کارگاه‌های آموزشی مرکز اطلاعات علمی

مقاله نویسی علوم انسانی

اصول تنظیم قراردادها

آموزش مهارت های کاربردی در تدوین و چاپ مقاله
An Investigation of the Impact of the Performance of Diverse Collaborative Tasks on the EFL Learners’ Flow Experiences across Gender

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Abstract
Learning a language has always been linked with engagement and other affective factors, which can be fully described by the flow experience heading. However, the way with which teachers can benefit more from those factors is still open to questions. At the same time, there are numerous studies who have proven the efficacy of collaboration and group work. Therefore, the present study was conducted to investigate the possible effect of collaborative learning on flow experience of the language learners in their speaking classes. To this end, a number of 52 language learners participated in this study. They were divided into four groups separated by experimental and control groups, and their genders. The data were collected using the flow experience questionnaire and they were analyzed using ANOVA and Post-hoc tests. The results of the study manifested that collaborative speaking tasks lead to having more active and engaged language learners who are encouraged and feel comfortable enough to speak more and more. Additionally, the results indicated that collaborative learning is equally effective for both genders. The findings of the present study can be useful for the whole processes of teaching and learning, and the parties who are engaged within the processes.

Keywords: Collaboration, Flow experience, Speaking

Introduction
Cooperative Learning is an active pedagogy in the sense that it can encourage active engagement and improve chances for students to actively alter their knowledge (Tsay & Brady, 2010). Cooperation, according to Johnson (2012), is not providing an assignment to a group of students where one student performs all the work and the others sign the paper. It is not having students sit at the same table to speak with one another while working on their respective projects. Cooperative learning, on the other hand, is a teaching technique in which small groups of students with varying levels of ability employ a range of learning activities to deepen their grasp of a subject. Because each group member has a responsibility/task/role, they must think that they are accountable for their own and their group’s development. Within their group, students must completely participate and put out effort (Brown & Ciuffetelli
This teaching technique fosters a sense of accomplishment since students work through the assignment until all members of the group have thoroughly comprehended and completed it (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Cooperative learning is rarely used in high school classes by teachers (Oxford, 1999). This is due to the widespread usage of conventional teacher-centered methodologies in most EFL settings in Iran and other countries. Text explanation, vocabulary illustration, grammar teaching, and intense exercises on language forms are the major components of these techniques (Wei, 1997). Students in EFL classrooms have become bored and disengaged as a result of these tactics (Miller & Meece, 1997). As a result, many academics think that education must go beyond rote learning (Erten & Razi, 2009). According to research, cooperative learning methods are usually equally effective for all ability levels and ethnic groups and can be used in any classroom. As a result, teachers must make changes in their classrooms to have a successful teaching and learning process in reading comprehension classrooms (Zoghi, Mustapha, & Massum, 2010). Cooperative learning improves students’ learning motivation, information retention, and understanding (Bakker, Oerlemans, Demerouti, Slot, & Ali, 2011), as well as promoting mutual liking, improved communication, high acceptance, and support (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) stressed the balance between an individual’s talents and task obstacles when it came to language learners’ flow experiences (Bakker, et al., 2011; Coffey, Wray-Lake, Mashek, & Branand, 2016; Demerouti, 2006; Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008; Fullagar & Kelloway, 2009; Nielsen & Cleal, 2010; Rodríguez-Sánchez, Salanova, Cifre, & Schaufeli, 2011; Schüler, 2007; Seger & Potts, 2012). He argued that the occurrence of flow experiences is dependent on this equilibrium, and that flow experiences cannot occur if the individual’s talents and the job are out of sync. Flow experience, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1991), is a state of total absorption or participation in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). According to Finneran and Zhang (2005), it depicts a state of awareness in which people are so immersed in a task that they perform well without being aware of their surroundings. Activities that create more flow than others, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), are those that “(1) have concrete goals with manageable rules; (2) allow us to adjust opportunities for action to our capabilities; (3) provide clear information on how we (activity participants) are doing; and (4) screen out distraction and allow us to concentrate” (p. xiv). When people are in the ideal flow state, they are in a psychological state. They are so engrossed in the action that they are unconcerned about their surroundings throughout the activity, thus nothing else appears to matter (Kiili, 2005).

Taking all the above-mentioned issues into account regarding cooperative learning and flow experience, as Vygotsky (1978) puts it, group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience makes a positive contribution to the learning process. Therefore, it can be appropriate for language learning processes. To this end, investigating the effect of cooperative learning on language learners’ flow experience, which has remained unclear, can be regarded as a good attempt to be taken into consideration in the context of Iran.
Because of the researcher’s passion for the English language, she believes that internal language knowledge and its use in communicative contexts have greatly aided her in improving her overall language competency. Collaboration has always played an important part in language learners’ development and has paved the road for them to succeed. These were the motivations that led the current study’s researcher to undertake this area of inquiry.

Classroom structure and instruction should be considered in educational approaches to promote students’ accomplishment and ease learners’ anxiety (Slavin, Madden, & Stevens, 1989). Teachers can use cooperative learning as a basic teaching approach (Slavin et al, 1989) to achieve both traditional and creative aims (Slavin, 1996).

This study aims to investigate the effect of using cooperative learning on intermediate language learners’ flow experience. The current study can open new horizons within the realm of language learning, specifically the use of cooperative learning and flow experience, and can empower or diminish the assets provided by the previous literature as a reliable and generalizable source.

Besides, the current study aimed to introduce valuable results for female and male learners in the EFL context. So far, to the best knowledge of the researcher, the learners’ flow experience in cooperative learning classrooms has not been widely studied (if any).

Furthermore, this study may contribute to previously conducted research related to cooperative learning, learners’ achievements, and their flow experience in Iran. At the same time, the results of the present study may be useful for curriculum developers, syllabus designers, as well as policymakers who take part within the realm of education in the context of Iran.

Although previous studies have investigated the impact of cooperative learning on foreign language learning as a whole, they have taken little or no account of EFL learners’ flow experience. This study was done to examine the effectiveness of the cooperative learning approach on learners’ flow experience status. Furthermore, in many previous studies, the focus was on the engagement of the learners in mobile-assisted game-based learning, whereas in the current research flow experience of the intermediate students within the speaking classes was the focal point of interest.

Methods

A quantitative experimental research design was utilized in the study. Cooperative learning, a student-centered teaching strategy that requires working in groups, was used as an instructional technique during the treatment in the experimental group. The other group (i.e., control group) followed the usual instruction which has been used in the language school.

The pre-questionnaire was given before the treatment to make their current flow experience clear. The students in both experimental and control groups were engaged in different speaking tasks to improve the skill in three sessions per week for 12 sessions. At the end of the treatment, the post-questionnaire was administered to the students.
In this study, collaborative learning procedures act as the independent variable, and at the same time, the language learners’ flow experience was regarded as the dependent variable. It is worth mentioning that the language learners’ gender was taken into account to make clear the difference which may exist between males and females.

The samples of the current study were intermediate students of Arad language institute in Urmia, Iran. Due to language school limitations, the participants were not selected randomly. As a result, the intact classes were assigned to the experimental and control groups. A total number of 26 students participated in the experimental group, and the control group comprised the other 26 students. It is worth mentioning that there were four classes, two of which were for females, and the other two were male language learners.

English was taught four hours and thirty minutes per week in the institute. The curriculum provided by the institute was applied in the course and World English 2 was taught as the main material.

The treatment lasted 12 sessions. The students in both experimental and control groups participated in diverse collaborative speaking activities to make them have a better flow experience and heighten their engagement level in three sessions per week. The participants were provided with appropriate materials to be studied in groups of four to five. The same teaching materials were used in both groups.

The language learners at the beginning of the treatment procedures filled out a questionnaire regarding their current engagement and flow experience level. Then, the collaborative speaking treatment began for the experimental group. Finally, at the end of the treatment, both groups filled out the same questionnaire to determine whether they found collaborative learning to be a useful method for improving their flow experience.

The present study made use of a flow experience questionnaire. The data were collected before and after the treatment procedures, and the researcher checked them thoroughly to be ready to analyze them through SPSS25. The data were added to the software and through independent samples t-test and/or ANOVA the results showed off.

Data Analysis
In this section, the data analysis procedures have been taken into consideration. The researcher, first, confirmed the normality of the data distribution using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and then the results obtained from ANOVA and Tukey have been reported in the following.

Table 1. ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>7983.737</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2661.246</td>
<td>17.261</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>11717.750</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>154.181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19701.488</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 dealt with the result of ANOVA based on the data obtained from the four mentioned groups (i.e., Experimental Male, Experimental Female, Control Male, & Control Female). The results revealed that there is some significant difference between the variables. However, the exact point of significant difference could not be identified using ANOVA, therefore, there was a need to assess Tukey. The following table took into account the between-group results, in which all the groups were juxtaposed in a dichotomous manner.

Table 2. *Post-hoc Test in Multiple Pairwise Comparison of the Mean of the Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable: Scores</th>
<th>Tukey HSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Groups</td>
<td>(J) Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Male</td>
<td>Experimental Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Female</td>
<td>Experimental Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Male</td>
<td>Experimental Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Female</td>
<td>Experimental Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 manifested that there is a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group language learners’ flow experience. Referring to the juxtaposition of male and female experimental group members, the table showed that the significance level is more than 0.05, and therefore, it can be concluded with a 95% confidence level that male and female language learners in the experimental group equally benefited from collaborative tasks. At the same time, male and female language learners of the control group did not have any statistically significant difference, which proves that gender has nothing to do with flow experience indices.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to explore the effects of diverse collaborative tasks on the language learners’ flow experience in their speaking classes. After analyzing the data, it was manifested that the experimental group learners outperformed the control group members, and therefore, the results indicated that making use of diverse collaborative tasks does help EFL students to enjoy more flow. Another phase of the present study was to investigate the possible difference regarding the effectiveness of collaborative tasks on male and female language learners. The results declared that there was no statistically significant difference between the two genders; that is, collaborative speaking activities promote the flow experience and engagement level of both genders the same way. The current study’s findings may be valuable for the Department of Education, Institutes for English Language Instruction, and Academic Research. The findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge...
in the field of cooperative learning. Furthermore, because the research was conducted in an environment where traditional teaching methods predominate and cooperative learning is lacking, the findings may provide information to compare teacher-centered and learner-centered techniques and assist EFL teachers in selecting the appropriate method to enhance the flow experience of language learners. However, the study suffered from some limitations and delimitations such as the number the language learners, their language level, their ages, etc., which could be taken into consideration in future studies.

References


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