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# The Relationship between Teachers and Students in the Classroom: Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Cooperative Learning Strategy to Improve Learning

Fredson Soares dos Reis da Luz

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The Relationship between Teachers and Students in the Classroom:  
Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Cooperative Learning  
Strategy to Improve Learning

by

Fredson Soares dos Reis da Luz

MA, Bridgewater State University, 2015

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching  
[TESOL]

Bridgewater State University

May 1, 2015

A thesis entitled

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN  
THE CLASSROOM: COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING  
APPROACH AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO  
IMPROVE LEARNING

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Teaching English for Students of Other Languages

by

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Spring 2015

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*To my mother.*

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank many people who have provided help, support and guidance during this process.

It is with respect and immense gratitude that I acknowledge the massive support of Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson. Her important collaboration has been an enormous help during the whole process of this research. She has been available to me; she encouraged me when I most needed. Without her guidance and ideas this work would never been possible. It was an honor to be able to work with her on this project and also to be her student.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Maria Madalena Soares dos Reis, who is the most important person in my life. A special thanks to her because she always beliefs in me and showed me that I have to struggle in order to have a great future. She gave me power in all moments of my life. I love you mom.

A special thanks to: my brothers, Thierry and Eduíz, my father, João Rodrigues, and Jandira, for their friendship, faith, comprehension and compassion.

Also to Roger and Biu Afonso, Riza, Anderson, Ze Rui, extended family, and cherished friends “VIP” and “BSU Kriolada” for their continual support.

Mark Krikorian for his patience, advices and help, also all my teachers during this Master, especially Dr. Lidia Silveira and Dr. Anne Doyle.

Thanks to all, and God Bless us!!!

## **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to investigate how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process. By having a good relationship with students, teachers can offer to students chances to be motivated and feel engaged in the learning process. Students will be engaged actively in the learning instead of being passive learners. I wish to investigate how using communicative approach and cooperative learning strategies while teaching do affect and improve students' learning performance. To achieve these goals qualitative data collection was used as the primary method. The results show that teachers and students value a supportive and caring relationship between them and that interaction is essential to the teacher-student relationship. This sense of caring and supporting from teachers motivates students to become a more interested learner. Students benefit and are motivated when their teachers create a safe and trustful environment. And also the methods and strategies teachers uses, makes students feel engaged and stimulated to participate in the learning process. The students have in their mind that a positive relationship with their teachers positively impacts their interest and motivation in school which contributes to the enhancement of the learning process.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

English has become a language that people worldwide want to learn and speak fluently. The English language is global; and globalization is also reflected in the worldwide use of English language. As a result, English plays a vital role in many areas: education, science, technology, politics, and trade.

In my country, Cape Verde, it is not different; everyone wants to learn the language most spoken worldwide. In Cape Verde, the official language is Portuguese, but our mother tongue is Creole. Despite the multilingual background of Cape Verde students, instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) focuses on reading and correctness of grammatical structures in writing, and less often addresses oral communicative skills such as listening or speaking. The Ministry of Education, school administrators, and teachers are looking for ways to help students learn more, faster and through better sustained, innovative strategies and methods capable of producing growth and learning. In most organizations, relationships are seen as the main way to achieve success. Often, the ability to effectively interact with others plays a pivotal role in the successes or failures of the individual. Within our society, many professionals including doctors, politicians, social workers, teachers, and so forth rely on social skills to be effective. Inherent within these professions is a level of leadership, as each position demands the ability to effectively understand and navigate human behavior. (Juchniewicz, 2008, p. 1) Teaching is considered a demanding and challenging social activity in our society with the ultimate goal of training students to acquire the ability,

knowledge, social values and skills in order to apply and integrate them in the community.

It is generally agreed that good teaching involves good communication between the teacher and students and also among students. The best productivity in a classroom comes from effective co-operation between the teacher and the students. Therefore, teachers' roles can be vital to the effectivity of the language learning. Teachers need to be supportive. A supportive teacher is one who creates efficiently a positive classroom environment, who encourages students to behave well in classroom and to be motivated. Supportive teachers also are teachers who emphasize the learning process by giving all the students the chance to construct their learning, and be engaged with the content. To give the students the chance to build knowledge and develop skills in the English language, in Cape Verde, teachers should shift from a traditional teaching method to methods and strategies focused on communicative instruction and cooperative learning. Communicative instruction and cooperative learning provide students with the necessary skills to succeed while learning a foreign language because they allow students to be the center of the learning process and can positively affect students' learning, promoting good interaction. Therefore, it is time to change to a method that guarantees communication and interaction between teacher and students and promote a supportive relationship between them. The method I propose is Communicative Language Teaching. Communicative Language Teaching is based on the idea that learners need to be involved in real communication, using natural strategies for language acquisition, and this will allow them to learn to use the language in different contexts. A strategy that complements this method is cooperative learning. Through this strategy students learn from each other

and from having to explain and share their ideas with others. It also promotes good relationships and communication among students.

## **1.1 Study Rationale**

The objective of this research is to investigate how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process. By having a good relationship with students, teachers offer them the chance to be motivated and feel engaged in the learning process. Students will be engaged actively in the learning instead of being passive learners. I wish to investigate how using communicative approach and cooperative learning strategies while teaching affect and improve students' learning performance. Therefore I will try to answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to have a teacher who cares about their students and tries to establish a good relationship with them inside the classroom?
2. How can different approaches and new strategies help to improve students' performance in acquiring a second language?

I hypothesize that if teachers maintain a supportive relationship with students then they will give them the opportunity to increase their motivation and feel part of the learning process. I hypothesize that teachers who care about their students and establish a good relationship with them will give them the opportunity to increase their motivation, and be more interested in learning the content taught. I further hypothesize that when teachers use different specific approaches and new strategies, like communicative language teaching and cooperative learning, students will be able to improve their performance in acquiring a second language.

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

My research explores the relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. Further, it investigates how communicative language teaching approach and cooperative learning while teaching affect and improves students' learning performance. Results of this study will help teachers learn about how a supportive relationship between teacher and students can help to increase the learning process.

The main objective of this research is to investigate how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process. By having a good relationship with students, teachers offer them the chance to be motivated and feel engaged in the learning process.

## 1.3 Definition of terms

The following terms have been defined to better help me to accomplish my objectives with this work:

**Supportive teacher** is one who creates efficiently a positive classroom environment, who encourages students to behave well in classroom and be motivated to accomplish their own goals.

**Positive Classroom environment** is an environment that offers the best conditions and chances to enhance students' learning and interaction, also where students feel part of the learning process.

**Communicative language teaching approach** is an approach where communication is the focus; it allows students to interact, to try language in different contexts and enhance their communicative competence.

**Cooperative learning** is based on getting students working together as a team in order to support each other and help them achieve first the group goal and then personal goals. It means being cooperative in a heterogeneous group to achieve common goals.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The study is significant in that it presents information not only to add to the current literature on the relationship between teachers and students, the communicative language teaching approach and cooperative learning but to bring another dimension of understanding to the data collected through teacher and students surveys. By having teachers and students answering the surveys, it provides me with important information and powerful data capable of helping teachers and students see the impact of their relationships/interaction in the learning process. The data offers a powerful insight into the importance of having different approaches and new strategies in the classroom to help students enhance their performance in acquiring a second language. This research is also significant because it was conducted in a classroom of second language learners capable of giving their real perspective and opinion about the topic in study.

In order to achieve this purpose this monograph is divided in four sections: Introduction; Literature Review; Methodology; and Conclusion.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

Teaching nowadays is filled with challenges and opportunities, but also with changes. What it is to be a teacher is changing, and being English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher involves and demands new teaching methods, strategies, and activities, new attitudes, values and perspectives for the classroom. Teacher-student relationships can be the key to whether positive or negative motivations exist in students' attitude toward learning, and relationships can have a deep effect on someone's life style. By having a supportive relationship with teachers, students will be motivated, will feel protected and this sense of security and friendship will create an empathy which is important to get students interested and desirable to succeed.

Hargreaves (1994) stated:

Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having correct competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy. (p. 835).

Undoubtedly, good teaching includes the ability to cultivate relationships; it is caring for and supporting our students, not just transferring knowledge to them. This thesis will focus on the relationship between teachers and students in the classroom, examining the interaction between the teachers and students. I investigate the importance of having a supportive teacher in the classroom, which can create a safe environment and how developing relationships with students can better orient them and help them to improve their learning.

## 2.1 Teacher-Student Relationships

This section will focus more on the importance of teacher-student relationships. A good and supportive relationship is needed to create safe environments and give students confidence to work without pressure and become motivated to learn. Specifically, when students are exposed to positive emotional stimuli, they are better able to recall newly learned information (Nielson & Lorber, para.1, 2009). Students feel motivated and stimulated to learn and actively collaborate with the teachers when the classroom is running in a safe and supportive environment. Thus, the teacher's role is vital to the effect of the language learning.

The relationship between teachers and students affects the quality of students' motivation to learn and classroom learning experiences. According to Davis (2003),

Operating as socializing agents, teachers can influence students' social and intellectual experiences via their abilities to instill values in children such as the motivation to learn; by providing classroom contexts that stimulate students' motivation and learning; by addressing students' need to belong; and by serving a regulatory function for the development of emotional, behavioral, and academic skills. Moreover, supportive relationships with teachers may play an important developmental role during the transition to and through middle school. However, developing relationships with an early adolescent presents unique challenges to middle school teachers (p.207).

It is important to have a teacher who cares for their students' needs and strengths, and who holds a supportive relationship with their students, giving them the same

chances and opportunities to participate in the learning process. These opportunities make students feel comfortable and free to interact in the classroom and improve their academic skills.

A teacher who cares about their students transmits knowledge affectively and has a good interaction with them. In addition he/she also provides the students the opportunity to create an emotional link. Allen, Gregory, Mikami, Lun, Hamre, & Pianta (2013) suggest that “improving the quality of teacher-student interactions within the classroom depends upon a solid understanding of the nature of effective teaching for adolescents” (p. 77). Allen et al., 2013 cites Brophy, 1999; Eccles & Roeser, 1999; Pressley et al., 2003; Soar & Soar, 1979 who studied a number of descriptions of classroom environments or quality teaching discussed in the educational and developmental literatures listing factors likely to be related to student learning (p. 77). Allen also notes that Hamre and Pianta developed an assessment approach that organizes features of teacher-student interactions into three major domains: emotional supports, classroom organization, and instructional supports (p.77). The emotional link makes the students feel comfortable in front of the teacher and class, which is essential the student’s success or failure. Classroom organization is the way teachers manage the classroom in order to achieve several goals, first of all classroom goals, which encompasses the way that teachers physically arrange the classroom for learning. Instructional supports are important to help teachers to provide the best strategies, support which will better help them to differentiate instruction and meet all students’ needs and promote their engagement in the learning process.

Normally, teachers have an important role and effect on students. Students' successes and failures can be directly linked or attributed to a teacher's effectiveness and how he or she leads and manages his or her classroom and how he or she communicates and motivates students to learn. When students have supportive relationships with their teacher, they feel more motivated and engaged in the learning process. A caring teacher tries to create a good classroom environment is the one who students will respond to, and the students will be more able to learn.

Weber, Martin, & Cayanus, 2005 (Mazer, et al., 2013, p.255), found that when students consider their classroom work to be meaningful, have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence, and believe their input is vital to the course, they are motivated to communicate with their instructors for relational, functional, and participatory reasons. Interested and involved students learn better. "Students with high interest perceive a content area to be important, are active and involved in the subject, and feel knowledgeable in the subject matter" (Mitchell, 1993; Tobias, 1994). According to, Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992 (cited by Joseph P. Mazer, 2013, p. 256) "Interest is often triggered in the moment by certain environmental factors (e.g., teacher behavior) and can be characterized from the perspective of the cause (the conditions that induce interest) or from the standpoint of the person who is interested." Mazer (2012) notes "Students who experience heightened emotional interest are pulled toward a content area because they are energized, excited, and emotionally engaged by the material" (p.99). It is crucial to be inserted in a safe environment where students can feel engaged and motivated to learn, share their experiences, and demonstrate their competence.

Teacher beliefs, behaviors, and actions also affect teacher-student relationships. A considerable body of research indicates that teachers who hold high expectations of students in terms of their levels of achievement and their social behaviors in the classroom can affect student motivation and engagement (National Research Council, 2004). Classroom structure is important to prevent classroom misbehavior, so it is important to create a good environment capable of enhancing students' learning process. According to Murray & Pianta (2009), "Classroom structures, rules, routines, and activities convey a sense of community and continuity to students. All teachers are aware of the importance of creating classroom environments that have structures in place that ensure the safety of students, promote positive behavior, and ensure the flow of classroom activities in ways that minimize distractions and disruptions" (p.108). Murray & Pianta (2009) also believe that:

Such structures can also promote positive relationships within classrooms. A well-managed classroom environment provides students with a consistent, safe setting where expectations for appropriate behaviors are clearly stated and consistently reinforced. Such settings allow students to develop a sense of trust and comfort with all members of the classroom community. Such environments also provide teachers with an increased number of opportunities to develop and sustain meaningful relationships with individual members of the classroom because teachers in such settings have the freedom to engage in more positive interactions with students rather than constant disciplinary duties. Although most teachers recognize the importance of establishing clear rules and routines in the

classroom, the methods through which these rules and routines are conveyed to students can vary radically. (p.108)

A teacher can use numerous strategies to manage their classroom and offer students the opportunity to build their knowledge and also to prevent misbehavior in classroom.

To set up rules in the classroom it is important to have a good classroom management and have small numbers of students inside the classroom. This allows the teacher to have total control of the classroom and better manage the activities in order to achieve success. Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior by students; it also implies the prevention of disruptive behavior. Jones and Jones (2004), identify several areas of knowledge and skill in the conceptualization of classroom management: establishing teacher-students and peer relationships that builds a supportive environment, using instructional methods that optimize learning, gaining a commitment from students to appropriate behavior standards, creating safe and caring classroom community, and using counseling and behavioral methods to change students' inappropriate behavior. Classroom management is perhaps the most essential aspect of teaching that one must master in order to be an effective educator.

Classroom management can be seen as the teacher's ability to supportively manage time, space, resources, student roles and student behaviors to provide a climate that encourages the learning process. According to Richards (1990), "Classroom management are the ways in which student behavior, movement and interaction during a lesson are organized and controlled by the teacher to enable teaching to take place most effectively" (*Classroom Management*). Considered to be an integral component of

student–instructor interaction, Katt, McCroskey, Sivo, Richmond, & Valencic, 2009; McCroskey, Valencic, & Richmond, 2004 claim classroom environment is conceptualized as “a dynamic social system which includes not only teacher behavior and teacher–student interaction but student–student interaction as well” (cited by Myers at al., 2012, p.387). McCroskey et al., 2004, add that the classroom environment takes into account elements such as the institutional culture, the level of instruction, the physical and social climate of the classroom, and the nature of the classroom, which undoubtedly affect whether and how students are motivated to communicate with their instructors (cited in Myers at al., 2012, p.387). Mazer, (2013) stated that “engaged students display many behaviors inside and outside of the classroom that reflect their interest and engagement in learning. They often have the opportunity to listen attentively, verbally contribute during interest and engagement discussions, take notes, and ask questions of instructors” (p.257). A good and efficient classroom management is important to set up the rules, manage time and space in order to give students all the conditions and support to be and feel engaged in the learning process. A good classroom management allows the students to behave well and be motivated and focused enhancing their interaction with the whole class.

## **2.2 Student-Teacher Relationships**

Students’ ability to connect with their teachers is one attribute that can make a great difference in students’ learning achievement. The following section will focus more specifically on the importance and impact of student-teacher relationships. Pianta (1999) defines the student-teacher relationship, as “emotions-based experiences that emerge out of teachers’ on-going interactions with their students.” When students feel that their

teachers are supportive, trustworthy people, they tend to create a connection with their teacher and start to see their teachers as someone who is there to protect them and give them all the chance to enhance their learning and in the same time behave well.

A good classroom environment is important because the social-emotional climate a teacher establishes with students will provide opportunities to see themselves as capable, worthy and confident members of the classroom community and make them feel part of the learning process. Trickett and Moos 1973 state that the classroom environment consists of three overarching dimensions: the ability for students to develop relationships with their instructors and peers, the extent to which students engage in learning activities, and the general structure and order of the classroom provided by the instructor (cited in Myers & Claus, 2012 p.389).

When social and psychological relationships with students are established it creates a positive relationship and also promotes social development and self-esteem among students. Gibb, 1961; Hays 1970 state that “classroom communication climate is dependent largely on whether students consider their instructors to communicate with them in either a supportive or a defensive manner” (cited in Myers et al., 2012 p. 389). Darling & Civikly 1987 supported this finding by saying that “When instructors communicate with their students in a supportive manner, they establish a classroom climate in which communication is efficient and characterized by few distortions, effective listening behaviors, and clear message transmission” (cited in Myers at al., 2012 p. 389). In contrast Rosenfeld, 1983 stated that “when instructors communicate with their students in a defensive manner, they establish a classroom climate in which students feel threatened and react by engaging in resistance, rebellion, and defiance” (cited in Myers et

al., 2012 p. 389). Students' reaction towards learning depends on how they feel engaged or not by their teacher. The way their teachers manage the classroom, are supportive to their students, and communicate with them will help students figured out their role in the classroom and be an active part of the learning process by making the communication an effective tool. Research in the area of motivation indicates that the quality of teacher student relationships affects students' emotional and behavioral engagement in school (National Research Council, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 2000).

In the same line of thinking, Koplow (2002) proposed that effective student-teacher relationships encourage greater confidence and classroom engagement in much the same manner as sensitive parenting encourages a greater sense of security and confidence. Students need the confidence and motivation to learn, which can be stimulated by the relationship they hold with their teachers. Students also perform well when they feel that the teacher is passionate about what they are teaching and pass security and confidence to the students. When teachers believes in students' ability to succeed it motivates them because students don't want to let them down but it also makes students believe that they are more capable than they even imagined.

### **2.3 Communicative Language Teaching**

This section reviews literature relating to the topic of Communicative Language Teaching, which I consider the most appropriate approach to teach English in Cape Verdean schools.

### 2.3.1 Background

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerge from the changes in the British language teaching tradition that dates from the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language Teaching represented the fundamental British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. The sorts of criticism that the well-known American linguist Noam Chomsky had leveled at structural linguist theory in his book *Syntactic Structure*, forced British applied linguists to call into question the theoretical assumptions underlying Situational Language Teaching. The communicative approach is based on the idea that learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language in a different context.

British applied linguists focused on the central dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in approaches to language teaching at that time – the functional and communicative potential of language. They considered that it was more important to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. Scholars who advocated this particular view of language, such as Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson, benefited from the work of British functional linguists (e.g., John Firth, M.A.K. Halliday), American work in sociolinguistics (e.g., Dell Hymes and William Labov), as well as work in philosophy (e.g., John Austin and John Searle).

Richards (2006) states that “the notion of communicative competence was developed within the discipline of linguistics (or more accurately, the subdiscipline of sociolinguistics) and appealed to many within the language teaching profession, who argued that communicative competence, and not simply grammatical competence, should

be the goal of language teaching.” (p.9) A group of experts investigating how possible it was to develop language courses on a unit-credit system, used a preliminary document that the British linguist D.A. Wilkins prepared, which proposed a communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkins 1972 (cited by Richards and Rodgers, 2011, p. 154) tried to analyze the communicative meanings that underlie the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meanings: notional categories (concepts such as location, time, sequence, and frequency) and categories of communicative function (requests, denials, offers, complaints).

Both American and British proponents now see communicative language teaching as an approach (and not a method) that aims to:

Make communicative competence the goal of language teaching; Develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

For some, Communicative Language Teaching means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching. Littlewood (1981:1) states, “One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional structural aspects of language” (p. 86). For others, it means using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks.

### 2.3.2 Theory of Language and Learning

The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is what Hymes (1972) referred to as “Communicative Competence.” Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky’s theory of competence. In Hyme’s view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to:

Whether something is formally possible; whether something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available; whether something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used; whether something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it is doing entails.

This theory of what knowing a language required a much more comprehensive view than Chomsky’s view of competence, which deals primarily with abstract grammatical knowledge. Another linguistic theory of CLT is Halliday’s functional account of language use. Halliday elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language. He described seven basic functions that language performs for children learning their L1:

First, Instrumental function: using language to get things. Second, Regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others. Third, Interactional function: using language to create interaction with others. Fourth, Personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings. Fifth, Heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover. Sixth, Imaginative

function: using language to create a world of the imagination. And finally the seventh, Representational function: using language to communicate information.

Another influential analysis of communicative was found in Canale & Swain (1980), in which four dimensions of communicative competence are identified:

The first dimension, grammatical competence: it is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. Second dimension, sociolinguistic competence: an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose of the interaction. Then the third dimension, discourse competence: the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse text. And the latest, strategic Competence: refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication.

### **2.3.3 Theory of Learning**

Little has been written about learning theory in contrast to the amount that has been written about CLT literature. Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices as follows:

The first element is *the communicative principle*: activities that involve real communication promote learning. Another element is *the task principle*: activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. A third

element is *the meaningfulness principle*: language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

As a consequence, learning activities in CLT are selected based on how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than just mechanical practice of language patterns).

#### **2.3.4 Design of Communicative Language Teaching**

Objectives:

Pipho (1981) notes that the following levels of objectives are proposed as general objectives applicable to any teaching situation and cannot be defined in terms of specification. Such approach will reflect the particular needs of the target learners like reading, writing, listening and speaking all approach from a communicative perspective. The levels of objectives in a communicative approach are: An integrative and content level; Linguistic and instrumental level; An affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct; A level of individual learning needs; A general educational level of extra-linguistic goals

The syllabus:

Communicative language teaching is effective as the main approach for teaching English in Cape Verde because it allows teachers to be in greater contact with their students; the communication and the relationships between teachers and students is enhanced by this approach. The syllabus must be built as a way to promote and develop students' communicative competence, rather than being concentrated in the teaching of grammar rules.

Discussions over the nature of the syllabus have been central in Communicative Language Teaching. The first model syllabus proposed was a national syllabus for Great Britain (Wilkins 1976) which specified the semantic-grammatical categories and the categories of communicative function that learners need to express. The same syllabus was later expanded and developed by The Council of Europe, adding the description of the objectives of foreign languages courses, the situation in which students might need to use a foreign language, the topics they might need to talk about, the functions they would need language for, the notions made use of in communication, and the vocabulary and grammar needed.

According to Richards (2013) concerns about CLT included the operationalization of the notion of communicative competence and the development of a communicative syllabus to replace earlier grammar-based syllabus models. Trim (as cited in Richards 2013) explains that it was an outcome of the discussion on how to create a new syllabus that will cover communicative competence, speech acts, semantic-grammatical categories and the categories of communicative functions. The result was the development of syllabus that could reflect the assumptions of the Threshold level of language learning. (European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults, designed to fit into a wide variety of educational contexts and to suit a wide variety of learning aims).

### 2.3.5 Teachers and Students' roles in CLT Classroom

#### **Learner roles:**

The learner is a negotiator (between himself, the learning process, and the objective of learning). According to Richards (2011) “learners now had to participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students had to become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. They were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning” (p. 5)

Learners need to contribute as much as they gain, and learn in an independent way. Students are expected to interact primarily with each other rather than with the teacher.

#### **Teacher roles:**

As Breen and Candlin explain that the roles of a teacher are to facilitate the communication process between students and to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. According to Richards and Rodgers (2011), the teacher can also be assumed to be a: needs analyst (determining and responding to learner language needs); counselor (expected to exemplify an effective communicator); and group process manager (organize the classroom for communication and communicative activities.)

Teachers are not in the classroom just to correct speech and writing. The teacher role is to create learning conditions and gives students the chance to produce language, interact and make mistakes and errors; teachers had to develop a different view of learners' errors to facilitate language learning.

### **2.3.6 The role of instructional materials:**

Communicative Language Teaching views materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Its primary role is to promote communicative language use. Currently CLT uses three kinds of materials: text-based (textbooks), task-based (games, role plays), and realia (signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources).

### **2.3.7 Procedures of Communicative Language Teaching**

Savignon (1983) discusses techniques and classroom management procedures associated with a number of communicative language procedures (e.g., group activities, language games, role plays), but neither these activities nor the ways in which they are used are exclusive to CLT classrooms.

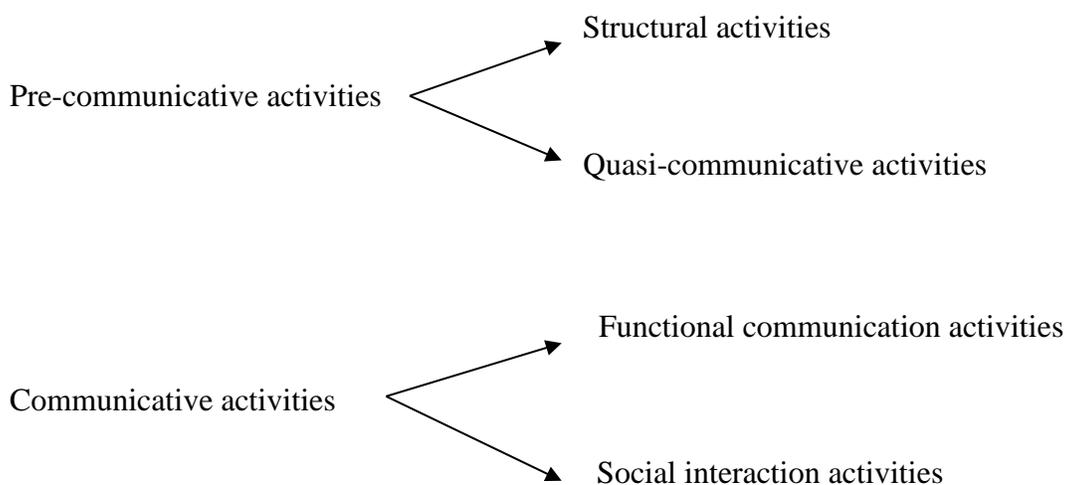
Finocchiaro and Brumfit offer a lesson outline for teaching the function “making a suggestion” for learner in the beginning level that suggests that CLT procedures are evolutionary rather than revolutionary:

Presentation of a brief dialog or several mini-dialogs, preceded by a motivation and a discussion of the functional and situation – people, role, setting, topics; Oral practice of each utterance of the dialog segment to be presented that day (entire class repetition, half-class, groups, individuals); Questions and answers based on the dialog topic (s) and situation itself; Questions and answers related to the students’ personal experiences but centered around the dialog theme; Study one of the basic communicative expressions in the dialog or one of the structure which exemplify the function; Learner discover of generalizations or rules underlying

the functional expression or structure; Oral recognition, interpretative activities; Oral production activities; Copying of the dialogs (or mini-dialogs or modules if they are not in the class text); Sampling of the written homework assignment, Evaluation of learning (oral only).

Such procedures presented by Finocchiaro and Brumfit have much in common with Structural-Situation and Audiolingual principles. So traditional language teaching procedures are not rejected but are reinterpreted and extended. Teaching points are introduced in dialogue form, grammatical items are isolated for controlled practice, and then freer activities are provided. Pair and group work is suggested to encourage students to use and practice functions and forms.

The methodological procedures of CLT reflect a sequence of activities represented as follows:



Communicative Language Teaching focuses on interaction and communication and rejects the view of teaching as active teacher and passive student in favor to culturally responsive teachers. It presents language teaching/acquisition as a dynamic

process and recognizes the complexity and interrelatedness of both written and oral skills; therefore, form and content are seen relevant. One of the advantages of this method is the possibility of students actually interacting and “acting” upon the language and learning for a purpose. However, as it focuses more on language performance rather than competence, in this approach a speaker’s grammar may be confused and it may pose a problem to teachers, for example, in how and what to assess, especially if the school has a high grammar centered curriculum as in Cape Verde. But teachers must integrate grammar in their teaching since accuracy is also important for ELL (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2013).

## **2.4 Cooperative Learning**

The following section will review some of the literature on the importance of cooperative learning in English language learners’ motivation to learn a second language.

Cooperative learning is a strategy that teachers can use in the classroom to help students achieve better performances and also help them build positive relationships among students, giving all the students the chance to be an active part of the learning process. Cooperative Learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal (Kagan, 1994). Olsen and Kagan (1992), have defined cooperative learning as “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 accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others” (p. 8). According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991), cooperative learning is “the instructional use of small groups so that student’s work together to maximize their own and each other’s

learning... To be cooperative, learning groups must be carefully structured” (p. 12).

Cooperative learning help students to stay on task help them to be focused and care about other members of the group and also it helps students to increase their learning.

Macpherson (2007) stated that cooperative learning “is part of a group of teaching/learning techniques where students interact with each other to acquire and practice the elements of a subject matter and to meet common learning goals” (p.1). It is much more than just putting students into groups and hoping for the best. Macpherson also said that cooperative learning “is a very formal way of structuring activities in a learning environment that includes specific elements intended to increase the potential for rich and deep learning by the participants” (p.1). Macpherson (2007) also states that Cooperative Learning models include the following basic principles:

First, group tasks are designed to be suitable for group work. Second, positive interdependence is built in – cooperation is necessary for students to succeed. Third, attention and class time are given to interpersonal/cooperative skill building. Fourth, participants learn together in small (2-5 member) groups. Fifth, students are individually accountable for learning and participation. And finally, the instructor’s role changes from being the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side.”

David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, Edythe, J. Holubec and others identify five basic elements of cooperative learning.

(1) Positive Interdependence: *Interaction through Activity* learners help, assists, encourage, and support each other’s efforts to learn. (2) Individual Accountability: The performance of each individual learner is assessed and the

results given back to the group and the individual. (3) Group Processing:

*Interaction through Reflection* At the end of their working period the groups process their functioning by answering two questions: what did each member do that was helpful for the group? And what can each member do to make the group work better? (4) Skilled Interpersonal Communication Skilled communication is

necessary for effective group functioning. Learners must have, and use, the needed leadership, decision making, trust-building, effective communication, and conflict-management skills. (5) Face-to-Face Promotive Interactions:

*Interdependence through Structure* Learners believe that they are linked together; they cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed (and vice versa). They “sink or swim together.”

Spencer Kagan in *Cooperative Learning, Resources for Teachers* (1994) suggests other ways to identify elements of Cooperative Learning:

At first, positive interdependence is structured into the group task activities and members are responsible for each other's success. Next, Individual accountability is an expected outcome. Communication skills are identified, directly taught, and expected to be used by all group members. Then, equal participation there is designated roles with shared leadership assigned and monitored by the group and the instructor. Finally, simultaneous Interaction the group regularly processes how they are working together and adjusts their personal and group behaviors accordingly. Both task and maintenance roles and outcomes are emphasized. The instructor observes and intervenes if necessary to ensure that the process is followed.

Cooperative learning helps students to increase achievement and help students to improve their attitude toward school, learning and classmates. It also helps students to work cooperatively as a team and learn critical thinking while working and making part of a group. Additionally, cooperative learning supports communicative language teaching. The activities and strategies used in cooperative learning are helpful to promote cooperation, interaction among students, which will promote real communication and benefit students' own learning construction. Students will use language in a soft way, and also in different context which helps to improve students' communicative competence.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This section presents procedures of my investigation about the relationship between teachers and students in the classroom, and how the communicative language teaching approach and cooperative learning affect and improve students' learning performance. To accomplish this purpose, two main questions were investigated:

1. Why is it important to have a teacher who cares about their students and tries to establish a good relationship with them inside the classroom?
2. How can different approaches and new strategies help to improve students' performance in acquiring a second language?

To answer these main questions, it was hypothesized that (1) if teachers maintain a supportive relationship with students then they will give them the opportunity to increase their motivation and feel part of the learning process; (2) a teacher who cares about their students and establishes a good relationship with them will give them the opportunity to increase their motivation, and be more interested in learning the content taught; and (3) when teachers use different specific approaches and new strategies, students will be able to improve their performance in acquiring a second language.

This chapter contains an account of the procedures used in the study, including the research design, selection of the participants, instruments used for data collection, and data analysis.

### **3.1 Research Design**

To achieve the goals proposed during this thesis data was collected using open-ended questions on teacher and student surveys. Qualitative data was chosen as the

methodology of this research. Qualitative data collection consists of gathering data using forms with general, emerging questions to permit the participant to generate responses; gathering word (text) or image (picture) data; and collecting information from a small number of individuals or sites (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative data provides the researcher with responses that will best help understand the research questions.

### 3.2 Sample and Population

The participants for this study include freshman students and teachers of freshmen classes of Bridgewater State University (BSU) and graduate students who are second language teachers. These participants were asked to answer a questionnaire which could be completed online or in paper. To participate on this research students selected must be BSU students whose first language is not English, English Language Learners (ELLs) and they must be enrolled in BSU courses. The survey was given out to 50 freshmen students at the University who were selected from different classes. Students were chosen from different classes and also from different cultural backgrounds in order to reach valid and authentic results. The sample of students includes both genders: male and female, to have an equitable distribution of gender among the participants. Age and class subject were completely disregarded.

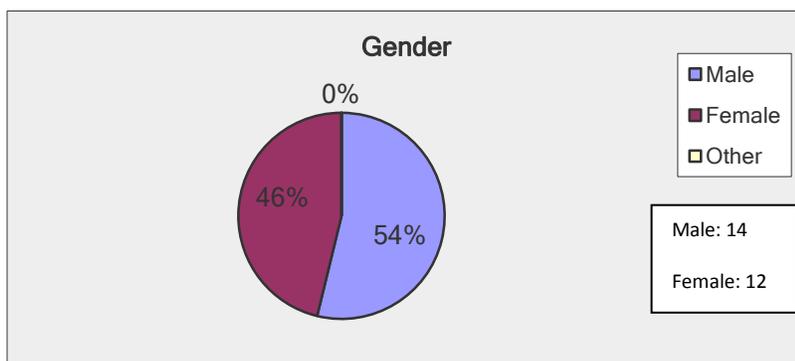


Figure 1: Gender of the students surveyed

### 3.3 Survey Instruments (students and teachers)

The surveys (see Appendix A, B) were collected from a group of teachers and freshmen students and analyzed by the researcher. These surveys were given to fifty students and twenty teachers. The purpose was to gather teachers' and students' perceptions on supportive relationships and how that relationship can affect students learning and their interest in the learning process. Questions included the following: How can teachers' perception about their students' needs and importance inside the classroom affect learning process? How communicative approach and cooperative learning strategy while teaching do affect and improve students' learning performance? Why is it important to have a teacher who cares about their students and tries to establish a good relationship with them inside the classroom? How can different approaches and new strategies help to improve students' performance in acquiring a second language? Answers have been analyzed by question and survey group. Since the surveys collect some quantitative data and qualitative data, the answers allow graphic percentages, calculation and a narrative data set to be compiled.

The surveys are a valid instrument because they are both based on open-ended questions which allow the respondents to provide answers in their own words and provide qualitative data important to the study. They tell the researcher what the participant actually thinks about the topic. A minimum amount of quantitative data was collected through the response choices which were assigned a number as follows: never – 0, rarely – 1, sometimes – 2, often – 3, and always – 4, or never – 0, very little – 1, somewhat – 2, strong – 3, and very strong – 4. However, the foundation of the surveys is

to collect qualitative data collection as quantitative data were not enough to make the work a mixed-method.

### **3.4 Data collection procedures**

All the necessary ethical procedures were followed to useful collect the data. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) paperwork was completed and submitted to the Human Subject Research Education at Bridgewater State University (see Appendix C). After the IRB approval, participants were contacted personally and the scope of the study was explained to them. Additionally, cooperative language teaching and cooperative learning were defined with the aim of giving them some context. Participants were encouraged to take part in this study and told that their participation and opinion will contribute to the improvement of English teaching in Cape Verde, to help teachers improve pedagogy. After signing the consent forms, the participant students were asked to complete the survey, which took them approximately 10-15 minutes. The questions were purposefully open-ended questions; thus the respondents could have the opportunity to justify and give some explanations that can prove and valid their choices.

There were nine total questions involved in the survey (Appendix A). One question related to the kind of relationship students maintain with their teachers; three questions were in regard to how supportive, caring, and motivating they feel their teachers are. There were also three questions that dealt with the communicative language approach and the cooperative learning. The last question was to gather student's level of comfort about teaching methods. Teacher participants were given an eleven question open-ended survey (Appendix B). Five questions dealt with teachers' feelings about the relationship they hold with their students, how aware they are about their students' needs

and how they feel about the students. Four more questions asked teachers' opinions about the use of communicative language teaching and cooperative learning in classroom. One open question asked their opinion about the use of the grammar-based language approach and the communicative language teaching approach. There was also one open question that dealt with their general feelings about the difficulties teachers' face in their attempt to use each approach: communicative language teaching and cooperative learning in their classrooms.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2012), analyzing qualitative data “requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research questions” (p.236). The instruments used in this study were questionnaires for students and teachers. The data gathered from the instruments have been analyzed in a logical, coherent, and statistically way. Graphic and table representations will be displayed below with explanation of the data gathered.

Questionnaire data analysis included the analysis of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed with the help of the free online survey software & questionnaire (SurveyMonkey).

### **3.6 Instrument 1- Student surveys**

Freshman students were asked, during different class times, to answer this survey and then deliver it to the researcher. The purpose of this question survey was to gauge their opinion about how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process, and, how the communicative approach and

cooperative learning strategies while teaching affect and improve students' learning performance. These concepts were explained to give them some contexts.

To infer about the relationship that exists between students and teachers, the following question was asked:

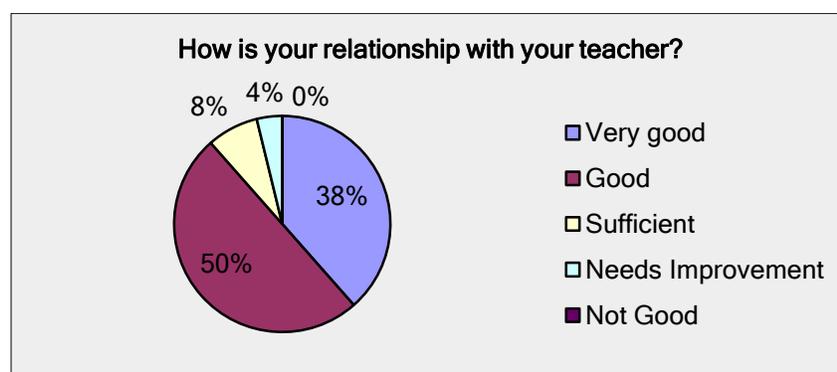


Figure 2: Relationships that exists between students and teachers

The answers vary between 50% of students surveyed indicating they have a good relationship with their teachers and 38% that think that the relationships they hold with their teachers are very good. The surveyed students explained that the relationship they hold with their teachers help them to improve their motivation, help them to interact with their teachers, and encourage them to ask teachers for help and support whenever they need. Four students said that “by having a good relationship with their teachers, students tend to be more interested in the learning process and also they behave well.” Another one said: “students who are interested for their learning and performance have to approach their teachers and have a good relationship with them.” Contrarily, one student pointed that the relationship he holds with their teachers need improvement. He said: “I do not have a good relationship with my teachers, and I do not feel free to ask them for help because it is not part of my culture, teachers are the only one who has voice inside the classroom.”

To find out if their teachers hold a supportive relationship with them the following questions were asked:

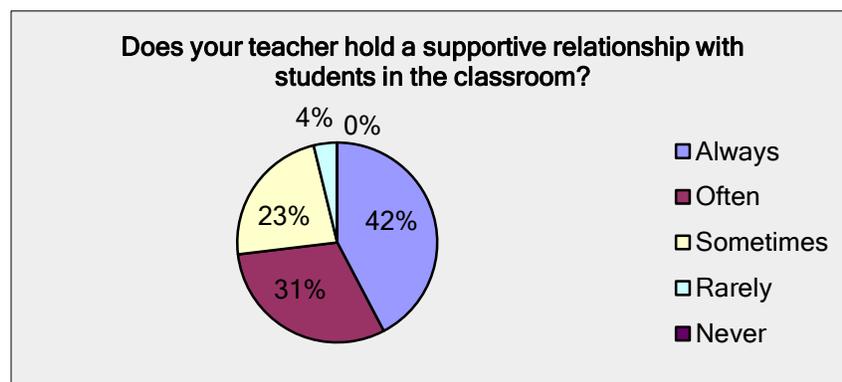


Figure 3: The kind of relationship teachers hold with students in the classroom

According to the students surveyed 42% said that their teachers always hold a supportive relationship with the students. One student demonstrates what being supportive is:

“teachers always care about us and they try to figure out if everything is understood, they provide interesting materials to the class.” Also, another student said: “the teachers try to create a safe environment where students feel free to interact, and ask questions. Teachers must try to establish good conversation with all students not just related to the teaching content but also related to aspects outside the classroom which shows that she cares about students’ welfare.” These aspects motivate students and make them feel more connected with the teachers and engaged in class.

In terms of motivation by having a caring teacher, this question was asked:

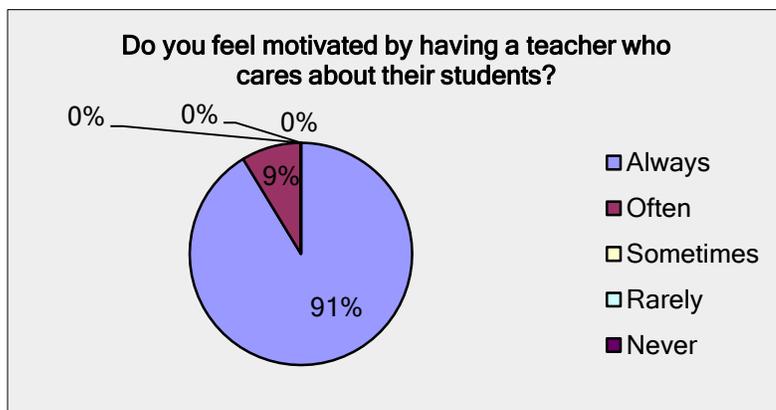


Figure 4: Motivation by having a caring teacher

Of the students surveyed, 91% agreed that they often feel motivated by having a teacher that care about them. It is necessary to care about our students. Most of the respondents believe that “teachers who care about students help students to perform better in class. This make students feel that their teacher believes in them and they are interested in students’ learning and they hold great expectations upon their students.” Caring teachers motivate students and the learning process is enhanced.

As for the importance of the relationship students maintain with teachers, the following question was asked:

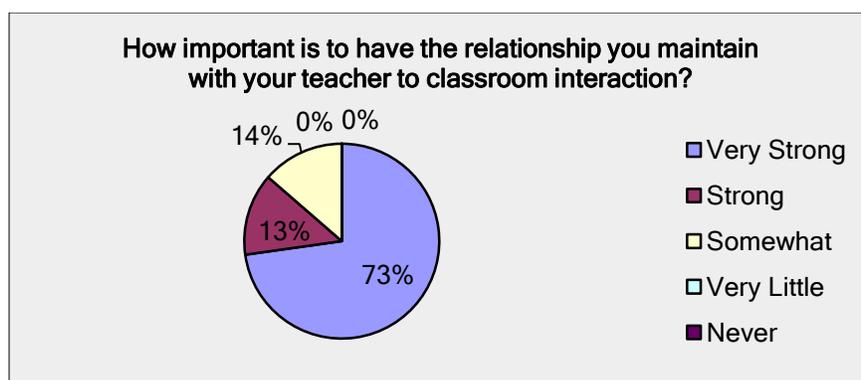


Figure 5: Importance of the relationship students maintain with teachers

Of the students surveyed 73% said that the relationship they maintain with their teachers is very important to classroom interaction. A group of students consider that the

relationship they maintain with their teachers makes them feel comfortable. Students commented that it transmits trust to them and makes them feel comfortable to interact not only with the teacher but with the entire class. Additionally, one student considers that “having a strong relationship with teachers is the key to success, when you maintain a strong relationship with your teachers it is easier to communicate and interact.”

Regarding how students see their teachers, the following question was asked:

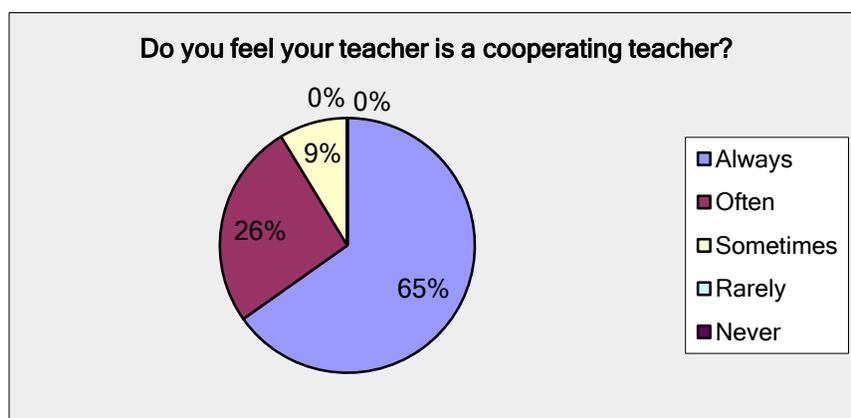


Figure 6: Students perception on their teachers

Of students surveyed, 65% claimed that their teachers are always cooperative. Students surveyed reported that teachers always try to engage and help all students inside the classroom. Another one pointed out that teachers try to cooperate and support us with materials, and they are always available to work together whenever students need. Two students said: sometimes some teachers seek the best strategies or methods to teach us and they show some flexibility when necessary. Being cooperative with students is important to show students that they can see teachers as someone they can trust, that the environment created is safe.

In terms of methods and strategies, the following question was asked:

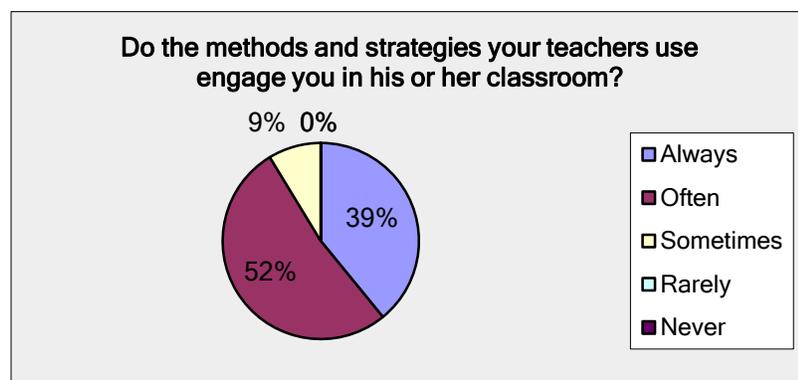


Figure 7: Appropriateness of the methods and strategies used

According to 55% of the respondents, most of the time, the methods and strategies are appropriate, and they engage students in the classroom giving them all the tools necessary to participate and enhance learning. Respondents added that they feel comfortable when they work in groups, in class discussion. Teachers are responsible to offer to students the best methods and activities to better help them feel engaged in classroom. One student comment that: “some methods and strategies encourage me to share my thinking about certain issues.”

As for how comfortable they feel using communicative language teaching, the following question was asked:

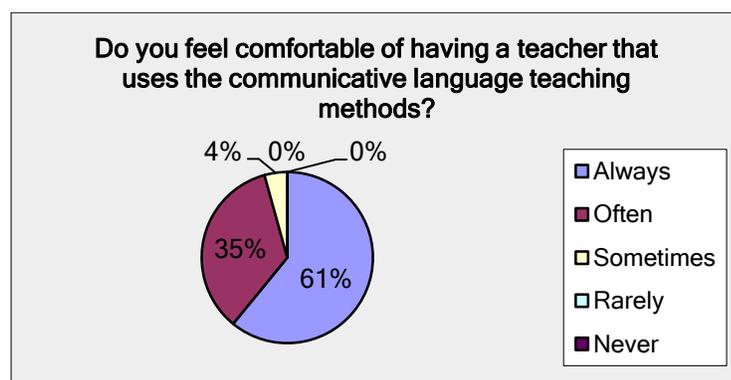


Figure 8: How comfortable students feel with CLT

From this point of view, 61% of the participants surveyed said they feel comfortable and more motivated to participate in class when the approach used is the communicative language teaching. One respondent believes that CLT makes students more competitive, makes them learn better because they interact with the whole class and with the professor. Additionally, as pointed out by other respondents, CLT helps to improve their communicative skills and allows them to be an active part of the class. Respondents comments demonstrate that their capacity to learn increase when they use CLT because they learn from each other using student language which makes the learning process easier. One student said: it is real life situations.

Responding to cooperative learning the following question was asked:

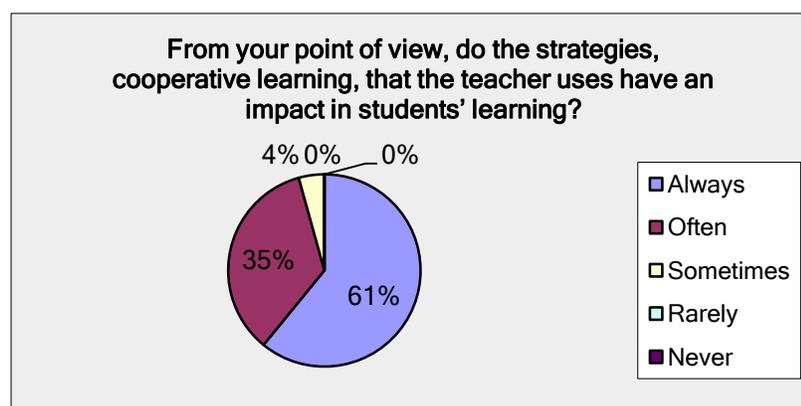


Figure 9: Students' opinion on how cooperative learning impact their learning

Of 61% of students' surveyed state that cooperative learning always impacts students' learning because it allows students to work in a group and as a group student can solve difficult tasks. One student demonstrates understanding about what cooperative learning is. The student said: Cooperative learning allows students to learn with their colleagues, it allows students to share their ideas as well as to increase their knowledge. Another one said: you can learn with your colleagues. Additionally, a student reported that he does not

feel comfortable working on group. Therefore, working on group is beneficial to ELLs because it allows the less proficient students to work with the most proficient students which will help them to be engaged in the learning process and take advantages of it.

Regarding methods of teaching, the following question was asked:

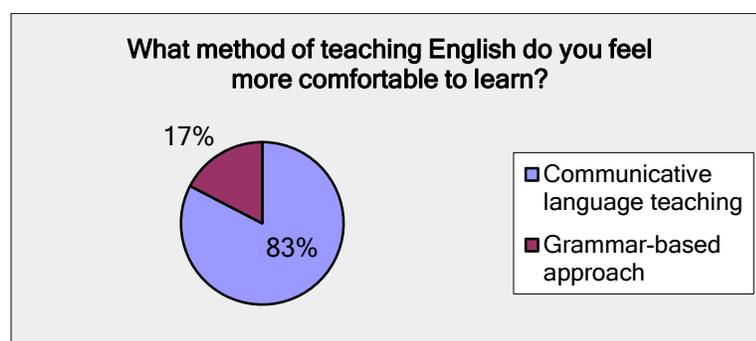


Figure 10: Methods of teaching English students feel comfortable to learn

According to 83% of students surveyed, they feel more comfortable to learn when their teachers use communicative language teaching. Comments from the respondents illustrate that: students feel more engaged in the classroom and it allows them to interact and develop their language skills. Additionally, one student said: "I feel that CLT is more realistic and it gives students the chance to build their learning." Other comments show students' understanding of the role of learner is in CLT, "students are the center and are responsible for the learning process." The majority of the students' comments show that they feel that compared to the grammar-based approach, CLT allows students to have more contact with the language and consequently gives students more opportunity to develop their communicative competence. Contrarily, 17% of students surveyed prefer grammar-based approach because as one student said "I do not have to interact all the time and the teacher is responsible for the learning process."

### 3.7 Instrument 2- Teacher Surveys

A question survey was conducted among teachers and graduate students who work with second language learners. These teachers were asked to answer the survey and then deliver it to the researcher. The purpose of this question survey was to gauge the teachers' opinions about how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process, and how communicative approach and cooperative learning strategies while teaching do affect and improve students' learning performance.

Regarding the relationship teachers hold with students, the following question was asked:

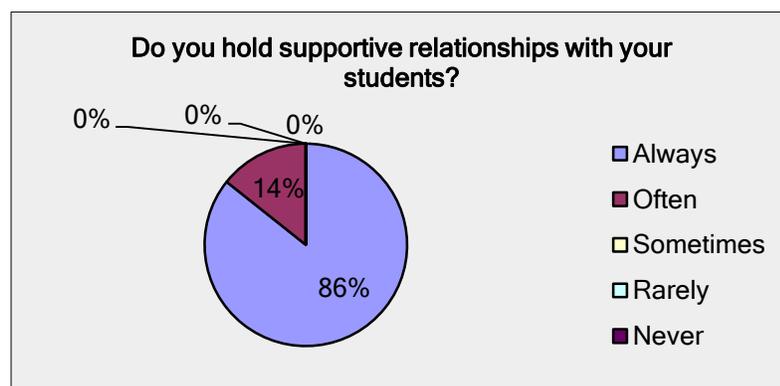


Figure 11: Relationships teachers hold with students

According to 86% of teachers surveyed they always try to hold a supportive relationship with students. One teacher pointed out: “teachers have to support their students and help them find the best way to reach their goals.” Another respondent said: “supporting our students it is a good strategy for helping them to be engaged, and also to create a relationship of trust and confidence.” A supportive relationship is significant to show students that they are important, and also it helps to create a positive learning

environment and helps to control misbehavior. A teacher pointed that: it is my role as a teacher to be supportive with my students. It is important for them to grow academically.

Regarding teachers' awareness of their students' needs, the following question was asked:

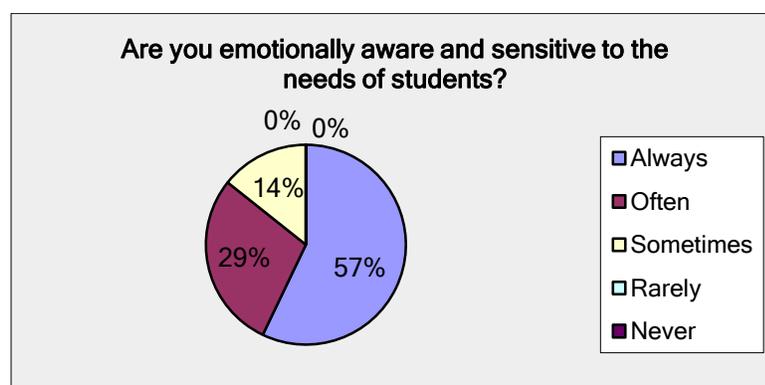


Figure 12: Teacher awareness of their students' needs

When asked if teachers are emotionally aware of their students' needs, 57% of the respondents said that they are always emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of their students. Teachers feel that they have responsibilities for their students' future and they need to support them in order to help them succeed. One teacher added a comment: "Students are different; they bring diversity to the class." In the same line of thinking, another teacher said: teachers need to keep in mind that students come from different background and they bring different issues to the class, thus teachers must be prepared to emotionally help them, talk to them and give them all the necessary support to succeed. But according to 14% of teacher surveyed, sometimes they are not emotionally aware and sensitive to the students' needs. One teacher opined that "sometimes teachers must be strict to their students so they can realize that they are in an advanced stage of life." Teachers must set up boundaries with their students, but they must keep on mind that as

human being sometimes students need a support, encouraging words and acts, that they cannot find at home and be a change in students' life style.

Talking about interaction, the following question was asked:

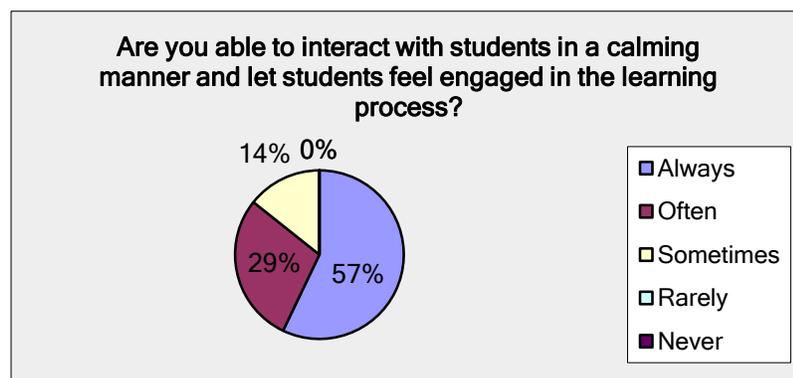


Figure 13: How teachers interact with students

According to 57% of the teachers surveyed, they always interact with their students in a calm manner and make them feel engaged in the learning process. A great part of the teacher surveyed illustrated that it is important to interact with students in a calm manner because teachers are responsible to ensure that every student feels engaged in the learning process. Additionally, one teacher pointed out: teachers should be calm with students to facilitate dialogue and communication in the classroom. However, 14% of teachers reported that sometimes they communicate in a defensive manner to show students that they are the authority, thus students must know that there are limits that they cannot cross, they must behave well to better favor the interaction and engagement in the learning process. When a teacher shows a students that he or she is calm, they show that they have patient to help them reach their objectives, teacher will make students behave well and respect them creating condition to students pursue their goals. But sometimes teachers must be strict and mark their position inside the classroom, so students can behave well and respect others.

In terms of how to coach students to show appropriate behaviors, the following question was asked:

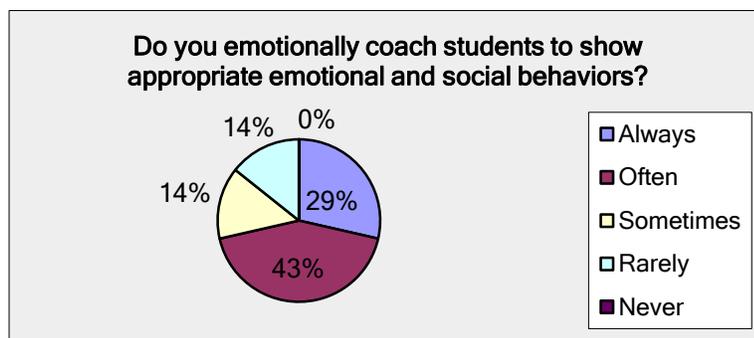


Figure 14: How teachers coach students to show appropriate behavior

53% of the teachers surveyed often emotionally coach students to show appropriate emotional and social behaviors. Teachers need to educate and encourage students to become a good citizen. One teacher said: “students have to know that they have to find the best way to interact with people, to socialize and the classroom is the best place to start.”

In relation to teachers’ beliefs in students’ ability, the following question was asked:

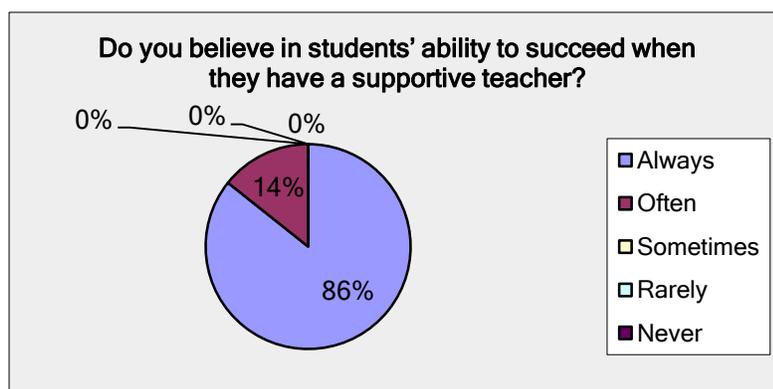


Figure 15: Teachers’ beliefs in students’ ability to succeed

According to 86% of teachers surveyed, they always believe in students' ability to succeed when they have a supportive teacher. The majority of the teachers surveyed believe that: teachers must show confidence in their students' ability, and support them according to their needs. It is important to show students that they are part of the learning process, and supporting them they can construct their own knowledge and they feel confident to study. One teacher commented that: students must feel that they can trust and count on their teachers, and when they are sure about this they will look for help more frequently.

Talking about the importance of teaching communicative English to students, the following question was asked:

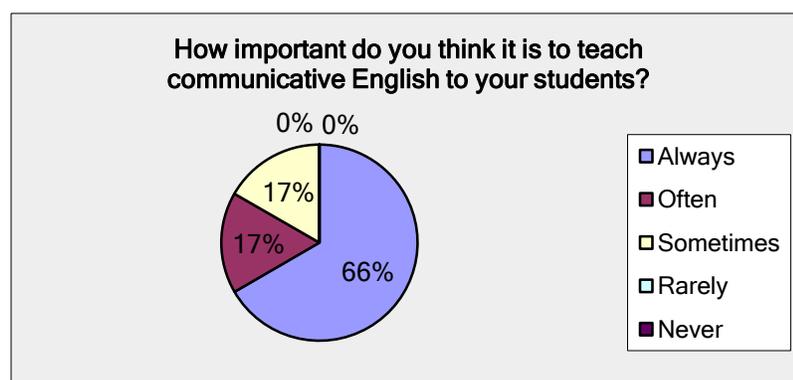


Figure 16: The importance to teach communicative English to students

Results from the surveys show that 66% of the teachers surveyed think that it is always important to teach communicative English to students. The surveyed teachers feel that through communicative English students can better understand the content.

Communicative English allows students to learn easier and develop their language skills.

One teacher said: it is easier to students to learn and remember the content taught in a communicative way. Students learn easier from each other, the language they use is softer; therefore it facilitates their comprehension and mastering of the content discussed.

Additionally, one teacher said: communicative English will help students to lose the fear to communicate and interact with their peers

When asked to give their opinion about “How can communicative language teaching engage and improve learning?” teachers agree that communicative language teaching stimulates students to participate in the class and they can become more competitive. One teacher pointed out that: CLT can be implemented in a classroom to maximize strengths and benefits for Second Language Learners. Learners are the center of the learning process in CLT. A teacher said that: CLT implies that students have more chances to interact in meaningful conversations and activities. CLT allows students to be focused on the learning process, interact and practice what they learn, and it is easier to make connections between their background knowledge and the content taught or discussed.

Teachers also were asked to give their opinion about teaching using the two approaches CLT and grammar-based. One respondent said “I think that teachers who use CTL approach have better strategy to help students than those who use grammar-based approach.” Grammar-based approach implies students to be a passive learner. Furthermore, one teacher said that: “I believe that in some circumstances it is important to teach both approaches, but with a little focus on CLT. CLT is student-centered which positively contributes to the learning process and makes classes more active.” CLT and grammar-based approaches when well-coordinated they have a tremendous result in the learning process, however, CLT is more effective and appropriate because of its characteristics.

Regarding cooperative learning effect on students' performance, the following question was asked:

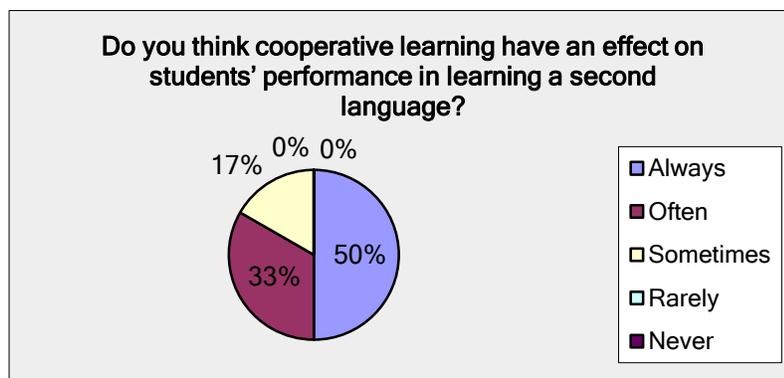


Figure 17: Teachers' perception on the effect of cooperative learning on students' performance

Among the teachers, 50% surveyed think that cooperative learning always has an effect on students' performance in learning a second language. According to three teachers surveyed cooperative learning makes students more motivated and interested to learn a second language because students feel comfortable working in groups, sharing experience with different people. While one teacher said: It helps them do more hands on activities and they will learn better. Cooperative learning helps students to master contents and also to overcome difficult tasks which contribute to their learning.

Talking about the effect of students' participation on groups, the following question was asked:

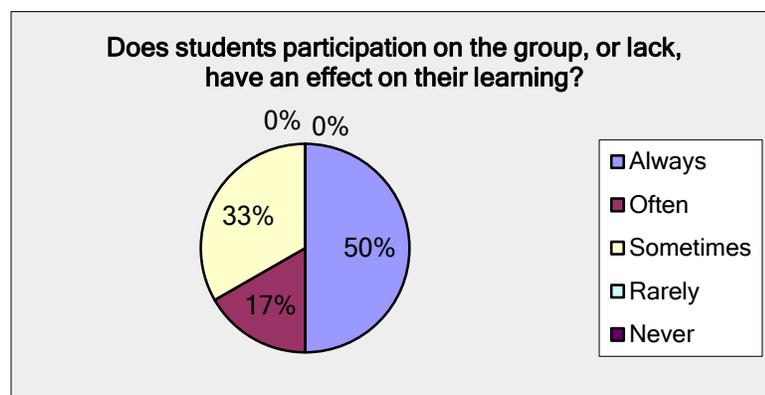


Figure 18: The effect of students' participation on groups for their learning process

Results from the survey shows that 50% of the teachers surveyed believe that the lack of participation in a group can affect students' learning. One teachers comment that: students have to develop their capacities to work as a group. Working as a group makes students be more responsible and become more interactive and available to learn and share their ideas with the group. Moreover, another one said: by being inserted in a group students will learn how to respect opinions and help them to frame their behavior and become more responsible.

Teachers were asked to talk about the difficulties that EFL teachers' face in their attempts to use CLT and cooperative learning in classroom they were unanimous that they faces difficulties in terms of materials and appropriate teaching environment. One teacher said: "I think one of the difficulties that teachers face is the lack of materials, the implementation of CLT approach and bridging the gap between theory and practice, it is another problem because sometimes you need to follow standards and school curriculum and you do not have control to do what students need." Furthermore, another teacher said: "I have difficulties in approaching ELLs who are not proficient; this is a great problem while implementing CLT because the activities are students' centered and if students have limited vocabulary knowledge they cannot interact and enhance the

learning process by giving their contribution.” In fact ELLs level of proficiency can be a problem that teachers can face, but giving students the chance to interact in a safe and free environment, give them the chance to try the learning process will be enhanced and CLT can be used.

The majority of the respondents’ answers show that it is obvious that a caring and supportive teacher has a great value regarding teacher and students relationships. Students benefit and are motivated when their teachers create a safe and trustful environment. And also the methods and strategies teachers uses, makes students feel engaged and stimulated to participate in the learning process. The students have in their mind that a positive relationship with their teachers positively impacts their interest and motivation in school which contributes to the enhancement of the learning process.

## **Chapter 4 Conclusion**

### **4.1 Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations with this study that could make a great difference in the discussion of the results and also the validity and reliability of my research questions. The first limitation was regarding to the amount of time that I had available to conduct this study. With a more extended time, I could do find additional resources to help answer my research questions.

A second limitation is related to the survey sample. Due to the limited number of participants, I was not able to have a broader range of responses. The study was initially developed for several classes of students from Bridgewater State University. However, it was restricted to freshmen students, which contribute to a generalized conclusion. It would be useful if the researcher could use more students, from different levels which would contribute with more information. Further, more time would allow me to conduct follow-up interviews.

Another limitation is related to the instruments used in the data collection procedures. This study may have generated more reliable results with multiple data sources, as for example interviews with teachers and students and classroom observations. Using data from different sources would allow me to use a mixed method where data would be triangulated, and consequently give validity to the results of this study.

Finally, as the researcher my interpretation of the questions I used may diverge from what the respondents have thought and answered. To make them easier to understand I would like to divide the questions in sections, first close questions to make it

simpler, second open-ended questions where respondents could choose the option they see that can best fit with their understanding and then they can give their feedback. This kind of structure would be more adequate to the data collection and further interpretation. By asking different questions I could have a clear understanding that students and teachers are aware of the necessity to have a supportive and caring relationship inside the classroom and that it is necessary to use communication and strategies that allow students to use their imaginations in order to be active and feel more comfortable in the classroom. It would be helpful in a repeat of this study, to survey students of these particular teachers who reported that sometimes they are emotionally aware or able to interact with their students, to see if I can find correlation between teachers actions and students responses.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

Although this work may contribute greatly to educators in general, it may eventually contribute to the improvement of English teaching in ESL classrooms. There is potential to provide strategies for maintaining a good relationship between teachers and students, and using communicative approach and cooperative learning strategies while teaching affect and improving students' performance.

Teachers must think in different ways and employ strategies to improve achievement in the classroom. We are convinced that as teachers, each one of us will contribute in many different ways to help the efficiency of the teaching process. This researcher began by questioning (1) why is it important to have a teacher who cares about their students and tries to establish a good relationship with them inside the classroom? And (2) how can different approaches and new strategies help to improve students' performance in acquiring a second language? Through the literature review and surveys,

it was obvious that a supportive relationship between teacher and students benefits the learning process. Students feel that they perform better when the teacher holds a supportive relationship with them.

Findings from the surveys show that the majority of teachers and students value a supportive and caring relationship between them and that interaction is essential to the teacher-student relationship. This sense of caring and supporting from teachers motivates students to become a more interested learner. A caring teacher will help students to overcome struggles. According to Collier (2005) “caring facilitates a sense of connection from which spring countless opportunities for learning” (p.352). Students will feel secure that the environment surrounded by caring teachers will allow them grow and develop their capacities, and give more of themselves to the enhancing of the learning process. Students need to trust that their teachers are going to help them when needed, but are going to do so while maintaining high expectations for their students (Boals et al., 1990). This sense of trust and security in relation to teachers’ good will to assist, and support their students contributes to students’ academic success. An environment that places emphasis on caring between the teacher and students favors students’ academic development, and learning will be more enjoyable.

When teachers hold a positive relationship with students, they certainly impact students’ interests in school and therefore their level of achievement. Findings from the surveys showed that teachers feel that when they know their students, and they hold a good relationship with them, students are more focused and they become harder worker thus they can better achieve their goals. This means that teachers who are more available to connect with their students, be open to his students, and care about them, will have a

better chance to cultivate a positive relationship with them and students will respond well to this situation showing commitment to the class and their motivation to do well in class will increase.

Teachers and students were surveyed about the use of CLT approach in classroom. They show a particular interest in this approach because they feel that it is more useful and very helpful for students. CLT is seen as an approach which provides opportunities for students to communicate and interact with their colleagues and teachers in class (e.g. Richards 2011). Teachers and students reported that by adopting CLT into ESL classrooms, the classes become more interactive, more interesting because the emphasis is in communication. Most of the surveyed also reported that they prefer CLT in comparison with a grammar-based approach in classroom. CLT not only give chances to students to improve their communication skills, but also it helps them to improve their interaction in the classroom. Teachers and students are interested in the communicative teaching approach because it motivates students to use English in class, and give students the chance to build knowledge by interacting with their colleagues.

In an ESL class the implementation of CLT can present some difficulties based on students' low proficiency in the English language, and their learning styles can be seen as another difficulty. The way students are taught in countries where English is not the first language, makes students to be receptors and become passive learners. However, it is teacher's duty to try to change the learning environment, make adaptations and provide best strategies and approaches to fulfill their students' needs and facilitate learning.

Regarding cooperative learning, findings show that this strategy is important and significant to improve second language acquisition, and it motivates students to work

cooperatively and improve interaction with colleagues. Through the results we can observe that students and teachers believe that cooperative learning is an effective strategy to promote English grammar achievement. It helps students to learn how to work cooperatively in small groups to achieve academic social learning goals (e.g. Macpherson (2007). Cooperative learning allows the creation of heterogeneous groups where more proficient and low proficient students are put together and they are responsible to solve tasks. According to Peregoy & Boyle (2013) “cooperative learning procedures are set to build positive interdependence among group members” (p.105). It means that students should act as a team and support each other learning in socially appropriate ways.

The respondents also reported that members of a cooperative group succeed only if they are committed with the group. To be successful all students must be attentive, care about the tasks, share background knowledge and experience and accept each other viewpoints Collaborative learning provides a rich learning environment and content learning opportunities as students discuss, explain and negotiate meaning in their groups.

The benefits of having a supportive and caring teacher influences positively the relationship between teacher and students in the classroom and this is easily proven by the results of the surveys. Students believe that they perform better in classes where they feel that the environment is safe, the teacher is there to help and support them and in classes where they are at the center of the learning process. Communication and interaction are the key to achieve success; moreover they believe that the communicative language teaching offers them the opportunity to interact and build their own learning. Students, additionally, takes advantages of cooperative learning. It allows them to feel engaged in the learning process, and learn from a perspective of teamwork which favors

students who are most in need. Even though all the constraints a teacher can face while implementing the communicative language teaching, and cooperative learning, both are seen as great tools to increase students' interaction and communicative competence ability. The most challenging problem a teacher can face is related to the materials, in this case authentic materials, and students English language proficiency. However, teachers can use CLT to promote students' interaction and engagement. Materials can be adapted to students cultural background, thus students will feel more attempted to try, to communicate with their peers and give their contribution in the learning process and break down their linguistic barriers or fears.

Students/teacher relationships, communicative language teaching and cooperative learning are essential elements of a learning process full of opportunity, trust, confidence and motivation. Those elements, when well combined, are a guarantee of success while learning a second language and succeed.

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## Appendices

### Appendix - A

#### Survey for Students

Thank you for volunteering to respond to this 15 minute survey *The Relationship between Teachers and Students in the Classroom: Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Cooperative Learning Strategy to Improve Learning*. Although you may not personally benefit, this study is important to science/society because instructors of ELL students will be able to develop their pedagogies to better serve ELL students. There are no foreseeable risks, your responses are anonymous, and you may refuse to answer particular questions or withdraw from this survey at any time.

The current survey has the purpose to gauge students' opinions about how can good relationships between teachers and students affect students learning, and how communicative language teaching and cooperative learning improve students' performance in learning a second language. It is an open-ended and anonymous questionnaire.

Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questionnaire

1. How is your relationship with your teacher? Why?

Very Good	Good	Sufficient	Needs Improvement	Not Good
4	3	2	1	0

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2. Does your teacher hold a supportive relationship with students in the classroom? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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3. Do you feel motivated by having a teacher who cares about their students? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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4. How important is to have the relationship you maintain with your teacher to classroom interaction? Why?

Very Strong	Strong	Somewhat	Very Little	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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5. Do you feel your teacher as a cooperating teacher? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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6. Do the methods and strategies your teachers use engage you in his or her classroom?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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7. Do you feel comfortable of having a teacher that uses the communicative language teaching methods?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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8. From your point of view, the strategies, cooperative learning, that the teacher uses have an impact in students' learning?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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9. What method of teaching English do you feel more comfortable to learn, the communicative language teaching or a grammar-based approach? Why?

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## Appendix - B

### Survey for Teachers

The current survey has the purpose to gauge teachers' opinions about how good relationships between teachers and students affect students' learning performance, and how communicative language teaching and cooperative learning improve students' performance in learning a second language. It is an open-ended and anonymous questionnaire.

Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Grade you teach \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questionnaire

1. Do you hold supportive relationships with your students? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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2. Are you emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of students? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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3. Are you able to interact with students in a calming manner and let students feel engaged in the learning process? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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4. Do you emotionally coach students to show appropriate emotional and social behaviors? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

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5. Do you believe in students' ability to succeed when they have a supportive teacher? Why?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

6. How important do you think it is to teach communicative English to your students?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

7. How can communicative language teaching engage and improve learning?

8. What is your opinion on the relation between teaching English using CLT and teaching English using a grammar-based approach?

9. Do you think cooperative learning have an effect on students' performance in learning a second language?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

10. Does students participation on the group, or lack, have an effect on their learning?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

11. What are the difficulties EFL teachers' faces in their attempts to use CLT and cooperative learning in the classroom?

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## **Appendix - C**

### **Board approval request**

Fredson da Luz

Graduate students at BSU

#### **Permission to conduct an experimental study**

Dear BSU Students

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Bridgewater State University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any question you may have. The title of my research is “The Relationship between Teachers and Students in the Classroom: Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Cooperative Learning Strategy to Improve Learning.”

If then you decide to participate in this project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained this project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

#### **Purpose and procedures**

The objective of this research is to investigate how a supportive relationship between teachers and students in the classroom can improve the learning process. By having a good relationship with students, teachers offer them the chance to be motivated and feel engaged in the learning process. Questionnaires will be applied to students and teachers.

There are no anticipated benefits or harm in this project. Your personal information will be protected and pseudonyms will be used. I hope that the information gathered will help teachers in the future to understand the benefits of having a good and supportive relationship with students.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By signing below I am indicating that I understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and I believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

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Participant Signature

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Date

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, about this study, please feel free to contact me, by phone (774-360-0773), or by e-mail: [fdaluz@student.bridgew.edu](mailto:fdaluz@student.bridgew.edu)

Sincerely,

Fredson da Luz