**Implementation and Evaluation of Cooperative Learning Techniques to Increase Inter-Class Communication of German Course Students**

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**Abstract.** This is an action research aimed at increasing classroom interaction for the German language course. The study group consisted of 10 students who took courses in a language school in Afyonkarahisar. The research data were collected through a focus group interview and their opinions and diaries. In addition, the data was supported by the researcher's diary. The collected data were presented by the content analysis method. In total, 3 action plans were implemented. It was observed that the group studies for the application increased student communication. The study also showed that the difficulty of learning the German Language for the students negatively affected the classroom atmosphere. They also emphasized that the class interaction increased.

**Key Words**. Action research, classroom interaction, cooperative learning, german language

**1.Introduction**

Social life is an element based on communication. Communication is an important concept that enables the exchange of emotions, thoughts and information. Communication in the context of education is an important tool that influences the classroom atmosphere and learning. Communication ability in teaching programs is a skill that must be acquired and used effectively in all disciplines [1]. In order to create a communicative classroom atmosphere, the teacher must encourage students to collaborate. Encouraging the students to work collaboratively in all processes from the setting of classroom rules to the applications has a great role in learning [2].Therefore, in addition to the personal characteristics of the student, the atmosphere of the class is important for the communication in the classroom. In-class communication can be enhanced with student-centered practices and learning groups. Cooperative learning is one of the group works used to increase communication in the classroom.

In a cooperative learning environment; It is known that there are activities open to communication, that the students are active, open to social learning, pedagogically contemporary and preparing the individual for real life [3].In this learning environment, the individual is responsible for his / her own learning as well as for his / her groupmate's learning. Positive solidarity among students increases students ' communication and positively affects learning.

When the literature is examined, Yıldız stated that cooperative learning is a teaching method that enables students to use their mental abilities and allows them to make decisions about their own learning[4]. Bozavlı, emphasized that the main reason why a child is learning his native language and is willing to speak is the interest of those around him[5].

Çaycı, Demir, Başaran and Demir stated that with the discussion of the subject in the course, knowledge was tried and tested more frequently and the basis of new knowledge was formed [6].This study should therefore be seen as an important guide for binding heterogeneous groups together. In this study, not only one technique was used, but different group studies were applied. German lessons were shaped with immediate feedback from the student.

**1.1. The Importance of research**

Group work in the education program is a factor affecting the classroom atmosphere. The combination of different age groups and individuals with different personality characteristics causes negative interactions in the classroom from time to time. Mark Twain stated that learning German as a foreign language is a difficult and very exhausting [7]. In this context, it is important that the classroom atmosphere creates a positive feeling for the student. Therefore, the interaction of students with each other in the classroom environment should be considered. As the positive learning environment in the classroom was targeted with the techniques used in the research. It is expected that the positive and negative situations experienced in this process will be exposed and the research will be a source for the following other studies.

**1.2. Purpose of the research**

In the language school where the research was conducted, it was observed that the students did not establish any dialogue inside and outside the classroom. This situation affects German language learning, especially speaking skills, in foreign language teaching. For this reason, in this action research, it is aimed to increase classroom interaction through activities that require cooperation. For this reason, in this action research, it is aimed to increase classroom interaction through activities that require cooperation. These activities are integrated into the course as called "Memory Game, Think-Pair-Share, Tableau" according to German subjects [8].

**1.3. Research problem**

How do cooperative learning techniques applied to students coming to the German course affect their classroom interactions?

**1.3.1 Sub problems**

1.Can the cooperation problems of the course students in learning be solved by using some techniques?

2.What is the effect of the techniques used?

3.Which techniques have positively affected the atmosphere of the classroom?

4.Does the atmosphere of the classroom have a positive effect on learning German?

 5- How are the positive and negative reflections of group work on classroom interaction?

 6- How was the reflections of the techniques used to the German lesson?

**2. Method**

**2.1. Research design**

In the study, action research, one of the qualitative research designs, was applied. According to Akkaş Baysal and Hocaoğlu, action research is one of the research methods that educators (teachers, managers, experts, etc.) can use to find solutions to education problems or to ensure their development [9]. This research focused on solving the problem of classroom communication based on a collaborative approach throughout the application. It has been determined that the difficulties in classroom communication negatively affect the learning and teaching activities. For this reason, this study was designed as an action research.

**2.2 Working group**

The language course where the study took place consists of 10 students who want to learn German in Afyonkarahisar province. The students who do not know German Language are taken to A1 German class. The students are qualified according to the initials of their names. For example: Sabine (S.) etc. There are 6 male and 4 female students in the classroom.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the working group**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Participants | Gender | Age | Profession |
| 1- M.       | M | 22 | Electrical Eng.2nd grade |
| 2- B.       | M | 30 | Anesthesiologist |
| 3- S.       | F | 24 | Map E. 4th grade |
| 4- O.       | M | 23 | Automotive E.2nd grade |
| 5- K       | F | 24 | Mechatronics E.3rd grade |
| 6- G.       | F | 20 | Sociology 2nd grade |
| 7- R.       | M | 14 | High school student |
| 8- D      | M | 25 | Mechanical Eng 3rd grade |
| 9- H.       | F | 21 | Medicine 2nd grade |
| 10- F.    | M | 20 | Physiotherapy 3rd grade |

**2.3. Collection of data**

In order to reach more detailed problem solving in the action research, diversity has been made in data collection tools. Therefore, data collected through focus group interview, the students’ and the researcher’s diaries were used. Six volunteers in the class participated in the focus group interview. Focus group interview questions prepared by taking expert opinions are as follows.

1. What do you think about the process of the course?
2. Which group work did you like more?
3. How did the techniques used in the lesson affect the lesson?
4. How did the applied techniques / games affect your social communication in the classroom?
5. Which technique made you become more socialized with your friends?

The same technique was not used in the other action plan, as immediate feedback was received about the techniques used after each application. The students were observed during and after the lessons. The students were asked to keep a diary about the lesson. 3 action plans were implemented in this research.

**2.4. Analysis of data**

The answers given to the interview questions applied were transferred to the computer environment and analyzed through descriptive and content analysis. Appropriate themes and codes for descriptive and content analysis were determined to analyze qualitative data and responses were examined. For the reliability analysis of the determined sub-themes and themes, the compatibility ratio among the researchers is determined [10].Issues with disagreement and consensus are identified and the Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement) x100 formula is used [11].In addition, teacher and student diaries are given through a descriptive analysis in terms of study reliability.

**3. Application**

**3.1. Action Plan I (For German lesson)**

**Introduction (10 min.)**

1-Watching a video with the subject of ' Mein Haus (My Home)', which is the 4th unit of the German course, draws attention to the subject and provides infrastructure for vocabulary.

2- The meanings of unknown foreign words are examined from the dictionary. Then, with the 'Memory Game' technique, the class is divided into 2 groups for the word-visual pattern**.**

**Development (25min.)**

1- Memory materials related to household items are used. The student matches the visuals of the household goods he sees in the course with the German meaning. The group that has matched the materials at first wins as soon as possible.

2-The same groups compete with the sentence recall event, which is the second stage of the ' *Memory Game'*event.  Two groups look at the relevant image for a short time and write what they see on the paper. The group that creates the sentences in the most correct way wins the competition.

3- Finally, a student is given a ball. ' Was gibt es in deinem Haus ? / What's in your house?' If the student wants to ask the question pattern, he throws the ball to the target classmate. The student holding the ball gives a few examples of the items in his home.

**Result (10 min.)**

1- The lessons are finally completed by making the listening sections.

2- After the application is completed, the course is ended by asking the students to write their opinions and thoughts about the application.

In the action plan implemented, the students determined and competed for their teammates themselves. In this case, introverted students had difficulties in team building. For this reason, only the applied technique was changed in other action plans and the implementation process continued exactly. In other plans, "Tableau and Think-Pair-Share" activity was used.

**4. Results and comments**

The answers given to the interview questions were coded according to the content analysis. The codes reserved for themes are given in the table 2 .

**Table 2. Code and themes list of opinions**

|  |
| --- |
| Themes |
| Classroom Atmosphere | Sense of Competition | Benefits of Activities | Communication Provider | Cooperation |
| Codes | Codes | Codes | Codes | Codes |
| beautiful funnydifficult but goodnervous satisfied   | memory gamelike a contesttableau   | permanent in minddo n't forget easyactivities are funnyactive coursecompetitions good learning with activities | we didn't talk much we spoke when there was a competitionno communication in the classsharing notes low communicationbeing a part of the team thanks to the race. | different peopleteam spiritbusiness division giving quick decisionwe get together we did it quickly it was like racingwe discussed |

In addition to the codes and themes mentioned above, co-observer application was applied. Within the scope of student responses, codes and themes were redefined. The averages of consensus and differences of opinion are given in Table 2.

**Table 3. Inter-researcher compliance table**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Themes** | **Consensus** | **Disagreement** | **Average** |
| Classroom Atmosphere         Sense of Competition             Benefits of Activities             Communication Provider             Collaboration  |        7       6       8       7       6 |      2      2      1      2       2 |    77.7%    75%    88%    77%    75% |
|  Average Value |   |   |  78.54 |

Considering the reliability results, the answers given by the students were measured as 78.54%. According to Miles & Huberman, the average reliability value was stated as 70% [12].Therefore, it can be stated that the application is reliable.

When the interview data were examined, M2 and M3 students stated that they participated in activities outside the class. This situation shows that the action plans worked very well in a short time.



**Figure 1. Memory game activity**

As indicated in Fig. 1, Both the student's energy and their emotional states showed that the action plans were effective. All of the students stated that they got closer with each other.

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**Figure 2. H's Diary**

In Fig. 2, H’s diary says that only focusing the lessons is more crucial than the communication in the class to avoid being failure in the lessons.That H doesn’t using such a statement in the focus group interview creates contradiction with H’ statement in her diary. However, the student stated that H integrated with the whole class.

**6. Conclusion and discussion**

The techniques applied in the study were found to be effective with the diary and interview expressions of the course students. Before the action plans were implemented, the students stated that they had no communication with their friends in the classroom. M student even stated that they did not share their course notes.

The problem statement of the research is " How do cooperative learning techniques applied to students coming to the German course affect their classroom interactions?". The answer to the question was solved by group work and ice-breaking activities. In the focus group interview data of the students, student F said, “We did not speak much in the classroom before. When the game or race became, I was immediately socialized, I tried to organize and win.” This shows that cooperative learning techniques are effective. They increased their communication by creating a team spirit and work share with their group friends. There are studies indicating that a sense of competition enables students to progress and is an effective way to increase student performance and motivation [13]. Ökmen, Şahin, Boyacı and Kılıç stated that most of the students felt excited and happy before the competition. [14].

Regarding the interview questions, M3 said : “There was no communication in the class before. I wanted a note, sometimes nobody shared it. Sometimes, when I wrote to the Whatsapp group, nobody answered. Now they were giving notes from direct message.” These expressions shows that the class is socialized and the sharing among the individuals increases. Yasul and Samancı stated that group work improved student's feelings of solidarity and enabled students to develop socially [15]. This situation is consistent with the results of the action research. It was seen that the students who liked cooperation, competition or discuss, liked the activities that provided these situations. In conclusion, the group activities were a step that increased communication in the classroom.

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