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Cooperative Learning in an Online English Reading Class:
How group activities in Zoom and online chat affect students' attitudes, perceptions of English abilities and motivation to learn English

Context

Level: First year students in College, low-intermediate level, non-English majors

Class Content: Reading

Class size: 38

Time: 90 minutes, 1/week

Textbook: "Reading Explorer 1", Cengage

Class method: Online (Mixed styles; On-demand self-study, live chat, and Zoom meetings)

Under the COVID-19 pandemic, many educational institutions have been forced to change their systems drastically from traditional face-to-face teaching to online lessons. And now after two years of the transition, online teaching is playing an important role in the field of language study, especially for higher educational institutions. While there are advantages in online learning and teaching; such as flexibility of time or place and accessibility of materials (Alodwan, 2021; Fang, 2020), online classes have a number of obstacles including the lack of access to the network, technological limitations, such as difficulties of monitoring through small screens, and some privacy issues (Ivone et al., 2020). In addition, communication between classmates and with teachers is easily hindered because of those new challenges, although Swain (1995) famously implied that interactions, output, and timely feedback are crucial elements for L2 development. Dörnyei (1997) indicated that physical closeness is a factor of enhancing affiliation, while Johnson and Johnson (1999) also stated that face-to-face promotive interaction is one of the basic elements of cooperation. Not having enough opportunities to physically see and talk with each other under the online education, it can be challenging for college students in this COVID generation to work

with peers who are not very familiar, besides the technical difficulties for interactions. This situation could also affect the learners' motivation negatively as Fang's research (2020) with 94 students in a university and a higher vocational college in China showed that students' enthusiasm to participate in class had decreased because they were not able to communicate with other students in their online learning. This has created a vicious cycle that some teachers or institutions abandoned some significant components of a language lesson; such as cooperative activities. In their research paper, Ivone et al. (2020) introduced a case that some schools chose to go with simple online assignments that students can complete individually, even though the teachers knew the importance of interactions, because of the great deal of problems they face in online teaching.

While having struggles with distance education, many educators have tried to introduce many new elements and techniques for providing the best that they can for the learners' communication needs, as well as for their well-beings (González-Lloret, 2020, Jacobs & Ivone, 2020;). Through this action research, the author tries to investigate the students' attitudes and motivation to learn and use English in online cooperative work by implementing some new format and techniques for online interactional activities. Also, this is an attempt to examine how the group interactions in spoken and written form online affect the learners' perceptions of their English abilities in order to discover a beneficial way of managing cooperative tasks both in online and face-to-face classes.

Literature review

1. Willingness to Communicate

It was over a decade ago that Japanese government applied English education in elementary schools, and the emphasis on English communication has been growing ever since, as the new curriculum guidance shows the importance of focusing on communicative elements of the language from the early school age (MEXT, 2017). However, the lack of frequent language exposure to other language communities and of immediate communication needs in English has still created a huge

barrier for learners to experience the English communication outside the classroom setting. Furthermore, due to the overly highlighted study for entrance exams, which often exclude the elements of spoken output, producing the language for communication purposes has been procrastinated, and has become challenging for a lot of Japanese learners of English. As it has been demonstrated in research, communicative language ability develops through communication (Lee & Van Patten, 2003); however, in Japan, the opportunities to interact in English do not occur automatically when learners are out of classroom (Yashima et al., 2004). This could lead to the idea that the improvement of the learners' communicative competence in English fairly depend on their willingness to seek out or take advantage of the opportunities to communicate in English in and outside schools and especially, in real-life settings. Considering this condition, enhancing learners' *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC) should be an important objective for English education in Japan.

The concept of WTC in a foreign language has drawn researchers' attention fairly recently in the field of language learning motivation. This concept was originally developed by McCroskey and associates to describe a person's trait-like predisposition towards initiating communication in his/her first language (L1) when free to do so (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989). MacIntyre et al. (1998) applied this notion into the field of the second language (L2) to explain the complex connections of the variables influencing a person's L2 use, while they had had experience encountering some students who are unwilling to use their L2 despite their high grammatical competence, whereas others seek to communicate with only minimal linguistic knowledge. They defined WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2 (p. 547)," and research has shown that WTC can be a predictor of frequency of communication in an L2 (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). In their heuristic model of WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) illustrate the complex interrelations of potential influences on L2 use, including fairly stable factors such as personality and intergroup attitude, as well as situation-specific ones such as desire to communicate with a specific person. WTC is placed just under the L2 use in the pyramid shaped model, which indicates that WTC is

required as the final step before an utterance occurs. [**Figure 1**]

Figure 1

Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC (MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, Kimberly, & Noels, 1998)
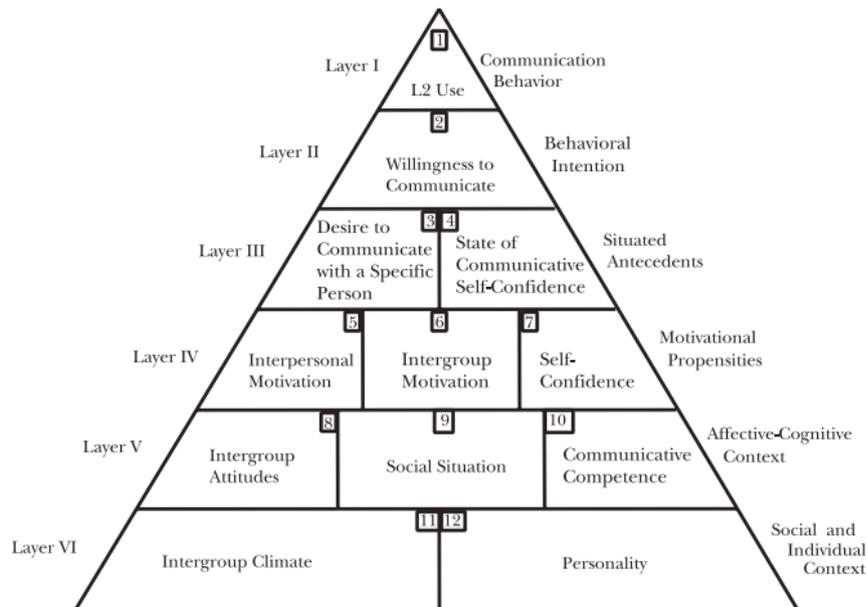
Yashima and associates (2004; 2016) claim that WTC is particularly important to Japanese learners and potentially has a great impact on developing their practical communication skills. In traditional teacher-centered classrooms in Japan, students are accustomed to being silent. Harumi (2016)'s study with 197 Japanese college students demonstrated that the significant number of the participants expressed the problems with turn taking as a possible reason of the silence; some learners think that they should talk only when they are individually nominated. Although silence can be an appropriate behavior in Japanese context, it could be misinterpreted as showing disinterest, laziness, or even a refusal for participation in some Western cultures (Harumi, 2016). Moreover, Yashima (1995) reported in her research of Japanese high school students studying abroad that many participants found it particularly important, but difficult, to initiate interactions and had a hard-time building an interpersonal relationship with peers because to establish an equal

relationship, "two-way communication is mandatory and the response should be quick and relevant" (p. 98). Taking initiative and making contributions to conversations are essential skills when communicating in English, but apparently, they are very challenging for Japanese learners. Considering these studies, improving learners' WTC should be one of the important purposes to acknowledge in the current English language learning context in Japan, to have students create "voices that reach the world." (Yashima, 2016)

In fact, some researchers have explored the ways to enhance Japanese students' WTC in EFL contexts. Matsubara's (2007) research with 237 Japanese college students suggested that the student-centered approach may increase their WTC, as well as the interests towards different culture. In her study, she administered the questionnaire to investigate the factors associated with the participants' WTC, and their preference of student-centered approach significantly corresponded to their WTC scores. Watanabe (2017) investigated 32 university students' WTC growth through their experiences in a speaking class which focused on exchanging opinions with classmates and the instructor. The participants were told that they were not judged by the accuracy of their speech, but the frequency of their utterance would be included in grading, and the feedback from the instructor was given only on the contents or messages. The participants' WTC significantly improved after the semester and the great number of participants expressed that they feel more comfortable speaking English. Furthermore, Yashima et al. (2016) discovered that, through repeated discussion sessions in small-groups and whole-class every week in a semester, participants found strategies to initiate turns by asking questions and listening carefully, and the number of turns they took considerably grew. This research also demonstrated that learners tend to become less nervous through the recursive discussion exercises and take up the challenge of contributing to the talk when teacher control is lifted (Yashima et al., 2016). In order to promote learners' active interactions in English, teachers need to provide enough opportunities for students to communicate with each other, while leaving some responsibility for them to take control of their utterance and interactions. As these studies suggested, student-centered approach and student interactions hold a great possibility to improve learners' WTC, which can help them make their way to the world outside the classroom

environment.

2. Cooperative Learning

Language educators are well aware of that comprehensible output is a necessary part of language acquisition (Swain, 1985). Swain and Lapkin (1995) stated "problems that arise while producing the second language (L2) can trigger cognitive exercises that are involved in second language learning" (p. 371); thus, to push the L2 development, learners need to meet the demands of producing comprehensive output (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Nevertheless, as it is mentioned above, opportunities for English output are rarely occurred in Japan, so conversational exchanges in classrooms are playing a significant role in the learners' learning process. Language classrooms should be the place for learners to experience comprehensive output.

Compared to the traditional teacher-centered classroom, students have a lot more time and opportunities to speak and listen when they work in a small group. Kagan (1995) explains that a student could receive half a dozen feedback opportunities within 20 minutes, while he or she is lucky to get one in whole-class, one-at-a-time interaction within the same amount of time. Group work allows students to have more frequent learner-learner interactions for practicing output in the limited class time. In addition to the benefit of frequency, research suggested that cooperative group work can create a positive impact on the learners' accuracy of speech. For instance, Jacobs and Kimura (2013) indicate that students can help each other with comprehension difficulties because peers usually speak more understandably when they talk. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (1999) demonstrated that through appropriate cooperative group work, all students in the group can perform higher academically than they would by working alone because learning cooperatively involves orally explaining problems, discussing the concepts, and teaching one's knowledge to each other. In fact, Long and Porter (1985) laid out the several advantages of group work in the second language classroom, not only from pedagogical, but also from psycholinguistic perspectives. They argue that a small group conversation improves the quality of student talk because students can engage in cohesive sequences of utterance for a fair amount of time, which help them develop

discourse competence; consequently, students involve in the lessons more and that promotes the higher motivation to learn.

Cooperative learning can be a powerful approach with numbers of benefits for the second language learning. However, small group work is not equal to cooperative learning. Johnson et al. (2013) defined cooperative learning as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (p. 3). In their study, Johnson et al. (2002) introduced the five important components to make the activity cooperative. They argued that understanding these five components: Positive interdependence, Individual accountability, Face-to-face promotive interaction, Social skills, and Group processing, is necessary to elicit the best possible outcome from the activity (Johnson et at., 2002). Likewise, Kagan (2013) displayed the four basic principles of cooperative learning: Positive interdependence, Individual accountability, Equal participation, and Simultaneous Interaction. Among those elements, the first two of each are identical and can be considered the most crucial, which are also often emphasized in other research (e.g. Anderson, 2019; McCafferty et al., 2006).

The first of the essential concepts is *positive interdependence.* According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), it is "the perception that we are linked with others in a way so that we cannot succeed unless they do" (pp.70-71), while Kagan (2013) and Anderson (2019) describe that, in cooperative activities, students work together to achieve a shared goal as a team. Also, learners "feel that their outcomes are positively correlated with those of their group mates" (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013, p.25) in a cooperative task. Thus, even if students are seated in group and working on the same assignment together, it is not a cooperative activity unless they are in a situation in which no one can complete the task without the help of others (Kagan, 2013).

The second is *individual accountability*. This concept is describing the notion of that "group success depends on contributions from all group members" (Anderson, 2019, p.9). Therefore, each student needs to encourage others to participate and share their ideas and skills, while they hold the responsibility in their own role and learning for contributing to the group (Anderson, 2019; Jacobs & Kimura, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Sometimes in group work, some of the active students

in group do all the work, and others might be off the task, which can not be considered cooperation even if the task itself is completed. This common issue of group work could be avoided when students are acknowledged the principles and benefits of cooperative learning. Cooperative group work with these important concepts also creates a feeling of safety, and boosts motivation and effort because encouragement and support students can get from other members help reduce anxiety and make them pay more attention to others (Kagan, 2013). When trying to increase students' WTC in English, incorporating the cooperative learning in a classroom would be beneficial, if not necessary, considering the previous research.

3. Group Dynamics and Cohesion [1] (Cohesiveness)

While cooperative learning has significant advantages in classroom, to make it effective, educators need to be concerned with the idea of *group dynamics*, which is explained as "the actions, processes, and changes that occur within groups and between groups" (Forsyth, 2014, p.2). In fact, group dynamics has been an area of focus in the field of social psychology which concerns the scientific analysis of groups, including group formation, development, interaction patterns and group cohesion (Clement et al., 1994; Dörnyei, 1997; Forsyth, 2014; Matsubara, 2007). Dörnyei (1997) stated that some of the important notions of group dynamics, such as group characteristics and group processing, "significantly contribute to success or failure in the classroom and directly e[a]ffect the quality of learning within group" (p. 485). Paying attention to the aspects of group dynamics is crucial for modern language education because communicative approach often requires group tasks with active interaction among students, which would be very difficult to achieve if students do not like or talk with each other. (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2003)

Especially, several researchers argue that, among the variables in group dynamics, *Group Cohesion (Cohesiveness)* is one of the most important elements for the learners' success in cooperative learning (e.g. Dörnyei, 1997). According to Forsyth (2014), group cohesion refers to "the solidarity or unity of a group resulting from the development of strong and mutual interpersonal bonds among members" (p.10). Also Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) implied that group

cohesiveness is related to the closeness and a feeling of being a part of group; they stated that students "participate in group-activities willingly and are happy to cooperate with each other" (p.63) as one of the positive features of cohesive groups. Indeed, in their meta-analysis, Evans and Dion (2012) found out that group cohesion and group performance are positively correlated, while research by Clement et al. (1994) with 301 secondary school students in Budapest demonstrated the associations between group cohesion and learners' positive evaluation of learning environment. Furthermore, Cao and Philp's (2006) investigation indicated that the group cohesion can influence the learners' WTC. Eight international students studying English in New Zealand participated in their research answering a series of WTC questionnaires and getting individual interviews. Fifty percent of the participants expressed that *familiarity with interlocutor* and *interlocutor participation* were major factors influencing their WTC in class, and they explained the result as that "the more distant the relationship of the individual to the receiver(s), the less willing the individual is to communicate" (p. 488).

The possible impact of group cohesion must be considered when implementing a cooperative activity. In Japan, most universities offer only one class meeting per week for a language course with relatively large number of individuals. Unlike in typical junior high or high school context, each learner may have a different language learning goal and motivation, after they are out of the phase of entrance exam preparations, which can result in less cohesion in class. Because of these conditions, building a good group cohesion between learners and creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere are particularly important for language classrooms in Japanese universities. Giving learners enough opportunities to get to know each other and helping them build strong rapport should be put as one of the highest priorities in class for the learners' successful language learning. Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) suggested that "the amount of time the parties have known each other is a powerful factor to solidify and stabilize the relations" (p. 67). Also, Dörnyei (1997) states that learners develop stronger ties gradually while fostering cohesiveness by sharing genuine personal information. Encouraging learners to ask questions about each other could allow them develop cohesiveness; also, learning each other's names and sharing some positive personal experiences

could be a great help to build positive relationships between the learners (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2003; Helgesen, 2019). In addition, there are several studies introducing techniques to build cohesion; Aubrey (2011) recommended some activities helping to boost the students' cohesion in his study; such as student-student interviews focusing on understanding each student' positive trait, as well as group reflection time on the members' contribution. Jacobs and Kimura (2013) also introduced some team-building activities; such as learners taking turns and sharing surprising facts about themselves.

In view of the research above, group tasks should be carefully planned and prepared to ensure they require cooperation; at the same time, we must first remember to prioritize building cohesion among learners by providing opportunities to work together for a sufficient amount of time in class. Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) stated that "in a 'good' group, the L2 classroom can turn out to be such a pleasant and inspiring environment that the time spent there is a constant source of success and satisfaction for teachers and learners alike" (p.3). Through this action research, the author is trying to implement the numbers of cooperative activities to build students' group cohesion so that they feel comfortable and confident in speaking English in class. Also, she is hoping to see that the students' willingness to learn and communicate in English, as well as their confidence, would grow through the lessons with shared goals and enjoyment, even in the online environment.

[1]
Note. The two terms, Group Cohesiveness and Group Cohesion are used to refer the same aspect. Group Cohesion is used for the following parts in this paper.

Purposes of Study

This action research aims to investigate the students' attitudes toward group work, their

perceived English skills and motivation to learn and use English, through providing series of opportunities to work with others in an online classroom. Also, this is to explore the connections between the elements above, while focusing on developing effective cooperative activities, which could help increase the students' group cohesion, both for online and face-to-face environment.

Research Questions

(1) What impact could a series of cooperative group activities online have on the students' perceptions of English speaking skills and motivation to learn English in a required reading class?

(2) How online interactions through Zoom and chat influence students' group cohesion?

Method

1. Participants

This action research focused on an online English reading course, in which 38 university students enrolled. Among the group, fifteen learners from the class participated in the study with the questionnaires from the beginning through to completion voluntarily. The course is one of the required English classes for students in non-English majors, and most students in this focused group are majoring in Economics with a few individuals from Policy Studies Department. Majority of the students are in another required English class focusing on communication. The levels of English among students in the class varied greatly from person to person although the target level for the class is "elementary", which is considered the second lowest of the four levels in the system of the school. (EIKEN pre-2 level/CEFR A1-A2)

2. Data Collection

Questionnaires

In order to explore the changes of their attitudes toward group work, perceived English abilities and motivation, questionnaires are administered three times; pre-term, mid-term, and post-term, with two months intervals. Also, in each questionnaire, specific items were added to explore more details and experience, while some items were removed due to less relevancy to the subject matter. The answers to each questionnaire were collected through online forms, so the participants filled them by their own within the assigned time-frame. All the questionnaires were developed through this action research and the detailed information of the contents of each questionnaire is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1

Summary of Questionnaires

	Pre-term	Mid-term	Post-term
Time	September	November	January
No. of participants	35	19	16
Questionnaire items	-English abilities -Motivation	-English abilities -Motivation	-English abilities -Motivation
Special focus	-Background information -Group work Attitudes	-Class method	-Group work experience -Reflection Comments

Notes. The numbers of participants vary because they were asked to submit these questionnaires as voluntary tasks. See **Appendix 1** for more details of the post-term questionnaires. (Some items above are excluded from the analysis for this action research.)

Real-time Chat Records

Every second week of the unit, students were required to participate in the online chat during the certain amount of the class time. The topics were assigned depending on the unit/passage contents, and the students were asked to post their opinions, as well as to respond to other classmates' posts. The records of the students' writing on every online chat are kept for the analysis. The details for this chat assignment are described in the *Class Procedure* section below.

3. Class Procedures

Lesson method and contents

The main objective of the course decided on the school curriculum is that students improve their English comprehension to the level that they can pass Eiken Pre-2. To achieve that, the main focus of the lesson is to introduce English reading skills, and to have them read and talk about the academic passages with the skills they learn. Due to the current situation with COVID-19 pandemic, all the lessons, except the final project week, were held online using an online education system the university provided and Zoom, a video conference tool. In the final two weeks, students met face-to-face for a group project, but to follow the measure for avoiding a crowd, students are divided into two groups. Each group came to the classroom on a different week, while the other group was working on assignments online individually. In fact, because of the measurement of the infection control, on-demand styled online lessons have been preferred and endorsed by the school. Concerning the circumstance with COVID and the school atmosphere, the mixed styled lessons with on-demand, real-time online, and face-to-face were adopted for the target class.

For one unit of the textbook, three weeks were spent for reading, online assignments on reading comprehension, and related group activities; the first and second weeks were offered in an on-demand style and the lesson in the third week was offered in Zoom live. Within the fifteen weeks of the semester, students met six times; five times in Zoom and once in the final face-to-face lesson. Students were required to join each class on time, even in an on-demand styled one, with the assigned textbook, and other materials were distributed through the online system during the limited amount of time. The semester schedule is provided below (**Table 2**), and for sample lesson plans, see **Appendix 2**.

Table 2
Semester Schedule for lessons and data collection

Week	Contents	Assignment/Activities	Data Collection
1	On-demand Orientation	・ Self-Introduction Video ・ Chat comment	**Pre-Term Questionnaire**

2	**Zoom** Practice Self-Introduction Unit6A	・**Three-Step Interview** ・Chat comment ・Group-building Practice	
3	On-demand Unit6B	・Watch PPT ・**Real-time chat**	Chat exchange record
4	**Zoom** Unit6AB	・**RallyRobin** ・Three-Step-Interview ・Group work (Vocab review) ・Online discussion	
5	On-demand Unit7A	・Watch PPT ・Comprehension exercise (writing)	
6	On-demand Unit7B	・Watch PPT ・**Real-time chat**	Chat exchanges record
7	**Zoom** Unit7AB	・**RoundRobin** ・Group work (Create Quiz) ・Online discussion	**Mid-term questionnaire**
8	On-demand Unit8A	・Watch PPT ・Summary writing	
9	On-demand Unit8B	・Watch PPT ・**Real-time chat**	Chat exchanges record
10	**Zoom** Unit8AB	・**Active Review** ・**Three-Step Interview** ・Group work (Adverb usages)	
11	On-demand Unit9A	・Watch PPT ・Online Discussion	
12	On-demand Unit9B	・Watch PPT ・**Real-time chat**	Chat exchanges record
13	**Zoom** Unit9AB	・**Three-Step Interview** ・Group work (Find paraphrases)	Passage popularity votes
14	**Face-to-Face (Group 1)** Final Project	・Self-Introduction in groups ・Group discussion (**RoundRobin**)	
15	**Face-to-Face (Group 2)** Final project	・Creating slides ・Final Exam online	**Post-term Questionnaire**

On-demand lessons

During the first two weeks of the unit cycle, students signed in to the school online education

system and do all the assignments presented there within the specified time. For the review of the

previous week, explanations of the focus point of the lesson, and instructions of the assignments, students are required to watch the PowerPoint slides which were created with narrations and uploaded by the author for every on-demand week. Students would start the assignment individually when they understand the directions after watching the slides. A passage reading with comprehension questions and vocabulary quiz from the textbook were the regular task, and some extra set of work was usually assigned including *Real-time chat* and *Asynchronous online discussion.* For a sample PowerPoint slides, see **Appendix 3.**

1) Real-time chat

On the second week of every unit cycle, students were required to participate in the real-time chat on the school online system. This chat was open only within certain amount of time during the 90-minute lesson, and students were asked to post their opinions and to reply at least two other classmates' posts. The Board function was applied for the first chat exercise in the Week 3 lesson, in which all the class members post on the same chat page. For the second to the last ones, Forum was used so that students could be divided into smaller groups (around 10 to 15). The topics were chosen depending on the unit contents (**Table 3**), and often the ideas students posted were reviewed and recycled in the discussions in Zoom lessons the following week.

Table 3
Chat topics and unit details

Week	Unit Contents	Reading skills	Chat Topics
3	Unit6: Small Worlds (Organisms/bacteria)	・Sequence ・Pros and Cons	・What are the pros and cons of the following things? Social media/ Fast food/ School uniform
6	Unit7: When Dinosaur Ruled	・Supporting details ・Definitions	・What do you know about dinosaurs? ・Why do you think people are interested in dinosaurs? ・What do you think Deinocheirus looked like?

| 9 | Unit8: Stories and Storytellers | · Relative clauses
· Pronouns | · Today, many children watch TV or videos on the Internet, instead of reading books. What do you think about this trend? |
| 11 | Unit9: Unusual Jobs | · Synonyms
· Paraphrasing | · Which job would you like to try? Meteorite hunter/ Smokejumper/ Hacker/ Crime scene cleaner/ Up-cycler |

Notes. Topic questions were either chosen from the discussion questions provided in the textbook, or developed by the author depending on the relevance of the lessons and students' interests.

Also, the students were encouraged to refer the classmates' names and use some interactional phrases they learned from the lessons earlier; such as commenting and agreeing (e.g. *That's interesting. I think so, too.*). As it is mentioned in Literature Review above, Cao and Philp's (2006) research suggested that familiarity with the members and participations of members in group work are the important factors to develop the learners' WTC. Moreover, Helgeson (2016) explained the significance of learning names of the students as one element of building a good relationship in class. From these perspectives, referring names and showing interests with certain phrases were encouraged in this exercise. Besides, this attempt to implement the real-time chat in on-demand lessons aimed to increase more time to interact with other classmates in the online education. The results of Fang's (2020) qualitative research about online study showed that one of the negative perceptions of online learning is not having communication and discussion with peers, which reduced students' enthusiasm to learn. Similarly, Alodwan's (2021) research with 20 college students studying English online expressed that one of the biggest disadvantages of online learning is social isolation. Though in a written form, frequent chances of synchronous communication between students could be helpful to avoid the negative affect Fang and Alodwan indicated. In addition, research suggested that text-based chat can be an effective way to improve the language learners' oral fluency. Blake (2009) examined the difference in fluency gain between three groups of ESL students in different instructional environments; a text-based Internet chat, a face-to-face, and an individual study. The data clearly indicated that the fluency gain made by the participants in

the text-chat group were the most significant. He suggested that the participants in the chat group had more turns in the chat conversations compared to the face-to-face group, in which learners usually needed to adhere to the rules of turn-taking having more time waiting. This could result in that the chat group was able to have more effective access of the lexicon, helping their fluency grow. Considering the previous research, real-time chat holds a great possibility to promote the fluency, as well as the cohesion of the group, under the current circumstance in which social distancing is required. (The sample chat records are displayed in the Discussion section as **Excerpt 1 & 2**.)

2) Asynchronous online discussion

In addition to the real-time chat exercises, students were assigned to post opinions and comments on others within a longer period of time as online discussion homework a few times in the semester. Because they had less time to interact with each other compared to the face-to-face styled classes, this assignment was created to multiply the opportunities for students to express themselves and exchange ideas with their classmates. The students had to follow the same manner in these assignments as well as the real-time chat: refer the students' names and react to each other's comments when they were replying. As it is explained above, text-based communication has some positive effect on learners' fluency; additionally, some research implied that asynchronous online discussion also has potential to influence the learners' rapport building (Adel, 2011). In her corpus-based study of analyzing university students' online exchanges and face-to-face discussion transcripts, Adel (2011) demonstrated that some discourse functions, such as *Greeting, Referring to in-group discourse* and *Agreeing*, could be seen and developed in both the text-based and face-to-face discussions. Those discourse phrases could represent the attempts to contribute to rapport building, and though less frequent, asynchronous text-based discussions could still be considered to hold some positive attributes on increasing group cohesion of the class.

Real-time lessons in Zoom

The third week of the unit cycle was always offered in Zoom. Students would come to the room and usually the lesson started with a short review of the previous two weeks. Some of the chat comments or common errors in students' writings were shared during this review. Sixty percent of the class time was aimed to be spent for pair or group activities, so there were two or three kinds of tasks presented during a lesson. The main purpose of one activity was for students to get to know each other more, and the other ones were related to the grammar and reading skills they learned through the previous two weeks. Learning names and using discussion expressions were encouraged in the Zoom lessons as well for the purposes discussed in the previous explanations about online chat (See **Table 4** for the list of the sample discussion expressions used in class).

Table 4

Sample Discussion Expressions

Discussion leader	Other members	For all
· Let's start. · What do you think about …? · How about you, (name)?	· I think it's …. · Thank you, (Leader's name), for leading the discussion.	· I think so, too. · I agree/disagree with (name). · That is an interesting opinion.

Notes. The list was shown in the class slides and worksheet for students' reference.

For group work the students were usually put together in a group of three or four randomly, and given a small task to assign a specific role to each other; such as Discussion leader, Notetaker, and Reporter. Different rules for the role assignments were offered every time, and the main purpose of this is to have students pay attention to the members' names; for example, the alphabetical order of their given names was used to define the roles and other times the numbers of alphabet letters of their names were the factor. Through this procedure, students were encouraged to learn their classmates' names and get familiar with each other. Assigning roles is also the attempt to promote the students' *positive interdependence* and *individual accountability* through cooperative tasks. The details of the activities are described below.

1) Three-Step Interview

One of the cooperative tasks in class was usually focused on having the students talk about themselves. Dörnyei (1997) stated that sharing genuine personal information about each other could help learners foster the cohesiveness. So, in this activity, the students were encouraged to have a conversation casually with familiar, but related issues to the unit contents. For this purpose, the author tried to implement a technique inspired by one of the *Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, Three-Step Interview* (Kagan, 2013), in which students interview a partner, then take turns reporting to the rest of the team what they learned about the partner. According to Kagan (2013), students can practice summarizing the information and be held responsible for listening to others through the activities with this structure. In the target class, the students were often asked to write a few sentences or a short paragraph about their partners in chat to share in class or on the worksheet they received in Zoom. This can provide the opportunities for redundant output (Kagan, 1995), while Lee and VanPatten (2003) also suggest that writing a report works as an important purpose of an information exchange activity. For example, for Unit 8, students learned about adverbs and they were assigned to ask their partner about somethings he or she *easily* or *rarely* does. Students were also asked to elicit more specific information related to the fact from the partner, so they had to prepare more questions to accomplish the task. Finally, they wrote a short summary about the partner on their worksheet; they were always required to include the partner's name in the writing as well. Some of their summaries were introduced in the following week in the class slides.

2) RallyRobin / RoundRobin

Another major technique that was often included in the Zoom lesson was called *RallyRobin*; one of the well-known cooperative learning structures (Kagan, 1989). This is a simple structure in which students take turns sharing ideas with a partner. (If this is done in a group, it is called *RoundRobin*.) Through this activity, everyone can respond and listen to others in a short amount of time simultaneously, which is one of the principles of cooperative learning Kagan (2013) claims. In

the target class, the students were sometimes put in pairs or groups to work on an exercise or quiz related to the focused reading skills. While working on it in break-out sessions, the students were asked to take turns sharing opinions and reasons why they think in a certain way using the discussion expressions such as *I think it's* …. Similarly, they had some tasks in which they shared their experiences; for instance, students asked each other about the hardest part of their part-time job with their real experience. This particular topic was brought from the passage of a unit, and had been used in a previous on-demand week in an asynchronous online discussion, so students had had time preparing for the answer since a week before. This is inspired by the idea of *Think-Pair-Share*, another popular structure of Kagan's (1989), in which students get time to think about the topic provided before they share with others.

3) Active Review

This activity has similar perspectives and purposes to the previous structures, *Three-Step Interview* and *RallyRobin*, but it is particularly focusing on the review of their learning contents. In *Active Review*, students took turns telling each other about what they learned from the passages they read or what part was interesting or surprising. This task sometimes came in the beginning of the real-time class to activate their memory or in the end of the unit aiming to internalize the ideas they learned. Japan Association for the Study of Cooperation (JASCE) emphasizes the importance of reviewing in the process of cooperative learning (2019). JASCE explained that this review should be done by the learners themselves; they can deepen their understanding and feel accomplished through the cooperative reviewing process (JASCE, 2019). Also, Johnson and Johnson (1999) describe that *Group processing* is one of the basic elements of cooperation, which promotes learners to review each other's actions and effort to maintain effective working relationship. By sharing their learning, students could help each other more and understand the difficulties of others; at the same time, they can provide and receive another opportunity to speak and listen to the same topic. This is boosting redundancy of both input and output, one of the advantages of the cooperative learning (Kagan, 1995)

Results

1. Attitudes towards group work

In the pre-term questionnaire, the participants were asked to indicate how much they agree with the statements about group work. This was to learn about their attitudes towards working with others before they experienced some cooperative activities in the target course. Then in the post-term questionnaire, the participants answered questions about their experience in group work, including chat interactions during the semester. **Table 5** shows the results of this elements in the pre-term questionnaire.

Table 5

Attitudes towards Group Work

Pre-term

Statements	Scores
1. I would like to work in pairs/groups in English classes.	3.2
2. I enjoy working on an assignment with two or more classmates.	3.45
3. I prefer studying with others to studying alone.	3.37
4. I get more work done when I study with an assigned group.	3.45
5. I feel more accomplished when I complete an assignment with others in group than doing it alone.	3.2
6. I think working in a pair/group can help my English skills improve.	3.65
7. I perform better when I can work with familiar members in class than people I don't know very well.	4.05
8. I perform better when there is a leader when working in group.	3.75
Average (N=35)	3.51

Note. The items were modified based on the questionnaire developed by Matsubara (2007). 5-point scale was used for the answer choices (1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree).

At the beginning of the semester, students showed the mixed feeling towards group work, as a few of them wrote that they were a little nervous about working with others in the optional free comment section. One thing should be considered is that students clearly showed the preference of working with familiar members (average score: 4.05). This perspective supports the previous research that group cohesion could affect students' performance and motivation (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006). Because of the isolated nature of the group work in the online environment, familiarity of the classmates could play even more important role when students are working in small groups. Thus, activities for group-building should be prioritized at the beginning of the course, and promoting the familiarity should always be considered into activities through the semester.

The related results about group work in the post-term questionnaire are presented below. The items focus more on the participants' perceptions of group work in Zoom and chat assignments, as well as their participation and enjoyment after they went through the series of cooperative activities (See **Table 6** and **7**). Generally, the participants show favorable attitudes towards group work compared to the pre-term state, especially for the statement no. 3 in both Zoom group work and online chat, the score is the highest. This indicates that students became aware of the efficacy of group work and appreciate the opportunities to work with others. Although the questions of the pre-term and post-term questionnaires are asked in a slightly different manners, the changes of average scores infer that their attitudes towards online group interactions became more positive. Students expressed that they enjoyed the group work more showing a big improvement from 3.45 at the pre-term to 4.06 in the post-term as well.

Table 6

Experience of Group Work

Post-term

Statement	Scores
1. I tried to contribute to the pair/group work.	3.75

2. I enjoyed the pair/group activities.	4.06
3. Working in pairs/groups helped me understand the contents better.	4.12
4. Working in a pair/group helped me to become friends with the classmates.	3.93
Average (N=16)	3.96

Table 7
Experience of Online Chat
Post-term

Statement	Scores
1. I tried to contribute to the chat activities.	3.81
2. I enjoyed communicating with classmates through chat activities.	3.87
3. Chat activities helped me learn skills for English discussions.	3.93
4. Chat activities helped me to get to know about my classmates.	3.68
Average (N=16)	3.82

Note. The items in the questionnaire shown in Table 6&7 were developed by the author to ask about the class experience of participants. 5-point scale was used for the answer choices (1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree).

One of the important findings is that a considerable number of the participants showed that communicating through online chat was not very helpful or it was doubtful as a tool to get to know about their classmates (average: 3.68). One reason of the low score for group cohesion through chat exercise could be the size of the groups for the activity; the big numbers of participants could have made it challenging for them to read and comprehend the messages in short amount of time. Also, because of the limitations of displaying comments on screen, it could be hard to follow and reply to the right senders. To use the chat function effectively, enough time of practice should have been provided, besides the group size needed to be carefully planned. Moreover, the difference of the results between Zoom group work and chat indicates that face-to-face communication plays a very important role for building cohesion within the limited amount of time. According to Johnson et al. (1993), one of the principles of cooperative learning is *face-to-face promotive interaction* which has been a big challenge in the current online learning situation. As expected, chat exercises could not

replace what they could do face-to-face in terms of group building.

Additionally, in the post-term questionnaire, a reflection comment section was provided to know the details of the students' perceptions of the class and their English skills. Some of the participants' comments towards the class contents, activities and management are on the list below (**Table 8**). Although their comments are mostly about the general feeling towards the lessons, which are mostly positive, some offered more detailed perceptions of group work and the class styles. As the scores of questionnaires above suggested, students enjoyed the group work, at the same time, they found group work meaningful as an opportunity to communicatie and for their learning.

Table 8

Comments on class contents, activities, and management

Post-term

Comment categories	Students' comments
Group work	・Although the class was online, I liked when the class was in Zoom because I could communicate with classmates. ・I enjoyed the group work. ・I thought that it was easier to understand the contents through group work than individual work.
Class styles	・It was interesting that there were often some different types of group discussions and contents used in class. Sometimes I got nervous but it was fun because of the variety. ・It was effective for my learning that several methods (on-demand, Zoom, and face-to-face) were mixed depending on the contents and activities.

Note. The comments from the students above are translated from Japanese by the author.

Nonetheless one important fact to consider is that each student has different preferences for the class method; some likes face-to-face, but some do not. In the mid-term questionnaire, participants were asked to express their opinions about the current class method, mixed styled lessons with on-demand and real-time online classes in Zoom (See **Figure 2** for the result). A considerable number

of students prefer on-demand style while some would like to have face-to-face classes. On-demand styled lessons can give learners time and flexibility (Alodwan, 2021; Fang, 2020), and it is understandable that majority of the students liked those elements of the on-demand styled class especially with the current situation of the school where still many other classes are offered on-demand. However, participants showed the positive attitudes towards their group work experiences in the post-term questionnaire. Some students might have started seeing the advantages gradually through the mixed method although they generally prefer on-demand lessons.

Figure 2
Class method preference
Mid-term
(N=19)
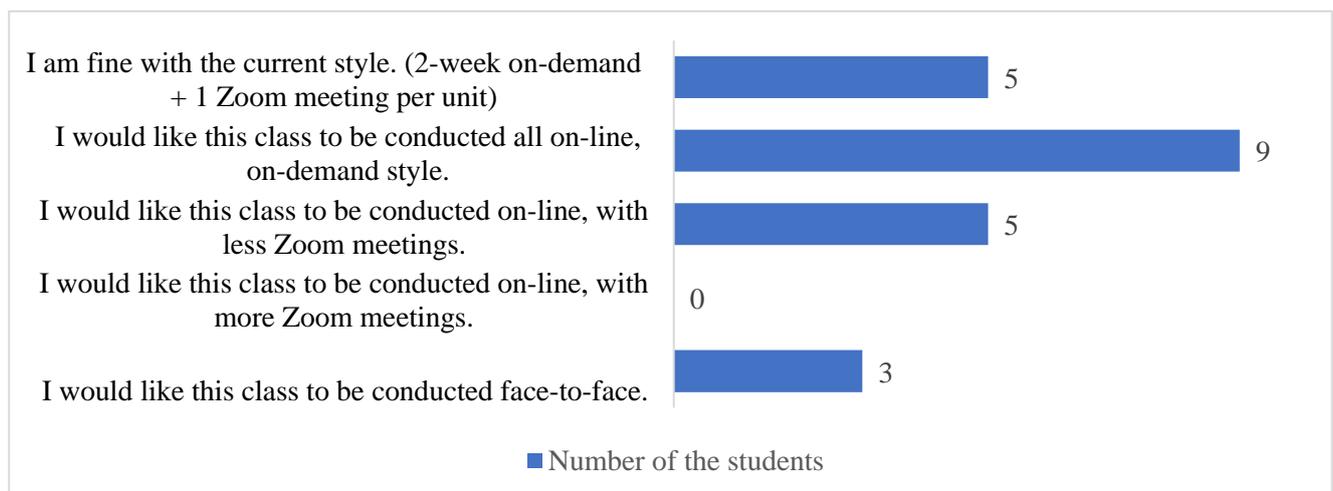
Note. Multiple answers are allowed for this question.

2. Perceived speaking abilities in English

In all the three questionnaires, participants were asked to display how well they could do in the three types of speaking activities in English; *asking questions, answering questions and expressing opinions*. The average scores of the 15 students, who participated in both pre and post questionnaires, are presented by categories in **Figure 3** to see the growth between the beginning of the semester and after the 15th week. During the semester, students had met only once in three

weeks in Zoom and met in one face-to-face class, and even though they had the chat assignment once in a while, opportunities for English output happened a lot less frequently compered to the lesson in a classroom. However, the average scores of the all three activities improved over 0.8. Especially, participants feel a lot more competent in *asking questions* in the post term, which is the biggest improvement of all the category. In the cooperative activities for building rapport, such as *Three-Step Interview*, students were often encouraged to elicit more information from the partner or team members, and that might help students accustomed to creating and asking more follow-up questions. In addition, it is interesting that students are more confident about *asking questions* in English than *answering questions* in the post-term questionnaire, which was opposite at the pre-term. In the reflection comment section, one student wrote that he became able to start a conversation more actively (See **Table 9**). As previous research suggested, initiating a conversation is one of the difficult, but necessary skill to build an interpersonal relationship (Yashima, 1995). Cooperative group work in the target class potentially had a positive impact on students' confidence in starting a conversation; namely, their WTC in class might have increased through it. On the other hand, participants showed the least confidence in *expressing opinions* in the pre-term questionnaire, and the score was still relatively low compared to other activities at the post-term. Some discussion topics could have been challenging for students, and more observations of the actual interactions between students are needed to investigate the feature.

Figure 3
Perceived English speaking abilities
 (N=15)
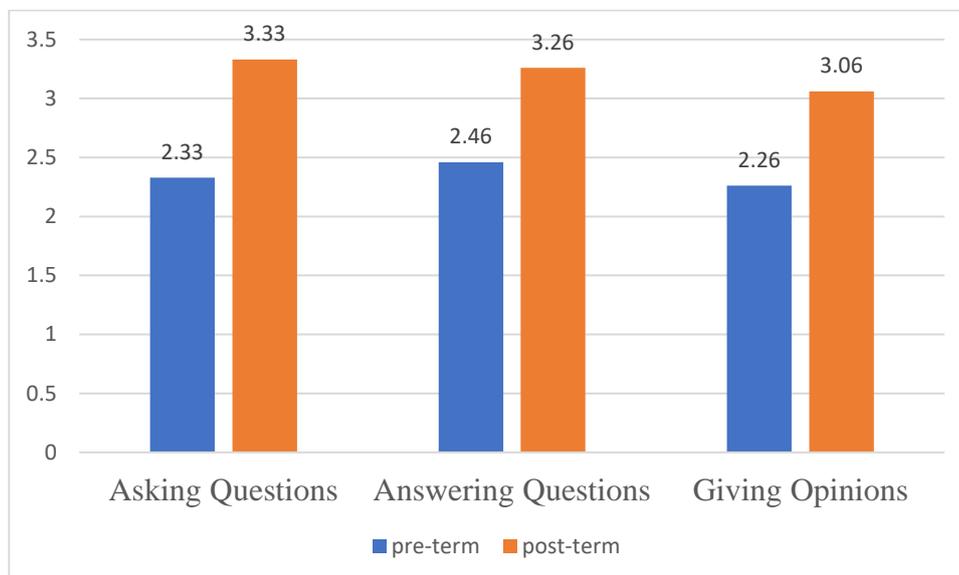
Note. The average scores of target students. 5-point scale was used for the answer choices (1: I can't do it at all. to 5: I can do it well.)

Table 9

Comments on self-perceived English abilities and motivation

Post-term

Comment categories	Students' comments
Communication, discussion	・I can communicate in English better than before. ・I feel that I became able to think and answer to questions in English even though I don't prepare a lot. ・I learned that I could communicate in English without using difficult grammar or vocabulary. ・I became able to use some new grammar and expressions in English conversations. ・I became able to start a conversation more actively.
Reading	・I think my comprehension skill improved. ・I can read English better, compared to before.
Writing	・It is easier for me now than before to write English sentences because there were many opportunities to express opinions in English.
Attitudes, motivation	・I like English better than before. ・I feel more positive about my English abilities. ・I became interested in taking some proficiency test such as TOEIC.

Note. The comments from the students above are translated from Japanese by the author.
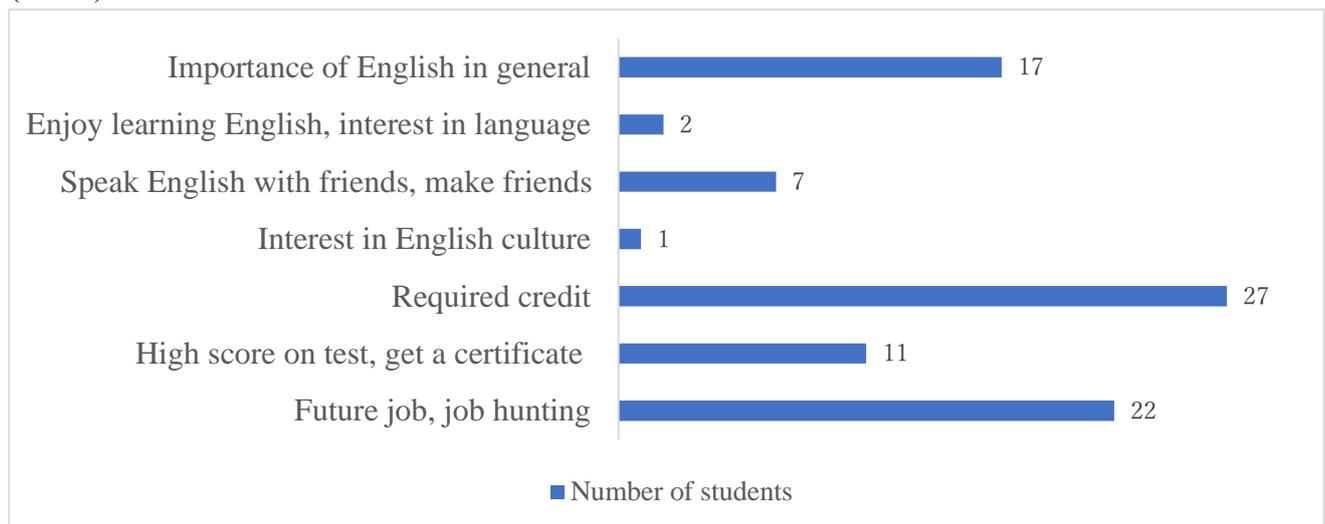
3. Motivation

In the pre-term questionnaire, students were asked to demonstrate the reasons why they learn English (**Figure 4**). Since this focus class is a required course, the main motivation to learn English for most of the students was to obtain a necessary credit to graduate or for their job opportunities, which is one of the biggest concerns for university students in Japan. From this result, it can be assumed that speaking or communicating in English is not necessarily the interests of majority of the non-English major students, even though they are aware of the necessity of learning English language itself.

Figure 4
Purposes of learning English
Pre-term
(N=35)

Note. Multiple answers are allowed for this item.

However, the participants revealed that their motivation to learn and communicate in English have grown through the semester. In the post-term questionnaire, they were asked to indicate how the level of their motivation towards learning and communicate in English changed from the beginning of the semester and the present. Perceived motivation levels of the participants in each time are presented below in **Figure 5**. At time 2, the post-term, 11 out of 16 individuals feel that they are motivated or very motivated, while majority of the participants indicated that their motivation level was not very

high at the beginning of the semester. The average score of the 16 participants at the post term is 3.62, which is a fair increase from the 2.81 at the pre-term (Time 1). One student mentioned in the comment section that he became interested in taking some English proficiency test such as TOEIC (See **Table 9** above). Overall, students now have a higher motivation toward English learning in general, and most importantly, they feel the positive changes from their own experience.

Figure 5
Perceived change in motivation
 (N=16)
Q. How motivated were/are you to learn and communicate in English in class?
（Time 1 …beginning of the semester, Time 2…present）
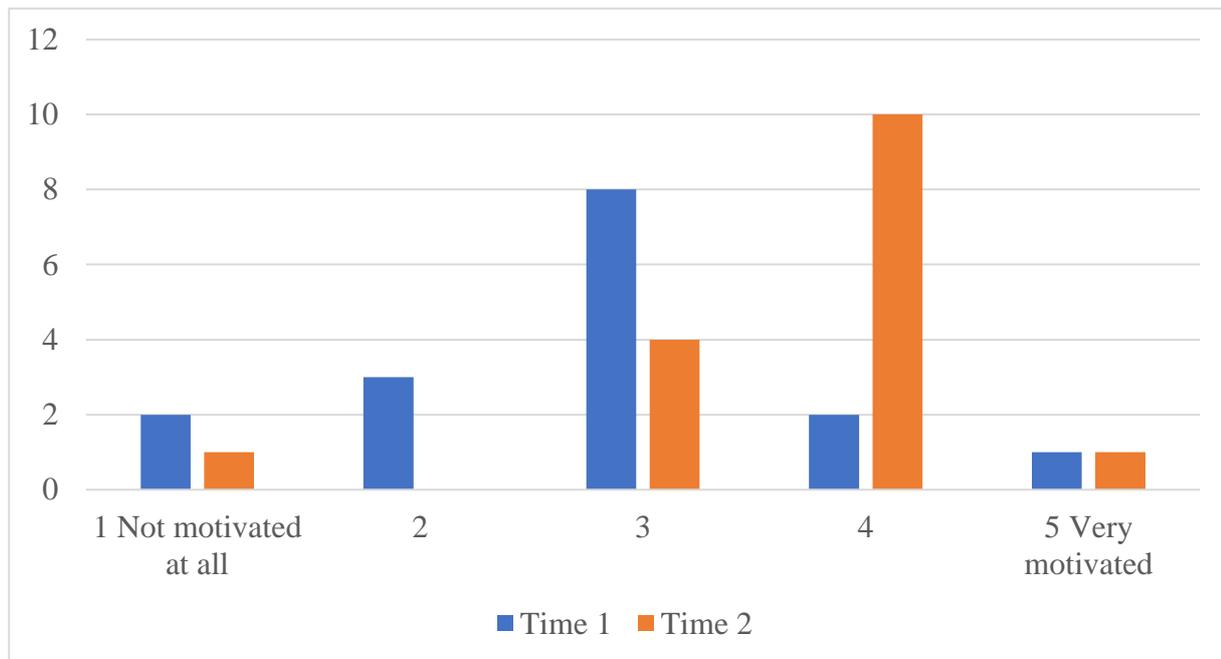
Note. The vertical line shows the number of participants who chose the score. 5-point scale was used for the answer choices (1: Not motivated at all to 5: Very motivated)

Discussion

This action research has shed lights on students' perceptions of group work and suggested

possible ways to improve their confidence in speaking English through cooperative activities. Moreover, it revealed the challenge of building students' group cohesion with the current online education system used in this course.

RQ (1) What impact could a series of cooperative group activities online have on the students' perceptions of English speaking skills and motivation to learn English in a required reading class?

The results of questionnaires on their perceived speaking skills suggest that their experiences of cooperative learning had a positive impact on their confidence in speaking. Although this reading course was offered with the mixed method, in which students could meet with each other once in three weeks, they experienced a number of types of cooperative group work in both spoken and written forms. Even within the limited amount of time, students seemed to learn ways to communicate with each other, as they feel their skills of asking questions improved. The cooperative activities might have pushed the students' active interactions because the tasks required careful listening and skills to get enough information from their partners. It might be because it was online, students needed extra attention to the information. Furthermore, because of the Zoom break-out room function, students' group work was often carried out with almost no teacher intervention. Long and Porter (1985) stated that, unlike teacher-centered lessons, they can exercise more in peer groups without being rushed to produce correct sentences; thus, they can develop discourse competence, rather than limited to just constructing a sentence grammar. Students were less worried about accuracy when they talked with their peers (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013), and this might help students talk more. As Yashima et al.'s (2016) research suggested, through a series of opportunities of discussions, students found strategies to initiate turns by asking questions and listening carefully, and under the circumstance of no teacher-control, they challenged more to contribute to the task. By looking at the growth in their perceived speaking abilities, it could be said that cooperative activities were effective to improve the students' confidence even in online lessons.

However, students assessed their ability of expressing opinions considerably lower than other

elements even after the semester. One of the possible reasons is that students did not get enough time which they needed to prepare for opinion-exchange activities such as *RallyRobin*. Unlike casual conversations, exchanging ideas about some of the unit topics could have been challenging for considerable number of participants. Although they had had time to learn and think about the ideas in on-demand lessons, putting the ideas into spoken format might have given the learners different type of obstacles. For this reason, *Think-Pair-Share* structure could be more suitable for this group of students and should be considered implementing in the future class.

Students expressed that they have higher motivation to learn and use in English at post-term, compared to the beginning of the semester. Considering the fact that majority of the participants chose *required credit* as their purpose of studying English, the growth of their motivation, and the more importantly the fact that they feel that they are more motivated and interested in English, are significant from this online course with the small numbers of meeting opportunities. According to Yashima (2002), if a learner is motivated, he or she tends to feel more confident in competence, and the confidence affects his or her WTC. In fact, the 15 participants' scores of perceived confidence and motivation to learn and use English at the post-term are correlated by 0.67. This supports Yashima's (2002) study above, and it could be said that the cooperative activities have a great potential to increase the learners' WTC.

In the present action research, WTC was not measured directly, besides the participants' motivation was not investigated in details. Although the cooperative learning made some positive impact on their perceptions of English abilities and motivation, their connections to WTC should be explored more with qualitative ways. In addition, to examine the changes of student's abilities, more proper observations of the students' interactions in groups are needed. Having said that, students expressed that they enjoyed the group work in Zoom and the group activities were effective for their learning in general. This implies that online meeting could provide a good platform for appropriate cooperative activities even though there are number of obstacles to overcome. Face-to-face interaction has always been considered important for cooperation (Johnson

& Johnson, 1999), but under the pandemic, online meeting definitely has a great potential to support language learning.

(2) How online interactions through Zoom and chat influence students' group cohesion?

Although students responded positively about their online learning experience, it is hard to say that it helped them build group cohesion. The scores of the items asking about the relationships with classmates in the post-term questionnaire display that the activities in Zoom or online chat was not very effective to get to know about each other. The infrequency of the meeting is one of the biggest reasons to make the rapport-building more difficult, and random grouping each time might have affected negatively; as the length of time spending together is an important element of group building (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2013). However, group work expressions were introduced in the beginning of the semester and displayed every Zoom session, and the students were encouraged to refer names of classmates and use the expressions in chat as well. Adel's (2011) research suggested that some interactional expressions could work as a cohesion building behavior even in chat, and that behavior appeared more and more every time in the chat activity of the target class. (For sample chat record, see **Excerpt 1** and **2** below). In there, supportive attitudes towards the others' comments can be seen often, and participants tried to understand and be agreeable with each other by frequently saying *"I think so, too"* and *"I agree with you"*, or repeating the information. Also, the participants' comments to the others became longer and more reflective of the classmates' opinions gradually. For example, in the Week 12 chat chain, the first student mentioned "go around the world", then others replied with some paraphrasing such as "go to various world" and "traveling" (**Excerpt 2**). Comparing to the chat record of Week 7, the comments in Week 12 chat display more variety and personality as well. These changes can be considered that students have learned different ways to respond and become more comfortable with each other through the chat experience.

Excerpt 1

Real-time chat Unit 6 (Week 7)

Why do you think people are interested in dinosaurs?

Emi: I think it's because it's not something you can see right now.

- ➤ Taku: Hi,Emi.I think so,too.I want to see them in modern times.
- ➤ Yuki: I agree with you !!
- ➤ Sota: Hi,Emi. I think too. I am interested in dinosaurs.
- ➤ Kumi: Hi,Emi! I think so too. I think so many people are interested because I have never seen it.
- ➤ Yuta: Hi, Emi. I agree with you.

Yuki: I think the reason for dinosaurs is that they have a more violent image than existing animals.

- ➤ Yoka: Hi,Yuki. I agree with your opinion. Dinosaurs do not exist today, so they have a very large and violent image in their imagination.
    - ➤ Yuki: In fact, dinosaurs were not surprisingly violent. It's interesting to the contrary.

Nao: I think dinosaurs don't exist and people have never seen them, so people are interested in them.

- ➤ Ran: I think the same thing!

Ran: I think it's because I'm curious about how the creatures lived before the birth of humans.

Taku: I think that it is because children have dreams for dinosaurs and anyone can be a discoverer or an expert.

- ➤ Hi Takumi! I think so, too. I think many children are interested in dinosaurs by looking at the picture book.

Note. All the names are pseudonyms. The writings are listed as the original.

Excerpt 2

Real-time chat Unit 9 (Week 12)

Which job would you like to try? (Meteorite hunter)

Daiki: I'm interested in this job because I can go all over the world to find metorite.

- ➤ Kumi: Hi,Daiki. I think so too. I think this job is fun to go to various worlds. But it seems to be difficult.
- ➤ Mayu: Hi, Daiki! I think so, too. Going around the world sounds like a lot of fun.
- ➤ Masaru: Hi. Takashita. I think so too. I want to find meteorites while traveling around around the world.
- ➤ Ken: Hi, Daiki! I think so, too. I want to find a high value meteorite.
- ➤ Taka: Hi,Daiki. I think so too. I want to search for meteorites while traveling around the world's tourist destinations.
- ➤ Yuki: I think so too. But It is difficult to enter a country where the war is taking place.
- ➤ Misa: Hi,Daiki. I think so too.　Going around the world looks fan!
- ➤ Miku: Hi, Daiki! I also want to go to various worlds, so I can understand your feeling well.I hope you can go all over the would someday.

Ryuto: I am interested in this job because if can find a meteorite, you can get a lot of money.

Note. All the names are pseudonyms. The writings are listed as the original.

Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) stated that cohesive groups pay attention to one another and actively participate in conversations and share personal details. Although the perceived cohesion was relatively low in the questionnaire, the chat records show the possibility to develop a good group relationship through chat if the topics and grouping are carefully planned. Thus, this type of activity might be suitable as an additional practice to tighten the group cohesion after they have opportunities to start getting to know each other in-person.

Generally, few students know each other in a first-year class of a Japanese university, and building good relationships with others is one of the important factors for the students' well-beings and good academic performance through their college lives (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2013). However, through this action research, it is apparent that online interactions are not as effective as face-to-face communication for building cohesion although there are some other advantages such as learning expressions and equal participations. During the pandemic, many college classes are offered online, so students have faced extra challenges including technological difficulties, as well as the absence of communication for building network. Some students expressed their desires to have face-to-face classes, which suggests that they need more opportunities to have social exchanges. Johnson and Johnson (1999) explained that meaningful cooperation can results in greater psychological health and higher self-esteem. Also, Johnson et al. (2013) stated that cooperative learning promotes the positive attitudes toward university experience itself. Thus, as a college instructor, helping students manage their isolation and supporting their well-being through the lessons with cooperative activities have become one of

the most important objectives in this unusual situation.

Conclusion

There are still a lot of issues managing a class online effectively, but this study showed the possible benefits of group work including increased confidence and motivation, ultimately, their WTC. To expand the prospect, a number of elements are subjects to change for the future classes, even where more face-to-face lessons are involved. First of all, the activities should be chosen and planned more carefully to maximize effective peer interactions. This include more constant team-building activities with a considerable amount of time to help them build group cohesion. Second, although the results of this action research showed some positive changes in students' attitudes and perceived skills, it would be richer with qualitative elements looking more deeply at their experiences of group work and group dynamics. For the next semester, the questionnaire will be revised with more open-ended questions, and after administering it, interviews are planned to be conducted to obtain clearer descriptions of students' perspectives and behaviors in group work. Thirdly, in order to expand this study, WTC would be focused more directly in the questionnaires. Students' perceived skills of asking questions improved significantly through the semester, so as a next step, it will be beneficial to see its connection to their WTC more thoroughly.

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Appendix 1

Post-term Questionnaire items

Note: The questionnaire was conducted online on Google Form. The unrelated items are omitted from the original questionnaire.

Section 1: Experiences/Activities in Class

5-point Likert Scale (1: Not at all – 5: Yes, very much)

Pair/group work:

1. I tried to contribute to the pair/group work.（ペア・グループワークの際、積極的に活動に貢献した）

2. I enjoyed the pair/group activities.（ペア・グループワークは楽しかった）

3. Working in pairs/groups helped me understand the contents better.（ペアやグループでの協同学習は、授業内容の理解に役立った）

4. Working in a pair/group helped me to become friends with the classmates.（協同で学習することで、クラスメイトと親しくなることができた）

Chat:

1. I tried to contribute to the chat activities.（チャット課題で、積極的に会話に貢献した）

2. I enjoyed communicating with classmates through chat activities.（チャット課題でクラスメイトと交流することは楽しかった）

3. Chat activities helped me learn skills for English discussions.（チャット課題は、英語でのディスカッション力を学ぶことに役立った）

4. Chat activities helped me to get to know about my classmates.（チャット課題は、クラスメイトを知ることに役立った）

Section 2: English Abilities/Motivation

Speaking

How well can you speak English under the situations below?（以下の3つの活動において、自分はどのくらい英語で話すことができると思いますか？）

　　5-point Likert Scale (1: I can't do it at all – 5: I can do it well.)

　[Asking questions]

　[Answering questions]

　[Giving opinions]

Motivation

How motivated were/are you to learn and communicate in English in class?（英語学習・交流に対する意欲はどのくらいありますか。）

	1. I am not motivated at all.		–		5. I am very motivated.
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
学期の始め					
現在					

Section 3: Comments

1.　Class contents, activities, management（授業内容、アクティビティ、運営方法などについて)

2.　Your English skills, motivation（自分の英語力、意欲、またその変化など）

_____

Appendix 2

Sample Lesson plans

1) On-demand lesson (Week 9)

2) Real-time Zoom (Week 10)

Objectives:
1. To review the grammar point (Adverbs) learned in on-demand classes
2. To understand the functions of adverbs in stories
3. To be able to exchange information using adverbs in pair conversations
4. To be able to use discussion expressions (interactional phrases) in group work

Time	Interaction	Activity & Procedure
5		Zoom entrance, Greetings
5	T-Ss	Introduce the agenda **Activity 1 (**Warm-up, pair talk) ・Explain task ・Review discussion phrases
10	S-S	**Break-out sessions (pair work, 10 minutes) [Active Review]** -Have short discussions about passages with discussion phrases *What did you like about the reading? What was memorable to you?*
10	T-Ss	**Activity 2 (**Pair work) ・Review important points (Adverbs) ・Explain task ・Share examples
14	S-S	**Break-out sessions (pair work, 10 minutes) [Three-Step Interview]** -Ask each other questions with adverbs *Do you finish your work early?* *Do you drive/ride a bike carefully?* *What is something you can do easily?* *What is something you introduced?* -Make comments Report on work today Demonstration in main session
	T-Ss	**Activity 3 (**Group work) ・Explain task ・Discuss phrases (interactual expressions)
15	S-S	**Break-out sessions (group work, 15 minutes)** -Read a story together -Add adverbs in the story
5		Share in main session
3	T-S	**Short Reflection Survey in class** -Explain task
4	S	**Individual Break-out rooms**
3	T-S	Announcement - On-demand Assignment - Next week preview

Overlaid second table:

Time	Interaction	Activity & Procedure
On-demand (15 min slideshow) 5	T-Ss	**PPT slides with recording voice** ・Review [Sharing Ss' reports from last week/Common mistakes] Unit 8B (passage introduction (Theme: Stories and Fairy Tales)
		Grammar Focus (Adverbs) **Grammar point (Adverbs) Vocabulary**
Real-time (within 80 min)	T-Ss / S-S	**Assignment 1** **Real-time chat (Forum)** ・Pass out worksheet, Show Forum (based on the student numbers, Post questions with adverbs They MUST interact with each other by adding reply comments (to at least two classmates in the group) Trying encouraged to use interactual expressions which have been introduced and explained in classes and materials (I think/ Give/ Extra information/ I think so, too. Etc...) *Today many children watch TV or videos on the Internet, instead of reading books. What do you think about this trend?*
On-demand	T-Ss	**Assignment 2** Online quiz Vocabulary Practice (Adverb Exercises)
On-demand 15	S-S	**Assignment 3** Online quiz Reading Comprehension Exercise

2	Ss-T	Leave Zoom (**write comments in chat**) Submit WS through school's Online system
	S	<u>Homework</u> Reading skill Quiz

Total:90 minutes
   S-S: 54 minutes
   T-Ss: 25 minutes
   Ss-T: 2 minutes
   S: 4 minutes
   Zoom entrance: 5 minutes

Appendix 3

Sample PPT slides

Elementary English Reading B

Day 11
Unit 9A

Eriko Mishima

第11回　agenda
1. Review
2. Reading
3. Vocabulary
4. Assignment (In-class)
5. Assignment (On-demand)
6. Announcement for next week

Review

Pair work : Short discussion

→summary report about the partner's opinions

Q. What did you learn from the passages? What was interesting for you?

- *My partner was N__. She said the Grimm's Fairy Tales were a little scary.*
- *My partner was S__. He said that he learned that the Grimm brothers' tales reflected traditional life and beliefs.*
- *My partner was M__. She said that the Brothers Grimm initially wrote fairy tales for adults.*
- *My partner was H__. He learned that he should be careful about what he says.*

Discussion Expressions
1. *Let's start.*
2. *How about you?*
3. *I see.*
4. *I agree with you.*

Review

Zoom worksheet

・追加の情報！

1. Do you finish your assignment <u>early</u>?
2. Do you drive/ride a bike <u>carefully</u>?
3. What is something you can do <u>easily</u>?
4. What is something you <u>rarely</u> do?
   + additional information

- **My partner was R__.** ...She can cook easily. And ~~S~~she is good at making Japanese food.
- **My partner was Y__.** He can come to Chukyo University easily. He can come to school in ten minutes.
- **My partner was Y__.** He can swim easily. ~~Bb~~ecause he has been ~~playing~~ swimming for 12 years.
- **My partner was M__.** She can get up easily. She gets up early, especially on Saturdays. She sometimes plays video games. Recently, she ~~does~~ plays Pokemon.
- **My partner was S__.** ...He rarely studies English. He doesn't like English.
- **My partner was Y__.** He rarely cooks. He practices making fluffy *omurice (omelette and rice)*.

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1. Review

Zoom worksheet

<u>**Group work: Adding Adverbs**</u>

One pig built a house of straw quickly /easily while...

The third little pig worked **eagerly/hard/** ✕ **hardly** all day and built his house with bricks tightly/wisely/well.

...they danced and played happily/excitedly, ...

...little pig ran to the second pig's house immediately...

...pigs were terrified and **ran fast** to the third pig's house ...

...bad wolf gave up and left the house angrily/slowly .

They too built their houses politely/seriously with bricks and lived safely/happily ever after .

①動詞が<u>目的語(〜を)</u>を伴う場合は副詞はその後ろに置く
✕ left slowly the house
○ left the house slowly

②hard⇔hardly は別の副詞
hard 「一生懸命に」
hardly 「ほとんどない」

UNIT 9: Unusual Jobs

A: Meet the Meteorite Hunter

    Reading Skill: Identifying Exact vs. Approximate Numbers

B: Smokejumper

    Reading Skill: Paraphrasing Sentences

Unusual Jobs
Unit9A Meet the Meteorite Hunter
p.120 Introduction
- What is a **meteorite**? Meteorite とは何？
- How many (meteorites) land on Earth each year?

  毎年どのくらいの数のmeteoriteが地球に到着するの？
- What can people learn from meteorites?

  人々はmeteoriteから何を学べるの？

Answers
- A piece of rock or metal from space
- Hundreds of small meteorites
- About space and our own planet

Reading
- **Interview**
- **National Geographic**
- ✕ **Michael Farmer (meteorite hunter)**

Questions:
1. *What's the hardest part of your job?*
2. *Are there a lot of meteorite pieces on Earth?*
3. *What's the most valuable meteorite you found?*
4. *Who else buys the rocks from you?*

Reading Skill
Numbers/Amount expressions!

- about 70 countries
- millions   （何百万も）
- for $100,000
- weighed 53 kilos
- around 4.5 billion years old
- just under a million dollars （百万ドル弱）
- 99 percent of these meteorites

Vocabulary

•illegal	•違法である
•law	•法律
•locate	•位置を探し当てる、配置する
•preserve	•保存する、保管する
•valuable	•価値のある、貴重な

Word family ⇔legal (adj)
Word family lawyer (n)
Word family location (n)
Word family value (n)

Vocabulary

•rare	•まれな、希少な
•weigh	•重さを計る、重さがある
•treasure	•宝、財産
•collector	•収集家
•in demand	•需要がある

Word family rarely (adv)
Word family weight (n)
national treasure: 国宝
Word family collect (v) collection (n)

Adverb expressions!

物語に多い！

- *You can see them **easily** in the sand.*

  簡単にそれらを砂の中から見つけられる
- *The heat also preserves the rock **well**.*

  その熱が、石を良く(うまく)保存している
- *, so they sell **quickly**.*

  それらはすぐに売れる

Assignment (In-Class)

p.125 Vocabulary Practice
＋Target vocabulary の中から**2単語以上**を選び、
オリジナル文を作ること

Assignment (On-demand)

Quiz
①p.123 Reading Comprehension

Forum
②Hardest Part of Your Job
What is the hardest part of your job?

➤現在している仕事や、経験したことのある仕事（アルバイト）について、上の
質問に答えること。（仕事をしたことがない場合は、興味のある仕事について
書いて下さい。）

①トピックとして、意見を投稿する
②他の学生のトピック投稿を読み、**コメントする**

Example
Title: *Staff at a movie theater*

What is the hardest part of your job?

Title には仕事の名前をわかるように
書いて下さい。
Ex. Book store clerk
cashier at a supermarket
moving staff

I have to know about the schedule and showtimes for all the movies playing at the moment. Also, sometimes I feel stressed because I always have to stay inside in a dark theater. But I like this job because I can watch many movies with worker discounts.

Hi, Eriko. Remembering all the information must be very difficult. But I would like to work in a movie theater because I love movies!

Announcement for next week

On-demand
Unit9B
Smokejumper

MaNaBoの**Forum**
機能を使用します。

Real-time chat があります！
(Unit9の内容 ［Unusual Jobs］ に関わる**トピック**)

That's it for today!☺ See you soon!

NEVER SAY,
"I CAN'T"
ALWAYS SAY,
"ILL TRY"