

The Most Common Group Work Techniques Used Among the Jordanian EFL Teachers when Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract The present study aims at investigating the Jordanian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the most common group work activities used among them to develop their students' linguistic competence. Moreover, it tries to shed the light on the teachers' common techniques in planning for the group work in their classrooms. Besides, it aims at finding if the teachers' attitudes toward using the group work as a technique vary according to gender. To conduct the study, a questionnaire was prepared in advance to measure the teachers' attitudes and the most working techniques that help in developing the students' language. It was distributed among 40 Jordanian EFL secondary teachers at Ajloun and Irbid directorates of education in Jordan. To analyze the participants' responses in the questionnaire, different statistical analyses were used such as Means and Standard Deviations and Cronbach's Alpha. The results pointed out that the Jordanian EFL secondary school teachers had a positive attitude towards using the group work to develop their students' English language, as it helps them in developing their students' linguistic competence. Moreover, the results pointed out that the overall degree of the group work activities that are used the most by the Jordanian EFL teachers is medium. Furthermore, the analysis showed that there are not any statistical differences in the teachers' attitudes towards using group work that could be attributed to gender.

Keywords Group Work, Techniques, EFL Teachers,

Attitudes

1. Introduction

In the field of education, teachers are asked to use different educational activities, methods, and techniques to develop their learners' linguistic competence. It is the teachers' role to discover the learners' needs to find the most workable and effective methods that help in developing the learners' linguistic abilities. Teachers should take into their consideration that teaching and learning in the basic, secondary, and higher education are changing. These changes are taking place in many fields of life and especially in teaching. Teachers should take these changes in consideration to teach English in a perfect way.

One of these important changes is involving learners in the teaching process [6]. Students should be provided with all available opportunities to be active participants in the classroom's activities. By doing so, it is expected to increase the students' comprehension to the presented material. In this context, [21] said that "Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who interact more with faculty members get better grades, are more satisfied

with their education, and are more likely to remain in college". These collaborative learning activities are supposed to provide the learners with excellent opportunities to participate actively with their classmates to develop their linguistic abilities properly.

Teachers should increase the interaction among the students through doing the classroom activities. This idea is supported by [17] when they assured that collaborative environment helps students to be more active and effective learners.

One of these workable techniques is the group work. The importance of group work is not limited in the educational level. It is important in other fields such as business; where employers should work in the spirit of group work to succeed in their work [2].

Group work is defined by [3] as "a generic term covering a multiplicity in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language".

Many studies that were conducted by ([8], [10], & [20]) conclude that students learn best when they are given the opportunities to face each other while doing classroom's activities as the learning outcomes will be great compared with the traditional learning atmosphere.

[3] believed that group work has many advantages. He mentioned that by adopting group work as a technique, we may help in achieving the following benefits:

1. *Group work generates interactive language.*
2. *Group work offers an embracing affective climate.*
3. *Group work promotes learner responsibility and autonomy.*
4. *Group work is a step toward individualizing instruction. (pp.178-79).*

Group work helps in creating a vivid interactional educational atmosphere that teachers have to create for their students. This idea is supported by [17], [19], [23], when they indicated that group work and the collaborative learning atmosphere helps in changing the students to be active and effective foreign language learners. Group work helps in increasing the learner's responsibility toward the learning process as he/she feels that he/she is an essential part in the classroom's activities.

In the same context, [4] added other benefits of applying group work in the teaching process as it stimulates activity. Students are expected to participate in problem solving activities. In doing so, students are asked to recall their own experiences to solve these problems. Moreover, he thinks that group work fosters learning and comprehension as students learn and remember better, when they are engaged in general discussions with their classmates. Furthermore, he saw that in engaging students in-group work activities, it is expected to gain better understanding for themselves as well as their linguistic abilities.

Before applying group work in the classroom, teachers should consider the following advices:

1. Teachers should have in their minds the expectations from applying the group work activity in their classrooms.
2. Teachers must think about the size of the class before implementing this technique. The model class should consist 20 -25 students. In this case, the teacher could divide them into 5 groups to implement the class's activities in an appropriate acceptable way.
3. Teachers should always design interactive activities that encourage all students to take an active role in the process of participation in different groups. In this context, [9] indicated that teachers should design different activities that are completely adequate in size and complexity to recall the collective knowledge of all the group's members.
4. Teachers should monitor the work of all students in all groups. He has to guide and present the help when it is needed. It is advised to give the process of guiding and supporting to the students themselves.
5. Assessing the groups' work is the teacher's responsibility. This could be achieved while monitoring them in the class to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

[7] investigated the Australian students' satisfaction with group work experiences in undergraduate computer science as the main purpose of the study was to make sure if things get better through using the group work activity in that subject. The sample of the study consisted 200 students (100 students from the advanced group and 100 students from regular group.) To achieve the purpose of the study, an interview and a questionnaire were used as instruments in the study to examine students' satisfaction with group work components, and to make a comparison between first year and third year students' group work experiences, contributions, and learning. The results of the study showed that the group work activity is useful and effective as it helped in increasing their positive point view about the importance of group work in the process of learning.

[16] conducted a study to get feedback from both students and tutors about their group work experiences in a health subject. The researcher used some strategies to resolve these collaborative learning issues. The researcher designed a group of support resources as the introduction and some strategies to improve the experience of the students in their group works. The results of the study showed that the students looked at the group work activity as a source of great value. Moreover, the results showed that the elements of the group work contributed positively for the students' understanding and comprehension.

[13] conducted a study to investigate the purpose behind using the group work in the lessons of English and modern languages at Stockholm's suburb schools. Two instruments were used in the study; a survey and interviews. The survey was followed up by interviews with two teachers at the school. The results of the study

showed that all the teachers who participated in the study used at least some group work. Moreover, the results pointed out that group work is often used to help the students practice and develop their verbal skills and it helped them to work in a collaborative environment. The study also showed that teachers found some of the problems in using and practicing the group work in their lessons.

[18] made an action research report to conduct the effect of group work in developing EFL students' reading comprehension. The research study was an experimental intervention. The sample of the study consisted the EFL 8th grade students of a secondary school in Dhaka. A pre-test and a post-test were used in the research. The results of the research indicated that the reading passages can be easily understood through sharing and exchanging the information within the group work. Moreover, the results showed that students feel free and so they can express their point of views freely as they work with their classmates and in a friendly learning environment.

[5] conducted a study at two of the Sweden Universities to measure the effect of the group work as an incentive for students' learning. The aim of the study was to get the students' positive as well as negative point of views and how students assess learning when they are asked to apply the group work activity in their learning. The researcher collected the data through using a study-specific questionnaire, with multiple choice and open-ended questions. To analyze the data, both reanalysis and qualitative analysis were used. The results of the study showed that most of the students looked at group work as a facilitator of learning especially in the academic knowledge. Moreover, the results pointed out that students considered group work as an important factor in learning, study-social function, and organization

[19] conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of group work in Mathematics. To carry out the study, an evaluation of group work was carried out during the period of applying the study. The sample of the study consisted of the first year civil engineering students who were studying mathematics module in their second semester. The data were collected by using evaluation surveys through the group work sessions and within four weeks. The analysis of the surveys pointed out the effectiveness of group in the process of teaching as the students showed interesting and encouraging positive outcomes toward using group work in the process of teaching Mathematics.

[1] conducted a study to investigate the students' perceptions of the benefits and the difficulties of group work in English classes. To collect the data, a mixed-methods approach was used. A questionnaire as well as an interview was used to collect the data needed to conduct the study. The findings pointed out that a large number of learners look at the group work positively. Furthermore, the findings revealed that Saudi learners looked at group work as an effective learning technique.

[14] conducted a study to discover whether the group work is an effective teaching method for the students in the department of English at Kufa University. To collect the data, a questionnaire was used. The results pointed out that female students prefer group work more than male students. Moreover, the results showed that the participants looked at the concept of group work as an effective method.

[23] conducted another study to review the students' expectations behind using the group work in the classroom. 768 learners participated in the study to collect the needed data about such expectations. The findings of the study showed that high-achieving students looked at the group work strategy positively as they enjoyed working with others. Moreover, the results pointed out that high-achieving students always tried to choose their close classmates when they are asked to be engaged in doing some exercises in the classroom.

2. Statement of the Problem

Many researchers such as [4]; [1]; [19]; [14]; ([23]; [5] indicated that there is a positive effect in using the group work activity in developing the learners' linguistic competence. Using group work activity helps in strengthening the learners' relations and increasing their self-confidence in their ability to speak and use the language in different authentic situations. Besides, it helps in creating an active working environment in the classroom ([15], & [22]). Moreover, adopting such technique at classroom increases the students cooperation and interaction among themselves about different learning issues they are studying ([1], & [23]).

From their experience at Jordanian schools as well as Jordanian and Saudi universities, the researchers have noticed that students work better when they are set in-group works to do some activities at the classroom. All students try to prove themselves to be active participants in their groups. This feeling may not be the same for some of the teachers as they may look at the group work as a useless teaching technique so the researchers are expected to have different point of views from the teachers. Some of them may look at this technique negatively, while others may look at it positively. The researchers also believe that teachers' negative attitudes toward using the group work as an effective technique may stand against developing the students in learning English as a foreign language.

3. Purpose and Questions of the Study

This study tried to explore the Jordanian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the most common group work activities used among them. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are Jordanian EFL teachers' attitudes toward using the group work in improving their students' linguistic competence?
2. What are the most common techniques when applying the group work activity?
3. Do these attitudes toward using the group work activity vary according to gender?

The results of this study could not be generalized because of the following reasons:

1. The present study is conducted on EFL Jordanian teachers at only Ajloun and Irbid Educational Directorates in the academic year 2019/2020.
2. The limited number of male and female teachers who participated in this study.

4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that it tries to present the necessity and the importance of group work activity in the process of learning to develop the students' linguistic competence. It is true that many foreign researchers tried to investigate the EFL teachers point of views concerning using the group work as a technique in the process of leaning ([7]; [16]; [13]; [5]; & [19]).

Unfortunately, none of them investigated the Jordanian secondary stage teachers' point of views toward the necessity of this technique in learning. Consequently, the present study could be helpful for teachers, as it would provide them with some of their point of views about this technique in the learning process as well as the most working technique that could be used by them to develop their students' linguistic competence. Moreover, it could be helpful for curriculum developers as it provides them with evidences about the importance of group work in the learning process. The study's results may encourage them to increase the activities that require using the group work in the classroom's activities, as it helps in increasing the students' interaction and participation and it increases the students' confidence about their abilities in using the language in different situational contexts.

4.1. Sample of the Study

40 Jordanian EFL secondary teachers at Ajloun and Irbid directorates of education in Jordan participated to conduct the study.

5. Instrument of the Study

To achieve the purpose of the study, the researchers designed and prepared a questionnaire that could be used to detect the teachers' attitudes toward using the group work as a technique to develop the students' linguistic

competence. It consisted of 26 items. The questionnaire was prepared by the authors to suit the purpose of the study (see Appendix A).

5.1. Validity of the Attitudinal Questionnaire

To measure the validity of the attitudinal questionnaire, a jury of four TEFL specialists in different fields in the curriculum and instruction, linguistics and applied linguistics in some of the Jordanian universities as well as Saudi universities were asked politely to examine it. They were asked politely to provide the researchers with their comments and suggestions to improve the questionnaire. Their suggestions and notes were taken into consideration.

5.2. Reliability of the Attitudinal Questionnaire

To obtain the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers computed it on a pilot study of 20 teachers using the test-retest method. The reliability coefficient was computed using Cronbach's Alpha formula. It was (.768) which is an acceptable value for the purpose of the study.

Case Processing Summary			
Cases		N	%
	Valid	26	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	26	100.0

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.768	26

5.3. The Questionnaire Correcting Method

In order to give the degree of acceptance, the researcher classified the means into three levels according to the statistical model as in the following table:

Table 1. The Questionnaire Correcting Method

Rank	Category	
	from	to
1. Low	1	2.33
2. Moderate	2.34	3.66
3. High	3.67	5

6. The Results and Discussion

The present study tries to explore the Jordanian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the importance of group work activity to develop their students' linguistic competence. The researchers analyzed the collected data and the teachers' responses using the suitable statistics analyses (SPSS). This study tried to find out answers for the

following questions:

1. What are Jordanian EFL teachers' attitudes toward using the group work in improving their students' linguistic competence?
2. What are the most common techniques when applying the group work activity?
3. Do these attitudes toward using the group work activity vary according to gender?

To answer the first question, means and standard deviations were used to calculate the teachers' responses in the first 15 items in the questionnaire. Moreover, the researchers found the ranks as well as the agreement degree, as illustrated in the questionnaire correcting

method, for each item in the questionnaire.

Table (2) shows that the means ranging from (2.1500–3.7000). The table points out that the highest mean reached (3.7000) with standard deviation of (0.46410) for item (13) which says "I make sure that dividing the students into group work should be relevant to the subject being taught". The lowest mean was (2.1500) with a standard deviation of (1.05125) for item (6) which says "I think that the activities require applying group work depend on the number of the students in the classroom". From the below table, one could notice that the total mean reached (3.23) and with a standard deviation of (0.645) by medium agreement.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Attitudes towards Using the Group Work

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
1-I always use group work in my work.	40	3.3000	0.46410	8	Medium
2-I use group work in all my classes because of its importance.	40	3.3000	0.72324	9	Medium
3-I use group work because it is necessary to develop my students' linguistic abilities.	40	3.3250	0.47434	7	Medium
4-I believe that students gain a lot of benefits from using group work at classroom.	40	3.6250	0.49029	2	Medium
5-I feel that applying group work is easy and interesting.	40	3.0000	1.06217	13	Medium
6-I think that the activities require applying group work depend on the number of the students in the classroom.	40	2.1500	1.05125	15	Low
7-I face many difficulties in applying group work at my class.	40	3.0750	0.57233	12	Medium
8-I always train my students to deal well with group work activities.	40	2.7250	1.01242	14	Low
9-I think that we can apply the group work activity when teaching the four language skills.	40	3.2250	0.53048	11	Medium
10-I think that group work is applicable for classes with small number of students.	40	3.4000	0.49614	5	Medium
11-I believe that we can not apply group work in the classes with huge number of classes.	40	3.4250	0.50064	4	Medium
12-I think that the purpose behind applying the group work activity is well known for me and for my students.	40	3.2750	0.71567	10	Medium
13-I make sure that dividing the students into group work should be relevant to the subject being taught.	40	3.7000	0.46410	1	High
14-I believe that group work activity can contribute in developing my students' English skills.	40	3.3750	0.49029	6	Medium
15-I think that teachers should give an adequate time for each group work activity .	40	3.5500	0.63851	3	Medium
Valid N (listwise)	40				
Total Average		3.23	0.645	-----	Medium

When teachers feel that dividing their students into group work before presenting their lessons, this certainly, indicates that they believe in its importance in developing their students linguistic competence. This fact is supported by [7], [11], [5], and [19] who all look at group work as a facilitator for learning English as well as a main factor in increasing the students' interaction and cooperation in the classroom.

The second question of the study was:

What are the most common techniques when applying the group work activity?

To answer the question, means and standard deviations were used to calculate the teachers' responses in the second domain of the questionnaire (items 16-26) that was specified for the techniques that are used by them.

The results of the second question showed that the overall degree of the group work activities that are used by the Jordanian EFL teachers is medium. This result highlights the importance of applying and practicing the group work activities by EFL teachers. Table (3) shows that the means ranging from (3.0250 -3.5500). The table points out that the highest mean reached (3.5500) with standard deviation of (0.50383) for item (24) which says "I give them an opportunity to discover their mistakes with their partners", whereas the lowest means were (3.0250) for item 20 and 21. Item 20 has standard deviations of (1.07387) while item 21 comes with a standard deviation of (0.9736). Items (20) and (21) say "I divide the class into groups according to their students' level of proficiency" and "I divide the groups according to the students' prior learning experiences".

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for the Most Common Techniques Used Among the Jordanian EFL Teachers

Statements	Gender	N	Mean	Average (mean)	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
16-I prepare for merging with a large group.	Male	20	3.3000	3.3500	0.47016	0.10513
	Female	20	3.4000		0.50262	0.11239
17-I encourage my students to practice dialogues with their partner.	Male	20	3.7000	3.4500	0.47016	0.10513
	Female	20	3.2000		0.41039	0.09177
18-I perform meaningful and appropriate group techniques such as drills, games, role play.... etc.	Male	20	3.3000	3.3500	0.47016	0.10513
	Female	20	3.4000		0.50262	0.11239
19-I give explicit detailed instructions on how to introduce the techniques.	Male	20	3.4000	3.4500	0.50262	0.11239
	Female	20	3.5000		0.51299	0.11471
20-I divide the class into groups according to their students' level of proficiency.	Male	20	3.7000	3.0250	0.47016	0.10513
	Female	20	2.3500		1.08942	0.24360
21-I divide the students according to their prior learning experiences.	Male	20	2.4000	3.0250	0.94032	0.21026
	Female	20	3.6500		0.48936	0.10942
22-I check written work with their partner directly.	Male	20	3.2000	3.4750	0.41039	0.09177
	Female	20	3.7500		0.44426	0.09934
23- I provide direct assessment for my students on how well they comprehend the activity.	Male	20	3.4000	3.3000	0.50262	0.11239
	Female	20	3.2000		0.41039	0.09177
24-I give them an opportunity to discover their mistakes with their partners.	Male	20	3.5000	3.5500	0.51299	0.11471
	Female	20	3.6000		0.50262	0.11239
25-I pepper my groups with physical activities and sensory aids (videos, pictures , tapes , music.... etc.	Male	20	3.4000	3.3250	0.50262	0.11239
	Female	20	3.2500		0.44426	0.09934
26-Through group work, I elicit as much oral participation as possible.	Male	20	3.2000	3.3000	0.41039	0.09177
	Female	20	3.4000		0.50262	0.11239
Total Average				3.327	0.521552	

Group work activities used by teachers can be effective methods to motivate learners, develop their critical thinking, decision-making abilities and communication skills and encourage their effective and active learning in their classroom. Without correct and careful planning, group work can frustrate students and teachers and will be a waste of time. Table (3) shows that teachers are aware of using many active and effective techniques to help implement group work successfully in their classroom. They used many physical activities and sensory aids in order to design collaborative work

They also share their rationale for using group work to make the tasks more challenging. When teachers identify the instructional objectives and give explicit detailed instruction, students have a chance to witness how discussion will proceed. For example, teachers have to give their students specific instructions on what they are expected to do, which include the main purpose, and the rules they have to follow.

Although group work can provide learners with a valuable learning experience whether or not it is associated with formal assessment, teachers provide direct assessment of how well students comprehend something with their partner. Teachers believe that when they give students who are in the same group the same mark or a mark based on each person's contribution, this will improve the group performance and encourage those who have low-level proficiency and performance to develop their abilities. To succeed in doing that, teachers try to divide the groups according to their level of proficiency and learning experiences. Besides, they would also employ the technique of the ideal group size. Group size can vary depending on tasks and context, but 4-6 students tend to be a good target for effective management of group tasks. In doing that, students are given opportunities to enhance their learning.

Many studies that were conducted by ([10]; [20]; & [8]) concluded that students learn best when they are given the opportunities to face each other while doing classroom's activities and encourage active learning atmosphere. The third question of the study was:

Do these attitudes toward using the group work activity vary according to gender?

To answer the third question, test independent sample was used. Table 3 shows the results.

Table (4) shows that there is not any statistical significant difference in the teachers' attitudes towards using group work that could be attributed to gender. The table shows that the total means for "males" and "females" are close to each other where the total mean of the "males" was (3.31) and the total mean of the "females" was (3.33), and the "t" value reached (-0.611) by sig.(0.307).

This result shows the importance of group work in the teaching process for all teachers whether they are females or males and in all educational stages, as it helps in developing the students' linguistic competence to develop their English as a foreign language (Appendix B). The importance of group work in developing the students' linguistic competence is supported by different researchers such as [7], [16], [13], [18], [1], [23] & [14].

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The results pointed out that the Jordanian EFL teachers had positive attitudes toward using the group work as an activity to develop their students' English language and their students' linguistic competence. Moreover, the results pointed out that the most common techniques that are used among the Jordanian EFL teachers were giving them an opportunity to discover their mistakes, checking their written work with their classmates directly, and practicing dialogues with their partners in the classroom.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that there were not any statistical differences in the teachers' attitudes towards using group work that could be attributed to gender as the total two means for "males" and "females" are close to each other.

The researchers encouraged other researchers to carry out future researches on other activities such as pair work to measure its effect in improving and developing their learners' language. Moreover, the researchers recommended increasing the number of the participants in other future studies.

Table 4. Test Table Independent Samples

Variable	Type	Num.	Mean	Standard. Deviation	"t" value	Sig
Gender	Male	20	3.31	0.514	-0.611	0.307
	Female	20	3.33	0.527		

Appendix A

The Questionnaire

No.	Statements	Totally Agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
	The Jordanian EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Using the Group Work in Improving their Students' Linguistic Proficiency				
1-	I always use group work in my work.				
2-	I use group work in all my classes because of its importance.				
3-	I use group work because it is necessary to develop my students' linguistic abilities.				
4-	I believe that students gain a lot of benefits from using group work at classroom.				
5-	I feel that applying group work is easy and interesting.				
6-	I think that the activities require applying group work depend on the number of the students in the classroom.				
7-	I face many difficulties in applying group work at my class.				
8-	I always train my students to deal well with group work activities.				
9-	I think that we can apply the group work activity when teaching the four language skills.				
10-	I think that group work is applicable for classes with small number of students.				
11-	I believe that we can not apply group work in the classes with huge number of classes.				
12-	I think that the purpose behind applying the group work activity is well known for me and for my students.				
13-	I make sure that dividing the students into group work should be relevant to the subject being taught.				
14-	I believe that group work activity can contribute in developing my students' English skills.				
15-	I think that teachers should give an adequate time for each group work activity.				
	The Most Common Techniques that are used among the Jordanian EFL Teachers when Applying the Group work activity				
16	I prepare my students for merging with a large group.				
17	I encourage my students to practice dialogues with their partners.				
18	I perform meaningful and appropriate group techniques such as drills, games, role play ... etc.				
19	I give explicit detailed instructions on how to introduce the techniques.				
20	I divide the class into groups according to their students' level of proficiency.				
21	I divide the students according to their prior learning experiences.				
22	I check written work with their partner directly.				
23	I provide direct assessment for my students on how well they comprehend the activity.				
24	I give them an opportunity to discover their mistakes with their partners.				
25	I pepper my groups with physical activities and sensory aids (videos, pictures , tapes , music...etc.				
26	Through group work, I elicit as much oral participation as possible.				

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