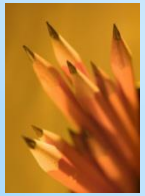
* Cooperative learning Groupwork

Introduction with a fairytale....

The Elephant and the six blind men.

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, 'Hey, there is an elephant in the village today.'
They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, 'Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway.' All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant. 'Hey, the elephant is a pillar,' said the first man who touched his leg. 'Oh, no! It is like a rope,' said the second man who touched the tail.
'Oh, no! It is like a thick branch of a tree,' said the third man who touched the trunk
'It is like a big hand fan' said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant.
'It is like a huge wall,' said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.
'It is like a solid pipe,' Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.
They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted that he was right; they began to shout louder out their perspective louder and louder…

Globally connected, Locally engaged - Active Citizens: Toolkit. 2011, British Council.



What was the mistake the blind men made?
What would be the right decision for the blind men in order to understand what the elephant is?

What is collaborative learning?

In collaborative learning pupils work as groups in order to achieve common learning goals.

Requires the active participation and coordination of efforts of two or more persons. The main component of collaborative action is the effort of each participant to facilitate the achievement or the target accomplishment of each member of the group. Coordination among the group members is crucial and therefore communication patterns among them is crucial.

Key components of collaborative learning (1)

- ✧ Positive interdependence: Lies at the heart of collaborative learning. Pupils see themselves as linked to the others in the group in such a manner that they cannot succeed unless the other members of the froup succeed. The pupils must really believe that they sink orswim together. Positive interdependence promotes a situation in which pupils work together in small groups to maximise the learning of all members, share their resources, provide mutual support and celebrate the joint success.

Pupils are expected to discuss what they are learning and how to solve the assigned problems or complete the assignments, as well as provide each other with help, assistance, support and encouragement.

In individualistic and competitive learning environments there is interdependence, but this is negative.

Key components of collaborative learning (2)

- **Individual accountability:** Exists when the performance of the each individual pupils is assessed and the results are reported to both the individual and the group. It is important the group members know that they cannot «hitch-hike» on the work of others.

- **Face-to-face interaction:** To obtain meaningful the size of the groups must be small (two to four members).

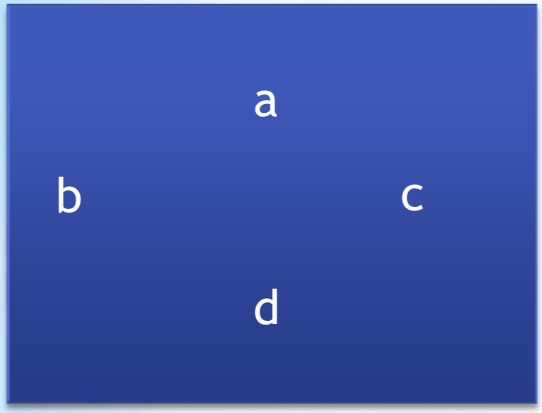
- **Interpersonal communication skills**:The pupils must often be taught the social skills for high quality collaboration and be motivated to use these skills.

Key components of collaborative learning (3)

Before getting involved pupils to collaborative learning teachers had to remember that pupils are conditioned to learn within an individualistic and antagonistic environment. Pupils should be taught to collaborate and develop communication skills.

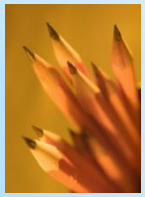
- ✧ **Group processing**: Exists when pupils as members of a group discuss their progress towards the achievement of their goals and the maintenance of effective working relations. Some of the keys for a successful group processing are allowing sufficient time for it to occur and make the processing specific rather than vague.

Work <u>in</u> group



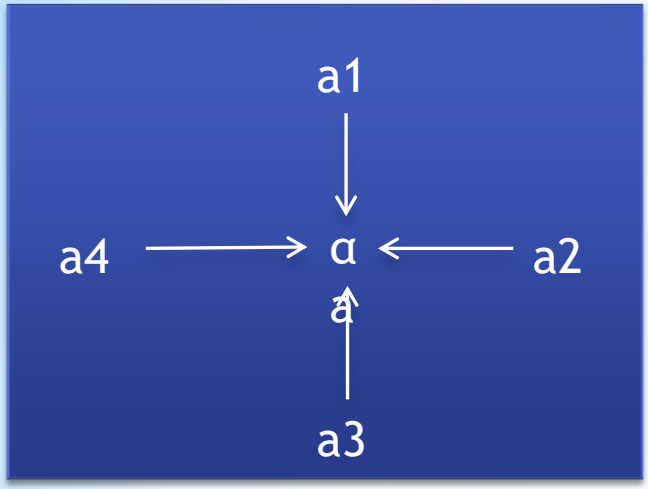
Pupils in the next arrangement are carrying out different grammar exercises (Figure 1)

Pupils in the next figure are carrying out a creative writing exercise and each one is writing his/her own story (Figure 2).

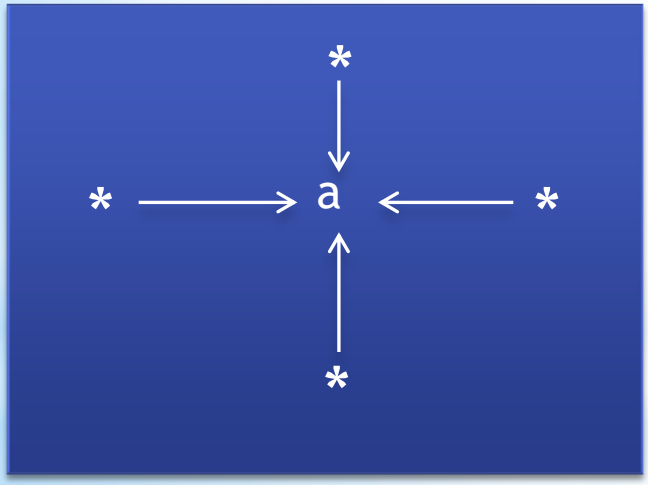


In the above examples are fulfiled the requirements of collaborative learning? Why?

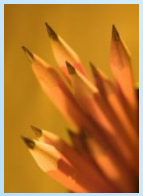
Work **as** a group



Pupils of the next figure have as a task to write a verb in all tenses giving an example for each tense (Figure 3)



Pupils of the next figure are writing a simulation dialogue at a coffee shop (Figure 4)



In the above examples are fulfilled the requirements of collaborative learning? Why? How do you think the work would be divided among the group members in each case? Which are the differences among the two cases?

How can organise my pupils in order to work as a group?

Sometimes the setting is socialised, bυτ the work is individualised!

In figures 1 and 2 pupils have group as a social framework, but their work is individual.

On the contrary in figures 3 and 4 the work is really collaborative. These cases represent two different ways of organising groupwork:

Figure 3: It is called jigsaw. Each pupil works on one part of the task, which is divided in such a way that the group outcome cannot be achieved until every group member has successful completed his or her piece of work. At this point the «jigsaw» can be fitted together.

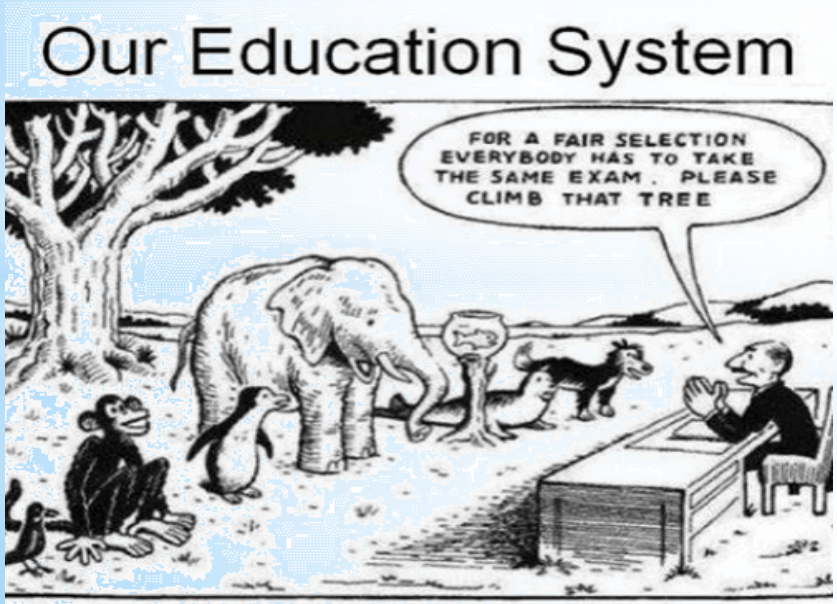
Figure 4: This type of groupwork sometimes known as Group Investigation. In this type of groupwork the task is not formally divided as in jigsaw. Children have to work together to produce one product or outcome. Their activities therefore must be co-ordinated in some way. Although collaborative endeavour is necessary for this kind of group to succeed, it is less easy to ascertain exactly what each pupil has contributed and individual accountability is therefore lower.

Why use collaborative learning in teaching language to mixed language ability groups?

It gives the opportunity for differentiated learning among groups and among members of the same group.

Because even the classes that seem homogeneous… rarely are!

Because each pupils has a different starting point in learning language, in relation to his/her cultural capital, his/her previous contact with the language e.t.c.



If you judge a fish by its 'ability' to climb a tree, it will spend its entire life believing its stupid - Albert Einstein

Groupwork activities (1)

Tic-tac-toe

The tasks are placed in the nine cells of the tic-tac-toe. Each group should choose among the nine tasks in order to make three in the row and block the other team to make three in a row.

Activities should cover a variety of different tasks in order to cover all learning types and classified regarding the language competency.

Example 1 (text comprehension)

Choose 5 words of the text that you do not understand. Find their meaning and write it next to the word.	Find a song suitable for soudtrach for the story.	Write another title for the story.
In which place is the story takes place?	Create a slogan and advertise the story to other pupils. Paint a poster for the story.	Choose two heroes and write a characteristic for each one.
Choose one scene from the story and represent it.	What if... Choose a point in the story and write another end.	Choose a part of the story and narrate it to the other pupils adding your comments.

Example 2: (vocabulary)

Whrite the words in alpabetical order.	Write a sentence for each word.	Write the words in capital words.
Write the words with blue consontants and red vowels.	Write the words with rainbaw colors.	Choose a word and find a way to make the other puils guess it without telling it.
Choose a word and draw a picture.	Write three times each word.	Write for each word another one (opposite, synonym e.t.c.).

Groupwork activities (2)

Think – pair – share

The technique has three stages:

Pupils think inidividually on a task
They discuss their ideas with a pair
They share their work with the whole class

Why use this technique?
Pupils initially attempt to respond to the task recalling their own knowledge. At the second stage through collaboration they have the opportunity to clarify and enrich their response. It also helps shy pupils to present in the whole class as they validate their answer firstly in the small group.

Groupwork activities (3)

Jigsaw

The technique involves pupils firstly become «experts» on an aspect of one topic and at a second stage share their knowledge with their mates. Is based on the principle that the most effective learning happens when we teach others.

- ✓ form groups of four or five pupils and assign a leader for each group
- ✓ divide the topic into equal aspects with the number of group members and each member of the group undertakes one aspect
- ✓ form new groups with the pupils that have the same subtopic
- ✓ in the new groups of the “experts” pupils develop the subtopic using brainstorming, elaboration of their ideas and research (if time enables)
- ✓ when the groups of «experts» have completed their work their members return to their initial groups and they share their knowledge with the other members creating thus a jigsaw of knowledge about the topic.

Groupwork activities (3)

Example: The ten parts of speech

Stage 1: Form groups of four pupils. There are eight parts and each pupils will become «expert» on two of them. For practical reasons we can divide the parts into two categories: a) noun, pronoun, verb, adjective b) adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection. If time is not enough we can work with the first category the first day and with the second the next.

Stage 2: Each pupil will choose two parts. All the pupils they have to find the following for each part:

- Definition
- 10 examples
- Use the examples to write a sentene for each one underlining the examples

Stage 3: Allow time for the pupils to work on their tasks and then form the groups of «experts» of the first category of parts of speech. At that stage you will have four groups: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective.

Stage 4: Pupils after the «expert session return to their initial groups and share their knowledge with the rest of the group.

References

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