ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY MODEL AS AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR TEACHING SPEAKING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Andi Susilo

Abstrak: *Academic controversy model merupakan sebuah strategi pengajaran dengan menggunakan konflik intelektual dalam proses pembelajaran untuk meningkatkan pencapaian belajar peserta didik dan meningkatkan kualitas kemampuan pemecahan masalah, membuat keputusan, berfikir kritis, mampu menyampaikan argumentasi dengan efektif, menciptakan hubungan interpersonal yang baik, menumbuhkan rasa percaya diri dan meningkatkan kompetensi sosial mereka. Academic controversy model adalah salah satu strategi alternatif dalam pembelajaran kooperatif yang dapat diterapkan dalam matakuliah Speaking untuk membantu mahasiswa memperluas dan memperdalam kemampuan pemahaman terkait dengan sebuah materi, masalah, atau topik. Artikel ini membahas beberapa isu terkait penerapan strategi tersebut dalam pembelajaran speaking di tingkat universitas, antara lain: konsep pengajaran kemampuan berbicara, pengajaran kemampuan berbicara melalui pembelajaran kolaboratif, academic controversy model sebagai salah satu alternatif strategi dalam pembelajaran kooperatif dan prosedur implementasinya dalam aktivitas pembelajaran berbicara. Pada akhir bahasan, artikel ini memuat sebuah aktifitas pembelajaran berbicara melalui academic controversy model.*

ملخص: إن التناقض الأكاديمي النموذجي هو إحدي الاستيراتيجيات في التعليم باستخدام النزاع المعرفي في عملية التعليم لترقية نتيجة تعلّم الطلاب وترقية نوعية القدرة على حلّ المشاكل وأخذ القرارات ، والتفكير النقدي، والقدرة على إبداء البراهين فعاليا، وإنشاء العلاقات بين الأفراد، وتنمية الثقة بالنفس، وكذلك الكفاية الإجتماعية لدى الطلاب. وهذا النوع من الأسلوب هو أسلوب احتياطي في التعليم الاشتراكي يمكن تطبيقه في مادة مهارة الكلام، لمساعدة الطالب الجامعي في توسعة وتعميق القدرة على الفهم المتعلقة بمادة ما، أو المسألة، أو موضوع ما. حاولت هذه المقالة البحث في الإشاعات المتعلقة بتطبيق هذا الأسلوب في تعليم مهارة الكلام في الجامعة. منها مفهوم تعليم مهارة الكلام، تعليم مهارة الكلام عن طريق التعليم الاشتراكي، وهذا النوع من الأسلوب كأسلوب احتياطي في التعليم الاشتراكي وخطوات تطبيقه في عملية مهارة الكلام. وفي نهاية المقالة ذكرت عملية تعليم مهارة الكلام عبر أسلوب التناقض الأكاديمي النموذجي.

Keywords: Speaking skill, academic controversy model, teaching strategy

---

*   Program Studi TI Jurusan Tarbiyah STAIN Ponorogo

INTRODUCTION

Basically, the ultimate goal of teaching speaking especially at English department, State Islamic College of Ponorogo is aimed at improving students' communicative competence on epistemic level. Students are expected not only to be able to communicate in English orally, but also to optimize their speaking proficiency to deepen, acquire, and improve the knowledge and language skills they have. By having such epistemic level of competency, therefore, it is hoped that they can help themselves improve speaking skill independently. Moreover, they are required to have awareness in learning, comprehend the function and relevancy of the instructional goal with their needs and wants, and able to apply their knowledge and skill in the work place after graduating from the College.

The speaking process in the classroom, therefore, should be able to facilitate and help students gain their epistemic development well. It is expected that the students have a wide chance of opportunity to practice speaking skill regularly, construct their own learning, and work together to share and solve their academic problems. As it is confirmed by Porter and Roberts in O'Malley & Pierce, teachers need to provide (1) the authentic language in speaking activities, (2) real-world tasks, and (3) opportunities for the students to use the language in any situations based on everyday life.[1] Furthermore, it is important to provide them with the ability of reasoning and problem solving in order to improve their communicative competence.

In relation with gaining the objective above, the roles of the English lecturer in facilitating the process of learning are essential and unavoidable so as to help students succeed in learning. The English lecturer should be able to motivate, guide, manage and evaluate the instruction by applying various effective techniques. He must present innovative methods which can arouse students' motivation and engage them actively in the process of speaking. As a result, it is hoped that students can improve their communicative competence, deepen their ability of reasoning, and increase critical thinking as well.

In accordance to those, the process of learning should be focused on the students' center. They should be involved in such productive activities through cooperative learning setting. As it is confirmed by Johnson, the students will have high responsibility on their learning and be able to improve their academic competence if they are involved intellectually and emotionally in such communicative process of learning.[2] In this void, the speaking activities

---

[1]   O'Malley, J.M. & Pierce, L. V., *Authentic Assessment for Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers*, (Longman: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1996.), 62.

[2]   Johnson, E. B., *Contextual Teaching and Learning*, (California: Corwin Press, Inc., 2002), 12.

should be directed to facilitate and help students to express their opinions, share experiences and ideas, give and encounter argumentation and improve critical thinking. These activities, in addition, lead the students to work together in such cooperative contexts to solve the academic problems they face. As a result, it is expected that the aims of instruction can be achieved optimally.

In reality, however, it is not easy to engage the students actively in the communicative activities. Brown and Yule confirm that learning to talk in a foreign language is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the students with.[3] It is difficult to break the gap between the students who have high speaking achievement with the lower English achiever to work and practice together to improve their speaking ability in the classroom. Hence, the activities of speaking are commonly dominated by the higher English achievement students. As a result, the low English achievement students tend to be passive in joining the lesson and even they do not take and give positive contribution to the group.

The application of an effective method seems important to improve the quality of speaking process and the students' speaking achievement. This is due to the fact that the instructional goal might be only achieved if the students are engaged in such effective and productive activities through the method applied. The method chosen, therefore, should be fitted with the instructional goal in order to achieve the optimum result. In accordance with this, an alternative technique that might be fruitfully applied to facilitate the students in learning speaking is that by employing academic controversy model (Henceforth ACM).

Motivated by the rationale above, this article attempts to discuss the application of ACM as an alternative strategy of cooperative learning used for teaching speaking at the College level. As a whole, the present article addresses the nature of speaking skill, teaching speaking through collaborative learning, ACM as an alternative strategy of cooperative learning and its process and a model of speaking activities through ACM. Those issues are discussed in the following subheadings respectively.

THE NATURE OF SPEAKING SKILL

Based on its use, language can be defined into two terms; they are spoken and written language. Since these two kinds of language are often used in daily communication, it can`t be justified whether one of them is more important

---

[3]   Brown, G., and Yule, G., *Teaching the Spoken Language*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

than the other one. In other word, these two kinds of language have the equal position as means of communication and they take place in their own different media. In daily life communication, however, it seems that spoken language dominates the communication among people since this form of language is simply used and it is much easier to convey the message.

In order to be able to communicate orally, it is important to possess speaking skill very well. According to Hadfield and Charles, speaking means talk to someone about something.[4] Speaking is the encoding process whereby we communicate our ideas, thoughts, or feelings through one or the other form of language. It is a complex skill requiring the simultaneous use of a number of difference proficiency which often develops at different rates.[5] In accordance with statements above, it is obviously defined that speaking is an activity to express the idea to others orally. Further, in the classroom context, it deals with the students' ability to use the target of language (English) orally.

Speaking is one of the English skills that should be mastered, especially by English major students. It is necessity that students are able to communicate well not only for their academic purpose but also for professional one. This is due to the fact that formerly the students of English Department are trained to be professional English teachers. By mastering speaking skills, therefore, they are expected to be able to improve their epistemic level of competence to assess, learn, and deepen the English skills and learning experiences they have.

TEACHING SPEAKING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

It is common that the lecturer tends to face some problems in facilitating and developing the students' speaking skill. This condition is primarily due to the fact that there are limited times to provide an effective speaking course in order that the students are able to practice the target language and enhance their speaking ability in the classroom context optimally. It is in line with Brown and Yule's opinion who say that learning to talk in a foreign language is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the students with.[6] Bygate adds that one of the basic problems

---

[4]   Hadfield, J. and Charles, *Simple Speaking Activities*, (Hongkong: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

[5]   Harris, D.P, *Testing English as a second Language*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 2003), 17.

[6]   Ibid.

in foreign language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to use the target language.[7]

In accordance to that case, the role of speaking lecturer becomes more important to help students succeed in learning Speaking. He is required not only to teach speaking, but also to be able to manage the speaking activities and facilitate the students to engage actively in the teaching and learning speaking process. In short, the speaking lecturer is as the core element to lead, guide, help, and evaluate the students' learning progress.

Furthermore, it is important to think and comprehend some factors as basic consideration to design the instruction. Since the lecturer plays an important role in facilitating and helping the students succeed in learning, it is expected that he can set up such communicative and productive speaking activities in the classroom. It is necessary to provide the students with a great deal of opportunity to practice their speaking skill in the classroom regularly. In this case, he should be able to maximize the classroom resources, regard the students' diversity, and comprehend the characteristics of the course and instructional target. Besides, it is important to develop the material, teaching media, and also various effective methods to promote the students in higher productive learning. The application of appropriate technique will improve the students' motivation, provide the students' attention to focus on the lesson, and increase the students' achievement as well.

In this void, the English lecture can involve students in such cooperative learning situation. Olsen and Kagan confirm that cooperative learning is a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.[8] In addition, Lei confirms that cooperative learning is a group learning that is proposed in order to make each learner in groups can exchange information and develop his own learning and the learning for others.[9] Those ideas are supported by Johnson et al. who say that cooperation is working together within cooperative situations; individuals seek outcomes beneficial to themselves and all other group members.[10] Based on those ideas, it

---

[7]   Bygate, M., *Speaking,* (Hongkong: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

[8]   Olsen, R. E.WB & Kagan, S., *About Cooperative Learning in Carolyn Kessler (Ed). Cooperative Learning: A Teacher's Resource book 1-30.* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1992), 8.

[9]   Lei, A.. *Cooperative Learning. Mempraktekkan Cooperative Learning di Ruang-Ruang Kelas.* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2001)

[10]   Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K.A., *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict,* (Washington, D.C: The George Washington University,

can be defined that cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other learning.

It is generally agreed that cooperative learning brings better result in learning since the students have a wide range of chance to learn each other, practice and develop their language skills, share opinions and ideas and solve the academic problems they face. Slavin claims that cooperative learning methods share the idea that students work together to learn and responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own.[11] By assigning the students in cooperative learning situation, it is hoped that they can engage in productive and meaningful speaking activities and improve their speaking ability.

However, not all group works or collaboration among the students are considered as cooperative learning. Generally, there are some certain conditions that feature cooperative context in the classroom and they are as effort which may be expected to be more productive than competitive and individualistic efforts. Roger and Johnson confirm some conditions which engage the students in cooperative learning situation, they are: a) clearly perceived positive interdependence, b) considerable promotive (face-to-face) interaction, c) clearly perceived individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals, d) frequent use of the relevant interpersonal and small-group skills and e) frequent and regular group processing of current functioning to improve the group's future effectiveness.[12]

All healthy cooperative relationships should have those basic elements. Those elements may be performed in the terms of peer tutoring, partner learning, peer mediation, work groups, families, and other cooperative relationships. Commonly, there are some ordinary techniques that can be used to apply cooperative learning in the classroom, such as students team achievement division (STAD), group investigation, make a match, think pair and share, jigsaw, arias and so forth. Prior to this paper, it is presented the application of academic controversy model as one of techniques in cooperative learning.

1996), 4.
    [11] Slavin, R. E., *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research and Practice*, (Englewood Clifts, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1990), 3.
    [12] Roger, T. and Johnson, D.W. *An Overview of Cooperative Learning*. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from http://www.cooperation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html.

ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY MODEL (ACM) AS AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY AND ITS PROCESS IN TEACHING SPEAKING

Academic controversy model (ACM) is one of cooperative learning techniques that can be applied in teaching speaking. According to Johnson et. al., ACM is the instructional use of intellectual conflict to promote higher achievement and increase the quality of problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, reasoning, interpersonal relationships, and psychological health and well-being.[13] Johnson and Johnson confirm that structuring academic controversy is a discussion that helps the students to broaden and deepen understanding related to an issue, problem or topic.[14] Hence, ACM is regarded as cooperative learning activity since the principle of ACM fulfill its criteria, such as a task for group completion, discussion and resolution, face to face interaction in small group, an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual helpfulness within each group and individual accountability.[15]

ACM is most often contrasted with debate or individualistic learning. The differentiation lies in the target of learning, in which it is not mainly focused on the winner or looser group likes in debate. In this model, however, the students are directed to present an issue in a group, reverse prospective with another group, argue and counter the other group's argument forcefully and come to agreement. This technique results in more positive outcomes for students which include positive interdependence, face to face promotive interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing.[16] The process of ACM can be seen on Figure 1.

Concerning with the use of academic controversy, the students are divided into two sides (pro and con position) to discuss a certain topic cooperatively and present their points of view in turns. Since ACM takes place in cooperative context, therefore, some elements underlying the principle of cooperative learning should be considered and well performed in the process of academic controversy.

---

[13] Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K.A., *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict*, (Washington, D.C: The George Washington University, 1996), 3.

[14] Johnson, D.W. and R. Johnson, *Creative Conflict,* (Edina MN: Interactive Book Company, 1987),

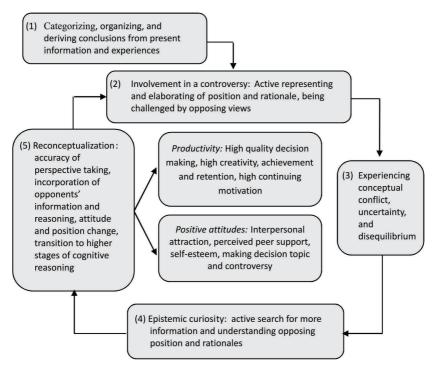[15] Slavin, R. E., *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research and Practice*, 3.

[16] Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K.A., *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict*, 54.

Figure 1
The Procedure of Academic Controversy Model (Adopted from Johnson, Johnson, and Smith)

```
┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│ (1)  Categorizing, organizing, and │
│      deriving conclusions from present │
│      information and experiences   │
└──────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
      ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
      │ (2)  Involvement in a controversy:  Active representing │
      │      and elaborating of position and rationale, being │
      │      challenged by opposing views     │
      └──────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│ (5) Reconceptualization: │ │ Productivity: High quality decision │ │ (3)  Experiencing │
│     accuracy of        │ │ making, high creativity, achievement │ │     conceptual   │
│     perspective taking,│ │ and retention, high continuing │ │     conflict,    │
│     incorporation of   │ │      motivation             │ │     uncertainty, │
│     opponents'         │ └────────────────────────────┘ │     and          │
│     information and    │                              │     disequilibrium │
│     reasoning, attitude│ ┌────────────────────────────┐ └──────────────────┘
│     and position change,│ │ Positive attitudes: Interpersonal │
│     transition to higher│ │ attraction, perceived peer support, │
│     stages of cognitive│ │ self-esteem, making decision topic │
│     reasoning          │ │      and controversy        │
└──────────────────────┘ └────────────────────────────┘

      ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
      │ (4) Epistemic curiosity:  active search for more │
      │     information and understanding opposing │
      │     position and rationales             │
      └──────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Providing learners with opportunities to engage in academic controversy enables them to have their ideas and conclusions challenged by advocates of an opposing position. As it is noted by Duffy, Dueber & Hawley, collaborative problem solving, collaborative inquiry, and critical thinking involve building an argument for a position by considering evidence and counterarguments. They confirm that a critical thinker will develop a strong argument in defining and interpreting the problem, in developing and evaluating solutions, in developing a plan based on a selected solution, and in reflecting on the learning outcomes.

In each case, the essential elements of an argument include hypothesis, counterarguments, and evidence. In this process the learners critically analyze each other's positions in an effort to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the opposing argument. They then make efforts to refute the opposing views while rebutting the attacks on their own position. In line with this process, the students need to learn the information being presented and to understand the perspectives of the opposing group. The opposing views and criticisms of the team's position leads to conceptual conflict and uncertainty. This may motivate an active search for more information (called epistemic curiosity) in hopes of

resolving the uncertainty. Indices of epistemic curiosity include an individual's actively searching for more information, seeking to understand opposing positions and rationales and attempting to view the situation from opposing perspectives.

The benefit of engaging the students in the ACM is to stimulate their new cognitive analyses leading to a reconceptualization, synthesis, and integration of the best ideas, reasoning and conclusions. Concerning with facilitating the students in an academic controversy process, the lecturer should assign the students to research and prepare a position, present and advocate their position, refute opposing positions and rebut attacks on their own position, reverse perspectives, and create a synthesis that everyone can agree to.

A MODEL OF SPEAKING ACTIVITY BY USING ACM

The first thing to do in presenting ACM on speaking activity is that the lecturer should provide interesting and challenging topics to discuss. It is suggested that the selected topics are some current contextual issues in the field of students' knowledge which they are very familiar with; for instances *'The physical punishment is needed in the classroom context', 'the English teacher is forbidden to give a private course for his students out of the classroom context',* or *'English should be excluded from the local content subject of Elementary school'.* By doing so, it is expected that students have had sufficient prior knowledge or ideas to be confronted or discussed with their peer mates.

After selecting issues to be discussed as focus of academic controversy, the lecturer is suggested to activate students' schemata or prior knowledge of the field/selected topic so as to get the students focus on the lesson, provide interest and motivation as well as rise up their participation. The lecturer can occupy questionings or other strategies to dig up students understanding about the topic being discussed. After activating students' schemata, in addition, the lecture can structure and engage the students in academic controversy activities.

The following procedures are a model of teaching speaking by using academic controversy model.

1. Preparing issue to be discussed as focus of academic controversy and giving direction

   Before engaging the students in the process of academic controversy, it is primarily important to introduce the students to the process, rules, and its steps. Besides, it is time to prepare some issues or topics that will be

addressed to the students including the pro and con positions related to the issue selected.

2. Dividing the suite team into two groups and assigning the pro and con positions to each group

    The next phase is to ask the students to work in groups of four to address a particular issue. Afterward, the suite team members are organized into two groups of students (pro and con position). The lecturer, then, delivers the issue to each position.

3. Doing research and prepare presentation

    In this step, each pair of students is assigned to research the issue, then organize and frame logical, and compel arguments to support their position. The pro and con group will each have some task to do, such as:

    a) Learning its position and the supporting arguments and information.

    b) Researching some information that are relevant to the position from some available resources, for instance from the text book, library, or personal experience.

    c) Preparing a series of persuasive arguments to support its position.

    d) Preparing a persuasive presentation to be given to the opposing group.

    After preparing some tasks above, in addition, each pair of group is assigned to plan how to advocate their own position effectively. Each pair should comprehend the materials and master information supporting their assigned position, and then plan a presentation in persuasive and comprehensive way.

4. Presenting the position

    In this phase, the groups are given the time to present their position to the other group by delivering their presentation with the opposing team in turn. While each side presenting the material, the other group is hoped to listen and take notes without interrupting, flagging and analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the arguments given.

5. Analyze and critique the opposing position

    In this activity, each team should listen carefully the opposing position and work together and evaluate critically the opposing position and its rationale, defend the own positions and compare the strength and weaknesses of the two positions. During this period, the team may ask clarifying questions of the opposing team.

6.   Arguing the position with opposing team

In this segment, the lecturer engages the groups in open discussion with the opposing team to argue both positions. During the discussion, each team will first present the rationale defending their position. This will be followed by open unstructured discussion between the two groups. In addition, each group should argue forcefully and persuasively for their position, present as many facts as they can to support the point of view. It is expected that the group can listen comprehensively to the opposing team's position, formulate the facts that support their viewpoint, and then present counter-arguments critically.

7.   Reverse roles

In this phase, each group is given the opportunity to reverse perspectives and positions by organizing and presenting the opposing position as sincerely and forcefully as they can. Each group may use their notes and materials developed by the opposing team earlier in developing their presentation but must add new information and facts beyond what has been presented in the first round. It is needed to elaborate the position by relating it to another information that has been acquired.

8.   Critique opposing argument

Each group is required to give comment on the presentation of the opposing group and respond by presenting counter arguments.

9.   Come to agreement

In the last stage, both groups drop their advocacy and reach a decision by consensus. The opposing pairs are assigned to join together to integrate the most powerful arguments from both positions and make them into a new position that all can agree to.

CONCLUDING

The use of ACM can engage the students in collaborative learning situations. This technique helps the students develop strong arguments, define and interpret the problems, develop plans based on a selected solution and reflect on the learning outcomes. In this notion, the students who experience conceptual conflict resulting from ACM are going to be better able to develop the content of speaking they learn to a wider variety of situations or evidence of their reasoning than those who do not experience conceptual conflict, i.e. concurrence seeking or individualistic learning. However, this technique should

be structured well to gain optimum results in greater achievement and retention of the material and skill being learned. Thus, it can provide greater motivation for the students to deepen the ability in delivering their ideas.

It is widely accepted that the application of ACM can help and facilitate the students engage in such productive and communicative speaking activities. Since it is fruitful and effective to apply this strategy in teaching speaking, therefore, it is recommended to the English lecturer to use and develop ACM in teaching speaking in order that the students are challenged and motivated to practice their English collaboratively as well as gain the optimum result on their speaking achievement.

REFERENCES

Brown, G., and Yule, G., *Teaching the Spoken Language*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Bygate, M., *Speaking,* Hongkong: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Davidson, N, *Cooperative Learning: A Handbook for Teachers*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1990.

Hadfield, J. and Charles, H., *Simple Speaking Activities*, Hongkong; Oxford University Press, 2001.

Harris, D.P, *Testing English as a second Language*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 2003.

Johnson & Johnson, *Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom.* Interaction Book Company 7208, Cornela Drive Edina, Mineseta, 1990.

Johnson, D.W. and R. Johnson, *Creative Conflict*. Edina MN: Interactive Book Company, 1987.

Johnson, E. B., *Contextual Teaching and Learning*. California: Corwin Press, Inc, 2002.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K.A, *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict*. Washington, D.C: The George Washington University, 1996.

Lei, A. , *Cooperative Learning. Mempraktekkan Cooperative Learning di Ruang-Ruang Kelas,* Jakarta: Grasindo, 2001.

Olsen, R. E.WB & Kagan, S. 1992. *About Cooperative Learning in Carolyn Kessler (Ed)*. *Cooperative Learning: A Teacher's Resource book 1-30*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

O'Malley, J.M. & Pierce, L. V., *Authentic Assessment for Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers*. Longman: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1996.

Roger, T. and Johnson, D.W. 1994. *An Overview of Cooperative Learning*. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from http://www.cooperation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html, 1994.

Slavin, R. E., *Cooperative Learning*: Theory, Research and Practice. Englewood Clifts, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1990.