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FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

Collaborative work in a Target Language IV class

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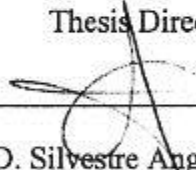
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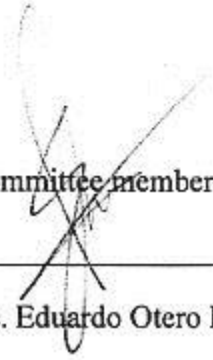
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Chapter I

1.1 Introduction

In the first time of human history the first people had to face many survival situations such as the search for food, extreme climate or avoid a lot of harms from wild animals. Then, they realized when they lived together and created groups they could strengthen their power to be protected and at the same time share the common goal; the survival of the human species.

Nowadays, groups are part of the daily life, for instance; business, religion, music, politics, etc. All these groups share different characteristics which make them accomplish their own target. There have been many theories to the understanding the concept of groups: starting with the ones which focus on the categorization of the groups, continuing with the ones which focus on the group stage development and the different dynamics of them and finally, the ones which focus on the educational practice. All these theories have influenced the way groups have been understood by people who want to use them as a medium for the accomplishment of many tasks.

When groups come into the educational practice specifically in the universities, it is expected to accomplish the objectives established by the curricula, the development of strategies and techniques to obtain significantly learning outcomes and student's satisfactions from the group activities (University of Wollongong assessment policy, 2002). In Mexico particularly, collaborative work has been part in many fields of education based on new programs. Moreover, the Faculty of Languages has been applied the Modelo

Universitario Minerva since 2009. This model is based on constructivism theory that explains learning as an active process (BUAP, 2007). The changes of structure and process of the organizations of the current society has generated a great impact in new ways of working with others making collaborative work as an innovative way of work.

1.2 Justification

The concepts of group work and collaborative work are ways of working in groups that need to be explained with specific terms in order to apply them in determined situations. Nowadays, every professional who wants to work in any type of organization needs to know how to react to different political, economic, social and educational problems (Ordronneau, 1991). That is, there are many evidences of the social interactions which people are living at this time, the behavior and ideologies of each person have been based on previous experiences shared with other people who also have worked in groups making a chain of work.

As Brannick, (1997) points out “teams are fact of life” because of the evidences of social interaction in the business management, governmental organizations, sport teams, etc. However, analyzing the process of teamwork it is not possible to establish it as the unique way of working, that is, there are more developed models which can help to the principals, teachers and researchers to improve the outcomes of every student (Armengol, 2002).

1.3 Significance of the study.

This research represents an overview about how the dynamics of collaborative work took part in a foreign language class in order to help teachers to visualize this way working as innovation in education. In words of Lieberman (1984), collaborative work provides professional development and encourages greater collegial interaction. Consequently, collaboration permits participation from teachers and students towards the solution of a planned task. For that reason the purpose of this research is to identify the most common characteristics of collaborative work in a target language four class in Faculty of Languages at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

1.4 Research context.

The purpose of this research is to identify the characteristics of the collaborative work in a class of target language four. This research is based on Constructivism theory; it explains how knowledge is a personal activity guided by functional, meaningful and authentic contexts (Mendez, 2002). Furthermore, this Faculty of Languages takes into account the model called Minerva, this promotes the development of abilities such as team work, communication and decision making. Also, this model promotes the practice of attitudes and values such as autonomy, empathy and collaboration towards the accomplishment of tasks to have a meaningful learning for students in an individually or collectively context (BUAP, 2007).

1.5 Location of the research.

This research is developed in a Target Language IV class at Languages Faculty of Bénémerita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. The plan Minerva is divided in eight periods of four months; according to the program there are five Target Language periods, the fourth period is an intermediate level of English according to the curriculum. Based on that, this research was applied with students who have been interacting in a foreign language.

1.6 Research aims:

General Objective:

1. To observe if there is collaborative work in a group of Target Language IV at Languages Faculty.

Specific Objectives:

1. Identify the characteristics of collaborative work used in a group of Target Language IV.
2. To determine the most common characteristics of collaborative work used in a group of Target Language IV

1.7 Research questions.

This research sets out to answer the following questions:

1. Which are the characteristics of collaborative work used in a group of Target Language IV?

- 2 Which are the most representative characteristics of collaborative work identified in a target language IV class?

1.8 Hypothesis.

The work developed in groups in a Target Language IV class is considered collaborative work.

1.9 Methodology:

The purpose of this research is to identify the characteristics of collaborative work used in a class of Target Language IV and to know which characteristics of collaborative work are more representatives in this class. Due this, this is a descriptive research because of the natural context where the research was done. It was used a qualitative method based on descriptions through the use of video recordings and a chart designed by the researcher. There were two video recordings for two classes; every recording last two hours approximately. The participants were students of intermediate level; nine female and two male, the age was between 20 and 26 years old.

1.10 Key terms.

Group: A group is a collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree. As so defined, the term *group* refers to a class of social entities having in common the property of interdependence among their constituent members (Cartwright & Zander, 1968).

Collaborative work: collaborative work promotes a positive interdependence; members of the group perceive their strengths working together with coordination in order to accomplish a determined task. Any member cannot have success if the other members are left behind (Jonson & Jonson, cited in Armengol, 2002).

Group work: It is an effective technique for achieving certain kinds of intellectual and social learning goals. The students work together in a group small enough so that everyone can participate on a task that has been clearly assigned (Cohen, 1994).

Group dynamics: refers to a system of behaviors and psychological processes occurring within a group. It helps to the understanding decision-making behavior, tracking the spread of diseases in society, creating effective therapy techniques, and following the emergence and popularity of new ideas and technologies (Canto, 2002).

Team work: it is a strategy to work with other people in order to improve the results for different tasks, where participants share the same objective and they have a lineal structure to follow, leadership subordinates (Stewart, 2008).

Chapter II: Literature Review

The term of collaborative work has taken significance in different areas such as study groups, research projects and other educational situations. Thus, it is important to know the theories that support the work in groups and in this case identify the characteristics that lead the development of activities when working collaboratively.

The organizational culture is the pattern of behaviors and assumptions that are taught to new organizational members as a way of perceiving, thinking, feeling and showing reactions to the society (Barton and Tusting, 2005). In other words, the organization culture is the collective behavior of humans who are part of an organization and the meanings that the people attach to their actions. As a result, the organizational culture affects the way people interact in groups promoting values, norms, visions, working language, belief, and habits (Ehrlich, 2002).

The importance of groups in the educational practice has improved the way to work with others talking about researchers, teachers and students. According to Brown (1994), group work is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves the practice of different skills. On the other hand, Cohen (1994) defines it as an effective technique for achieving certain kind of intellectual and social learning goals.

Thus, the option to use group work depends on the achievement of the goals established by the teachers or the guide who will be in front of the group. However, there are other

techniques/ strategies to work with others that have been applied in classrooms such as pair work, team work and collaborative work (Armengol, 2002).

Nowadays, team work is a term used in different places where it is necessary to accomplish a determined goal, greater interpersonal skills are necessary to work together effectively at more complex levels. As a result, more options of working with others have become available regarding the dimension of involvement of different skills. According to Vašková (2007), team work is a group of people who have at least some collective tasks and the team members are authorized to regulate mutually the execution of these collective tasks. However, team work is not the unique form to work with others sharing the same goals; collaborative work has taken much relevance in the educational field because it encourages students' interactions through the dialogue promoting a powerful professional development of the teachers and students.

When working in groups there is mixture of people who share different backgrounds, they start interacting among them and share their knowledge in order to have an understanding about to the new things. For this reason the Constructivism theory starts taking part within the work developed in groups.

2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism as educational theory comprises ideas about the human learning (Taber, 2011). That is, it explains the nature of the human knowledge and how people construct their own understanding of the world through experiencing things and making sense of their lives. Moreover, Constructivism explains that the learning is an active process, when a

person learns something new he/she incorporates it to the previous experiences giving a cognitive relation which permit the assimilation of the learning (Mendez, 2002).

Therefore, Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is not a set of words given by the teacher to the students and they stay passive. On the contrary, knowledge is constructed by learners through an active mental process.

The Constructivism draws on the work of Piaget (1977) who asserts that learning occurs by an active construction of meaning, rather than by passive recipience. He explains that when learners encounter an experience or a situation that conflicts with the current way of thinking, a state of disequilibrium or imbalance is created. To do this, people make sense of the new information by associating it with what we already know, that is, by attempting to assimilate it into our existing knowledge. So, when a person has this process there is an assimilation of the new information to our old way of thinking by restructuring our present knowledge to a higher level of thinking (Twomey, 1989). However, this process is not done in an isolated manner, the human being needs to be in contact with others in order to give meaning to the new information.

2.1.2 Social Constructivism.

Social constructivism is a model based on the Constructivism that gives a particular view of knowledge, a view of how we come to know. In this view, learning is constructed through interactions with others, which take place within a specific socio-cultural context (Oldfather, 1999). Therefore, a social constructivist perspective focuses on learning as sense-making rather than on the acquisition of the role knowledge that “exists”

somewhere outside of the learner. Piaget's theories focus primarily on individuals' constructions, and then Vygotsky emphasizes the inherently social nature of learning and the observations about the relation between thought and language that have significantly expanded views of learning.

Taking into account that the learning is social, Vygotsky talked about the importance of teacher-student dialogue and the needs for teachers to stimulate it (Beck and Kosnik, 2006). That is, give the importance of dialog with others in the knowledge construction process. As Dewey (1916) stated, education is not something to be said because it is an active and constructive process. This means learners must interpret new ideas in the context of their present interests and understanding of the new things to make sense in daily life.

2.2 Communicative Approach

Communicative approach was a manifestation of the 1970's that brought a more comprehensive view of teaching and learning of a language. This approach arose after other approaches did not give enough results in specific language skills. This approach was focused on the concept of communication that takes beyond level of sentence. Furthermore, 'Communicative' implies 'semantic', a concern with the meaning potential of language (Littlewood, 1983)

2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching.

The importance of this method was the aspects focused on the communicative issues. That is, this way of work changed how was perceived and taught the language, in this case

English language. The origins of communicative language teaching were found in the British language teaching in 1960s where the changes in language teaching methods throughout history reflected recognition of the learners' needs (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In other words, it was necessary to be focused on language teaching on communicative proficiency rather on mere mastery of grammar structures.

Based on the previous idea, the communicative language teaching managed with two important aims; the first one is to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching, and the second one is develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. (Littlewood, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The way to integrate grammatical and functional teaching gives the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups employing available language resources in problem-solving task. In addition, dialogue centers on communicative functions and the learning activities are consequently selected how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns).

2.2.2 Objectives of Communicative Language Teaching

The objectives of Communicative language teaching assumed that language teaching reflects the particular needs of the target learners (Rodgers, 2001). In words of Piepho (cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) the first point for this method is an integrative and content level, that is, use the language as means of expression. The second one, an effective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct, hence, use of language as a

means of expressing values and judgments about oneself and others. The third one is focused on a general educational level of extra-linguistics goals. And the fourth one emphasized on the level of individual learning needs.

2.3 Task based approach

As previously stated, the communicative language approach was focused on making language in classroom truly communicative, for that reason task-based language arose as a branch of the theory. According to Nunan (1984), this approach is emphasized on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. In addition, Richards & Schmidt (2002) stated that this approach is based on interactive tasks with a planning unit. Hence, communication and learning involve the performance of tasks which are not solely language tasks even though they involve language activities and make demands upon the individual's communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). That is, those tasks are neither routine nor automatic; it requires the use of strategies in communicating or learning.

For the Common European Framework (2013), a task is “any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfill or an objective to be achieved”. That is, the tasks are going to be solved using different strategies which permit to give the results planned by the teachers. Consequently, the range of activities enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, all this is done with the process of sharing information, negotiation of meaning, and interaction (Littlewood, 2004).

The communicative language teaching distinguishes between “functional communication activities” and “social interaction activities”. The first one includes such tasks as learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; giving instructions, explaining a topic. The second one: social interaction activities include conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

2.4 Groups

The previous part described the kind of activities that concern with the interactions among others. So, the characteristics and ideas about the concept of group have been a matter of debate for many years. However, the significance of collectivities like families, friendship circles, tribes and clans has been long recognized, but it is really only in the last century or so that groups were studied scientifically and theory developed (Mills, 1967).

Furthermore, Cooley (1909) stated that groups are people who share values in common and those values give them a holistic pattern of activity. In a similar way Shaw (1981) explained that groups are people who create norms which define their activities to keep cohesion. On the other hand, Belbin (2000) established that groups consist of people brought together for a common purpose. In groups, as the number of people increases, the identity of each member diminishes. Finally with Cartwright and Zander (1968), a group is a collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree. As so defined, the term group refers to a class of social entities having in common the property of interdependence among their constituent members.

Thus, all the definitions have three important elements: the number of individuals involved, connection, and relationship. Consequently, those elements give a number of types of groups such as; groups of work, solving problems groups, social action groups, politics groups and economics groups (Cartwright and Zander, 1971). All these categorizations of group were done based on the purposes of the formation.

Those groups share different purposes on their formation, there are ones focused on solving problems carrying out activities with efficient results, others that look the balance of the social facts and behaviors making a balance among people of different status in the life. Finally, those politic groups focused on making decisions that affect the development of the countries talking about international and national aspects.

Consequently, the characteristics of groups which share a common goal that is give results to the members of the group. To do this, it is important to know the stages or phases of the groups' process, the best known theory from a stage perspective is Tuckman's (1965). He named five stages of group life: namely, forming, storming, norming, performing and ending or "mourning" (Brown, 1988). All these stages are important to identify the weakness and strengths of the group and solving the possible problems related with the members. In other words, each stage can be different based on the process of development of the group (Canto, 2002).

Stage 1: Forming.

Members of the group cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behavior. They search for their position within the group and test the leader's guidance. It is normal for little team progress to occur during this stage.

Stage 2: Storming.

It is probably the most difficult stage for the group. Members often become impatient about the lack of progress, but are still inexperienced with working as a group. Members may argue about the actions they should take because they faced with ideas that are unfamiliar to them and put them outside their comfort zones. Much of their energy is focused on each other instead of achieving the goal.

Stage 3: Norming.

During this stage group members accept the group and begin to reconcile differences. Emotional conflict is reduced as relationships become more cooperative. The group is able to concentrate more on their work and start to make significant progress.

Stage 4: Performing.

By this stage the group members have discovered and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses, and learned what their roles are. Members are open and trusting and many good ideas are produced because they are not afraid to offer ideas and suggestions. They are comfortable using decision making tools to evaluate the ideas, prioritize tasks and solve problems. Much is accomplished and group satisfaction and loyalty is high.

Stage 5: Ending.

The final stage where the groups could reach their objectives, here members of the group do their best to accomplish the task and later on the group can be dissolved successfully. Moreover, it is vital to ensure that every member of the group paid attention to details of all work they have developed.

That is, the types of groups are important because each one has the purpose to help in specific feature of the society. Nevertheless, in educational process the conception of the group has taken relevance interchanging the concept of group work that involves many characteristics that will be explained in the next section.

2.4.1 Group work

Group work in general terms is a method which made use of voluntary association in small groups with an individualization related to identification with the group, interaction among members and the leader, the expression and stimulation of interests, leadership sensitive to personal and social values (Reid, 1981). On the other hand, talking about educational process group work is a strategy for solving two common classroom problems: keeping students involved with their work, and managing instruction for students with a wide range of academic skills (Cohen, 1994).

According to Bell (1998), group work has been considered a valuable teaching and learning strategy that increases language practices opportunities, improves the quality of students skills and helps an affective climate among students. That is, group work generates interactive language helping to solve the problem of classes that are too large to offer many opportunities to speak (Brown, 1994).

It is important to mention that the group work development in the classroom and the planning process start with a fundamental decision that determines the nature of the interactions and tasks for students. Once teachers have considered the task and the interactions to the class, it is necessary to know the student's attitudes toward the task

because if there is no clear objective students would get lost in the process of working with their partners (Trevithick, 2005).

2.4.2 Group dynamics.

The term “group dynamics” had a profound impact on a generation of researchers concerned with group dynamics. According to Canto (2002) group dynamics refers to a system of behaviors and psychological processes occurring within a social group (intragroup dynamics), or between social groups (intergroup dynamics). In addition, the study of group dynamics can be useful in understanding decision-making behavior, tracking the spread of diseases in society, creating effective therapy techniques, and following the emergence and popularity of new ideas and technologies (Cartwright and Zander, 1971).

In other words, group dynamics can be studied in business settings, in volunteer settings, in classroom settings, and in social settings. Any time there are three or more individuals interacting or talking together, there are group dynamics. Based on previous statement, Brown (1988), argues about two key ideas that emerged out of field that are crucial to an appreciation of group process: interdependence of fate, and task interdependence. These phases would help to understand how group work sustains interactions among the members.

Moreover, Forsyth (2006) stated that most of the groups create a state of interdependence, for members’ outcomes, actions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences are determined in part by other members of the group. Interdependence also results when

members are able to influence and be influenced by others in the group. In this part, it is crucial to put in a high level the interactions among members.

Allwright (cited in Bell, 1998) goes on to identify at least five different aspects of interaction management; the first one is the selection of the speaker; the second one is the selection of the topic, then the tone, that is, the socio-emotional atmosphere of the interaction and finally the code.

Working in groups means that the teacher has to give explicit detailed instructions and specify the objective in the way of working. Therefore, the task interdependence includes all group behavior that is focused principally on the group's work, projects, plans, and goals. In most groups, members must coordinate their various skills, resources, and motivations so that the group can make a decision, generate a product, or achieve a victory (Brown, 1988).

However, it is important to consider the disadvantages of using group work in learning English as a foreign language. When working in groups, teachers take the risk students use their mother language or doing other things instead of the task. Consequently, some students choose working individually (Brown, 1988). For that reason, it is important teachers monitor the work.

2.4 Pair work

Pair work, as a branch of group work, has taken relevance in the classrooms. It assumes learners working together in pairs exchanging opinions about the task (Gorgon, 2008). Furthermore, pair work applied on the classroom encourages students to increase the

English language proficiency (British Council, 2013). Moreover, it permits to increase the opportunities for students to work together exchanging information about the activities when answering comprehension questions after reading a text. As a result, this way of working allows them to compare answers, and clarify problems together using English (Brown, 1994).

On the other hand, focused on teachers there is an available way to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of pair work on their learners by using action research tools. That is, they can ask the learners how they feel about working in pairs.

According to Brown (1994), pair work is more appropriate than group work for tasks that are: (a) short, (b) linguistically simple, and (c) quite controlled in terms of the structure of the task. There are many activities with different purposes, for example those focused on practicing dialogues with a partner, simple question and answer exercises, performing certain meaningful substitution drills, a brainstorming activity and some activities that lead the preparation for merging with a larger group.

Nevertheless, these activities are focused on the learner's needs and it is important to take into account the curriculum that determines which skills would be encouraged.

2.6 Small group work

The term of small group has been treated as a small team which searches the achievement of the goals in a determined time. However, small group work provides opportunities for students to face real context, here students practice negotiation of meaning for extended

conversational exchanges (Brown, 1994). That is, small group work is a community of learners cooperating to pursuit common goals.

Small group work enhances students to develop their cognitive and metacognitive abilities through having to explain and clarify their thoughts to the other group members. Explaining how they have reached a conclusion or arrived at an answer will involve an analysis of their own thought processes (Davidson & Worsham, 1992).

Consequently, the learning goals can be defined as desired future state of competence or mastery in the subject area being studied, such as foreign language proficiency. The work to achieve learning goals can be structured so as to promote individual learning (Nunan, 1984).

2.7 Teamwork

As it was explained before, there are many situations that promote the work in groups. Broadly, teamwork has been defined as the joint of two or more people who have different tasks and work together to achieve specified goals (Brannick, Salas and Prince 1997). Moreover, Keen (2003) stated a team as "*As a group organized to work together or a group on the same side*" (p. 15). Based on this, the Webster's New World Dictionary explained that a team is "a joint action by a group of people, in which each person subordinates his or her individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group."

On the other hand, the concept of teamwork in educational practice is explained as a strategy to work with other people in order to improve the results for different tasks

(Stewart 2008). In this description the participants share the same objective and they follow a lineal structure with leadership and subordinates.

However, the previous definition of teamwork has not been observed in education, sometimes teamwork is a mere of saying without any specific objective. It does mean that effective and efficient teamwork goes beyond individual accomplishments. The most effective teamwork is produced when all the individuals involved harmonize their contributions and work towards a common goal and result.

Components of team work based on Brannick (1997)

Team orientation.

It refers to the attitudes that team members have toward one another and the team task. Also it considers the acceptance of the norms, level of group cohesiveness, and the importance of the team membership.

1. Team leadership.

It involves providing direction, structure and support for other team members. It does not necessarily refer to single individual with formal authority over others.

2. Communication.

According to Branick, (1997), it is important the exchange of information between two or more team members in the prescribed manner and by using a proper terminology. Often, the purpose of communication is to clarify or acknowledge the receipt of information.

3. Monitoring:

In this part there is an observation the activities and performance of other team members. It implies that the team members are individually competent and that they may subsequently provide feedback and backup behavior.

4. Feedback:

In this part members are focused on giving, seeking and receiving the information among team members. Giving feedback refers to providing information regarding other members' performance. Seeking feedback refers to requesting input or guidance regarding performance.

5. Backup behavior:

It involves assisting the performance of the team members. This implies that members have an understanding of the other members' tasks.

6. Coordination:

It refers to team members executing their activities in a timely and integrated manner. It implies that the performance of some team members influences the performance of other team members.

7. Definition:

It implies that members have an understanding of the other members' tasks. It also implies that members are willing and able to provide assistance when needed.

8. Decision rules:

This final component is crucial when one member of the group has problems with the development of the tasks. Team members look for solutions to avoid negative effects in the others members' tasks.

Those aspects are considered when using team work; to choose the way to work is based on the goals and the types of interactions that the teacher would look in the students.

2.8 Collaborative Work

The concept of collaborating and cooperating evokes different expectations from its members. Cooperation is a limited process in which one organization seeks the assistance or permission of another for the attainment of a goal. However, collaboration involves exchanges on the part of both organizations (Johntson, Brosnan, Cramer and Dove 2000). According to Pico and Rodríguez (2011), collaboration searches a compromise among students and teachers towards the knowledge building, that is, everybody shows competencies and values in the way they are going to work. In other words, collaboration permits to change the word "me" for "us" giving a different context in the accomplishment of a determined task (Armengol, 2002). Furthermore, in working collaboratively all participants share parity and act in a volunteer manner based on shared mutual goals (Friend and Cook, 1992).

As Roschelle and Teasley (1995) stated, collaborative work is the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinate effort to solve the problem together. It implies direct interactions and involves negotiations, discussions, and accommodating others' perspectives. That is, emotionally and cognitively aspects are important to it.

Based on that, collaborative work is a model that requires changes in attitudes, working relationships, pedagogies, and the organizational culture view. There must be a change in the perception of groups; collaborative work is an opportunity to exercise higher level thinking skills. That is, people working together aiming towards a common goal in personal and academic sides avoiding individualism. Moreover, collaborative work enhances critical thinking because it involves cognitive skills when analyzing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems (Paul and Elder, 2007). Due to this, critical thinking entails effective communication and promotes respect for and willingness to entertain diverse viewpoints.

Additionally, the cohesion created among members in collaborative work permits to be applied in different fields of education and social organizations, for example; collaborative research, collaborative work in computer programs and writing texts (Johnston and Johnson, 2000). Furthermore, it is necessary to explain other characteristics that shape this innovative way of working: planning, the task, objectives, and dialogue.

2.8.1 Planning.

In each group it is necessary to have an understanding of the development of the work; each member has his own role. It is necessary to establish the goals based on the work that is

going to be done. Moreover, it is important to establish the group size, according to Barkley, Cross and Major, (2005), for effective collaborative work; group size usually ranges from two to six students. While size may be dictated by any number of factors and preferences. However, all these characteristics need to be discussed among members to avoid misunderstandings and revise the objectives of short or long period.

2.8.2 Task

The task is a crucial point in collaborative work; it permits to know what the group is oriented for (Gouran, 2003). All members of the group must know the task, that is, to have a shared idea about the strategies to accomplish the task. Furthermore, in collaborative work, tasks are oriented with specific purposes that concern with every member of the group, it engages with the members' interests to have an initiating activity, seeking information, seeking opinion, giving information about the task (Arencibia, 1998).

2.8.3 Objective

As in every task there must established objectives, an objective is a specific result that a person or system aims to achieve within a time frame and with available resources (Dick and Carey, 1990). Furthermore, objectives underlie all planning and strategic activities. They serve as the basis for creating policy and evaluating performance. In collaborative work, objectives should be an agreement from the members when establishing objectives, also it is important to keep in mind the strategies that all members propose in order to have a clear understanding of the course of the work.

2.8.4 Dialogue.

Dialogue goes beyond the exchange of information, it seeks planning, critical thinking and autonomy. Dialogue is the encounter between humans, mediated by the world, in order to name the world, that is, it is a constitutive dimension of the activity systems that construct and display thinking (Bartlett, 2005). Moreover, dialogue is a medium through which participants are able to share conceptions, verify or test their understandings, and identify areas of common knowledge or of difference (Burbles, 1999). Consequently, the dialogue encourages having a relation of confidence that will keep communication among the members of the group even after the work.

According to Scardamalia and Bereiter (2006), the treatment of the dialogue is indexed in five levels:

2.8.4.1 Recitation.

This is the traditional form of oral interaction between teachers and students, which consists of an oral examination conducted by the teacher (Scardamalia & Bereiter 2006). In words of Nystrand (1997), recitation refers to students' oral presentations where students respond with occasional word or two to the teacher's periodic questions.

According to Gutiérrez (1993), recitation follows a strict Initiation – Response – Evaluation (IRE) discourse pattern, that is, teacher selects student speakers, after that he shows little or no acknowledgement of student's self-selections and then teacher initiates subtopics. Furthermore, teacher discourages or ignores student's attempts to introduce other subtopics leading the student's responses to be short (one word/phrase). In other words, teacher does

not encourage response elaboration, and there is minimal expansion of student's responses by teacher. Consequently, teacher initiates test-like questions for which there is generally only one correct answer and indicates implied goal is to contribute specific right answers to teacher's questions.

2.8.4.2 Teacher mediated-dialogue.

This presents the IRE format, that is, teacher initiates, students responds and teacher evaluates but there is some logic and constructive purpose to the sequence of the units. Sometimes it takes the form of Socratic questioning or a relatively free discussion. Hence, there is not just to respond with a correct answer because students restructure knowledge using their own ideas, experiences, and thought patterns (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 2003).

Students internalize the meaning of what was learned by elaborating, extending, and commenting on it using their own thoughts. In this manner, learners are encouraged to communicate the processes by which they are learning, thereby helping them to construct their own meanings and understandings of the content (Phillips, 2000).

2.8.4.3 Teacher-managed argument or debate.

A debate is a discussion or structured contest about an issue or a resolution. Debate requires multiple levels of skills and understandings (Ziegelmuller and Harris, 1998). A formal debate involves two sides: one supports a resolution and one opposing it. Such a debate is bound by rules previously agreed upon. However debates may be judged in order to declare

a winning side. This level of dialogue is more used to explore and resolve issues and problems of a determined topic.

2.8.4.4 Independent small group discussion.

This model was pioneered in Great Britain, this approach divides the class into small groups that carry on their own informal discussion, usually on set topics, with the teacher as monitor. Moreover, one aspect to be considered in small group work is the interaction among students through discussions that would enhance achievement of the objective, all this can be done by engaging students substantively, especially compared with lecture, drill work, and recitation which like short-answer study questions; typically involve abbreviated responses for students (Nystrand, 1997). For some, small group was so highly structured by the teacher promoting two important aspects.

First, to promote student autonomy it is necessary that teacher shapes group work by assigning tasks and establishing parameters of interactions. In highly prescript group work, the parameters are defined entirely by the teacher, and the task could just as easily be done without interaction among students. The second point is to promote student production of knowledge in which activities such as completing worksheets and answering study questions, students are required mainly to manipulate and master information provided by the teacher or a textbook.

2.8.4.5 Authentic problem-solving discourse.

It is authentic because authentic problem-solving discourse has a goal toward which is intended to progress usually explaining something, but possibly toward planning or

designing something. Authentic means that students actually care about a problem and do not see as merely an exercise. “Knowledge building discourse” has the purpose the production and the improvement of public knowledge (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006). Accordingly, it represents the kind of discourse observed in mature knowledge-creating teams.

Finally, it can be said that collaborative work offers an embracing affective climate that promotes the learner responsibility and autonomy. Moreover, responsibility for action and progress upon each of the members of the groups somewhat equally also is a step toward individualizing instruction. In such a classroom, the teacher provides students with experiences that allow them to hypothesize, predict, manipulate objects, propose questions, research, investigate, imagine, and invent (Kelly, 1991).

2.9 Collaborative learning

As mentioned before, collaborative work promotes learning in groups. Learning is one of the most important activities in which humans engage. It is at the very core of the transformation of the knowledge that happens in the brain. According to Phillips (2000), learning is a process of assimilation and accommodation to disturbances in the subject’s experimental environment. The disturbances alert the subject to the need to check cognitive patterns previously established and to recognize those problems that call for new and equilibrating solutions.

The equilibrating situations cannot be separated from the social perspective, when a person learns something new it is because she/he has contextualized the knowledge with the reality. That is, learning is a social process that cannot be separate from the society.

Since the learning is social Vigotsky developed one of the concepts of his theory Zones of Proximal Development. This ZPD stimulates internal developmental processes that operate exclusively during interactions with others. For Vogostsky, the interpersonal processes are said to become intrapersonal through a process of internalisation. In this sense, internalisation is a process involving the transformation of the higher mental function through social interactions between two or more people representing an inter-mental phenomenon (Vygotsky, 1978).

Therefore, the process of learning a foreign language brings social interactions transforming the target language for oneself, keeping it in its social base. Due to this, the constructivist teacher has two specific tasks: to establish a learning environment suited to providing perturbations for the student's stage in mental development and constructions, one that will allow the teacher to understand the student's notion of a viable solution.

Also, it is based on different epistemological assumptions, as mentioned before; it has its home in social constructivism. In other words, collaborative learning occurs when students and faculty work together to create knowledge. Collaborative learning replaced the traditional social conventions of learning where students just had to give answer expected by the teachers. According to Lai (2011), collaborative learning is “a situation in which two

or more people learn or attempt to learn something together,” and more specifically as joint problem solving.

Finally, as Bruffee (1999) established, collaborative learning is students constructing knowledge socially in small groups. That is, collaborative learning foster student’s conceptual rethinking where teachers tend to trust college and university students to govern themselves in a context of substantive engagement, conversation, and negotiation of meaning.

2.10 Chapter conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical framework that supported this research project. First of all, it was taken into account the theory of groups with its different characteristics and branches of organization such as group work, pair work, teamwork and collaborative work. Secondly, it was mentioned the Constructivism theory and dynamic of the groups in order to contextualize the work. And the last one, working collaboratively implies many characteristics that needed to be explained with specific details.

Chapter III: Methodology

The present chapter is mainly focused on the methodology description that was used to carry out this project. In this section was described the subjects, the instrument and the data collection procedure. As it was described in chapter one, it was used a qualitative methodology because of the observations done in the target language four class.

It was recorded two classes of Target Language IV at the Languages Faculty. The purpose was to identify the characteristics of collaborative work used in a class of Target Language IV and to know which characteristics of collaborative work are more representative in this class.

3.1 Participants

This research was carried out in the Languages Faculty with students of intermediate level of English. As Merriam Webster (2013) stated, participant is a person who is involved in an activity or event and for this case the participants were eleven students of target language four: nine female and two male, the age was between 20 and 26. These students take target language four class of two hours per four days. Additionally, the teacher of the group was male with English Teaching degree. Also, it was taken into account their naturalistic way of working using groups, for that reason the researcher decided to work with this group to know if there is collaborative work identifying the characteristics of it.

3.2 Research methodology

This research follows a qualitative methodology because of the description of the activities developed in class. Moreover, this method helps the categorization data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In addition, this research takes into account the context of this social process. It was used videotapes because it allowed having more reliable observation for repeated examination, that is, as Marsall and Brosnan (1999) stated, the videotapes capture details of behavior that in field notes will be difficult to do it.

3.3 Instruments

The instrument for this research was a chart designed by the researcher in order to classify the information obtained in the observations. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained, the observation helps to identify first-hand information about any specific subject. The chart was divided into six columns; the first one was to identify the task, the second for the objectives of the task, the third one for the number of members for each activity, the fourth one was for the time of each activity, the fifth column for the types of interactions, and the last one for the comments of the researcher.

Furthermore, the video tapes helped to complement the information gathered in during the observations in the class.

3.4 Data collection procedure.

The data collection started with two classes that were recorded, including when the class started right up until the end in order to avoid missing information. The video recording began since students arrived at the classroom and started working. The chart was divided in seven columns; the first column was focused on the description of the task, the second one was focused on the objective, the third one on members of the groups, the fourth was focused on time spent for the activities, the fifth on the results, the next one on comments about the activities and the last one on observations.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis started with a chart that helped me to describe some characteristics of collaborative work, also the videotapes helped to complement the information required. Moreover, the videotapes permitted to move back and forth when it was necessary to consider an important point during the analysis of the information. As a result, this information helped the researcher to focus on the categories established for this research. Finally, it was necessary to identify the task asked by the teacher, the objective, time for each activity and the most important; how the work was developed identifying the levels of dialogue.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter was mainly focused on the research methodology. That is, this project followed a qualitative methodology; that is why it was used videotapes and a chart designed

by the researcher. The design of the chart was based on identifying the characteristics of collaborative work and then determined the most common. Consequently, the instrument of videotapes helped to complement the information in order to complete the data of the chart. Then, there was a description of the participants of the Target Language IV class. Finally, this part of the research leads to start the analysis of the data that is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter described the analysis of the data obtained with the methodology and instrument. This research follows a qualitative method, and the instruments were video tapes and a chart that gathered information of two sessions of two hours of target language four. Every video recording yielded relevant information to reach the objectives and answer the questions presented in chapter one, and the analysis of the data is based on the framework presented in chapter two.

4.1 Research questions.

The research questions are:

Which are the characteristics of collaborative work used in a group of Target Language IV?

Which are the most representative characteristics of collaborative work identified in a target language IV class?

4.2 Characteristics of collaborative work.

Chart 4.2 Characteristics of collaborative work	
Task:	It has specific purposes that concern with every member of the group, it engages with the members' interests to have an initiating activity, seeking information, seeking opinion, giving information about the task (Gouran, 2003) p.29.
Objective:	Objective underlies all planning and strategic activities to carry out the task, and objectives should be agreed on between members of the group

	(Carey, 1990) p.30
Dialogue:	IRE pattern, Teacher starts the questions, students respond and then teacher evaluates the answer (Gutierrez, 1993) p. 31
➤ Recitation	
➤ Teacher mediated dialogue	It follows an IRE pattern with a limited number of questions and the conclusion is decided by the teacher (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 2006) p.32
➤ Teacher managed argument or debate	A debate is a discussion or structured contest about an issue or a resolution. Debates may be judged in order to declare a winning side (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 2006) p. 32
➤ Independent small grup discussion	Informal discussion focuses usually on set topics, with the teacher as monitor. Activities can be lecture, drill work, and recitation which like short-answer study questions; typically involve abbreviated responses for students (Nystrand, 1997) p. 32
➤ Authentic problem solving discourse.	Topic relevant to the members of the group. “Knowledge building discourse” has the purpose the production and the improvement of public knowledge (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006) p. 33

4.3 Results.

In this chapter, it is described four activities developed in class. The descriptions of the activities were done based on the information gathered with the instrument and the video recordings. Moreover, each activity was described in chronological order taking into account the formation of groups, development of the activity and revision of the work. Also, it is important to consider that in each level of any target language there is a specific

students' book , and for this target language four class was used the book New Headway Upper-intermediate level. This student's book is organized in different units of grammar explanation and some exercises.

Moreover, this group of target language four was working in the unit number five; this unit was focused on future forms, the aim was to revise and practice the uses of the main future forms, will, going to, and the Present Continuous.

4.3.1 First Activity

The first activity was focused on grammar; future forms. In this activity students had to answer six questions about descriptions of different situations. Teacher started reading the instructions and formed groups of three students, then, teacher played the conversation and asked students to answer the questions.

After eight minutes, teacher asked if everything had been understood, students did not answer, teacher played the CD twice. Ten minutes later, teacher began the revision of the activity selecting one student to give him the first answer, for each response he asked aloud if it was correct or not. Teacher continued the same process of revision with other students without any other comment about the activity.

The previous description helped to observe that the objective was to practice listening of future forms. This way of working was more focused on small group work, when students worked together there was a negotiation of meaning trying to get the correct answer. As Brown (1994) explained, with small group work students practice the language and improve their speaking skill. Moreover, when working in small groups teacher needs to

monitor the activities to revise if the objectives of the activities have being achieved. However, this way of working could be used for most activities of interactions among students allowing them to share different backgrounds about the topic.

As a final point, it can be said that the level of dialogue achieved in this small group work was recitation because the activity followed the IRE pattern; teacher began with the question, in this case the questions were already stated by the book, then students gave the answers according to the listening, after that students replied and finally teacher made an evaluation according to the activity.

4.3.2 Second activity.

The second activity was focused on grammar exercises; the task was future questions form. At the beginning of the activity teacher read the instructions of the exercise, students had to form questions according to the answers written on the book. Then, teacher started to choose the pairs. After that, students started working on the activity remarking the instructions among them. During the revision of the answers teacher chose one student of each pair work to write down the question form on the board, when students finished teacher revised the questions and he corrected some mistakes of the questions forms. Finally, students listened to the audio-recording of the answers for the activity.

However, based on the previous description it is said that the task was already established by the book, and the objective was that students practice future question form. Furthermore, during the revision of the activity there were no more interactions, teacher showed

willingness to correct grammar mistakes in the questions but those answers were already determined by the book when listening to the audio recording.

On the other hand, monitoring the task is crucial to know if students are practicing the language, or detect if there are some difficulties from students when doing the tasks. Sometimes, the activity may be difficult or easy enhancing the use of the mother tongue, for that reason instructions must be very clear to the students, so they know exactly how to complete the task successfully.

Finally, as a resume; the characteristics of collaborative work were the task, the objective, and the level of dialogue observed was recitation, as Gutierrez (1993) stated, in recitation teachers initiate, student responds expecting the evaluation of the teacher. However, activities like this expect more interactions to carry out the activity in a personal context where students could give other examples.

4.3.3 Third activity

The third activity was about future forms discussion, in the book there were questions and sentences in Present Simple, Present Continuous and Future simple form. Teacher started reading the instructions and asking the answer for the first sentence. After that, teacher asked students to work in pairs; the discussion was about twenty minutes and teacher did not monitor the students' pair work.

In the middle of the activity, teacher asked how the use of Future Simple in Spanish language is, if it is used in a correct way; at this time one student replied saying that there is not a correct use, then, teacher explained that in Spanish language there is an interference

with English language, to give an idea to the students teacher said some examples of future forms in the Spanish language.

After ten minutes, the revision of the task began selecting one student in a direct way to read the sentence and say what it expressed, the same routine was applied for the next students.

Among the characteristics of collaborative work it is observed that the objective was predetermined by the book; it was that students discuss tenses such as Present Simple, Present Continuous and Future simple. Moreover, when teacher talked about the future forms in the Spanish language students did not comment more about the topic leaving all the explanation to the teacher. The level of dialogue observed was recitation based on students just gave the answers and teacher said if it was correct or not. Finally, in this type of activity it was used pair work but with some difficulties because student did not seem to compare their answers or clarifying problems among them, they just waited for the result of the teacher (Brown, 1994).

4.3.4 Fourth activity

For the last activity, it was a discussion focused on vocabulary; students practiced the word “thing” in sentences. Teacher read the instructions on the book and then he chose the pair work, when students were discussing teacher did not monitor the pair work discussions.

After ten minutes of discussion, when the activity had finished teacher said that students could ask the same questions to him. Every student asked the teacher the same questions

from the book. Moreover, in this part any student neither formulated other questions nor explained how the activity was.

When the activity was going developed, it can be observed the level of dialogue was teacher mediated-dialogue. In this part, students were talking about the activity with no short answers besides they restructure knowledge using their own ideas and experiences using the English language.

As a result of the analysis, in the first three activities the task was determined by the book and the level of dialogue most common was recitation.

Consequently, the work developed were done in different ways such as pair work and small group work, the first one helps to use the language for those students who have some difficulties; promoting confidence among students. To achieve this, it is essential that teacher monitors the groups periodically to make sure they are functioning according with the objectives of the activities. Hence, planning is the key to have success in this way of working.

Besides, with the next two activities it was observed more pair-work. As it was mentioned on the theoretical framework, pair work has many advantages in the process of learning but it must be observed learner independence, allowing for individual differences in learning style and encouraging collaboration among students.

However, pair work does not encourage the kind of interaction that teacher is seeking without any planning and strategy that can involve the students; it needs to be dynamic,

active and monitored. Learning cannot really take place unless the students are actively involved in the process.

Chart 4.4 Activities and level of dialogue observed.

Collaborative work	activity 1	activity 2	activity 3	activity 4
Task	✓	✓	✓	✓
Objective	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dialogue				
1. Recitation.	✓	✓	✓	
2. Teacher-mediated dialogue.				✓
3. Teacher-managed argument or debate.				
4. Independent small group discussion.				
5. Authentic problem-solving discourse.				

The previous chart gives general information according to the activities observed.

When working in groups, the syllabus and teachers expect to hear an exchange in which people are stimulating each other with ideas and in which each person's contribution becomes input for any other member of the group. In every planning, it is important to

consider the kind of interaction as a medium to achieve the goals of the class; some activities are for higher level of discourse but if the objective is not clear students cannot articulate their strategies, deductions or general reasoning.

4.5 Chapter conclusion.

In this chapter, it was described the data collected through the use of video recordings. The description of the activities was made according to the collaborative work characteristics explained in the chart. The results showed that all the tasks and objectives were already established by the book; according to the descriptions of the activities it is observed recitation level of dialogue as the most common in the class. On the other hand, there were no agreement and strategy to accomplish the task, that is, the activities were developed in the concept of pair work or group work.

Chapter V: Conclusions

In this chapter it is provided general conclusions about this research project, aiming the main objective that is to identify the characteristics of collaborative work used in a class of Target Language IV and then to determine which characteristics of collaborative work are the most representative in this class.

5.1 Collaborative work characteristics

The characteristics of collaborative mentioned in this part are based on what was observed during the writing process of chapter two. First, collaborative work requires group members to have social skills for trust building within the group, and constructive conflict resolution thorough the dialogue. Secondly, group processing includes monitoring all members' work to ensure the quality of the work, facilitating social interaction, and ensuring reciprocal interaction so that group members can collaborate effectively. Additionally, students can share their work progress and obtain feedback from other members. To facilitate this feedback, teachers can provide students with explicit guidelines on the collaborative work process.

In other words, effective collaboration does not happen automatically. Students need to learn how to collaborate as well as to learn how to collaborate to learn. Group members must be able to collaborate and be willing to collaborate with others. Consequently, when group assignments are developed, teachers may want to consider the members' responsibilities. Thus, effective strategies should also be discussed in order to facilitate collaboration and make each class member's experience more meaningful.

The perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of all students are important for enhancing learning in the classroom. As learning beyond the classroom increasingly requires understanding diverse educational perspectives, it is essential to provide students opportunities to do this in multiple contexts in schools. For that reason, collaborative work must be engaged in a thinking curriculum, everyone learns from everyone else, and any student is deprived of this opportunity for making contributions and appreciating the contributions of others.

5.1.2 Results findings and their significance

First at all, it is essential to take into account the curriculum because every point in the plan that does not reach the students constitutes an educational desire, but not a curriculum. That is, curriculum often loses its original form and suffers a relapse into certain shapelessness. However, curriculum consists of all the planned experiences that the school offers as part of its educational responsibility, but also the unplanned experiences as well. Do we need to take a look in the curriculum? Can it be considered the collaborative work on the curriculum?

Secondly, to work collaboratively it is necessary a multiplicity of authentic tasks. This may first involve attention to the theory of collaborative work. Additionally, teachers may re-structure the resources in how to carry out the class, teachers working with others teachers or students changing this perspective of individualism. It is important that teachers seek to make sense of the learning process because sometimes education is based on beliefs. In every classroom confidence to the autonomy of each student must exist, the

objectives have to be clear in order to achieve them. So, teachers are convinced of collaborative work?

On the other hand, most students, who start working in educational projects, are not experienced in collaborative work. They may have experiences with the group work at secondary school; this is observed during the work developed in classes. When working collaboratively, it is involved feelings and emotions, that is, involve the whole person allowing for choice. Students must observe that the subject is relevant for them, take the responsibility and start thinking about the personal and professional formation, believe in what they are doing and always look for the solutions of any difficult situation. Thus, some questions arouse: Are students conscious about the process of collaborative work?

Moreover, there is a need for more activities to achieve the goals for every unit of the class, sometimes the book received much importance because it is part of the curriculum but it is not immersed in the student's context. The book permits to look at the grammar and syntax aspects with some exercises but it needs to be taken more as one of many tools to carry out the activities. So, why is the student's book more important than other activities?

5.2 Limitations

As in every work, there were some limitations for this study to be done. The first of them was that I was not able to see the lesson plan beforehand. And the second one was that students did not act in confidence because of the presence of a camera, as Silverman (2004) mentioned, sometimes the presence of a camera in a group means evaluation of a person's

behavior. Finally, the data gathered during the two sessions is limited and cannot be used to get an overall panorama of the whole teaching practice and students' performances.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Based on the results of this research, it is suggested to make different studies focused on collaborative work. The first one, it is recommended a study in collaborative work experiences; in this way we can know the reasons why collaborative work does not happen in the classes. And the second place, a study that contemplates not just Target Language classes but all the subjects that the major offers.

Appendix A

Instrument: Designed by the researcher.

<i>Tasks</i>	Objective	Members of the group	Time	Interactions	Comments	Observations
Task 1						
Task 2						
Task 3						
Task						

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