

HOW COLLABORATIVE IS COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK? A CASE STUDY OF THAI UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' GROUP TASK

Kannikar Boonkhaos

Kitcha Thepsiri

King Mongkut's University of Technology,

Thonburi, Thailand

am_loveu28@hotmail.com

kitcha.the@kmutt.ac.th

Abstract

This study aims to investigate how students collaborate within the group while working on a group task and what the pattern of the students' collaboration is when Thai undergraduate students perform a task. The data of this research study were collected from 38 volunteer Science and Technology students who enrolled in an Academic English course at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi in Bangkok, Thailand. Two research instruments were employed in the present study. The memo notes were primarily used to recall students' collaboration. After analyzing the data gained from the memo notes, a semi-structured interview protocol was conducted to further probe any ambiguous or unclear points mentioned in the memos. The findings revealed that students did collaborate while performing a group task as they helped one another to complete the task. Two patterns of collaboration were identified in this study. The first pattern is that students separate the task and each team member work on his/her own on the part he/she is responsible for. After that they come back to the group and work together to finish the assigned task. The second pattern is that students work together from the beginning to the end of the group task.

Key words: *collaboration, collaborative learning, group task, group work*

Introduction

Group work is a teaching strategy generally used in second language learning classes (Storch 2005; Killen 1998). It is based on social constructivism which believes that a learner's cognition can be raised by other members in his/her society (Vygotsky 1978 cited in Richard-Amato, 1988). In language learning, students need to set themselves up in a group and learn to do a task together in order to achieve the task goal. Normally, the aim of a language learning class is to create a chance for students to interact with others (Cross, 1991). In terms of group task, the task should entail particular characteristics that relate to and promote the use of language and interaction in the group work. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), a task should have a special characteristic which helps the students to use the target language to complete the task by interacting with their group members or the teacher. Additionally, the importance of group task has been described by Orlich *et al.* (1998) who agree that a group task is considered to be an important teaching and learning approach because it has a clear goal and identifies individual assignments and roles. Thus, the working group will help enhance effective learning in the second language classroom.

Such group work and tasks affect the students' cognition. Most studies reported that group work was more effective than tasks performed alone or even in pairs; for example, a study by Dobao (2011) compared group, pair, and individual work during collaborative writing tasks in an L2 classroom. It was found that the performance of students working in a group was better — their percentages of accuracy was higher and they could solve language-related problems faster — than those working in pairs or alone.

Although group task seems to be a good teaching method for an L2 classroom, there are some weak points regarding students' performance that teachers may come across when employing this strategy. The first limitation of group work is that some students have a difficult time working as a group for they may be different in some ways from their friends, or may feel uneasy about being judged based on their group's ability (Killen 1998). The second limitation, caused by the brainstorming stage, is that the brainstorming sometimes controls a student's idea and compels him/her to conform to the group. However, these limitations are derived from the students' attitude which blocks them from engaging in group work; Storch (2005) mentions that his students preferred to work alone because they don't want their ideas to be controlled by others in a writing task. Group members' differences in

background, experience, attitudes, beliefs, etc are some of the causes of the conflict; for example, the difference in the levels of knowledge and experience of the students. The knowledge or ideas that they share are sometimes so difficult or complicated that it is troublesome for others to understand (Runde & Flanagan 2008). In terms of responsibility, it is also problematic if some members do all the work or most of the group task (Slavin, 1995).

To work on a task, the students might need to work in groups. English proficiency seems to be a big problem most often with Thai students. Therefore, many a time, because of language problems, they cannot perform the assigned task successfully. Moreover, they are not familiar with working on a task in a group. They seem not to have adequate communication skills to make group work run smoothly. So the weaker ones tend to work alone and participate less or even contribute nothing in group discussion and brainstorming sessions and may even avoid communicating with their peers. Learners who have high English proficiency are more participative and do most of the group work themselves (Carmesak, 2009). This seems to be one weak point of group work. Therefore, a learning method that can go along well with the nature of the group work is necessary to facilitate and manage the group's learning. This method is known as "collaborative learning" (Intrakamhang,2004; Panitz, 1996).

Collaborative learning is a teaching technique where students work together in a group to share their experiences or beliefs to construct knowledge by following guidelines (Littlewood, 2000). It is not only a teaching technique but it is also a way of working with other people where responsibility and respect for group members are important (Panitz, 1996). A peer's opinion is observed and students learn to construct their knowledge on the basis of such opinions (Young, 2010). Therefore, students not only learn language through group work but also to interact and accept the differences in each other's ideas. In effect, the process of learning exists in the form of interaction with peers and teachers to collaborate and engage in the group work. Hirvela (1999: 7) highlighted this notion in regard to EFL instruction, pointing out that "when the students are asked to do the task in pairs or groups, their performance and their learning are getting better than [when] working alone". This is because of the characteristics of collaboration which distributes equal parts to all members and contributes to the "personal philosophy" of acceptance (Panitz,1996). Thus, it reduces competitive feeling between group members (Littlewood, 2000).

The course under investigation in the present study is LNG I03:

Academic English. It is the last compulsory course which the students at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi have to take to complete the program requirements. This course aims at fostering the four language skills, thinking skills, academic English, strategies for learning English, autonomous learning, and positive attitude towards English. The main task for students is to work in groups for: reading academic texts, summarizing the main point, analyzing the text critically, and then presenting the information to the class. The topic of the task was: "the technology we cannot live without". In accordance with this task, which needs a lot of help and ideas from friends, the students are assigned to work in groups of four. As a result, they need to collaborate with other members of the group to accomplish the task. We were interested to study how collaborative learning helps students in their group work to achieve learning goals, and also what patterns of collaboration can be identified from their group work.

Literature Review

Most of the meanings of collaboration involve people working in groups in order to do a task, produce, and achieve a goal. In terms of learning, Myers (1991 cited in Panitz 1996) points out that collaborative learning (CL) originated from the exploration of British teachers who tried to help their students have more participation and be more active in their own learning. Later, CL was elaborated on by Panitz (1996) who pointed out that it is not a learning and teaching technique, but a "personal philosophy". It is the personal belief of a group member to work in a group with respect and in consensus. He also suggested that collaborative learning emphasized working together not in competition with each other, but with mutual help and the support of teamwork to accomplish the task. This can be achieved by the endeavors of all members of the group. In addition, collaborative learning is an alternative way of teaching in which the learners will be able to learn and control their task themselves and with help from the teacher which in this case is not for controlling the work but to function as a facilitator. In this study, the term "collaborative" will be employed to see how students work together, and how they provide help and support among group members to complete a group task.

The characteristics of collaborative learning

Budd and Wright (1992) mentioned that “collaboration is communication”. They define that to collaborate in the classroom, the teacher and students need to consider how they should communicate with each other to generate a closer relationship. The relationship between group members appears to be an important factor that will help them show their feelings and thoughts in order to gain mutual trust. According to Littlewood (2000), there are five concepts of collaborative learning. The first concept is that students work mainly in small heterogeneous groups. This is a simple way of collaboration where students work in a small group in which each of them has a different ability and background to contribute to their work. That means the result of the task might depend on the background of the students (Murray, 1992). The second point is that students work in positive interdependence. As the task at hand wants them to work in a group, interaction is the most important element (Killen, 1998). The students involved need to share their ideas. The next concept is that students are accountable as individuals and also as a group. The work which is performed individually will be counted as part of the group work. Students’ learning through purposeful communication is the fourth concept of collaborative learning which means that students learn effectively through communication. And the last concept is social skills. To engage in collaborative learning, students not only need language skills, but also social skills. These can be found in activities like requesting, paraphrasing, or mediating disagreement.

Methodology of the study

This study does not focus on collaborative learning in any particular skill, but rather on how students collaborate with their group members to complete the task where all the skills are required. Since there is no study that combines the steps and features of collaborative group work for a big varied task, this study observed students’ collaboration pattern during group work in order to find answers to the following question:

How do students collaborate within a group while doing a group task?

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 38 students who were enrolled in the LNG I03: Academic English course at a tertiary institute in Thailand. The course aims at fostering the four language skills, thinking, autonomous

learning, and positive attitudes towards English and learning by using task as the main focus of the lesson. The course provides two big tasks for them. The first task is “the technology we cannot live without” in which they have to make notes, write a summary, and give presentation from a reading text selected by the group. This task was used for the data collection of this study. The students were asked to compile notes after completing the task. The students whose ideas were not clear were interviewed by the researchers who asked them to clarify the unclear points in their writing.

Research Procedure

Stage 1: The researchers provided some guiding questions in the form of notes for the subjects to write down after they presented their group task outcome. The memo note included questions about their collaboration in five steps by choosing the topic, note-taking, summary writing, preparing, and presentation.

Stage 2: The researchers distributed the note forms for the subjects after the presentation. At this stage, the students needed to recall what they had done for each step. The questions are (1) “What is the first step of working in a group?”; (2) “What are the criteria for selecting group members?”; (3) “What are the steps of working in group for this task?”; (4) “How does your group select the topic?”; (5) “What is the step of working in group for these three mini tasks: note-taking, summarizing, PowerPoint preparation, and presenting?”; (6) “Is the member in the group helpful in doing group task?” (7) “What did you get from doing this task as a group?”; (8) “Do you have any problem doing tasks in a group?”; and (9) “Do you have any suggestion for this group task?”

Stage 3: The researchers interviewed 10 students whose notes had some ambiguities to probe more into the unclear points mentioned in the notes.

Research Instruments

The students' notes were used for collecting data. After the presentation, the researchers asked the students to write their notes in Thai by answering the questions to recall their information in each step. Then, the notes were translated into English by the researchers. The researchers would focus on the contents of the students' notes to make sure that the translated

version did not deviate from the original version. The students' interview data were used after the researchers found points that needed further clarification.

Data Analysis

The data which were gathered from students' memo notes and interview were analyzed to see how the students collaborated within their group. All the data were analyzed by employing the stages of development of group work from Tuckman and Jensen (1977) which shows the stage of doing group work, namely: forming – forming a group work; storming – sharing ideas to test others' opinion; norming – separating the responsibility; performing – the performance stage; and adjourning – evaluating their group task. Thematic content analysis was employed to capture the nature of their group work and identify the pattern of their collaboration.

Data Presentation

RQ: How do the students collaborate within the group work?

This section discusses the process of working collaboratively within a group. There were 12 groups of three or four members in this study. In order to see the steps of collaborative work of the students in each group, the stages of development of group work from Tuckman and Jensen (1977) were employed. They consist of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning, all of which are described in the data analysis part. The following is the data obtained from comparing the stages of group work development.

Table I The stages of development group work by KMUTT students

Group Group numbers and topics	Step 1: Forming	Step 2: Storming	Step 3: Norming	Step 4: Performance	Step 5: Adjourning
1. IPod Nano (S1-S4)	/	/	/	/	x
2. Rota (S5-S7)	/	/	/	/	x
3. Notebook (S8-S10)	/	/	/	/	x

4. Wind Turbine (S11-S13)	/	/	/	/	x
5. Digital Camera (SI4-SI6)	/	/	/	/	x
6. Cloud Storage Works (S17- S19)	/	/	/	/	x
7. Satellite (S20- S22)	/	/	/	/	x
8. Internet (S23- S26)	/	/	/	/	x
9. IPhone (S27-S29)	/	/	/	/	x
10. Windows 8 (S30- S32)	/	/	/	/	x
11. Smart Phone (S33- S35)	/	/	/	/	x
12. GPS (S36-S38)	/	/	/	/	x

In this section, the data collected from the notes and the interview protocol were expanded on and analyzed to answer the research question regarding the students' collaboration in group work. Each extract will begin with "G and number/S and number" which means the group's number, followed by the number of the subject. Also, at the end of the extract, the letter "M" which refers to the data from the memo notes, and "I" which refers to the data from the interview, will also be used.

I. Forming

According to the task, the students needed to be in groups of four. There were 38 students, thus some groups got three members. All of them were from the same faculty. They had worked together in a big group before, so it was important to know what aspects concern them in making decisions regarding working with particular students in the class. The students searched for their group members and made decisions on who would be their group members.

G2/ S5: *"I got a group with my close friends. It was because we used to work with each other before and we could trust each other".* (M)

G7/ S20: *"...grouped with my close friends... because we could have a talk comfortably".* (M)

G11/ S34: *"...we grouped first from our close friends..."*(M)

In this group forming activity, one interesting point was their reasons for choosing their members. The students liked to work with their close friends because they felt comfortable with them, as they would feel free to share ideas, give suggestions, or even trust their friends' ability. This is why they used the words *"we could trust each other"* or *"we could talk comfortably"* in their notes. The other reason given was based on their field of study, i.e. they wanted to work in the same group as their friends were from the same department. They commented that it would be easy for them to work together as they had the same schedule. They also felt at ease communicating with peers from the same background, as shown below:

G9/ S28: *"I chose friends from the same faculty as mine because we would have the same free time to do the task".* (M)

G12/ S38: *"...we chose friends from our major so that we would have the same view points and understand each other better".* (M)

This shows that the students were concerned about the time and inputs needed for the work. They felt that they could easily meet group members and have smooth discussions if they worked with friends from the same faculty or major.

2. Storming

The students tested out each member of the group to get to know each other better as they were already familiar with each other. This way, they were spending less time finding out what their interests were as is explained in the extracts below.

G4/ S10: *"...we discussed the topic together, then we separated the duty by the stages: finding the information, note-taking, - summarizing, and preparing PowerPoint".* (M)

G6/ S19: *"...we discussed the technology we would choose before everyone went about looking for the information. We chose information that was easy to understand and covered all the points in the teacher's guideline questions."* (I)

According to the data from the students' memo notes, it is found that most students used collaborative learning to fulfill their group task. This can be gleaned from statements such as "*we plan together*" and "*we discussed and separated the duty thoroughly*". To find the topic, the group members had a discussion. Students worked in small groups of 3-4 members. Therefore, it was faster to come to a conclusion about the topic. Also, they had a close relationship and the same background and interests; hence it was easier to choose the topic for their group. Then, they allocated the responsibility of finding information. It is clearly seen that the discussion for making a plan was the most important thing that every group did after group formation. As evident from the extracts, they will begin their notes with the word "discussed" or "discussion". Having a conversation with friends was helping them plan and understand each other's ideas about the work.

G6/ S17: "...the group members ***gave a lot of opinions*** that were helpful..."(M)

G9/ S29: "... ***the advices*** from my friends were useful..."(M)

G11/ S34: "... after we formed a group, we started discussing with group members ***to see what we should do first...***"(M)

For collaborative learning, students will learn how to carry out their opinions for the group and also how to listen to and negotiate with others' ideas.

3. Norming

After forming groups and storming ideas about the topic, it was time for each group to come to the stage of separating the duty or what is known as norming. The students clarified their roles in the group work.

G4/ S10: "...we discussed the topic together, ***then we separated the duty*** by the stages: finding the information, note taking, summarizing, and preparing PowerPoint". (M)

G11/ S34: "... we planned and ***then together decided to separate the duty...***"(M)

The group members tried to divide the responsibilities for each of them equally. Their roles might be different but they had the same amount of work. In the case of the member who was unable to complete the work, the other members helped as mentioned in the extract below.

G1/ S3: “...***we give the role to all members equally*** by asking what part they want to do. Then we had discussion and help each other”. (M)

G10/ S 32: “... I got the duty of following the work, sometimes editing small mistakes, and printing the work to submit to the teacher. ***We separated this part of the part of work equally***”. (M)

There is one interesting point in this stage, that is, the term “collector” was used in the students’ notes. It is strange that there was no leader in this group task. They appoint a person to be a collector. After completing the task, the collector collected and checked the work before submitting or presenting it. This role is similar to that of the leader of the group but it only involves collecting work from friends. They all had equal roles in decision-making and leading the group. The following extracts are from groups which had a collector instead of a leader.

G10/ S32: “... ***I got the duty of following the work, sometimes editing small mistakes, and printing the work to submit to the teacher. We separated that part of the work together.***” (M)

G11/ S34: “... ***we planned and made the decision together to separate the duty. And also set a person to collect the work from everyone***”. (M)

4. Performing

There were three tasks that they had to perform. The first was making notes. The second was summarizing. PowerPoint preparation and presentation was the last stage. In that stage, they planned their activity. The data show that they began with the first activity, which was note-taking as shown in the following extracts.

a. Note-taking

G1/ S1: “...***we separated the subtitle for each member***”. (M)

G5/ S14: “...***we helped each other to make notes, we had to read the whole information first and separate the subtitle for members. In some parts which were really difficult, we did it together with friends. At the end, we checked the work together***”. (I)

G8/ S24: “...***separated this part for one person, and then we checked the work together***”. (M)

G10/ S32: “...read first for taking notes..., ***only one member was responsible for this part...***” (I)

G11/ S33: “...***we separated the responsibility following the subtitle***”

we got, and then read for taking notes". (I)

In note-taking, the students placed great emphasis on two major ideas. The first was that participants were doing all the stages together. They read the passage together. Then, each member worked on each subtopic. S/he made notes of his/her part. After that, the group members joined together and combined the work of each member. Eight groups out of 12 used this method to complete the task. The remaining four groups planned to separate their duties from the beginning of the working process after getting the topic as shown in G8 and G10. They separated this part by having only one person in the group for the note-taking. The person who was responsible for it read the whole information and then took notes as mentioned in G10/ S32.

b. Summarizing

In this mini task, the participants needed to write a summary on the information they got from note-taking. Their steps for doing this stage are shown in the extracts below.

G3/ S9: "...we **read** the information together, and then **chose the interesting subtitles to make notes and summary**". (M)

G8/ S24: "...**separated this part for one person, and then we checked the work together**". (M)

G9/ S27: "...we helped each other to **read, summarise, and check each subtitle we were responsible for...**" (M)

In the above extracts, groups 3 and 9 began by reading, which was then followed by summarizing. The last groups (8 and 9) checked the work together after they completed their part. The performance in this stage was similar to that in the stage of note-taking. The groups which worked by separating the parts used the same pattern in this stage. Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, and 12 used the method of doing the part together. But groups 6, 7, 8, and 10 separated the stages. One person was responsible for the note-taking alone, while another person summarized..

c. Preparing the PowerPoint

The PowerPoint task was carried out by only one member. The members who worked on each sub-topic kept working on their part. They then edited the information and compiled the PowerPoint together. For decoration and finding pictures, some groups had a

member who was good in formatting and was familiar with the application to make slides more interesting and beautiful. Before presenting the task, they went back to edit the PowerPoint slides. One concrete example of how a group completed the task is shown in the following extracts.

Group 3: Notebook

G3/ S8: “...*we separated the part and helped each other to put an effect and content in the slide*”. (I)

G3/ S9: “...*we separated the part according to the note-taking which we were responsible for and then helped each other to edit. After editing, we saved the file and then practised our part for presentation*.” (I)

G3/ S10: “...*we took the information from the note-taking part to put in our slide. Then we helped each other to think about making an interesting presentation*.” (I)

On the other hand, the groups that separated their work right from the beginning assigned one member who did not have any participatory role in any step to work on the PowerPoint. It is to be noted that the person who got this responsibility was good at software application. S/he always sent the slide back to friends to check for correctness of content and language.

d. Presenting

Presenting the task to the whole class was the last stage. In this stage, the participants separated the parts for the presentation as shown in the extracts below.

G1/ S2: “...*we separated the part under the sub-topic we have done before...*” (M)

G5/ S16: “...*we had equal part for presentation and tried to understand about the content...*” (M)

G7/ S22: “...*we separated the part from the content of the slide in equal numbers of the slides...*” (M)

According to these examples, the participants had to divide their slides equally because the task required all the members to participate in the presentation. And, there were many ways of separating the parts such as by content or by numbers of slides. Then, they prepared their scripts, and

practised with their friends. The first presenter introduced the group's topic, and s/he went back to conclude at the end of the presentation as shown in the extracts below.

G1/ S2: "... *the member who introduced the first part would conclude for the last part too*". (M)

G4/ S13: "...*after having our part, I did my script and practised my part for the presentation...*" (M)

G6/ S19: "...*we prepared our own script and practised together with our group members...*" (M)

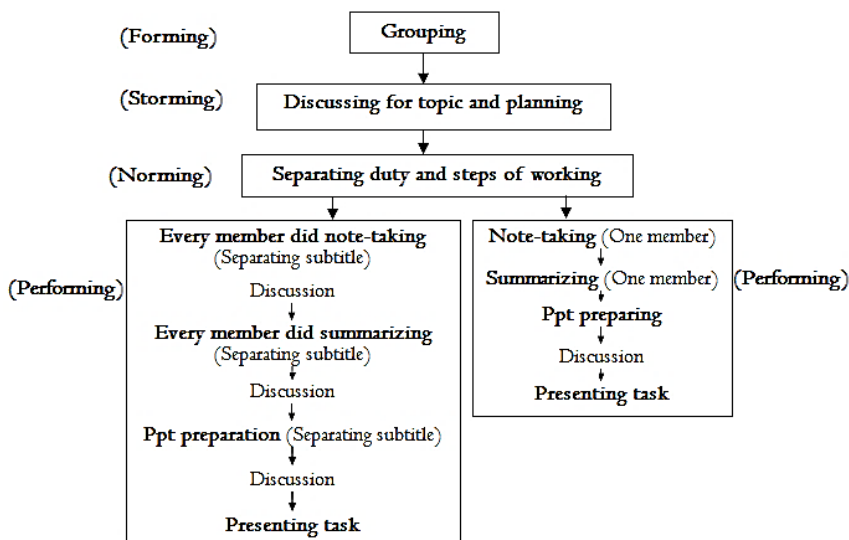
5. Adjourning

It is clearly seen from the extracts that the students did not perform their task in step 5: Adjourning. When they finished the presentation as the final task of their group work, they did not discuss, evaluate or contemplate on their group performance. Therefore, their group collaboration was slightly different from the pattern proposed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977).

Patterns of collaborative learning

Based on the data of this study, two models of collaboration can be identified. The figure below elaborates the models.

Figure I Pattern of KMUTT students' collaboration



The figure shows the pattern of students' collaborative learning in their group work. They started working with the same beginning steps — grouping, discussing for the topic, and separating the duties. Then for the performing stage, there were eight groups which worked together in each stage but separated the sub-topics for members. And, they had discussion in every mini task. This was the first pattern. The second pattern was doing the task by separating the mini tasks. The group members worked on their particular task, and then sent the finished product to the other members to do the next task i.e. S17 did note-taking, S18 did summary writing, and S19 prepared the PowerPoint. They had discussion before presenting to check on the information, the slides, and their sections for the presentation.

In conclusion, the data show that most of the groups collaborated to complete the group task and their performance reflected their collaborative learning i.e. they were discussing with friends, planning, and editing the work together. Discussion appeared to be one important event that shows the process of collaborative learning because it facilitated the groups' planning and ideas. Also, it helped improve the relationship amongst group members and they learned from each other by sharing and listening to their friends. Only four groups used cooperative learning: they separated the parts by looking at the ability of each member and then assigned the work for each stage. Discussion was done when some group members needed help with the content or while preparing for the presentation because they had to check the accuracy and the appropriateness of the figures and text.

Discussion

Relationship is important for group formation.

According to the task, the students needed to work in groups of four. It is interesting to note that most of them were from the same faculty, and they had worked with each other in a big group before. Then, when they needed to work in small groups to perform this task, certain criteria or decision-making aspects were used in forming the groups. The criterion that the students used for grouping seems to be related to homogeneity (Barkley, Cross & Major 2005; Bruffee 1999). The reason for grouping which is based on their prior relationship seemed to be good for their group unity which helped them complete the work earlier. They did not choose the group members based on their learning ability and hence it did not matter to them if the members had English proficiency or not. It showed their belief in collaboration and the fact that they could learn better with persons they have

known or had worked with earlier in a team. Barkley, Cross and Major (2005) mention that a homogeneous group can help a group learn effectively, especially in language learning because they start with the same level and develop their language skills together as the other members do. This is acceptable for class work, but it could cause a problem for the students in the future if they continue this strategy. For, they might have less chance to learn new interesting points from others. And, some researchers point out that students might arrive at a consensus too soon (Bruffee, 1999). Then, they may not have a chance to come across new and different ideas. Therefore, their work might not be as good as if they had tried to work with new group members. To Young (2010), one of the benefits of collaboration is to be able to understand how others think. Therefore, in terms of getting more experience, they should be open-minded about meeting and grouping with new students. It is also the nature of Thai students to sit next to their close friends. If the teacher assigns any work which involves grouping, they will turn to their close friends and form groups easily. However, sometimes the teacher can assign the group members for them so that they have chances of working with new members with a different working style. They then need to adjust their work to suit the new members resulting in better quality.

Leader or collector

A leader is necessary for a group work (Cross 1991; Orlich, Harder, Collahan & Gibson 1998; Murray 1992) whose main role is to run the group work. But in this group task, the students did not mention a "leader of the group". They used the word collector instead for the person who collected the work and ran the group work for each step. This can be explained thus: since they were working with close friends in a small group, it was more comfortable to work without appointing a leader. That is why students did not assign the role of the leader clearly. They simply asked someone in the group to collect the work. But there were still some problems that required a person to be in charge, e.g. someone who would be in charge of making an appointment, dealing with conflict, and making decisions. If they worked in a bigger group or if the task was more complicated, they may have had to assign the duty for each member to help facilitate a smoother group performance. The teacher can train them on how to work, for example, by asking them to decide the position and responsibility of each member before starting the group work.

Discussion is helpful for collaborative learning

For the second pattern, they separated the mini-tasks in each stage. Each group member was given one mini-task. The reason was that they thought it would help them to reduce the time needed for meetings. And, they strongly believed that each group member was skilled for the part assigned to them. After the mini-tasks were completed, they met to prepare for the presentation. It is noticeable that the frequency of the meetings was fewer than those for groups which employed the first pattern. As a result, the group which had more discussion had fewer problems and they were more successful in their work. They spent sufficient time looking at the work together and helped each other to improve each mini-task. According to them, the important part was to discuss and check everything thoroughly before submitting and presenting to the class and teacher. So, this showed a marked difference in the quality of their work.

Group members' responsibility allocation

The success of group task depends on group member collaboration. At the same time, the group members' accountability and responsibility allocation are important for the task quality and the amount of knowledge and experience they gain from a group task. Each member should have an equal role to play in group work. Even if each group has different ways of working, they try to make each member work equally with no one left out from doing the work. The person who is good in English might play a pivotal role in helping group members when they do not understand the content. The members who are not good in English will be assigned to lead the part they are capable of, e.g. designing and decorating the slides. In this study, all members got involved equally in performing the group task. They thus learned from one another to accomplish the task. The group size also plays a part in the success of group work. In this study, the students were assigned to work in small groups, i.e. in groups of 3 or 4 members only. The result might have been different if they had a bigger group for this task as the group members' duties could not have been allocated equally. Some members might not have contributed adequately. Therefore, to assign a task, one objective that teachers should bear in mind is the size of the group.

In this study, the students had no time to review and do their assessment about what they gained by doing the task. The teacher needs to focus on the adjourning stage as it will make the students aware of what they gain from working in a group. One effective method is to ask students to compile notes to reflect their knowledge, experience, and skills gained from the group work.

Conclusion

The way Thai undergraduate students work in group reflects their collaborative learning. The stages of work are similar to Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) model even though the adjourning stage was omitted. Two patterns of collaboration can be identified. It is seen that one pattern is more effective than the other. Therefore, the teacher needs to provide enough guidance to help them work effectively in groups. The findings of this study can be applicable to learning situations at any proficiency level in Thailand and in similar situations. The findings also provide strong evidence for further research to help students learn more effectively in different learning modes.

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