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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LEARNING OF GLOBAL ISSUES VOCABULARY USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHODS

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Abstract:

As a matter of fact, the cooperative learning method is considered one of the most effective student-centered learning methods used in teaching English language classes. It is an updated and effective pedagogic method that should be incorporated in classrooms. The previously reviewed studies showed that group work is better than individual work since student-centered learning methods may improve students' knowledge of the language because of their effective cooperative engagement. This paper aims at investigating students' perceptions and attitudes towards the learning of global issues vocabulary using cooperative learning methods. The study employed a survey method research design where the quantitative data collection method was conducted. 25 participants are subjected to the intervention phase for seven weeks (40 hours) at MALI institute in Taiz, Yemen. Then a well-prepared questionnaire was conducted on the participants within a period of two days, immediately after the intervention phase. The descriptive statistic SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 25.0 was used to analyze data. Percentages were used for the questionnaire. The results from the questionnaire indicated that cooperative learning techniques had positive effects on students' writing in classrooms. The participants gained confidence and their language skills were improved. Social skills like leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills were also developed. The study concludes that cooperative learning contributes to cognitive growth, increased autonomy, and productivity. The cooperative learning method

should be integrated into English language classrooms to improve the growth and productive knowledge of students.

Introduction

English language is a common language used by the majority of people all over the world. It is used not only for communication among native speakers and non-native speakers of English but even among the speakers of different languages of the world. Consequently, English language teaching has become widespread in almost all the countries of the world. Teaching English demands different ways, appreciable experiences, great efforts, etc., and the methods of teaching English should be suitable and manageable based on the varying factors including the course, lessons, skills, exercises, and the needs of the students themselves. Regardless of the curriculum worthiness, teachers play a crucial and active role in teaching. They are advised to use different techniques and develop methods that in turns will enhance the students' learning process. Lee (2018) asserted that teachers should be well qualified to produce quality learners. A professional teacher should connect matters outside classroom with the course inside classroom during teaching.

The world around us faces different worrying problems such as terrorism, ethnic clash, social discrepancy, and environmental destruction. Such problems, and more others, are defined as global issues. Teaching a language in a global context is pedagogically important for the students. Indeed, those problems might not be around us or far from our surrounding but our efforts to introduce our students to the issues happening all over the world may have important impact to the development of the world and to the students' knowledge. Sciamarelli (2017) contended that her students do not just need to master a language, but also the knowledge and skills to try to solve some global issues. The researcher also observed that students face difficulty in understanding the vocabulary of global issues. In fact, teaching the topics of global issues needs suitable methods, techniques and different exercises to facilitate acquisition of the vocabulary of global issues.

Cooperative learning method refers to a particular set of classroom techniques that foster learner interdependence as a route to cognitive and social improvement. Oxford (2014) reported that a lot of studies refer that cooperative learning is more effective in promoting students' motivation and task achievement. It also improves higher-level thinking skills and students' attitudes toward the subject. Thus, learners may be exposed to increased amounts of effective communication in both comprehension and production, using of language for academic and social functions.

Dewey (1966) claimed that education is a tool for students to learn how to participate in classrooms cooperatively. He believed that education plays a significant role in exercising and embellishing cooperative learning method as a means of promoting students' socialization, as well as motivation, and task achievement. Unlike traditional method, cooperative learning

method increases achievement and time on task, generates self-esteem, improves academic peer norms and takes advantage of learner diversity in classrooms (Bilen, 2015).

In learning global issues, students will be skillful to interpret information, develop critical thinking, and choice appropriate ways and approaches for solving world problems. They can communicate efficiently to express their ideas, views and opinions. Awareness and senses of a shared global citizenship will be improved gradually. Besides, it will be able to outline the challenges, dilemmas and conflicts of values which are decided, to reflect upon one's own values and to consider rules and principles to integrate as a citizen and in one's future career.

A study related to the importance of global education in classrooms was carried out by Inka and Niina (2013). They believed that global education is a very important activity that guides students to have knowledge about world issues and to become responsible world citizens. The essential aim of the study was to find out Finnish elementary school teachers' perceptions, experiences and attitudes toward global education. The other aims of the study were to explore the kind of resources that teachers have for implementing global education and how to improve global education services and materials offered to elementary schools. The results revealed that teachers generally realize the necessity of integrating global education as a branch of education and global education should be incorporated into the teacher-training program as an individual subject in order to increase the level of global education. It was added that global education services and materials should be more available. So, teachers can find them easily and without wasting time.

Ünal (2008) observed that teacher education about environmental problems should be improved to increase students' awareness and knowledge about local and global environmental issues. The results indicated that a large number of Elementary Education pre-service teachers granted more significance to global environmental issues and global education should be integrated into classrooms. The study recommended that operative environmental courses be improved from primary to higher education in order to develop students' environmental knowledge.

Lopes (2012) identified some outcomes which are applied across curricula in learning world problems. Four main outcomes are established including knowledge, skills, values and taking action. Erfani (2012) construes that "due to the importance of textbooks in any ELT context it is necessary to consider all aspects of global issues not only in materials development, but also in course design and methods of teaching" (p. 2415). Terry (2018) conducted a study about the importance of respondents' engagement in cooperative learning activates. The findings showed that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive student' engagement through cooperative learning activities improved the academic achievement, especially of the vocabulary and grammar.

Almulla (2017) investigated the perceptions of Saudi high school teachers and their students about cooperative learning. It also investigates teachers' classroom practices based on the five cooperative learning principles (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). The findings of the study indicate that all teachers and the majority of students in this investigation presented positive attitudes towards cooperative learning and prefer it to lecture-style lesson (teacher-centred learning). The findings suggest that training in cooperative learning is significant to help teachers change their practice and their perceptions of classroom roles, responsibility and authority as well.

AlMashjari, (2012) found that cooperative learning method employed in the new developed high school system in her country enhanced the students' English proficiency as measured by their abilities in grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and listening comprehension. The study also measured the participants' attitude towards cooperative learning and their motivation to learn English in the new high school system. It was found that cooperative learning in the new system positively affect some aspects in the respondents' English proficiency and they had a positive attitude towards cooperative learning in the new system and a higher motivation to learn English.

Cooperative learning contributes to cognitive growth since it is based on important cognitive theories as Vygotskian, Piagetian, and Banduran learning theories and that have supported the theories that were used to underpinned this research; namely, Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural scaffolding theory and Graves and Slater's (1987) schema theory. Vygotsky's (1978) perspective about teaching and its relationship with the external world was that cultures with different conceptual categories should be expected to perceive and therefore to think about the world differently from other cultures. In addition, Vygotsky (1962) outlined that students' learning is a result of social and dyadic interactions; that is to interact with more knowledgeable people (teachers, parents, peers) and fulfill some culturally tasks. Thus, the learning process is facilitated. Additionally, students' cognitive improves since their thinking is related to society in the form of sharing social activities with people who are surrounding to them (Al-Jawarneh, n. d). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) confirmed that, through scaffolding, learners are able to be in a progress level than they can attain by themselves. They added that it is significant to notice that ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is conceptualized as something that emerges through participation in collaborative activities, not as an attribute of learners (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012).

On the other hand, Samuels (1994) argues that the importance of schema theory to comprehension lies in how the learners use schemata. He emphasizes internal aspects of attention (to process information) is crucial to comprehension and defines three characteristics of internal attention. First is alertness. It is the learners' active attempt to access relevant schemata involving not only letter-sound relationships, syntactic knowledge but also word meanings. Second is selectivity. It refers to the learners' ability to attend selectively to only that information which requires processing. Final characteristic is the limited capacity. It refers to the fact that learners' brain has limited cognitive energy for processing information purposes. To clarify the idea of schema theory, Margana (2016) states that learners develop schemata through experience and schemata does not only affect the way information is interpreted but also continue to change as new information is received to facilitate further comprehension. This statement is supported by Graves and Slater (1987) who asserted that learners can easily learn new words (as global issues words) if they have the schemata for the exposure of suitable method for learning (as cooperative learning methods). Jahromi and Marzban (2015) asserted that finding an appropriate way to learn vocabulary is a crucial issue in acquiring them. So, cooperative learning methods can help students learn and recall new vocabulary. Hence, the aforementioned theories underpin the present research, supporting and enriching it with information in which the objectives of this research can be achieved, and research questions can be answered.

Klapwijk (2015) strongly stands up teachers for introducing strategies (such as the cooperative learning methods used in this study; namely, the jigsaw technique and monolingual dictionary, English - English) in the form of explicit instruction. Therefore, learners have the ability to think of the process of learning the needed meaning when they face difficult words or texts. The jigsaw technique is one of the earliest cooperative learning methods and the best motivational devices used to create a real 'information gap' in the classroom and encourage for communication. Moreover, Falchikov (2001) asserted that there are two main aims of using jigsaw method. Firstly, it is to enhance pre-service teacher preparation through cooperation and; secondly, to develop learners' academic and social learning (Azzioui, 2016). Hausfather (1996) maintained that teachers must engage students' interest and simplify the tasks, so they are controlled and manageable. Teachers should also motivate learners to fulfill the instructional goal (improving their vocabulary of global issues as well as language acquisition).

Pratama and Yuliati (2016) asserted that students need to master the skills of communication, critical and logical thinking, creativity, and problem solving. That cannot be achieved efficiently unless the students learn vocabulary, including the vocabulary of global issues. Thus, they can express their thoughts, ideas, experiences and feeling. In addition, Sciamarelli (2017) claimed that teaching global issues in the classroom is imperative because that gives students a chance to communicate and express their views, transforms the classroom into a real-life environment creating internationally aware students.

Despite the importance of introducing global issues vocabulary lessons to students, Yemeni learners at tertiary level still face difficulty in learning and understanding them. Having knowledge of using particular and suitable methods in teaching the vocabulary of global issues may lead learners to engage and participate efficiently. However, what are the students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning cooperatively? This study aims; therefore, at investigating students' perceptions and attitudes towards the learning of global issues vocabulary using cooperative learning methods.

Methodology
The study employed a survey method research design where the quantitative data collection method was conducted. 25 participants (both males and females) are subjected to the intervention phase for seven weeks (40 hours) at MALI institute in Taiz, Yemen, 2019. Then a well-prepared questionnaire was conducted within a period of two days, immediately after the intervention phase. The descriptive statistic SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 25.0 was used to analyze data. Percentages were used for the questionnaire.

The population of the study constitutes English language students at MALI private institute in Taiz, Yemen. Sample was selected using a purposive sampling method since there are two levels of students in the institute, adult and beginners. Adult students were recruited as sample for their opinions about the issue were more attainable. An intervention phase took place for two hours a day (a period only), for seven weeks, totaling 40 hours altogether. The participants (25) studied 8 global issues lessons, which were selected by the researcher. They were taught global issues lessons using the selected cooperative learning method (the jigsaw technique and using monolingual dictionary, English – English).

To analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, the participants were asked about the cooperative learning methods that they used while learning the vocabulary of global issues whether they were appropriate or not, the difficulties that they usually faced to acquire vocabulary and many different related questions. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Each section contains of five questions except the last section which consists of ten questions. The total number of the questions in this questionnaire is 25 close-ended questions. After collecting the participants' responses, all the data were run in the SPSS version 25.0. The data were analysed statistically in percentages.

Result and Discussion
The subsequent section will explain the data analysis obtained from the quantitative data; the questionnaire.

Data Analysis of Questionnaire
Based on the statistical results, students' preference and evaluations of vocabulary learning and language ability were clearly observed. In response to item 1, a majority of the respondents 22 (88%) thought that acquiring new words was always important to learn a language; whereas in response to item 2, 22 respondents (88%) agreed that using repetition and practicing technique were effective to memorize new words. In response to item 3, a majority of the respondents 12 (48%) thought that the skill that helped them acquire new words efficiently was speaking. 15 (60%) participants (item 4) said that they always used their background knowledge of a topic to guess the meaning of new words which they did not know their meanings. In response to item 5, 16 respondents (64%) preferred to make a note when they thought that the meaning of new words, they were looking up was useful and important. To sum up, the findings obtained from this section presented some of the respondents' abilities and skills to acquire the vocabulary of English language. Such vocabulary can include the vocabulary of global issues as well. Consequently, the students have also the same skills and abilities while acquiring the vocabulary of global issues.

This finding is supported by Jahromi and Marzban (2015) who pointed that the most crucial issue in vocabulary acquisition is finding a suitable way to learn and recall them. EFL / ESL learners should be aware of helpful methods and techniques which can help them learn and recall new vocabularies.

According to the statistical results, we got an idea about the techniques that the participants preferred to use in leaning vocabulary, in general. We also knew whether the participants were satisfied in the techniques by which they have learned the vocabulary of global issues or not. It was also found that the respondents had different ideas about the methods and techniques that they used while studying vocabulary in last periods, in general. In response to item 6, 10 (40%) of the subjects were sometimes satisfied in the techniques by which they learned new words in the last periods whereas 9 (36%) of the subjects were always satisfied.

In response to item 7, 8 (32%) of the participants preferred to discuss with their classmates when they first met new words in the classroom, and the same amount of the respondents, namely; 8 (32%) preferred to guess the meaning in context, whereas 7 (28%) out of the 25 participants preferred to use a dictionary.

It can be noticed that two of the aforementioned techniques used while learning vocabulary, i. e., discussing with classmates and using a dictionary are considered to be the same techniques that were used in this research with the experimental group. In other words, these techniques should be used since they are appropriate to understand new vocabulary easily. The finding obtained from this item is supported by Oxford and Crookall (1990) who also asserted that; students are explicitly informed how to use a particular technique to learn a given word, how to evaluate the success of the technique, and how to transfer it to a new word or set of words (Saengpakdeejit, 2014).

From item 8, it also showed that 16 (64%) of the respondents said that in the last periods, their teacher introduced vocabulary items through giving a word with its meaning in FL, whereas 8 (32%) of the subjects said that their teacher let them guess the meaning of new vocabulary by their own and also used a dictionary.

In item 9, it was found that the respondents were also in consensus about the technique that they found more effective for explaining new vocabulary of global issues. 20 (80%) of the participants agreed that the effective technique was discussing with classmates in groups whereas 5 (20%) of the respondents confessed that the effective technique was explaining everything by a teacher and guessing the meaning from a context. The finding obtained from this item was repeated more and more that most of the respondents preferred to discuss with their classmates in groups.

The results obtained from item 10 clearly showed that 17 (68%) out of the 25 respondents were always satisfied in the ways/techniques by which they learned the vocabulary of global issue whereas 5 (20%) of the participants confessed that they were sometimes satisfied in using those techniques.

To conclude, the findings obtained from this section presented the respondents' opinions of the suitable techniques that they used in learning the vocabulary of global issues. Most of them agreed that discussion was regarded as the most appropriate technique to acquire new words. This finding was supported by Mothe (n. d.) who confirmed that many useful techniques that can help students learn new and acquire words easily. One of those techniques is discussion in groups.

Based on the statistical results, the respondents' problems and difficulties that they faced while learning and using the vocabulary of global issues were discussed. It was also observed whether teaching global issues were important to improve students' vocabulary or not.

According to item 11, most of the respondents 17 (68%) agreed that global issues; like human rights, poverty, floods, hunger, etc. should be always discussed in English classroom, whereas 4 (16%) of the subjects preferred that global issues should often be discussed in English classroom. Meanwhile, it was asked (in item 12) whether learning global issues' topics improved respondents' vocabulary or not. 18 (72%) of the respondents believed that it always improved so. In response to item 13, 11 (44%) of the subjects faced difficulties in using the vocabulary of global issues in pronunciation whereas 10 (40%) of them faced difficulty in spelling.

Besides, 16 (64%) out of the 25 respondents agreed that they sometimes found the vocabulary of global issues difficult and faced difficulties in learning them as we mentioned in item 14. Finally, in item 15, 20 (80%) of the subjects agreed that the skill that can assess students' productive knowledge effectively while learning the vocabulary of global issues was speaking compared to the five respondents (20%) who showed that the skill that can assess students' productive knowledge effectively was writing.

This finding revealed that the learners agreed that learning global issues was very effective hence they can improve their vocabulary. So, integrating global education into classrooms becomes an important matter. That was reported in many researchers' studies as Lopes (2012), Wintersteiner et. al. (2015), Cates (2002), Young (2014), Erfani (2012) and Bhargava (2006). This finding, in fact, was supported by Cates (2002) who maintained that global education aims to enable learners to effectively learn and acquire a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills, and commitment required by world citizens to solve global issues and problems. Another study was conducted by Inka and Niina (2013) to prove the importance of teaching global issues. They believed that global education is a very important approach that guides students to have knowledge about world issues and to become responsible world citizens. Consequently, teachers should be aware of the significance of global education to transfer their knowledge to students.

Based on the statistical results, students' perception and attitudes of cooperative learning methods were discussed. The students were asked whether they liked them or not and whether learning vocabulary cooperatively was significant to improve their language and to practice newly learned vocabulary or not. Finally, it was discussed the challenges and difficulties that the students faced in cooperative learning.

The findings obtained from item 16 showed that 10 (40%) of the respondents agreed that their English teacher sometimes used cooperative learning methods to discuss new words, whereas 6 (24%) of the subjects confessed that their English teacher always used those techniques. Besides, 11 (44%) out of the 25 respondents, in item 17, said that they always liked using cooperative learning methods in the classroom. In response to item 18, the respondents 15 (60%) also agreed that working with other students in the classroom always gave them more opportunities to practice newly learned vocabulary. The findings in item 19 also revealed that the learners 13 (52%) always practiced English very well in group work activities in the classroom.

Based on the findings obtained from item 20, a majority of respondents 20 (80%) preferred their teacher organizing their setting in the classroom in small groups. In other words, they preferred to learn new vocabulary cooperatively in small groups, just as it was conducted in the current study, in comparison to only 5 (20%) of the subjects preferred the whole class shared as one person or to be organized in pairs.

According to item 21, 9 (36%) of the subjects believed that working with other students on a problem often gave them confidence to answer a question in the classroom, whereas 7 (28%) of the subjects agreed that working with other students on a problem always gave them confidence to answer a question in the classroom.

In item 22, it can be summarized that 10 respondents (40%) liked to learn the vocabulary of global issues in groups since it created more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere as opposed to the 7 respondents (28%) who agreed that learning the vocabulary of global issues in groups was effective because it helped them learn different social skills. On the other hand, 6 (24%) of the respondents said that it was effective because it enhanced communication skills and respects others' opinions.

In response to item 23, the respondents' answers were different from one to another regarding to the challenges and difficulties that they faced in cooperative learning. 11(44%) of the participants believed that some of team members did not do their shared work, whereas 5 (20%) of the subjects confessed that some of their team members did not participate in team discussion. Only 4 (16%) of the learners thought that one of the difficulties was cooperative learning led to too much noise in the classroom.

Based on the results of item 24, a majority of the respondents 13 (52%) thought that teaching students in the classroom (having the teacher's role) can always help improve their English language. The final item in this section 25 showed that 13 (52%) out of the 25 respondents agreed that their teacher guided and helped each group as possibly as he can while they were working in groups, whereas 6 (24%) of the respondents found that their teacher observed the groups but did not comment.

In this section, we have discussed the respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards cooperative learning methods. Based on the findings, the students confessed, among others, that cooperative learning methods were an appropriate approach to learn and acquire the vocabulary of global issues. Those techniques had the potential to increase their academic success and performance. Most of the subjects had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning in terms of oral competence, academic achievement, social skills, personal development, collaborative skills, thinking skills, and learning atmosphere.

This finding was supported by Daloğu (2010) who affirmed that there are close relationships between cooperative learning and language development. Learners who are taught through cooperative learning are exposed to increase amounts of effective communication in both comprehension and production, using of language for academic and social functions. Moreover, Graves (1987) asserted that learners can easily learn new words (as global issues words) if they have the schemata for the exposure of suitable techniques for learning (as cooperative methods). This is because using an appropriate way to learn new words is a crucial issue in acquiring them. So, cooperative methods can help students learn and recall new vocabulary, (Jahromi and Marzban, 2015).

According to the theory used in this study, the main idea of the ZPD concept is to share doing a task with others who have more knowledge rather than to do it independently. Sharing different ideas and experiences with them enables learners to be developed mentally. Hence, learning through the social level moves to learning individually. So, learners can achieve tasks without helping from the others, Al-Jawarneh (n. d).

Finally, working cooperatively in the intervention phase made the participants felt more motivated and the class had relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. For Johnson and Johnson

(2012), the main purpose of group processing is to develop the effectiveness of group work by analyzing the performances of group members in order to reach the needed goals. For this process, teachers must distribute some time to students to estimate their groups. In addition, they need a sufficient amount of time to discuss how well they are achieving their goals. Students evaluate their effective working relationships. This finding supported the claim that cooperative learning methods improved the students' performance. The same significant finding of this section was also reported in Slavin's (1995), Johnson and Johnson's (1999), Kagan's (1999), Richards and Rodgers' (2001), AlMashjari's (2012), Oxford's (2014), Almulla's (2017) and Terry's (2018) studies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that cooperative learning contributes to cognitive development, increased autonomy, time management, and productivity. In addition, cooperative learning contributes to learners' interaction (face-to-face interaction), communication skills, social skills and language skills. It also provides positive interdependence, productive knowledge, and individual accountability which are developed gradually. Moreover, cooperative learning contributes to create natural, interactive contexts in which learners had authentic reasons for listening to one another, asking questions, clarifying issues, and re-stating points of view. Working together as a team enabled FL/L2 students to learn without doing a big effort. Thus, students' perceptions towards teaching the vocabulary of global issues cooperatively strengthened the association between the learning of English language and their identities. So, cooperative learning method should be integrated in English language classrooms to improve the growth and productive knowledge of students and to promote students' achievement.

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