

The Impact of Group Work in Improving EFL Medical Students' Academic Performance

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Abstract:

Group work is modern instructional approach in which students learn best when they are actively involved in the process of learning. Researchers report that, regardless of the subject matter, students who work in small groups usually like to learn more of what is taught and keep it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional techniques. This study aimed at investigating the impact of group work on the students' academic performance. It aimed also at creating healthy climate. Students learn effectively in groups, encourage each other to ask, explain, justify opinions, evaluate and reflect upon their knowledge. It is adopted the descriptive and empirical methods. The data for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire of 20 items distributed to 50 students from medical college at Jazan university in 2014. SPSS was the tool analysis. the analysis reveals that group work proves to be an effective, suitable and interesting technique for both instructors and students.

Keywords: Group Work, academic performance, instructional approach, interaction, knowledge, motivation.

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Introduction:

The researcher sees that old techniques threaten the objectives of the (TEFL) Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia (KSA). KSA is the largest country in Western Asia and the second-largest geographically in the Arab world after Algeria and multicultural semi-continent country of more than 28 million population. It consists of various ethnic groups and tribes live in 13 regions.

Therefore, a great care of dealing with this situation, the investigator hoped that by working in small groups the students might come to know and understand each other better, and consequently be able both to help each other with their writing patterns in the small groups and to communicate more effectively in discussions.

This study is intended to show the development in teaching English as a Foreign Language and to contribute the student's intellectual, personal and professional growth. It aims at finding effective techniques, which facilitate the process of interaction between the student and the instructor used inside the classroom.

This thesis will suggest techniques and activities through which the Small-Group Work can realize the educational process and achieve its objectives.

Statement of the Problem:

The main reason that motivates the researcher to design this paper is to find out whether the group work, which is used in TEFL in the KSA and particularly; at Medical college in Jazan University. The investigator observed that, students avoid speaking English (TL) with each other or with their teachers, except in greetings and some fixed expressions. In observation that, interactions which permit or require language use for negotiation of meaning tend not to occur in the classroom.

EFL students in Saudi Arabia at university level are suffering from a severe shortage of their communicative competence. These are clearly reflected when they are communicating and interacting with native speakers through social settings. In addition, students' performance while speaking to their teachers and peers shows that they use little English just for the purpose of greeting and saying some simple expression. In the same regard, students are still having problems in adopting accurate pronunciation patterns.

Objectives of the Research:

This paper tries to explore the learning of medical terminology by Saudi students of medicine at Jazan University. It focuses on using group work as an effective strategy by them in learning medical terminology and to identify the strategies related to success or failure in learning the target. In brief, this study attempts to clarify the strategies used most and least frequently by the learners ; comparing the two groups one is an experimented group who have been learned through group work and another group who have been taught through classical method in individuality. The objectives of the research can be summarized in the following.

- ❖ To investigate the strategies of group work which improve the students' achievements and performance.
- ❖ To create a healthy classroom climate group work activities develop EFL medical students' performance.
- ❖ To encourage EFL students to be active participants, and develop their self-learning strategies and techniques by participating in group activities.
- ❖ To enable EFL students to communicate effectively by creating a healthy classroom atmosphere.
- ❖ To promote group work learning by exchanging ideas and discussions among the students themselves, their teachers and others.
- ❖ To create instructional activities for ELL that model successful integrated strategies by using group work.

The Significance of the Research:

Applying Small-group techniques and strategies for enhancing classroom instruction have become a trend. This paper attempts to explore the the impact of group work on the students' academic performance and to approach their interaction in a creative way. Many studies and researches have been carried out investigating the ways in which group work strategy can be successfully integrated along with methods of teaching English in Saudi Arabia.

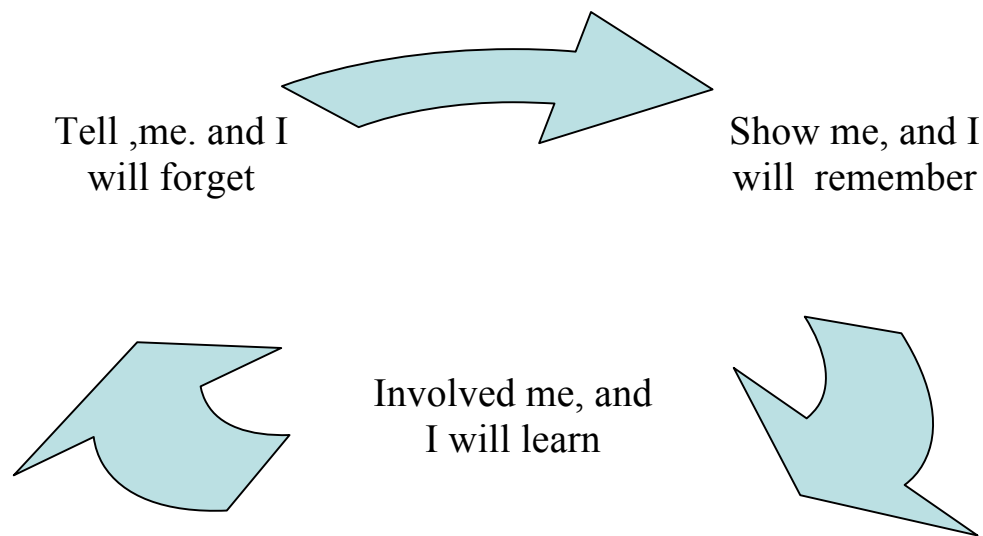
The importance of this study is that using group work strategies in the Saudi classes enhances the students' motivation, engagement and willingness to learn collaboratively through creative thinking in medical problems solving, sharing information and knowledge...etc.

The study attempts to examine the learning opportunities and possibilities of the grouping application may offer for fresh EFL medical students at universities and higher institutions to pave their way to master the language learning terminologies in an effective way. In addition, the researcher hopes that using small-group work may increase their motivation and interest level and turn them into a positive attitude towards learning English language.

Literature Review:

Small-Group Work is a learning activity, which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task, or on different parts of larger task. The members of the group often select tasks for group members.

Alhaj (2008:3) Group work or cooperative learning can be characterized in the following Chinese proverb:



Definition *Group Work*

- It means a group of people with a complementary skills interact to achieve a common objective.
- A group of people committed to achieve a task, common performance goal and an approach for which they hold themselves collectively responsible.

Group or cooperative work can be defined as a strategy for classroom that is used to increase motivation and retention, to help the students develop a positive image of self and others, to provide a vehicle for critical thinking and problem solving, and to encourage collaborative social skills. (Calderon 1987)

In group work, each student plays a great role in discussion and he participates in his position towards his group goals and achievements.

Using collaborative learning for Saudi Students

- ❖ Most students in the KSA are rather passive or mainly depend upon their teachers in the educational process.
- ❖ They prefer to follow step-by-step instructions from the faculty members rather than to take an active role to explore themselves.
- ❖ From my observation in teaching English as a foreign language at Jazan university, that the academic performance is the main concern for the most students at the university.

Characteristics of Group Work:

The above-mentioned definitions bring out the following characteristics of the group work.

- ❖ Group Work provides community and a social life.
- ❖ It allows students to interact with each other in real life.
- ❖ Group work is a cooperative learning activity.
- ❖ It encourages critical thinking skills and solve problems.
- ❖ Group work is an activity through which solution of a problem is found out by the students themselves.
- ❖ It is against the regular routine of old methods.
- ❖ Small-Group work versus individual work.
- ❖ Small-Group work is better technique in competition than individuals.
- ❖ It is an effective technique for motivating and involving students.
- ❖ In grouping, students feel free because they live in social climate.
- ❖ Students can relate to each other easily and in the same time, both students and the teacher are one side to improve academic performance.
- ❖ Students are independent and responsible for their learning.

The Advantages of Small-Group Work:

An organization student into groups has many advantages.

According to Propy (1998: 140) that the potential learning benefits, it encourages students in the social construction of knowledge:

- ❖ The students get more right answers.
- ❖ They help each other and relate to one another.
- ❖ Be stronger. "Three heads are better than one"
- ❖ Protect each other by interacting with their classmates.
- ❖ It creates friendly a climate by getting good cooperation.
- ❖ Motivational benefits because, it responds directly to the students' relatedness.

In brief, there is better cooperation and more friendliness in group work than individuals. Small-Group work creates a positive social climate, in which, students help one another and they have good relationships with their teacher and with each other.

Disadvantages of Small-Group Work:

- ❖ Students need to go at different speeds
- ❖ Someone may try to take over the group
- ❖ For some people; grouping is not fair!
- ❖ Some students use their own language during group work tasks.
- ❖ One group member may not contribute as much as the others do to do tasks.

Some learners need to go at different speeds while doing the task to fully understand the information. It seems that while working in a group, someone is either slowed down or forced to catch up faster than they would like to. This speed may cause tension to other groups.

The Classroom as a Social Environment:

Psychologists and teacher educators try to bridge the gap educational psychological theory- which emphasis on the individual students- and educational practice which focuses on the interaction between the teacher and a group of students.

It views that the classroom as a complex social system in which the behavior of the teacher and each students is affected by many dynamic social forces or characteristics. There forces include friendships, communication patterns, power and influence; leadership style, peer group norms, attraction, communication, cohesiveness, goals, and even the physical environment. These properties illustrated in (Schmuck and Schmuck (1971:18), Clark and Starr (1976:35), (Smith and Luster man (1979: 209).

The Main Factors of Group Success:

To make Group work learning a success, there must be some kind of "glue" that holds the group together. Group members should feel they need each another, and need to learn and help each other learn, They must have personal interdependence. Those experienced in successful small group work have found five essential components (*i.e.*, the "glue") that are necessary:

- ❖ Positive interdependence
- ❖ Face-to-face interactions
- ❖ Individual accountability and personal responsibility
- ❖ Teamwork and social skills
- ❖ Group processing and activities.

Grouping Process and Requirements:

The Requirements of Group Learning:

Procedures for using small groups are easy because elaborate planning is not demanded as stated by Grambs; et al (19970:188) set four requirements of 'SGW':

- ❖ No special expenditure of funds, it means that the instructor needs not money to have students sit in circles.
- ❖ No special equipment needed to make groups.
- ❖ No permission, it usual work.
- ❖ No special professor talent. Professors of different abilities can apply this kind of work.

Classroom Rules:

- ❖ Obey all our group rules.
- ❖ Respect and be kind to others.
- ❖ Listen carefully to directions, and obey them.
- ❖ Do not touch others.
- ❖ Work quietly and keep calm we are future Drs.
- ❖ Listen quietly while others are speaking.
- ❖ Raise your hand before you ask a question.
- ❖ Listen quietly while others are speaking.

Individual Group Tasks:

Each group member is expected to...

- ❖ support the work of the team
- ❖ contribute ideas about content and process
- ❖ listen carefully to others
- ❖ build on others' ideas
- ❖ help move the team to its goal
- ❖ keep on task
- ❖ maintain a positive attitude
- ❖ clean up when the activity is completed.

Students' Promises:

- ❖ Get along with each other and with our teachers.
- ❖ Respect each other be friendly to everyone.
- ❖ On task very kind to each other and making fun.
- ❖ Using a quiet voice is a must.
- ❖ Participation. Each partner should be active and share.
- ❖ Stay with your group.

Small-Group Work activities:

The challenge confronting the English Foreign Language teacher becomes one of designing techniques and activities which encourage natural communication practice. Therefore, the EFL teacher should carry out his task effectively in order to cultivate competence in his students in grouping. The teacher should select different techniques and activities that permit students to share their ideas and experiences through acting, discussion, using schedules, contrasting techniques, classification, role-playing, inquiring, dialogue, guessing games and storytelling.

Group work discussion:

The main part of Gastroenterology System is the 'stomach'. In Small Groups of five DISCUSS the statement concerning the 'stomach':

1. Anatomy
2. Functions

3. Diseases
4. Treatments

Using Schedules:

Methodology for teaching medical terminology by using a flexible and effective *schedule*. E.g., 3 stages. These stages are:

1. prefixes 2. suffixes 3. specializations
 In group of five students are asked to list prefixes within (2-3) proceeding to suffixes from next two weeks. Then introducing roots represent different specialties and specialists. For example by listing words starts with (ab) abdominal abnormal, abstract, abduction...etc.

Contrasting Techniques:

In groups Students are asked to show the differences between.

Medical Terminology	Its opposites
Hyperglycaemia	Hypoglycaemia
Hypertension	Hypotension
Hyperthyroidism	Hypothyroidism

Classification:

In grouping students can relate to each other and being active classifying medical terms and giving their meanings.

Suffix	Suffix Meaning	Terminology	Meaning of the Medical Term
A ,an	No. not or without	anemia	Deficiency of hemoglobin or number of RBCs
Ectomy-	Surgical removal	nephrectomy	Removal of the kidney
Sub-	Below, under	Subcutaneous	Pertaining to under the skin
Endo-	Within	endoscope	An instrument to visual examine an organ or a cavity

Research Methodology

Research Design

The researcher will use a qualitative and quantitative standard of research.

Participants:

The study was conducted at Medical College, Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the second semester in 2014. Fifty EFL students who participated in this study. All of these participants from the students side are native speakers of Arabic language. They are all Saudi. They study at the first year of medical college, level II (MED 164-3prep courses). All students are Saudi and their native language is

Arabic. Their average age is 19. The study was constructed to provide general information about the students' attitudes toward small-group learning. It was also concerned with the identification of their problems in small groups.

Research Questions:

- ❖ To what extent does group work create a positive classroom climate?
- ❖ Are there any significant differences between the control and experimental groups in using group work techniques?
- ❖ To what extent can group work activities develop EFL medical students' performance?
- ❖ To what extent does the group work help students to be well-motivated?
- ❖ To what extent does group work facilitate a democratic learning environment by creating a healthy classroom atmosphere?

Assumptions:

- ❖ Group work creates a healthy classroom atmosphere.
- ❖ There is no significance difference between learning through 'SGW' and learning in individuality.
- ❖ There's a possibility that 'SGW' can develop EFL students' communicative skills and academic performance.
- ❖ Work in grouping may maximize medical students' learning opportunity by interacting with their instructors and peers effectively.
- ❖ Using group work techniques may allow EFL students the choice to actively participate in discussions in a democratic climate.

In order to find persuasive answers to the research questions and find out the practical solutions of the problems and also the practicality of 'SGW', the research will adopt the empirical method in which two kinds of treatments will be involved i.e. control and experimental groups.

The Instrument:

- Questionnaire
- Achievement Test

Research Design:

The researcher will use a qualitative and quantitative standard of research.

Discussion:

This study followed the statistical analysis for overall results of Small-group work 'SGW' that use in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The presentation will be in the form of tabular charts and graphs, and the analysis will be done in the form of the comparison of the percentage of the two groups of teaching: controlled and experimental of 'SGW' using inside the classroom.

Having a look at the table below, it is found that, students can relate easily to one another more than the teacher and increase their performance.

Sample	Agree%	Neutral%	Disagree %	Mean	Std. Devi
Ss	74.3	15.4	10.3	2.64	0.67
Ss	85.3	8.4	6.3	1.71	0.83
Ss	72.6	9.4	18	1.28	0.79
Ss	87	3.3	12.7	1.69	0.68
General mean				1.66	

Regarding the participants' perception of the using of 'SGW' (question number 3), results showed positive perception of this effectiveness. The participants' mean score on the using group work techniques variable was quite positive, particularly in the posttest. Participants reported that 'SGW' increased their course achievement, performance, and grades according to the following percentage (74.3, 85.3, 72.6 and 87 % respectively). In addition, they reported that 'SGW' activities increased their interaction with the instructor and colleagues.

About the achievement test that was conducted for both groups out of 40 marks. It is found that the experimental group who received their learning through small group techniques and activities, they got (35-40) in general percentage of 87.5%. On the other hand, another group got less marks than the first one, they got marks between (24-37) in general percentage of 76.25%. From this results, it is clear that learning in small groups has a great effect on the students' motivation and better outcomes.

Findings and Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that students in general prefer working in small groups, and collaborative strategies. In addition, the students most proficient in medical terminology used various kinds of strategies more often than the less proficient students did. The survey of literature revealed a significant relationship between participation in these experiences and deeper learning as well as the development of learning and collaborative learning skills. Further, collaborative learning appears to increase a sense of community, which has been shown to be closely linked to students' enhancement, motivation, encouragement, satisfaction and retention. It was also found that the effective teaching and learning a language needs innovative and effective learning methods, strategies and techniques through collaborative learning. Also, it is found that the 'SGW' creates a healthy classroom environment providing ample opportunities which enable instructors to make good relation with their students who are motivated to help and relate to one another, and therefore can do more work in a short time. In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher has come to conclusion that:

- ❖ There are significant differences between the control and experimental groups in using 'SGW' techniques.
- ❖ 'SGW' has a great influence on the students' achievements.
- ❖ 'SGW' is interesting for both teachers and their students. Students in grouping perform better.
- ❖ Students relate to each other and help one another in the Group Work
- ❖ 'SGW' is an effective interaction and suitable technique.

- ❖ There is more participation and production from the students in 'SGW' activities if the teacher speaks less than them.
- ❖ Students are more active and motivated in group work than in individual learning.

Group work learning is a feature of positive interpersonal climate in the classroom and learning community norms of collaboration. *“Students are likely to experience enhanced intrinsic motivation when they participate in learning activities that allow them to interact with their classmates.”* (Brohpy1998:140). The students in group work have influences with one another and in the same time; with their teacher in an open communication. These different group processes can create a positive atmosphere. (Schmuck and Schmuck (1971:18)

It is found that the Small-Group Work creates a positive climate and healthy classroom environment in which the students are very active and more motivated by helping and relating to one another. It is hoped that teachers make benefits of this research and arrange their classes setting and allow their students to sit face to face so as to increase their motivation and interests and help each other.

Implication for Further Research and Development:

There is much that is good about small-group work 'SGW' and much that still students can learn more effectively from using such kind of learning. As this study is limited in its nature many possibilities are open for further research. There is need for further studies with different age groups, and with a larger population in other colleges and institutions in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices:

Appendix A Students' Questionnaire

Dear Student please answer the following questions by ticking on only one answer.

- | SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
|--|----|----|---|----|---|
| 1. I can communicate with my friends easily through Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 2. Group Work enhances my communicative skills. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 3. Group work activities help me to do better inside the classroom. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 4. English is a difficult subject and it needs Group Work to be understood. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 5. I do not like to speak English with my friends. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 6. It is better for me to do all language activities in groups. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 7. I feel more confident in Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 8. I would prefer if the lecturer used Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 9. Group Work learning offers opportunity for me. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 10. I am able to interact easily with my friends and my teacher during Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 11. I feel the need to work in grouping with other students in class. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 12. Group Work learning improves my performance. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 13. I can usually get a lot more done in a shorter time through Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 14. It is good to help each other doing exercises except during the test. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 15. I'm able to learn more and understand things better through Group Work. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 16. Group Work makes assignment more fun. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 17. I can solve a problem in a faster and easier way collaborating with friends. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 18. To me "three heads are better than one" is definitely true. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 19. We can relate to each other more than the teacher in grouping. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |
| 20. I really like working in groups. | | | | | |
| SA | AO | SD | D | NS | O |

Appendix B

Medical Achievement Test

Q.1. Choose the correct answer:

1. Femur is a
a. backbone b. wrist c. thigh bone d. tail bone
2. is a sign of high blood sugar.
a. Hypertension b. Polyuria c. Hyperglycemia d. Diarrhea
3. means chronic.
a. last long time b. short time c. unlimited time d. right now
4. treats disorders of childhood.
a. Urologist b. Pediatrician c. Obstetrician d. Hematologist

Q.2. Read the case and answer the questions

Mr. Zak suffers from *dyspepsia* and sharp abdominal pain. A recent episode of *hematemesis* has left him very weak and anemic. *Gastroscopy* and an upper GI series with *barium* revealed the presence of large *ulcer*. Mr. Zak will be admitted to hospital and scheduled for partial *gastrectomy*.

1. Which specialist can treat Mr. Zak?.....
2. Write the meaning of the underline words.
a)
b)
c)

Q.3. Write the meanings to the following terms:

1. Arteriosclerosis:.....
2. Dysmenorrhea:
3. Anemia:
4. Rectocele

Q.4. Complete the sentences with the words in the box:

angina\ gynecology \ vasculitis \ hematemesis\ oncology

1. Vomiting blood.....
2. is an inflammation of blood vessels.
3. The study of women diseases is
4. Sharp pain in the chest is

Q.5. Match the terms in (A) with their meanings in (B):

- | (A) | (B) |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Lymphadenopathy | a. Inflammation of the appendix. |
| 2. Anticoagulant | b. Use of kidney machine to filter blood from waste materials. |
| 3. Hemodialysis | c. Disease of lymph glands |
| 4. Appendicitis | d. drugs that works against clotting. |

Terms (A)	1	2	3	4
Meanings(B)				

End of the Questions

Good Luck

Contact email: abumojtaba68@hotmail.com