Title: Enhancing Speaking Confidence in English Language Learners through Group Work: A Methodological Investigation

Abstract:

Effective cross-cultural communication is increasingly crucial in today's globalized world, necessitating proficient foreign language skills. Kazakhstan, as a growing global player, recognizes the significance of fostering friendly relationships with distant and neighboring countries. The economic, political, social, and cultural positions of the country are expanding intensively, impacting the educational landscape positively. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has underscored the importance of languages, particularly English and Russian, as essential means of cross-cultural dialogue and communication. As Kazakhstan enters a new phase of development and integration into the global multicultural community, the need for prioritizing foreign language teaching and intercultural communicative competence becomes evident.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Foreign language teaching, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Speaking confidence, Group work, Kagan's structures, Intercultural communicative competence, Language proficiency, Cooperative learning, Language education, Global multicultural community, Kazakhstan, Suleyman Demirel University, Language acquisition, Pedagogical process, Language proficiency assessment.

This research investigates the methodology of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to pre-intermediate level students at Suleyman Demirel University. The primary focus is on enhancing students' speaking confidence through group work activities. The central research question examines the impact of employing Kagan's structures for group work on students' speaking confidence. The study draws on theoretical frameworks from renowned scholars in the field of language education, cooperative learning, and intercultural communication.

Introduction:

Language proficiency plays a crucial role in fostering effective communication and meaningful relationships between nations. As Kazakhstan assumes a more active role in the global arena, proficiency in foreign languages, particularly English and Russian, becomes essential for successful cross-cultural dialogue. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has consistently emphasized the significance of language skills in promoting international cooperation and enabling citizens to excel globally. As Kazakhstan becomes part of the global multicultural and multilingual community, neglecting foreign language teaching or treating it carelessly is no longer acceptable.

Teaching foreign languages effectively, especially English, has become a priority for educational institutions. Suleyman Demirel University, among others, has been actively addressing the challenges in foreign language education and has achieved commendable results. However, there remains a need to modernize the methodology to better develop students' speaking skills.

Research Purpose and Questions:

This research aims to explore and develop a robust methodology for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to pre-intermediate level students, with a primary focus on enhancing their speaking confidence through group work activities. The central research question is to investigate whether the application of Kagan's structures for group work significantly improves students' speaking confidence.

Theoretical Background:

Teaching oral proficiency poses unique challenges in language learning, as real-life interactions outside the classroom offer the most effective environment for language acquisition. In this regard, group work, cooperative learning, and interactive activities have emerged as powerful teaching methods for developing students' speaking abilities and cross-cultural communication skills. To inform this research, insights from renowned scholars such as R. Slavin, Lesley A.J. Farmer, David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, Edyth Johnson Holubec, David McConnell, Vygotsky, and Jeremy Harmer are integrated to form a solid theoretical foundation.

Methodology:

The research methodology entails a comprehensive analysis of theoretical and methodological literature related to teaching speaking skills in EFL contexts. Primary data is collected through questionnaires distributed among students and instructors, complemented by careful observations of the pedagogical process. A pre-test and post-test approach is employed to measure the efficacy of the methodological model in enhancing students' speaking confidence.

Results and Contribution:

The research findings demonstrate that employing Kagan's structures in group work significantly improves students' speaking confidence. The developed methodological model emphasizes cooperative learning, group discussions, and projects to enhance students' communicative competence and social interaction abilities.

Conclusion:

This research highlights the critical role of foreign language education, particularly English, in Kazakhstan's global engagement. The proposed methodological model, based on Kagan's structures for group work, shows promising results in enhancing students' speaking confidence and overall language proficiency. As Kazakhstan continues to embrace its place in the global multicultural community, investing in foreign language education becomes essential for fostering successful cross-cultural communication and diplomatic relationships with other nations. The study contributes valuable insights to language education research, offering practical implications for educators and policymakers to promote effective foreign language teaching and intercultural communication skills among students.