

Promoting Cooperative Learning in ELT Classes through the Use of CoRT Thinking Tools

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Abstract:

The author examines the use of CoRT (Cognitive Research Trust at Cambridge) Thinking Tools in Cooperative Learning activities in undergraduate university English language classes at a private university in Turkey. CoRT I and CoRT IV thinking lessons are demonstrated to provide practical and accessible content for ELT cooperative learning activities for learners at various language ability levels. Results demonstrate that students increased their facility and knowledge of cooperative learning strategies through use of CoRT thinking tools, and, as a corollary result, promoted writing and speaking in real-life contexts. Survey results show that students intend to use cooperative learning in their teaching. Written responses include CoRT lesson work cards and student anecdotal reports. Group presentations and peer feedback are shown to increase facility and confidence with spoken language. Evidence indicates that CoRT tools used in cooperative learning assist students to break down participatory barriers, develop different ways of framing situations, and develop greater language use and interactive discussion amongst learners, with opportunities for immediate, specific contextualized feedback in a low-risk environment. Using cooperative learning strategies with CoRT thinking tools is shown to be an adaptable strategy for initiating productive language.

Keywords: CoRT (Cognitive Research Trust at Cambridge) Thinking Tools; ELT, cooperative learning; creative thinking; productive language.