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0521606640 - Cooperative Learning and Second Language Teaching

Edited by Steven G. McCafferty, George M. Jacobs and Ana Christina DaSilva Iddings

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Series editor's preface

The approach known as cooperative learning has long been of interest to practitioners of communicative language teaching since it offers a body of widely tested classroom procedures for implementing group-based activities in the language classroom. Although there is a considerable and growing literature on cooperative learning in mainstream education, there have been few recent accounts of its application to second language teaching. The present book is therefore a welcome account of the background of cooperative learning, its theoretical and research underpinnings, and its applications in a number of different ESL/EFL classroom settings.

The authors make a strong case for applying the principles of cooperative learning to second language classrooms. They show its roots in social psychology, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology, and they further link it to motivational theory and humanist education. The authors suggest how cooperative learning connects with second language acquisition theory, with the notions of input, interaction, output, and learner autonomy, as well as with sociocultural theories of learning through collaborative and dialogic interaction. Since group-based learning lies at the heart of cooperative learning, considerable attention is given to the nature of and conditions for successful groups. The book then provides a number of teacher narratives that show how cooperative learning can be implemented in different ESL/EFL contexts. These narratives illustrate how teachers prepared students for group-based learning. They also demonstrate the activities and materials the teachers employed to teach various language skills, the difficulties sometimes encountered and how these were resolved, and how cooperative learning took different forms based on the contexts in which it was being implemented. This book concludes with a very useful glossary of commonly used cooperative learning techniques.

This book will therefore provide a useful introduction to the field of cooperative learning for teachers wishing to better understand how its group-based learning principles can be successfully used in second and foreign language teaching.

Jack C. Richards