

Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning for Improving False Beginners' Grammar Skills and Self-efficacy

Kazuko Shiota
Ikuei Junior College

Abstract:

Prior studies indicate that many Japanese college students remain at the beginner level even after studying English for six years. Also, their self-efficacy is low, which hinders their improvement. Generally, grammar classes are taught in a traditional way, that is, one-way teacher centered, and students are supposed to copy what is written on a blackboard while listening to teachers' instruction and memorizing grammar rules. In such grammar classes, false beginners have had little successful experience. Traditional teaching methods are intended to provide remedial education in many colleges but might result in poor outcomes and even be counterproductive.

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy drives actions that are necessary to achieve desired results, and he classified the concepts of self-efficacy into the following four categories: (1) performance accomplishment, (2) vicarious learning, (3) verbal encouragement, and (4) emotional state.

For improving false beginners' English skills, self-efficacy matters. So, for college students still at the beginner level, what would be the ideal method of learning English grammar? How should teachers help them?

What if collaborative learning is introduced?

In collaborative learning, two or more people learn together. In contrast to individual learners, collaborative learners gain advantages from one another's resources and skills (e.g., asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work). Under such a circumstance, learners can make it easier to accomplish tasks by encouraging each other. They see a successful peer as a future ideal self, and then they can sense possibilities for themselves, i.e., self-efficacy.

In fact, beginners' low meta-cognitive skills (Sakai, 2011) prevent them from improving their English skills. However, collaborative learning might be a solution because it is more effective than individual learning in achieving critical thinking (Oxford, 1997).

More so than in other subjects, collaborative learning is actively conducted in English classes, e.g., conversation practice in pairs, peer feedback on writings, presentations, and group discussions, but there are few pedagogical reports on collaborative learning from grammar classes.

In this small poster presentation for the 16th Education and Development Conference, (1) the effectiveness of collaborative activities in Japan for learning grammar will be overviewed, and

(2) other options that could improve false beginners' self-efficacy in learning English grammar are discussed to provide directions for further research.

Keywords: Collaborative/Cooperative Learning, False-beginner, grammar, self-efficacy, meta-cognitive skills

References:

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change.

Psychological Review, 84, 191-215.

Oxford, R.L. (1997). Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning, and Interaction: Three Communicative Strands in the Language Classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 443-456.

Sakai, S. (2011). The Structure of Usage of Meta-cognitive Strategies of Japanese Learners of English (*Nihon no Eigo Gakushusha no Ninchi-horyaku Shiyō Kozo ni Tsuite*). *The Bulletin of Remedial Education*, 6 (1), 55-70.