

GROUP WORK IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Group work can be defined as a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language [1, 3].

The use of group work in EFL classroom is supported by sound pedagogical arguments (extended language practice opportunities, improving the quality of student talk, individualizing instruction, positive affective climate, motivating learners); moreover, there is a psycholinguistic rationale for group work based on the role of comprehensible input in second-language acquisition (ability of non-native speakers working together during group work to perform the same level of comprehensibility) and on the nature of non-native/non-native conversation (amount and variety of student talk in small groups) [4].

There is a belief in benefits for teaching international students associated with the use of group work at English lessons; in particular, group work can be an appropriate methodological tool for Chinese students sensitive to the three key Confucian values: co-operation, the concept of "face", and self-effacement [2].

Group work can be implemented in EFL classroom through a number of activities: buzz groups (to generate ideas/answers, re-stimulate student interest, gauge student understanding); think-pair-share (to generate ideas, increase students' confidence in their answers, encourage broad participation in plenary session); circle of voices (to generate ideas, develop listening skills, have all students participate, equalize learning environment); rotating trios (to introduce students to many of their peers and generate ideas); snowball groups/pyramids (to generate well-vetted ideas, narrow a topic, and develop decision-making skills); jigsaw (to learn concepts in-depth, develop teamwork, have students teaching students); fishbowl (to observe group interaction, provide real illustrations for concepts, provide opportunity for analysis); learning teams (to foster relationships among students and increase confidence in participating).

To ensure that group work is successful, the educators should impress upon students the importance of practice in EFL, appeal to various motivational factors affecting them so that they can see some real uses for English in their own lives, and demonstrate how enjoyable the various small-group tasks and activities are [1].

References:

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