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**Olha CHORNA,**  
 orcid.org/0000-0003-4344-6785  
 MA in Linguistics,  
 Teacher  
 Liko-School  
 (Kyiv, Ukraine) ochernaya96@gmail.com

**Galyna TSAPRO,**  
 orcid.org/0000-0002-0748-7531  
 PhD in Linguistics, Associate Professor,  
 Head of the English Language and Communication Department  
 Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University  
 (Kyiv, Ukraine) g.tsapro@kubg.edu.ua

### DEVELOPING READING SKILLS THROUGH JIGSAW TECHNIQUE: A CASE STUDY OF 5TH GRADERS

*The article is devoted to a case study of developing reading skills implementing jigsaw technique. Communicative language teaching involves students into cooperative activities and they feel more confident working in pairs and groups with their peers, practicing language skills and sharing ideas with other students. Reading is seen as an interactive process which helps students to learn to work in teams and to overcome difficulties cooperating with each other. The teaching proposal is based on the jigsaw technique, which presupposes developing students' language skills as well communication and interaction skills so that even students who are usually less active will be more productive in class, and in this way students' motivation is increased and they gain more enjoyment from the learning process. The teaching proposal is offered for 5<sup>th</sup> graders, it is based on the textbook Academic Stars and consists of several stages starting with the introduction to the topic offered to read, giving instructions for further activities. The first stage of the proposal contains dividing the class into three groups and working on the text and new vocabulary items. The next stage requires mixing teams, so that there is a representative from each home team in a new group, then continuing doing tasks given by the teacher and the third deals with checking reading understanding. Students can perform tasks only if they cooperate and support each other. At the fourth stage students return to home teams and share information about jobs they learned from other teams. This stage includes speaking based on the text studied in class. The fifth stage is self-assessment. For the last stage a questionnaire in Ukrainian is offered to students and results are discussed in class. The results obtained demonstrate that the students positively evaluated the jigsaw technique for the reading class, which was new for them. They were satisfied with the mode of work, underlined being more active in class and highly assessed their academic achievements during the session.*

**Key words:** reading skills, jigsaw technique, communicative learning, cooperative learning

**Ольга ЧОРНА,**  
 orcid.org/0000-0003-4344-6785  
 магістр філології,  
 вчитель  
 Ліко-школи  
 (Київ, Україна) ochernaya96@gmail.com

**Галина ЦАПРО,**  
 orcid.org/0000-0002-0748-7531  
 кандидат філологічних наук,  
 завідувач кафедри англійської мови та комунікації  
 Київського університету імені Бориса Грінченка  
 (Київ, Україна) g.tsapro@kubg.edu.ua

### РОЗВИТОК УМІНЬ ЧИТАННЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ТЕХНІКУ «ГРУПОВИЙ ПАЗЛ»: ДОСВІД НАВЧАННЯ П'ЯТИКЛАСНИКІВ

*Стаття присвячена дослідженню розвитку навичок читання з використанням техніки «груповий пазл». Комунікативне навчання мови залучає учнів до спільної діяльності, і вони почуваються більш впевнено, працюючи*

в парах і групах зі своїми однолітками, практикуючи мовні навички та ділячись ідеями з іншими учнями. Читання розглядається як інтерактивний процес, який допомагає учням навчитися працювати в командах і долати труднощі, співпрацюючи один з одним. Методична розробка базується на техніці «груповий пазл», яка передбачає розвиток мовних навичок учнів, а також навичок спілкування та взаємодії, щоб навіть учні, які зазвичай менш активні, були більш продуктивними на уроці, що сприяє підвищенню мотивації учнів і отримання більшого задоволення від процесу навчання. Методична розробка пропонується для учнів 5 класу, вона базується на підручнику *Academic Stars* і складається з кількох етапів, починаючи зі вступу до теми, що пропонується для читання, та вказівки для подальшої діяльності. Перший етап розробки включає поділ класу на три групи та роботу над текстом із новим вокабуляром. Наступний етап вимагає змішування команд таким чином, щоб у новій групі був представник від кожної домашньої команди, потім учні продовжують виконання завдань, запропонованих учителем. Третій етап стосується перевірки розуміння прочитаного. Учні можуть виконувати завдання лише за умови співпраці та підтримки один одного. На четвертому етапі учні повертаються до домашніх команд і діляться інформацією, яку вони отримали від інших команд. Цей етап включає говоріння на базі вивченого на уроці тексту. П'ятий етап – самооцінка. На останньому етапі студентам пропонується анкета українською мовою, а результати обговорюються в класі. Отримані результати свідчать про те, що учні позитивно оцінили нову для них техніку «груповий пазл» на уроці читання. Вони залишилися задоволені таким видом роботи, підкреслили свою активність на уроці та високо оцінили свої навчальні досягнення під час заняття.

**Ключові слова:** уміння читання, техніка «груповий пазл», комунікативне навчання, спільне навчання

**Introduction.** The Jigsaw technique can diversify monotonous classroom activities pushing students to cooperate, drawing them in what is going in the classroom, it can also motivate them to develop the necessary skills for both team work and individual performance. The paper is devoted to a case study of teaching reading to the 5th graders through Jigsaw technique. As this technique was used with these students for the first time, the hypothesis is that the students might like cooperative learning, they will get engaged in the reading process deeper and evaluate themselves highly. The questionnaire is used to check the expected results.

**Theory review.** Methods, techniques and approaches to teaching foreign languages are under constant change. Educators look for most appropriate ways to lead their students to success. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seems to be one of the most popular and efficient approach used in schools.

The background of CLT dated from the late 1960s (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). CLT engages learners in really meaningful communication (Galloway, 1993). Communicative competence is seen as important as linguistic competence. The core idea is that the approach enables students to use their acquired skills in a meaningful way. As stated by Thornbury (2006: 36-37), «*the communicative approach is an umbrella term used to describe a major shift in emphasis in language teaching that occurred in Europe in the 1970s. Essentially, the shift was away from teaching language systems (such as vocabulary and grammar) in isolation to teaching people how these systems are used in real communication*». In order to implement communicative strategies in the classroom, teachers must consider which communicative activities are appropriate for their learners.

CLT presupposes students' cooperation in the classroom. Cooperative learning is a strategy of a

small group of students working together to achieve academic purposes by students' collaborative efforts. The activities can range from simple to difficult and more complicated, solving problems together. In other words, cooperative learning means working together to achieve a final outcome.

There are five elements that make cooperative learning more productive (Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Botha, 2021):

1. Positive independence. In a learning process, before starting to work with the tasks, the teacher must clearly explain the purpose and results that students must achieve. They should work as a team. In other words, if a single member of the team is defeat, the whole group will fail. Positive independence creates a sense of responsibility not for their own, but for group efforts.

2. Interpersonal and small group skills. Work in a group, in other words, teamwork.

3. Face-to-face cooperation. Each student shares and respects each other opinion, support and help each other efforts also, it is eye contact.

4. Individual and group accountability. Each student is responsible for himself and the work what he/she is doing. The main task of the group is to be accountable for achieving goals.

5. Group processing. How well or how bad the team is working. How good they achieve their main goals. In other words, always improving the process of learning.

**Jigsaw technique.** One of the varieties of the cooperative learning structure is well known as the Jigsaw technique. The general features of it are considered to belong to cooperative learning, which involves and motivates the study of foreign languages. By providing learners with interesting materials, the variety of the tasks makes the difficult process of acquiring a foreign language less difficult for students.

Practice as a standard procedure of involving some groups of students and teaching each other indicates that they are involved in cooperation. In cooperative learning the teacher's and students' roles may change. For example, while working in groups some students are appointed to be coordinators in this way performing the teacher's role. By participating in pair or small group discussion learners listen to each other and share their ideas and points of view, and in this way, they learn how to cooperate within the group as well as improving their communication skills.

The Jigsaw technique was invented by the psychologist Elliot Aronson in 1971 in Texas. This task focused on communication and on relation between groups of students.

Tamah, (2007) mentioned that the Jigsaw technique displays some benefits for learners. Firstly, because it allows learners to increase their active participation in the course, to take part in group learning, instead of working alone. The method allows to create a positive atmosphere where students are more motivated to be involved in the learning process. Students also become more interactive with each other as compared to traditional methods of instruction. Another great aspect of the Jigsaw technique is that it also allows learners to learn from each other, get some experience and even learn from other students' mistakes analyzing the material studied and correcting one another, which can help them to learn the material more productively. It also creates an opportunity for learners to practice their skills, in this case, communicative skills. In addition, there are numerous guides of how to organize the productive activity in class. This factor makes preparation for teaching easier and less time consuming. To work more effectively, dominant students and slow students may be joined in one team. In this case, learners understand the responsibility of each other and they start to work more effectively. Thus, their ability to be dominant may lessen while working in the team and, as a result, there is more productive work of the whole team. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a lecturer or deliverer of knowledge while students are «in their turn» knowledge gatherers and synthesizers.

According to Mengduo and Xiaoling (2001), one of the benefits of the Jigsaw technique is students' increased attention and awareness. Students are responsible for one specific chunk of information and they learn the topic at hand. Learners are more likely to be more effectively engaged in classroom activities and be more aware of their own participation. It is easier for learners to communicate ideas as they are more confident working with peers. Students listen

attentively and respond to the ideas of their peers and friends more immediately.

However, we think, the teacher may face some drawbacks while using the Jigsaw technique in his/her class:

- not equal participation of all students in classroom activities;
- the possibility of transmitting inaccurate information;
- dislike of students of each other;
- shyness of students to communicate with other students;
- not being familiar with such activities;
- not possessing enough features of autonomous learners;
- inheritance of others' mistakes;
- the material being difficult to process;
- uneven number of students or not enough students for the prepared material.

To sum up, the Jigsaw technique has more advantages than disadvantages as any disadvantage may be solved by teachers' reflection on their students' needs, by anticipating possible difficulties, and by thorough preparation for teaching. It is considered that the Jigsaw method can be a huge success in organizing not only classroom activities but also in uniting students with each other and building competitive spirit as well as improving leadership skills. However, this task is not the only classroom activity that may be effectively used in the classroom for developing communicative skills. The Jigsaw may be easily combined with other teaching techniques to make the process of learning efficient.

**Teaching proposal.** Reading skills are of great importance for learners. It is a well-known notion that reading is a receptive skill. However, the fact that «*it is receptive does not mean that it is passive: reading is an active, even interactive process*» (Thornbury 2006: 190). In classrooms texts are used with slightly different purposes from the ones that they were originally created for. They are rather used for developing some particular skills than to get pleasure or information from reading even though sometimes all these goals may be successfully combined. As we have mentioned above, the Jigsaw technique does not only improve communicative skills. It is a method for grouping, creating a friendly atmosphere and it even may serve as conflict resolution among students in the class. During the sessions of our unit, secondary education students are expected to cooperate through new learning contact and to be encouraged to develop communication skills.

The session is designed for two classes of 12 students in each. The level of English is A2. The main problem in both classes is that there are

some active and some passive students. Hence, our objective in the class is to motivate the whole class to be active and take part in all activities. The purpose during sessions is to improve learners' abilities to work together as well as reading skills, so that they collaborate together working on the activities and to promote communicative skills. Due to cooperative learning, their abilities will increase. The other aim is to help students with difficulties to work in groups and to be more active in class. The Jigsaw activities will decrease teacher speaking time, as it gives the opportunity to concentrate on student-centered teaching. It will increase students' self-confidence as well as their cooperative skill, develop better team spirit, and build positive rapport in the class.

In general, the sessions will be given as following: firstly, the teacher introduces the topic of the new module «Cool jobs» and encourages students to share what kind of jobs they consider exciting. Secondly, the teacher introduces vocabulary units dealing with jobs and the whole class starts reading the first part of the text (see pic. 1).

After the introduction activities, the Jigsaw technique starts:

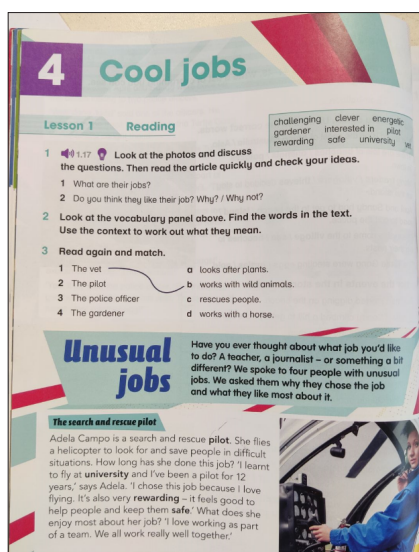
1. The first step, the students will be divided into 3 groups and will begin to work separately with the text for about 5-10 minutes paying attention to the lexemes in bold. They are provided with their parts of the text (see pic. 2).

2. At the next stage students are mixed so that there is a representative from each home team in the new mixed team and they work on vocabulary exercises offered by the teacher: matching the words with their definitions (see pic. 3).

The teacher circulates and checks every student, whether the groups can cope with task correctly. In addition, a very important goal is to test pronunciation of every student so that other students understand what they hear from their mates. The students continue working with the essential vocabulary of Unit 4 doing exercises in the Workbook (see pic. 4).

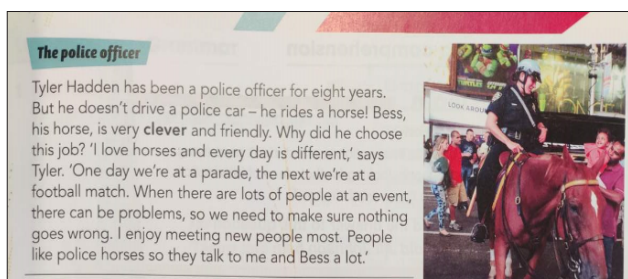
3. Then follows the stage of checking reading understanding. The teacher offers the card for marking statements as TRUE or FALSE (see pic. 5).

The students can do it only exchanging the information taken from their part of the reading task. The important thing here is to correct the wrong statements. The teacher continues monitoring the process.



Pic. 1. The text for reading

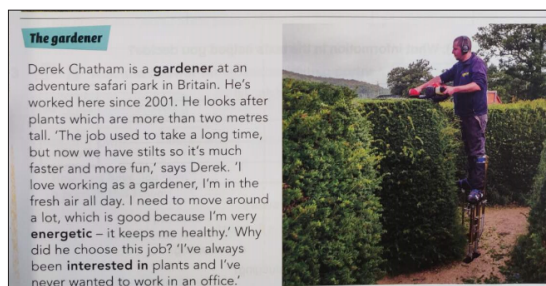
Card 1



Card 2



Card 3



Pic. 2. Cards for groups

<b>SAFE</b>	<b>ENERGETIC</b>	This means you're out of danger. Someone who makes sick animals better as a job. A place where some people study after they finish school. This describes something that makes you feel important and enjoyable. Someone who flies a plane as a job. Intelligent and good at learning things. Someone who looks after a garden as a job. This describes someone who is active and full of energy. Liking something and wanting to learn more about it.
<b>GARDENER</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY</b>	
<b>CHALLENGING</b>	<b>CLEVER</b>	
<b>PILOT</b>	<b>INTERESTED IN</b>	
<b>VET</b>	<b>REWARDING</b>	

Pic. 3. Cards for matching words and definitions

**Lesson 1 Vocabulary**

1 Look and read. Choose the correct words and write them on the lines. There is one example.

gardener pilot vet university interested in  
challenging energetic clever rewarding safe

1 This means you're out of danger. \_\_\_\_\_ safe

2 Someone who makes sick animals better as a job. \_\_\_\_\_

3 A place where some people study after they finish school. \_\_\_\_\_

4 This describes something that makes you feel important or useful. \_\_\_\_\_

5 This describes an activity which is difficult, but interesting and enjoyable. \_\_\_\_\_

6 Someone who flies a plane as a job. \_\_\_\_\_

7 Intelligent and good at learning things. \_\_\_\_\_


8 Someone who looks after a garden as a job. \_\_\_\_\_

9 This describes someone who is active and full of energy. \_\_\_\_\_

10 Liking something and wanting to learn more about it. \_\_\_\_\_

2 Complete the text with the words from Activity 1.

My name is Sara Barton and I work at the same adventure safari park as Derek Chatham. He's the <sup>1</sup> gardener here and cuts the tall plants. I'm a <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and I work with the animals. Before I studied at <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, I wanted to be a <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and fly planes. You need to be <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to do both jobs, but I'm happy that I chose this job. It can be difficult sometimes – looking after lions is more <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ than cats or rabbits, but it's also a very <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ job. It feels good to help sick animals and keep them <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. I'm very <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ wildlife, but I sometimes do more <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ activities like karate.



Pic. 4. Exercises from Workbook for mixed groups

4. The last phase presupposes working in home teams telling the team members about any job that is not mentioned in their part of reading.

5. The evaluation is based on self-assessment. The students are offered a questionnaire consisting of 6 statements: 1) I liked today's session; 2) I worked better today than usual; 3) I worked on ... % of my potential; 4) I liked to be responsible; 5) I felt more confident when I worked in teams of peers; 6) I would give myself ... grades.

The questionnaire results are discussed in class. The students are allowed to use their native language. The results demonstrate that 74% of the students liked the reading lesson, stating that 72% of them worked harder than usual. 84 % of the students worked hard at the lesson pointing out that worked from 75 till 100% of their potential (see pic. 6), that proves a high level of engagement into activities offered in class.

<i>Read the statements and decide if they are TRUE or FALSE</i>		
<b>№</b>	<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>T/F</b>
	Jill is a pilot and Derek is a gardener.	
	Jill has worked with wild animals since she left university and Tyler has been a police officer for 18 years.	
	Tyler has got a horse, Bess, and Jill has got a baby elephant.	
	Derek chose the job because he has always been interested in plants and Jill chose the job because it's exciting.	
	Tyler chose the job because he loves horses and Jill chose the job because there's always something new and challenging.	
	Tyler chose the job because every day is different and Derek chose the job because he wanted to work in the office.	
	Derek is healthy because he moves around a lot and Tyler talks to a lot of people because they like his horse.	
	Derek works as a gardener in South Africa and Jill works as a vet at a safari park.	
	Tyler makes sure nothing goes wrong at an event and Jill makes sure animals are healthy.	
	Tyler works at parades and football matches and Derek works in the fresh air.	
	Jill likes her job most because working with wildlife is very special and Tyler likes his job most because he often meets new people.	
	Derek thinks that working with stilts is not fun and Jill thinks that only some animals can teach us something different.	

Pic. 5. T/F statements for mixed groups



Pic. 6. Answers to Question 3

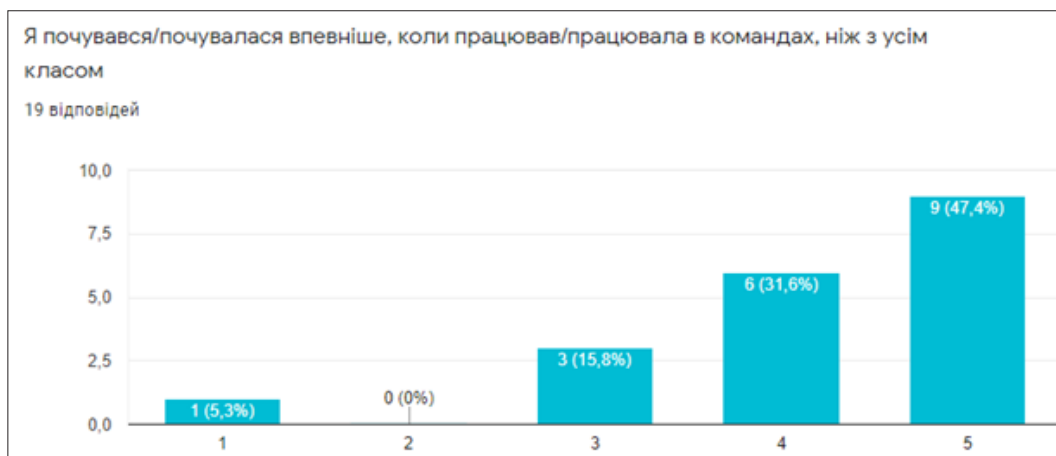
53% of the students liked to be responsible for performing tasks and in this way being responsible for the whole team. Their answers clearly show that working with peers gave them more confidence (see pic 7), 79% of the students specified it in their answers.

Self-assessment shows (see pic. 8) that all the students thought that they deserve high grades despite

the fact that one student admitted not working to their full potential.

In general, the students demonstrated favourable attitude to the new for them teaching technique and shared positive emotions from working in teams.

**Conclusions.** According to CLT the aim of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in the target language. CLT presupposes a teacher to be



Pic. 7. Answers to Question 5



Pic. 8. Self-Assessment

a facilitator, who helps his/her students to achieve some particular results acquiring different language skills, and not an instructor who gives some passive guidance without forming necessary communicative skills. The aim of sessions is to create a truly positive atmosphere giving students the opportunity to exchange their personal experiences. Students are motivated to concentrate on their personal learning success.

Jigsaw technique can be one of the most motivating language learning techniques, where students themselves play an important role in their

own learning process. Interactive tasks encourage students to collaborate in a group; allows students to be independent, to become autonomous learners and make decisions without the help of the teacher.

Eventually, we have presented a plan of a reading session for 5<sup>th</sup> graders using Jigsaw techniques. We have offered an evaluation technique in the form of a questionnaire. The results obtained demonstrate after an intensive lesson of practicing reading skills using Jigsaw techniques, students highly evaluated their achievements giving positive feedback to the offered methodological procedure at the session.

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