

Teacher and students' factors affecting students' participation in pair work and group work – A case study at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninhbinh \ Yếu tố giáo viên và học sinh ảnh hưởng đến việc tham gia hoạt động nhóm, cặp của học sinh chuyên Anh - Một nghiên cứu cá biệt tại trường THPT Chuyên Lương Văn Tuy Ninh Bình

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I. Rationale of the study

In recent decades, English has been more and more important in Vietnam. The importance of English is not only in how many people speak it but also in what it is used for. Besides the native language is popularly used in all fields of the society, English is now widely known as the major language of intercommunication, international commerce, business, science and technology and so on. As a result, there has been a positive trend of teaching and learning English across the country. People, from children to adults, learn English with different purposes. In general, despite deriving from different purposes, every one wants to turn English to become their own instrument in their lives.

Over the past few years, the application of the communicative language teaching method has been widely adopted. This marked the beginning of a major change in the language teaching and learning at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninh Binh. And the students' speaking skill as well as their communicative abilities has been improved remarkably. In the speaking class of English major students, there are many speaking activities. Among them, Pair work and Group work, key features of learner – centered orientation – have received more emphasis because of a number of advantages they bring about.

Being a teacher of English at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School, the researcher is well aware of the importance of using pair work and group work during speaking

lesson. However, like many other teachers of English here, the researcher see that the students in general and the English proficiency students have also faced many challenges coming from teacher, students, classroom condition, and different culture between two languages when organizing and managing pair work and group work. This lead me the choice of the study “*Teacher and students’ factors affecting students’ participation in pair work and group work – A case study at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School*” with the hope of investigating the teacher and students’ factors which come from teacher and students themselves affecting the students’ participation in pair work and group work. With regard to the factors affecting the students’ participation in pairs and in groups, the study focused on the students’ factors including learning styles, attitudes and motivation, language levels, learning habits and gender differences; teacher factors including teacher methods, knowledge, characteristics and roles in oral activities. This research is also aimed at discovering the application of pair work and group work during speaking lesson in English major classes and then some feasible suggestions for both teacher and students to organize the pair work and group work successfully. Thus, pair work and group work can be used in flexible way to create variety, freshness in the classroom atmosphere and most importantly, to enhance students’ oral practice of English.

II. Aims of the study

The aims of the study are to investigate the factors affecting students’ participation in pair work and group work of English major students at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninh Binh. Some mains purposes covering the study are summarized as follows:

- To identify the application of pair work and group work in speaking lesson at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School.
- To point out some teacher and students’ factors affecting students’ participation in pair work and group work.
- To give some suggestions for teachers to stimulate students and to improve their participation when working in pairs and in groups.

III. Scope of the study

Concerning the scope of the study, some of the following things should be taken into consideration. First, the subjects of the study are the 99 English major students at

Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School. We chose the major students of English because they had basic knowledge about English and began to learn English as their proficiency so in speaking lesson, they will be more participated in speaking activities, especially in pair work and group work. Second, the study only focuses on oral activities because speaking skill is considered the most important and needs developing for their future employment aspect. Third, the study concentrates to find out the human factors including teacher factors and student factors. Finally, the two techniques chosen to be investigated are pair work and group work.

IV. Research questions of the study

This study was aimed to answer the three following research questions:

1. How often are pair work and group work applied in English speaking class in Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School? How actively are the students involved in pair work and group work?
2. Which are the teacher and students' factors affecting their participation in pair work and group work?
3. What are the feasible solutions to improve students' participation in pair work and in group work, as recommended by the teachers and students?

V. Methodology of the study

To realize the aims of the study, a case study was used. The theoretical background of the study comes from many published books written by different authors on language teaching and language acquisition. The data collected for the study come from two sources: The students and the teachers of English at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School (99 students of three English proficiency classes and 10 teachers of English) by making survey questionnaires, class observation and interview. In this research, quantitative method is used, too. All comments, remarks, recommendations assumption and conclusion provided in the study based on the analysis of the statistics from the survey questionnaires conducted with students and teachers of Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School. The study is also based on a qualitative method with the author's own experience and observation during 6 years of teaching English.

VI. Significance of the study

The study is of great values by the following reasons:

First, the information about the self – evaluation of the participation in pair work and group work of the students is believed to be useful for the teachers of English in general and teachers of English at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninh Binh in particular.

Second, identifying some human factors affecting students' participation of students in pairs and in groups, pointing out students' preferences and demands to activities and techniques applied by teachers are believed to be helpful for all teachers when teaching speaking and when designing pairs and groups.

Third, giving some recommendations for teachers to motivate students to participate in pairs and groups and to overcome obstacles and difficulties in teaching speaking is expected to be beneficial.

VII. Design of the study

The study is divided into four parts: The Introduction, the Development, the Conclusion and the References.

Part A: Introduction

This part deals with the rationale, aims, scope, methods, significance and design of the study.

Part B: Development

This part consists of the following chapters:

Chapter I: Literature review – is intended to give some theoretical background related to Communicative language teaching, speaking skills and its related concepts, classroom work arrangement (pair work and group work) and the concept of students' participation in pairs and in groups and factors affecting students' participation in pair work and group work including students' factors.

Chapter II: The study – presents the situation analysis, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis. The detailed results of the survey and a comprehensive analysis on the data collected are focused.

Chapter III: Presentation of statistical results – analyzes the statistical results from questionnaires, class observation and interviews which aim at answering three research questions mentioned in the previous part.

Chapter IV: Summary of findings and recommendations – shows major findings and offers some feasible solutions to improve students' participation in pair work and in group work, as recommended by the teachers and students.

Part C: Conclusion: - gives the conclusion from the results of the findings, some suggestions for further researches and limitation of the study.

Part D: References: - provides readers a list of the lecturers, their books, the publisher, the year of published, and pages that the author used as recommended documents.

PART B: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter briefly covers the theories related to the study: Communicative approach to language teaching, pair work and group work arrangement in language teaching and learning and human factors affecting the students' participation in pair work and in group work.

I. COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT)

I.1. AN OVERVIEW OF CLT

I.2. COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

II. CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT: PAIR WORK AND GROUP WORK

II.1. Definition and description of Pair work and Group work

II.1.1. Pair work

II.1.2. Group work:

II.2. Advantages and disadvantages of pair work and group work:

II.2.1. Pair work:

II.2.2. Group work:

II.3. Organization of pair work and group work

II.3.1. Formation:

II.3.2. Procedures for Pair work and Group work:

II.3.3. Seating arrangement in pair work and group work:

III. Students' participation and factors affecting their participation in Pair work and Group work

III. 1. Concept of students' participation in pair work and group work:

III.2. Human factors affecting students' participation in Pair work and Group work:

III.2.1. Students' factors:

III.2.1.1. Students' learning styles:

III.2.1.2. Students' attitudes and motivation:

III.2.1.3. Students' language levels:

III.2.1.4. Students' learning habits:

III.2.1.5. Gender differences:

III.2.2. Teacher's factors:

III.2.2.1. Teacher's teaching methods:

III.2.2.2. Teachers' knowledge:

III.2.2.3. Teachers' characteristics:

III.2.2.4. Teachers' roles in PW and GW:

IV. Summary

This chapter covered the theories related to CLT, classroom work arrangements including pair work and group work, students' participation concept and the human factors affecting the students' participation in pair work and in group work in detail. Students' participation can be affected by teachers' factors and students' ones including teaching methods, teachers' knowledge, teachers' characteristics, and teachers' roles in classroom activities, the students' passive learning habits, the fear of making mistakes of students, the un – cooperation of partners and the overuse of mother tongue of students. The chapter that follows will present all the information concerning the study: the English learning situation at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School including the teachers, the students, the textbook and the using of pair work and group work in the speaking lesson, the methodology of the study, the research questions, the research instruments and the data collection procedures.

Chapter II – The study

I. Introduction

II. English learning situation at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School

II.1. Students:

II.2. Teachers:

II.3. Textbook:

II.4. Using pair work and group work in speaking lesson:

III. Methodology and design of the study:

III.1. Subjects of the study:

The subjects of the study are 99 students of the three English major classes: 10,11,12 and 10 teachers of English at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School.

III.2. Research methods:

To realize the aims of the study, a case study was used including the qualitative and quantitative methods.

III.4. Research instruments:

III.4.1. Questionnaire survey:

The instrument used in this study consisted of two types of questionnaires: One for teachers and the other for the students. Each of them has four parts. All the questions are closed to avoid time – consuming of students when taking part in the survey.

III.4.2. Class Observation:

Before observing classes, the researcher has to design the classroom observations sheet. The classes observed from grade 10 to 12 and with all ten teachers of English must not be prepared especially for being observed.

III.4.3. Interviews:

The interview was carried out in Vietnamese. 9 students of 3 English major classes and 3 teachers were randomly selected for the interview. The questions in the interview were basically based on those in the questionnaires, but they were extended to cover more open – ended questions to get through understanding of the reasons behind each choice. Each conversation lasted for 5 to 7 minutes.

III.5. Data collection procedures

* **Questionnaire survey:**

* **Class observation:**

* **Interviews:**

III.6. Data analysis

Data analysis is not simply a single description of the collected data. In fact, it is the process by which the researcher interprets the data collection from the survey questionnaires, the class observation and interviews.

III.7. Summary

Chapter III - Presentation of statistical results

I. Introduction

II. Presentation of statistical results

CHAPTER IV- SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Findings from interviews, questionnaires and class observation:

1. To answer the first research question *“How often are pair work and group work applied in English speaking class at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninh Binh?”* and *“How actively are the students involved in pair work and group work?”*, The pair work and group work activities were often used in English speaking lesson and the students of three English major classes took part in these activities of high proportion. Students had positive view of the using of pair work and group work, so when they were asked to work in pairs and in groups, they worked with great interest.

2. To answer the second research question *“Which are the teacher and students’ factors affecting the students’ participation in pair work and group work?”*, the teacher and students’ factors had both positively and negatively affected to the students’ participation in pairs and in groups: The factors from teachers include the lack of knowledge of pair work and group work, habits of old teaching methods, and not very good preparation and the factors from students include the passive learning style, the students’ fear of making mistakes and gender differences.

3. To answer the third research question *“What are the feasible solutions to improve students’ participation in pair work and in group work, as recommended by the teachers and students?”* all the students interviewed wanted their teachers to provide them some more English structures, vocabulary, and suggested ideas concerning to the topic to help them speak out in English accurately and fluently. They also wanted their teacher to create an interesting lead – in, a competitive atmosphere and to give them supports when necessary.

II. Some main recommendations:

II.1. To teachers:

First, to organize courses about the techniques especially the pair work and the group work is considered the most important for every teacher.

Second, within the English group should organize professional meetings to exchange teaching and material selecting experience. The teachers can attend the other's lectures to have more experience or to help others to improve the teaching quality.

Third, the teachers should enhance their extrinsic motivation by changing the current assessment system with a view to increasing their participation in classroom speaking activities.

Another issue that may reduce the effectiveness of pair work and group work is the students' Vietnamese use. The best way to keep students speaking English is that the teachers should try their best to put an eye on all groups, pairs, and remind them and model them the language use.

II.2. To students:

The students should participate in pair and group positively with the highest motivation. They should become active speakers in the speaking class. Students should be confident when working in pairs or in groups.

Besides this, the students should plan to form a habit of using English. This habit should be built right from the beginning of the first lesson. They should make use of the different sources such as newspaper, Internet... to be acquainted to the native speakers' voice which helps to improve their pronunciation ability.

Moreover, they also should cooperate with friends and teachers. It is advisable that the students should find more opportunities to practice speaking English by attending English speaking clubs or by speaking English with foreigners.

PART C: CONCLUSION

I. Conclusions:

The findings analyzed in the previous chapter lead us to the following conclusions:

The Pair work and group work are often applied in English speaking class at Luong Van Tuy Gifted High School in Ninh Binh.

The two human factors affecting students' participation in pair work and group work are coming from teacher and students themselves. These factors have both negatively and positively to students' participation in Pair work and Group work as listed here: The lack of knowledge, of time when organizing pair work and group work, the habit of using traditional method during the speaking period for the old teacher and the not very good preparation before and during the organizing pair work and group work, the passive learning styles of the students including their pronunciation abilities, the fear of making mistakes and gender differences and the overuse of the mother tongue when taking part in pairs and groups, too.

Thus, to stimulate the students' participation in Pair work and Group work, teachers should pay attention to these factors so that he/ she can make use of the advantages of Pair work and Group work when organizing these two activities during speaking class.

II. Limitation of the study

However, there is an obvious limitation that this length of time is not enough for the students to familiarize themselves with learning. Neither is it long enough to measure the effectiveness of a new idea in teaching language. As it can be seen from the students and teacher questionnaires, the information to be obtained was quite limited and not very accurate. Their response may be just their belief or thoughts that they have about their use of working in pair and in group. Some students can answer things that they actually not do or they have different understanding of some concepts/ terms used in the questionnaire.

III. Suggestions for further studies

Some further research should be taken as follow:

- A study of the ways to use material provided by the textbook effectively in organizing pair and group work.
- A study on the tips and techniques, which help to organize successfully pair work and group work in crowded classes.

- A study on classroom conditions affecting students' participation in PW and GW.
- A study on cultural obstacles affecting students' motivation in English speaking.