

THE ROLE OF GROUP WORK IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

This research paper focuses on the important role of group work in teaching a foreign language. Groupwork is often used to help the students practise their verbal skills as well as in teaching them to work together. The study has also shown that teachers find using group work in their lessons useful.

Keywords: Group work, teacher attitudes, second language, third language

Introduction

Group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills. However without careful planning and facilitation, group work can frustrate students and instructors, and feel like a waste of time. It is recommended to help implementing group work successfully in classroom. For this, there are some suggestions. These are:

- Identify the instructional objectives. Determine what you want to achieve through the small group activity, both academically (e.g., knowledge of a topic) and socially (e.g., listening skills). The activity should relate closely to the learning objective(s) and class content, and must be designed to help students learn.
- Assign group tasks that encourage involvement and interdependence. All of group members should feel personal responsibility to achieve the success on the task together with their teammates and realize that their individual success depends on the group's success. Johnson, and Smith (2014) refer to this as positive interdependence and argue that this type of cooperative learning aims to result in learners promoting each other's success.
- Decide on group size. The size chosen will depend on the number of students, the size of the classroom, the variety of voices needed within a group, and the task assigned. Groups of four-five tend to balance the needs for diversity, productivity,

active participation, and cohesion. The less skillful the group members, the smaller the groups should be (Gross Davis, 1993).

- Decide how you will divide students into groups. Division according to the students' choice is quickest, especially for large and small classes, but this often means that students want to work together with friends or with the same people. To vary group composition and increase diversity within groups, randomly assign students to groups by counting off and grouping them according to number or choosing colorful stickers. Collect a data card from each student on the first day of class to glean important information about their backgrounds, knowledge, and interests. Alternately, ask students to express a preference (e.g., list three students with whom they would most like to work or two topics they would most like to study), and keep their preferences in mind as you assign groups.

- Allow sufficient time for group work. Consider that time should be enough to do tasks for attendees. Estimate the amount of time that subgroups need to complete the activity. Also plenary session is important that groups' results can be implemented or unclear issues and questions can be discussed.

- Design collaborative work in various forms: pairs, small groups, large groups, etc. Some students might be better at contributing after they have had time to digest material, while others might be better at thinking on the spot. Other students prefer working in large groups but actively contribute in pairs. All variants should be valued and included.

- Explain the task clearly. This means that giving clear information about the task is vital, that is, both telling students exactly what they have to do and describing what the final product of their group work will look like. It is an effective way to prepare written or visual instructions (e.g., charts, sequential diagrams, pictures videos) for students. Remember to include estimating time for activities.

- Ask students to reflect on the process of the group work. They may do so either written or orally. This helps them discover what they learned and how they functioned in the group. Also it gives you a sense of their response to group work.

Cohen defines group work as "students working together in a small group enough so that everyone can participate on a task that has been clearly assigned". The fact that the different members of a group bring different knowledge to the gathering that the more members there are in a group the more knowledge they have available. Sjodin also points out that if there are more members in one group it causes some difficulties to work in a given task. According to Stensaasen and Sletta there are various types of groups. People standing in line waiting for something are a group of people, this type of group they define as a non-social group. This is not the type of group meant when discussing group work they define this type of group as a social group. An example of their definition of what a social group is : "A group consists of two or more

people who have a mutual influence on each other and are mutually dependant on another in the sense that that they have to trust each other to get their needs satisfied and achieve their goals". After giving this definition Stensaasen and Sletta go on to state the three criteria that make a social group. The first one, a group consists of two or more people. The second one, mutual influence, the members of a group need to be engaged in some form of social interaction. The third criteria, mutual dependence, what one member does has meaning to the other members. According to the given examples I think that a group should include approximately 2 to 5 members. This means that time can be a problem if group members are more. Because different people have different information so that it can take time to share each data to each other. The upper limit of five students has been set so that the group is still small enough that the students are all able to participate on the assigned task.

In addition, group work can be implemented in the classroom through a number of tasks or activities with which students can practice the target language. These activities are game, role play, project, information gap, jig saw, think pair and share, debate, and prioritizing. Also teachers always remember that group work is effective and interesting as it helps facilitators motivate and encourage their learners while conducting lessons. Also students learn how to work in a group and how to respect each during the processes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper offers effective strategies and ways to teach English as a foreign language to the learners. Group work refers to learning experiences in which students work together on the same task. Group work can help build a positive and engaging learning community through peer learning and teaching. Another importance of this, when students work together to tackle problems, they gain knowledge together and students may learn effectively working cooperatively in diverse groups, working in competition with other students.

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