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MOTIVATION IN GROUP WORKS**

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**Abstract:**

Completing a group assignment may be difficult if group members are uncooperative. Therefore, it is essential for group assignments to have an effective leader who can manage group members through group work. Regarding this, this study seeks to examine the leadership and motivational experiences of students engaged in group work. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, and the data for this study were gathered through individual interviews with ten students selected by purposive sampling. The results of this study indicate that the ten students who participated in group work activities had positive leadership and motivational experiences, including defined roles and responsibilities as well as enhanced confidence and communication skills. This study provides insight into the leadership and motivational experiences of L2 students that contributed to the success or failure of group work in a classroom.

Keywords:

Group Work, Leadership, Motivation, Students' Experience

Introduction

Although most research on the motivation of language learners focuses on the motivation of students by teachers (Hiromori et al., 2021), it is challenging for teachers to motivate students. Teachers are capable of inspiring and motivating their students. However, it is difficult to motivate and inspire a group of students with varying personalities and talents. Also, it is difficult to motivate students in a large class---30 to 40 students in class---with multicultural background. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to motivate each other, and this can be applied in group work activities, where students need to rely on each other for good grades.

Group work is commonly employed as a pedagogical method in the classroom (Jacobs et al., 2016; Hiromori et al., 2021). The active sharing of ideas within groups promotes students' motivation, encourages critical thinking, fosters socialization, improves attitudes towards learning, and fosters the development of a better understanding of various cultural backgrounds. Group learners are more analytical and retain information longer than individual learners (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). This is so that students may participate in discussions, take ownership of their own learning, and develop their critical thinking skills through group learning (Totten et al., 1991). Studies have also demonstrated that encouraging group learning and collaboration among students is advantageous (Chiriac, 2014) because it allows students to negotiate meaning, manipulate ideas, and reflect on their own learning (Burdett, 2003). Yet, there is still a lack of comprehensive study on the dynamics of group work and the factors that influence students' learning capacity. It is also unclear why certain group projects succeed while others fail. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the leadership and motivational experiences of students in group work. The study's research question is: what are the leadership and motivational experiences of students in group work activities? This study provides insight into the leadership and motivational experiences of L2 students that contributed to the success or failure of group work.

Literature Review

The following discussion addresses the importance of group cohesion, motivation, and leadership in learning.

Collaborative Learning, Group Cohesion & Motivation

Collaborative learning is an approach of group learning. Learning in a collaborative environment or collaborative learning takes place in a group setting. In this group setting context, students assist and rely on one another to complete a task. They are expected to participate in the learning activities as part of this active learning approach. In this approach, small groups of students with diverse skill levels work together towards a common objective (Hassanein, 2006). Each student is responsible for both his or her own learning and that of his or her peers. So, an individual's achievement can impact the success of a group. L2 scholars continue to be interested in collaborative learning due to its facilitative effects on students' learning backgrounds (Gaudet et al., 2010; Slavin, 1996), notably that it encourages frequent exchange of ideas within groups, increases motivation among participants, promotes critical thinking, fosters communication, improves attitudes towards learning, and encourages a better understanding of diverse cultural background (see Clarke, 2004; Gillies & Ashman, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2000). It is evident that group learners are more analytical and retain knowledge longer than individual learners (Johnson & Johnson, 1986). This is so that students may participate in discussions, take ownership of their own learning, and develop their critical

thinking skills through group learning (Totten, et al., 1991). However, the efficacy of collaborative learning may differ based on social environmental factors such as the students' teammates and the learning environment. Although motivated peer involvement has usually positive impact on the motivation levels of fellow L2 learners (Chang 2010; Murphey et al. 2014; Tanaka 2017a), its efficacy diminishes in a demotivating learning setting (Tanaka 2017b).

Group cohesion has been extensively research in the group dynamic's field (Pescosolido & Richard, 2012). Research has shown that group cohesion has both advantages and disadvantages (Forsyth, 2014; Pescosolido & Richard, 2012). Additionally, research on cooperative learning has shown that the degree of group cohesion significantly affects the benefits of cooperative learning on students' achievement (Slavin 2014). Thus, conformity to negative group norms is one of group cohesion's detrimental impacts. Nevertheless, group cohesion has advantages such as increased dedication, commitment, and group productivity (Forsyth 2014).

In respect to motivation, the roles of group cohesion in L2 learning have not received enough attention (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019; Fukada et al., 2020). Group cohesion is favourably connected with L2 learning motivation and student evaluations of the teacher and course (Clément et al., 1994), as well as with self-efficacy and independent behaviours in L2 learning (Chang, 2010). It also tends to foster group effectiveness (Leeming 2020). Members of a cohesive group engage in active communication, favourably contribute to discussions, willingly talk about themselves, and support one another, all of which ultimately increase productivity (Emura, 2009). In addition, university students' happiness and academic success are correlated with closeness and group cohesion (Marmarosh & Markin, 2007). Therefore, it is important for teachers to ensure positive cohesion among members of group works.

Leadership in Learning

Leadership is one of the primary research topics in group dynamics (American Psychological Association, 2018; Forsyth, 2018). According to Northouse (2009), it consists of both assigned leadership, whose position is formally allocated by teachers, etc., and emergent leadership, which arises spontaneously during interactions. In emergent leadership, each group spontaneously appoints a group leader during interaction, to oversee and manage the group's efforts to complete the assigned task to prevent members from failing to fulfil their responsibilities (Baines et al., 2009). Leeming (2019) investigated the effect of emergent leadership on group interaction and language learning opportunities of 20 groups of three to four Japanese university students taking mandatory English communication classes. His study shows that the leader's behaviour can substantially affect the performance of the other group members, both positively and negatively. Similar study was conducted by Yashima et al. (2016). They examined the participation of 21 Japanese university students in English class group discussions. Their study indicated that groups with an emergent leader were more successful than those without one: groups without an emergent leader experienced difficulties during talks and unusually long periods of stillness. In conclusion, the preceding research, Leeming (2019) and Yashima et al. (2016) indicates the position of a student in a leadership role in group work. If a student can steer the group in the proper direction, this may increase the motivation of other members and, as a result, improve the group's performance. In this study, the researcher studied the emergent leadership's impact in group works, following the findings of Leeming (2019) and Yashima et al.'s (2016) studies.

Methodology

A qualitative case study approach utilising an individual interview was applied to collect the data of the study. This approach allows researchers to focus their research within the limits of time and space on a single case (Schoch, 2019). It helps to explain an issue within a particular context (Yin, 2018). In this study, the individual interviews elicited and explored the participants' experiences on leadership and motivation in group works. Ten L2 students of the Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning (PPIB), Universiti Malaysia Sabah participated in the study. They took English language course in PPIB, and they were selected based on purposive sampling method because they have the knowledge and experience in group work since they involved directly in group works as part of the learning activities in class. The participants were identified as S1, S2, S3 and so on for ethical reasons. To analyse the interview data, the researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of Thematic Analysis, namely becoming familiar with the data by transcribing the data and reading the data repeatedly, coding the data, searching, and reviewing potential themes, giving definition, and naming the themes, and producing a report of the data analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Based on Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (2006), two positive themes related to leadership and motivation emerged from the interview, which were categorized as such: 1) clear role and responsibilities, and 2) improved confidence and communications. These two themes demonstrate the participants' positive opinion on leadership and motivation in the group works they did in class. The following responses illustrate the findings:

Clear Role and Responsibilities

The participants expressed their positive opinion on the leadership effects of their participation in group work activities conducted in class. Among the responses were:

"The group's leader clearly divides roles and responsibilities. He did this at the beginning of the group work discussion..." (S5)

"Nobody is arguing...we all know what we should do... The task was finished on time..." (S9)

"We had a quick discussion, and everyone knew exactly what to do..." (S2)

"We always pick Azlan to head our group since he'll make sure we follow the rules that are often stated at the beginning of a group activity... No issues arise, and we finish early..." (S10)

"The leader always has ideas, and I just go along with them..." (S1)

Improved Confidence and Communications

They said that their group leader always encouraged them to express their views without fear of being ridiculed in front of the class. Several also reported that their familiarity with the group leader from taking the same class has allowed them to communicate and discuss without anxiety during group works. This is shown in these responses:

“He continues to ask us questions and encourages us to freely share our ideas without fear of being laughed at by our classmates.” (S3)

“I’m not worried about the fact that I talk a lot in group activities. He (the group work’s leader) wants us to participate in the group task.” (S7)

“If Melvin is the leader of the group task, I feel confident. He is my classmate... I know him because we take the same course...” (S4)

“I tend to remain in the same group and under the same leader for all tasks since I am comfortable conversing with them because we are classmates.” (S8)

“I speak more during group works because I know the leader will incorporate my and others’ suggestions so that we receive high marks for the tasks.” (S6)

It appears from the responses above that the participants have favourable experiences with group work activities. The leader of the group works knows what to do for the allotted task, and as a result, they have been able to complete the group task on time and obtain higher scores for the members' constructive conversation and excellent groupwork. In addition, because they were familiar with the group leader, the participants felt inspired and assured to talk, share ideas, communicate freely with group members, and contribute to the group's success. The familiarity of the group members with the group leader may have increased group cohesion. This is consistent with the findings of study on cooperative learning, where the degree of group cohesion was the most influential factor in students' accomplishment (Slavin, 2014). Due to their familiarity with the group leader, the members were also driven to speak more and express their opinions. This supports the idea that cohesive group members participate in active communication that contributes to discussions, and that this will result in higher productivity (Emura, 2019). The members of the studied groups have profited from the emergent leadership. The emergent leaders were able to steer the group in a favourable direction, which increased the confidence and communication skills of the group members, who conversed more and completed group projects with ease.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what are the leadership and motivational experiences of students in this study's group work activities? Students that participated in the group work activities in this research demonstrated positive leadership and motivation. The emergent leadership has substantially increased the confidence and communication skills of the group members since the leaders were aware of their roles and duties in ensuring the effective completion of group works. It appears that the participants' familiarity with the group leaders has enhanced their group performance. Nevertheless, this study's findings are solely applicable to this group of students. Future research should utilize a larger sample size and more research tools to get conclusive and representative findings.

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