

Group work within the scope of Teaching - Learning

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1-Introduction:-

1-1 Significance and the problem of the study:-

The significance of the study stems from the effective role of Group work technique in teaching English as a foreign language .

Most foreign language teachers want their students at the center of communication. Sauvignon (1983:65) demonstrates that "communicative competence is acquired through communication", and Communication in the foreign language is " the single greatest Challenge in the profession " .

Nowadays a new goal has been set around the world, that is, to develop the students` communicative competence. The idea is no longer more linguistic correctness, but the development of communicative and linguistic abilities of learners. Larsen Freeman (1986 :131) states that communicative competence involves being able to use the language appropriate to a given Social context ; to do this , students need knowledge of the forms , meanings and functions .

The need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from among these the most appropriate form that social context, and must also be able to merge the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors .

Harmer (1983:33) asserts that in order to enable students acquire the communicative efficiency, they must be helped to learn items of the language that they study side by side with a great deal of language use in communicative situations. In other words, students should be given practice not only in the structures of the language but also in the process of using them in real daily situations.

1-2 Aims of the study:-

The study aims at:

- 1- Presenting a comprehensive account of Group work in language learning and teaching.
- 2- Outlining some pedagogical implications that useful for teachers and learners.

1-3 limitations of the study:-

This study is limited to presenting Group work technique within the scope of teaching and learning English as a foreign language Emphasis is placed on pedagogical implications of this technique.

1-4 Definition of Basic Terms:-

1- Group work : finocchiaro and Brimful (1983 : 219) define Group work as "work in which the class broken into small groups of form three to eight students they work simultaneously on the some task , or be given different tastes of varied types or levels "

Al- Hamash (1985:88) states it as "more than one group of students can be engaged in language use simultaneously .The teacher just assists in facilitating the work and in solving some of the problems that might arise in the course of action".

2- Teaching is the process by means of which learning is expected to take place. Brown (1980: 8) states that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling learners to learn and setting the conditions for learning.

3- Learning is The process by which human beings acquire either their native speech or a foreign language learning as psychological and social activity is not fully under stood , chartman and stock (1976: 126).

2. Group Work within the Scope of Teaching / Learning EFL**2.1. Theoretical Background**

Conventionally, as Cortis (1977:1) has pointed out that there has been an increasing interest and interaction between teachers or group leaders and smaller groups. This movement has developed partly from the concern to avoid authoritarian structure in schools, often a direct reaction to the political

events of the 1930s, with strong moral or even religious underpinning and partly from the implications of progressive educational philosophies as Dewey's(1916).

Dewey's concern with the process of learning, rather than the content provides the basis for an emphasis on group work as a more efficient way of teaching subject matter.

Group work has grown from different roots and at different times; it was only beginning to be conscious of itself as a movement. Group work did not begin as a method of helping student to solve their problems, but a way of organizing students into group for purposes of self-help toward a better way of teaching. Rather, it came from education, especially from John Dewey's and from sociologists who were active in the self-help movements (Compton and Galaway, 1979: 350).

Group Work is the most satisfactory method for teaching oral work and far more oral practice; it is an attempt to solve serious linguistic and pedagogical problems. Lewis (1977: 289) suggests that the group work technique has been utilized effectively to facilitate individual growth and to give students a chance to help one another, to learn from one another, and to communicate with one another. Each group member, the group leader, and the group as a whole set specific objects for the group process and reach agreement on the kinds of help that they will try to provide for one another.

2.2 Organizing of Group Work

The organizing of the classroom in group work often involves students participating in small groups of various sizes. The group is made of 5-8 under the direction of a group leader (one of the students themselves). Group activities offer the opportunity of putting the language to a real and immediate use.

Byrne (1980: 64) summed up the basic considerations of organizing group work. These include:

A- Forming Groups

The size of the groups should be worked out in relation to the total number of students in the class. They should be 5-8 students in each group and not more than 5-6 groups in the class on the basis of mixed ability (clever and lazy students together); since as a role, students do help one another. Usually group work will involve some re-arrangement of the classroom furniture.

B- Group Leader

Each group should have its own leader or coordinator. The function of the group leader is not to dominate the group but to coordinate their activities and serve as a link between the group and the teacher.

C- Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is both in setting up the activities and in overseeing the students while they are in progress, (See 2.8)

D-Duration and Frequency

Many factors are involved here (the number of lessons per week, the level of the class, .etc.), but once the students have enough language for communication activities on however limited scale the teacher should try to provide some group work about one week for perhaps half a class period².

Hess (1996: 8) suggests the following consideration for every group. These should be:

- a chairperson who is responsible for work of the groups;
- a secretary who makes notes to used by the speakers;
- a dictionary keeper who looks up all the missing word;
- a monitor who is to make sure that every group makes use of the target language and;
- a spokesperson who explains the results achieved by the work of the group.

2.3 Characteristics of the Groups

The size of the group may be limited in order to provide better conditions; and special features of the group are the degree to which members come to know one another in the context of particular learning with the group concerned.

Powell (1969: 36) has mentioned the main features of group work learning as follows:

- 1-The group will quickly arrive at a standard to which it will work;
- 2-It can easily become antagonistic towards outsiders;
- 3-A hierarchy will tend to become established, and
- 4-In certain circumstances, small group can quickly accept false conclusions before which individuals would hesitate.

2.4 Principles of Group work

Al-Mutawa and Kailani (1989: 147) have summarized the following principles that may be taken into consideration in conducting a group activity:

1. The teacher should know the abilities and interests of each student in class so that he can organize homogeneous group,
2. Maximum student participation should be sought; if the discussion is to have general value, each student should feel a part of it,
3. Students should feel that the class participation is an important part of the day lesson,
4. The teacher must create an atmosphere, in which students feel free to raise questions without constraints,
5. The teacher should not confine class participation to a few students,
6. Students must learn to take turns in talking and to listen while others are speaking,
7. The teacher should not correct mistakes in English made during the activity. Correcting errors may discourage or inhibit students' attempts to use the language freely,
8. The direction of the discussion should be kept under control.

This can be achieved if procedures are established so that discussion allows maximum participation with minimum confusion, and

9. At the end of the activity, the teacher should make final comments, summaries, or give correct responses if required.

2.5 Teaching Aims of Group Work

The teaching aims of group work are often to encourage fluent, uninterrupted communication, even when the aim for the student might be to produce something with language material.

Beard and Books (1972: 126) have described the aim of using group discussion as follows;

- To provide student opportunities for questions;
- To help students understand the language material;
- To ensure that students are not getting lost in lecture courses;
- to aid students in solving problems;
- To give practice in oral presentation;
- To study one topic in depth;
- To ensure that principles and concepts are understood;
- To extend studies to topics to beyond those covered lectures;
- To change attitudes which is an important aim in a field such as social studies; and
- To provide feedback to staff on student's progress and attitudes or as to effectiveness of teaching.

Accordingly, Boyle and Young husband (1973: 24) demonstrate that "working as a member of a group, helping groups to form and to work towards their aims, understanding the roles of other students".

2.6 Introducing Group Work

The class is usually begun by explaining briefly the purposes and advantages of using group work in the classroom. However, there are some basic principles that the leader should adhere to in conducting a group work discussion. These are as follows:

- 1- Introduce the topic for discussion,
- 2- Begin the discussion,
- 3- Encourage general participation,
- 4- Keep the discussion on the right track,
- 5- Make occasional summaries,
- 6- Remain in the background, and
- 7- Conclude the discussion.

(See Keri tow et al., 1960: 128)

Gray (2000: 1), in a recent article "Group Work: Using Job Duties in the Classroom", summarizes the following steps to introduce group work:

- Group consists of 4-5 students.
- Each student must choose a job for group projects.
- The duties each job should be carried out to the best of the student's ability.
- Students should choose a different job for each group activity in order to give them a broader experience.
- The jobs and their responsibilities are as follows:
 1. Leader: this person is responsible for leading a group discussion. They should call on individual (speakers for the group), and make sure that everyone is included in the discussion. The leader also reports group progress to the teacher.
 2. Secretary: this person writes down details of the discussion.
 3. Timekeeper: this person keeps the group on task, and reports the time left for finishing the task.
 4. Barnstormer: when needed, this person leads the group in brainstorming session as well as recording outlines for the group.
 5. Co-leader (optional): If the group consists of five members, this person will aid and assist the leader when needed.

Thus, 4-5 members are ideal for group work-but when necessary Group activities can also be achieved with as few as three students with two of them taking more than one job.

2.7 Role of the Leader

It is necessary to have a leader to help the students in the group activity. Some of the more important functions of the leader are listed below.

1. He serves as group executive.
2. He assists the group in making plans.
3. He speaks for the group.
4. He coordinates the activities of the group.
5. He represents the group ideals.
6. He evaluates the progress of the group.

(See Kreitow et al., 1960: 98)

Young husband (1970: 42) states that "there was a need for both leadership groups and for the use of group work method. Leadership roles would change with changing priorities for action that the group meets for ". To support the significant role of the leader, Kreitlow et al. (1960: 98) have mentioned some qualifications of good leaders that prepare them for their position of leadership.

1. Knowledge-must is will informed.
2. Pleasing personality-must is able to draw students' attention.
3. Tact-must be respectful
4. Initiative must be able to take the right action at right time without being told.
5. Leadership skills-must know how to conduct meetings and guide thinking with ease.

2.8 Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher who deals with group work involves the following:

1. The teacher appoints group leader and gives them lists of lead questions.
2. The teacher circulates around the classroom, helping those who have troubles, getting started and answering questions.

3. The teacher makes a note of error and takes the student up at the end of the period of a lesson.
5. The teacher helps groups look at themselves and can make group work possible for them to help each other to more effective learning.
6. The teacher gets the group leaders organize things so that everyone is able to participate.
7. The teacher of a small group must of the following:
 - a. Predict a level of performance for the group, which is at once high and realistic,
 - b. Pay attention to problems and practically to the process of solving them; the students wait for the solutions,
 - c. Continue to maintain the coherence of the group long after its original purpose for coming together, which has ceased to exist, and
 - d. To ensure that development of mind, which is alert to the needs of the moment, must not be fostered at the expense of responsibility.
8. These are some steps the teacher must follow:
 - a) Select activities carefully,
 - b) Work out instruction for an activity carefully,
 - c) Present the activity to the class,
 - d) Monitor the students' performance,
 - e) Provide feedback and,
 - f) Keep a record; it is important to keep a record of the activities the teacher has done with a class,
9. The teacher must see group goals, individual goals, tasks, and activates, which have been clearly defined.
10. The teacher helps to mobilize the energies of group tasks and activates.
11. At the end of the activity, the teacher conducts a session to get feedback from the learners on their participation.

2.9 Group Work Evaluation

Group work Evaluation forms are simple questionnaires used to collect feedback on student's reactions to cooperate learning (where student's work in structured groups toward an agreed upon learning goal) and study groups (See Hulled, 2001: 1). In this respect, Butterfield (1982: 21) states that when the group work task has been completed, the teacher draws the class together again for some sort of feedback.

Group work evaluation can help students and teacher see what is going on well in a learning group; it gives students something to aim for, and provides the teacher with an opportunity to correct any common errors.

Day (1977:292) has described feedback and assessment in communication learning as follows:

1. Five students sit round a table and each has a numbered card in front of the teacher.
2. The participants are then given the rules of the exercise, which include the following:
 - a- They may only communicate by passing notes on the cards provided,
 - b- Students must not pass on cards they have already received themselves and they must not read notes passed between other students.
 - c- They are told by the teacher to whom they may pass cards.
 - d- They will be given a list of five symbols and they have to find out which symbols are common to the whole group.

These symbols are:

- 1) Four kinds of communication sets can be used:
 - a- The circle in which there are five communication channels,
 - b- The full circle in which each student may communicate with students sitting on each side of him,
 - c- The wheel: one student can communicate with all the others but they can only communicate with each other by going through him, and
 - d- The situation in which all the channels are open.

- 2) The time that is taken to produce correct answers can be recorded, as the cards are filled in the number of the messages sent in can counted.
- 3) The idea of knowledge of results or feedback has a long history. The idea is important because it suggests some basic characteristic of behavior.
- 4) Feedback may have three functions. These are: the information function (information about results of an action), the reinforcement function, and incentive function of reward and punishment.
- 5) Two main purposes of systems of assessment are:
 - (a) To provide feedback to students on their learning.
 - (b) To provide a "measure" of achievement (for the purposes of awarding a qualification very often).

2.10 Advantages and Disadvantages of Group Work:-

The advantages of organizing students into group in the classroom are the following:

- 1- Group work allows students to actively participate in the class with their fellow students, rather than idly accepting ideas from the teacher.
- 2- Group work gives them the opportunity to generate their own ideas.
- 3- Group work develops students' ability to articulate and respond to opinions, and to cooperate with others to solve problem.
- 4- It allows a break from the regular routine such as lectures, timed writing and exams.
- 5- It encourages critical thinking skills.
- 6-It allows students to pool their resources from each other.
- 7- Students can try out new ideas in a small group, which is less formal and threatening in structure than a whole classroom of students.
- 8- It increases the opportunity for students' practice.
- 9- It gives space for students' help and integration.

- 10- It increases motivation.
- 11- It builds of self- confidence.
- 12- It favors cooperative language learning.
- 13- It trains students to use the foreign language independently of the teacher.
- 14- Is sufficient to control over the general direction in which students make progress.
- 15- It is to require a number of small groups to discuss the same subject and then for each, to present his views and solutions to a formal meeting comprising all of the groups.
- 16- It provides everyone with decisions, which every group has reached and it acts as a directing and correcting influence on everyone.

The disadvantages which teachers mention in connection with group work in general are the following:

1. Group work may be difficult to control.
2. The students inevitably make mistakes, which the teacher can not correct continuously.
3. When a large class does group work, there may appear to be too much noise, and a lack of discipline.
4. The fixed furniture in some classrooms can complicate the physical arrangements; it may dominate group work.
5. Some talkative students may dominate group work, and block the language production of their partners.
6. Some students say nothing while others talk too much.
7. Students speaking their mother tongue make too many mistakes in the foreign language.
8. Students waste time of making too much noise.
9. Difficulty in recalling the attention of the whole class at the end of group work.
10. There may be problems of discipline from time to time. We have noted how it takes time for students to get used to new procedures.
11. The students are unable to have an opportunity to discuss difficult materials of the language.

12. Many of the groups might emotionally insecure, unstable, easily frightened and starved of joy.

2-11 conclusions:-

Using the traditional techniques in teaching a foreign language, students have displayed considerable weakness communicative skills, encourage participation, change the attitudes towards language learning and above all provided them a realistic opportunity to work with others in the classroom.

Group work improves student learning in the following aspects:

- 1- Give opportunities to ask questions
 - 2- Give opportunities for input and feed back, and
 - 3- provide more contact with student's accessibility
- Group work is a specific job duties help students define their individual great technique to motivate students toward a more active approach to learning specific job duties help students define their individual roles in the group process .

2.12 Suggestions of using Group work :-

Pattison (1987: 13) maintains that communication activity for group work can reduce the problems. Since many tasks depend on students sharing their information, everyone has to contribute. Language can be controlled by a language frame or model sentences, so that students are encouraged their speech to be more repetition.

The use of the mother tongue in group work can be avoided by:

- A- Deciding where the teacher places himself in the classroom;
- B- The groups nearest to the teacher are more likely to use English than those further away.
- C- The teacher takes an interest in what each group is doing and more around so that groups have less chance of switching act into their own language (Gower and Walters, 1983: 44).

Finocchiaro and Brimful (1983: 109) have mentioned practical suggestions of using group work; these are:

- 1- The teacher makes sure that the entire class meets together as often as possible.
- 2- The teacher writes the assignment for each group on the board.
- 3- The teacher selects a group leader and a group reporter from among the most able students within the group.
- 4- The teacher takes time to check the written work that each group may have been asked to do.
- 5- The teacher provides an audience situation before the entire class for members from groups to dramatize an original sustained dialogue or mini-dialogue, to engage in a role play of modules, or to talk about a book read in the native language or in the target language.
- 6- The report to the class and the ensuing discussion should be in the target language.

3- Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

The study recommends the following pedagogical implications:

- 1- In- service training in the use of Group work technique should be given to the EFL teachers.
- 2- Teachers should be encouraged to use this technique in teaching English
- 3- Emphasis should be placed on using Group work in the text book of English and in the teachers Guide.
- 4- Apart from Group work technique, the teacher should use different and new techniques in teaching English
- 5- Enjoyable language materials, activities and techniques in which students have the opportunities to produce the foreign language should be used by teachers of English mostly for interest and often to break the routine of working the English course activities.

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