



Implementing Pair-Work Strategy In Efl Class: Why?

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I. Introduction

Pair work is a fundamental classroom practice in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, emphasizing active student participation and interaction. It is also a dynamic and interactive teaching strategy widely used to engage students in meaningful communication and collaborative learning. Effective implementation, however, requires a structured approach to ensure that the activity is both productive and engaging. The success of pair work depends significantly on how it is implemented. This process involves thoughtful planning, task design, student preparation, and classroom management strategies tailored to the unique dynamics of each group.

Pairing students effectively is an important aspect of implementation. It can be based on various factors such as language ability, personality, or seating arrangements, depending on the lesson's goals. Depending on the task, pairs may be formed randomly, by skill level, or based on compatibility to foster optimal collaboration.

Teachers play a crucial role in setting up pair work by clearly defining objectives, providing relevant materials, and establishing task instructions. Additionally, pairing strategies—whether random, teacher-selected, or student-chosen—can significantly influence the dynamics and success of the activity. During pair work, instructors monitor interactions, offer support as needed, and assess engagement, ensuring that students remain on-task and benefit from the activity. Concluding the session with feedback or a debrief helps reinforce learning and address challenges encountered during the interaction.

To implement pair work, teachers must first identify tasks that are well-suited to the language proficiency levels of their students and the goals of the lesson. The tasks should be designed to match students' proficiency levels, ensuring they are neither too easy nor overly challenging. These tasks might include role-plays, problem-solving exercises, or information gap activities, all designed to encourage meaningful communication. The

teacher's role in setting clear expectations and providing concise instructions is crucial to ensuring students understand their objectives and responsibilities within the activity.

Based on what has been presented above, it can be concluded that the implementation of pair work in EFL classes will run successfully if it is planned and carried out well. It consists of careful tasks design in line with learning objectives, clarity of instructions, and monitoring student interactions. Classroom dynamics, such as pairing strategies and balancing proficiency levels, is important to maximize the effective pair activities. The clear time limits, relevant materials, and post-task feedback need to be provided in order to support the process. Using these practical strategies will create a structured yet flexible environment that facilitates meaningful language practice and collaboration.

Merits of Pair-Work Strategy in EFL Class

Pair work strategy has been attracting the attention of many researchers and they found several benefits of the strategy. Sorch, as one of them, (1999:363) asserted that collaboration had a positive effect on overall grammatical accuracy. In other study, Storch (2005:168) made a comparison of the products (completed texts) of pairs and individuals. The pairs produced shorter and better texts that had greater grammatical accuracy and linguistic complexity, and were more succinct. They seemed to fulfill the task more competently. In a collaborative study, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009:445) found that collaboration (pair work) impacted positively on accuracy although it does not affect fluency and complexity. Indirectly, these three research findings reveal that pair work is able to facilitate students to improve their skill in using language component (grammar) required in producing good written texts. In addition, pair work also helps students to write effectively in presenting ideas in their essays.

In a study, Baleghizadeh (2009) highlighted that learners who completed the task in pairs outperformed those who attempted it



individually. Storch (1999) also found that learners who worked in pairs had more opportunities to communicate in the target language than those in teacher-fronted classrooms. These findings implicitly imply EFL teachers on how to create a strategy in which students have more opportunities to communicate in the target language. Baleghizadeh and Farhesh (2014) investigated the power of pair work to students's motivation and found that pair work had positive contributions to learners' motivations. This means that pairwork can be employed to stimulate students's motivation. Shin, et al (2015) found that students who worked together in pairs assisted each other, thereby recalling more correct idea units from the texts and eliminating extraneous information in their writing. These research findings have shown that pair work really, in general, gives a lot of advantages if it is employed in EFL classrooms. The findings discussed above on the merits of pair work are also related to aspects required in writing.

Some researchers also found the effect of pair work toward students' writing performance. Shehadeh (2011:286) found that collaborative writing had an overall significant effect on students' L2 writing. However, this effect varied from one writing skill area to another. Specifically, the effect was significant for content, organization, and vocabulary, but not for grammar or mechanics. Globally, her findings are the same as Storch's. However, she also found a different result from Storch's study (2005). Her finding showed that collaborative writing did not have a significant effect on grammar. Meanwhile, Storch found that pairs produced shorter and better texts that had greater grammatical accuracy. The difference was assumed by the fact that they used the subject with different proficiency (based on IELTS score). The subjects' score (average) in Shehade's study was 4. Meanwhile, the subjects' score (average) in Storch's study was 6.5. Although research findings by Shehade on grammar accuracy is different from Storch's, Shehadeh found the significant effect of pair work on some other aspects of writing. These aspects were found to be a problem for students working individually (Sabarun:2006, Attamim: 2007, Ulfiati: 2010, and Isnawati: 2010)

Jafari and Ansari (2012: 128) found that students working in pairs had better writing accuracy than those working individually. This finding can enrich the theory on the merits of pair work found by Shehadeh (2011) and Storch (2005). In addition, this finding (students working in pairs had better writing accuracy) also has answered research finding by Kasman (2004) and Irawati

(2008) in which college students and university graduates were found to have low academic writing. It means that having students to work in pairs can help them to minimize their problem in writing.

Chen (2012:25) and Kwon (2014: 85) investigated the benefit of collaborative writing viewed from students's voices. Their finding was that most students perceived their collaborative writing experiences quite positively. Students' perceived benefits of collaborative writing were numerous, ranging from opportunities to exchange ideas to development of communication. This finding indirectly completes other research findings that usually discuss the power of pair work viewed from teacher voices (based on students works). In other words, the students' voices need to be compared with teachers' voice in order to come to the more convincing result on the merits of pair work.

Biria and Jafari (2013:164) found that practicing in pairs really improved the overall quality of the learners' writing even though the fluency of written texts did not change significantly. Students need to be encouraged in order to have good writing quality and this research finding has showed that pair works can meet the target. In other words, pair work can guide students to have a good quality writing.

At last, Meihami, Meihami, and Varmaghani (2013:47) found that collaborative work (pair work) could improve students' grammatical accuracy in their upcoming writings. Their findings match what Storch (1999:363) has found on the effect of pair work on students grammar in writing. Having grammatical accuracy is a must in writing activities because sentences with wrong grammatical patterns can mislead and will not be understandable. Working in pairs was found to be useful for students to improve their grammatical accuracy because writing activities where students correct each other and share ideas with one another guide students to better grammatical accuracy.

Talking about the advantages of pair work strategy, Storch (2007:143) also states that pair-work has strong pedagogical and theoretical supports. From the pedagogical aspect, Biria and Jafari (2013:166) affirm that pair-work offers language learners more chances to use the language. From a theoretical point, this strategy is in line with language learning that emphasizes the importance of interaction for learning in order to develop learner's language competence. Dobao (2012:41) asserts that the role of interaction and peer collaboration are considered important in L2 development. In



addition, Xiao (2008:106) also points out that paired-peer review gives students benefits in terms of EFL writing proficiency, transferable skills, and self-efficacy. Besides, Mulligan and Garofalo (2011:9) emphasize that collaborative writing (pairwork) is a non-threatening approach for students that results in purposeful usage of the target language across skills and demonstrable improvements in writing. In short, pair-work does not only function as an activity to be employed in teaching-learning process, but it also gives advantages to students in writing performance.

Based on research findings by Storch (2005 and 2009), Jafari and Ansari (2012), Biria and Jafari (2013) and Meihami, Meihami, and Varmaghani (2013), it can be concluded that pair work can develop students' writing performance. Specifically, it helps students to produce better written texts in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy.

In addition to research findings on the effect of pair work toward students writing performance, there are several benefits of employing pair work in EFL writing. A number of researchers have found them in some terms.

Pair work, in fact, contributes to students' idea development. In a study, Storch (2005:153) found that collaboration afforded students the opportunity to pool ideas and provide each other with feedback. This finding can be a solution and is useful for EFL learners studying writing skill. Writing requires students to develop ideas into be a paragraph and an essay. Students tend to have problems fulfilling this requirement if they write individually.

Pair work in EFL writing also can make students active. In another study, Storch (2007:143) found that although there were no significant differences between the accuracy of tasks completed individually and those completed in pairs, most pairs engage actively in discussing language. They tend to reach correct resolutions. Making students active in an EFL class is a must because if the students are active, the teaching-learning process will run well and expected targets can be achieved. Pair work, based on Storch's finding, can be one alternative solution to make it come true.

The next power of employing pair work in EFL writing is on language improvement. Dobao (2012:40) states that writing tasks completed in pairs offer learners an opportunity to collaborate in the solution of their language-related problems, construct new language knowledge, and produce linguistically more accurate written texts. It seems that this finding provides more convincing evidence

on the power of pair work in EFL writing because students get merits of working in pairs.

Another advantage of employing pair work is that it can make students enjoy learning. Shehadeh (2011:286) found that most students in the pair work setting have an enjoyable experience. Making students enjoy the teaching learning process is important because if students enjoy class, the teacher can teach well and maximize the learning achieved. Shehadeh's finding proves that pair work can be employed to make students enjoy the teaching learning process.

Paying attention to research findings on the effect of employing pair work in EFL writing toward students' writing performance and its power in several aspects, writing in pairs is apparently beneficial and very useful for students. Pair work in EFL writing enables students to produce good quality written texts. Then, the findings can minimize the belief that writing is a complicated and multifaceted task (Cahyono and Widiati, 2011; Tsai and Lin, 2012; and Richard and Renandya, 2002). In addition, pair work can be one of solutions to writing problems met by most students working individually as stated by some research findings (Kasman, 2004; Irawati, 2008; Ahmed, 2010; Barrett and Chen, 2011; Zakaria and Mogaddam, 2013; Hammad, 2014; Al Seyabi and Tuzlukova, 2014; and Javid and Umer, 2014).

Maftoon and Ghafoori (2009) investigated the effect of the homogeneous and heterogeneous collaborative interaction on the development of EFL learners' writing skill. In the study, they found that both groups, very similarly, had significantly higher post-test scores in all three writing tasks. Ghafoori (2009) conducted a study on the effect of homogeneous and heterogeneous dyadic interaction on the development of EFL Learners' Writing Skill. His research finding was that there was no statistically significant difference between G-Hom and G-Het participants in terms of their progress from pretest to posttests. There was also no statistically significant difference among the scores obtained from the three posttest tasks. Then, Mahmoud (2011) also investigated the effect of homogeneous grouping and heterogeneous grouping on high school students' EFL Writing Achievement. Here, he wanted to know which one was better. His finding was that homogeneous pairs showed a better performance than heterogeneous ones. From the three research findings above, it can be concluded that homogeneous and heterogeneous groups have similar power on the development of EFL learners' writing skill.



Eckley (2014) conducted a study to discover what type of cooperative learning has the best result /educational outcomes. His research finding was that students from heterogeneous groups performed better working than homogenous groups. Fauziah and Latief (2015) investigated the effect of working in Heterogeneous and Homogeneous pairs on the students' writing skill. Their research finding was that the quality of descriptive essays produced individually by the students from heterogeneous group was on the average significantly better than the quality of descriptive essays produced by the students from the homogeneous group. What was found by Eckley and Fauziah & Latief above means that heterogeneous group has better result than homogeneous group to students' achievement.

Final Remarks

EFL students are required to have good performnace in learning English. One of strategies that can be implemneted is pair work. This strategy provides several significant benefits for language acquisition and learner engagement. The opportunities are provided to practice speaking, listening, and problem-solving in a supportive environment. The students are encouraged for active participation, fosters peer learning, and helps build confidence as students collaborate to achieve shared goals. To get maximal-good result,the tasks should be planned carefully, students are paired well, and clear instructions are provided.

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