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Research Paper

Impact of Team Teaching on the Academic Performance, Motivation, and Collaboration of Iranian EFL Learners: Oral Skills and Counseling Procedures in Focus

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Abstract

This paper aimed to critically look at team teaching tactics and the role it plays in achieving teaching and learning effectiveness. Specifically, using psychological counseling procedures, this study examined the benefits this learner-centered attitude brings to the student teachers and students, and also discussed different possible issues that may arise. To this purpose, a mix-methods design which comprised pretest, posttest, questionnaires, and interview was utilized to collect the necessary data. 52 Iranian high school EFL students were selected through purposive sampling and divided into a Control Group (CG) and an Experimental Group (EG). Also, two English language teachers, and a teacher as counselor were purposively selected to participate in team teaching procedure. The control group was taught through traditional methods of language teaching and the experimental group was taught through team teaching procedures. The posttest results showed that there were significant differences in favour of the experimental group between the two groups in terms of their oral proficiency. Also, the results obtained from the questionnaires revealed that there were significant differences in the participants' outlook towards using team teaching methods in the language class. It was further found that there was a very strong evidence of partnership between team teaching plus counseling practice and inherent academic motivation as well as between team teaching and counseling procedure. The findings of the study are valuable for English language instructors, materials developers, program planners, and education administrators.

Keywords: Reinforcement, team teaching, psychological counseling, oral proficiency

کارایی آموزش تیمی بر عملکرد تحصیلی، انگیزه و مشارکت زبان آموزان ایرانی با تمرکز بر مهارت‌های شفاهی و رویه‌های مشاوره‌ای

این پژوهش با هدف بررسی انتقادی از کارآمدی تکنیک آموزش تیمی و نقشی موثری که در دستیابی به نتایج مثبت یاددهی و یادگیری دارد انجام شد. خاصه آنکه پروژه حاضر با استفاده از الگوهای روانشناختی مشاوره‌ای، دستاوردها و مزایایی را که این روش دانش آموز-محور برای معلمان و فراگیران به ارمغان می‌آورد مورد بررسی قرار داد و همچنین در مورد مسائل مختلفی که ممکن است مطرح شود، بحث کرد. از روش ترکیبی تحقیق استفاده شده که شامل آزمون‌ها، پرسشنامه و مصاحبه برای جمع‌آوری اطلاعات لازم بود. از این رو، 52 دانش آموز ایرانی به روش نمونه برداری هدفمند، با دو معلم زبان انگلیسی به همراه یک معلم به عنوان مشاور در روش تدریس تیمی فقط برای گروه آزمایشی، و همچنین گروه کنترل بر اساس روش سنتی برای انجام تحقیق آموزش داده شدند. نتایج نشان داد که از نظر آماری اختلاف معناداری در جهت گروه آزمایشی بین دو گروه در پس آزمون پدیدار گردید و نیز گزارش شد که از نظر آماری اختلاف معنی داری در نقطه نظرات آنان در آیت‌های پرسشنامه و چشم انداز مطلوبی نسبت به استفاده از روش آموزش تیمی در کلاس وجود داشت. در همین حال، شواهد بسیار محکمی از رابطه بین تدریس تیمی و الگوی مشاوره‌ای و انگیزه ذاتی دانش آموزان در این روش آموزشی وجود داشت. یافته‌های این مطالعه برای مدرسان زبان انگلیسی، طراحان منابع آموزشی، مدیران و دست‌اندرکاران برنامه‌های آموزشی ارزشمند است.

واژگان کلیدی: تقویت، آموزش تیمی، مشاوره روانشناسی، مهارت شفاهی

Introduction

According to Liebel et al., (2017), Team Teaching is a communal term to define numerous variations of a technique to teach a course with more than one trainer. The method shifts the role of teaching from a specific instructor to a team with the main aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning (Haghighi and Abdollahi, 2014). Team teaching is one step to constantly adjust the education system to the changing needs of the students and the abilities of the teachers (Zubkova and Burak, 2016). It has multiple benefits for teaching participants, one of which, as mentioned by Bailey et al. (2001), is that “the teaching partners can demonstrate interactive activities, such as role-plays, with one another” (p. 182). Furthermore, team teaching inherently introduces a portion of peer observation into the process, enabling teachers to gain new ideas and experiences by seeing each other execute a mutually planned lesson (Bailey et al., 2001). It actually enhances teaching skills by exchange of knowledge and conversational dialogues, leading to professional and personal development (Baeten and Simons, 2014).

For Iranian EFL learners, practicing and learning English as a Foreign Language has always been a complicated and challenging task (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Especially as teachers experience circumstances where English represents a very particular purpose, teaching and learning become exhaustive. Listening and speaking, in particular, are regarded among the most demanding skills for Iranian EFL pupils, and thus, up-to-date teaching procedures that help EFL learners to master these two skills are needed (Akbari, 2015).

Aliakbari and Bazayr (2012) believe that lack of adequate empirical team-teaching projects in Iran offers a fruitful opportunity to examine the feasibility of team teaching to address the pending needs of learners. The students of the present age, they say, need mobility and dynamism in the classroom in order to be motivated and able to learn the education content properly with the necessary motivation and energy. If they do not have the required motivation to learn, they can never achieve the desired instructional result in the success process (Namaziandost et al., 2019). In fact, the education system needs vitality, creativity, flexibility, and being up-to-date. It is necessary, therefore, to move beyond traditional methods towards constructive and new patterns in education.

Based on the above-mentioned points, the current study aimed to propose new policies and to design materials which would satisfy learners' emerging needs. Therefore, the following 4 research questions were addressed.

RQ1) What is the impact of team-teaching procedure on EFL learners' oral proficiency?

RQ2) What is the impact of team teaching plus counseling procedures on EFL learners' intrinsic motivation?

RQ3) What is the impact of team teaching plus counseling procedures on EFL learners' collaboration in the language classroom?

RQ4) What is EFL learners' attitude towards the use of team-teaching procedure in their language classroom?

Literature Review

Team teaching technique in Iranian setting has been reflected in as Aliakbari and Nejad (2013) who conducted a study on the effectiveness of team teaching in the learning process and promoting learners' grammatical proficiency, in which two classes were allocated to a total of 58 first-grade pupils. The obtained results confirmed that variation in instruction is not related to a significant difference in the learners' performance. In another research, Khoshnodifar et al. (2020) explored the influence of team teaching and traditional teaching method on the academic performance of students in comparative courses. An obvious difference between the two

instructional approaches in the area of academic success and the enhancement of students' conduct was shown in the final findings. Also, Mohammad Hassani Soudmand and Ahour (2020) investigated the impact of one teach-one assist model of co-teaching on the reading comprehension Iranian EFL learners. The findings showed a significantly better performance for the experimental group were taught through team teaching.

Haghighi and Abdollahi (2014) too examined the efficacy of team-teaching procedure in the development of the students' reading comprehension in Iran. Their findings supported the use of team-teaching strategies in education settings.

Generally, the results from content studies have revealed that team teaching increases the academic success of students. Nevertheless, the degree of achievement has not been specifically demonstrated. Also, there has been a signal of hesitation in using team teaching in some cases. For example, when a student is trained through team teaching, can he or she gain a high level of competence? If yes, to what extent?

Based on the above-mentioned points, the present research aimed to investigate the impact of team teaching on the academic performance, motivation, and collaboration of Iranian high school students. The rationale was that there were few studies in Iran concerning the effectiveness of team-teaching strategies in connection with EFL learners' success and teachers' performance in developing oral skills.

Method

Design of the Study

For the purposes of this quantitative and qualitative study, a quasi-experimental design with treatment was used, administering PET as both pretest and posttest. Regarding the quantitative phase, the design required team teaching and counselling procedures as independent variables, and oral proficiency, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to communicate (collaboration) as dependent variables. The quantitative phase of the study comprised a questionnaire on the last two dependent variables mentioned above, and an interview with open-ended questions about the participants views on team teaching.

Participants

Fifty-two male EFL learners studying English language at high school level in Iranshahr city of Iran, participated in this investigation. They were selected through non-probability or non-random purposive sampling, and at the beginning of the first semester, were randomly divided into two Control (CG) and Experimental (EG) groups.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this research: 1) pre-test post-test, 2) questionnaire, and 3) interview. Pre-test, post-test and questionnaire were used in the quantitative phase of the study, while the interview was completed by the learners in the qualitative part of the study. As pretest as well as posttest, Cambridge PET Speaking Test was administered at the beginning and end of the first semester to determine whether there was any significant difference in the participants' oral proficiency performance in the two groups. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher on the two dependent variables, that is, "the intrinsic motivation and willingness to communicate (collaboration)", based on a 7-point Likert scale. It was validated by some ELT experts. Also, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to estimate its reliability, and a high reliability ($\alpha=.89$) was reported. The interview comprised open-ended questions about the participants' viewpoints on team teaching. It was used by the researcher to collect and transcribe the oral views of the participants for future references. Preparing transcripts help researchers as the latest technique of qualitative research. Generally, interview data processing in this study

involved a method of several moves; 1) performing classification and arrange it, 2) writing down the transcripts, write reports, records, or other items, 3) checking the details and analyze it, 4) creating original codes, 5) checking the codes and updating or merging them into themes, and 6) representing themes in a coherent form. After all, just before data is indeed obtained or processed, the definition of the categories originates from the data instead of being placed on the data.

The data obtained through administering the above-mentioned instruments were ultimately statistically analysed to find answers to the posed research questions.

Procedures

As a point of departure, the pre-test was administered to the two groups to determine their oral proficiency level before the treatment. Then, treatment processes; that is, presentation to and instruction of the participants (EG) through team teaching strategies and encouragement of them to cooperate in class discussions, started. Two English language teachers and an educational psychology counselor were involved in these processes. The model proposed by Richards and Farrell (2005) was implemented for this purpose. In fact, through team teaching (TT) and counselling (CP) exercises, the participants were required to join the class, actively collaborate, and do their assignments. The CG was, however, taught through the traditional approach. The whole study lasted three months in both classes, for a total of 30 sessions.

As the second step, the above-mentioned standard questionnaire adopted from Migdadi, and Baniabdelrahman (2016), was administered to the experimental group to investigate the inherent motivation and engagement of L2 learners in the development of communicative competence.

Finally, the post-test was administered to both groups in order to measure the effect of the treatment and to compare the extent of the participants' achievement. Concerning the qualitative phase of the study, the interview was done at the end; that is, selected participants from both groups were interviewed in a conversational setting, which lasted for a period of 120 minutes.

As an ending procedure, the scores derived from pre-test, post-test, and the questionnaire and the participants' responses to the interview questions were respectively analyzed and discussed to find answers to the research question of the study.

Results

In order to examine the learners' performance in the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) on the pre-test, an independent-samples *t*-test was run. The obtained results revealed that there was no violation of the normality assumption (normal distribution) of the scores based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the control group $\text{sig}=.069$ and for the experimental group $\text{sig}=.200$, which were well above 0.05 (Table 1).

Table 1

Between-Group Descriptive Statistics

	Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
pre- Test	EG	26	53.00	8.035	1.576
	CG	26	54.19	8.266	1.621

Results for the First Research Question

To answer the first research question, an independent-samples *t*-test was run to examine the performance of the learners in both groups on the post-test. The results as shown in Table 2 below revealed that the learners in the experimental group (EG) outperformed those in the control

group (CG) on the post-test, meaning that team teaching and counselling procedures had an outstanding impact on EFL learners' oral proficiency in a course of language learning.

Table 2

Group Descriptive Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	EG	26	70.77	9.547	1.872
	CG	26	54.27	7.561	1.483

Results for the Second Research Question

To address the second question concerning the effect of team-teaching procedure on English learners' intrinsic motivation, a dependent samples *t*-test was used. Table 3 below shows that there were statistically significant differences at ($p \leq 0.05$) between the learners' attitudes before and after the treatment. This means that the experimented learners' perspectives were value-added significantly due to the use of team teaching.

Table 3

Paired Samples Statistics

Experiment	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 post-stage	5.59	26	.234	.046
pre-stage	3.57	26	.557	.109

Results for the Third Research Question

In response to the third research question regarding the effect of team-teaching procedures on EFL students' willingness to communicate (collaboration) in the English language class, and to ensure that there was a relationship between the two independent constructs, team teaching plus counselling procedures and willingness to communicate, a Chi-square test was run. Table 4 below displays the results.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.667	16	.000110
Likelihood Ratio	62.182	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	38.911	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	52		

As seen in Table 4, there was a significant relationship between team teaching plus counselling procedure and willingness to communicate (collaboration). It can be thus noticed that team teaching plus counselling procedures strongly affect the learners by increasing their willingness to communicate with others in the classroom.

Results for the Fourth Research Question

As for the fourth research question concerning EFL learners' attitude towards the use of team-teaching procedures and the attendance of a psychological counsellor in class, the structured interview with its following five questions was administered:

1. Team-teaching procedure and its usefulness for students in their listening and speaking skills development.
2. Willingness to communicate as a result of team-teaching strategy in the classroom.
3. Constructing motivational status through using team-teaching procedure in class.
4. The interest of students to participate in such a team-teaching course in future and the reasons behind it.
5. The role of the counsellor in meeting the purposes of oral proficiency course.

Most of the participants (75%) agreed that the current teamwork procedures were useful to achieve appropriate results in oral skills and development. A considerable number of the participants replying to the second question (66.6%) agreed that language teachers' instruction helped to increase the collaboration between them and the teachers. In contrast, only a few (25%) had no idea, and some (8.4%) disagreed. As for question three, majority of the participants (83.4%) believed in the positive effects using team-teaching procedures on constructing motivational status. In fact, they regarded it as an auspicious path to success. In response to the fourth question, a good majority of the learners (92%) approved that team teaching reduced their oral production difficulties, and highly agreed with participating in team-teaching classes in future opportunities. Finally, replying to the last question, majority of the participants (66.7%) confidently expressed their pleasant feelings to see an individual in the team to listen to their emotions and problems. They regarded it as a merit against having a single teacher in the class.

Discussion

In reference to the research questions of the study, the above-mentioned results showed that the participants preferred having team teachers rather than one single teacher in their classes. They believed that team teaching technique would help them to have more opportunities to develop their oral skills through proper class activities. This is in line with Cullen et al. (2009) who showed that splitting up the duties between two teachers presented enough time for teachers to listen to learners, reply and give suitable feedback. The results also indicated that motivation can play an important role in enhancing the participants' oral skills development. This finding is consistent with a research by Ahmadi et al. (2013), which focused on the relationship between understanding and motivation to learn. Their results manifested that encouragement might have a constructive effect on the achievement in comprehension skills (centred on reading comprehension) by learners. The results further revealed that the participants had optimistic views about team teaching, meaning that it had a substantial impact on improving their attitudes towards using team teaching which would subsequently enhance their inherent inspiration. In fact, they believed team teaching and counselling procedures had outstanding impact on their intrinsic motivation in the course of language learning.

Another finding of the study was that the increase of the participants' collaboration among themselves was the cause of their preference for team work instruction in their classes, which would finally lead oral skills development. In fact, in class conversations, team teaching followed a constructive model in which an instructional counsellor, expert in the field of psychology, worked with two other teachers. Liebel et al. (2017) believe that a significant model for learners is the team-teaching environment in which a number of teachers are involved. In such an environment, when the teachers initiate cooperative work and welcome humour, learners are highly pleased, affected and encouraged to collaborate. This is why, the results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the learners' attitudes before and after research treatment in the current study. So, the idea that team teaching plus counselling may have positive effects on L2 learners' willingness to communicate was proved. In fact, the findings indicated

that in the course of language learning, team teaching and psychoanalysis procedures had outstanding effects on the participants' collaboration.

As for the fourth research question of the study concerning the attitude of the participants towards team instruction technique and the attendance of a psychological counsellor at school, the results of the structured interview showed that this idea could be effective on their oral skills development, intrinsic motivation, and ability to communicate. For some of the participants, however, the challenge was that they were unable to recognize different parts of speech and thus, the language teachers had to introduce some of the linguistic affixes, but since time constraints did not grant more time to be spent on this issue, they suggested some textbooks that could support them. In fact, according to Dahlgren (2005), building relationships between teachers and students is so significant that it is arguably the most important factor contributing to student success, both behaviourally and academically. He adds that the students who experience respect and unconditional acceptance from their teachers are more likely to be compliant, respectful, and open to learning (p. 103). In the present study, a large number of participants' response to the second question (66.6 percent) agreed that language teachers' instruction was helpful in raising the interaction between the learners and the teachers. At the same time, only a few participants (25 percent) had no idea, whereas some others (8.4 percent) disagreed with the above-mentioned development of willingness to communicate in such classes. Generally speaking, the participants' response to the fourth question of the interview concerning their interest or lack of interest in attending team teaching courses in future, was strongly in the positive and thus, a strong majority of them (92 percent) agreed that team teaching reduced their oral production problems and agreed that they would definitely do so in future opportunities.

Conclusion

The results of the current study revealed that the majority of the students were satisfied with team-work teaching and group teaching style. However, there was a statistically significant difference in their viewpoints about the use of team-teaching procedure and the attendance of a psychological counsellor in the class. Meanwhile, the interview results reported clear information about what students felt about the team-teaching experience. The viewpoints of the students were mostly positive and almost all the participants were willing to take part in similar courses the future. Actually, the findings showed that the participants found the technique of team teaching to be helpful, interesting, welcoming, and enjoyable.

To sum up, the current research investigated the importance of planning language learning courses for EFL learners based on their specific and pending needs as well as the need for collaboration among language learners, teachers, and content consultants at all stages of preparation, teaching and learning. It is to be noted here that the research was conducted with the least education facilities, in the face of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic disease. This was actually one of the biggest limitations of the research, which restricted the participation of many more language learners than the present participants. Furthermore, in this research, merely male students contributed as participants and thus, the findings might not be generalizable to all Iranian EFL learners. It is, therefore, proposed that both genders be taken into consideration in future studies. Also, team teaching should be tested at all stages of language learning; that is, elementary, pre- and upper-intermediate, and advance levels. Further, the research was solely restricted to Iranian EFL learners; it can be done in other contexts with EFL and ESL learners. The implication of the current stud for teachers, policy-makers, education officials and administers is that they have to implement put into effect team-teaching procedures worked out in the current study in order to enrich educational plans and class activities, specifically in connection with the development of EFL learners' oral skills.

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