Fostering Learner Autonomy through Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

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Abstract
Both cooperative and collaborative learning are learner-centered teaching approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) to support active learning, shared learning, inductive learning, and autonomous learning. However, definitional and conceptual clarity of these two concepts did not receive as much attention as they deserve. As a result, these two terms are often confused, conflated or used interchangeably. This review paper critiqued the two terms by revealing their components, identifying their commonalities as well as variances, and explicating their theoretical bases and exploring their role in fostering learner autonomy. Searching and reviewing published literature were used to achieve the objectives of the study. The study perceived that cooperative learning is the educational technique that uses small groups of students guided by the teacher to benefit their individual and each other's learning whereas collaborative learning is a philosophy of interaction of a learning group where people take responsibility for their own learning while recognizing their peers' abilities and contributions. Both the approaches foster autonomous learning behavior where cooperative learning is considered the foundation stage for collaborative learning. This article will benefit current and future ELT practitioners and researchers of this emerging field of pedagogy by providing a clearer analyses of the terms and role in fostering learner autonomy.
Keywords: Collaborative Learning, Cooperative Learning, Learner Autonomy, Learner-Centered Teaching

Introduction

Over the last few decades, the practice and research in English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone a paradigm shift from teacher centered approach to learner centered approach (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010 cited in Jacobs & Shan, 2016). Learner centered teaching accelerates active learning, shared learning and inductive learning (Schreurs and Dumbraveanu). Schreurs and Dumbraveanu (2014) described that some of the essential features of learner centered approach are, actively solving learning problems, formulating and answering questions, brainstorming and discussing during the teaching/learning sessions, working in teams for positive interdependence, and responsible learning through inquiry or problem-based learning. The beginning of learner centered pedagogy can be traced back in 1970s and 1980s in changing the role of teachers from knowledge providers to becomes facilitators (Nunan 1988, cited in Darsih, 2018). Some of the essential features of learner centered teaching have been identified as (1) teaching approaches focusing on the learners' needs, their learning styles and learning objectives; (2) teaching approaches that empower the learners with more control; (3) curricula incorporate inputs from the learners in setting learning objectives through discussion; (4) teaching techniques that encourage creativity and innovation of the learners, and (5) teaching techniques that encourage the learners' growth of confidence (Brown 2001, in Darsih, 2018). Since learner centered teaching starts with the teachers, they play an essential part in developing an atmosphere that facilitates learning of their students, accommodates different learning styles of them, and motivates them to take their learning responsibility.

Learner autonomy has been identified as an important facet of learner centered approach (Jacobs and Shan). Holec (1981, cited in Haque, 2018) defines learner autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own learning suggesting that an autonomous language learner takes responsibility for their learning, actively selects learning content and methods, and evaluates their own learning progress. Likewise, Benson (2011, in Anderson, 2015) outlines that autonomy is the capacity to "take control of one's own learning". Sidupa (2016) summarizes that, by taking responsibility for learning, the learners are expected to: 1) determine their learning objectives; (2) select or define their learning materials; (3) choose the methods and techniques to be used in the class; (4) monitor acquisition procedure; and (5) evaluate the whole educational activity. He notes that learners accomplishing the above learning cycle can be regarded as autonomous learners. His study also reviewed that, fostering learner autonomy benefits the learners by assisting them in becoming more effective and independent learners, empowering them to exercise independent learning activities outside the classroom by utilizing technological resources and other materials, and by enhancing their intrinsic motivation. However, some people wrongly assume that learner autonomy means that students often learn individually, without teachers or peers being involved. In fact, teachers play the key role in shaping learning environment (Hornstra et al.), motivating them (Riswanto and Aryani; Alberth) and encouraging autonomous learning behavior among their students using learner centered as well as interactive teaching techniques (Kaur; Maghami et al.).

Cooperative and collaborative learning are two interactive learning techniques that attribute to learning situations where peers work together to achieve the shared learning purpose of benefiting from the engagement of all participants. Accordingly, Dillenbourg (1999, cited in Ezekoka & Gertrude, 2015) defined cooperative and collaborative learning as situations where two or more individuals learn or try to learn something together. These techniques lead the learners towards social interactions with the objective of deeper knowledge, making the participants responsible for their peer's learning as

well as their own, and thus success of one learner positively influence that of the other (Ezekoka and Gertrude). The essential tendency of cooperative and collaborative learning is learner-centered which ascribe them to foster autonomous learning. However, in ELT the concepts of cooperative and collaborative learning exist with some differences as well as overlaps. Hence, there is no surprise that they are treated synonymously on some occasions.

There is a common acceptance among the educational researchers that cooperative and collaborative learning benefit learning and foster learner autonomy (Feri & Erlinda, 2014; Jacobs & Shan, 2016; Loh & Ang, 2020; Sawyer & Obeid, 2017; Yusuf et al., 2019). However, it is observed that a lack of definitional and conceptual clarity about these two learning techniques exists (Andreu-Andrés). In addition, study like Jacobs (2015) even recommended against differentiation between these two terms and suggested to take them synonymously. Search into previous literature shows that review of the two terms for clarification of the concepts and their theoretical bases have not received as much attention as they deserve. Thus, it is essential to elucidate these two important techniques for a clearer view to help the current and future ELT researchers in these emerging field of pedagogy and learner autonomy. Therefore, this paper aims at explaining and comparing between cooperative and collaborative learning by sharing their commonalities as well as variances, shedding light on their theoretical bases, and their role in fostering learner autonomy.

Methodology

To achieve the above stated objectives, this paper reviewed published literature on learner autonomy, cooperative learning and collaborative learning from 2015 to 2021 from three online databases, namely Google Scholar, Scopus and Web of Science to explore the concepts. In academic research, reviewing existing literature encourages deep learning and enhance analytical skill (Chan), and literature review synthesizes multiple studies in the field on the point under investigation (Cowell). The articles studied to achieve the research objectives were chosen based on their relevance to the topic to provide an overview of the current knowledge on the subject matter, and present an improved understanding to elucidate the terms.

Discussion
Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is defined as instructional use of small groups of students to benefit their individual and each other's learning. The teacher structures learning goals and creates desired process of interaction among students and between students and teacher. In this teaching technique, teachers structure the group or pair activities, supplies information for students in the groups or pairs to read and discuss, and then carefully observes, listens, and intervenes for effective interactions when necessary. The shared learning goals of the groups or pairs create an interdependence among the members where change in the state of one member influences the state of other members. Thus, it is a form of interaction between or among the persons involved to acquire knowledge and skills together through mutual exchange by each of them taking on a sub-task to complete the activity. This makes the participant individually accountable for their part of work as well as combinedly responsible for the complete work. The students in a cooperative learning context learn to work as a team, develop their interpersonal skills, share their strengths and develop their weaker skills. When learners in cooperative groups are driven by clear goals, they participate in various activities that develop their understanding of the topic.

Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) believes that learning is a naturally social act, and it occurs through collaborative interaction with more knowledgeable peers, attempting to solve problems, and seeking to understand the world (Lasmawan and Budiarta). He highlighted that interaction and collective attempts to learning is the first step towards learner autonomy and noted that what children can do collectively today, they can do independently tomorrow (Lasmawan and Budiarta; Ismail and Al Allaq). Besides, learners are guided towards reasoning, solving problems, reaching conclusions, and thus constructing knowledge by working cooperatively. It can effectively accommodate their individual differences and preferences to better address their needs with the theory of multiple intelligences (Ismail and Al Allaq; Yaduvanshi and Singh; Siddique and Singh). In cooperative learning, the teacher however

must clearly define the group task, form the groups small enough so that everybody has to contribute to the task, and create an environment where learners feel safe as well as challenged. Figure 1 shows the essential elements of cooperative learning.

Figure 1: Essential elements of cooperative learning (Yaduvanshi and Singh, 2015)

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning, on the other hand, involves promoting exchange and participation of each member of a group to create a shared cognition. Laister and Kober (2002) define that collaborative learning is any kind of group learning attained through meaningful interactions between or among the member of the learning group. Goodsell et al (1992, in Feri & Erlinda, 2014) noted that students in collaborative learning work in groups of two or more, and they mutually search for understanding, solutions or meanings, or creating a product. The same study observed that most of the wide range of collaborative learning activities center on the student's exploration or application of the course material. In education, the word collaboration is used to imply a philosophy of interaction where people take responsibility for their own actions, including learning, in which they respect their peers' abilities and contributions (Laal and Ghodsi). The basic concept of collaborative learning is focused on consensus building by group members' collaboration, a principle that is implemented not just in the classroom, but also in all other community or group interaction as a way of living with other people and dealing with them (Panitz, 1996, cited in Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

Ibrahimi and Essaaidi (2012) define collaborative learning as an approach that enables learners to build their learning to achieve a shared goal by engaging with group members. Exchanges among the members

of the group and the realization of a collective goal allow each participant to share his or her observations, to discuss the significance of his or her work and to validate newly formed understanding. Their demonstration of the components of collaborative learning is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Components of collaborative learning (Ibrahimi and Essaaidi, 2012)

Similar to the theoretical basis of cooperative learning, Lev Vygotsky's social learning theory and his concept of ZPD also serves as the foundation of collaborative learning. However, while explaining cognitive development, Piaget (1952, cited in McLeod, 2020) claimed that infants and children use their schemata to process the world around them using assimilation and accommodation. Although both Vygotsky's social learning theory and Piaget's theory of cognitive development accept that there are stages in development of human cognition, these two concepts are essentially different in some points. Vygotsky's belief that cognitive development can be accelerated by ZPD is in contradiction of Piaget's view of children's having an innate tendency to active learning through self-discovery. It may be added that both these developmental theories center around cognitive development in children, while Robert Kegan developed his theory positing that development is a lifelong process and it is possible for people to continually develop and gain traits associated with wisdom and maturity.

A Comparison between the Two Concepts

The definitions of cooperative learning and collaborative learning presented above clarify that both are educational settings in which peers work together on a learning activity that benefits all participants. Students learn to understand, appreciate, and accept the cultural differences among their classmates through cooperative or collaborative learning. Both the teaching methods are beneficial to students' progress and growth, particularly in terms of improving their social skills and instilling confidence in them due to the fact that the participating students feel that their voices are valued. These two terms are so closely related to each other that make some researchers use the terms interchangeably (Jacobs).

However, it has been made clear that cooperative learning refers to working together in small groups to accomplish a shared purpose, usually under the teacher's direct supervision who may set the specific tasks and objectives for each session. But collaborative learning refers to learning where, as opposed to cooperative learning, student-to-student interaction plays the primary role in the learning process. The learners coordinate their efforts among themselves and source materials to assist themselves complete a task with no control of tasks by the teacher. Instead of playing a supervisory role, the teacher in the collaborative learning context becomes a facilitator. Cooperative learning is actually a type of collaborative learning that is more guided by the teacher.

To explain the differences between collaborative and cooperative learning, Panitz (1997) stated that collaborative learning is more a personal philosophy than a classroom approach, and it is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members. In contrast, he noted that cooperative learning is a set of process that allow individuals to work together in order to attain a desired objective or develop an end product that is typically content specific. In his opinion, cooperative learning is a teacher directed approach while collaborative learning is more learner centered. Students make personal progress when working together to achieve a shared objective in collaborative learning. On the other hand, cooperative learning entails interdependence with explicitly defined roles and responsibilities of the participating students. Due to their essential nature, cooperative learning is more useful in foundational classes, while collaborative learning is more applicable in upper classes, where students work together to solve problems. Role playing, pair work or group work in language classes are common examples of cooperative learning, while

collaborative learning may take the form of a group of students reviewing a lecture or students from same or different institutions working together on a joint project.

Each group member in cooperative learning technique applies their expertise and skills to assist the other members of the group in comprehending the new learning content. This implies that each participating individual cooperative learning is responsible not only for their own learning but also for the learning of their peers. The functions and structure of cooperative learning are predefined by the teacher. This is frequently compared to the cast and crew of a theatre production where the performance of the show depends on all of the interconnected roles helping one another, but the project is overseen by a director. On the other hand, collaborative learning refers to students working as a group on a project where each student is in charge of their own part of work without supervision. The students here evaluate their own individual and group performances, and the success of the group is largely determined by the success of its members individually.

The Role of Cooperative and Collaborative Learning in Fostering Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy, as already discussed, is the ability to take charge of one's own learning. An autonomous language learner takes responsibility for their learning, by selecting learning content and methods, and evaluating their own learning progress. Sidupa (2016) assessed that, learner autonomy benefits students by assisting them in becoming more successful and independent learners, encouraging them to engage in independent learning experiences outside of the classroom, and increasing their intrinsic motivation. Both cooperative learning and collaborative learning are inextricably linked and can be described as important stages in the learning process that lead to learner autonomy. Teachers can select cooperative and cooperative teaching strategies to shape the learning environment (Hornstra et al.), motivate their students (Riswanto and Aryani; Alberth) and encourage autonomous learning behavior among their students (Kaur; Maghami et al.).

Learning is an action-oriented experience that necessitates a learner's conscious interactions with teachers, learning materials, and peers. The best instructional practices aim to gradually transfer cognitive accountability from the teacher to the student. Fisher and Frey (2013) proposed an instructional framework suggesting that when students encounter a new content, they require to experience four phases for deep learning : a) Focused instruction by the teacher to the whole class ("I do it" phase); b) Guided instruction by differentiating content, process and product through instructions and interactions with small groups who share common instructional need ("We do it" phase). Cooperative learning is encouraged at this phase; c) Collaborative learning that promotes the learners more engagement with the content and opportunity for inquiry ("You do it together" phase; and d) Independent learning when the students can independently apply their learning in unique situations ("You do it alone" phase). Figure 3 shows these four phases of learning.
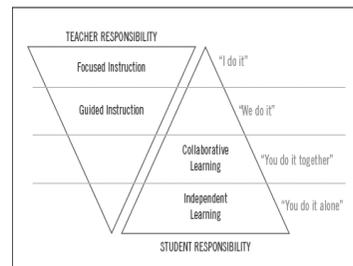

Figure 3: A Structure for Instruction That Works (Fisher and Frey, 2013)

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the concepts of cooperative and collaborative learning, compared the two, and discussed their similarities and differences, as well as their theoretical foundations and role in fostering learner autonomy. It clarified that cooperative learning is the teaching technique that uses small groups of students guided by the teacher to benefit their individual and each other's learning. The review article also elucidated that collaborative learning refers to participation of each member of a learning group to create a shared cognition through meaningful interactions between or among the members that implies a philosophy of interaction

where people take responsibility for their own actions, including learning, in which they respect their peers' abilities and contributions. The analysis in the study also explained the important role that cooperative learning and collaborative learning play in fostering learner autonomy or independent learning. Current and future ELT researchers in the emerging field of learner-centered pedagogy will benefit from the clearer view of these two essential teaching strategies their role in promoting learner autonomy explained in this article.

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