

Effects of Group Work to Improve Sophomore Students' Speaking Skill in English Department of Education Faculty at Balkh University

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the significance of using group work to improve sophomore students' speaking skill in English Department of Education Faculty at Balkh University. The present work is mainly attempts to investigate the students' awareness of the important of speaking skills in learning English. The results of this study show that most of the students think that speaking is difficult for them because of the lack of real practice. They all agreed that cooperative group working will help them to talk more in a speaking class. The findings of this research show evidence that group work in a good method for developing sophomore students' speaking skill and increase their classroom oral participation in interactional environment.

Keywords- group work, speaking skill, language learning, cooperative, sophomore students.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancements in higher education and the increasing need for effective communication skills, speaking ability has become a key component of students' academic and professional success. Speaking skills are essential not only in educational settings but also in social and professional interactions (Baker, 2016). Consequently, numerous studies have explored effective methods for improving this skill.

One of the innovative and effective approaches in language education and speaking skills development is group work. Group work allows students to engage in an interactive and dynamic environment, facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences, and enabling them to learn from one another (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). This method not only enhances students' confidence but also provides an appropriate platform for dialogue, offering opportunities to practice speaking skills.

The most important part of learning a new language is to be able to communicate in that language.

Sophomore students in English department have many problems while speaking. Developing the students speaking skill in English is one of the most important problem that teachers try to achieve. The challenges the researchers found here is that the learners are almost passive participants and they have little interest to speak. It is clear that knowing a language and speaking are not the same, because speaking is a skill which has to be developed and practiced in the class. We all accepted that speaking is one of the four micro language skills. The students who learn English as a foreign language in Education Faculty, speaking can be seen as the most difficult task for them. This is because of some reasons. First, the class is large. There are often 70 to 80 students in a class it is difficult for teachers to participate every student individually. Second, learners are lack of background knowledge of the topic to talk. Third, they feel shy about their performance in the target language or they do not want to lose face in front of their classmates so they are reluctant to speak in English. These problems can be solved by participation in speaking activities in group works that can limit the

embarrassment while speaking. It means group work can improve quite warm, friendly atmospheres in students that feel comfortable. Also, group work demonstrates the ability of students to communicate, discuss and cooperate with other students. In addition, group work is an effective method of dividing the workload. Furthermore, it allows for small sections or units to complete a whole project. As a result, group work can improve students' practice, the quality their speaking, their motivation, and positive classroom atmosphere in teaching and learning speaking skill.

Research Questions

In this article the writers try to find answers for the given questions:

1. How can group working techniques affect the sophomore students' speaking skills?
2. What are teachers' awareness of the using group work?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To find out group working techniques to be effective for sophomore students' speaking skills.
2. To identify teachers' awareness of using group work.

Research Hypothesis

The researchers hypothesize are:

1. Working in groups by teachers in EFL classes facilitate speaking skill and motivates students to involve in the lesson.
2. Students of English Department of Education Faculty use group work activities in teaching speaking.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

When people think about the activities of teaching and learning, especially when it talks about a group work, they imagine a picture of students sitting in rows listening to a teacher who stands in front of them. In fact, it is the most common form of teacher-student interaction in many cultures. Group working is one way to deliver the materials well to reach the target of teaching. Harmer (2001) indicated that one of the advantages of group work is to improve students' autonomy by allowing learners to make their decision in the group without being told what to do by teacher. As a result, a group of five students can be good participants. Lie (2002) stated that cooperative learning through group work is a method that allow the students to cooperate with complete and structural tasks. Good (2003) defines that group work gives the opportunities for all the students to speak the new language. Also it allows them to learn from each other.

Holt; et al in Good (2003) in Merla (2019) indicate that the advantages of group work: the cooperative learning technique used in a group work is a good strategy for teaching, especially it is useful for students who learn English as a second language. It is a

teaching and learning strategy that can be used for all types of students and can take various forms in the classroom.

Nguyen (2020) defined that speaking is one of the four skills that is essential for effective communication language in both first and second language learning. The main objective of learning any foreign language is to be able to speak and communicate. So speaking is very important that provide students with the opportunity to have successful conversation. The learning of English speaking skills is a preference for a second language learners. Students sometimes evaluate their success in how they improve their spoken language ability. Teachers use direct approaches that concentrate on particular aspects of oral interaction.

According to Harmer (2007) as cited in Nguyen (2020) human communication is a complex process, they need communication while they want to say something and transmit information. They also use communication when they are going to inform about something. People use language according to their own goals. For this reason, they should be both listeners and speakers at the same time for a good communication. Speaking is very important in second language learning. Therefore, it has been overlooked in universities for different reasons like emphasize on grammar and unfavorable teacher-student proportions.

According to Bueno, Madrid, & McLaren (2006) as cited in Nguyen (2020) one of the most difficult skills that language learners face in learning a language is speaking skill. It is delivered that speaking is one of the most important four language skills. Many students indicate that they have spent so many years studying English language but cannot speak correctly.

Speaking Difficulties in Foreign Language Learning

The aim of teaching the oral skills is to enhance the student's communicative efficiency, but when they want to speak there is always hesitation, repetition, and too much pauses. Students sometimes find some problem when practicing the speaking skill due to a lack of interest in the subject, lack of self-confidence, and etc. Ur (1991) defined that there are four main problems in getting students speak in the foreign language in the classroom which are: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use.

Inhibition

This problem occurs when EFL learners attempt to participate in the classroom, make them unfortunately face many problems that decrease the students' ability to speak confidently in front of their classmates.

Nothing to say

The common expressions EFL students say when they are asked to participate in a given topic is "I have nothing to talk about", "I don't know", "no comment" or they keep silent. Ur (1991) as cited in Nguyen (2020) confirmed that when he stated "even if

they are not inhibited, you often hear learners complain that they cannot think of anything to say”.

Low or uneven participation

This problem refers to the amount of each student’s talking time. Only one student can talk at a time if he or she is to be heard, and in a large group this means that each one will have only very little talking time. This problem is compounded by the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.

Mother tongue use

EFL students like to use mother tongue outside and even inside the classroom because they feel more comfortable. In classes where all or a number of the students share the same mother tongue, they may tend to use it, because it is easier and it feels unnatural to speak to one another in a foreign language. Therefore, students will never be able to use the foreign language correctly if they keep using their mother tongue.

III. METHODOLOGY

The data for the present research is based on a quantitative method. The researcher uses survey method and make questionnaire to find the solutions. 80 undergraduate students from English department participate in this research. 54 students are female and 26 are male participants. The students are from third and fourth classes. The questions are in descriptive form. They ask to share their experiences and background information about the effects of group work in sophomore students in speaking class. The collected data were then analyzed and the percentages were calculated using Microsoft Excel and then converted into visual tables and charts.

Data Collection

Data collection is a very important part of any research and it helps the researcher to complete his or her study by collecting relevant data and information through a questionnaire. This questionnaire is consisted some open ended questions about effects of group work to improve sophomore students’ speaking skill in English Department of Education Faculty at Balkh University.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed and break down through formula and charts in Microsoft Excel.

Finding

This research paper is designed to implement at the university level and is based on the survey of student’s opinions where most of the students have problem in speaking skill. Throughout this research the researchers gathered the answers for the following questionnaires and concluded the findings based on student’s experience and personal ideas.

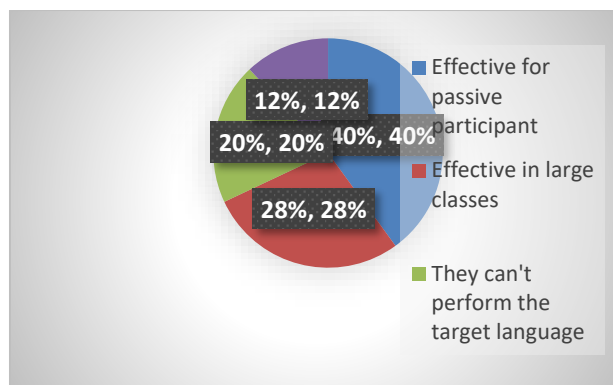


Figure 1: To find out group working techniques to be effective for sophomore students’ speaking skills.

Figure one states that 40% of students at English department declared that group working is effective for passive participants. While 28% of them argued that it is effective in large classes. Meanwhile, 20% of students confirmed that group working is effective for shy students that they cannot perform the target language. The remaining 12% of participants answered that group work can improve quite warm, friendly atmosphere in class.

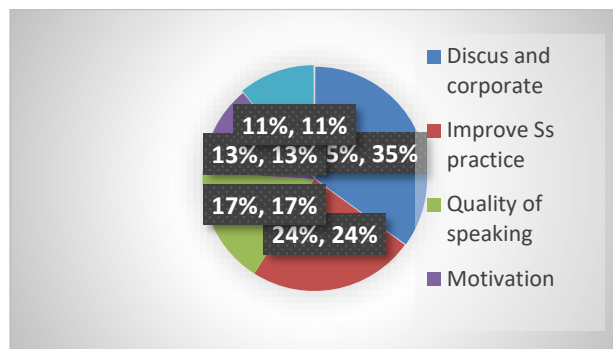


Figure2: To identify teachers’ awareness of using group work.

Figure 2 illustrates that 35% of students believe that if teachers use group work in speaking class students can discuss and cooperate with each other. 24% of participants agreed that using group work can improve students practice. About 17% of them were answered that it improves the quality of speaking. In addition, 13% of students are satisfied that if teachers use group work, student’s motivation will be improved. The other 11% of participants agreed that do not using mother tongue while group working help students to improve their speaking skill.

Table 1: Mean Scores of Speaking Skills Before and After Group Work

Status	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Before Group Work	3	0.5
After Group Work	4.5	0.6

The results indicate a significant increase in the mean score of speaking skills from 3.0 (before group work) to 4.5 (after group work). The standard deviation, which measures the variability of the scores, is relatively low, suggesting that most students experienced similar improvements in their speaking abilities due to group work. This indicates that group activities are effective in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Table 2: Impact of Group Work on Students' Confidence

Response	Count	Percentage
Very High	45	45%
High	30	30%
Moderate	15	15%
Low	10	10%
Total	100	100%

In this table, the majority of students (75%) reported high or very high levels of confidence in their speaking abilities after participating in group work. Specifically, 45% felt "very high" confidence, while 30% felt "high" confidence. This suggests that group work not only improves speaking skills but also significantly boosts students' self-confidence in their communication abilities.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Between Group Work and Speaking Skills

Group Work	Speaking Skills	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Group Work	Speaking Skills	0.75	0.001

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.75$) indicates a strong positive relationship between group work and speaking skills, meaning that as participation in group work increases, so does the improvement in speaking skills. The p-value of 0.001 confirms that this correlation is statistically significant, suggesting that group work is a reliable method for enhancing speaking skills among students.

Table 4: Summary of Research Findings

Hypothesis	Result	p-value
The impact of group work on improving speaking skills	Supported	0.001

This table summarizes the hypotheses tested in the study. The hypothesis that group work has a positive impact on improving speaking skills is supported, with a p-value of 0.001 indicating strong statistical significance. This reinforces the conclusion that implementing group work in educational settings can

lead to significant improvements in students' speaking abilities.

IV. DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to find out the effective ways of group working to improve sophomore students' speaking skill in English Department of Education Faculty at Balkh University. After analyzing the data and reviewing the literature the researchers found some important points to improve speaking skill. Some of them are improving passive participants, increase shyness from students, and make the atmosphere of the class friendly. In addition, students can communicate with each other. Also working in groups is a good method for dividing the work load. Furthermore, it is more student-centered and effective in getting every student to be involved in the tasks.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results the researchers have concluded that the use of group work brings the benefits in improving the students' speaking fluency. It provides more opportunities for the students to use English which allows a greater quantity of language practice. Also group work brings a good atmosphere for the students and make them confidence in speaking. As a result, the students have favorable attitudes to the use of group work activities in the classroom. Moreover, group working is useful in large classes because it is impossible to participate every student. It is also found that teachers should monitor the groups while working together that to do not speak in their mother tongue. Clearly, teachers who want to improve their students' speaking skills should consider employing group work activities in their classrooms.

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