

The Effect of Using Group Work Technique on Developing Attitudes of non-English Major Students towards Learning English as a Foreign Language

Asst. Instr. Hayder Abdulzahra Shalash

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the effect of applying group work technique on developing non-English major students' attitude towards learning English as a foreign language .Two null hypotheses have been formulated; the first hypothesis states that there is no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group in their attitude towards learning EFL after the experiment. The second one states that there is no statistically significant difference in (pre-post questionnaire) of the experimental group students' attitude towards learning EFL. To achieve the aim of the study, and verify its hypothesis, the researcher has applied eight week experiment. A sample of 62 students has been chosen and divided into experimental and control groups. It has been chosen randomly from the second year students in the Basic Education College/ Department of History/Academic year (2017-2018).

The attitude questionnaire for both groups was applied before and after the experiment. After processing the results statistically, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Having used the t-test formula, it was found that there is statistically significant development in the experimental group students' attitude towards learning EFL, which in turn indicates that the use of

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GWT is more effective than the traditional method. Conclusion and recommendations were drawn.

المستخلص

يهدف البحث الحالي الى التحقق من تأثير استخدام تقنية العمل الجماعي في اتجاهات تعلم اللغة الانكليزية للطلبة العراقيين غير المتخصصين باللغة الانكليزية. تم صياغة فرضيتين صفريتين من اجل تحقيق هدف البحث. تشير الفرضية الاولى بان ليس هناك فرق ذات دلالة احصائية بين المتوسطات الحسابية للمجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة لاداء مقياس الاتجاه البعدي نحو تعلم اللغة الانكليزية. اما الفرضية الثانية فتشير بانه ليس هناك فرق ذات دلالة احصائية بين المتوسطات الحسابية لاداء مقياس الاتجاه القبلي والبعدي للمجموعة التجريبية. من اجل تحقيق هدف الدراسة، اجريت تجربة لمدة ثمان اسابيع باستخدام التصميم التجريبي للمجاميع غير المتكافئة. اختيرت مجموعتان من ٦٢ طالبا من المرحلة الثانية/ كلية التربية الاساسية/ قسم التاريخ للعام الدراسي ٢٠١٧-٢٠١٨. اختيرت احدى المجموعتين كمجموعة تجريبية واختيرت الاخرى كمجموعة ضابطة. تم تطبيق استبانة الاتجاه للمجموعتين قبل وبعد التجربة. بعد معالجة النتائج احصائيا وجد بأن هناك فرق ذات دلالة احصائية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. ويتطبيق الاختبار التائي وجد ان هنالك تطور ملحوظ في اتجاه المجموعة التجريبية نحو تعلم اللغة الانكليزية وهذا بدوره يشير الى ان استخدام تقنية العمل الجماعي اكثر فاعلية من الطريقة التقليدية. تم وضع الخاتمة والتوصيات والاستنتاجات.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. The Problem of the Study and its Significance

The role of attitude as an essential factor that affects learners' learning and performance of all language skills and activities has formed a turning point of study and interest for a number of scholars in language teaching, learning, and acquisition. This is so because attitude, through its three main components, namely cognitive, affective and behavioural, formulates the ways that learners think of the new language, feel of it and behave in doing all its relevancies. The group work technique (henceforth GWT) enables teachers to create a group, generate interest, and organize activities which focus on deeper learning through discussion, reflection and problem – solving inquiry. Thus, teachers are responsible for providing students with appropriate techniques that might increase those opportunities of language use. Therefore, organizing the class into groups is one of the inevitable ways to provide learners with extensive oral practice.

1.2. Aims

The current study aims at: -

- 1- Discovering the attitude of non-English major students towards learning EFL.
- 2- Developing non- English major students' attitude towards EFL.

1.3. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are postulated:

- 1- There is no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group in their attitudes towards EFL after the experiment.

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2- There is no statistically significant difference of the experimental group in their attitudes towards EFL in (pre-post attitude questionnaire).

1.4. Limitations

The current study is limited to the following:

- 1- Second-year college students at the History Department in the College of Basic Education in Baghdad.
- 2- The academic year 2017-2018.
- 3- Attitude questionnaire.

1.5 Value

It is hoped that this study will be of value in the following aspects:

1. It can be useful in providing Iraqi EFL university students with new techniques and strategies that help them to enhance their oral proficiency and to promote autonomy in language use in speaking classes.
2. It can help the curriculum developers, syllabus designers in general and course designers and university professors in particular to pay more attention to students' needs and attitudes.
3. Such a study may be of primary significance and benefit to the researchers in getting training in the use of GWT to teach English language, in addition to having a close view of students' performance in classroom.

1.6 Procedures

The following procedures are adopted to collect data:

- 1- Selecting a sample of second-year college students at the Basic Education College/Department of History and dividing them into control and experimental groups.
- 2- Designing and validating an attitude questionnaire.
- 3- Applying the pre-post questionnaire on the sample of the study.
- 4- Using a suitable rubric.

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5- Analyzing the collected data and suitable statistical methods are used to calculate results.

6- Finding out results and stating conclusions.

1.7. Definition of Basic Terms

1.7.1. Attitude

A feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this opinion (Richards& Schmidt, 2002:18).

The operational definition:It is an acquired willingness, either negative or positive, adopted by university students towards learning EFL.

1.7.2. Group work

According to Woolfolk (1998:19) group work is interdependence among students achieving an exchange of thoughts in which all members must participate in a sharing of ideas, beliefs, opinions and so on.

The operational definition: It means a number of students working together in groups to complete a task or an exercise in the coursebook.

1.7.3. Technique

it is an instructional procedure designed to relate to the learner the material being presented in order to facilitate learning (Karahana, 2007:79).

The operational definition: it is the instructional tool which is used in the learning environment to ease and support the teaching method specially, and learning process generally.

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**Chapter Two
Theoretical Background**

2.0. An Introductory Note

This chapter deals with the concept of attitude and its importance in EFL settings. Besides, it gives a clear conception of GWT, definition, importance as well as its advantages and disadvantages.

2.1. Attitude

2.1.1. Definition of Attitude

According to Travers (1973: 337) an attitude as “a willingness to respond in such a way that behavior is given a certain direction”. This definition implies that attitude is responsible for behaving in a particular and a definite way. Kara (2009:17) adds that learners' attitude towards learning affect their performance. Whenever one has a positive attitude towards something, he/she will try to achieve it. On the opposite side, if he/she has a negative attitude, then he/she will feel hostile and will try to avoid it. All in all, and according to the previous definitions, we can say that attitudes are responsible for the way people behave towards objects, ideas or people. Attitudes differ from other pre-dispositions or tendencies such as habits or interests in the sense that attitudes are learned dispositions, they have motivational characteristics, and they may be arranged from positive to negative.

2.1.2. Importance of Attitude in EFL

As noted earlier, the attitude plays an important role in learning FL students and can affect their failure or success. Gardner (1985:23) points out that the motivation to learn FL is determined by the learner's personal characteristics, such as his attitude toward foreigners in general and their language in particular. Karahan (2007:79) states that the positive attitude of learners who study EFL will support their attitude toward

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learning the target language. According to Buros & Perez (2015:317) many studies on university students' attitudes towards FL learning has been published in the last decade. These studies have confirmed the pivotal impact of attitude towards learning FL and how positive attitudes of learners contribute to a better learning of language. In addition, studies show that students with positive attitudes are more motivated and involved in the foreign language class.

2.2. Group Work Technique

2.2.1. Definition Group Work Technique

One of the techniques that the researcher suggests for remedying students' weaknesses and developing their attitudes towards EFL is GWT which is described by Knott and Mutunga (1995:199) as "getting learners to talk and think". Dillon (1994:55) defines GWT as a classroom technique which is formed as small or large groups. It includes the class overall experiences questioning about a particular subject-matter through discussion, the sustained interrelations among members and the work that they do together. This technique presupposes earlier achievements and evolves interests and future obligations. Richards and Rodgers (2001:192) define GWT as a learning method based on the distribution of students from one class to small groups, and each group accomplishes the educational tasks assigned to them by the teacher collaboratively. The role of the teacher in this method is to give a general idea of the lesson, set goals, and provide reinforcement and feedback for each group. At the end of the lesson, each group reports on its performance to other groups under teacher supervision.

2.2.2. Importance of GWT in EFL

English as an essential international language has gained attention from people who want to be into the new world of bilingualism, As well as from learners who are learning a

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foreign or second language. However, the ability to use the language in real communication does not seem to be an easy task. Consequently, the opportunity for students' participation in EFL classes seems to be limited. This is how the use of group work could be an alternative that might embrace solutions to develop and improve the speaking skill.

Larsen-Freeman (1986: 105) states that there are different activities that could occur with pupils working in a small group. Teachers who use small group activities believe that pupils can learn from each other and can get more practice with the foreign language. Moreover, small groups allow pupils to know each other freely and carefully. This can lead to the development of a community among class members.

Akers (1997: 118) asserts that one of the vital aspects of GW learning is that it helps to promote cooperative behaviour and better group relations among pupils; it helps them with their academic learning. Also, cooperative learning reflects the perspective that human beings learn from their experiences and participation in small groups helps students to learn important social skills while simultaneously developing democratic attitudes and logical thinking skills.

2.3. Previous Related Studies

2.3.1. Rita Koloma (1986)

The aim of the study was to identify the attitudes of Arabic-speaking students toward learning English. The sample of the study consisted of (420) students from the Faculty of Education and Arts within the framework of the university study program at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The research tool consisted of a questionnaire consisting of two parts, containing (60) items. The main findings of the study are:

1-There are no significant differences in attitude due to the place of birth.

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2 The significant difference in the attitude towards English learning is due to the length of stay.

2.3.2. Al-Ubeidy (2003):

This study investigates empirically the effect of GWT in teaching oral practice on the achievement of preparatory school students. GWT was intended to enhance students' learning through providing them with opportunities to ask questions and communicate with each other. The sample of the present study was 64 female students of fifth preparatory stage (the scientific branch) in Diyala Governorate during the academic year 2001-2002. The items of the materials were limited to the oral practice of Book 7 of NECI. To fulfill the aim of the research, two groups (experimental and control) were used. The subjects of both groups were matched in the level of parents' education, the level of subjects' achievement in English in the fourth preparatory grade and their age. It was found that there were significant differences between the groups of the study in both the written and oral tests in favour of GWT.

The study concluded that this technique allowed for physical activity to break up the routine of sitting in the same place throughout the whole class period. Another advantage was that students can learn from each other and can get more practice with the foreign language through working in a small group.

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**Chapter Three
Methodology and Procedures**

3.1. The Experimental Design

To fulfil the aims of the study and to examine the effect of adopting GWT on developing non-English major students' attitudes towards learning EFL, the researcher has chosen pre-post non-equivalent group design. The form of the design is shown in Table (1).

**Table 1
Experimental Design**

| Groups | Before experiment | Experiment | After Experiment |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Experimental Group | Q1 | GWT | Q2 |
| Control group | Q1 | Traditional way | Q2 |

The abovementioned groups were exposed to a pre-post questionnaire. The experimental group was taught by GWT as a way of teaching whereas the control group was taught by the traditional way. The scores were compared to identify whether there is a significant difference between the groups.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The study population is the second year non-English major students at the College of Basic Education/ University of Mustansiriyah , in 2017-2018. Sampling as defined by Al-Samawi (2000:112) is selecting a number of individuals to represent the population. The sample was selected randomly from the abovementioned population. After excluding those

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who failed to attend the pre-post questionnaire, the total number of the sample was 62; 31 for each group.

3.3. Description of the Instrument.

A number of studies regarding language learning attitudes have been reviewed. Accordingly, the researcher has designed an attitudes questionnaire. The type of the questionnaire that used in this research is rating scales questionnaire in which the items include the language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Positive and negative items are included in the questionnaire to avoid bias and make them obvious and straight forward.

Scoring scheme for the positive Items:

| Agree | Uncertain | Disagree |
|-------|-----------|----------|
| 2 | 1 | zero |

Scoring scheme for the Negative Items:

| Disagree | Uncertain | Agree |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| 2 | 1 | zero |

3.4. Validity

Ebel (1972:78) contends that face validity is the degree to which a procedure, especially a psychological test or assessment, appears effective in terms of its stated aims. In order to verify the face validity of the questionnaire, it has been exposed to jury members in the fields of methodology and linguistics. The experts were requested to judge the suitability of items. They agreed on the suitability and validity of the questionnaire items and enriched it with their remarks.

3.5. Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

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On the 15th of October, 2017 a pilot administration of the questionnaire has been implemented. It was applied on a sample of 10 students who were chosen randomly from section (A and B). It was found that the time needed to complete the questionnaire was 40 minutes.

3.6. Reliability

Varma and Beard (1981:86) define reliability as “the degree of accuracy with which a given test or a set of scores measures whatever it is measuring”. The final result of reliability through Cronbach alpha formula was 0.82 which is good value. This shows that the questionnaire is acceptable and reliable.

3.7. Final Administration of the Scale

After ascertaining the validity and reliability of the instrument, it has been administered to the selected sample on 17th of December, 2017. The assigned time for the scale is 40 minutes. Then, the students' answering sheets were collected by the researcher and then scored and tabulated in order to find out the final results using appropriate statistical tools.

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Chapter Four

Results, conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Results Related to the First Hypothesis.

In order to find out whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups, the mean scores and standard deviations of the questionnaire have been computed and compared to the theoretical mean. Then by using t-test, the results are found out to be as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Statistics of the comparison control and experimental
groups on their
(post-attitudes) questionnaire

| Groups | No. | Mean scores | S.D | D.F | t-test Computed Value | Level of Significance |
|--------|-----|-------------|-------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Exp | 31 | 38.2 | 9.37 | 60 | 2.321 | 0.05 |
| Cont | 31 | 33.51 | 10.66 | | | |

The statistics of table above indicates that there is statistically significant difference between the two scores on the post –attitudes questionnaire at level 0.05 in favor of the experimental group. It can be noticed that GW as a technique has developed the experimental group students' attitudes towards learning English positively. From the researcher's own observation throughout his experiment, the use of GWT has motivated the learners, stimulated their interest and increased their participation in the class activities.

4.2. Results Related to the Second Hypothesis.

In order to verify the second hypothesis, the mean scores and standard deviations of the pre and post questionnaires of

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the experimental group have been calculated. Then by using t-test, the results are found out to be as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Statistics of the pre-post Attitude Scale of the Experimental Group

| Pair | No. | Mean Scores | S.D | D. F | t-test Calculated Value | Level of significance |
|------|-----|-------------|-------|------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| pre | 31 | 31.79 | 11.29 | 31 | 5.711 | 0.05 |
| post | 31 | 37.42 | 9.31 | | | |

According to the statistics shown in table (4.2), it is found that there is significant difference between the two scores (pre-post attitude questionnaire) of the experimental group in favor of the post attitude scores. This indicates that the proposed technique has a positive impact on developing students' attitudes towards learning EFL. The positive findings revealed in this study show that well structured and systematic group work is an effective technique for enhancing EFL learners' language ability.

4.3. Conclusions

From the results of the present study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1- Using GWT is significant in increasing learners' motivation and participation to improve their language competence.

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2- Providing students with GW activities decrease anxiety and develop their attitudes to achieve effective participation in classrooms.

4.4. Recommendations

On the basis of the results and conclusions put forward, some recommendations have been drawn. It is hoped that they will be of value to the students and instructors in the field of TEFL. These recommendations are as follows:

- 1- Pay much attention to develop EFL students' attitudes towards learning the target language.
- 2- Curriculum developers' responsibility is to take GWT into account due to its impact on motivating and encouraging learners to participate in the classroom activities.
- 3- The teacher's responsibility is to create a comfortable environment and friendly situation where the learners can use the target language without anxiety and use English language spontaneously.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

A letter to Jury Members

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The researcher intends to carry out a Quasi- Experimental study entitled (The effect of using group work technique on developing attitudes of non-English major students towards leaning EFL). The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of adopting group work technique on non-English major students' attitudes towards EFL.

Group work technique is one of relatively recent strategies that has focused on improving the quality of learning among students and allow them to interact with their peers, thus leading to effective participation. To fulfill the aims of this study, a questionnaire with 30 items is designed to explore non-English major students attitudes towards leaning EFL at Al-Mustansiriyah University/ Basic Education College / Department of History.

In order to achieve the face validity it will be appreciated if you thankfully state the suitability of the test for achieving the aim of the study stated above. Any recommendation and modification which you make will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

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22/9/2017

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| No | The items | Agree | Uncertain | Disagree |
|----|--|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | Studying English Affects my relationship with classmates positively. | | | |
| 2 | When I speak English anywhere, I feel worried. | | | |
| 3 | I like to practice English with those who speak English well. | | | |
| 4 | Studying English could develop my personality. | | | |
| 5 | I don't feel relax when I have to speak English in class. | | | |
| 6 | I put off my English homework as much as possible. | | | |
| 7 | When I speak English in front of others, I feel embarrassed. | | | |
| 8 | Studying English assist me having more knowledge and more understanding. | | | |
| 9 | I am satisfied with my English competence. | | | |
| 10 | I don't feel enthusiastic when answering a question in my English class. | | | |
| 11 | The current English book is interesting. | | | |
| 12 | I can control myself and pay attention during the time of English class. | | | |
| 13 | The knowledge I get from English subject is beneficial in my real life. | | | |
| 14 | I study English language just | | | |

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| | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|
| | because it is a university requirement. | | | |
| 15 | I think that studying in my mother tongue is better than any other language. | | | |
| 16 | I think that studying in my mother tongue is better than any other language. | | | |
| 17 | Studying English enable me to know more about European cultures. | | | |
| 18 | Worrying about making grammatical mistakes has an impact on my speaking in English. | | | |
| 19 | If I don't say things right, I'm afraid people will laugh at me. | | | |
| 20 | English syllabus and activities used in English class are interesting. | | | |
| 21 | English is not important in my life. | | | |
| 22 | I don't care about teacher's culture and nationality since he/she is a good teacher. | | | |
| 23 | I am satisfied about my English level. | | | |
| 24 | I don't have any idea about the useful ways of learning a language | | | |
| 25 | In the future, I am going to communicate with others in English. | | | |
| 26 | In my opinion, learning English is boring. | | | |

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| | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|
| 27 | I think that learning English will help the growth of my mind. | | | |
| 28 | I believe that learning English language provides me with more job opportunities | | | |
| 29 | I think that learning English is not necessary subject in colleges. | | | |
| 30 | I wish I could speak English like those who speak English fluently. | | | |

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***Appendix 2
Names of the Jury Members***

| No. | Academic Rank | Name | College | Certificate and specialization |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Professor | Yahya, Eman Fathi | University of Al- Mustansiriayh/ College of Basic Education. | Ph.D. in Literature. |
| 2 | Professor | Hassan, Dhuha Attallah | University of Al- Mustansiriayh/ College of Basic Education. | Ph.D. in ELT |
| 3 | Assistant Professor | Sarhan , Saad S. | University of Al- Mustansiriayh/ College of Basic Education. | MA. in ELT |
| 4 | Instructor | Dakhil, Ridhah Gh. | University of Al- Mustansiriayh/ College of Basic Education. | Ph.D. in ELT |
| 5 | Instructor | Jassim, Azhar | University of Al- Mustansiriayh/ College of Basic Education. | Ph.D. in Literature. |
| 6 | Instructor | Lahad, Afrah M. | University of Al- Mustansiriayh /College of Basic Education. | M.A. in ELT. |
| 7 | Instructor | Jassim, Habar | University of Al- Mustansiriayh /College of Basic Education | M.A. in ELT. |