Cooperative Learning and Motivation

Miyoko Kawano

1. Introduction

1.1 Target of the Concept of the Research

These days, motivation has come to be familiar in Japan. Its use ranges from the field of sports and business to the field of learning. Motivation is a necessary condition for every activity and people naturally seem to have motivation to learn new things and experience a new world.

Many researchers have concluded that cooperative learning is an effective way of improving motivation. In this study, the relationship between cooperative learning and motivation will be discussed in regards to language learning. First, I will introduce previous research. Next, I will describe my experiences in two courses of language learning. One is Filipino learning, and the other is English learning. Both are carried out with the methods of cooperative learning. Analyzing these experiences, I will discuss whether cooperative learning can improve motivation for language learning.

1.2 Previous Research on Cooperative Learning

Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1984) show five basic elements of cooperative learning. The first is ‘positive interdependence’. It is defined as team being structured by mutual goals (maximize own and each other’s productivity), joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles. The second is ‘individual accountability’. It means that the quality and quantity of the team’s work are assessed by each member’s contribution and the results are given to the group and the individual. The third is ‘face-to-face promotive interaction’. It is defined as team members promoting each other’s productivity by helping, sharing, and encouraging each other to produce something. The fourth is ‘interpersonal and small group skills’. This requires that the team should have social
skills, including instructorship, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills. The fifth is ‘group processing’. It is defined as the specific time for a group to discuss how well the members are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Johnson, Johnson & Smith emphasize the role of instructors for good cooperative teamwork. They suggest that instructors should monitor and give comments on how well the groups work.

1.3 Previous Research on Motivation

Since the 1990s, the theory by Deci & Ryan (1995), American psychologists, has been influential on motivation of language learning. Their theory is Self-Determination Theory (SDT). They describe that people naturally have the attitude for self development; this means learning to achieve a new challenge, expanding their ability, and demonstrating their action. SDT is defined as a strong attitude for self development formed by the following three psychological needs. The first is the need for autonomy: the activity is based on people’s determination and responsibility. The second is the need for competence: people need to have an opportunity to demonstrate their competence through an activity. The third is the need for relatedness: people want to have a good relationship with the society and good friendship with others to do something together. When these three factors are fulfilled, people’s intrinsic motivation increases greatly. Those three factors should work mutually in the environment of learning. They also define intrinsic motivation as spontaneous action involving objectiveness.

Dörnyei (2001) points out that motivation in the language learning classroom is not there from the beginning but it is created. He also claims that to create motivation, it is necessary to fulfill the three psychological needs as defined by SDT. He points out certain conditions to create motivation among learners; pleasant and active classrooms, good relationship between teachers and students, and good peers who have good group manners.

1.4 The Relationship between Cooperative Learning and Motivation

Dörnyei (2001) says, “cooperative learning is such a powerful means of increasing students’ motivation”. In the field of second language learning (L2), various forms of
peer cooperation have come to be well-established techniques for cooperative learning (e.g. small group activities or project work in the spirit of communication on motivation). Dörnyei proposes L2 teachers to increase students’ motivation by actively promoting learners’ autonomy. He says “students have to work a lot without the immediate supervision of the teacher, and autonomy is a powerful contributor to motivation” (2001). He also suggests for teachers to allow learners real choices about as many aspects of the learning process as possible.

2. My Experiences of Cooperative Learning in University

I will discuss the relationship between cooperative learning and motivation through my own experience of learning two foreign languages, Filipino and English, at university. I will use our data of recordings, review papers, reports and questionnaires.

2.1 Filipino Learning with Peers

The Filipino course had 13 peers. Our teacher just told us that we should learn a new language, Filipino, with peers cooperatively. This is quite different from the classes I had before, which were based on textbooks or sound materials. I was quite anxious about the sessions with only peers and overseas students together without any instructions or suggestions. Our teacher advised us to get along with peers. I thought she meant our goal was to try to have good communication; to speak clearly, to listen carefully, not to hesitate to speak out, to ask some questions, and to know the Philippines and Filipinos better.

We were divided into two groups with rock-paper-scissors (janken in Japanese). Two overseas students from the Philippines joined each group.

2.1.1 The First Semester

We had to make a learning plan of sessions with Filipino students cooperatively.

After the first session, we encountered two main problems in making session plans. One was that we did not have confidence in how to spend each session of 90 minutes more effectively. The other was our skills of speaking English, which was used as a mediate language between the Japanese students and the Filipino students. We were
always at a loss about what we should do for the next session. I was also quite anxious about the lack of common objective of our group. Some peers wanted to know about Filipino grammar in detail. Other peers were interested in knowing about accurate pronunciation of Filipino.

Looking back at the first semester now, I think the session plans were made without exchanging our ideas positively and frankly. We were not able to achieve the consensus because we had different ideas and purposes of the session. When we realized that we were not able to find a good idea, we decided to use a book, *Tabino Yubisashi Kaiwacho* according to our teacher’s recommendation. There were typical greetings or basic nouns and adjectives and some phrases in the book. We tried to memorize some words in the book for every session. However, this task lowered interest and motivation. It made me feel it was hard to participate in the session. If I was not able to learn some words by heart in advance, I was not able to enjoy the sessions. Therefore, I felt stressed and found no meaning in participating in the sessions. After all, our session plans were almost the same as our traditional language classes in our school days. In the first semester, we just got together without any cooperation. As a result, nobody checked our learning and we were not able to give any suggestions, advice, or encouragement to each other.

### 2.1.2 The Second Semester

In order to study more positively and enjoyably than the first semester, I proposed to the group peers that we should decide a common goal for the final session. Specifically, my proposal was to make a Japanese guidebook for Filipinos in Filipino. Each of us was supposed to make five sentences in English to introduce various areas in Japan at every session through translating those sentences from English to Filipino with overseas students’ support. I thought it was important for us to have a common goal and try to achieve the difficult task together. Fortunately, all peers agreed with my proposal. We tried to make as many Filipino sentences as possible by ourselves. Each member prepared the handouts of five sentences both in English and Japanese to share with each other. Moreover, we opened a Google-group which worked as a group homepage to share our data and resources openly and interactively.
Advancing through the sessions, we communicated with each other more actively to make better sessions; one peer made Japanese maps for the overseas students, and I proposed that the handouts should contain some related photos with the Japanese introductory sentences. Besides, kana characters were added to the sentences so that overseas students could read kanji characters. We came to enjoy making sentences because we wanted overseas students to know Japan well.

Here are some examples of happy interaction through exchanging the Japanese and the Filipino cultures. In one session, I made some sentences which describe the Tohoku area in order to introduce the place where ‘Oshin’, one of the popular Japanese TV dramas known in many Asian countries, was filmed. Overseas students were so interested that we had a very exciting interaction. In another occasion, one peer introduced a cuisine of a region, and we talked about the food culture of both countries passionately and exchanged some words in each language. In another occasion, one Filipino student said ‘honto’ (really) in Japanese. I told her that most young people in Japan say ‘maji’ instead of ‘honto’. She tried to say ‘maji’ quickly. Through these activities, we Japanese students enjoyed discovering some new aspects about Japan.

Preparation in which we made sentences for introducing Japan was very important for the session to be successful with good interaction. Positive preparation promoted our motivation for communication. Also, we worked cooperatively for preparation. We gradually came to speak to the overseas students in English, Japanese and Filipino without hesitation.

Using the Google-group, which supported group members to share and discuss their information and data, gave us good stimulation and encouragement. It also kept us highly motivated because we were able to see and read one another’s preparation freely and openly. On the other hand, using the Google-group had a disadvantage: face-to-face discussion decreased.

The good point of the second semester was equal contribution for the common goal with peers keeping the motivation high. On the other hand, there were few chances to speak Filipino in front of others. The only chance was the final session of presentation in which we showed the Japanese guide book in Filipino. We focused more on working out Filipino sentences than on speaking the language itself.
2.1.3 Comparison between the First and the Second Semester

The most remarkable difference between the first and the second semester was whether we had a common goal or not. Though we did not have it in the first semester, we had it in the second semester. To achieve it, peers had to provide equal contribution. Equal contribution kept us stimulated, thus promoting motivation. We came to have a feeling in which we acted not only by ourselves but with all peers. Each one of us could be responsible. We did not elect a leader in our group. Instead, we all acted as a leader as a rule. Therefore, we were able to participate equally and have our own responsibility in the second semester.

The second difference was whether we knew each other well or not: whether we had a good relationship among us or not. As we could build good relationship with each other, the second semester was better than the first semester for open and frank discussion. The friendship made the sessions more enjoyable. In the first semester, we did not work cooperatively, while we cooperated in learning by sharing information with a lot of encouragement or stimulus in the second semester. Moreover, we tried to make closer friendship with overseas students than the first semester. For example, I invited two overseas students to dinner to talk more after the session. We enjoyed talking about cultural matters such as food, tradition and family system.

The third difference was whether preparation was enjoyable or not. The preparation in the first semester was not interesting. In the first semester, we just focused on memorizing words. In the second semester, preparation was more positive and voluntary.

The fourth difference was the use of the Google-group. We made use of the system to share our learning in the second semester. It was especially useful because we did not have to get together to share our ideas, which was good because some peers were busy job hunting.

2.1.4 The Result of a Questionnaire from Peers

I carried out a questionnaire to the peers. I will show you the result of it. (N=7)

- Did you enjoy Filipino sessions as juniors?

< the first semester >
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>enjoyed</th>
<th>29 % (2 peers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not enjoyed</td>
<td>71 % (5 peers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

< the second semester >

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>enjoyed</th>
<th>71 % (5 peers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not enjoyed</td>
<td>29 % (2 peers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ratio of peers who enjoyed the sessions and who did not enjoy them was just reversed between the first and second semester.

- **About the atmosphere of your group**

< the first semester >

| nervous : 57 % (4 peers) | relaxed : 29 % (2 peers) | neutral : 14 % (1 peer) |

< the second semester >

| nervous : 0 % | relaxed : 86 % (6 peers) | neutral : 14 % (1 peers) |

Most peers changed from nervous to relaxed in the second semester.

- **About cooperative learning**

< the first semester >

| positive : 43 % (3 peers) | negative : 57 % (4 peers) |

< the second semester >

| positive : 100 % (7 peers) | negative : 0 % |

It is remarkable that all the peers changed the learning style from negative to positive in the second semester.

- **Telling the difference between the first semester and the second semester**

In the first semester, some peers always felt at a loss about how to learn by themselves. Most peers felt anxious about not having a common goal. In the second semester, some peers felt relaxed about the good relationship among peers. The common goal gave them good motivation. However, one peer felt that the common goal gave her decreased positiveness because she exercised her leadership for the sessions to succeed. One peer was not confident in acquiring Filipino though she enjoyed cooperative learning. One peer was concerned about poor speaking skills of Filipino.
• Did you feel uneasy about speaking to your peers, speaking in English, speaking in Filipino, doing the task or so on?

Three peers felt anxious about speaking Filipino. One peer felt uneasy about speaking English because she did not want to speak in poor English.
• Did you try to do anything to make a better session?

One peer answered that the responsibility gave her autonomy. Two peers came to have good communication among them. Most peers recognized that doing the task for the final goal made them highly motivated.
• How did you feel about your teacher in the seminar?

All peers answered that they felt uneasy because the teacher did not give them any instructions or suggestions. They thought that she should have given some instructions, advice or suggestions.
• What did you think about the common goal?

All peers answered that it was better to have a common goal as they had it in the second semester. One peer thought that she got a sense of achievement for the first time in her college life. Two peers thought that the common goal kept motivation high. One peer thought that it was important to make the plan and the goal of the session. One peer thought that she enjoyed achieving the common goal with peers cooperatively.

2.1.5 Discussion

I showed some factors for successful cooperative learning: a common goal, equal participation, good relationship, joy for learning, and a good environment such as using a Google-group. Especially, having a common goal and equal participation helped us maintain high motivation and equal contribution. Each member should carry out an important role like a leader. Everyone shared the sense of duty.

Good relationship made us have good interaction. The more active interaction among peers, the more new things we could learn about the Philippines. Good relationship among peers needed positive effort: peers tried to recognize that each peer had an indispensable role. We had to open our mind and make an effort to communicate with each other. I tried to make a good relationship with overseas students as well as Japanese peers in the second semester. Ms Ting, a prosecutor, is one of them. She
studied the ombudsman system at a Japanese university at the expense of the government. She became a close friend of mine. The closer the friendship became, the more active the interaction in the class became.

When these factors of successful cooperative learning worked well, we were able to create a cooperative learning environment. In addition, I thought that it was also important for us to give and receive encouragement, advice, suggestions and stimulus. Positive stimulus made us unite to learn together. It was necessary for us to share the style and attitude of learning as well as learning resources. In this manner, we came to learn how to solve the conflict among peers and cover each other’s weak points.

2.2 English Learning with Peers

Next, I will describe my experience in ‘Advanced Speaking course’. This course is for advanced English learners who have already finished required English courses. Students should be highly motivated to acquire competence to use English effectively, particularly speaking skills. The course consists of three components: group discussion, individual presentation and the final group presentation. The final group work is to be done by participants cooperatively.

2.2.1 The Concrete Practice of Group Work

All activities including the tasks for every discussion and the topics of individual and group presentation are decided by the teacher and participants together. Fixing the course plan together led us to become responsible for the course. This was an instance of cooperative learning. First, we gave ideas of the topics for discussion and then all members voted on the topics. The chosen topics were ‘Language Education’, ‘Sweets’, ‘Drugs’, ‘Ideal Partner’, ‘Work Ethics’, ‘Otaku’, and ‘Japanese Identity’. The teacher suggested that we prepare some articles about every topic for having a good discussion and for active participation. The final goal of this course was to make a group presentation. Each group consisted of four peers. Each peer was responsible for her own sub-session. Our group chose the topic 'herbivorous men’, new Japanese expression which refers to weak and meek young men. First of all, we discussed how to organize the presentation. We divided the topic into sections so that all the members had an equal
role. One examined the origin of the expression 'herbivorous men', another examined how it is used, the third made a questionnaire, the fourth member made a power point file of the presentation. We analyzed the questionnaire and made a conclusion together. Each of us took a significant role eagerly for a common goal of achieving a good presentation. We got a sense of team spirit. The cooperation worked well and the presentation was successful.

2.2.2 Discussion

According to the result of the questionnaire from peers, I found that participants of this course had strong intrinsic motivation for English learning. I found some reasons for the success of cooperative learning in the class. First, there were a lot of opportunities to discuss before the final presentation, and this helped the participants develop a good relationship. Our group activity satisfied the factors of cooperative learning, such as positive interdependence, equal participation, face-to-face group interaction, and individual accountability.

The second was peers’ good perception. Most peers already knew the importance of group cooperative work as well as high motivation. This develops good relationships. Before preparing the final presentation, we had many opportunities to discuss various topics together in the class and to know each other well. Good discussion needed open and frank participation of all peers. Through open-minded discussions, we came to overcome the difference in opinion and have good interaction. Among the factors of cooperative learning, interdependence is the most important for success. To achieve interdependence, we should give each other good encouragement.

The third is sharing learning resources. To prepare for the final group cooperative work, we brought in different resources to learn together.

The fourth is social skills. To cooperate with peers, we learned not only presentation skills in English, but social skills which are necessary to be a good member in the society: to cooperate, to listen to other’s opinion, to think about what we can do to achieve a common goal, and to contribute to solve the problem.

The fifth is teacher’s support. Our teacher gave us some communicative activities to help us get to know each other. The teacher guided us on how to find better ways for
good communication interdependently.

3. Conclusion

Despite my limited experiences of cooperative language learning, I think this study offers a significant relationship between cooperative learning and motivation. I was able to confirm that five basic elements of successful cooperative learning, pointed out by Johnson, Johnson & Smith: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing, are important. Each factor should work mutually. I realized that positive interdependence was needed for responsible and autonomous preparation of each learner. I also think that positive interdependence improves high motivation. Learners in cooperative learning situation should try to understand each other. Cooperative learning gives a good chance to encounter someone or something different which brings stimulus. I believe that schools should provide as many opportunities as possible to experience cooperative learning interdependently. Good interdependence needs encouragement and praise from and to each other. Dörnyei (2001) claims that encouragement is positive persuasive expression and it enables the learner to be aware of personal strength and abilities.

Moreover, I found the joy of language learning through cooperative language learning. On one hand, language learning is to acquire the knowledge of the target language; on the other hand, it can give the joy of encountering someone and discovering something new through good cooperation with peers. When cooperative learning is carried out well, we are able to learn not only the target language but the significance of communication such as positive interaction with others. Cooperative language learning is one of the good ways to enrich learners. As for the roles of teachers, they should be a good facilitator so that group will be organized well by adequate instructions, suggestions and timely advice. It is hoped that learners and instructors will work together dynamically to fulfill factors of successful cooperative learning and to create an effective learning environment.
References


要旨

この論文は、外国語学習において協同学习を取り入れることで学習の動機づけが高められるかを論じたものである。協同学習は近年、大学教育で社会的スキルを養う有効な学習方法として積極的に取り入れられている。また動機づけについては、外国語学習のみならず学習全般に

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おいて学習の成果に大きく関わるため多くの研究がなされている。動機づけを高めるのは、「自己」に関する要因だけではなく、学習者同士の関係性が大きな役割を果たしていると考えられている。筆者は学習者同士の関係性を高める方策の一つとして協同学習に着目した。

本論文では、協同学習と動機づけの先行研究を概観し、筆者が本学で経験した外国語学習から協同学習と動機づけの関係を分析した。その結果、協同学習はある共通の目標に向かって学習者同士が友好な関係を築きながら、互恵的な役割を果たすことであることがわかった。また積極的にコミュニケーションを図り、仲間意識をもって行えば学習の動機づけに有効な方法であることがわたった。学習者はお互いを肯定的に刺激し、評価し合うことが大切である。そして仲間への貢献が学習の自律性も引き出すといえる。協同学習における指導者の役割は大きい。適時に適切な助言を与えながら、学習者が相互に助けあって活動できるような楽しく、友好的な環境を与えることが大切である。それが学習者の学習意欲を保持することにつながる。効果的な学習の場は、学習者同士と指導者がダイナミックに関わりあいながら創っていくものである。