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Collaborative Learning To Develop English Language Skills

Dr. K.P.Padmaja

SPW Degree & PG College, Tirupati, India

drpadmajakp304@gmail.com

Abstract:

Collaborative learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of collaborative and interactive activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. Students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Researchers report that students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups fare well in their classes. Collaborative instructional system advocates groups of three & five students to solve a problem or pose a question for an answer. In large classes groups so formed can be particularly useful to check on students understanding of the materials as also giving them an opportunity to apply what they are learning or to facilitate their learning. Collaborative learning has currently been employed in many institutions as a way of promoting communicative interaction in the classroom and is viewed as a learner-centered approach to teaching with advantages over teacher-fronted classroom methods. Collaborative learning fosters the development of critical thinking, discussions, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others ideas.

Keywords:

Classroom, learner-centred, critical thinking, facilitator, collaborative

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of information technology the need for good communication skills in English is ever-growing. It is also creating a huge demand for the teaching of English language in this global village. Due to this, the learning of English language has become a pre-requisite qualification for every 21st century man who would like to improve their English Language and get command over it. This has given scope to researchers, trainers and educators to design and examine various teaching methods and approaches so that the learners can be benefitted, improve their communication skills and get command over the English language.

Students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Researchers report that students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups fare well in their classes.

The teacher creates and provides opportunities as a facilitator for collaborative work and group learning, while offering students authentic learning tasks. Arrangement of small meeting areas where planning and collaboration can occur in the first requirement and the classroom should be organized with various resources for the students. Along with computers a

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variety of Magazines, newspapers and audio equipment would enable students to experience and interact with diverse media.

Collaborative instructional system advocates groups of three & five students to solve a problem or pose a question and an answer. In large classes groups so formed are particularly useful to check on students understanding the material as also giving them an opportunity to Apply what they are learning or to facilitate their learning.

Collaborative learning requires working together towards a common goal. This type of learning has been called by many names as co-operative learning, collective learning, peer teaching or team learning. What they have in common is that they incorporate group work. Collaboration entails the process of learning this may include students teaching one another, student teaching the teacher and of course they teaching the students, too. More importantly, it means students are responsible for one another's learning as their own and that reaching the goal implies that student helped each other to understand and learn. Collaborative learning aims at getting the students to take at most responsibility for working together, building knowing together, changing & evolving together and of improving together.

The basis of collaborative learning is construction. Knowledge is constructed and transformed by students learning process must be understood as something and does by activating already existent cognitive structure. Constructing new cognitive structures that accommodate input. Learners do not passively receive knowledge from teacher, teaching becomes a transaction between a stakeholders in the learning process.

The collaborative learning medium provides student opportunities to analyze, synthesize and evaluative ideas cooperatively. The informal setting facilitates discussion and interaction. The fact that students are actively exchange, debating and negotiating ideas within their groups including students interest in learning. Importantly by engaging discussion and taking responsibility for their learning, students are encouraged to become critical thinkers.

For collaborative learning to be effective there should be both group goals and individual accountability (Slavin) this means that the collaborative learning task would allow each member to be responsible for some concept necessary to complete the task. This implies that every group member learn their assigned concept and will be responsible for explaining/teaching this to other members of the group.

In Collaborative language learning group activities are the major mode of learning and a part of a comprehensive theory and system for the use of group work in teaching. The collaborative learning medium provides students with opportunities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate ideas cooperatively. The informal setting facilitates discussion and interaction. This group interaction helps students to learn from each other scholarship, skills and experiences. The use of discussion groups, group work and pair work has often been suggested in teaching English language and hence the suitability of their approach in Degree Colleges for English courses needs to be considered.

Collaborative learning shifts the responsibility for learning to the students in the role of researcher and self-directed learner, In order to work towards a collaborative learning approach the teacher must understand the students preferred learning styles and their own conceptions of learning. The collaborative learning classroom will strengthen the students learning in the classroom. It will help them become life long learners.

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The present curricula in the English language textbook prescribed for most of the undergraduate courses required to be updated and so designed as to meet the needs of the stakeholders and the demands of the employment market. Besides this the syllabus framed should be more activity-oriented serving a variety of language functions than more content based. As far as possible learning English language skills be given preference over mastering the subject.

The successful teaching and learning process is not possible without a proactive attitude of both the teacher and the taught towards what is happening in the classroom. Good teachers often compensate for deficiencies in the curriculum, the facilities or the resources they make use of in their teaching. At the same time responsibility of learning should also be realized on the part of students collaborating with what is undertaken by the teacher in the process of teaching and learning. A Proactive attitude and approach need be inculcated.

Need of the Study

To implement collaborative learning in developing English language skills, the English teachers have to adopt various activities such as role-play, debates, activities, case-based learning, classroom problems, and so on.

While doing collaborative activities, the learners most commonly practice the activities based on vocabulary and grammar that they have been learning in their classrooms.

To implement the latest strategies, techniques, methods, and approaches in teaching English language skills by doing activities in the classrooms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Collaborative learning involves groups of learners to accomplish the given tasks.
2. Collaborative learning develops problem-solving techniques among the learners.
3. Collaborative learning supports learning by doing method.
4. Collaborative learning promotes learner self-learning.

Scope of the Study

Effective learning takes place when the learning process is done in a learner-centred way. It is possible when the English language teachers apply various approaches and strategies that are suitable for their English language learners. The main concern of the teacher must be on the needs and interests of their students, and they have to involve their learners in doing work in Pairs or groups, as it enhances their knowledge as well as their learning skills. When the learners perform various activities in their classrooms in the form of tasks or projects, each learner of the group contributes something to the given task, and fruitful groups naturally learn through discussions, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others' ideas. The information that they converse in their discussions retain in their memory for a long time.

Data Collection

For the purpose of the present study, data has been collected from secondary sources, like books, journals, websites and also internet

LITERATURE REVIEW

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Collaborative learning enhances English language skills by fostering interaction, communication, and mutual support. Research highlights benefits, challenges, and effective strategies.

Benefits:

1. Improved Communication Skills: Collaborative learning encourages learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and clarify doubts. (Long & Porter, 1985)
2. Enhanced Language Practice: Learners engage in authentic interactions, practicing language skills in context. (Swain & Lapkin, 2000)
3. Increased Motivation: Collaborative environments promote learner engagement, motivation, and confidence. (Dörnyei, 2001)

Effective Strategies:

1. Peer-to-Peer Interactions: Pair and group work facilitate language practice and feedback. (Villamil & Guerrero, 1996)
2. Implementation
3. Clear instructions: provide clear instructions and expectations
4. Support and scaffolding: Offer support and scaffolding as needed
5. Feedback and assessment: provide constructive feedback and assess learner progress
6. Flexibility: Be flexible and adapt tasks to meet learners' needs.

Best practices:

1. Learner-centered: Design tasks that cater to learners' needs and interests
2. Collaborative: Encourage collaboration & peer interaction
3. Meaning focused: Focus on meaning and communication rather than just form.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges in Collaborative Learning

Core Strategies

1. Clear Instructions and Goals Establish clear expectations and objectives for group work.
2. Defined Roles and Responsibilities Assign specific roles to ensure participation and accountability.
3. Regular Feedback and Monitoring Provide ongoing feedback and support to groups.
4. Culturally Sensitive Grouping Consider learners' cultural backgrounds when forming groups.
5. Flexible Grouping Strategies Use various grouping strategies (e.g., random, interest-based) to promote diversity and inclusivity.
6. Teacher Support Provide ongoing support and training for teachers.
7. Face-to-Face Interaction Regular face-to-face interaction enhances speaking, listening, and communication skills.

Advanced Strategies and Supporting Theories

1. Task-Based Learning Collaborative tasks promote problem-solving, critical thinking, and language use. (Nunan, 2004)
2. Technology-Enhanced Collaboration Online platforms and tools facilitate remote collaboration, feedback, and language practice. (Hampel & Stickler, 2005)
3. Group Dynamics Manage group interactions, ensure participation, and address conflicts. (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006)
4. Language Proficiency Differences Accommodate varying language levels and abilities. (Littlewood, 2004)

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5. Assessment and Feedback Evaluate individual contributions and provide constructive feedback. (Hampel& Stickler, 2005)

DISCUSSION

Collaborative learning offers numerous benefits for English language development.

However, effective implementation requires:

1. Careful planning
2. Strategic grouping
3. Ongoing support

Challenges

1. Group dynamics: Managing group interactions, ensuring participation and addressing conflicts (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006)

2. Language proficiency differences: Accommodating varying language levels and abilities (Littlewood, 2004)

3. Assessment and feedback: Evaluating individual contributions and providing constructive feedback (Hampel & Stickler, 2005)

CONCLUSION

English language teaching reflects a wide spread desire in the language teaching community to develop means of allowing the learners to play a fuller, more active and participatory note in their language study, However, learner centeredness in ELT is not of a single school of thought but a result of the confluence of several innovative perspectives on language teaching. Among them, mention must be made of collaborative approach and teachers of English in Degree colleges may find it to be effective with re-structured and re-oriented English course books in respect of course content, teaching methods, examination and evaluation procedures.

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