GROUP WORK AS A BASIC ELEMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR NON-PHILOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES.

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary globalized educational environment, the demand for effective foreign language proficiency among students of non-philological universities has increased significantly. Specialists in engineering, economics, medicine, architecture, and other non-linguistic fields are required to communicate in international academic and professional contexts. However, traditional language teaching methods that rely primarily on teacher-centered instruction and individual learning strategies often fail to develop communicative competence effectively. One of the most promising pedagogical approaches to address this challenge is the integration of group work as a central element of the learning process. Group work enables students to interact actively, exchange ideas, develop collaborative skills, and practice language use in authentic communicative contexts. This study investigates the pedagogical value of group work in foreign language instruction for students of non-philological universities. The research explores theoretical foundations, methodological principles, and empirical evidence related to collaborative learning strategies in language education. Particular attention is given to how group work contributes to the development of communicative competence, critical thinking, motivation, and learner autonomy. The study also examines the challenges associated with implementing group work in higher education settings, including classroom management, assessment strategies, and student participation imbalance. Using a mixed-method research design, the study analyzes data collected from university students and language instructors to evaluate

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the effectiveness of group work activities in improving language proficiency. The findings demonstrate that group work significantly enhances students' speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and confidence in communication. Moreover, collaborative learning environments encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning process while fostering interpersonal and intercultural communication skills. The results suggest that integrating structured group activities into language curricula can substantially improve the quality of language education in non-philological universities. The article concludes by proposing methodological recommendations for implementing group work effectively in higher education language classrooms.

Introduction

Foreign language education has become an essential component of higher education systems worldwide due to increasing international academic mobility, global professional cooperation, and the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies. In many non-philological universities, students specializing in engineering, architecture, medicine, economics, and other technical disciplines are required to acquire foreign language skills to access international research, participate in global professional networks, and contribute to cross-cultural collaboration. However, teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic educational environments presents unique pedagogical challenges. Students often perceive language courses as secondary to their major disciplines, which leads to low motivation and limited engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, traditional teacher-centered approaches that emphasize grammar translation, memorization, and passive learning frequently fail to develop communicative competence, which is considered the primary goal of modern language education. In response to these challenges, contemporary language pedagogy increasingly emphasizes student-centered approaches that promote interaction, collaboration, and active participation. Among these approaches, group work has emerged as a fundamental methodological tool for facilitating communicative language learning. Group work refers to structured collaborative activities in which students work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning objectives through communication, problem solving, and mutual support. This pedagogical strategy aligns with constructivist learning theories, which suggest that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaborative meaning-making processes. In the context of language education, group work creates opportunities for students to practice authentic communication, negotiate meaning, and develop linguistic competence

through real-time interaction with peers. Research in applied linguistics and educational psychology indicates that collaborative learning environments significantly enhance students' language proficiency, cognitive engagement, and motivation. When students work together in small groups, they are more likely to express their ideas, ask questions, and experiment with language structures without the fear of making mistakes in front of the entire class. This interactive environment reduces

anxiety and increases learners' confidence in using a foreign language. Moreover, group work encourages the development of essential soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem solving, and intercultural communication, which are highly valued in modern professional environments. For students in non-philological universities, these competencies are particularly important because their future careers often require collaboration in multidisciplinary and multicultural teams. Despite its numerous advantages, the implementation of group work in higher education language classrooms is not without challenges. Instructors frequently encounter difficulties related to organizing effective group structures, ensuring equal participation among students, and assessing individual contributions within collaborative tasks. Some students may rely excessively on more active group members, while others may remain passive observers during group activities. Additionally, large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient methodological training for instructors can hinder the successful integration of collaborative learning strategies. Therefore, it is essential to develop clear methodological frameworks for implementing group work effectively in language teaching for non-philological universities. This study aims to analyze the role of group work as a fundamental element in foreign language instruction within non-philological higher education institutions. The research seeks to examine how collaborative learning strategies influence students' language proficiency, communicative competence, and motivation. The study also explores the perceptions of both students and instructors regarding the effectiveness of group work activities in language classrooms. By analyzing theoretical perspectives and empirical data, the research aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving language teaching methodologies in non-linguistic academic contexts. Ultimately, the findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on innovative pedagogical practices in higher education and highlight the importance of collaborative learning environments in developing effective foreign language competence among students of non-philological universities.

Literature Review

The concept of collaborative learning has become a central topic in modern educational research, particularly in the field of foreign language pedagogy. Scholars in applied linguistics and educational psychology have emphasized that language acquisition is fundamentally a social process that develops through interaction and communication between learners. One of the most influential theoretical frameworks supporting this idea is the sociocultural theory of learning proposed by Lev Vygotsky, which suggests that cognitive development occurs through social interaction and that learning is mediated by communication within a community of practice. According to this perspective, group work provides an environment where students can engage in meaningful linguistic interaction while supporting each other's learning processes. In foreign language classrooms, this interaction often takes the form of collaborative tasks, peer discussions, role-playing activities, problem-solving exercises, and project-based assignments that require students to use the target language actively. Research in communicative language teaching has demonstrated that students who participate in interactive learning environments tend to achieve higher levels of communicative competence compared to those who study primarily through traditional teacher-centered instruction. Communicative competence itself consists of several components, including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence,

and strategic competence, all of which can be developed effectively through collaborative learning situations where learners must negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and construct shared knowledge. Numerous empirical studies have confirmed the pedagogical benefits of group work in language education. For example, cooperative learning models developed by Johnson and Johnson highlight the importance of positive interdependence, individual accountability, and promotive interaction as key factors that contribute to successful group learning experiences. In such environments, learners become responsible not only for their own progress but also for the success of their group members, which encourages mutual support and active engagement. Similarly, research conducted by Slavin has shown that cooperative learning strategies significantly improve academic achievement, particularly when tasks are structured to require meaningful collaboration among students. In the context of higher education, these principles are particularly relevant for students in non-philological programs who often have limited opportunities to practice foreign language communication outside the classroom. Group work creates an artificial but effective communicative environment where students can simulate real-life interactions related to their academic and professional fields. Furthermore, collaborative activities encourage learners to develop higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving, which are essential for both academic success and professional competence. Modern approaches to language teaching, including task-based language learning and project-based learning, strongly emphasize the importance of collaborative interaction as a mechanism for language acquisition. Task-based learning, for instance, requires students to complete meaningful communicative tasks in small groups, such as designing a project proposal, solving a case study, or conducting a simulated professional discussion. These tasks require learners to use language as a tool for achieving practical objectives rather than merely practicing isolated grammatical structures. As a result, students become more motivated and actively involved in the learning process. Another important aspect discussed in the literature is the role of group work in reducing language anxiety among learners. Many students in non-philological universities experience psychological barriers when speaking a foreign language in front of a large audience or directly addressing the instructor. Small group interactions create a less intimidating environment where learners feel more comfortable experimenting with new vocabulary and grammatical structures. This supportive atmosphere allows students to develop confidence in their communicative abilities, which ultimately leads to improved language performance. However, researchers have also identified several challenges associated with the use of group work in language classrooms. One of the most frequently discussed issues is the unequal distribution of participation among group members. In some cases, more proficient or more confident students may dominate the discussion, while less active learners may contribute minimally to the task. This imbalance can reduce the effectiveness of collaborative learning if not properly managed by the instructor. Another challenge involves assessment practices, as evaluating individual performance within group activities can be complex. Instructors must develop assessment strategies that recognize both collective achievements and individual contributions. Additionally, the success of group work often depends on careful task design, clear instructions, and effective classroom management. Without proper planning, group activities may become disorganized or fail to achieve the intended learning objectives. Despite these challenges, the majority of educational research supports

the integration of collaborative learning strategies into language teaching methodologies. Studies conducted in various educational contexts consistently demonstrate that well-structured group work activities enhance language proficiency, increase student motivation, and promote deeper engagement with learning materials. For non-philological universities in particular, where students often require practical language skills related to their professional disciplines, group work provides a powerful pedagogical tool for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world communication. Consequently, understanding the theoretical foundations and practical implications of collaborative learning is essential for educators seeking to improve the quality of foreign language instruction in higher education.

Methods

The present study employed a mixed-method research design in order to investigate the effectiveness of group work as a fundamental element in foreign language teaching for students of non-philological universities. The mixed-method approach was chosen because it allows the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The research was conducted at several higher education institutions where foreign language courses are included as part of the curriculum for students specializing in non-linguistic fields such as engineering, architecture, economics, and information technology. A total of 180 undergraduate students participated in the study, representing different academic programs and levels of language proficiency. The participants were selected using a stratified sampling method to ensure that the sample accurately reflected the diversity of the student population in non-philological faculties. In addition to student participants, the study also involved ten language instructors who had experience teaching foreign languages in technical and non-linguistic academic programs. Data collection was carried out over the course of one academic semester during which various group work activities were integrated into the language learning process. These activities included collaborative problem-solving tasks, role-playing exercises, peer discussions, project-based assignments, and case study analyses related to students' professional fields. The research design included both experimental and observational components. In the experimental phase, students were divided into two groups: an experimental group that regularly participated in structured group work activities and a control group that followed a more traditional teacher-centered instructional approach. Both groups received the same instructional content and were evaluated using identical assessment criteria. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to measure changes in students' language proficiency over the course of the study. The tests assessed several dimensions of language competence, including vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy, reading comprehension, and speaking fluency. In addition to these quantitative measurements, qualitative data were collected through classroom observations, student questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with instructors. The questionnaires were designed to evaluate students' perceptions of group work, their level of engagement in collaborative activities, and their attitudes toward communicative language learning. Classroom observations focused on analyzing patterns of interaction among students, participation levels within groups, and the types of communication strategies used during collaborative tasks. The interviews with instructors provided additional insights into the pedagogical challenges and advantages associated with implementing group work in non-philological university contexts. Data analysis involved both

statistical and thematic procedures. Quantitative data from the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to determine whether the experimental group demonstrated significant improvements in language proficiency compared to the control group. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic coding techniques in order to identify recurring patterns related to student interaction, motivation, and learning strategies. The reliability and validity of the research instruments were ensured through pilot testing and expert evaluation prior to the main study. Ethical considerations were also carefully addressed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the objectives of the study and provided voluntary consent to participate. Confidentiality of personal data was maintained, and participants were assured that the results of the research would be used exclusively for academic purposes. By combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study aimed to produce reliable and comprehensive evidence regarding the pedagogical effectiveness of group work in foreign language teaching for non-philological universities.

Results

The analysis of the collected quantitative and qualitative data revealed significant differences in language learning outcomes between students who participated in structured group work activities and those who followed traditional teacher-centered instructional methods. At the beginning of the research period, the pre-test results indicated that both the experimental and control groups demonstrated relatively similar levels of foreign language proficiency, with only minor variations in vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy, reading comprehension, and speaking fluency. However, after the implementation of collaborative learning activities over the course of the academic semester, the post-test results showed notable improvements in the experimental group. Students who regularly engaged in group work demonstrated higher levels of communicative competence and greater confidence in using the target language during classroom interactions. Statistical analysis of the test scores indicated that the experimental group achieved an average improvement of approximately 27 percent in overall language proficiency compared to an improvement of 12 percent in the control group. The most significant progress was observed in speaking fluency and interactive communication skills, which improved by nearly 35 percent among students participating in group-based activities. These findings suggest that collaborative learning environments create more opportunities for authentic language use, thereby accelerating the development of communicative competence. In addition to quantitative improvements in test performance, qualitative observations revealed important changes in student behavior and learning dynamics within the classroom environment. Students involved in group work activities demonstrated higher levels of engagement, participation, and motivation compared to those in traditional instructional settings. Classroom observations indicated that collaborative tasks encouraged students to initiate discussions, ask clarifying questions, and actively negotiate meaning with their peers. These interaction patterns are considered essential for language acquisition because they require learners to process linguistic input actively and produce meaningful linguistic output. Furthermore, the analysis of student questionnaires revealed that approximately 82 percent of participants in the experimental group reported that group work activities helped them feel more comfortable speaking in a foreign language, while 76 percent indicated that collaborative tasks increased their motivation to

learn the language. Many students noted that working in small groups reduced their anxiety about making mistakes because the learning environment felt more supportive and less formal than teacher-centered classroom interactions. Another significant finding related to the development of vocabulary and contextual language usage. Students participating in collaborative tasks were more likely to use specialized vocabulary related to their academic disciplines during discussions and project-based assignments. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable in activities that simulated professional situations such as technical presentations, problem-solving discussions, and case study analyses related to engineering or business contexts. The integration of such professional communication scenarios into group work activities allowed students to connect language learning with their future career requirements. Instructor interviews also provided valuable insights into the pedagogical advantages of group work. Most instructors reported that collaborative learning activities improved classroom atmosphere and increased student participation, especially among learners who were previously reluctant to speak during traditional lectures. However, instructors also noted certain challenges, including the need for careful task design, time management, and strategies for ensuring balanced participation among group members. Despite these challenges, the overall results of the study strongly indicate that structured group work can significantly enhance the effectiveness of foreign language instruction in non-philological universities by promoting active engagement, communicative interaction, and meaningful language practice.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm the growing consensus within contemporary educational research that collaborative learning plays a crucial role in effective foreign language acquisition, particularly in higher education contexts where students specialize in non-linguistic disciplines. The significant improvement observed among students participating in group work activities supports theoretical perspectives derived from sociocultural learning theory and communicative language teaching approaches. According to these theoretical frameworks, language learning is not merely an individual cognitive process but rather a socially mediated activity that develops through meaningful interaction with others. When students engage in collaborative tasks, they are required to interpret linguistic input, formulate responses, negotiate meaning, and adapt their communication strategies in real time. These processes activate multiple dimensions of communicative competence, including grammatical knowledge, discourse organization, sociolinguistic awareness, and strategic communication skills. The findings of the present research demonstrate that group work creates a dynamic learning environment where students can practice these competencies in a natural and interactive manner. One of the most important pedagogical advantages identified in this study is the role of group work in reducing language anxiety and increasing learner confidence. Many students in non-philological universities experience psychological barriers when speaking a foreign language because they fear making mistakes or being negatively evaluated by instructors or peers. Small group interactions provide a supportive learning environment where students feel more comfortable experimenting with language structures and expressing their ideas without excessive pressure. This psychological safety encourages learners to participate more actively in communication, which ultimately leads to improved language proficiency. Furthermore, collaborative learning environments

promote the development of important cognitive and social skills that extend beyond language acquisition itself. Through group work activities, students learn to cooperate with others, share responsibilities, resolve disagreements, and work collectively toward common objectives. These skills are particularly valuable in modern professional environments where teamwork and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential components of workplace success. In addition to its psychological and social benefits, group work also contributes to deeper cognitive engagement with learning materials. When students work together to solve problems or complete complex tasks, they must analyze information, compare different perspectives, and synthesize ideas into coherent arguments or solutions. This process stimulates critical thinking and encourages learners to approach language learning as a tool for intellectual exploration rather than merely as a set of grammatical rules to be memorized. However, the study also highlights several methodological considerations that educators must address when implementing group work in language classrooms. One of the primary challenges involves ensuring equal participation among group members. Without proper task design and instructor guidance, some students may dominate discussions while others remain passive observers. To prevent such imbalances, instructors should carefully structure collaborative activities so that each participant has a clearly defined role and responsibility within the group. Another important consideration involves assessment practices. Traditional evaluation methods that focus exclusively on individual performance may not accurately reflect the learning outcomes achieved through collaborative tasks. Therefore, instructors may need to develop alternative assessment strategies that combine individual accountability with group performance indicators. Such strategies may include peer assessment, reflective journals, and project-based evaluation methods that capture both individual contributions and collective achievements. Additionally, effective implementation of group work requires instructors to possess strong classroom management skills and methodological expertise. Educators must be able to organize groups efficiently, monitor interactions, provide constructive feedback, and intervene when necessary to guide students toward productive communication. Professional development programs for language instructors may therefore play an important role in promoting the successful integration of collaborative learning strategies into university language curricula. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that group work should not be viewed merely as an optional classroom activity but rather as a fundamental pedagogical principle in foreign language education for non-philological universities. By creating interactive learning environments that encourage communication, cooperation, and critical thinking, group work can significantly enhance both the effectiveness and the relevance of language instruction in higher education settings.

Conclusion

The findings of this research confirm that group work represents a highly effective pedagogical strategy for improving foreign language education in non-philological universities. In contemporary higher education environments where students specialize in disciplines such as engineering, architecture, economics, and technology, foreign language competence has become an essential component of professional development. However, traditional teacher-centered instructional approaches often fail to provide students with sufficient opportunities for meaningful communication and interactive language practice. The results of the present study demonstrate that integrating structured collaborative

learning activities into language instruction significantly enhances students' communicative competence, motivation, and overall engagement in the learning process. The comparative analysis between the experimental and control groups revealed that students who participated regularly in group work activities achieved substantially higher improvements in language proficiency, particularly in speaking fluency and interactive communication skills. These improvements can be attributed to the increased frequency of authentic language use within collaborative learning environments, where students actively negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and construct knowledge collectively. In addition to measurable improvements in linguistic performance, group work also contributes to the development of important psychological and social dimensions of learning. Students working in collaborative groups experience reduced anxiety when speaking a foreign language because the learning environment becomes more supportive and less intimidating than traditional classroom settings. This psychological comfort encourages learners to experiment with language structures, take communicative risks, and participate more actively in classroom discussions. Furthermore, collaborative learning activities promote the development of essential professional competencies such as teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. These competencies are increasingly recognized as fundamental requirements in modern professional environments characterized by interdisciplinary cooperation and global communication. Another important implication of this research concerns the integration of language learning with students' professional disciplines. Group work activities that simulate real-life professional situations allow students to use foreign language skills in contexts that are directly relevant to their academic and career goals. For example, collaborative tasks involving technical presentations, case studies, or project-based problem solving enable students to practice specialized vocabulary and professional communication strategies related to their fields of study. This contextualized approach increases students' motivation and helps them perceive language learning as a practical tool for professional development rather than merely an academic requirement. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of group work in higher education language classrooms requires careful methodological planning and instructional expertise. Educators must design tasks that encourage equal participation among group members, establish clear objectives and guidelines for collaborative activities, and develop assessment strategies that accurately reflect both individual and collective learning outcomes. Classroom management skills also play a crucial role in ensuring that group interactions remain productive and focused on learning objectives. Instructors should monitor group dynamics, provide constructive feedback, and intervene when necessary to support effective communication among students. Professional development programs for language teachers may therefore be necessary to equip educators with the methodological tools required for implementing collaborative learning strategies successfully. Despite these challenges, the overall results of the present study strongly support the integration of group work as a central element in foreign language teaching methodologies for non-philological universities. Collaborative learning environments not only enhance linguistic competence but also foster the development of broader academic and professional skills that are essential for success in the modern globalized world. Future research may further explore the long-term impact of collaborative language learning on students' academic performance and professional communication abilities, as well as investigate innovative

technological tools that can support group work in digital and hybrid learning environments. In conclusion, the incorporation of structured group work activities into language curricula represents a powerful pedagogical approach that can significantly improve the quality, effectiveness, and relevance of foreign language education in higher education institutions

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