

E-COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PRACTICES AND CONCERNS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: A STUDY AMONG PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative learning is one of the major components of the constructivist classroom. The digital revolution today has created wide opportunities beneficial to English language learners in the form of E-collaborative tools. . Even though integrating technology in English Language Teaching (ELT) has become mostly popular in our classrooms, adoption of E - collaborative learning approaches often remain restricted. This article sheds lights on the practice of E-collaboration in English language classrooms. The research mainly focuses on teachers' awareness about E -collaborative learning practices available in English language classrooms, the practice level of E-collaboration in the English language classrooms at present and finding out if they face challenges while adopting E- collaborative learning practices in English language classrooms. The methodology adopted for this study was survey method. The sample of the study consists of thirty prospective teachers of English language in Kasargod district of Kerala. The findings of the study reveal that the Teachers need more exposure and guidance to integrate E- Collaborative Learning tools in English Language classrooms. It points out that Students centered environment is congenial for practicing E -collaborative learning and that a learner-focused, techno friendly curriculum is required for the success of E- collaborative learning.

Keywords: E- Collaborative learning, prospective teachers, English language teaching, techno- friendly curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning is one of the major components of constructivist classroom. Collaborative learning in English second language classrooms helps the students to develop their language skills, foster creativity and imagination and also motivates Independent thinking, and critical thinking. Collaborative learning originated from Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. Collaborative learning (CL) can be defined as a set of teaching and learning strategies promoting student collaboration in small groups (two to five students) in order to optimize their own and each other's learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The emergence of media and technology has opened new vistas of pedagogical applications of collaborative learning in the classroom scenario .Electronic collaboration can be called one such techno oriented practice ,which can accelerate the learning outcomes of the students. E-Collaboration can be defined as collaboration using electronic technologies among different individuals to accomplish a common task (Kock& D'Arcy, 2002; Kock, Davidson, Ocker, &Wazlawick, 2001). The paper attempts to study the major concerns in practice of E-collaboration in English language teaching. It focuses on the awareness of teachers on E-collaboration and the practice levels as well as challenges they face for implementing it in English language classrooms.

Need and Significance

A general trend in English classrooms is to work on group discussions, role playing, assignments, seminars, projects etc. Due to the accelerated growth of technology, the transaction ideologies of teaching learning have undergone drastic changes. By incorporating technology in to the Educational scenario, it has redesigned the idea of collaboration and has created a variety of interactive learning opportunities.

According to Barbara & Jean (1995) "Collaborative learning" is an umbrella term for a variety educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. According to Gokhale (1995), Individuals are able to achieve higher levels of learning and retain more information when they work in a group rather than individually, this applies to both the facilitators of knowledge, the instructors, and the receivers of knowledge, the students.

The tools on Web 2.0 have been able to enhance collaborative learning like no other because it allows individuals to

work together from anywhere to generate, share, discuss and evaluate. Web based learning focuses mainly on learner centered approach which helps them to construct and share knowledge and thereby store it permanently for further studies. Present Technologies such as online discussion groups, email or wiki, chat rooms and many more apps help share knowledge and ideas with each other and refine knowledge at its best. These can be adopted at its best in English second language classrooms.

The major focus of the study is to understand how recent trends of technology like E - collaborative techniques are useful for academic purpose and thus contribute to attain higher level of acquisition ,especially in case of English language. Prospective teachers of English language are students and teachers at the same time and conducting a study on them can give more clear and appropriate picture of the current teaching learning process in English Language classrooms. The present study thus tries to unveil the practices and challenges in implementing E-collaborative techniques in English Language classrooms and to understand basic awareness of prospective teachers of English language on E -collaborative techniques in English language teaching /learningprocess.

Statement of the problem

The study is entitled as “E-Collaborative Learning Practices and Concerns in English as second language Classrooms: A study among prospective teachers”.

Definition of the key terms E-collaboration

E-collaboration defined as “collaboration, which is conducted without face-to-face interaction among individuals or members of virtual teams engaged in a common task using information and communication technologies”(Igi global dictionary,2019)In the present study E- Collaboration refers to collaboration which is conducted without face-to-face interaction among students who are engaged in the common task of English language learning though various online collaborationtechniques.

English Language

In this study English language learning is the learning process of English as a second language.

Prospective Teacher

“Teacher candidates who were enrolled in a teacher education program and are envisaged to be a teacher after the successful completion of the course”(Igi global dictionary,2019).In this study prospective teachers of English language in kasaragod district were selected as the sample of thestudy.

Objectives

The major objectives of the study are:

- (i) To map teachers awareness about E -collaborative learning practices available in English Languageclassrooms
- (ii) To understand the practice level of E- collaboration in the English Language classrooms at present.
- (iii) To find out if teachers face challenges while adopting E -collaborative learning practices in English Languageclassrooms.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted through survey method. The population of the study consists of prospective teachers of English Language in Kasaragod district of Kerala. A sample of 30 prospective teachers of English language in Kasaragod district was selected using suitable randomnessampling techniques. A five point likert type rating scale on E-collaborative techniques was developed by the researcher mainly focusing on the three components, i.e. awareness, practices and challenges on E- collaborative learning practices in English Language classrooms .Each components consisted of 10 questions each with the five ratings- always, often, sometimes, seldom and never which scored 4,3,2,1,0 respectively. So the maximum score obtained would be 40 and the minimum score 0.

Analysis and Interpretation

The participants' responses were tabulated to perform the analysis and interpretation and then the frequencies, percentages, Measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion and measures of divergence from normality were calculated. The descriptive statistics of the data is calculated and their values are given below in tables.

- **Teachers Awareness about E-Collaborative Learning Practices Available In ESL Classrooms**

Table 1

Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Dispersion, Skewness and Kurtosis of obtained scores of the component Awareness

Component	N	AM	Md	SD	Sk	Ku
Awareness	30	12.7	12.5	2.45	0.854	2.058

With the reference to the above table, it is evident that the arithmetic mean obtained is 12.7.the median score is 12.5 and the standard deviation score is 2.45.

- **Current opportunities for implementing E- collaborative learning in the English second languageclassrooms**

Table 2

Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Dispersion, Skewness and Kurtosis of obtained scores of the component practices

Component	N	AM	Md	SD	Sk	Ku
Practices	30	17.4	17	4.25	0.246	-1.01

With the reference to the above table, it is evident that the arithmetic mean obtained is 17.4 .the median score is 17 and the standard deviation score is 4.25.

- **Challenges faced by the teachers while adopting E- collaborative learning practices in ESL classrooms**

Table 3

Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Dispersion, Skewness and Kurtosis of obtained scores of the component Challenges

Component	N	AM	Md	SD	Sk	Ku
Challenges	30	22.97	23	1.96	-0.009	-0.933

With the reference to the above table, it is evident that the arithmetic mean obtained is 22.97 the median score is 23 and the standard deviation score is 1.96.

• **The Frequency and Percentage of Scores in Different Levels for Different Components**

Table 4

The Frequency and Percentage of Scores in Different Levels for Different Components

Component	Level	Frequency	Percent (%)	Total No.	Total Percent
Awareness	High	4	13.33	30	100
	Average	21	70		
	Low	5	16.67		
Practices	High	5	16.67	30	100
	Average	8	26.67		
	Low	17	56.66		
Challenges	High	7	23.33	30	100
	Average	14	46.67		
	Low	9	30		

Out of the total sample 13.3% people had a high awareness on E- collaborative learning practices in English Language classrooms and 70% of people had basic or average awareness on E- collaborative practices in the English Language classrooms and 16.7% of people had very low awareness on the same.

Out of the total sample 16.67 % people showed high level practice of E- collaborative learning practices in English Language classrooms and 26.7% of people showed average level practice and 56.67 % of people showed low levels of E- collaborative practices in English Language classrooms.

Out of the total sample 23.3% people had faced high challenges while practicing E- collaborative learning in English Language classrooms and 46.7% of people faced average challenges in implementing E- collaborative practices in the English Language classrooms and 30% of people had faced very low challenges on the same.

FINDINGS

Major findings of the study :

- (i) It is evident from the study that 70% of the sample had an average awareness about E- collaborative practices in English Languageclassrooms.
- (ii) Out of the total sample, 56.67 % showed low practice of E – collaborative techniques in English Languageclassrooms.
- (iii)With reference to the study, 46.7% of people had faced average challenges while adopting E-collaborative practices in English Languageclassroom.

The majority of the prospective teachers of English language are still unequipped with recent technologies or E- collaborative techniques that can be utilized in effective transaction of the language. Even though majority of the prospective teachers were aware of many E- collaborative techniques to enhance the English language only few adopted such methods in the classroom. Some participants rejected the idea of E- collaborative learning due to the practical difficulties faced by them like restricted time schedule and syllabus overload. The prospective teachers also faced many challenges in implementing E- collaborative techniques in English Language teaching learning process.

Educational implications of the study

The major educational implications of the study are:

The study is used to map the teachers’ awareness about E -collaborative learning practices available in English Language classrooms. Majority of the prospective teachers are aware of the E- collaborative techniques, but are hesitant

to use such methods in the teaching learning process. The reluctance from the part of teachers to experiment creative techniques always stays as a hindrance for favorable learning atmosphere.

The study found out that of E- collaborative learning is less in the English language transaction. Majority of the teachers never practice these methods in the teaching/learning process. As prospective teachers of English language, the pedagogical aspects of integrating technology can bring out fruitful results in promoting and motivating the children to acquire and use language for their daily purpose. The study also identified that there are some challenges faced by the teachers while adopting E -collaborative learning practices in Language classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Practical sessions, trainings, workshops and conferences must be conducted by the authorities in order to equip the teachers with current technology and its meaningful integration in the teaching learning process.
- Teachers need more exposure and guidance to integrate E- Collaborative Learning tools in English Language classrooms.
- A learner-focused, techno friendly curriculum is required for the success of E- collaborative learning.
- Students centered environment is congenial for practicing E -collaborative learning.
- Simple E- collaborative techniques for Basic English language learning can be introduced and provisioned in the actual classrooms.
- Western E- collaborative techniques can be adopted in Indian classrooms but more unique methods of the same can be created if experts and creative teachers unite in complimenting the textual and actual practices.

CONCLUSION

It is often said that the 21st century is an era of science and technology (Light bown & Spada, 2013) and English language has invaded the primary attraction in every transactions of life. With internet gaining wide popularity among the common mass, English language has become more people friendly, and thus to equip students to be literate, life-long learners and global citizens of the 21st century, we must successfully integrate various innovative practices like E- collaborative techniques into both the English curriculum and English pedagogical practice.

It can be concluded from this small-scale research that integrating or adopting E- collaborative techniques is not as easy in real practices as there are many challenges that relate to resources, access, skills and expertise to operate and manage in the academic zone. But despite the challenges, we can create opportunities to both English teachers and learners if a conscious effort is made by the institutions and the experts. Digital literacy has evolved as major need of the time and therefore due attention should be given to such practices that can accelerate the teaching learning process in our classrooms.

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