เทคนิคการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือร่วมใจ เพื่อส่งเสริมการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ สำหรับนักศึกษาไทย

Collaborative Learning Techniques: an Emphasis on Reading Comprehension for Thai EFL Students

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บทคัดย่อ

ในปัจจุบัน แวดวงการศึกษาเจริญก้าวหน้าอย่างรวดเร็ว ส่งผลให้นักการศึกษา นักวิจัย ตลอดจน ครู อาจารย์จำนวนมากมีความตื่นตัวที่จะต้องพัฒนาการจัดการเรียนการสอนด้วยรูปแบบต่าง ๆ ที่หลากหลาย ให้มีประสิทธิภาพและเกิดผลสัมฤทธิ์สูงสุดกับผู้เรียน ด้วยเหตุนี้ เทคนิคการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบร่วมมือ ร่วมใจจึงได้รับความนิยมและได้รับการคัดสรรมาใช้ในห้องเรียนเพื่อส่งเสริมผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน ของผู้เรียนอย่างสูงสุด นอกจากนี้ จะเห็นได้ว่า ด้วยสังคมที่หลากหลายด้วยวัฒนธรรม ส่งผลให้ทักษะการ อ่านในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศยังคงมีความสำคัญอย่างต่อเนื่อง และยังเป็นทักษะสำคัญทักษะหนึ่งในการที่ จะส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนเกิดการเรียนรู้ ความสามารถในการอ่านจะส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนเกิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต และเพิ่มโอกาสให้ผู้เรียนได้สั่งสมความรู้จากแหล่งต่าง ๆ มากมาย อาทิเช่น หนังสือเรียน บทความ สื่ออิเล็กทรอนิกส์เพื่อให้เกิดผลสำเร็จต่อตนเอง หน้าที่การงาน และความเชี่ยวชาญเฉพาะตัว อาจกล่าวได้ว่า เทคนิคการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือร่วมใจได้รับความนิยมและนำมาใช้ในการจัดการเรียนการสอนการอ่านอย่าง แพร่หลายในช่วงระยะเวลา 10 ปีที่ผ่านมา ทั้งนี้เนื่องจากเทคนิคการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือร่วมใจจะช่วยส่งเสริม ให้ผู้เรียนเกิดความเป็นอิสระในการเรียน เกิดทักษะการทำงานกลุ่ม ปฏิสัมพันธ์ การพัฒนาระดับความคิด ชั้นสูง และส่งเสริมให้เกิดการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิตอีกด้วย ดังนั้น จุดมุ่งหมายของบทความนี้ จึงมุ่งเน้นให้ครู อาจารย์นำเทคนิคการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือร่วมใจไปใช้ในห้องเรียนการอ่านเพื่อส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนเกิดองค์ความรู้ ด้านการอ่านอย่างสูงสุด

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Abstract

In accordance with the rapid advancement of education and development of teaching and learning methodologies at the present time, many educators, instructional designers, researchers, and teachers are encouraged to explicitly develop effective and challenging teaching methods which aim to respond to the students' learning achievement. In these perspectives, collaborative learning techniques are predominantly selected in order to strengthen the students' academic achievement. Moreover, with multilingual societies, reading as a foreign language continues to take on increasing importance. It has become one of the most important skills to successful learning. The ability to read helps in strengthening individual learning and provides limitless opportunities for improving the students' life by acquiring more knowledge from various forms of media such as textbooks, journals, and internet searches in order to achieve personal, occupational, and professional goals. In the last ten years, collaborative learning techniques have been broadly used in foreign language reading classroom since they facilitate positive interdependence, group processing, interaction, high level thinking, and lifelong learning. The purpose of this article is to encourage teachers to apply collaborative learning techniques in the EFL reading classrooms for increasing students' proficiency in English reading.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning Techniques, Reading Comprehension, EFL Students

Introduction

In this fast moving era of globalization, it is indispensable that a person should be able to communicate with people from other locations in the world. English, in particular, has played an important role as a tool for such international communication. Moreover, living in this information age, people must be able to cope with increasing reading demands in order to select relevant and practical information for their personal and professional purposes. Briefly, this means that readers must read more efficiently not only by reading faster but also with better comprehension. The question is: how can we increase the effectiveness and efficiency of reading to achieve such a challenging goal?

In Thailand, students need to read texts not only in Thai, their native language, but also in English, their foreign language. By the completion of secondary education, Thai students have spent ten or more years learning English; they should be good at reading texts. However, they do not seem to be able to do so. In fact, the majority of average Thai students cannot read adequately. For example, Chawwang (2008) carried out research to investigate the problem of reading skills of students at M.6 level, the last year of study before college, in educational regions 1, 2, 3 and 7 in Nakhonratchasima. The investigation showed that the students' ability was less than average for each of the three main problem areas: sentence structure, vocabulary in context, and paragraph organization. Plus, Liamsokul (1998) pointed out that Thai students have difficulty remembering vocabulary and understanding sentences. Therefore, students with reading problems have difficulty in both studying and their personality.

This article focuses on indication of the elements of procedures in teaching English reading skills for EFL students by using collaborative learning techniques to help students succeed in their English reading.

What Collaborative Learning Represents

For this section, the description of collaborative learning is briefly discussed as follows:

Collaborative learning, also known as CL, has been called by different terms: cooperative learning, collective learning, peer teaching, or team learning. It is a timeless strategy that has been prevalently used in the academic setting for enhancing the students' learning by working together and has experienced increased popularity in the past ten years. According to Smith and Macgregor (1992) collaborative learning refers to a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students work in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. As Jolliffe (2007) mentioned, a characteristic feature of what drives new collaborative learning and motivation is the way that the students work together in small groups to support each other to improve their own learning and that of others.

Apart from that, Dhitsakul (2000) revealed that collaborative learning can significantly enhance the students' cooperation to work together, accept other members' ideas, and develop personal responsibility and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, it is designed to support the students' various skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and even critical thinking.

It is also considered that collaborative learning is the whole process that includes the ways the students teach one another, the students teach the teacher, and undeniably the teacher teaches the students, too. The most importantly factor is to highlight the ideas that the students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own and that reaching the goal implies that students have helped each other to understand and learn (Dooly, 2008). This makes a collaborative learning context that provides opportunities for students to interact with one another in verbal and nonverbal, paralinguistic ways (O'Donnell, Hmelo-Silver, & Erkens, 2006)

Moreover, Srinivas (2011 as cited in Marjan & Mozhgan, 2012) also supports the notion that in collaborative learning environments students are challenged both socially and emotionally by listening to different perspectives, and then articulating and defending their ideas. In so doing, students begin to create their own unique conceptual frameworks and not rely solely on an expert's or a text's framework. In the collaborative learning setting, the students have the opportunity to converse with peers, present and defend ideas, exchange diverse beliefs, question other conceptual frameworks, and are actively engaged.

According to Elizabeth, Barkley, and Cross (2014), there are two factors to make collaborative learning effective: intentional design and co-laboring. For intentional design, teachers simply tell students to get into groups and work; then, faculty members create intentional learning activities for students. They may do this by selecting from a range of pre-structured activities, such as creating their own activities and assignments. Another crucial component is co-laboring. It means all members in the group must actively engage in communication to accomplish the stated objectives.

This is also supported by Netwong and Tumnanchit (2012) that demonstrated collaborative learning encourages the students to concentrate on the lessons which are personally relevant. The process elicits individual perceptions and allows for development

of meaningful understanding that may be applied systematically and developed into permanent learning.

From the above, it can be noticed that even though the definitions of collaborative learning have different perspectives, especially for the academic environment, it is still vital to consider collaborative learning is a technique which is focused on the learning outcome which allows the students to improve their knowledge by interacting with others.

EFL Students' Reading Comprehension

Under this topic, reading comprehension for EFL students is highlighted. Its definition is briefly discussed.

Ultimately, reading harmonizes one of the most important skills in language learning for students especially at the university level. It is also, according to Wallace (1992), so much a part of daily life for those who live in literate communities. Moreover, if students read more, they also learn more (Piyanukool, 2001). As EFL students, the way that they read is different from L1 students. While they learn to read, they must broaden their linguistic knowledge, deal with transfer effects, and learn to use L2-specific resources among many other factors (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). With this in mind, the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately is a focal issue (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). In addition, Sighal (2006) mentioned that EFL reading must act as a dynamic and interactive process in which learners make use of background knowledge, text schema, lexical and grammatical awareness, L1-related knowledge, and real-world knowledge, as well as their own personal purpose and goals, to arrive at an understanding of the written material. All of this is indicative of improved reading comprehension.

Comprehension can be defined as understanding. Reading comprehension means understanding a written text; it entails the most efficient extraction of the required information (Grellet, 1981). Furthermore, Greenwood (1990) claimed that a complete comprehension is something that a sensible reader should not strive for; a reader should be satisfied if, after reading a text, he understands what the writer wants to convey, not necessarily all the minute details the writer has in mind. Grellet (1991) agreed with Greenwood, pointing out that such completeness might not exist. In other words, a reader

should not seek complete comprehension from a text; he should only seek appropriate level of comprehension.

In order to encourage students to be successful in reading comprehension, students are able to show their understanding by re-expressing the content of the text by writing sentences or paragraphs in response to questions, or by summarizing the text (Swan, 1975). Additionally, the process of making meaning from the text should aim at establishing an overall understanding of the text rather than obtaining meaning from isolated words or sentences (Woolley, 2011).

In brief, comprehension is the ability to effectively infer the information or the desired meanings from a text.

Why Should Collaborative Learning Techniques Be Focused on EFL Reading Classrooms?

There is compelling evidence in support of collaborative learning techniques focused on EFL reading classrooms and related literature.

There have been various successful studies in the literature that deal with the implementation of collaborative learning techniques in reading courses from the secondary and tertiary educational levels both in Thailand and other countries.

One interesting study was when Meejang (2004) developed an English reading strategy instruction model based on collaborative learning principles for enhancing reading and learning outcomes of university students. The findings showed that the students worked collaboratively in group discussions in which they expressed their ideas about the text and strategies while the teachers acted as a facilitator who provided guidance and support.

Momtaz and Garner (2010) conducted a study on how collaborative learning improved EFL students' reading comprehension. A mixed-method study was used in Iranian EFL reading comprehension classes with the objective to establish whether collaborative learning leads to greater comprehension of a text than private reading and if so, the processes by which it enhances comprehension. The pre-test for reading comprehension was used for all participants and then students were separated into two classes. The test consisted of four texts of equal length. The students in each class read

two texts collaboratively and two privately, then responded in writing to ten comprehension questions. It was found that for all four texts, collaborative reading consistently resulted consistently in significantly higher scores than private reading for all four texts. It showed that the students reading collaboratively consistently outperform students reading privately. The effects of collaborative reading appear to enhance the reading comprehension ability of Iranian EFL university students.

Two years later, Novita (2012) conducted a survey dealing with the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) strategy in teaching reading comprehension. The study was aimed at determining if there was significant improvement of students' reading comprehension achievement after being taught using Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). It was found that there was a significant improvement in the students' achievement after they were exposed to the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) strategy when studying reading comprehension in the classroom.

Karabuga and Kaya (2013) conducted a research of collaborative strategic reading practice with adult EFL learners in Turkey. It aimed to find out the effects of collaborative learning on adult EFL learners' reading comprehension and reading-related problems. 40 prep-class university students, having three hours of reading classes per week, participated in the study and they were labeled into two groups as experimental and control groups. The results revealed that collaborative strategic reading positively affected the comprehension and reading related problems of adult EFL learners.

The success of these strategies is not confined Turkey; in Thailand Muensri (2013) studied the achievement in reading comprehension with collaborative learning using Facebook for CVE 1 Panyapiwat Technological College. The purposes of this research were 1) to study the achievement of reading comprehension with collaborative learning via Facebook and 2) to study their satisfaction with reading comprehension with collaborative learning using Facebook. The samples were 30 students studying in Certificate Vocational Education (CVE) 1st level, Retail Business in the second semester of the 2013 academic year in Panyapiwat Technological College. The results showed that: 1) after using collaborative learning using Facebook, their achievement of reading comprehension was statistically significantly higher than before learning, 2) their overall satisfaction with reading comprehension with collaborative learning using Facebook was at a high level.

Rana (2014) studied the effectiveness of collaborative learning on reading comprehension of Grade VIII students. The sample of the study was comprised of 30 students in the experimental groups selected from standard VIII of New English School, Nadiad through a convenient sampling technique. It was found that the reading comprehension through collaborative learning showed a positive impact on the experimental group. The performance of the students exposed to the intervention improved a great deal. Not only was their achievement increased but also their confidence level increased and they felt satisfied and capable of applying the reading strategy to any kind of textual material. Also, Zarei and Gilani (2014) identified the effectiveness of collaborative techniques on L2 reading comprehension. The present study examined the effects of selected collaborative techniques on students' reading comprehension. The participants of the study were 86 adult pre-intermediate level English learners studying at institutes in Qazvin. The participants were divided into five groups; each group was randomly assigned to a different treatment condition. They participated in collaborative techniques for 21 sessions. The collaborative techniques included jigsaw, rotating circles, snowball, think-pair-square, and word webbing. At the end of the experimental period, a reading comprehension post test was administered. A one-way ANOVA procedure was used to analyze data. Result showed that collaborative techniques were differentially effective on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

With this in mind, collaborative learning has been used continuously in many studies for many years and it facilitates reading skill acquisition in many levels. In addition, it leads to an increase in comprehension (Santa, 2002). Therefore, as EFL teachers, these studies can provide guidance, especially to determine effective ways to develop the students' reading comprehension and allow the students to work and share together. Moreover, collaborative learning techniques have been developed for EFL classroom teaching.

How to Apply Collaborative Learning Techniques in EFL Reading Classrooms

Collaborative learning techniques play an essential role in EFL reading classrooms, especially in 21st century learning environments. in order to enhance the students' reading comprehension and support the teachers' teaching methods. In order to apply them, experts have concentrated on several significant features.

To start with, Tinzmann, Jones, Fennimore, Bakker, Fine, and Pierce (1990 as cited in Roberts, 2004) suggested that there are four standard characteristics of collaboration. They are as follows:

1. Shared knowledge between teachers and students: Shared knowledge is in many ways a characteristic of the traditional classroom where the teacher is the information provider, who also incorporates some student input, and the students share their experiences or knowledge.

2. Shared authority between teachers and students: Here the teacher shares the goal setting within a topic with the students, thereby allowing the students to approach task completion in a manner of their choosing.

3. Teachers as mediators: In this area the teachers encourage the students to learn how to learn-this being one of the most important aspects of collaborative learning.

4. Heterogeneous groupings of students: This characteristic teaches all students to respect and appreciate the contributions made by all members of the class, regardless of the content.

Moreover, Johnson and Johnson (1991) presented five important elements for successful collaborative learning: positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing. They are explained in the followings:

1. Positive interdependence

The students desire each other to complete the group task, whilst the teachers are required to complete the positive interdependence by launching mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles.

2. Face-to-face promotive interaction

Helping, sharing, and encouraging efforts to learn are stimulated to support each student's learning. The students precisely show their explanation, discussion,

brainstorming, and teaching to one another. At the same time, the teachers form the groups in order for them to sit together and talk through each aspect of the assignment.

3. Individual accountability

Each student's performance is regularly evaluated. Then the results are delivered to the groups and each student. Teachers also attempt to give an individual test to each student or select one group member to give answers.

4. Interpersonal and small group skills

Social skills like interpersonal and small group skills are necessary for the students to work as a group. That means the teachers not only need to focus on social but also academic skills; auxiliary skills include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills are included.

5. Group processing

A determined time is provided for the groups to examine how successful they are in meeting their goals and the efficacy of working relationships among members. The teachers offer group processing by arranging two tasks 1) presentation of at least three successful actions from group members and 2) identification of only one action that should be included for another successful task. The teachers also facilitate the groups and give feedback on how well the groups are working together to the groups and the class.

Not only two mentioned experts but also Jolliffe (2007) had a similar perspective and also recommended that there are two vital features which should be concentrated on. The former is positive interdependence. Each student in a small group is required to contribute to the learning of the group. Plus, the students work in a way to develop relationships with other members to help complete the task. The latter is individual accountability. In this feature, each member of the group is accountable for completing the work. A sense of personal responsibility to learn and to help others to learn is required to encourage each student in the group.

Regarding the attributes mentioned above, collaborative learning is highly focused on the cooperation between the students and the teachers to work together. The students can express their individual and academic performance in order to accomplish their goals; whilst, the teachers function as a supplementary role to run the collaborative teaching and learning process.

Designing Collaborative Learning Techniques to the EFL Reading Classroom

This part highlights the ways to design EFL reading classroom with collaborative learning techniques.

Regarding to the Center for Teaching Excellence (2012), knowledge is a social construct. Consequently, collaborative learning techniques for enhancing students' reading comprehension is designed with the cooperation of teachers, students, or even peers as a team. For the teachers, the role is as a mediator or facilitator to provide the opportunities to the students to work and participate collaboratively. Convincing the students to work as a team is highly endorsed by the teacher. The teacher starts coaching the students to make sure that they all participate and understand what it means to cooperate with informal processes such as pairs that meet briefly for specific, narrow objectives, the prospective teacher can observe students' interactions and then master some fundamentals of classroom management before moving on to more sophisticated processes (Brody, 2004). What is more, Grellet (1981) recommended that guessing, predicting, checking and asking questions should be implemented to develop the students' powers of inference through systematic practice or introduce questions which encourage students to anticipate the content of a text from its title and illustrations or the end of the story from the preceding paragraphs.

For the students, they participate in the activities with their self-confidence and responsibility. Plus, they pay respect to each other and learn to share their responses with other group members. During the collaborative learning, their performance of thinking, communication, and leadership skills are performed. This is also supported by Slavin (1987 & Johnson et al., 1988 as cited in Wilcox, 2008) that the students, before learning, set goals and plan learning tasks; during learning, they work together to accomplish tasks and monitor their progress; and after learning, they assess their performance and plan for future learning.

In order to heighten the students' reading comprehension using collaborative learning techniques, reading comprehension and collaborative learning techniques are greatly focused on. Firstly, Grellet (1981) recommended that guessing, predicting, checking and asking questions should be implemented to develop the students' powers of inference through systematic practice or introduce questions which encourage students to

anticipate the content of a text from its title and illustrations or the end of the story from the preceding paragraphs.

Conclusion

In order to heighten the students' reading comprehension, it is necessary for the teachers to implement collaborative learning techniques in EFL classrooms in order to enhance the students' reading comprehension. Not only are the students beneficially encouraged to develop their self-esteem, communication, responsibility and leadership skills for working with other people, but also critical thinking, a higher level thinking skill, and cognitive elaboration are engaged. In addition, Laal & Ghodsi (2012) proposed that collaboration is a supported interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respecting the abilities and contributions of their peers. There is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the groups' actions.

With regards to developing students' reading comprehension, using collaborative learning techniques is a way to develop the students' reading comprehension in order to succeed in their classroom learning. Moreover, the classroom environment enhances the value of collaboration. It is also useful for the teachers to enrich their present teaching method in a way that can support authentic experience and lifelong learning in real life literacy.

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