

# The effect of using group work technique on the students' achievement of Language learning

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تأثير استخدام اسلوب العمل الجماعي على تحصيل الطلبة

المدرس – نزار حسين ولي في تعلم اللغة

كلية التربية الأساسية-جامعة ديالى

## **Abstract**

Group work is one of the new techniques in language learning .It is used to develop the foreign language skills;speaking is one of these skills.using group work technique has become a common feature of English language teaching,hence it is considered one of the cooperative methods that lead to competitive learning and improving the individual performance of the students in the class activities. Group work is considered one of the effective instructional techniques to use with students ,it gives practice in comprehending clear English.

The aim of this study is to investigate experimentally the effect of the group work technique on the college students achievement in the subject of (speaking),at the first stage/Department of English/College of Basic Education during the academic year (2013-2014).This study discusses the group work principles, techniques, advantages and developing speaking skill.

The population of this study is divided into two groups :controlling and experimental groups.The results reveal that the percentage of success for the experimental group is (70 %) while (55%) is scored for the controlling group according to the students achievement. The conclusions of the research states that :-

- 1- Arranging students into groups maximizes student participation in class activities.
- 2- Group tasks are often more stimulating the dealing with problems in pairs.
- 3- Putting students into groups fosters creative work and is potentially very helpful to weak students. Certain suggestions and recommendations are presented due to the results of the study .

## **Section one**

### **Introduction**

English as a second or foreign language has been a growing profession. thus, teachers have to be provided with a general picture of the field of teaching by giving them the practical knowledge ,ideas and activities they need for teaching all aspects of teaching English. Putting students into pairs or small groups has become a common feature of English language teaching(Lindsay,2000:23).The role of the teacher in managing group work is to adapt and change the arrangements according to the teaching aims or activities.Teachers may need to know the activities that use group work.

Some students are slow learners or have special difficulties;others are quick.There are two kinds of interaction:cooperation and competition , teachers can use these techniques for different kinds of learning activities.There is a place for competition within cooperative group work. The technique of frequent change partners and groups for each activity brings variety and fresh stimulus which is needed effectively in language learning.

## **1-1The problem and its' significance**

Learning another language can be a challenging and often frustrating exercise for many of our students.No matter how motivated students are ,a good teacher must have many instructional tools at his or her disposal to help students (engage ) in the class and not to have to (endure )it.

Group work is one of these tools. Students are more likely to store information as part of their long-term memory and make them available for later retrieval by participating in activities they enjoy.Group work have along been particularly popular in the ESL. Classroom and research has borne out their effectiveness.Among their many benefits are creating meaningful at low-anxiety opportunities for learners to use all domains-speaking,listening reading and writing.Learning to remember things faster and better ,and developing greater fluency by (using) the language instead of (thinking) about making sure they use it correctly.Group work is an essential ingredient for varying the learning pace (Lindsay: 2000 ,225) relaxing and motivating students by using group work,students can actively practise language and enjoy learning. students feel less inhibited when they are participating in a group work.;most learners don't' mind risking linguistic mistakes in a group work tasks.they focus on

communication to score points to win and this makes group work an excellent route for building fluency.

Most of the teaching in the Iraqi classroom not only in the (EFL) classroom still emphasises teacher-centered and teacher-directed instruction which characterized as less scope for interaction and discussion. Thus Teachers still make use of the traditional teaching methods and students do not feel confident in using English in real life situations. Thus students sit in their seats passively and listen to the lecture attentively.

Most of (EFL) learners in Iraq are not able to master English. most Iraqi students are hardly able to communicate in English because there has been too much teaching and too little learning and practice in a traditional classroom. what would be the practical alternatives to replace the traditional method so that students can achieve communicative competence. In addition to the challenge of the paradigm shift of the teaching method .

Group work technique is one of the cooperative methods that lead to competitive learning and individual performance in the classroom teaching. Students need to be close enough to interact inside the

classroom. a group work play a vital role in promoting students initiated discussions while the teacher play the role of facilitator. it creates situations for real and authentic communication models of the traditional teaching method tend to make students overly passive and indifferent to what is being taught..

The traditional whole-class lecturing method is found to be one of the major causes often generally low English proficiency and the declining interest of English learning. Group work is one of the main and interesting techniques in the cooperative learning method ,it seems a potential to teaching problems. It is one of the teaching methods to improve language learning, and encourages all groups academic achievement interaction and work together effectively during the classroom activities.

### **1-2 Aims**

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of using the group work technique on the students' achievement on the subject of (speaking).

### **1-3 The Limits OF the Study**

This study is limited to find out whether the group work technique has a positive effect on the f first year college students achievement on the subject of (speaking ) during the academic year ( 2013-2014).

## **1-4 Hypotheses**

The hypotheses that presented in this study is that there is no difference on the students' achievement by teaching by the group work technique or the traditional method on the subject of ( speaking ).

## **Section two**

### **Theoretical background and previous studies**

#### **2-1 Classroom group work**

In the last decades, there has been a growing interest among ESL/EFL teachers in group work activities. Students work together in groups whose usual size in two to four members. However, cooperative learning is more than just putting students in groups and giving them something to do. Cooperative learning principles and techniques are tools which teachers use to encourage mutual helpfulness in the groups and the active participation of any members. In addition to group work technique as a way to reinforce student relationships, Research on cooperative learning and adolescents has

shown the importance of peer relationships in relation to learning and overall well-being. Research has confirmed that :the better a students' relationships with his classmates ,the higher the students tended to achieve academically .A teacher secret strategy for increasing student achievement may be building more positive relationships among students. Simply, if you want students to increase their academic achievement, give them friends (Richards. J and Rememandya A. 2002:17). Forming these types of links between students and teachers can lead to stronger relationships between students and teachers. However, in order to serve these purposes, group work technique must be thoughtfully structured. simply ,telling students to work together or assigning them to groups gives a chance to effective language learning. Even two people are a group. Generally speaking, the smaller the group ,the more member talks and the less chance there is that someone will be left out. if time is short ,smaller groups can usually do an activity more quickly, smaller groups require fewer group management skills. Thus ,when starting with cooperative learning, groups of two or three may be best. ( Richards J. 2002 ,53 ) .Larger groups are good because they provide more people for doing big tasks to increase the variety of people in terms of skills, personalities ,backgrounds and so on and reduce of groups for the



teacher to monitor, many books for cooperative learning recommended groups of four. (ibid :53).

An effective way to set up mixed-proficiency groups is to band the learner's names by presenting four proficiency clusters from high to low and then select randomly from within each band so that groups will involve learners with a range of proficiencies. One student can be the noise monitor or quiet captain function is to urge the group to collaborate actively, yet

quietly. There are variety of ways to put students in groups .one way is to select students in advance of the class based on personality characteristics or abilities and experience for example fluent students with those who are not fluent. The critical responsibility of the teacher in all this work is to allow students to use language as freely as possible. The classroom becomes a genuine language-using community. Finnochiaro (1983: 162) states that group practice will normally have three phases:-

#### 1-preparation

The teacher will explain or demonstrate, roughly what is to be done , will give out appropriate worksheets or other materials and will refer to the relevant parts of the textbook.

## 2-Activity

Students will perform the task(s) while the teacher perhaps sits on the work some groups,even taking part in the task if a group appears to need helps.

## 3-follow-upandevaluation

This is optional and will not always be necessary,but students prefer to be some reporting back ,demonstration of what they have achieved,or discussion for at least some of their group activities.There is a continuing debate about the amount of time teachers should spend talking in class.Classes are sometimes criticized because there is too much (TTT) (Teacher Talking Time) and not enough (STT) (Student Talking Time ).Overuse of (TTT) is inappropriate because the more a teacher talks,the less chance there is for the student to practice their own speaking-and the student who needs the practice,not the teacher(Harmer J.2007,:38).

## **2-2-Teaching Speaking**

The ability of speaking English means to be able to communicate easily in speech and hold a conversation in the language.A learner will have

difficulty speaking English if he/she doesn't receive the proper training in both listening and speaking. Lindsay P. (2000:137) introduces the teaching of speaking through three stages:-

a-eliciting

b-restricting oral practice

c-developing oral fluency

The first stage is designed to help teachers by developing the teaching skill of not talking too much and giving time to the learners for guided practice and stimulating them to speak. Thus, teachers in this stage should aim to develop the student's confidence in responding to specific questions or prompts. In the second stage, teachers focus on accuracy through restricted oral practice which is called (drilling). It is an enabling phase. Controlled practice which is essential in learning any skill. The third stage is developing oral fluency which is developing oral fluency. It is considered the most interesting technique for teachers and learners. In this stage, teachers should be able to introduce topics that are stimulating, controversial, and relevant to students' lives and aims. Group work technique is one of the effective techniques in the achievement of these stages.

## **2-3- Group work principles**

The main principles of group work are :-

1-each student in a group of four gets a number 1,2,3,or 4.

2-student in each group should be ready to supply support for his/her answers.

3-the teacher calls a number from (1 to 4 ).

The student with that number gives and explains his/her group's answer.Numbered heads together encourages successful group functioning because of the member's need to know and be ready to explain the group's answer(s) and because when students help their whole group because the response given belongs to the whole group not just to the group members giving it.Students who do not study at groups can be allowed to work on their own.After a while they will want to take part in the group interaction and will ask to join a group.Keeping a group together for a long periods gives them a chance to become comfortable with one another allows them to form a group identity and bond ,and gives the opportunity to learn how to overcome difficulties they have working together . they will need to be able to do to communicate in the world beyond the classroom.Group work is essential to any classroom that is

based on principles of experimental learning. Through group work, learners develop their ability to communicate through tasks that require them, within the classroom to approximate the links of things they will need to be able to do to communicate in the world beyond the classroom.

#### **2-4 -Advantages of group work**

There is a belief that learners learn best if the content relates to their own experience and knowledge (Nunan D 2004:90). Tasks and exercises completed by learners working in small cooperative groups. Group work is particularly important in communicative language teaching. Learners have different learning styles and strategies that need to be taken into consideration in developing language programs. Few would question the need to make language classroom a place where genuine and meaningful communicative activity takes place and not simply one where students (practice) language their own need to make communication. The primary focus of teaching materials and classroom activities has long been a core assumption of communicative methodology. Thus, practicing language by using the group work technique gives students the following advantages:-

1-these potential advantages include( learning is fun) and preparing students for tasks .

2-Students may look more favorably on cooperative learning by talking with others in a language learning strategy and they can apply outside class as well .

3-group work may encourage students to look forward to other group learning activities.

4-it gives a chance to exchange information which provides language support in terms of useful vocabulary and structures so that students are more likely to succeed which build confidence in the ability to work in groups.

5-it provides opportunities for naturalistic second language learning through the use of inter active pair and group activities.

6-learning motivation and reduce learner stones and to create a positive affective classroom climate.

## **2-5 -Developing speaking skill**

When people are learning to speak a language,they are concerened mainly with two things;first knowing what to say –what words and phrases to use at the given momentin any given situation and second being able to say it –able to perform the required actions.The movements necessary for saying those words and phrases around . Now,knowing what to say is a

matter of memory; one has to learn and then remember the meanings of words, the construction of sentences, and so on. One learns these things partly from books, one's teacher and and this is the best of all for the learning of a spoken language by direct conversation of a spoken language. One of the techniques of developing this skill can be put under three main headings;-

1-One feature of articulation at a time.

2-Repetition

3-Co-ordination

People often hesitate and stumble when speaking foreign language. Of course, people sometimes stumble in their own language, but it is more than ever important when people are speaking a foreign language that their manner of speaking shouldn't interfere with the subject-matter. In fact, one might go so far as to say that how one speaks English is perhaps to give instructions, as well as at least as important as what one says in it. Teachers can group students, provide activities and explore ways to give instructions, but this is not always enough to keep students on task. Some teachers believe that keeping students on task is an important part of providing students with opportunities for meaningful interaction (Gebhard, 2006 : 89). The primary goal of a communicative classroom is students,

development of communicative competence in English. At a basic level, this includes development of student's ability to comprehend and produce written and spoken English in communicatively proficient and accurate ways. In order to work up to a communicative activity the teacher gave students. Teachers can use many strategies, the first is reducing the central (and traditional) position of the teacher. The second is promoting interaction in the classroom requires the teacher to step out of the limelight and yield to the students so that they feel free to interact with the teacher and each other. Students quite often come into our classrooms with little experience in initiating and participating in interactive in English (Ibid :74)

## **2-6- Building relationships**

Teachers have realized the value of connecting real-life situations with classroom interaction and thus have embraced communicative language teaching (CLA). It connects classroom-based language learning with the language that learners need in order to communicate outside of the Classroom (Lindsay: 2000 :54).

Group work is a purposeful activity. It is one of the appropriate teaching techniques in class, there are both short and long turns. A short turn includes just one or two utterances on a topic that will likely get a buzz group, the teacher success. A long turn takes place when it is necessary for a



speaker to explain or justify something. Communicative activities work well with students beyond the beginning level to warm up, review or teach a new concept. It gives students opportunities to interact freely in English. It gives a chance to students to express themselves in spoken English.

Buzz groups is an activity students are considered just like a busy bees while working on a task (Gebhard, J. 2006 :176) To create a buzz group, the teacher selects a topic that will likely interest students and have some purposes. It is useful to try authentic tasks such as planning an actual trip to measure or planning a party or picnic. Group work technique creates positive and effective relationship as follows:-

### **a-Student-student relationship**

Building relationships with students is vital. It is perhaps the most critical factor affecting students motivation and learning especially true for students in an ESL class who are faced each day with each other and interacting in a new culture. In order to learn, they must be willing to take risks, make mistakes and receive feedback. Making relationships are priority of specially in an ESL classroom, will yield many positive outcomes for both the students and the teacher. Many studies showed that school-based relationships affected the engagement and achievement of these students (Gebhard J, 2006:16). Students saw themselves as cooperative

engaged with the course materials and activities in classes. Research indicates that the biggest individual academic gains result from students working in groups (Gebhard J, 2006:17). Positive relationships are the foundation of a successful ESL classroom. Students feel more comfortable sharing through group work. This can be powerful on a number of levels by giving a chance to each student to speak inside classroom.

### **b-student-teacher relationships**

It can increase trust and respect between the teacher and the students. When the students feel that reflects the importance of students feeling valued in the classroom. When students believe they are important in a project anything works, their levels of motivation and achievement that teachers who had high-quality positive relationships between teachers and students can also be a way to decrease and even prevent behavior problems. Studies explained that teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had (31%) percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations over a year's time than teachers who did not have high-quality relationships with their students (Gebhard, 2006 :16). If the relationship between the teacher and the student is good, then everything else that occurs in the classroom seems to be enhanced. The simplest way for teachers is to get to know their students is talking with

them daily. This can easily be done by (checking in ) with a student each day before class, while students are working at their desks or after class. Giving a chance to each student to speak inside class, helps to build a genuine relationship , when students feel that their teacher takes an interest in their lives. One of the new techniques of motivating students in learning a foreign language is by using positive –framed messages by emphasizing the positive side of learning a foreign language in future and its effect on student's life (Ferlazzo Larry and Hull S. Katie ,2012:271).

## **Section three : Procedures**

### **3-1- Population and sample**

English language teaching (ELT) is characterized by the existence of many approaches and methods .The adherents of each of these methods claims that their method enables learners to communicate fluently and that theirs is much more effective than the others .to improve language learning :each is suitable for certain teachers and certain students to achieve certain aims . Besides,each adds new techniques and new ideas that contribute to the improvement of teaching English.The result is a abundance of tools that the teacher is free to choose those which are suitable for the environment where he/she functions to the resources available to him/her.

The aim of the present study is to investigate empirically the effect of teaching the subject of (speak English fluently) by the group work technique on the students' achievement.The population of this study is the students of the first year at English Department in the college of Basic Education/Diyala University during the academic year 2013-2014,the total number of the students are (80) male and female students divided into two sections,each section is consisted of (40) students.Section (A) is

considered a( controlled ) group while section (B) is considered an (experienced ) group which is taught by the researcher by using the group work technique. the controlled group is taught by another instructor in the traditional method by using the common techniques in teaching English as a foreign language.In this study ,a pr-etest and post-test is used (Table I).

**( Table I ) Design of the study**

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
control	Speaking scales to both groups	Teaching speaking in traditional method	Speaking scales to both groups
experimental		Teaching speaking by using group work	

**3-2-The statistical means**

1-Pearson's formula:It is used to find out the correlation coefficient between the achievement scores of students in the first and second test.

2-t-test which is used to determine whether there is any significant difference between the means of two sets of scores or between coefficient of correlation(table II).

**Table II.The t-test value of achievement scores**

Groups	Mean	Standared deviation	variance	t-test value	Level of significance
control	20.4	9.4	46		0.05
experimental	25	12.7	50.8	Com(3.2) Tab(1.72)	

This study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the group work technique versus the traditional learning method. group work is working together to accomplish shared goals. It is the instructional use of small groups to let students work together to maximize their learning in order to achieve their goals.the experienced group is taught by depending mainly on the group technique which is explained previously.the class is classified into groups and each group selected a leader and each group is given a chance to participate in the class activities and doing the tasks in order to record their achievements,the two groups are taught the whole programe for three months ,the two groups were likely equal in number ,kind of sex(male and female) and the scientific background.the two groups were tested and their marks were recorded in order to out the difference between the controlled

and experienced group concerning language learning achievement. the study reveals the strengths and weakness of these techniques used in teaching English.

### **3-2- Results**

By comparing the results between the student's achievement of the controlled group and the experimental group, the researcher investigated the effect of the group work technique and found out the following :-

1-The t-test value indicates that there is significant difference at (0.05) level between the two levels in favour of the (group work) .

2-The results showed that the control group learner's were lower than experimental group improvement.

3-The percentage of success of the experimental group is 70% while the controlled group is 55%.

4-The percentage of positive participation of the experimental group is more than the controlling group in the general performance ,marks and better in language learning.

### **3-3- Conclusion**

In foreign language teaching ,group work has been embraced as a technique for promoting communicative interaction in the classroom and is seen as an extension of the principles of communicative language teaching. It is viewed as a learner centered

approach to teaching held to offer advantages over teacher fronted classroom methods. Group work is a valuable technique as a language learning device. It is considered one of the effective instructional strategies (techniques) and activities to use with students . it enables students to learn ,develop aural comprehension and it assist in self-evaluation. It gives students practice in comprehending clear English. It can be a good indicator of overall language ability. the effect of group work technique can be seen in :-

a-higher achievement and greater productivity;

b-more caring, supportive, and committed relationships

c-greater psychological health, social competence and self-esteem.

d-increased student talk and more varied talk,

e-a more relaxed atmosphere, and

f-arranging students into groups maximizes student participation in class activities.

g-student get much more listening ,speaking time and active practice when working with the whole class.

h-group tasks are often more stimulating the dealing with problems in pairs.

i-putting students into groups fosters creative work and is potentially very helpful to weak students.

j- greater motivation, more efficient and effective



#### **4-suggestions and recommendations**

The following suggestions and recommendations are stated :-

1-suggesting of using the group work technique in teaching the other subjects of foreign language learning,

2-recomending of applying this technique on the other stages of English language learning like primary and secondary stage.and

3-providing teachers of English in general with the new techniques of language learning and using of group work technique as one of these new techniques.

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# The effect of using group work technique on the student's achievement of language learning

تأثير استخدام اسلوب العمل الجماعي على تحصيل الطلبة في تعلم اللغة

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## المستخلص

يعتبر العمل الجماعي واحد من الأساليب الجديدة في تعلم اللغة والتي تستخدم لتطوير مهارات اللغة الأجنبية

وتعتبر مهارة التكلم هي واحدة من هذه المهارات حيث اصبح استخدام اسلوب العمل الجماعي صفة مألوفة في تدريس اللغة الأنكليزية كونها تعتبر واحدة من الطرق التعاونية التي تؤدي الى التعلم التنافسي وتطوير الأداء الفردي للطلبة في نشاطات الصف يعتبر العمل الجماعي احد الأساليب للتدرسية المؤثرة المستخدمة مع الطلبة فهمي تعطي التطبيق ن اجل استيعاب لغة انكليزية واضحة تهدف الدراسة الى التحري و بشكل تجريبي الى تقصي تأثير اسلوب العمل الجماعي على تحصيل طلبة الكلية في مادة (المحادثة) -المرحلة الأولى- قسم اللغة الأنكليزية-كلية التربية الأساسية للسنة الدراسية (٢٠١٣-٢٠١٤)

وناقشت هذه الدراسة مبادئ العمل الجماعي والأساليب وتطوير مهارات المحادثة .

قسمت عينة هذه الدراسة الى مجموعتين طابطة و تجريبية وقد

نسبة النجاح المؤية للمجموعة التجريبية كانت (٧٠%) ونسبة النجاح للمجموعة الطابطة كان بينت نتائج الدراسة بأن (٥٥%) اظهرت الدراسة استنتاجات نذكر منها:-

١-ترتيب الطلبة في مجاميع يزيد من مشاركة الطالب في نشاطات الصف .

٢- يعتبر العمل الجماعي اكثر اثارة مقارنة مع مشاكل الطلبة كازواج .

٣ -وضع الطلبة في مجاميع يسرع من العمل الأبداعي

وهو عنصر اساسي ومساعد الى حد كبير للطلبة الضعفاء طبقا الى تحصيل الطلبة و قد قدمت مقترحات و توصيات معينة طبقا الى نتائج هذه الدراسة

