

## The Impact of Group Work Activities on EFL Learners Language Proficiency

Assistant teacher. Aseel Gany Mohammed

General Directorate of Education of Dhi Qar Governorate

[aasyl4332@gmail.com](mailto:aasyl4332@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The study investigates the impact of group work on Iraqi EFL students' academic performance and interaction levels. It explores how group work can enhance classroom situations and improve information retention. The research uses a questionnaire to identify and investigate anxiety issues among Iraqi EFL learners during classroom activities. The research questions focused on the impact of group work on students' English speaking, grammar, and writing skills. Results showed that students participate at different rates, with some believing group work improves their speaking skills and helps understand difficult grammar structures. However, a minority of students do not see social benefits, and some prefer working together in non-school situations. To ensure equal participation, tasks should include speaking, grammar, and writing. The study shows that while group work improves English speaking and writing skills, some students don't see social benefits. To ensure equal participation, tasks should include speaking, grammar, and writing.

Keywords: (Iraqi EFL, group work, academic performance, interaction levels).

## تأثير أنشطة العمل الجماعي على إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

م.م أصيل غني محمد

المديرية العامة لتربية محافظة ذي قار

aasyl4332@gmail.com

### الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تأثير العمل الجماعي على الأداء الأكاديمي ومستويات التفاعل لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين. وتستكشف كيف يُمكن للعمل الجماعي أن يُحسّن من بيئة الصف الدراسي ويُحسّن من حفظ المعلومات. يستخدم البحث استبيانًا لتحديد ودراسة مشاكل القلق لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين أثناء الأنشطة الصفية. ركزت أسئلة البحث على تأثير العمل الجماعي على مهارات التحدث والقواعد والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يشاركون بمعدلات متفاوتة، حيث يعتقد البعض أن العمل الجماعي يُحسّن مهارات التحدث ويساعد على فهم تراكيب القواعد الصعبة. ومع ذلك، لا يرى عدد قليل من الطلاب فوائد اجتماعية، ويفضل البعض العمل معًا في بيئات غير مدرسية. لضمان المساواة في المشاركة، يجب أن تشمل المهام التحدث والقواعد والكتابة. تُظهر الدراسة أنه على الرغم من أن العمل الجماعي يُحسّن مهارات التحدث والكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، إلا أن بعض الطلاب لا يرون فوائد اجتماعية. لضمان المساواة في المشاركة، يجب أن تشمل المهام التحدث والقواعد والكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (اللغة الإنجليزية للعراقيين، العمل الجماعي، الأداء الأكاديمي).

### Chapter One

#### 1.1. Overview

#### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Regardless of their motivation levels, effective teachers must have a variety of instructional tools to assist students in the classroom without making the experience burdensome. Group work is one such tool. Students

tend to retain information better and retrieve it more easily when they engage in enjoyable activities.

Group work has been particularly popular in EFL classrooms, with research supporting its effectiveness. Benefits include providing low-anxiety opportunities for learners to use all language domains speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It helps students remember information faster and more effectively, while also developing greater fluency by using the language rather than focusing solely on correctness. Group work is crucial for varying the pace of learning (Lindsay: 2000:225)

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

This study aims to examine the impact of the group work technique on the academic performance of Iraqi EFL students. The present study explores the effect of group work on EFL learners' development. Accordingly, this research project aims to find out whether group work may involve and increase the level of interaction between learners and how can the use of group work activities influence the development of inside and outside classroom situations. Group work is proposed as pedagogical tool which may facilitate the role of the teacher. Our main interest is to investigate the effects of group work on EFL learners' development. The aim of this study is therefore to shed light on the effectiveness of group work on the learners in class communication.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. To what extent the group work affect, the students performance in EFL classes?
2. What are the students perspectives toward Group work?

#### **1.5. Limitations and delimitations**

This study is limited to find out whether the group work technique has a positive effect on the fourth year college students achievement on the during the academic year (2024/2025) in the Department of English at Islamic University in Najaf Al- Ashraf Iraq. A questionnaire was conducted on the participants in the study were 50 students, including 25 females and 25 males.

### **Chapter Two**

#### **2.1. Definition of Group Work**

Working in groups is often viewed as a technique to facilitate tasks and enhance oral performance in classroom settings. It involves utilizing various skills, knowledge, and experiences of individuals (Smith,2008, p.1). Teachers use group work as a tool to distribute classroom activities, creating specific interactions within the group. This method is part of cooperative learning, where students spend time learning, developing knowledge, and improving their linguistic abilities.

## 2.2. The Rationale of Group Work

working in groups can enhance learners' meta-linguistic abilities and academic knowledge through increased oral performance and shared learning.

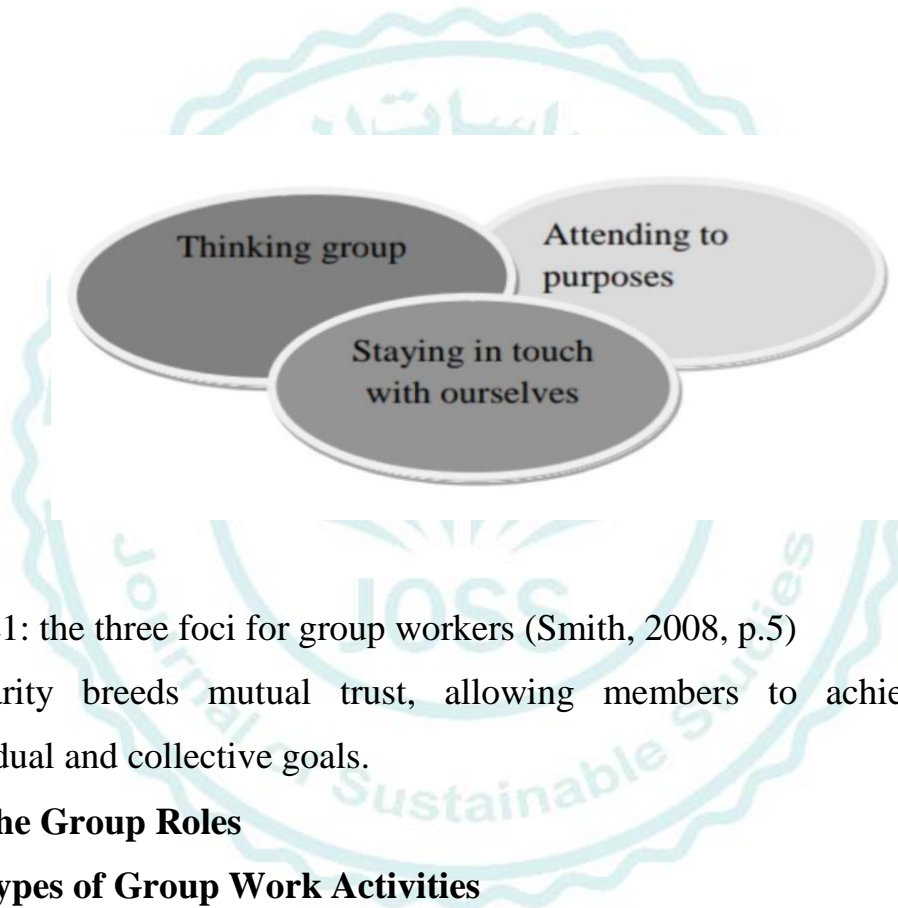


Figure1: the three foci for group workers (Smith, 2008, p.5)

solidarity breeds mutual trust, allowing members to achieve both individual and collective goals.

## 2.3. The Group Roles

## 2.4. Types of Group Work Activities

## 2.5. Benefits of Group Work in Language Learning

teachers with more opportunities to discuss task structures with students (Foster, 1998).

Researchers like Brown (2001) assert that GW is effective in language classrooms as it provides learners with opportunities to practice English with peers. It also maximizes classroom benefits by improving oral activities, facilitating task discussions, sharing reading and listening activities, and enabling cooperative writing.

Additionally, GW allows different groups to perform tasks suited to their abilities (Harmer, 1991).

McDonough (2004) studied the perceptions of instructors and learners regarding pair and small-group activities in a Thai EFL context. He examined whether the learning opportunities theoretically associated with these activities occurred in the classroom and whether active participation in these activities improved learners' production of target forms. The results showed that learners who actively participated in pair and smallgroup activities demonstrated improved production of target forms, even though they did not find the activities particularly useful for their learning.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

#### 3.1 Design

Depending on the research goals the study use quantitative method questionnaire on the identifying the impact of group work activities on EFL learners language proficiency, to extent the group work affect, the students performance in EFL classes. The students perspectives toward Group work.

### 3.2 Participants

The sample of this research is the fourth year students at English department in the Faculty of Education, at the Islamic University. Their ages ranged Between 22-26 years old. The researcher selected 20 male and 20 female students randomly to represent the study sample. students language proficiency levels were ranged from intermediate into advanced.

### 3.3 Instruments

The questionnaire includes ten items. In addition, there are five variables to answer these items (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never).

### 3.4 Procedure

The researcher used one tool to collect data. This tool was a questionnaire designed to distribute to participants and collect responses. The questionnaire was distributed to 40 male and female students in Islamic university, the Department of English. Use statistical methods to analyze survey data results. The sample of this research is the fourth year students at English department in the Faculty of Education, at the Islamic University.

## Chapter Four

### 4.1. Overview

This is the answer to the investigation form How doing group work affects the language skills of English as a foreign language (EFL) students.

After making changes to the answer sheets, the researcher started to count how many people had answered each question in each variable.

## 4.2. Questionnaire Data

The responses of the participants of the current study to questionnaire items are presented below.

4.2.1. The first items in the questionnaire ask the participants about in group work activities in EFL classes.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	22	13	7	5	3

As shown in table 4.2.1. The survey results show that students take part in group work tasks at different rates. A good number of students twenty two of them always take part, which suggests that group work is popular in EFL classes. Thirteen students often join, which means they are involved sometimes but not all the time. Seven kids sometimes take part, showing that they are occasionally involved. Five students rarely do group work, and three students never do it. This shows that there is a minority of students who don't do group tasks.

4.2.2. The second items in the questionnaire ask the participants about if the group work improves their speaking skills.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	20	15	2	8	5

As shown in table 4.2.2. The questionnaire results show that twenty percent of students think that working in groups always makes their English speaking skills better. This is strong support for the method. Fifteen students often get better, which means that the results are often good. Only two of the students sometimes see effects, showing that it works sometimes. Eight students say they don't think group work helps very often, and five say they never see change. This shows that some students aren't sure it works.

4.2.3. The third items in the questionnaire ask the participants about group work impact ability to understand and use vocabulary.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	25	6	7	8	4

As shown in table 4.2.3. There is strong support for collaborative learning based on the poll results, which show that a lot of students twenty five always think that working with others helps them understand and use new English words. This gain is often felt by six students, showing that improvement happens more often but not as consistently. Seven of the students sometimes see good effects, showing that they sometimes see benefits. Eight students rarely think that working with others helps them learn new words, and four students never think it does. This shows that there are some students who are skeptical.

4.2.4. The fourth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about feel that group work activities help you build better relationships with classmates.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	22	10	5	3	10

As shown in table 4.2.4. The questionnaire results show that people have different thoughts on how group work can help students get along better with their classmates. Twenty-two of the students who answered always say they think it helps, which suggests that it has big social benefits for many. Ten of the students often have better relationships, which shows that the program is having frequent good effects. Five of the students sometimes notice that their relationships are better, which is an advantage. Three students rarely think that working in a group helps, and ten students never think that it's good for relationships. This shows that a big portion of students don't see any social benefits.

4.2.5. The fifth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about feel group work impacts confidence in using English.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	19	9	2	13	7

As shown in table 4.2.5. The questionnaire results show that people had different opinions about how group work affected their confidence in using English. Nineteen students always feel more confident, which shows

that it has big good effects for many. Nine of the students often feel more confident, which suggests that they get benefits more often but not as consistently. Only two of the students sometimes notice an increase, which shows that it only works sometimes. Thirteen students rarely or never feel more confident, and seven students never do. This shows that a large number of students do not find group work helpful in this way.

4.2.6. The sixth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about the role group work understand complex grammar structures in English.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	11	15	12	4	8

As shown in table 4.2.6. The questionnaire results show that people have different thoughts on how well group work helps people understand difficult English grammar structures. Eleven kids always find it helpful, which means that a big chunk of the class benefits. Fifteen students say it helps them understand things most of the time, which suggests that it has frequent good effects. Twelve kids sometimes see improvements, showing benefits from time to time. Four students rarely find group work helpful, and eight students never see an effect. This shows that some students do not think group work helps them learn language.

4.2.7. The seventh items in the questionnaire ask the participants about that group work activities help learn peers in EFL classes.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	17	11	5	4	13

As shown in table 4.2.7. The questionnaire results show that people have different ideas about how well group work helps people learn from each other. Seventeen of the students always think that working with others is a good way to learn from each other, which shows that a lot of people like working together. Eleven students often gain, which suggests that the effects are common for the better. Five of the kids sometimes see improvements, showing that they sometimes get better. Four students rarely think that peer learning through group work is helpful, and thirteen students never think it is helpful. This shows that a big group of students do not think it is helpful.

4.2.8. The eighth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about that group work in EFI classes improve writing skills in English.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	9	12	6	8	15

As shown in table 4.2.8. Different people had different thoughts on how group work affects writing skills in EFL classes, as shown by the poll results. Nine students always say that working in groups helps them get better at writing, which is a strong showing of support from a small group. Twelve kids often feel better, which suggests that the effects are often good. Six students sometimes notice changes, which shows that it works

sometimes. Eight students rarely notice an effect, and fifteen students never think that group work improves their writing skills. This shows that a large number of students do not find group work helpful in this area.

5.2.9. The ninth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about the fairness of assessment in group work activities.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	14	9	12	6	9

As shown in table 4.2.9. The study results show that people have different ideas about how fair it is to grade group work. Fourteen of the students always think tests are fair, which shows that a large majority of them agree. Nine students say that tests are usually fair, which suggests that they agree a lot of the time but not all the time. Twelve students sometimes agree that the tests are fair, showing that they sometimes think they are fair. Six students rarely or never think tests are fair, and nine students never or rarely think they are fair. This shows that a significant number of students are unhappy with the fairness.

4.2.10. The tenth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about that group work activities help you practice English outside of the classroom.

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Pre-intermediate students, fourth stage	20	11	7	9	3

As shown in table 4.2.10. The questionnaire results show that people have different ideas about how useful group work is for practicing English outside of school. Twenty of the students always think it's good to work with others, which shows that a lot of people want to work together in situations other than school. Eleven students often gain, which suggests that the effects are common for the better. Seven of the students sometimes notice changes, showing that they sometimes get better. Nine students rarely think that group work helps them with practice outside of school, and three students never think it helps. This shows that there is a minority who doesn't think it works for this reason.

## Chapter Five

### 5.1. Discussion

The first research question were extent the group work affect, the students. The survey results show that students take part in group work tasks at different rates. students think that working in groups always makes their English speaking skills better. Group work helps people understand difficult English grammar structures. Group work affects writing skills in EFL classes. Collaborative learning often involves explaining and discussing concepts with peers. This reinforces understanding and helps clarify complex grammar structures that might be harder to grasp individually. Hearing others apply grammar in context can solidify abstract rules. Divide students into groups and assign roles to ensure participation

for all students. Equal participation and ensure that tasks are well designed to include speaking, grammar and writing.

The second research question were the students overview toward Group work. Suggests that group work is popular in EFL classes. This shows that there is a minority of students who don't do group tasks. think that working with others helps them understand and use new English words. This shows that a big portion of students don't see any social benefits. which shows that the program is having frequent good effects. The students often feel more confident, which suggests that they get benefits more often but not as consistently. This shows that a large number of students do not find group work helpful in this way. This shows that some students do not think group work helps them learn language. Many people want to work together in situations other than school.

## 5.2. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the impact of the group work technique on the academic performance of Iraqi EFL students. Accordingly, this research project aims to find out whether group work may involve and increase the level of interaction between learners and how can the use of group work activities influence the development of inside and outside classroom situations. Learning another language can be quite challenging and often frustrating for many students. Regardless of their motivation levels, effective teachers must have a variety of instructional tools to assist

students in the classroom without making the experience burdensome. Group work is one such tool. Students tend to retain information better and retrieve it more easily when they engage in enjoyable activities. The researcher relied on the questionnaire to detect and investigate the anxiety problems of Iraqi EFL learners during classroom activities.

The research reveals that students participate in group work tasks at different rates, with some believing it improves their English speaking and writing skills. However, a significant portion of students do not see any social benefits, and while group work is popular in EFL classes, it may not be as effective in other .

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