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The role of cooperative learning strategies to enhance EFL learner's motivation

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Abstract
One of the goals of the study here is to make people lifelong language learners. Once a certain level of proficiency is achieved, people can be expected to perform self-study to attain their target and quarry.
Again, the study aims to determine the impact of cooperative leaning methods on EFL leaners' motivation. The study affords the definition of cooperative learning strategies by different scholars; the researcher has attempted to discuss the different definitions to make the ideas behind cooperative learning clear. Then the researcher shed a light on the history of the cooperative learning strategies. In addition to this study, it affords Theoretical Roots of Cooperative Learning such as Social Interdependence Theory, cognitive development & research, Motivational Theory, as well as Behavioural Learning Theory. Moreover, this study shows different types of cl such as Learning Together, Student Team Learning, jigsaw, and Group Investigation. Finally, the researcher commenced the study by suggesting that cooperative learning strategies enhance the EFL learners and scholars' motivation if the teacher applied the strategies in a scientific way.

Keywords: cooperative leaning, EFL learners, motivation

Introduction

Cooperative Learning

The importance of group work in developing students' communicative competence has been well recognized in the literature on second and foreign language teaching (Bailey, 2003; Ellis, 1994, 1999, 2009b; Harmer, 1998; 2007; Hedge, 2000; Nunan, 2003a; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The appropriate use of group work is considered the core of many modern teaching approaches, such as communicative language teaching, task-based language learning and interactive learning. Moreover, group skills have become essential for success in more and more professional contexts, which are increasingly characterized by intensive division of labour and thus call for a wealth of collaboration and teamwork across professions and cultures (Baloche, 1998; Gillies, 2007; Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Phipps, Phipps, Kask & Higgins, 2001). These group skills must be learned, however, and the classroom is a good place to begin this type of training‖ (Phipps *et al*., 2001, p. 20).
Cooperative learning (CL) is defined as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning‖ (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec 1998, p.1:5). It is often implemented through a set of highly structured, psychologically and sociologically based techniques‖ (Oxford, 1997, p. 444). A key point to accurately understand CL is that not all group work constitutes CL. What makes CL differ from other types of group work largely lies in its two fundamental elements: positive interdependence and individual accountability (Baloche, 1998; Brown & Thomson, 2000; Dishon & O'Leary, 1998; Gillies, 2007; High, 1994; Holt, 1993; Hornby, 2009; Johnson *et al*., 1998; Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; McCafferty, Jacobs & DaSilva Iddings, 2006; Slavin, 1995). Integration of positive interdependence into group work is very likely to result in mutual support and good cooperation among team members. Positive interdependence also generates peer norms favouring achievement, increases the quantity and quality of peer interaction, and thus creates a supportive and non-stressful learning environment. When students are clear about their individual accountability and specific roles in group work, they are more likely to engage in active participation and feel motivated to learn.

Hypothesis of the Proposed Thesis

1. To identify the effects of cooperative learning methods on the EFL learners' motivation.
2. Cooperative learning methods can influence on the EFL learners' motivation toward learning English positively.

Review of the Literature through the History

Cooperation has been an essential strategy for survival and development throughout human history. The equivalent of the old saying ―Two heads are better than one can be found in almost any language and any culture. In a similar vein, CL has a long history, dating back to the late eighteenth century, when Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell used and disseminated this form of instruction in England. In 1806, the concept and practices of CL were introduced to the United States with the opening of a Lancastrian school in New York (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994; Johnson *et al*., 1998) and started their long journey in the United States. In the following years of the early nineteenth century, the use of CL in the classroom was highlighted to promote the educational goals at that time, such as the Americanization of a diverse student

body and effectiveness in teaching a class involving mixed grades. Colonel Francis Parker was one of the most influential proponents of CL in the late nineteenth century. His fame and success originated in his suggestions of links between CL and democratic education, his enthusiasm to advocate for the use of CL in public schools, and his efforts to spread CL perspectives and practical procedures. His methods of structuring cooperative groups influenced American education through the turn of the century. In the early twentieth century, John Dewey (1924) developed Parker's connection between CL and democracy and extended the use of CL in his project method of instruction at school. Dewey maintained that building up a democratic and cooperative setting at schools is vital for individuals to be cooperative and live democratically in real life. Although the increasing emphasis on interpersonal competition made competitive and individual learning popular during the period from the 1930s to the early 1960s, CL advocates never lost their confidence and interest in the role of cooperation in education. During this time, Kurt Lewin (1935, 1948) and Morton Deutsch (1949) further developed their views of the group as a dynamic whole and formulated a theory of cooperation and competition. Around the late 1960s, based on Deutsch's perspectives, David Johnson and his brother Roger Johnson (Johnson *et al*., 1994, 1998) established social interdependence theory (see the section on social interdependence theory, pp. 18-19), initiated teacher training programs on CL, and established the Cooperative Learning Centre at the University of Minnesota. CL regained strength in the 1970s as a well-recognized effective school practice for ―providing students of different ethnic groups with opportunities for non-superficial, cooperative interactions (Slavin, 1995, p. 51).

Types of Cooperative Learning Methods

Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of studies of CL for the purpose of improving classroom instruction; however, a considerable amount of published research ―does not necessarily testify to the way CL methods are implemented in classrooms‖ (Sharan, 2002, p. 106). This calls into question the quality and adequacy of the research. This is because there are a variety of CL methods which ―share the idea that students work together to learn and are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own‖ (Slavin, 1995, p. 5). Different CL methods overlap but are not equivalent in terms of their components, procedures or their appropriateness for subject areas, school levels and educational settings. Generally speaking, there are six major CL methods: Learning Together created by David and Roger Johnson (1994a, 1994b), Student Team Learning by Robert Slavin (1994) and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins University, Structural Approach by Spencer Kagan (1994), Jigsaw by Elliot Aronson (1997) his colleagues in Austin, Texas, Group Investigation (GI) by Yeal Sharan and Shlomo Sharan (1994), and Complex Instruction by Elizabeth Cohen (1994) and her colleagues.

Learning in Collaboration

Learning Together provides a generic framework for applying CL in any subject area to learners of any age, which emphasizes the integrative use of three types of CL styles: informal CL, base group CL and formal CL. Informal CL refers to having students work together in temporary, ad-hoc groups and serves as a valuable aid for students to process their learning materials effectively during direct teaching. For instance, informal groups can be used to ―help set expectations as to what the lesson will cover, ensure that students cognitively process the material being taught, and ―provide closure to an instructional session (Johnson *et al*., 1998, p. 1:8). Base groups are long-term, heterogeneous CL groups with stable membership, aiming at providing constant support and motivation that group members need to achieve educational success instead of working together on a specific learning tasks or assignments. Base group members are like good friends and comprise a supportive learning community with an obligation to help each other in the academic field (J acobs, 2006). Formal groups, as the heart of the CL classroom, are often carefully formed according to certain principles (e.g. maximum heterogeneity) and aim at students achieving mutual learning goals through completing assigned tasks with group members cooperatively. It is assumed that any lesson or assignment may be reformulated to be cooperative. In Learning Together, teachers follow five major steps. First, they specify the objectives for the lesson either in terms of academic areas or cooperative skills. Second, they make several pre-instructional decisions on grouping students, assigning individual roles and tasks, and planning materials. Third, they specify the task and the positive interdependence, including explaining the learning task, structuring positive interrelations and individual responsibility among group members, then clarifying criteria for success and desired behavior. Fourth, they monitor students' learning and intervene within the groups, aiding in terms of academic knowledge and cooperative skills. Five, they evaluate students' learning and help students assess how well their groups work together. These five steps compose a general procedure and guideline for designing and conducting the whole process of cooperative lessons.

Cluster Learning

Student Team Learning methods stress the use of group goals and group success, which cannot be achieved until all group members have grasped the materials being taught. There are three central elements in Student Team Learning methods: team rewards, individual accountability, and equal opportunities for success. Successful teams earn their team rewards when their team performances are above pre-set assessment criteria. The overall performance of each team depends on the individual performance of all teammates on the assessment (e.g. quizzes or academic games) that students take individually without help from others; in this way, each member has his/her individual accountability for team success. Team rewards and individual accountability effectively engage teammates not only in working hard to get themselves prepared for a quiz but also in helping each other to make sure every member can do well. Equal opportunities for success mean that students contribute to their teams by improving on their own past performance (Slavin, 1995, p. 5); in other words, the more improvement points teammates gain, the more likely their team will succeed. This element allows students of different academic levels to be equally challenged

to contribute to their teams because they compete with themselves rather than with others. Research suggests that if students are rewarded for doing better than they have in the past, they will be more motivated to achieve than if they are rewarded for doing better than others‖ (Slavin, 1995, p. 5). The two principal Student Team Learning methods which are widely used include Student Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Team-Game-Tournament. The main idea behind the two methods is to motivate teammates in heterogeneous groups to help each other grasp the learning materials presented by the teacher. STAD can be used with students of all ages from elementary to tertiary level and is adaptable to most subject areas. In STAD, the cycle of instructional procedure involves five steps. First, the teacher gives a class presentation on learning materials. Second, students work together in their teams on the materials they just learned. Group work usually ―takes the form of students discussing problems together, comparing answers, and correcting any misconceptions if teammates make mistakes‖ (Slavin, 1994, p. 6). Third, following a couple of periods of teacher presentation and team practice, students take individual quizzes without teammates help. Fourth, individual improvement scores are calculated by comparison with their individual base scores, which indicate the level of their average academic performance in the past. Last, individual improvement scores of all teammates are added up to form the team scores and those teams whose scores exceed a certain criterion are recognized as high-performing teams with team rewards. Team-Game-Tournament, which is usually used for teaching mathematics at the elementary level, employs the same procedure as STAD apart from the replacement of quizzes with academic tournaments, in which students play academic games with members of other teams to contribute points to their team scores (Slavin, 1995, p. 6). In addition, there are another two Student Team Learning methods designed for subjects at grade levels: Team Accelerated Instruction for teaching mathematics at the elementary level, and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition for teaching reading and writing in the upper elementary level. In contrast to STAD and Team-Game-Tournament, these two methods involve individualized instruction for students of different academic levels. Specifically speaking, students are grouped in terms of their academic level and work on materials appropriate to their levels, while the teacher presents lessons which are adapted to each group's level. Thus, Team Accelerated Instruction and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition do not fit in with the common curricula which typically provide single-pace instruction for the class.

Jigsaw

Jigsaw was first designed in 1970s by Aronson and his colleagues, as an attempt to implement the desegregation of schools and build up good relations between children in multiracial situations. Its name derives from the metaphor of putting together the pieces of a puzzle to create a whole picture (Clarke, 1994, p. 36). The use of Jigsaw in the classroom ―curbs some of the undesirable aspects of excessive competition and increases the interest children have in cooperating with one another (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997, p. 14). The major vehicle of Jigsaw to make teammates positively interdependent is through task specialization within the team, which makes each member and his/her work valued by the others. Jigsaw fits best in the situations where learning is based on text-based materials that can be divided equally among students‖ (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997, p. 25) and each section of the text is distributed to only one member of the home team. Jigsaw typically involves three steps: first, students are divided into heterogeneous home groups, with each member assigned a particular section of the learning unit to study; second, students focusing on the same sections meet together in focus teams to explore the particular aspects; third, students return to their home groups to share with each other what they have learned in their focus groups so that everyone gets a whole picture of the learning unit. Slavin (1995) creates Jigsaw II by introducing two elements to Aronson's Jigsaw (which was renamed Jigsaw I by Slavin). The Original Jigsaw (or Jigsaw I) requires that learning materials be divided neatly into sections that are comprehensible by themselves. However, this rarely happens since all sections in a text are usually intertwined. Thus, teachers usually need to restructure learning materials, which greatly adds to their workload and thus make Jigsaw I less practical. In order to make use of existing textbooks, Jigsaw II proposes that all students read the whole text, but each team member be assigned a aspect to work on in the focus team. Second, home team recognition is introduced in Jigsaw II based on the average performance of all team members on a quiz which takes place after teamwork, as in the other Student Team Learning methods. However, there are some concerns that elements of CL might be missing in Jigsaw methods. A common issue is how to make students positively interdependent and sufficiently enthusiastic to help each other's learning in focus groups. This issue may become more critical in Jigsaw II where home teams' success is recognized. Home team recognition effectively consolidates the home team cohesion; but on the other hand, it is likely to build a competitive spirit between home teams and inhibit the mutual support within focus teams (Thomson, 2000).

Conclusion

The given academic research is based on an investigation for the implementation, enhancement, enactment, and coordination of cooperative learning strategies. Also, the paper reveals the developing theories and pedagogies of teaching English language in an effective way.

The study has found out the performance of EFL learners unparadoxically and sporadically through a comparative channel of several researches on learners.

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