan explains that CLT is an extensive philosophical approach to the language curriculum. And that TBLT is just one of the realizations of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus, design and methodology [4, p. 7-10].

According to Jack C. Rodgers TBLT can be viewed as an extension of CLT movement. But it uses other ways to achieve communicative goals. Since TBLT focuses on creating classroom processes that are considered to best contribute to language learning it refers to process – based methodologies, which also comprise content – based teaching [5, p. 27].

So we see that both David Nunan and Jack C. Richards have the opinion that CLT and TBLT are strongly interconnected. They both try to achieve communicative goals, but do it in different ways. Both authors view CLT as a superordinate term to TBLT. George M.Chinnery in his article VoIM – Mediated Cooperative Tasks for English Language Learners referring to Larsen-Freeman affirms that CL is an essential complement to TBLT [2, p. 29]. According to Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, CL contributes to communicative interaction between the learners and can be viewed as an extension of CLT [6, p. 193]. Finally, we see that according to David Nunan CLT can be seen as a family of approaches which have both differences and similarities that are reflected in their ways to achieve communicative goals. And TBLT is one of these approaches. Jack C. Rodgers considers TBLT as an extension of CLT. Both authors are in agreement concerning the relationship between CLT and TBLT. As to the relationship between CLT, TBLT and CL, there are some controversies between George M.Chinnery, who views CL as an essential complement to TBLT and Jack C.Richards and Theodore S.Rodgers, who consider CL to be the extension CLT on a level with TBLT.

Having analysed the goals of CLT, TBLT, and CL, one common goal can be observed – to teach learners to communicate. While the practitioners of the

first two approaches exert every effort to teach their learners to communicate, those who implement CL, along with teaching communicative skills, also aim at the development of critical thinking, social and problem-solving skills.

Both CLT and CL promote interaction during the lessons since it contributes to the development of communicative competence. Still, CL presupposes a lot of group and pair work, whereas CLT may also use group and pair work, but to a far less extent. It can be used in such communicative activities as discussion, role – play, simulation. Communicative activities not always give all the learners in the classroom equal opportunities to participate, but cooperative techniques are structured in such a way that even the weakest and shyest students can participate in them.

TBLT as well as CL use the principle of active learning, which affirms that language is acquired better when learners make efforts to learn it, rather than when teacher alone tries to transmit his knowledge to them. TBLT is based on the fulfilment of different types of tasks and CL is based on cooperation in groups and pairs. Both TBLT and CL can include group and pair work and task fulfilment. TBLT students are mostly responsible only for their results whereas CL learners are responsible for the success of those who they are working with.

In conclusion, CLT, TBLT and CL are closely interconnected approaches. Some researchers such as Nunan and Rodgers view TBLT and CL as the extensions of CLT which in their opinion represents a set of approaches with the main goal to achieve communicative competence. CLT, TBLT and CL definitely have a common goal – realization if the communicative competence, but they use different means in order to achieve it. All three types of teaching aim at preparing learners for real – life communication. They try to provide learners with authentic language presented in the context. In addition, all three types of teaching are learner – centred.

References:

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