

The Effectiveness of Group Works in English Language Classrooms: Soran University as an Example.

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to observe the effectiveness of using groups in English language classes. Group working is a meaning-making process where teacher, learner, content and environment are at play. The aim of group working is to use the functions of language; learners in groups exchange ideas with each other, also encourage, help and challenge each other which make them critical and creative thinker. This study examines second and third stage learners at faculty of Arts, Soran University through a designed questionnaire. The study reveals that the teachers should pay more attention to the principles of group working.

Key words: Group working, English language, language learning, activities.

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Introduction:

Obviously, group working is a necessity of language classes where the aim is communication, the role of learners in group working is active while the role of the teachers are facilitator, and it shows a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach. The learners play different roles during working in groups and it will make them to be responsible for their own learning inside and outside the class. Moreover, they learn the result of group working that is favorable and more functional than individual working.

Additionally, they exchange ideas and thoughts with other members in the group, some information that they did not know or they could not understand it before, so they can obtain the information and learn, it is possible to learn from each other, at the same time they may learn from their peers better than teachers. Finally, during all of these exchanges of ideas and acting different roles, they use English language as a mean of communication, therefore, providing a suitable environment for the learners to work in groups and use a language as a vital element in learning language.

Literature Review:

Group work is an essential technique that the teachers rely on in their language classes in order to enable the learners to use the language.

Burke (2011: p.89), states that, group work is the process of working or preparation of the combination of two or more individuals on a particular subject. Groups may contain individuals of different nations, levels and ages.

Groups are designed for effective communication among students, and increasing students' clarity about intended outcomes (Gower, Philips and Walters: 2009, p.23). Certainly, through group work learners can use target language in a meaningful context to share ideas with other members of the classroom, rather than idly accepting ideas from the teacher. It is the most important way in the process of learning to improve speaking skill.

Students who work in a small group always attempt to learn and understand materials that have been taught in the classroom in order to participate in the task. Additionally, the information will remain for a longer time (Davis (1993) cited in Chen 2004, p.5).

Moreover, students will be centered rather than teachers, by discussing and engaging in their activity, rather than accepting ideas from the teacher only (Chen 2004, p.4 & Hamoady 2011, p.2).

Also, in groups students can answer specific questions or analyze points to other members (Busy teacher 2007). In this way, it benefits both sides, the student who answered the question and the student who got the answer or point. But at the same time, as Freeman & Greenacre (cited in Burke 2011, p. 91), mention that working in groups sometimes is a problem, because some members do not participate in the activities. And, students do not pitch and help other members. Most of the times, one or two members will control the group and do the entire task. Some learners in a group may rely too heavily on others to do the task.

In addition, Hamoady (2011, p. 13), explores that talkative students usually dominate the group activity, and do not allow the language production of their partners. In most of language classes there are some students that their use of language is better than others, or their level is advanced, in such cases they can find more chance to participate.

According to Dorney and Murphy (2009, p.18), there are two basic facts in forming groups. The first fact is that groups have their own properties which are different from the time that the learners do not work in groups, and therefore they behave differently and according to the task. The second fact is that groups can be studied generally. In spite of the fact that the aims of the different groups change, but they share the same basic categories. However, one of the biggest problems in most English groups is using native language by members which result to destroy the aim of learning language in groups (Chen 2004, p.5). Also, Gower, Philips and Walters (2009, p.21), mention that group work is one of effective activities which increase interaction among the members.

Material and Approach

In this paper, an education group was surveyed in Soran University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The data were collected from 60 students who were randomly selected, by the use of a questionnaire survey. The questions were self-constructed. The questions for this survey included questions on personal background, age (lowest range was 19 and the highest was 22), by considering gender, marital status, with other questions about group works and the language classroom.

The paper aims:

- finding the effectiveness of working in groups in English classes.

- finding the frustrations of the process.

Approach of Analysis

The data were analysed by using descriptive statistical techniques by computing Mean, standard deviation, and chi-square test of Independence to examine the validity of the questions. The Chi-Square Test of Independence shows the possibility of a relation between dependent variable and independent variables. If the finding is equal or less than the null hypothesis, it means that the independent variable related to independent variable, but if it's higher than null hypothesis, there is no relation (Kent State University, 2017).

Result and Discussion

Table 1 represents the socio-demographic characteristics of students in the study. According to the field survey of respondents, 46.7% were male, 53.3% were female, also, 20.0% of the learners are 19 years old, and 36.7% are 20 years old, further 23.3% are 21 years old and the last age of learners 22 years old 20.0%. According to the survey, about 78.3% of the respondents are single.

Table (1) presents the descriptive statistics (frequency statistics) of the independent variables, (demographics).

Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
Age	19	12	20.0
	20	22	36.7
	21	14	23.3
	22	12	20.0
	Total	60	100.0
Gender	Male	28	46.7
	Female	32	53.3
	Total	60	100.0
Marital-status	Married	13	78.3
	Single	47	21.7
	Total	60	100.0

The dependent variable (group works) was analyzed with the descriptive statistics (frequency distribution). The next table shows the learners' satisfaction toward group working.

Table (2) presents the result of the analyzed overall customer satisfaction.

Depend variables		frequency	Percentage %
Group work	Agree	35	58.3
	Disagree	25	41.7
	Total	60	100.0

The result demonstrates that 58.3% of the learners agreed that the group working creates a suitable environment to use the language while 41.7% of the participants disagreed with the above statement. It shows that the learners have a positive attitude toward the effectiveness of group working in language classes.

However, table 3 shows that many of the respondents (46.7%) did agree with using group increase interaction between teachers and students in big classes, with 33.3% of the respondents strongly agreed. According to this table, respondent 20.0% disagreed with using group increase interaction between teachers and students in big classes.

But 35.0% of respondents had strongly agreed with the item which is; Student use of native language while preparing an activity, Most of the respondents 40.0% have agreed, 25.0% of respondents disagreed. Next item of this table Group can be a change for low motivated students to hide from the activity 36.7% of respondents strongly agreed, also 35.0% agreed and 28.3% did not agree, the illustration of this result shows that the teachers should deal carefully with the low motivated learners during

working groups. In addition, 36.7% of respondents had disagreed, 35.5% of respondents were agreed, and 28.3% of respondents have strongly agreed that pair is better than groups of three or more as they have more opportunity to discuss and participate.

Table (3) Activity

Activity variables		frequency	Percentage %
Using group increase interaction between teachers and students in big classes	Strongly Agree	20	33.3
	Agree	28	46.7
	Disagree	12	20.0
	Total	60	100.0
Student use native language (Kurdish), while preparing an activity	Strongly Agree	15	25.0
	Agree	24	40.0
	Disagree	21	35.0
	Total	60	100.0
Group can be a chance for low motivated students to hide from the activity	Strongly Agree	22	36.7
	Agree	21	35.0
	Disagree	17	28.3
	Total	60	100.0

Pair is better than groups of three or more as they have more opportunity to discuss and participate	Strongly Agree	17	28.3
	Agree	21	35.0
	Disagree	22	36.7
	Total	60	100.0

According to the first item in table 4, nearly 48.3% of students agreed, also 6.7% of respondents disagreed and 45.0% of respondents strongly agreed on (students feel more comfortable to share ideas in small groups rather than whole class). Regarding the next item (talkative students dominate group task and do all the work on their own way), 18.3% disagreed, 20.0% of respondents strongly agreed and 61.7% of respondents agreed. Another field is (group working is better than working individually), 50.0% of respondents strongly agreed, and 36.7% of respondents agreed with 13.3% of respondents disagreed. For the last item, 60.0%% of respondents agreed, 25.0% of respondents disagreed and 15.0% of respondents strongly agreed that (group working is a chance for low motivated students to use English language).

Table (4) / Environment

Environment Variables		frequency	Percentage %
Students feel more	Strongly Agree	27	45.0

comfortable to share ideas in small groups rather than whole class	Agree	29	48.3
	Disagree	4	6.7
	Total	60	100.0
Talkative students dominate group task and do all the work on their own way	Strongly Agree	12	20.0
	Agree	37	61.7
	Disagree	11	18.3
	Total	60	100.0
Group working is better than working individually	Strongly Agree	30	50.0
	Agree	22	36.7
	Disagree	8	13.3
	Total	60	100.0
Group working is a chance for low motivated students to use English language	Strongly Agree	9	15.0
	Agree	36	60.0
	Disagree	15	25.0
	Total	60	100.0

The sample characteristics in the usage of the critical thinking are summarized in Table 5. It shows the 51.7% of respondents agreed, 33.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 15.0% of respondents did not agree that (the student learn more from working in groups and remember more). Focused to discuss that (groups take more time as we have various views), 68.3% agreed, 16.7% strongly agreed and 15.0% of respondents disagreed. Moreover, according to the next item, 51.7% of respondents agreed, 35.0% of respondents strongly agreed and 13.3% of respondents disagreed. The findings of this table are important because make learners to think critically is one of the main aim of teaching process.

Table (5) / Critical thinking

Critical thinkin Variables		frequency	Percentage %
Student learn more From working in groups And remember more	Strongly Agree	20	33.3
	Agree	31	51.7
	Disagree	9	15.0
	Total	60	100.0
Discussion in group	Strongly Agree	10	16.7
	Agree	41	68.3

take More time as we have Various views	Disagree	9	15.0
	Total	60	100.0
Students learn to Think critically	Strongly Agree	21	35.0
	Agree	31	51.7
	Disagree	8	13.3
	Total	60	100.0

Regarding table 6 and its first item; (the working in group improves listening and speaking skills) 61.7% of respondents agreed, 26.7 of respondents strongly agreed and 11.7% of respondents disagreed. Further, 45.0% of respondents agreed, 26.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 28.3% of respondents disagreed that (the groups increase social skills among students).

Table (6) / Skills

Skill Variables		frequency	Percentage %
working in grouimproves	Strongly Agree	16	26.7

listening and speaking skills	Agree	37	61.7
	Disagree	7	11.7
	Total	60	100.0
Groups increase social skills among students	Strongly Agree	16	26.7
	Agree	27	45.0
	Disagree	17	28.3
	Total	60	100.0

Table 7 shows the mean values to the age demographic in the study area, 20.43%, of respondents.

Table (7) / Age demographic mean

Variables	Age
Mean	20.43
Std.deviation	1.031

The result in table 8, is a result of chi-square test for independence which compares the relation of two categorical variables in a table (Statisticshowtocom, 2017).

The result demonstrates that there is no relationship between gender and group working; the interpretation of the result is that gender has non-significant impact on student groups' perception of how well the groups meet the requirements and expectations.

At the same time, the result shows that there is no relationship between the age group, marital-status, and group working. Therefore, this means that all of the demographic variables have an insignificant impact on how students evaluate group performance.

The findings also indicate that there is a relationship between students learn more from working in groups and remember more. Groups increase social skills among students and students learn to think critically. However, the results mean that variables have a significant impact on group work, it means the implication of this result is that groups create suitable environment for students to use the English language.

Regarding the rest of the questions, there is no significant relationship between them and dependent variable which is creating a suitable environment for students to use the English language. This result could be due to the fact that we cannot still apply group works properly in our language classes, therefore it's important to review the process and to apply the principles of group work is a proper approach because the aim of the group working is not only to divide students into some groups and let them go, but the teachers should observe them carefully, especially in the early stages, in order to make sure that they are on the safe side.

Table (8) / Chi square test

Variables	Overall		Chi-square test (P – value)
	Disagree	Agree	

Gender	Male	9	19	0.070 ^a (0.791)
	Female	16	16	
Age group	0-19	5	7	0.655 ^a (0.884)
	19-20	8	14	
	20-21	7	7	
	21-22	5	7	
Marital-statues	Married	20	27	0.070 ^a (0.791)
	Single	5	8	
Working in group improves listening and speaking skills	Strongly Agree	6	10	0.887 ^a (0.642)
	Agree	17	20	
	Disagree	2	5	
Using group increases interaction between teachers and students in big classes	Strongly Agree	8	12	0.039 ^a (0.981)
	Agree	12	16	
	Disagree	5	7	
Students feel more comfortable to share ideas in small groups rather than whole class	Strongly Agree	11	16	3.388 ^a (0.184)
	Agree	14	15	
	Disagree	0	4	

Talkative students dominate group task and do all the work on their own way	Strongly Agree	4	8	0.749 ^a (0.688)
	Agree	17	20	
	Disagree	4	7	
Students use native language while preparing an activity	Strongly Agree	7	10	0.056 ^a (0.973)
	Agree	10	13	
	Disagree	8	12	
Students learn more from working in groups and remember more	Strongly Agree	13	7	7.009 ^a (0.030)
	Agree	10	21	
	Disagree	2	7	
Groups increase social skills among students	Strongly Agree	5	11	6.453 ^a (0.040)
	Agree	16	11	
	Disagree	4	13	
Group working is better than working individually	Strongly Agree	14	16	1.228 ^a (0.541)
	Agree	9	13	
	Disagree	2	6	
Groups	Strongly	13	16	0.796 ^a

can be a chance for low motivated students to hide from the activities	Agree			(0. 672)
	Agree	8	15	
	Disagree	4	4	
Discussions in group take more time as we have various views	Strongly Agree	3	7	0. 673 ^a (0. 714)
	Agree	18	23	
	Disagree	4	5	
Pair groups is better than groups of three or more as they have more opportunity to discuss and participate	Strongly Agree	8	9	2.314 ^a (0.314)
	Agree	6	15	
	Disagree	11	11	
Group working is a chance for low motivated students to use English language	Strongly Agree	4	5	0.571 ^a (0.751)
	Agree	16	20	
	Disagree	5	10	
Students learn To think Critically	Strongly Agree	9	12	6.988 ^a (0.030)
	Agree	16	15	
	Disagree	0	8	

Conclusion:

This study reveals insight into different perspectives of using group works in English classes. Nowadays, the core of language learning is students-centered approach, where the learners are responsible for their own learning and the teachers are mentor. At the meantime, through group working, teachers can offer a suitable environment for the learners to use the language. The findings of the research reveal that the use of group work increases learners' social skills because the learners work with other members in one group with different background. Also, it argues that the use of groups makes learners to think more critically. Also, a significant finding of the study shows the importance of working in group reveals that the learners learn more in groups. While the learners have a positive attitude toward the effectiveness of group work in the language classes, the study proposes that the teachers should pay more attention to proper use of group work, apply group work principles and observe the groups carefully during working. There are some items which are important, but they have no significant relation to the dependent variable. This could be due to the real situation of application of group working in classes; therefore, the study recommends to conducting another study, but using an observation checklist and designs a questionnaire for teachers in order to get a better perception of the process.

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پوخته

کاریگه‌ری کاری به کومه‌ل له پوله‌کانی زمانی ئینگلیزی، زانکۆی

سۆران وهک نمونه

ئامانجی ئه‌و لیکۆلینه‌وهیه چاودی‌ری کردنی کاریگه‌ری به‌کاره‌یتانی کاری به کومه‌له له پوله‌کانی زمانی ئینگلیزی که وهک پالپشتیک بو فی‌ر بوونی زمان به کار ده‌هینریت. کاری به کومه‌ل پرۆسه‌یه‌کی به‌ره‌مداره که تینیدا مامۆستا، قوتابی، ناوه‌روک و ژینگه‌ رو‌ل ده‌بینن. ئامانجی کارکردنی به کومه‌ل به‌کاره‌یتانی کاراییه‌کانی زمانه، قوتابییه‌کان له گروپ بیرۆرا و زانست ئالۆگۆر

دهكهن و ههروهها يهكتر هاندهدن، يارمهتي و كيپرکتي يهكتر دهكهن له کاتي کارکرنی به کومه‌لدا، که وا له قوتابيه‌کان دهکات که به شيويه‌کي ره‌خنه‌گرانه و به‌ره‌مدارانه بير بکه‌نه‌وه. ئەم ليکولينه‌وه‌يه قوتابيانى پولى دووهم و ستيه‌مى زانکوى سوران، فاکه‌لتى ئاداب، به‌شى زمانى ئینگليزى وهک نموونه‌ى ليکولينه‌وه له ريگاي راپرسى نامه‌يهک وهرده‌گريت. ليکولينه‌وه‌که ئەوه دهرده‌خات که پيويسته ماموستاکان زياتر گرنگى به بنه‌ماکانى کارى به کومه‌ل له پوله‌کاندا بکه‌ن.

ملخص

تأثير العمل الجماعي في شعبات اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة سوران

نموذج

الهدف من هذا البحث هو مراقبة تأثير العمل الجماعي بين طلبة قسم الانجليزية. فالعمل الجماعي مشروع مثمر، حيث ان لكل من المعلم، الطالب و البيئة دور واضح فيه.

يعتبر الاستخدام العملي للغة من اهم اهداف العمل الجماعي، حيث ان الطلبة في هذه المجموعات يقومون بالتحدث فيما بينهم بحيث يشجع احدهم الآخر، و بالتالي يخلق نوعاً من المنافسة فيما بينهم ليدفع الطلبة نحو تفكير نقدي بناء.

اما عينة هذا البحث فهم طلبة المرحلة الثانية و الثالثة في قسم اللغة الانجليزية من كلية الآداب، جامعة سوران، من خلال الاطلاع على آراءهم عبر استبيان التي تم توزيعها عليهم حول تأثير العمل الجماعي بين الطلبة. تكشف الدراسة أن المعلمين يجب أن يعطي المزيد من الاهتمام لمبادئ العمل الجماعي.