

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING FOR TEACHING ENGLISH SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is an approach to organizing classroom activities which students work cooperatively in small teams with individuals of different talents, abilities and background to complete a common goal. The purpose of this critical review was to know about the strengths and the weakness of the journal is written by Dr. Dima Hijazi and Dr. Amal Al-Natour entitled teachers' attitudes toward using cooperative learning for teaching English skills. The journal was an action research study using means and standard deviation for the pre and post- tests of students' English language test to experimental and control groups. Means and standard deviations and T-Test were used for teachers' attitudes and measure the effect of experience and educational level variables. The findings of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the post- test between the control and the experimental groups in favor of the experimental group and there were statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes due to experience variable and educational level variable. This study was at seventh grade students in Zubaida secondary school for girls and Al Khansaa School for girls in Amman. The findings of the study of the journal indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the post- test between the control and the experimental groups in favor of the experimental group and there were statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes due to experience variable and educational level variable.

Keywords: Teachers' Attitudes; Cooperative Learning; Teaching English Skills

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a fundamental process of life. Every individual in the world has been learning about something new in his or her life. Through learning, he or she develops the modes of behavior by which he lives. All human activities and achievement manifest the result of learning. Learning may be viewed as a process, rather than a collection of factual and procedural knowledge. In learning process teacher can teach his or her students because he or she had learnt how to teach. Students can get high grade because he or she learns his or her lesson.

In teaching second language process, teacher will find many problems in teaching language skills. It is not simply because of the language is a foreign language, but also the condition of the class that commonly managed in large number of students or in the form of large class. To accomplish the lesson numerous techniques are used by teacher. They are used to help increase the students' self esteem. However before deciding on the learning techniques certain aspects need to be taken into consideration such as the material to be taught and how it can be formed to fit into the different learning methods, the students to be taught and their details such as age, level of education and finally the conditions or environment under which the teaching is to take place. A good learning style should present the student with concepts, information that seems familiar and interesting. At every step the control of the teacher should be available to the student. So the teacher can measure the core understanding of the student about the subject matter.

Any learning style should be one that motivates the students in their effort to gain information. It should give confidence to the learners and can improve the students' skills in English. So each student might be good if they get a good Learning' strategy and method. The methods have to contribute to academic gains.

The cooperative learning is one of the recommended teaching-learning techniques in which students achieve learning goals by helping each other in a social setting. The cooperative learning is defined as a teaching grouping in which small groups of students work together to achieve a common goal. Students

support each other, assume responsibility for their own and each other's learning, employ group related social skills, and evaluate the group's progress. It is expected that group work can influence academic progress more positively than other forms of teaching and learning.

In this paper I will criticize the issue written by Dr. Dima Hijazi and Dr. Amal Al-Natour in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business* at Al Yarmouk University entitled "Teachers' attitudes towards using cooperative learning for teaching English skills". It will concern to observe the weaknesses and the strangeness on it however I strongly present the good side of the journal because my perspective is the cooperative learning influence to students' achievement. Teaching English skills may have a positive effect on students' achievement.

DISCUSSION

Summary

In the journal the author describes that the main purpose of cooperative learning is to actively involve students and improve student understand of a subject in the learning process. By combining teamwork and individual accountability, students work toward acquiring both knowledge and social skills. It is a teaching strategy which allows students to work together in small groups with individuals of various talents, abilities and backgrounds to accomplish a common goal. Each individual team member is responsible for learning the material and also for helping the other members of the team learn. In the group the students are able to increase their motivation to do academic work, to achieve higher levels of achievement, to increase time on task, to build cross-ethnic friendships, to experience enhanced self-esteem, to build life-long interaction and communication skills, and to master the habits of mind (critical, creative and self-regulated) which needed to function as productive members of society.

The researchers used descriptive methods (means and standard deviation) for pre and post tests for English language test to experimental and control groups. It is used to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards using cooperative learning in teaching English skills and to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the students who were taught by using cooperative learning and those who didn't use cooperative learning. Based on the research conducted by the author shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the students who were taught by using cooperative learning and the students who were taught by using the traditional way on the posttest, was significantly better than that of the control group. And to answer the second question about teachers' attitudes towards using cooperative learning the result indicates that the experiences have an effect on teachers' attitudes and there are statistically significant differences due to educational level variable in favor of Bachelor group. It can be conclude that being involved in a cooperative learning community will help students express higher levels of enthusiasm and curiosity toward learning through this strategy. Hence, it will be of great benefit to students' community if these activities are incorporated as it will enhance their learning of the different English language skills.

Critique

The bad point of the journal is the cooperative learning might not be beneficial for every student. Teachers need to start by teaching social skills before put the cooperative learning because some students cannot get used to the new strategy. There are types of students who prefer to work alone. Because of this, teachers need to teach the students how to ask for help, how to listen to others and how to give opinion (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Students sometimes feel uncomfortable with the number of group members. Therefore, it is advisable that the teacher should discuss the group size with the students and if necessary, modify some aspects of methodology. Bigger groups make students feel threatened and hinder them from producing a quality output. The students also tend to get over-excited and thus create a very noisy atmosphere. Therefore, the quiet signal is an appropriate signal for students to stop talking and to give their full attention to the teacher. It works well in a classroom. When the teacher raises his/her hand, the students do the same action to give full attention to the teacher (Kagan, 1992).

However, majority of the students would benefit both socially and academically if cooperative learning is implemented in the classroom. It can enhance achievement in English language acquisition in a class. Cooperative learning activities can help maximize the performance of the students in acquiring the English language as well as interpersonal skills needed for success in school and society.

In teaching language the cooperative learning is an effective method to obtain learning goals. It shows that group work can influence academic progress more positively than other forms of teaching and learning because it emphasizes on the existance of activity and interaction among the students to motivate and help each other in effort to master the material for maximal achievemant.

In the research journal shows that statistically significant differences teacher' attitudes towards using cooperative learning for teaching English skills due to educational level variable of the teachers. The teachers' educational level has an effect on teacher's attitudes. I agree with that because

I believe that cooperative learning plays a significant role. It seems more effective than applying another method in classrooms because it can drive teachers to find new ways to teach not only problem solving but all concepts to students. The group interaction has allowed students to feel more empowered. They have a strong connection to their class, group, and education. It helps them to better understand the concepts they are working with or learning about.

The students who were taught by using cooperative learning and those who didn't use cooperative learning are differences in achievement and also the educational level have an effect on teachers' attitudes. It can prove that the students were satisfied with the planning and monitoring process used in cooperative learning. The students believed that group tasks make learning interesting, it provides fun, done in satisfactory situation and their socialization enhance. Students also expressed that during the assigned work, they felt responsibility of work, committed to success of each member and their group.

The cooperative learning also increase students' motivation, help them to develop a positive image of self and others and also help in the development of other important social skills. Mengduo and Xiaoling (2000) said that the cooperative learning is importance of motivating students to communicate and accomplish the task together in cooperative learning. Its purpose was to find an effective way to promote student participation as well as a useful technique to focus in the classroom where students can experience success.

In the journal quoted that the use of cooperative learning (CL) helps students clarify concepts and ideas through discussion and debate. I agree with the idea because the cooperative learning contributes to the development of critical thinking if the right strategy is chosen. It is the most successful classrooms are those that encourage students to think in critical thinking. A learner who thinks critically creates the most advantageous classroom situation because he or she can ask appropriate questions and gather relevant information about his or her subject which contributes to learners' success. Research by Klimovienė et al (2006) report the cooperative learning is a valuable tool for developing critical thinking. Students who mastered the skills of cooperative learning they mastered the skills of critical thinking as well. The relationship between students' success in mastering critical thinking and good language command has become evident as well. It has been proved that critical and creative thinking is interrelated and complementary aspects of thinking. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the development of both critical and creative thinking in order to improve critical thinking skills. Cooperative learning is a valuable tool for developing critical thinking. Jacobs and Ng (1997) believe that cooperative learning has been associated with gains which are improving quality thinking. The cooperative learning might play a role in creating thinking classrooms. It supports an environment in which students feel encouraged to take part in higher order thinking.

Teaching English using cooperative learning method is able to encourage pupil to become more active in the learning process. In the journal stated that cooperative work will certainly helps decreasing apprehension toward English language learning in general. I do agree with the idea because in learning English the students must have ability to express their own ideas and to share these ideas by communicating with other people. Therefore, the cooperative group plays significant role and increase confidence for students to produce and comprehend the material by feedback from their peers. Meng (2010) states with learners working in groups or pairs they learn how to read and speak effectively, how to work out what texts mean how to gather important information, how to work well in cooperation with others and how to solve language problems in a systematic way. They become skilled at cooperating with others, and express their own opinions, ideas and feelings, guided by the teacher. In a word, cooperative learning method helps students become a real language user in and out of English classroom. Tsailing (2002) also states cooperative learning is a powerful teaching method that can boost the students' motivation through a supportive climate of caring and sharing in the classroom that makes English learning more enjoyable, lively, and encouraging, which, in turn, enhances the students' motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. And according to Rani (2009) being working in a team, gives a person an opportunity to share himself deeply, meaningfully with others and have access to the enormous resources and potential of other human beings. Students will be motivated to help one another to master academic materials. In cooperative learning the

students demonstrate more confidence in writing and decrease their apprehensions towards writing. Teaching through this would be equally interesting both for the teacher and the students. The students working with partners ask each other for help and improve their attitude towards writing. They will show high level of curiosity in being taught through cooperative learning tasks. Thus, an incorporation of these activities will be of great benefit to the student community and help them enhance their language skill

Argument

I believe that it is a good journal because it well organized and grammatical, with accurate spelling and punctuation. Each paragraph was unified each other by mutually supported sentences. The authors focus on thing expressed in the topic sentence. The authors also select the most obvious topics to write. It was focus on the issue about Teachers' attitudes towards using cooperative learning for teaching English skills. The step on the research methodology structurally. In the introduction of the journal very clearly mentioning the specific object reasearch and attempted to solve. It gave brief priview of what is to come and hold the reader's attention with the excellent choice words. In obtaining and measuring data of research method was validity because it was providing the credibility factor. Next in the conclusions the authors summarize the issue statement with the supporting points of the journal.

I do agree with the author view that teachers' attitudes towards using cooperative learning for teaching English skills. The students will gain the knowledge based on feedback from teachers. The students were satisfied with the planning and monitoring process used in cooperative learning. They felt that group tasks clear their concepts more then individual learning. It also makes learning interesting, it provides fun, done in satisfactory situation and their socialization enhance. Students also expressed that during the assigned work, they felt responsibility of work, committed to success of each member and their group.

CONCLUSION

Overall, cooperative learning has been shown to enhance learning. The cooperative learning in teaching English is a better approach in teaching English. It is a possible strategy to solve the problems of low English proficiency and low motivation in EFL teaching because cooperative learning methods able to motivate students in learning and developing students knowledge. The method can improve the students' oral communicative competence of the target language and more effective in improving English comprehension skills of learners when it compared with traditional teaching methods. It also helps students to build communication, leadership and trust-building skills. Slavin (1985) who mentioned that cooperative learning can bring positive effects on academic achievement as well as positive aspects on social relationship among all students. He added that when compared with traditional method, cooperative learning also promotes higher achievement and greater motivation than individual learning. Furthermore, the cooperative learning strategy should be continued as a teaching method to enhance the social communication among the students in the group. It offers the students the chance to develop positive, productive relationships among themselves. Cooperative teams may offer some students the academic support that will help them to excel in their studies. Students need to interact with each others in teams in the workplace of the future

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