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de la Barra, Erika; Carbone, Soffía
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Bridging Inequality: Cooperative Learning Through Literature in Two Vulnerable Schools in Santiago

Cerrar la brecha de la desigualdad: aprendizaje cooperativo mediante la literatura en dos escuelas vulnerables en Santiago

Erika de la Barra

Soffia Carbone

Universidad Mayor, Santiago, Chile

This paper reports a qualitative action-research study on the use of cooperative learning through literature in two vulnerable English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms in Chile. The study aimed at bridging EFL inequality by exposing students to a different methodology using cooperative learning, and content-based instruction through literature, which are inexistent methods in vulnerable schools. Improving students' performance and increasing their personal growth were also pursued. Data were gathered through lesson observations, language tests, and surveys. Results evidenced that students improved their cooperative learning skills and personal growth, yet their linguistic proficiency was not significantly enhanced. As a conclusion, promoting cooperative learning together with content-based instruction through literature resulted in a suitable combination to improve learners' learning strategies and personal growth.

Keywords: content-based instruction, cooperative learning, English as a foreign language, inequality, literature

Este artículo reporta una investigación-acción cualitativa sobre el aprendizaje cooperativo mediante la literatura, adelantada en dos aulas chilenas vulnerables de inglés como lengua extranjera. Se buscó disminuir la desigualdad en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera y mejorar el rendimiento y el crecimiento personal de los estudiantes. Estos estuvieron expuestos al aprendizaje cooperativo mediante la literatura, algo inexistente en escuelas vulnerables. La recolección de datos incluyó la observación de clases, pruebas de lenguaje y encuestas. Se evidenció un incremento en las habilidades de aprendizaje cooperativo y en el crecimiento personal de los alumnos, aunque su competencia lingüística no mejoró significativamente. En conclusión, combinar un aprendizaje cooperativo con el uso de la literatura resulta apropiado para mejorar las estrategias de aprendizaje y el crecimiento personal de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje basado en contenidos, aprendizaje cooperativo, desigualdad, inglés como lengua extranjera, literatura

Erika de la Barra · Email: erika.delabarra@umayor.cl

Soffia Carbone · Email: soffia.carbone@umayor.cl

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Introduction

The problem of inequality in English as a foreign language (EFL) has been a serious concern for several Chilean governments. Research suggests the idea that public schools have access to substantially poorer learning materials and incompletely trained teachers (Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2008; Matear, 2006). It can also be observed that municipal schools keep using old fashioned methodologies such as the grammar translation method whereas private schools make use of more modern approaches that help students develop productive skills such as speaking and writing (Abrahams & Farías, 2010; Herrada et al., 2012; McBride, 2010; Yilorm, 2016). Proof of this inequality is the sustained gap in the results obtained in the *Simce* in English, the standardised test carried out by the Ministry of Education between the advantaged schools and the disadvantaged schools (Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación, <https://informate.agenciaeducacion.cl/>).

Having worked at both public and private schools as teachers of English and having also supervised preservice teachers in several schools, we saw how it was easy to appreciate that the existing gap between materials, didactics, and methodology used in public schools and in private ones is still a big issue which damages the possibility of vulnerable children to learn English appropriately.

The objective of this research is to examine the effects of both the cooperative learning and content-based approaches in two vulnerable schools in Santiago. These two approaches are widely employed in private schools because they are more effective and because students become the centre of the learning process allowing them to develop productive skills rather than just receptive ones. The research describes the effects of an intervention carried out in the selected schools and the impact it had on the children who had never worked with these methodologies.

Literature Review

Inequality in the EFL Classroom

There are several studies and tests that have demonstrated the inequality and variation in Chilean students' linguistic proficiency when using EFL (Abrahams & Farías, 2010; Herrada et al., 2012; see also the website of the Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación, <https://informate.agenciaeducacion.cl/>). Nevertheless, the best results are achieved by those who have been exposed to the language from earlier years. In Chile, English is mandatory from Grade 5 to 8, with education on the subject before Grade 8 depending on the school (McKay, 2003). There is a high number of public schools which do not teach English to earlier years as they do not have the monetary resources as to spend on English teachers or materials, whereas private schools begin teaching the language in nursery school. Carbone (2015) explains that *Simce* 2010 established that 20% of students obtaining certification began learning English in nursery school, while 5% of students did not study the language until Grades 4 or 5, and just 3% in Grade 8. The situation was confirmed in *Simce* 2014: 26% of students who began English in nursery school obtained certification while 8% of students who began English in Grades 4 or 5 did likewise; and 4% of certified students belonged to the group which started in the eighth grade.

On another note, Abrahams and Farías (2010) claim that there is a difference among those teachers working at high budget schools and those who work at less wealthy institutions. These authors discovered that teachers working at fee-paying private schools were trained at better universities and had completed postgraduate studies related to their field. Better qualified teachers apply for better jobs at private schools, while those who attended less prestigious universities and have not undertaken training courses, frequently apply for jobs at public schools. Supporting this view, Herrada et al. (2012) analysed 3,079 teachers and discovered that more than half of the sample had attended private universities

and that a third had not been trained in English for their main degree, as they had studied other subjects or primary education. All throughout Latin America, EFL teachers face difficulties when it comes to training and continuity. According to Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017), even though in countries such as Colombia, Panama, and Peru there are programs available for EFL teachers to study abroad, there is little evidence on the positive impact that these programs may cause in teachers. Furthermore, in some countries most teachers have not received official training in teaching English; for example, only 27% of Peru's secondary English teachers are licensed to teach the subject (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Herrada et al. (2012) also discovered that teachers working at public schools in Chile are less proficient, do not speak as much English as they are expected to in the classroom, and tend to rely on old-fashioned teaching methods. This is not an isolated situation in Chile, as Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) explain; in Latin America, English language teaching has shown to be weak when it comes to the quality of both teachers' training and proficiency. Policy frameworks have set the bar from the B2 to C2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and several studies and tests have demonstrated that many EFL teachers do not reach the level. Costa Rica and Chile are the strongest countries when it comes to teacher proficiency, while other countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, show less auspicious results (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Old fashioned teaching methods are not only present in public schools but also in subsidised ones. As de la Barra (2016) suggests, most EFL teaching in these schools is teacher-centred and students have very little participation in their own process. It is urgent to redefine the roles of the teacher and students in an EFL context. English cannot be learnt if the teacher is the only one who speaks. Besides, by perpetuating a teacher-centred approach, schools are not providing room for the development of social skills that will help students

grow up as citizens with a pro-social behaviour. Only individualism, indifference, and inequality are being fostered because cooperative learning is mostly absent in public and subsidised schools but is vastly used in private schools.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning falls within the social approaches to learning. One of the founding fathers of the social development theory is Vygotsky (1934/1978), who stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the process of learning. In other words, he strongly believed in the relevance of the community and culture in learning. Cooperative learning as such became really popular in the 80's with researchers such as Johnson et al. (1991), Slavin (1985, 1987, 1989), and Kagan (1989) who, through different experimental studies, developed principles and categories for this method that became immensely fruitful in the 90's and 2000's.

Cooperation is an essential trait of an ethical and moral society because it suppresses individuals' egoistical self-interests and helps them to open to others providing help and care which is the basis for a pro-social behaviour (Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). On the same line of thought, cooperation teaches the individual about the value of relationships, the value of helping, sharing, and reciprocity instead of just competing with other human beings to get an objective, that is, helping others and working together towards a common goal can be more effective and rewarding. Cooperation, in fact, seems to be a defining feature of human social life. In cooperative behaviour the individual humanizes; hence the individual becomes more humane and exhibits higher levels of sophistication and flexibility than when working alone. However, as some recent studies in developmental psychology suggest (Warneken, 2018), cooperation faces two important challenges for human beings. The first has to do with envisioning the benefit of cooperation as more effective than personal achievement and the second is how to distribute gains among

the community who have worked together towards a common goal. It's important to consider that from a cooperative approach, leadership responsibility also changes and moves from one person to the other.

In the field of education and learning, cooperative learning provides a set of instructional techniques aimed at developing interpersonal skills and a more student-centred learning. One of the founders of this method is Kagan (1989), whose definition of cooperative learning provided a valuable umbrella for other authors who also developed this methodology. In his definition, Kagan emphasises the organisation of social interaction in the classroom which provides a certain structure that facilitates the use of activities with a focus on cooperativeness to enhance learning. This approach is different from collaborative learning which sometimes is wrongly used as a synonym but which differs in the fact that cooperative learning is more focused on specific knowledge and learning processes that take place in the classroom while collaborative is rather an attitude towards life, and has less focus on the specific structure (Panitz, 1999).

Now, something important to consider is that students merely sitting in groups and expected to work cooperatively will not actually be engaging in cooperative learning. That is why Kagan (1989) is so emphatic about the structure. For example, the conformation of the groups is something to pay attention to. Questions such as the composition of the groups (by level of proficiency, by students' preferences, etc.), group size, and frequency and consistency of the groups are worth considering beforehand.

Another important contributor to cooperative learning is Slavin (1989), who after synthesising 60 studies both in elementary and secondary schools, finally arrived at the conclusion that learning cooperatively was more effective than learning individually or through competition. To arrive at this conclusion, Slavin designed experiments where he taught the same contents to the experimental groups that would receive cooperative

instruction and the control groups that followed a traditional pattern. The results showed that in 72% of the cases the cooperative instruction had been more successful than the traditional one (Slavin, 1989).

The work of Johnson et al. (1991) is also relevant for cooperative learning. They established five principles of cooperative learning, which are still in use today: (a) positive interdependence that puts the emphasis on the idea that students need each other to complete a certain task; (b) face-to-face promotive interaction where students put the emphasis on the importance of sharing and helping each other; (c) individual accountability is the principle that emphasises that each member of the group is responsible for his/her contribution to the group; (d) the development of social skills such as leadership, decision making, trust building, communication, and conflict management; and, finally, (e) group processing as a way for the members of the group to monitor if they are achieving the goals and keeping good and effective relationships among themselves.

Some recent studies have shown that the implementation of cooperative learning has been very successful in different areas of knowledge. In a study carried out by André et al. (2013), cooperative learning proved to be incredibly successful with pupils in France who had learning disabilities related to risk taking. This study shows the benefits of cooperative learning in environments that require a context of inclusion to enhance positive social relationships. This inclusion encourages acceptance by peers and the self-confidence of the disabled students whose learning disability was related to their poor writing and reading skills. The participants of this study were 168 pupils from middle school aged 11 and 12 years. The results showed an increase in the risk-taking attitude of children with learning disabilities. Another successful study carried out by Zhang (2018), combined the use of flipped classroom techniques with cooperative learning at university level, and it involved 130 students from three majors in the first year at Luoyang Normal University, China. The study concluded

that the results were successful as the students became more autonomous under the use of flipped classroom and then increased their interaction with other students due to cooperative techniques.

Sharan (2010) states that the main benefit of cooperative learning is that both academic and social skills are developed through this method; furthermore, it also helps to promote better classroom management and better signs of inclusion in classes that are largely multicultural. However, something important to consider before implementing cooperative learning is the cultural context where the experience is going to be developed because success is not always guaranteed. Such are the cases described by Mai Nguyen (as cited in Sharan, 2010); these examine the application of cooperative learning techniques in a Vietnamese context in secondary schools whereby female students did not want to sit next to boys; students took a long time to form the groups, which created widespread chaos. This shows that the successful implementation of cooperative learning depends a lot on cultural characteristics. Vietnamese children felt uncomfortable in a learning environment where the source of knowledge was not the teacher and that was less structured compared to a lecture. So again, knowing the culture where the method is going to be implemented is vital, so the teachers in charge can structure their lesson as to generate confidence in the students. However, Sharan states that there is always a gap between the cooperative learning promise and theory, and the actual implementation.

Another important element to consider before implementing successful cooperative learning is the right combination of this method with short periods of lecturing. This proves to be more effective than implementing pure cooperative learning activities. Fernández-Santander (2008) proved this in an intervention carried out with first year students of optics and optometry. The study showed that the combination of the two methods proved highly effective and the data obtained through anonymous university interviews

revealed that students thought that they had learned better with these two methods combined. Through cooperative learning, team members were encouraged to rely on each other to achieve common goals. Additionally, students perceived that the cooperative learning sessions were more interesting than the traditional methods. Students stated that the most positive elements of this methodology were that studying at home was easier, that the contents of the lesson were fully grasped as sessions were more amusing, that difficult items were easier to learn, that their work was more valued by the teacher, and that there was a lot of help inside the group.

It is also important to consider the role of the teacher when using cooperative learning. In a study carried out by Hsiung et al. (2014), the authors advocated for the early identification of ineffective groups in cooperative learning. As mentioned before, due to cultural traits, the implementation needs to follow a very strict structure and the role of the teacher is to identify if the groups are working well during the implementation. When a group does not work cooperatively, it is very difficult to put a stop to the dynamics that hinder students' engagement in cooperative learning. Some researchers have suggested that the use of peer rating is a very efficient technique to detect the students who are not working according to what is expected.

Content-Based Instruction

Since the use of the grammar translation method does not provide a strong basis for communication and a more natural approach to language, it was also the aim of this research to combine the use of cooperative learning with content-based instruction (CBI). The emphasis of CBI is not on form but on meaning and provides an environment for contextualized learning which encourages students to discuss and communicate. Although this approach is not new, dating back to the Canadian immersion programmes in the 60's, it has had some interesting varieties, frameworks, and developments.

One of the most interesting developments is the one called content and language integrated learning (CLIL). This approach, adopted in the 90's, emerged as a response to the European Union's plurilingual agenda and the increasing number of immigrants that were coming to Europe. In this sense, English was taught through a content and the teaching and learning of the subject matter was as important as the language itself (Stoller & Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2016). Although it can be argued that CBI, including CLIL approaches, are at the service of the hegemonic cultures of Europe and the USA, because they give response to political agendas, we truly believe that CBI also provides the educational context for social criticism and is more effective in developing critical thinking than the grammar translation method.

The use of CBI also provides more opportunities to work cooperatively because students can talk and help each other in a way that connects their learning to affective elements, a process which resembles Freire (1968/1970) and his dialogic pedagogy where there is not a central authoritative figure who can claim a monopoly on knowledge, but rather a process whereby all the participants involved cooperate to create knowledge together. CBI reinforces the principles of the communicative approach and allows for a more active participation of the students in their learning process. According to Richards and Rogers (2001), CBI takes into consideration two important principles: First, people learn the language more effectively if they use the language to acquire information rather than an end in itself; and second, CBI reflects the situation of the learners who really need to understand and act accordingly. Brinton (2003) states that, as teachers, we should

- base our instructional decisions on content rather than language criteria;
- integrate linguistic skills;
- involve students in the learning process;
- choose content for its relevance to students' lives and interests; and
- emphasise the choice of authentic texts.

Method

To carry out the present study a qualitative interpretative design was used. We designed special material that included the selection of simple literary material and the creation of units that put into play a cooperative and a content-based approach to EFL.

The units that we created were based on literature in English. Some of the texts were simpler than others; with a variety of vocabulary and simple grammar to contribute to the learning of the students. When choosing the readings and the activities that would be applied by the teachers, we took into consideration some of the principles offered by Brinton (2003). The content used in this research is literature which includes short fables and poems: some by well-known authors such as Aesop and Ray Bradbury while others were quite unknown. Most of these authors are speakers of English but who do not belong to the hegemonic cultures of the centre but come or are from eastern countries such as India, Iran, and Pakistan. We chose these authors and texts considering students' interests, and we also decided to use literature instead of other subjects because it helps students become aware of their feelings and emotions, which are areas commonly neglected in education.

This paper promotes the use of literature over other genres as, in Tosta's (1996) words, this genre "deals with universal themes, such as love or hate, which are familiar to the readers" (p. 62), while at the same time exposing students to a cultural and linguistic context with the myth of complexity being approached in a positive manner, working as an emotional factor, especially when students understand a literary text and experiment a feeling of accomplishment.

Participants and Background

The intervention involved 35 students from 8th to 12th grades from two vulnerable schools in Santiago. One of the schools is in San José de Maipo, a small town to the east of Santiago, in the mountainous area of Cajón

del Maipo. The other school is in the centre of Santiago. Both are vulnerable municipal schools and the number of hours of English students are exposed to is three per week, with the grammar translation method as the most used methodology.

The students from San José de Maipo comprised a total of 24, 17 females and seven males; while the students in Santiago made up a total of 11, seven females and four males. All the students who were part of this study were between the ages of 13 and 17. The school in San José de Maipo has a vulnerability rating of 91% whereas the school in Santiago reaches 62%.¹

We created a workshop to improve students' effectiveness in learning. The instructors in charge of making the intervention invited the students to participate in this activity on a voluntary basis because it was important that students perceived they were not being compelled to participate. As all of them were under 18 years old, we sent informative consent forms to their parents to get authorization for them to participate in the workshop.

There were two teachers who participated in the project. One of them, a graduated 28-year-old male teacher with three years of experience who worked at Cajón del Maipo, and a 24-year-old male preservice teacher who worked in Santiago. We selected these teachers because they were willing to participate in a project that would provide new opportunities for their students; also, these teachers were interested in learning about cooperative learning as they had never actually used this methodology before. When we invited them to participate, we asked them to read a few articles to get familiarized with the elements of cooperative learning. They were also asked to keep a

journal where they registered all their insights about the implementation of the project.

Both teachers had trained to become English teachers at Universidad Mayor (Chile) in a program that takes five years and includes subjects within the areas of English language, as linguistics, methodology and didactics, literature, thesis, and teaching practice. The area of teaching practice includes the participation in schools of different social backgrounds—private, state, and subsidized—and during the last year of teaching practice, students work an average of 22 hours at the school before completing their education with a bachelor's degree examination in education.

Procedure

The teachers in charge of making the intervention carried out a weekly English workshop that went from October to December 2018. Each session lasted one hour and students who attended stayed for the workshop after the regular lessons.

We provided the two teachers with a set of materials with the units to be covered at the beginning of October. So, in or during each lesson the teacher covered one unit which was adapted according to the students' needs. All the units were based on content related to literature in English basically through short stories and poems and with specific indications on cooperative activities that students had to work on. Table 1 summarizes the names of the units that were used in the intervention, their literary genre, their main theme, their difficulty level, and associated cooperative activities.

At the beginning of the workshop the teachers spent some time explaining the basis of cooperative work and assigned students to groups that changed throughout the intervention. Neither teacher used a specific method to assign each student to one certain group or another. Most of the time, students kept the same groups because they already knew each other.

¹ The vulnerability indicator is constructed taking into consideration the socio-economic background of the students and their risks of dropping out from school associated with poor attendance, academic problems, special needs, and so on (Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas, n.d.).

Table 1. Literature Based Units

Unit name	Literary genre	Main theme	Difficulty level	Cooperative activities
Unit 1: "Defeated by Pride" (By Aesop, retrieved from http://www.english-for-students.com/Defeated-by-Pride.html)	Narrative - Fable	Pride	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-reading vocabulary activity • Reading and memorizing the story • Speaking and telling the story
Unit 2: "Nails in the Fence" (Unknown author, retrieved from http://www.inspirationpeak.com/cgi-bin/stories.cgi?record=50)	Narrative - Fable	Anger	Pre-intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-reading activity (predicting) • Read the story in groups • Discussion of a sentence
Unit 3: "My Greatest Regret" (Retrieved from http://giftedminds.com.ng/)	Poem	Lost love	Pre-intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group reading of the poem • Discussion of vocabulary • Discussion of questions • Role play
Unit 4: "Foolish Imitation" (Retrieved from http://www.english-for-students.com/Foolish-Imitation.html)	Narrative - Fable	Creativity	Difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming activity: concepts from the pictures • Reading the story for the second time
Unit 5: "The Night Train at Deoli" (By Ruskin Bond)	Narrative - short story	Love at first sight	Difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing what they think the story is about • Pre-reading activity. Look up vocabulary groups • Providing a new ending to the story
Unit 6: "There Will Come Soft Rains" (By Ray Bradbury)	Narrative - Short story	Science fiction - future	Very difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-reading vocabulary activities • Reading as a group • Create a comic based on the story

Data Collection

Cooperative Learning Rubric

To observe the lessons, we designed a rubric taking into consideration the five principles stated by Johnson et al. (1991). The rubric graded the presence of the

criteria according to four levels of achievement: 4 = *strong*, 3 = *capable*, 2 = *emerging*, and 1 = *weak*. Each of the levels was assigned a score to help quantify the level of cooperativeness in the classes observed. The rubric was validated by observing a cooperative lesson. The objective of validation was to make sure that the

rubric measured the cooperative activity of the students in an English class.

Pre-test and Post-test

In order to measure the level of English at the beginning of the intervention and after the intervention, a test was adapted from the Straightforward Quick Placement & Diagnostic test (Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2007). It has two parts, one of grammar and the other of vocabulary, with a total of 25 multiple choice questions. This test was validated by two full-time academics from the English Department at our university.

Students' Survey

We constructed a survey to get students' feedback and to measure students' motivation levels. This is the only instrument that was carried out in Spanish because of students' level of English; it was validated by two full-time academics. The criteria we used for asking questions was: whether the classes had been entertaining and fun; if the materials had been attractive and interesting; if the workshop allowed understanding English better; if the workshop allowed students to work in groups better; if the snacks provided had been good for them; if the workshop had helped improve their vocabulary; and if they would recommend this workshop to other people. The survey considered three answers (*very happy, average, sad*) and students had to mark the one that suited them the most.

Ethical Considerations

Under the University regulations regarding research using human subjects, ethical considerations were considered during the intervention. As the subjects were under 18, we asked their parents to sign an informed consent that explicitly stated that the research would always respect their privacy with confidentiality as the most important part, and results dealt within the strictest confidence.

Findings and Discussion

Pre-test and Post-test

Regarding the results of the intervention, it can be stated that from an academic perspective the experience had an important impact especially in Cajón del Maipo as indicated in Table 2. This is due to an increase in the average score obtained by the students at the end of the experience. In Santiago Centro, on the contrary, there was a slight decrease in the scores obtained by students.

Table 2. Average Score Entrance and Exit Tests

Quick placement test	Average score entrance test	Average score exit test
Cajón del Maipo	6.2	7.4
Santiago Centro	8	7

It is important to mention that, although both teachers worked well and applied cooperative learning in their lessons, the teacher in Cajón del Maipo was more experienced and had higher levels of adaptability, creativity, and flexibility; which made it possible for him to combine cooperative learning with other more teacher directed activities. This explains in part that the experience was more successful in that school. However, the other reasons have to do with the application of the principles of cooperative learning. As it will be explained with more details later when the rubric results are analysed, two of the principles of cooperative learning (individual accountability and contribution to the group and considerations of others) reached appropriate levels of development whereas the other two principles (social skills and face to face promotive interaction) were present but to a lesser extent. To achieve higher academic results, all principles should have similar development while the teacher who makes the implementation needs to have the flexibility to adapt materials and possibly

combine with other methods to enhance cooperation as suggested by Fernandez-Santander (2008).

Degree of Cooperativeness

Table 3 indicates the levels of cooperativeness of the lessons supervised. As it can be observed, Lesson 1 in Cajón del Maipo and Lesson 2 in Santiago Centro were the most cooperative because they were within the range of *capable* and *strong*; while the other two were in a range of *emerging*. Nevertheless, cooperation traits were present in every lesson.

Individual Accountability and Contribution to the Group

As stated by Johnson et al. (1991) the category of individual accountability and contribution to the group emphasizes that each member of the group is responsible for his/her contribution to the group. From this perspective it is interesting to notice that this was slightly stronger in Cajón del Maipo than in Santiago Centro. The teacher who did the intervention in this school was truly aware of the importance of making use of the approach in the class, and he promoted activities that helped students with their

own individual accountability and their contribution to the group.

In Santiago Centro, the teacher also implemented the cooperative activities and, little by little, gained more confidence to apply the rest of the material improving cooperativeness in the lessons.

What is relevant here is that students in both schools were able to become aware of the importance of social learning and that their contribution to the group and active participation in the cooperative activities had an impact in their own learning and the learning of the others. This bridges inequality as the relevance given to social learning is not that present in public schools as it is in private institutions in Chile.

Consideration of Others

As explained by Tomasello and Vaiss (2013) cooperation is an essential trait of a pro-social behaviour where the individual forgets about his/her egotistical needs to consider the other in a more reciprocal relationship. It is interesting to observe that this category ranked *capable* in both schools. This means that in both classes, students were sensitive to the feelings and learning needs of others and this attitude remained until the end.

Table 3. Degree of Cooperativeness in the Schools

Criteria	San José de Maipo		Santiago Centro	
	Lesson 1 (22/10/2018)	Lesson 2 (29/10/2018)	Lesson 1 (25/10/2018)	Lesson 2 (15/11/2018)
Individual accountability and contribution to group	4	3	2	3
Consideration of others	4	2	3	3
Social skills	3	2	1	3
Face to face promotive interaction	3	2	2	2

Note. 1 = Weak, 2 = Emerging, 3 = Capable, 4 = Strong

It is interesting to consider that, although traditional teacher-centred education does not reinforce social interaction in class, students seem to have naturally a positive attitude towards the feelings of others and in general they showed solidarity with the weakest students.

Social Skills

This category, which takes into consideration the students' social skills to interact with the group, ranked *emerging* in both schools, and it shows that in spite of all the good work carried out by both teachers, it was difficult for students to show skills such as leadership, decision making, trust building, and conflict management. In general terms, it was difficult for students to work their differences in a friendly way. In Lesson 2 of Cajón del Maipo and Lesson 1 of Santiago Centro, we could appreciate that students shouted at each other to solve their conflicts and that required the constant interventions of the teacher in each of the groups to moderate behaviour. After the intervention, it was clear to us that this principle needed to be reinforced and modelled prior to any application of cooperative learning.

Face to Face Promotive Interaction

Face to face promotive interaction intended to measure whether students helped each other by sharing and encouraging efforts to learn. In the first lesson observed in Cajón del Maipo students ranked *capable* for this category, while in the second lesson students merely ranked *emerging*, which meant that students did not use strategies such as making requests and giving or asking for advice, and so on.

In the school in Santiago Centro there were no changes between Lesson 1 and Lesson 2, as the category ranked 2 (*emerging*). This showed that the students who attended the workshop had some budding notions of

interactive strategies such as negotiation, turn-taking, and how to interpret verbal and nonverbal clues.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that cooperative learning was implemented in both schools with a successful development of the principles of individual accountability and contribution to the group and consideration of others. The other two principles had an emerging development. This means that the trait was present in the lessons, but more work needs to be done to increase cooperation.

Students' Feedback

Table 4 shows students' feedback once the intervention ended. All the students from both schools agreed that the lessons were motivating and fun. This is because the approach taken from a cooperative perspective and a content-based approach was innovative for the students who are more used to a grammar-focused teacher-centred approach. Most of the students felt that the materials were attractive and interesting for their learning.

Most students also had the perception that the workshop helped them understand English better and helped them improve their vocabulary. Through the observations of four different lessons, it was clear that as the teachers tried to use English most of the times; hence, the abilities to understand vocabulary were enhanced. Students recognized this as they were able to provide answers for the teachers. Regarding the cooperative work in the group, most students perceived that cooperation was something relevant and valuable to achieve certain tasks. This is an important contribution because these students were not used to working cooperatively and most of them learned individually. Finally, it is worth mentioning that all the students who took part in the workshop would recommend it to others. In other words, the experience was rated positive by the students.

Table 4. Students' Feedback From the Survey

Survey's questions	San José de Maipo (<i>n</i> = 24)			Santiago Centro (<i>n</i> = 11)		
	Very happy	Average	Sad	Very happy	Average	Sad
The lessons conducted by the teacher were fun.	24			11		
The materials were attractive and interesting for me.	15	9		10	1	
The workshop allowed me to understand English better.	22	2		9	2	
I learned and valued the importance of working in groups.	22	2		7	4	
The workshop helped me improve my vocabulary.	20	4		9	2	
I liked the snacks provided by the teacher.	24			10	1	
I would recommend this experience to other people.	24			11		

The reality that learning has a social component as Vygotsky (1934/1978) mentioned was a great discovery for students. The social dimension of learning, which seems to be so underdeveloped in Chile, appears to have been awakened in students making them more aware of the relevance of the community, and the importance of changing their egotistical self-interest for a more pro-social behaviour (Tomasello & Vaish, 2013).

The results obtained can be useful for EFL teachers who by fostering space for cooperation can enhance learning (Kagan, 1989; Slavin, 1989). However, it is also important to consider that implementation of cooperative learning must consider cultural background as stated by Sharan (2010). Chilean educational culture emphasizes the role of the teacher as the source of knowledge and not the students as co-creators of knowledge, so for cooperative learning to work, it is necessary to model and explain the principles and how they function.

Conclusions

To conclude this study, it can be stated that bridging EFL inequality is possible if changes are produced. First, the incorporation of alternative approaches and methodologies such as cooperative learning and CBI is possible if teachers in charge prepare students to live this experience positively. Relying only on the classical grammar translation method is the easiest thing to do, but it has proven to be ineffective. Of course, applying new approaches is always a challenge because Chilean students have learned that education is teacher centred. They must be trained in the importance of cooperation for the future development of their professional skills and because human beings develop better when they are inserted in a community. Students in both public and subsidized schools can learn to work with these methodologies and become more active in their learning.

As we previously mentioned, one of the most interesting challenges for the Chilean culture nowadays

is to give more room to social development, and the role of social interaction in the process of learning. As Tomasello and Vaish (2013) mentioned, cooperation is the basis for social behaviour, and this emphasises the value of relationships, sharing, and reciprocity which has been somehow forgotten due to a rather individualistic and competitive view. One of the reasons why there is so much inequality in our country is because of the emphasis on competition.

In the second place, it is important that EFL teachers also modify their preconceived ideas and assumptions. For instance, it is possible to speak English and motivate students to have an active role in understanding what the teacher is saying. Also, teachers must rely on their students and believe that they can build their own learning if well guided and finally, it is essential that students' interests are taken into consideration when planning lessons. In the study conducted both teachers tried to implement a cooperative approach to learning in the schools. This was a challenge because the students were not used to this approach and Chilean culture, at least in terms of education and learning, does not seem very cooperative. In other words, students expect a traditional approach even if this is ineffective because they are expecting to receive all the knowledge from the teacher. They do not see themselves as active participants in their knowledge and contributing to the learning of the group.

In the third place, it is necessary to point out that by using cooperative learning and CBI there is personal growth through English. Students not only learn about grammar, and lexis, but also about becoming responsible for their learning, sharing it with others and helping the ones that are slower. So, through these methodologies, we are also fostering social behaviour and solidarity. Proof of this is the positive feedback provided by the students at the end of the experience. Students are bored with the traditional teacher-centred approach and would like to try new methods that would help them develop better

as human beings. Besides, the possibility to learn about other topics and discuss them develops critical thinking and a connection to the affective realm of the students.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it is important to mention the time span for the interventions and to train students about this method. As it was stated previously, this intervention lasted 7 to 8 weeks and after close consideration of the results, we strongly believe that the experience would have been more successful if more time had been dedicated to help students learn the methodology. Of course, the teachers in charge explained what the workshop was about, but given the fact that students in Chile are rather teacher-centred themselves, some more weeks of induction for this purpose would have been very useful.

The other aspect, that we consider a limitation and yet, an opportunity for this study, is providing training for teachers. None of the teachers who participated in this research had undergone a specific training workshop to apply the methodology. They had had some training at university in the methodology courses, and they were provided some articles to read, but a specialized workshop on cooperative learning and CBI would have been a great asset. The study showed that it was not easy for teachers to discern when to use the cooperative approach and how to combine it with other methods throughout the lessons to become more effective.

To sum up we would like to encourage EFL teachers to try different methods and approaches. Cooperative learning, for example, and CBI can provide not only meaningful learning experiences for students, but also become an agent of change to bridge the inequality gap that has affected our country for such a long time.

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About the Authors

Erika de la Barra is a full-time professor at Universidad Mayor (Chile). She holds a PhD in literature from Universidad de Chile and has been involved in literature and language teaching at different private and public institutions. She has published in the area of literature and EFL contexts and presented in relevant EFL conferences.

Soffía Carbone is a full-time professor at Universidad Mayor (Chile). She holds a master's in education from King's College, London, and a master's in TEFL from Universidad de Jaen (Spain), and has been involved in language teaching in public and private institutions. She has published in the area of poetry and presented in relevant conferences.