

# Propelling Students Into Active Grammar Participation

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## Abstract

O! this learning, what a thing it is.

-W. Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

The aim of this action research was to find out if active grammar involvement amongst students might lead to better results. My approach was to activate my students during grammar instruction by using cooperative learning: that is a form of learning in which teachers favour the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991). My motivation was to instil a more active attitude towards grammar instruction amongst my students. I used three groups, of 26-30 students each that participated in this study: one experimental group and two control groups. I incorporated the *Jigsaw Method* in my experimental group. I divided this group into small groups with one mini-expert who would explain grammar to others. After two cycles the findings were promising. The students of my experimental group scored higher and were more actively involved during the grammar lessons than their peers of the control groups. Though this approach to grammar seems to have worked in my school practice I do advise to study the effects of cooperative learning in grammar education holistically over a longer period of time.

## Acknowledgement

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Dennis Jurhill

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my motivation for starting this action research as well as describing what I hope to achieve in terms of my research question and sub-questions. Besides this I will introduce the other chapters and describe my research plan before I conclude chapter 1.

### 1.2 My situation at the start of my study

At this moment I am teaching at a secondary school in Zaandam, The Netherlands. This school is divided in a *havo* department (= senior general secondary education) and a *vwo* department (= university preparatory education). The students are placed in either *havo* or *vwo* stream based on a primary school examination developed by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO). The students at my school are predominantly of Dutch origin. I teach in year 2, 3 and 4 of the *havo* department.

The starting point for my study was the way students in my *havo* 3 classes participated in my grammar lessons. I observed that very often students behaved passively during my grammar instruction and I wanted to know why they behaved like that and if I could do anything to change this. When it comes to grammar many schools, including mine, still prefer a traditional way of teaching in which a teacher explains a rule to students and where they reproduce the rule through exercises i.e. deductive approach. Students are drilled to learn and apply grammar rules without having the opportunity to discover these rules for themselves i.e. deductive approach. Ira Shor, an American philosopher and professor of composition and rhetoric stated that students' preference for the "teacher-as-authority-figure" relates directly to the internalized expectations that years of traditional pedagogy have succeeded in achieving; making students find comfort in a model they are familiar with – passivity. "In traditional classrooms, students develop authority-dependence; they rehearse their future as citizens and workers by learning that education means listening to teachers tell them what to do and what things mean" (Shor, 1993, p.25-33).

My classroom, though I do not like to admit it, was not any different from the classrooms described above. I noticed that explaining grammar formed an obstacle in my teaching because students lacked the intrinsic motivation to learn grammar. I often found myself teaching grammar to a very passive crowd. It made me question my grammar lessons: Were my grammar lessons not diverse enough? Were my grammar lessons not tailored to their needs? Clearly not, because I was not able to change their passive attitude into an active one. It is not easy to put yourself, as a teacher, in the shoes of those you are teaching; especially when they are adolescents. It reminded me of a book I read called *The Limitless Generation*. In this book the authors, Frits Spangenberg and Martijn Lampert, explain that adolescents are difficult to please because they seek out (fast) forms of pleasure without looking at what it implies or what the consequences are for pursuing constant fulfilment (Spangenberg & Lampert, 2009). It sounds self-evident that something only brings fulfilment when it appeals. And perhaps that was the missing element in my grammar lessons. I had to find a way to make my grammar lessons more appealing to my students so that they would become more actively involved.

### 1.3 Goal and research (sub)question(s)

My goal was to evoke a more active attitude in my students during my grammar lessons. I came up with the following research question that became the basis for the rest of my study:

*How can I, as an English teacher, actively involve students in my grammar lessons?*

The following sub-questions are directly linked to each other as well as to the main question:

- What can I as a teacher do to ensure a higher yield in students' active involvement during my grammar lessons?
- Will participatory teaching/cooperative learning instil a more active involvement amongst my students?
- Will grammar test results actually improve through participatory teaching / cooperative learning?

My research question led the way towards an action-based research. Geoffrey Mills states the purpose of an action research very clearly: "Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes" (Mills, 2003). I conducted my study along the same lines: I gathered information to gain insight; I tried to evaluate and reflect on the classes I was studying; I tried to promote positive changes in my school practice and I aimed to improve my students' performance.

#### **1.4 Conclusion to chapter 1 and a preview**

I have introduced my starting point and my motivation for conducting this study. I explained how I came up with my main research question and my sub-questions and how they formed the basis for my research. The next chapter contains a theoretical framework supported by literature in which I will link the cooperative learning theory and studies done in this field to my own research. Some key terms I will focus on are ESL education and teaching grammar as well as cooperative learning in the classroom. Chapter three is called methodology wherein I will explain my research methods. In chapter four I will present the results of my study and in the last two chapters I will discuss my results and provide a conclusion as well as suggestions for implementation.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I stated my research question. This question can be divided into sub-questions which lead to several key terms which I will discuss in this chapter. I would like to highlight the following information because my goal was to improve ESL education and grammar in particular.

### 2.2 ESL education and teaching grammar

ESL education involves the teaching and acquisition of English as a second language. English has become the second language in the Netherlands and it is being used in a wide variety of every-day situations. This mainly started in the 20th century due to the influx of English from American and British popular music in the 1960s and the more widespread use of English among scientists in the 1970s. Because of its international predominance it has been taught more extensively than any other foreign languages in the Dutch curriculum (Berns, de Bot, & Hasebrink, 2007).

Grammar plays an important part in the language curriculum because it forms a basis to understand and apply a language successfully through the means of rules and examples dealing with syntax and word structures. Scott Thornbury, an author of English grammar instruction books, explains grammar as “the systematic study and description of a language. It is conventionally seen as the study of syntax and morphology of sentences i.e. it is the study both of the way words are chained together in a particular order, and also of what kinds of words can slot into any link in the chain” (Thornbury, 1999, p.2).

Teachers incorporate grammar in their lessons by means of deductive or inductive explanation. Grammar acquisition is paramount in the teaching and learning of any language. It is also one of the more difficult aspects of language teaching as well. Many people hear the word "grammar" and think of a fixed set of word forms and rules of how to use a language. Many language teachers, including myself, focus on grammar as a set of forms and rules. They teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students with reproductive exercises. This results in bored, disaffected students who can produce correct forms in exercises and tests, but consistently make errors when they try to use the language in a natural context (Byrd, 1998).

Learning itself means to acquire/gain and to accumulate knowledge. But why do teachers prefer one way of teaching over the other? A common mistake many young teachers make is to assume that if they simply follow the book and its directions in order, learning will happen. But that is not what happens in reality. To employ effective instruction means to explore first how students learn best. Most teachers know that there are better ways of instructing students but theoretical exclusivity and didactic single-mindedness can be trusted to make even the best of educational ideas fail. And then there is also the factor of time which holds many teachers back from implementing new approaches of teaching such as cooperative learning.

### 2.3 Cooperative learning / Participatory teaching

Activating didactics or cooperative learning is a new wide-spread phenomenon in which teachers give more autonomy to learners in order to develop their skills necessary for their subject. I.e. cooperation is a structure of interaction which is designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a

specific end, product or goal through people working together in groups. Lev Vygotsky, a famous developmental psychologist, referred to it as the “Zone of Proximal Development” (Vygotsky, 1986). This concept was developed further for educational purposes and is called *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). This is a process through which a teacher or more competent peers give aid to the student in their ZPD as necessary, and narrows it down until it becomes redundant, much as a scaffold is being removed from a building during construction. Cooperative learning stems from participatory teaching which is a form of higher order thinking. These so-called activating didactics/approaches are those that stimulate students’ learning through active participation and activation of cognitive processes, not only through mere reproduction of given rules.

Cooperative learning can instil a better and more efficient way of teaching because everybody in a classroom participates. Anna Sfard, a professor of Mathematics at the University of Haifa speaks of the *participation metaphor*. This suggests discourse and communication because the learner should be viewed as a person interested in participation. Learning becomes a process of becoming a member of a certain community. This requires the ability to use the discourse of this community and behave according to its particular norms. And these norms are to be negotiated in the process of consolidating the community. While learners are newcomers and potential reformers of the practice, the teachers are the preservers of its continuity. The learner becomes an integral part of a team (Sfard, 1998). This became an important notion in the changes I decided to bring about in involving my students in this research.

#### **2.4 How do students learn?**

It is proven that students are able to learn when they work together. William Glasser, a renowned American psychiatrist, concluded in his book *Every Student Can Succeed* that students learn (Glasser, 2000):

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they hear and see
- 70% of what they discussed with others/peers
- 80% of what they experienced personally
- 95% of what they explain to others

This information supported my choice to make use of students to teach each other grammar during my study.

#### **2.5 Educational reformers**

In the past there have been some educators who tried to actively involve students in their lessons by working together. The first one I like to address is John Dewey. He concluded that if teachers could start with what students already know, their learning would be more grounded in a tangible form, rather than in abstract, theoretical concepts (Dewey J. , 1916/1944), (Dewey J. , 1938/1973). The other reformer is called Paulo Freire: he sees the role of the teacher and the participants as being reciprocal: the teacher acts as a facilitator; not as the one and only source of knowledge. Freire’s approach to education, also called critical pedagogy, was based on the theory that students do not



enter into learning situations with empty heads. However, they start from a place of knowing based on their personal experiences. He also referred to this as *the banking model* (Freire, 1970).

These two educational reformers were of great importance to the learning needs of ESL students. Dewey's focus on the importance of recognizing and incorporating student experience in the classroom and Freire's critical pedagogy united in their process orientation and provided a backdrop for the contemporary approach to language teaching *The Communicative Approach* (Berlin, 2005). As teachers we must foster an educational process in which students can draw from their own experiences and become partners in the classroom. This starts with raising students' awareness, moving them away from a passive attitude towards an engaging process. And that is exactly what I tried to achieve with my study. My goal was for students to become partners in the classroom and teach each other grammar.

## 2.6 The Jigsaw Method

After thorough investigation I discovered that the pioneer of cooperative learning in the classroom was called Elliot Aronson. He invented one of the earliest cooperation methods based on Dewey and Freire's theories and called it the *Jigsaw Method*, a process in which each student in a five- six-member group is given a unique piece of information belonging to a topic which the entire group is studying. After the students have studied their information they move to expert groups and when they have discussed their information they return to their original group and explain to their classmates what they have learnt (Brophy, 2004). Not long after Aronson's findings others followed in his footsteps to document wider applications of the *Jigsaw Method*. Among them was Robert Slavin who improved Aronson's method and called it appropriately: *Jigsaw II*. His theory focuses more on interaction and shared responsibilities amongst group members. (Slavin et al, 1985).

## 2.7 The studies

My next step was to find research reports on cooperative learning at secondary schools. Many theories, reports and journals have been written about this subject, but not many clear-cut examples of research were actually done at secondary schools. When I cross-referenced *Jigsaw* I came upon two studies that were done at secondary schools.

The first study I looked into was done by Fred Newmann and Judith Thompson for the University of Wisconsin-Madison in September 1987. The title of their publication was *The Effects of Cooperative Learning on Achievement in Secondary Schools*. They conducted their research in grades 7-12: students between 12 and 18 years old. There were 37 comparisons of cooperative versus control methods and 68% (twenty-five) of the comparisons favoured the cooperative method. The overall success rate was 10% higher with their applied techniques. However, they do suggest more research should be done in grades 10-12. And that is precisely the grade which my experimental and control groups belong to. Research in these grades requires sufficient preparation on how to reorient secondary school students to new classroom procedures and also on the teaching of specific cooperative skills to students (Newmann & Thompson, 1987).

A more recent study on cooperative learning I used as a reference was done by Mark Dollard and Kate Mahoney for the State University of New York at Fredonia, NY in March 2010. This research was done in several 8<sup>th</sup> grade science classes. At the end of their study they compared the pre-test scores with the post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group. In the experimental group

there was a +10.6% change. In the control group there was a +9.7% change. Though the control group scored higher on both tests the experimental group increased their scores in terms of percentages significantly. The difference between the learning growth of the control group and the experimental group was 0.9%. The authors concluded that the achievement gain made by the control group was higher using the traditional method. However, the experimental group expressed they felt more important and had more opportunity to participate in class (Dollard & Mahoney, 2010).

## 2.8 Implementing the theory in my research

In my study I also used the *Jigsaw Method* in which I made use of mini experts. The concept of mini-experts basically means that students become teachers and teach each other. David Nunan explains in his book *Second Language Teaching & Learning* the nine steps of moving learners along the negotiation continuum. This means a classroom in which the content and process are negotiated: that what is being taught, and how it is learnt, is accomplished by discussion and compromise. I focussed on his eighth step *encourage learners to become teachers* (Nunan, 1998, p.23). My aim was to transform several students in my experimental group into teachers i.e. mini-experts in order to create a situation in which these mini-experts teach other students. These small groups were transformed into places where there was room for interaction and discussion amongst the students.

## 2.9 Mini-experts

The concept of mini-experts is more extensively described by (Ebbens & Ettekoven, 2000). They describe the roles of the teacher and students as:

- The student is also an expert.
- The teacher allows students to outline parts of the process and content by offering them a framework; he/she coaches individual or groups of students and reflects on the content and process.
- The teacher is interested in the process of learning and in the student.

In the next chapter I will outline the practical application of these insights I decided to use in my research.

## 2.10 Conclusion to chapter 2

In this chapter I have shown how my decisions with respect to my actions are supported by literature. I have also set the role of myself and my students during my research. My students will become teachers/mini-experts. This was a choice that felt quite exotic to me because I had never been in a situation before in which I permitted students to teach peers. I was anxious to find out how my students would react to this. However, the theory supporting my choice was compelling as well as motivating in exploring how well it would work out in my grammar lessons. In the next chapter I will discuss how I conducted my study.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework of the previous chapter gave me some insights that helped me in furthering my research to my teaching practice. In this chapter I will outline how I employed several data collection strategies for my starting point and during my two cycles. But let me first start by explaining what type of research I used for my study.

### 3.1.2 Type of research and structure

I performed action-based research which basically means that the researcher is the centre of the research, and the focus is on self-improvement (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996). All research has the aim of advancing knowledge and my aim was to create new knowledge i.e. to see if cooperative learning can be applied in English grammar instruction in order for students to become more actively involved during my grammar lessons. This report has been written by using a methodological structure (Oost, 2002).

### 3.1.3 Data collection strategies

I used several data collection strategies to validate my research in order to answer my research questions. I used data-triangulation during this stage. Validity is amplified by using different kinds of research information or sources i.e. collecting data from different perspectives to complement a picture of a given situation that is being researched (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2001).

I used the following data collection methods at the start of, during and after my research:

1. Lesson observations of the way grammar was dealt with, both by me and my students
2. Recorded interviews with students on how they experienced my grammar lessons
3. Questionnaires
4. Comparison of results of grammar tests between experimental and control groups

## 3.2 Data triangulation I: Establishing my starting-point through lesson observations

This data collection method is not only suitable because it is widely used by researchers but also because it gave me a starting point to conduct my research. To secure my starting point I first asked my coach and intern at school to observe my grammar instruction as I would normally teach it, that is: frontal teaching i.e. a traditional teacher-centred approach. I discussed the validity of the following points I wanted to be evaluated on with my thesis supervisor and with my critical friend:

- Label the moments when there was interaction between me and the students during my grammar explanation (this was asked to find out how students are normally involved during my grammar lessons)
- The participation of my students during the grammar explanation
- Is there a safe learning environment for students to freely ask questions when something is not clear during my grammar explanation?

After I got the observation lists (appendices: A & B) back from my coach and intern I summarized them (the results of the outcome can be read in the next chapter: 4.2).

### **3.3 Data triangulation II: interviewing students**

For my next step I decided to interview my students as well to find out what their opinion was about English grammar lessons and their own involvement at that point (see appendix C). I made use of a recording device so I could replay the interviews afterwards to analyse and evaluate the data. The reactions of my students (these results can be read in the next chapter: 4.3) gave me a better understanding of their own involvement in my grammar lessons and how I would be able to change that. Still the results were not convincing enough since I only interviewed a random selection of six students per class i.e. The answers did not give me a fair representation of my entire classes.

### **3.4 Data triangulation III: introducing a questionnaire for more data**

To complete the picture I came up with a questionnaire which I had my colleagues, my thesis supervisor and my critical friend check for inconsistencies (see appendix D). In this new questionnaire, which I gave to my experimental group – selected in advance, my goal was to find out several things. First I wanted to know how my students envisaged their own participation during the normal grammar lessons. The next step was to find out if my students were interested in cooperative learning. My final goal was to see if there were students who would be interested in becoming mini-experts.

After my students completed the questionnaire I processed this data and went over each question they answered. My goal was to elicit useful responses from my students to see what their views were on active grammar education versus passive (teacher-centred) grammar education (see next chapter for these results: 4.4). The end result was that my students' attitude toward my research was very positive and they wished to cooperate in my study. This outcome consequently initiated the preparation and planning towards my first cycle.

#### **3.5.1 The preparation of cycle 1**

On the basis of my questionnaire results I made a planning for my first cycle. Some students indicated that their learning could be enhanced by explaining grammar to others (as a mini-expert), whilst others preferred a more subservient role. Each group consisted of four to five students each including the mini-expert. The next thing I did was preparing several envelopes which contained a manual, exercises and keys. The manual helped the mini-experts to prepare their instruction before they were to teach the mini-grammar lessons to their classmates. As a backup I made extra envelopes for each lesson just in case some of them might forget to bring their envelopes with them.

#### **3.5.2 Start of cycle 1**

Before the grammar lesson I gave the mini-experts time to ask questions about topics that were still unclear to them. The mini-experts only taught a maximum of three grammar topics. These topics corresponded with the lessons in their course-books. After three lessons there was a grammar review to see if the students comprehended all grammar topics. They concluded these lessons with a grammar test.

#### **3.5.3 Describing my role during the first cycle**

During these grammar lessons my role was to observe the groups while the mini-experts were explaining grammar to their peers. Sometimes there was engagement in the sense that I would interact with students if they had questions they could not solve amongst themselves. There are several roles you can choose from while observing your participants. In these field experiments I chose

a mixed role as a *distant observer*, e.g. taking notes of the process without interacting with the students, and sometimes as an *engaging observer* (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2001), e.g. if students needed my help or if they needed some correctional supervision i.e. correcting students who were misbehaving or unfocused.

During these lessons I took notes which I wrote down in my logbook afterwards. Next to this I also gave my students a short questionnaire after each lesson to find out how they would rate their own involvement during the instruction of and with their peers; what they had learnt; and if they could state any suggestions for improvement (for questionnaire: see appendix E and for the results: see next chapter: 4.5). After class I would take this data and my notes to make adjustments for the following lesson.

### 3.5.4 Evaluating cycle 1

When I got their results back from their grammar test I was a bit disappointed. I had hoped that they would have scored higher than other groups but that was not the case. I tried to formulate reasons why they had scored lower than the other classes. One of the studies I read contributed to my conclusions, namely the process of making the students aware of what was expected of them (Dollard & Mahoney, 2010).

I browsed through my observation notes which I took during the grammar lessons and came up with the following points:

- The group formation: some students were not always very serious
- The neglect of doing their final homework before their test: a grammar review of the lessons they had discussed
- The fact that 1/3 of my experimental class went to a nation-wide strike for educational reform during one of the grammar instruction lessons.

### 3.6 Students' feedback

In order to validate my views I decided to interview the mini-experts to see if they could provide me with feasible answers which would explain the bad results for their grammar tests (the outcome of this interview can be found in the next chapter: 4.6). With the results of this interview and some feedback from my thesis supervisor and my critical friend I adjusted the planning of my second cycle as follows:

- I formed new groups in which there was little room for students to cause any ruckus.
- After each grammar lesson I planned one lesson to review the grammar that was taught by the mini-experts and subsequently instruct them for the following grammar lesson.
- At the end of all the grammar lessons I would not give the grammar review as homework; instead I made it compulsory for them to do it in class. Afterwards I would check the grammar review with all students in class.

My new planning (see appendix F) was clearer than my first one and left room for students to ask questions and to reflect on their own learning process before and after each grammar lesson. Because of this structure students knew exactly what to expect and what to do for each lesson.

### 3.7 The second cycle

The second cycle went a lot smoother than the first one. The mini-experts knew that they had plenty

of time to prepare and to ask questions. The class knew that there was ample time to ask questions after each lesson as well as at the end of all grammar lessons. At the end of this cycle I gave my experimental group one questionnaire (see appendix G) instead of one after each lesson. I asked my students to grade their own involvement on a scale from one to ten at the start of my research, during the first cycle and during this cycle. I also asked them what they learnt/picked up from this different style of grammar instruction (the results can be read in the next chapter: 4.7).

### **3.8 Comparing test scores**

The last thing I wanted to focus on was if I could find any differences between the grammar test results of my experimental group and control groups. I collected grammar tests from before, during the first and second cycle as well as a grammar review test which I gave them two weeks after cycle two had finished. I used the tests results to discern if there was a correlation between cooperative grammar teaching and tests results (the results can be found in the next chapter: 4.8).

### **3.9 Conclusion to chapter 3**

I have explained how I validated my starting point by applying triangulation through different forms of data collection strategies. Besides this I described my role as well as the role of my students during my study. I zoomed in on how I executed my first and second cycle and described how I made use of the feedback I received. In the next chapter I will sum up the results of the observations, student interviews, questionnaires and test results which are linked to this chapter.

## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will offer the results of the various data collections discussed in the previous chapter. The results are introduced by a short introduction and will be further discussed in chapter 5. The following results are taken from the observations, interviews, questionnaires and test scores I gathered before, during and after my two cycles.

### 4.2 Outcomes of lesson observations: reconnaissance phase

Below are the summaries of the observation reports of my coach and intern (for full observation reports see: appendices A & B). In the previous chapter I discussed how I wanted to secure my starting point by asking my coach and intern to observe some of my grammar lessons (3.2). Here are the results:

The outcome of my first focus point: Label the moments when there was interaction between me and the students during my grammar explanation (this was asked to find out how students are normally involved during my grammar lessons)

Group 1: At the start of the grammar lesson questions that activate pre-knowledge are asked to students by the teacher. During the PowerPoint presentation there seems to be a good interaction between the teacher and students.

Group 2: The themes of this grammar lesson were not easy; students were being involved by the teacher from the start. Per slide on the PowerPoint presentation questions were asked to students to ensure an understanding. There seems to be interaction but this is mainly initiated by the teacher.

The outcome of my second focus point: The participation of my students during the grammar explanation.

Group 1: During the explanation students ask questions when something is not clear.

Group 2: Students are not asking questions to the teacher during the presentation, but during the exercises they do.

The outcome of the third focus point: Is there a safe learning environment for students to freely ask questions when something is not clear during my grammar explanation?

Group 1: There is a good atmosphere during the lesson in which students feel at ease to participate.

Group 2: The teacher ensures a safe learning environment where he answers students personally when they have questions.

### 4.3 Results of interviewing students: reconnaissance phase

The next step was to find out about my students' feedback on my grammar lessons (see 3.3 and for interview questions: appendix C). I interviewed between four and six students per group and made sure that they were mixed: an even number of boys and girls.

These students gave my grammar lessons an average score of 6.1 on a scale from 1 to 10. When I asked them what mark they would give their former English teachers they told me that they would give them a 6.1 as well. In their opinion a grammar lesson should be attractive and inviting but they

could not think of clear-cut examples of how they envisioned this. They did say that repeating and feeding short chunks of grammar would help them in their process of acquiring grammar.

The next part was to find out how high my students would grade themselves concerning their own participation and involvement. The average score they gave themselves was a 6.6. My students had mixed feelings when being asked if they would be able to teach each other grammar. Some answered that fellow classmates might pay less attention when someone explains grammar in his/her group. However, most of them were positive to explain grammar to peers if it would only involve dealing with a maximum of three grammar topics.

#### 4.4 Results student questionnaire: reconnaissance phase

These are the results of the questionnaire (appendix D) I gave to my students of the experimental group after the interviews. In paragraph 3.4 I described my motivation for giving my students a questionnaire. The answers are represented in percentages below:

1. What kind of grammar education do you, as a student, prefer?

Students who...

- favour passive education: 9%
- favour active education: 48%
- had no answer: 43%

2. Do you agree that a better understanding of grammar is the result of an active approach on your part? Students who answered:

- 'sufficiently' 52%
- 'entirely' 35%
- 'a little' 13%

3. How actively are you involved during the grammar lessons? Students who answered:

- 'sufficiently' 48%
- 'sometimes' 48%
- 'never' 4%

4. Do you ask questions during grammar lesson? Students who answered:

- 'sufficiently' 35%
- 'sometimes' 48%
- 'never' 17%

5. In what way do you understand grammar if the teacher explains it to you? Students who answered:

- 'completely' 35%
- 'mostly' 57%
- 'sometimes' 8%

6. Do you understand grammar better if you explain grammar to other classmates? Students who answered:

- 'completely' 8%
- 'sufficiently' 22%



- 'a little' 57%
- 'no' 13%

7. Do you understand grammar better if other classmates explain it to you? Students who answered:

- 'sufficiently' 43%
- 'a little' 48%
- 'no' 9%

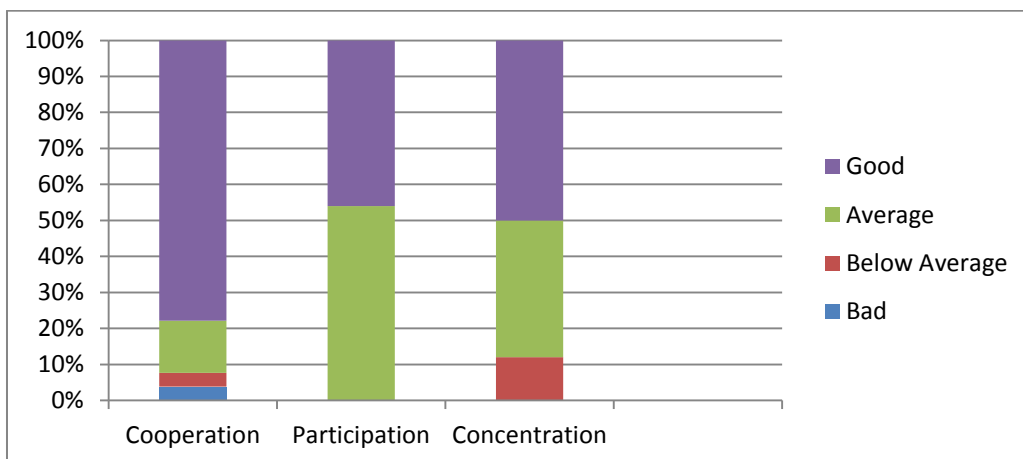
8. Does an active involvement in grammar education produce better test scores. Students who answered:

- 'completely' 70%
- 'sufficiently' 26%
- 'a little' 4%

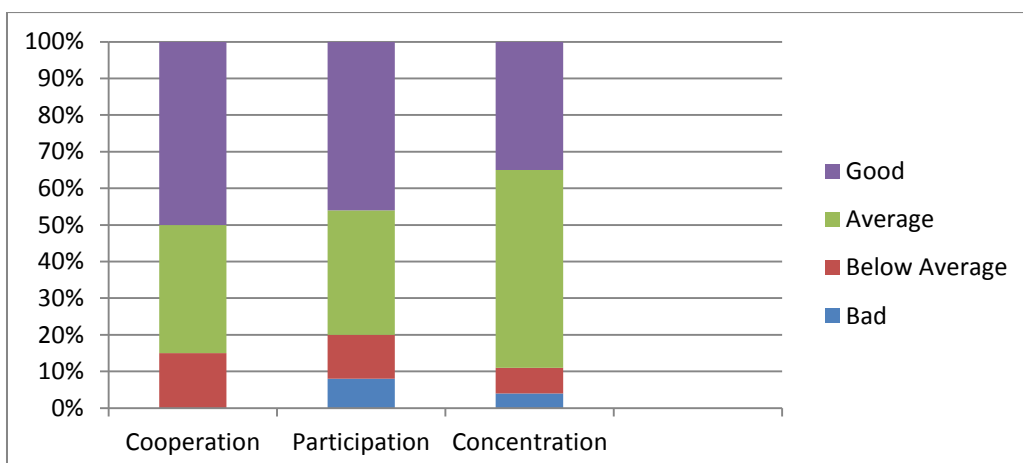
#### 4.5 Results of questionnaires: cycle 1

The following graphs are based on short evaluation forms I gave to my students after each grammar lesson during cycle 1 (appendix E). In chapter 3 I described how I started my first cycle and how I evaluated my grammar lessons (3.5). The graphs represent percentages of how students evaluated themselves regarding cooperation, participation and concentration.

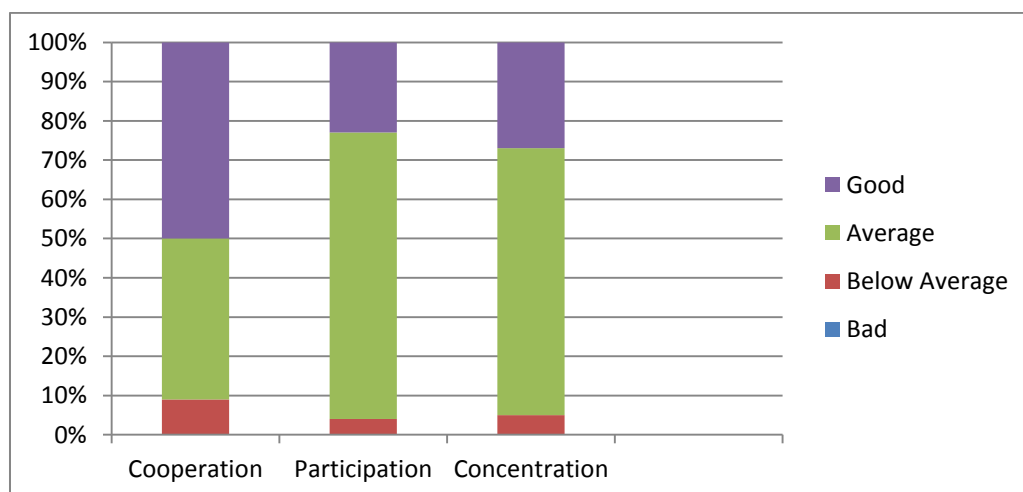
These are the results the evaluation forms of the 1<sup>st</sup> grammar session, cycle 1:



The results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grammar session, cycle 1:



The results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grammar session, cycle 1:



#### 4.6 Results of mini experts' feedback: after cycle 1

Though I gave my class an evaluation form, I decided to interview the mini-experts (paragraph 3.6, appendix F) in order to find out what they had to say about the first cycle. I asked them to give me positive and negative points as well as things I could improve which would make them more involved in preparing their grammar lessons for the second cycle. Below are the results:

Positive points:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mini-experts learnt more than normal because of the variation: something new, different kind of grammar lesson</li> <li>• The mini-experts learnt more because they taught others and checked each other's exercises.</li> </ul>
Negative points:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some mini-experts did not commit themselves to the grammar exercises which everybody had to do. The reason was that these mini-experts believed that they did not have to do them since they had explained grammar to their peers. For the next cycle they promised to do them so they would not distract their classmates.</li> <li>• Poor preparation due to the short time span of preparing their work and other homework they had to do for other subjects.</li> <li>• Unmotivated classmates: one group was formed with students who did not want to listen which resulted in the rest of the group not understanding the grammar completely.</li> </ul>
Points which needed to be improved:
<p>Start of lesson</p> <p>Take more time to answer questions from mini-experts if they encounter any problems, difficulties etc. in preparing the grammar lesson.</p>
<p>End of lesson</p> <p>Ask the class if there are students who still find some things unclear and explain these to them: individually if necessary.</p>

#### 4.7 Results of cycle 2

The following table is based on the questionnaire I gave to my students at the end of cycle 2 (appendix G). In chapter 3 I explained why I only used one questionnaire at the end of this cycle instead of after each grammar lesson (3.7). This table represents how students evaluated themselves regarding their participation/active involvement. I also asked them to give me some feedback on cycle 2.

<p>Student Participation/Active Involvement in percentages:          Good: 23 %          Average: 50 %          Below average: 22 %          Bad: 5 %</p>	<p>100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0%</p> <p>Student Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good</li> <li>■ Average</li> <li>■ Below Average</li> <li>■ Bad</li> </ul>
<p>Question: What did you learn from this new approach of grammar instruction?          Answer: That students can also be teachers; working together; learning from each other</p>	
<p>Question: What did you consider positive points during these lessons?          Answer: That we were able to discuss with others about things we did not understand; that we were more actively involved instead of only listening, what we normally do.</p>	
<p>Question: Are there any things that you would like to see differently if this kind of grammar instruction was to be repeated?          Answer: Mini-experts need to be well-prepared before they teach us grammar; extra explanation by teacher after the grammar sessions is desirable to see if any important information was omitted by the mini-experts.</p>	

#### 4.8 Comparing test scores

After cycle 2 was completed I collected the scores of the tests before my study, after cycle 1, after cycle 2 and after a pop quiz they had to do 2 weeks after cycle 2 was finished (see 3.8). On the next page you can find the scores of my experimental group and control groups.

Comparing test scores of my experimental group and control groups:

H3b Experimental Group	Test before study (pre-test)	Test after 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	Test after 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	Grammar review pop quiz
Average result	5.9	5.7	7.5	6.7
Differences current & previous test:		-0.2	+1.8	-0.7
Difference: pre-test and cycle 2 test:			+1.6	

H3c Control Group I	Test before study (pre-test)	Test after 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	Test after 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	Grammar review pop quiz
Average result	7.2	6.2	7.2	6.6
Differences current & previous test:		-1.0	+1.0	-0.6
Difference: pre-test and cycle 2 test:			0.0	

H3d Control Group II	Test before study (pre-test)	Test after 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	Test after 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	Grammar review pop quiz
Average result	6.2	5.4	6.4	6.2
Differences current & previous test:		-0.8	+1.0	-0.8
Difference: pre-test and cycle 2 test:			+0.2	

#### 4.9 Conclusion to chapter 4

In this chapter I have epitomized all the results and data I received from my observation reports, interviews, questionnaires and test scores. In the following chapter I will discuss these results by linking them to previous chapters and to my research question and sub-questions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my results of chapter 4 against the backdrop of chapters 2 & 3 and in doing so try to answer my research questions. I will also mention and interpret some problems which arose during this study. Last but not least I will discuss the significance of these results for my teaching practice and development.

### 5.2 Starting point

Before I began my field experiment I had to establish my starting point in order to plan my next steps. I used my coach's and intern's feedback which I received during my normal grammar lessons before I started this study (see 4.2). However, I would like to clarify a remark they wrote down under the third focus point. They said in the observation reports that there was a good atmosphere and a safe learning environment. I went back to them to ask if they were able to describe what they meant by a good atmosphere and a safe learning environment. My observers explained to me that a good atmosphere means a classroom where a teacher does not constantly have to ask for students to pay attention. There seems to be an open and friendly relationship between teacher and students. They described a safe learning environment as a classroom where students feel safe to ask questions and where an unbiased teacher motivates them to ask questions if something is not clear.

There was also another thing I discovered in the lesson observations. They were done in two different classes and there was a difference between the two observation reports. One class seemed to be more responsive than the other:

Group 1: During the explanation students ask questions when something is not clear.

Group 2: Students are not asking questions to the teacher during the presentation, but during the exercises they do.

This can be attributed to the fact that these groups were different in the way they interacted with the teacher. Group 1 possessed a stronger need to understand grammar. Group 2, on the other hand, was less inclined to ask queries regarding grammar. Instead I was the one who had to elicit responses to make sure they understood the grammar.

### 5.3 The student interviews

After the observations of my coach and intern I interviewed six random students of three *havo* 3 classes (see 3.3 & 4.3). I analysed the results and there were a couple of things I noticed:

- While observing some grammar lessons there was no ground for the marks they gave themselves in relation to participation. Apart from a few questions during the grammar instruction and exercises, the major part of the students remained passive.
- There is a discrepancy between how students rate their teacher's involvement and how they rate themselves. Students rate themselves higher than their teachers.

These results imply that my students believed that they were more involved than the teacher but not all students showed this to me during the grammar lessons extensively. My observers had already noticed that most of the students' involvement was triggered by me apart from some students in group 1. The majority of my students remained passive during my grammar explanations.

### 5.4.1 Student questionnaires

Though I received feedback from my coach, intern and students I still had to figure out if there were students who would be receptive to teaching grammar to others. I decided to give group 2, which was the least responsive during my grammar lessons (see 5.2), a questionnaire with one question asking them directly if there were students who would learn grammar better if they had to teach it to others. I received a positive outcome and this helped me in furthering my research.

### 5.4.2 Main research question favouring a student-centred approach

Which approach was I going to use in order to involve my students actively in my grammar lessons? The 'how' factor was very important because many different approaches have been suggested as to which is the best way to teach grammar. I turned it around and looked at my own teaching practice. How would I like students to acquire grammar? Through frontal-teaching using deductive/inductive methods (teacher-centred approach) or through a participatory method in which students exercise cooperative learning and teach each other (student-centred approach). I chose the latter because I had found students who would be willing to teach grammar to each other. Based on the result of the questionnaire I decided to exploit my students' own notion of involvement and started to search for student-centred approaches in literature (see 2.8). My ultimate goal was to involve students more actively in my grammar lessons.

### 5.4.3 Incorporating methodology in my field experiment

In sections 3.5.1 & 3.5.2 I discussed the methodology I used in conducting this study. I emulated Aronson's theory called *Jigsaw* (see 2.9) in which students become "experts" on a certain concept and are made responsible for teaching it to their teammates. The results of the student questionnaire (4.4) showed me that there were students who considered themselves to be able to explain grammar to others. In copying the *Jigsaw Method* I found a way to actively involve my students and consequently answer my main research question.

During the field experiment my students knew that they were part of a team and that they shared a common goal: acquiring grammar. The group members had to realize that they were working together in understanding grammar. The success or failure depended on the students' willingness to work in a cooperative setting. And for this it was necessary that all students had to talk with each other to engage in a discussion that would lead to a better understanding of the grammar (Panitz, 1997).

### 5.5 Striving for a higher yield in students' participation

One of my sub-questions was to ensure a higher yield amongst my students' active involvement during these grammar lessons. In chapter 3.5.3 I described my role as a teacher/researcher during this study. In the first place I was what Paulo (Freire, 1970) referred to as a *facilitator*: creating synergy between me and my students. Besides this I evaluated my students and myself through observations, and evaluation forms (4.5). In order to ensure improvement I needed to see if there were any obstacles that would impede my students from benefiting from cooperative learning. After my first cycle I was not entirely satisfied with the outcome (see 3.5.4), so I decided to interview the mini-experts.

### 5.6 Feedback from mini-experts

Reflection was imperative at this stage in order to make my second cycle more successful by means of planning and student participation (see 3.6 & 4.6). The result of this interview positively helped me

in improving several aspects for my second cycle. The most important one was making a more flexible planning. In the planning of my first cycle I did not implement enough time for mini-experts to discuss the grammar topics with me. I assumed that if the manuals (see 3.5.1) were not clear they would come and see me if they had any questions. Looking back that was wishful thinking. In the planning of my second cycle I implemented more room for students to prepare, give and review their grammar lessons with me personally (appendix G).

### **5.7 The effect of cooperative learning: comparing cycles 1 & 2**

At the end of my field experiment I gave my experimental group a questionnaire to give me feedback on how they had perceived the last cycle compared with the previous one. The results of the questionnaires indicated an elevated participation in these grammar lessons and according to my observations I have to concur that my students were more actively involved during the second cycle than during the first cycle.

I discovered that it is possible to actively involve students in my grammar lessons by offering them tools to teach each other and creating an atmosphere where students can interact and discuss grammar. When looking back at their cooperation percentage during their first cycle they scored an average of 60% (4.6) and during the second cycle 73% (4.7). There was a palpable increase in their level of active participation.

The way (Ebbens & Ettehoven, 2000) (see 2.11) describe the roles of students and teachers during active learning gave me the right mind-set which I needed in conducting this study. The results showed me that students became more active in these grammar lessons and that was something I was trying to achieve when formulating my main research question.

#### **5.8.1 Does cooperative learning positively influence test results?**

After these two cycles I analysed my students' grammar test scores before my study, after the first cycle, after the second cycle and after a grammar review pop quiz (4.8). After studying these results I was able to make several observations. First, my experimental group (h3b) went through a positive development in which they scored higher on their grammar test after cycle two: a 1.6 increase in comparison with their test score before the study. And on their grammar review pop quiz there was a 0.8 increase. Secondly, my control groups did not seem to have made a significant progress compared with my experimental group. Group h3c scores remained more or less the same and group h3d curved a little up after their second cycle but dropped back to their average with their grammar review pop quiz.

If I look more closely I can deduct the following things. All groups scored lower on their test after cycle 1. However, the experimental group experienced a 0.2 decrease while the control groups came up with a 0.8 and 1.0 decrease in test scores. Apparently, the test was more difficult than the previous one, because all groups scored lower. It is interesting to see that the experimental group managed to minimize their decrease in contrast to the control groups.

I cannot prove that my improvements for cycle 2 (see 5.6) were necessarily at the basis of better scores by my experimental group. However, their scores were 0.8 higher than the control groups when comparing the test results of cycles one and two. If I compare the scores between the pre-test and the test of cycle two there was a 1.4/1.6 difference between the experimental and control groups. Quite likely the students of my experimental group had themselves to thank for that because

they taught each other. In that regard I can say that cooperative learning seemed to have a positive effect on their test scores.

A certain question that arose during my field experiment was if cooperative learning could also have a positive effect on my students' ability to retain grammar. Two weeks after cycle two was finished I gave them a pop quiz about the grammar they discussed during cycle 2. Unfortunately, the scores of my experimental group did not differ much from the other two control groups. This means that so far there is no evidence for either a positive or a negative effect. More research is advisable to see if cooperative learning might lead to a better ability to retain grammar.

### **5.8.2 Reflecting on the scores**

In one of the studies I mentioned earlier (2.10) Mark Dollard concluded that in his study the yield in test results was almost destitute. He compared test results in his groups and found out that the test scores of his experimental group increased by +9.7% and in his control group +10.6% (see 2.10). The difference in learning growth between his experimental group and control group was 0.9% (Dollard & Mahoney, 2010).

My aim was to see if I could apply cooperative learning in grammar education and if I was also able to realize an increase in test scores. The test scores and learning growth of my experimental group were +1.4/+1.6% higher than my control groups.

### **5.9 Reflecting on the results in relation with my own practice and development**

Albert Einstein once said: "the only thing that interferes with my learning is my education". This quote explains that learning is always possible but the way teachers educate students is something that should be questioned more often. I questioned my own teaching before this study and I came to realise that I had to find a way not to interfere in my students' learning or obstruct it by any means. I began to read and started to see that there were other ways students can learn. In chapter 2 I referred to an American psychologist named William Glasser who said that 95% of what students learn is through what they explain to others (Glasser, 2000). I decided to give them some tools to teach themselves grammar i.e. I began to favour a student-centred approach over a teacher-centred approach. I used Aronson's *Jigsaw Method* and I proved that it is applicable in grammar education.

With the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews I was able to improve the way students could become more efficient during these grammar lessons. And I became more aware of myself as a teacher. I have to disclose that I was very hesitant at the beginning of my study to take a step back as a teacher and surrender the grammar instruction to students. This resulted in some start-up problems and unforeseen obstacles which I experienced during the first cycle (see 3.5.4). But during the second cycle I felt more secure and content and things went a lot better (see 3.7).

### **5.10 Conclusion to chapter 5**

In this chapter I have explained and discussed the results of chapter 4. It was possible to relate the results of this study to my main research question and sub-questions. And I was able to link them to my school practice and personal development. In the next and final chapter I will explain how the results of this study contributed to my school practice. I will finish with my final conclusion as well as suggestions for implementation.



## Chapter 6: Conclusions and suggestions for implementation

### 6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I will summarize how my study contributed to my teaching practice and how it affected my school and students. I will also make some suggestions for implementing the results of this study.

### 6.2 My teaching practice and school interest

This study has given me the opportunity to examine my own teaching practice and beyond. I always favoured a teacher-centred approach when teaching grammar. I was aware of the possibility of active learning but I never thought of applying this form of student-centred teaching in my grammar lessons. I spoke with my colleagues to see if they would mind if I taught grammar in a cooperative setting. It was not a problem for them nor for my Headmaster and her assistants. They were the ones who finally gave me a green light to conduct this study at my school.

### 6.3 My students

I have to conclude that it was a joy to see the students from my experimental group working so closely together for a common goal which was to learn grammar. I also noticed that there was interaction between team members. E.g. if there was a topic that someone did not understand another team member would step up and explain it to that person. At the end of this study I disclosed the results of my findings to all groups that participated in my research. The experimental group felt really rewarded for the time and energy they put in these grammar lessons. And in the control groups I received some positive reactions that cooperative learning does seem to work and that if I was to do research again I could call on them.

### 6.4 Implementation

The results of my study indicated a better score for my experimental group, but I do think that more research over a longer period is needed to discover whether cooperative learning will produce better test results or not in the long run. I have only done two cycles and was only able to compare the results of four tests over a time period of roughly 3.5 months. My advice would be to introduce/implement cooperative learning over a longer period so that it would yield more data to compare which might produce a more conclusive answer. I purposely do not say final answer or closure because in the end... "It does not matter if the social situation does not reach successful closure; it probably will not because any solution allows new questions to emerge. What does matter is that you show your own process of learning, and explain how your new learning has helped you to develop your work within the situation". (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996).

### 6.5 Final word

My goal with this study was to see if it would give me more insight in teaching grammar more effectively in the future. During this study I found a way to improve my students' active involvement and at this moment I am looking at the possibilities of continuing this form of teaching for next school year. I have discussed the results of this study with the Headmaster and her assistants. They were very interested in the outcome. I told them that cooperative learning, apart from the positive scores, instils a more active attitude amongst students. They are very eager to see if I am able to continue cooperative learning in my classes for next year.

I can speak of a very favourable development in my classroom and teaching practice as well as an increase of knowledge: cooperative learning can also be incorporated successfully in grammar education. In *'Logik der Forschung'*, Karl Popper, a scientific philosopher describes the following in his demarcation criterion: "What distinguishes scientific knowledge is when development occurs; when there is an increase of knowledge. Scientific researchers try to refute accepted knowledge and subsequently try to propose improvement" (de Vries, 1995).

There is still something to gain in this field and I believe that many other teachers may benefit from the outcome of this study and, hopefully, may be persuaded to implement participatory teaching/collaborative learning in their own classes one day.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: lesson observations by colleagues part I

My coach and intern wrote observation reports about the following points:

- Label the moments when there was interaction between me and the students during my grammar explanation (this was asked to find out how students are normally involved during my grammar lessons)
- The participation of my students during the grammar explanation
- Is there a safe learning environment for students to freely ask questions when something is not clear during my grammar explanation?

The following table contains their points of observation. See next page for translation.

**Docent: Dennis Jurhill      Klas: H3d    Datum: 14 oktober    Lesuur: 5de    Bladnr. 1**

Tijd	Docentenactiviteit	Leerlingenactiviteit	Opmerkingen
13.23 u.	Uitleg a.d.h.v. ELO		Overzichtelijk
13.26 u.	Huiswerk controleren  Nu huiswerk maken, dan controleer ik het later. Daarna oef. (zie bord) maken.  Uitleg grammatica met behulp van een aantrekkelijke PowerPoint presentatie	We hebben geen huiswerk gehad, roept een leerling  Leerlingen aan het werk  Leerlingen letten goed op	De meesten hebben hun huiswerk wel gemaakt
13.50 u.	Docent stelt gerichte vragen, meestal controlevragen  Docent geeft grammatica- uitleg.	De betreffende leerling antwoordt serieus.  Leerling stelt vraag over lijdend voorwerp dat in zijn ogen een meewerkend voorwerp is	Interactie (punt 1)  Docent legt kort uit, maar besteedt hier niet te veel aandacht aan om verwarring te voorkomen.  Leerling doet kritisch mee en durft rustig een vraag te stellen. (punt 2)

### Aandachtspunt 1

Aan het begin van de uitleg: docent stelt gerichte vragen aan bepaalde leerlingen.

Tijdens het bespreken van de oefening stellen leerlingen vragen.

Tijdens klassikale uitleg aan de hand van een PowerPoint presentatie stelt docent vragen aan de klas en vragen aan bepaalde leerlingen.

### Aandachtspunt 2

Ja.

Leerling stelt vraag tijdens klassikale uitleg op 't bord: MV ipv LV?

Tijdens klassikale uitleg en ook tijdens het maken van de opdrachtjes stellen leerlingen vragen.

### Aandachtspunt 3

Op één na (Kevin) doen de leerlingen goed mee.

Leerlingen zijn in de gelegenheid om vragen te stellen wanneer zij willen (uiteeraard met vinger opsteken) en zo komen zowel informatieve als hulpvragen aan bod. Uit reacties en vragen blijkt, dat leerlingen de uitleg grotendeels begrijpen!

Kortom: het is een prettige en uitdagende les, waarbij de leerlingen zich op hun gemak voelen en goed meedoen.

Het is knap van de docent om zo'n goede les te geven in een klas die niet bepaald de gemakkelijkste van de school is. Dennis geeft nota bene dit schooljaar voor het eerst les aan *havo* 3 klassen: complimenten!

Verslagje gemaakt door drs. E.T. Nederstigt,

begeleider nieuwe docenten

Summarized translation:

Teacher asks questions to random students to activate their pre-knowledge. During the instruction and exercises students ask questions. During the PowerPoint grammar instruction the teacher elicits answers from students.

Students seem to grasp the grammar explanation. This shows from their reactions and answers they provide.

## Appendix B: lesson observations by colleagues part II

Lesobversatie Dennis Jurhill

14/12/'10

Door: K. Beers

*Kun je noteren op welke manier er sprake is van interactie tijdens de grammatica uitleg en deze labelen/kwalificeren?*

Dennis stelt veel vragen aan de klas om de kennis te activeren. Tijdens de uitleg blijkt dat één van de leerlingen erg druk is. In plaats van hem te straffen, betreft Dennis hem bij de uitleg en vraagt deze leerling om voorbeelden. De onderwerpen van vandaag (The passive, past-perfect en some/any) zijn redelijk moeilijk en de klas is daarom erg stil. Dennis legt dit stap voor stap uit via een PowerPoint presentie waarop de leerlingen ook voorbeelden kunnen zien. Per slide vraagt Dennis om eigen voorbeelden van de klas. De leerlingen mogen na de uitleg in de hand-out kijken om hun kennis te testen. Hierbij mogen ze overleggen en dit leidde tot drukte. Tijdens het invullen van de hand-out mogen de leerlingen vragen stellen en worden persoonlijk behandeld en beantwoord door Dennis, per leerling. Er is veel sprake van interactie tijdens deze les. Er worden weinig informatieve vragen gesteld door de leerlingen.

*Zou je kunnen omschrijven op welke momenten leerlingen vragen stellen tijdens mijn grammatica uitleg en waar deze betrekking op had/heeft?*

De leerlingen krijgen de mogelijkheid om vragen te stellen tijdens de uitleg. Vooral bij het uitleggen van de past-perfect en de passive kwamen de vragen naar voren. Some/any was duidelijk het makkelijkste onderwerp van de 3. De meeste vragen werden gesteld tijdens het nakijken van de hand-out. Dennis gaf duidelijk aan dat de leerlingen vragen mochten stellen en dat hij ze per stuk zou behandelen. Individueel dus.

Gedurende de hele les zijn er vragen gesteld.

*Kun je de betrokkenheid van mijn leerlingen beschrijven tijdens de grammatica uitleg?*

Dennis controleert eerst wat de leerlingen al weten over de onderwerpen. Dit doet hij door activerende vragen te stellen. Wat meteen naar voren komt is dat de leerlingen de lijdende vorm (de passive) niet in het Nederlands kennen. Dit onderwerp is voor hen dus geheel onbekend. Dennis legt met behulp van zijn PowerPoint presentatie uit en vraagt daarbij zoveel mogelijk voorbeelden van de klas zodat ze een duidelijk beeld krijgen van wat het inhoud. Dennis betreft zijn leerlingen bij de les door persoonlijk les te geven. Hij is geen afstandelijke docent die zijn ingestudeerde uitleg geeft. Volgens mij stimuleert dat leerlingen om beter in zijn les te functioneren en mee te doen.

Summarized translation:

The teacher involves all students in his grammar explanation. The students, however, do not ask informative questions. The teacher tries to involve all students in his class and ensures that they can ask questions if something is not clear.

## Appendix C: interviewing students on past grammar lessons

Op een schaal van 10 (1 slecht – 10 heel goed)

(On a scale from 1 to 10)

Wat voor cijfer geef je de grammatica lessen die je in de afgelopen jaren hebt gehad?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Waar baseer je dit cijfer op?

(How do you rate the grammar lessons you received until now? Support your answer!)

Was de manier waarop je grammatica les hebt gekregen goed, matig of slecht? Licht toe!

(How do you rate the way in which you were instructed grammar? Explain!)

Wat had je graag anders gezien in de lessen grammatica van de afgelopen jaren?

(What would you have liked to see differently in these grammar lessons?)

Wat voor cijfer geef je jezelf met betrekking tot jouw eigen betrokkenheid in de lessen grammatica?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Waar baseer je dit cijfer op?

(How do you rate your own involvement during these grammar lessons? Support your answer!)

Op welke manier geef je, als leerling, richting aan je eigen leerproces?

(In which way do you direct your own learning process?)

En als je het (volledig) van de docent laat afhangen; waarom doe je dit dan?

(If you depend your learning process on your teacher, explain why?)

Zouden de lessen grammatica voor jou meer betekenen als je er meer zelf actief mee aan de slag gaat i.p.v. dat de leraar alles uitlegt?

(Would grammar lessons mean more to you if you were more actively involved)

Als dit niet het geval is, waarom niet?

(If you do not agree, state why!)

Wat voor tips heb je om de lessen grammatica beter bij jouw persoonlijke wensen te laten aansluiten?

(What tips/advice can you think of to tailor the grammar lessons more to your needs?)



## Appendix D: student questionnaire experimental group

Voor mijn eindonderzoek wil ik graag een enquête afnemen en jullie hierbij verzoeken om deze zo eerlijk mogelijk in te vullen!

(For my study I would like you to fill in this questionnaire)

Uitleg:

Passief grammatica onderwijs: luisteren en dan opdrachten maken om te zien of je de theorie begrepen hebt (reproduceren), dus geen inbreng vanuit jezelf.

Actief grammatica onderwijs: niet alleen luisteren, maar zelf initiatief nemen door met vragen te komen die je helpen om de theorie beter te begrijpen. Hiernaast kun je ook denken aan het uitleggen van grammatica aan medeleerlingen die het moeilijk vinden. M.a.w. door meer interactie tussen jou, de docent en klasgenoten wat duidt op meer inbreng vanuit jezelf.

I Omcirkel: ik geef de voorkeur aan **passief / actief** grammatica onderwijs.

(Explanation: Passive grammar education: listening en reproducing exercises, no own involvement.

Active grammar education: not only listening, but self-directing your learning process. E.g. explaining grammar to others; interaction between you, your teacher and fellow students.

I Circle what applies for you: I prefer **passive / active** grammar education.)

**Geef voor de volgende vragen aan: 1 (niet/nooit) 2 (een beetje/soms) 3 (redelijk/geregeld) 4 (helemaal/vaak)**

Indicate for the following questions: **1 (never) 2 (a little/sometimes) 3 (reasonably, regularly) 4 (completely/often)**

II Als ik mezelf actief opstel tijdens grammatica lessen begrijp ik de grammatica beter.

1                      2                      3                      4

(II If I have an active attitude during grammar lessons I understand grammar better.)

III Ik vervul een actieve rol binnen de grammatica lessen.

1                      2                      3                      4

(III I am actively involved during the grammar lesson.)

IV Ik stel vragen tijdens de grammatica les.

1                      2                      3                      4

(IV I ask questions during the grammar lesson.)

V Ik begrijp grammatica het beste als de docent het uitlegt.

1                      2                      3                      4

(V I understand grammar more if a teacher explains it to me.)

VI Grammatica begrijpen wordt zinvoller voor mij als ik het aan een klasgenoot uitleg.

1                      2                      3                      4

(VI Grammar become more transparent for me if I explain it to others.)

VII Ik begrijp grammatica het beste als een klasgenoot het aan mij uitlegt.

1                    2                    3                    4  
(VII    I understand grammar better if another students explains it to me.)

VIII    Als ik actief bezig ben met grammatica denk ik dat dit betere resultaten oplevert.

1                    2                    3                    4  
(VIII    If I am actively involved in grammar I presume that this will result in better test scores.)

Wat is je naam?  
(What is your name?)

Wil je met Unit 3 meewerken aan mijn onderzoek naar actief grammatica onderwijs: **JA / NEE**  
(Would you like to cooperate with my study into active grammar education: **YES / NO**)

**Bedankt voor het invullen van deze enquête!**

**(Thank you for completing this questionnaire!)**

## Appendix E: short questionnaire after each grammar lesson cycle 1

Kun je aangeven op een schaal van 1 tot 5 wat je vond van de:

1: ver onder de maat    2: kon beter                    3: voldoende                    4: ging super

De Samenwerking:                    1            2            3            4

Jouw eigen inbreng:                    1            2            3            4

Jouw Concentratie/inzet:            1            2            3            4

Wat heb je van de uitleg geleerd?

Wat heb je gemist in de uitleg?

Translation:

Can you indicate on a scale from 1 to 5

1: far below average    2: just below average    3: sufficient                    4: perfect

Cooperation:

Own input:

Your concentration :

General questions

What have you learnt during this explanation?

What have you missed during this explanation?

## Appendix F: interview with mini-experts after cycle 1

Interview with the mini-experts: questions/focus points:

What were the positive points during the first cycle? Please clarify with examples?

What were the negative points during the first cycle? Please clarify with examples?

Can you think of any points which need to be improved?

What can I/we do to make the start of the lesson more efficient?

What can I/we do to make the end of the lesson more efficient?

## Appendix G: schedule/planning for cycle 2

Schedule 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle Grammar Lessons:

Friday	11/02:	<b>Listening test.</b> Hand out envelopes with first grammar lesson Unit 4
Monday	14/02	<b>(Reading test)</b> Take time for mini-experts to ask questions
Friday	18/02	Mini-experts give their first grammar lesson
Holiday		
Monday	28/02	Review grammar last lesson, hand out second envelope
Friday	4/03	<b>S.O. vocabulary Unit 4.</b> Take time for mini-experts to ask questions
Monday	7/03	Mini-experts give their second grammar lesson. Hand out third envelope
Friday	11/03	Review grammar last lesson, take time for mini-experts to ask questions. ICT room grammar practice with CD ROM
Monday	21/03	Mini-experts give their third grammar lesson
Friday	25-03	No class: excursion of teacher
Monday	28/03	<u>Do self-test grammar in class</u> plus Review grammar last lesson
Friday	01/04	<b>S.O. grammar Unit 4</b>
Monday	04/04	<u>discuss grammar test</u>
Friday	08/04	<b>Test of Unit 4</b>

## Appendix H: student questionnaire after cycle 2

Kun je aangeven op een schaal van 1 tot 10 wat jouw eigen inzet was **voor** het onderzoek tijdens de grammatica lessen?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Waar baseer je dit cijfer op?

(Can you rate on a scale from 1 to 10 your own involvement during the grammar lessons before the start of this study? Support your answer!)

En hoe zou je jezelf inschalen voor **de eerste ronde** van het onderzoek **(Unit 3)**?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Waar baseer je dit cijfer op?

(How would you rate yourself during the first cycle: unit 3? Explain!)

En voor **de laatste (Unit 4)**?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Waar baseer je dit cijfer op?

(And for second cycle: unit 4? Explain!)

Wat ging er de laatste ronde (Unit 4) beter dan in de vorige ronde (Unit 3) qua:

Samenwerking:

Jouw eigen inbreng:

Jouw Concentratie/inzet:

(What went better during the second cycle if you compare it with the first cycle regarding: cooperation, own involvement, concentration/input)

Wat heb je van deze andere aanpak van grammatica onderwijs geleerd?

(What have you learnt from this different grammar approach?)

Wat vond je positief gedurende deze andere aanpak van grammaticalesen?

(What did you like about this other approach of grammar lessons?)

Wat vond je een punt/punten ter verbetering m.b.t. deze andere aanpak van grammatica lessen?

(Are there any points for improvement in regard to this other approach?)

Zijn er andere dingen die je nog kwijt wilt?

(Is there anything else you would like to share?)