



OUR ZOO A COOPERATIVE LEARNING LESSON

Lesson plan for teachers

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1. Lesson content – Introduction of the topic; Topic and method relation:

Most supporters of cooperative learning agree that one of the main advantages of the strategy is that not only the language, but the personal competences can evolve through constant interaction and shared experience of the learners. It is never too early to start working on these skills, and one should grasp every opportunity presenting itself to improve language and social skills alike – even in first grade. After all, young learners must not only cope with their demanding first year in school, they must also adapt to new social situations. Everyday conflicts are abundant in the life of a six-year-old.

Cooperative lessons can help children to understand and practice working together for a common cause. Prolonged cooperative SLA at this age is almost impossible given the frequency of the lessons, but spicing up the usual singing/playing lesson frame from time to time can be invigorating both for students and teachers alike. As cooperative structures are unknown for most first-grade students, I have also described easy and entertaining ways to introduce these concepts to children before and during the lesson.

My aim was to provide an opportunity for teachers to improve their students' social skills, while still having a fun English lesson. If it is possible, try to organize a session at least 60 minutes long, so you can conveniently finish every phase and do not have to rush your students.

2. Competences to improve:

<u>Personal competences</u>	<u>Social competences</u>	<u>Cognitive competences</u>
building self-confidence and reliability	communicating, cooperating, being flexible	applying, making decisions, presenting, being creative

3. Target group:

6-7-year-old second language (L2) learners, elementary (A1) level





4. Preliminaries:

basic vocabulary (animals and colours)

5. Teaching materials and equipment:

Large sheets of paper (wrapping paper), paper glue, scissors for each group, coloured papers, pencils, markers, blue-tack

6. Comments and remarks:

Most teachers start teaching English with the names of animals, colours and numbers. Children are already familiar with these after their first few L2 lessons. 'Our zoo' is a great way to practice these, but with some modification it could also be used to teach the names of the animals along the colours. In this lesson plan I am presuming that the children already know some animals, colours and can count.

7. Lesson plan:

E (evocation)



Task 1

"Today we are going to make a fantasy zoo!"

Close your eyes. Listen! What animal are you? Make the sound of your animal [imitate the sound of an animal]. If you are a cow, find the other cows. [show them]"

Tell your students that you are going to make a zoo together. First you must assemble the groups for the lesson. I usually make groups of four, and that is what you are going to need this time as well. Common techniques for group formation can prove to be difficult to explain and unnecessarily complicated for your reason, so let just stick to an easy and fun way – which is also related to animals! Choose an animal for each group, like 'lion', 'monkey', 'snake', 'dog' and 'cat'. Whisper the name of an animal to every student (four of each animal). Tell them to close their eyes, and sound off like the animal you have whispered in their ears. They must find animals identical to themselves, and hold each other's hands. They can stop giving sounds if they could find their peers.



Task 2

"Please put four desks together! Everybody do this! [show them, give instructions visually]"

Tell and show the students to assemble their workspace by moving their desks together. The actual moving of the tables should involve every group member – guide a single group so that the others can see what you mean. Gently put everybody's hands on the desk before moving it – they will get the idea. This phase is a great introduction of cooperation and also forges the groups on a basic level.





Task 3

“You have got the coloured papers. You draw the animals!
You have got the scissors. You cut out the animals!
You have got the markers. You draw the zoo!
You have got the glue. You put the animals in the zoo!”

[plenty of visual underlying and explanation]”

Seat the students and give them all the items they will need. Group roles are according to the necessary tools they will use: one child should have the scissors, one the paper glue, another one the pencil, while give the markers to the last one of them. Explain your students that everybody can only use his or her own item. According to my experience the easiest way of doing this is to show and tell the students what they should do and how they should behave. Choose a group, and act out the way how they are going to prepare the zoo:

- The student with the pencil is going to draw the animals on the coloured papers.
- The student with the scissors is going to cut out the drawings.
- The student with the paper glue is going to stick the animals into the zoo (large piece of paper).
- The student with the markers is going to draw the zoo itself (cages, visitors and such).

Explaining and understanding this working process is far easier than it may seem. Simple yet effective cooperative structures may also be introduced during this phase – for example my students often hold pieces of paper together, while the fourth student applies the glue.

Once your students get the idea, tell them again that you are going to make a zoo together. Use the term ‘fantasy zoo’, and talk about your own (“In my fantasy zoo, there is a pink crocodile, there is a red elephant, there is a brown dinosaur and there are three white penguins.”)

R (realization of meaning)



Task 4

“Now let’s make the zoo together!”

Let the fun begin! Assist and supervise the groups as needed. Make sure that everybody keeps his or her own task, and also helps the others if necessary. Encourage your students if they need it and try to give positive feedback after their first completed animal.





Task 5

“Bring your zoo to the board together! [show them how] Everybody touch the poster!”

Try to find the correct moment to finish the previous task: it will probably take at least 30 minutes to complete the zoo. Once the posters are finished, ask your students to bring them out to the board together. A nice opportunity for another cooperative exercise presents itself: children should bring their zoo together. Stick the posters on the board or on a wall, and seat the students in front of the zoos.



Task 6

“- Let's count the animals in this zoo!

- Show me the blue animals, please!
- What animal is this? What colour is it?
- How many elephants can you see? Count all the elephants! One, two...
- Is this the elephant? Nooo... What animal is this?
- Is this lion pink? Nooo... What colour is this lion?”

This is sort of a frontal phase. Depending on the timeframe, you can do several things with the posters. Some ideas to work with:

- Count each group's animals together.
- Ask somebody to show every blue, green, etc. animal.
- Ask the names of the animals as well as their colours.
- Ask somebody to count eg. all the elephants.
- Make yes-or-no questions to the students, eg. ‘Is this the elephant? Nooo... What animal is this?’ or ‘Is this lion pink? Nooo... What colour is this lion?’”

R (reflection)



Task 7

“[Once again enumerate the animals on every poster, and give positive feedback for each group (eg. ‘This is a very beautiful orange monkey. I love the pink crocodile!’)]”

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8. Visuals:





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9. Evaluation and assessment:

It is interesting to observe your students' behavior during the cooperative exercises. Giving simple positive feedback is encouraging and motivating as well, while the task and the beautiful posters themselves pose the real experience. You will see that your students will not forget the lesson, and will demand it all the time.

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