

AN OVERVIEW OF NUMBER HEADS TOGETHER IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative learning strategy that holds each student accountable for learning the material. Cooperative learning strategy promotes discussion and both individual and group accountability. It offers an alternative to the competitive approach of whole-class question-answer, in which the teacher asks a question and then calls on one of the students with a raised hand. In the numbered heads together approach, the teacher has students number off (e.g. 1-4), asks a question, and then tells the students to “put their heads together” to develop a complete answer to the question. When the teacher calls out a number, the students with that number raise their hands to respond. This structure facilitates positive interdependence, while promoting individual accountability. It also gives confidence to lower achievers because they know they will have the correct answer to give to the class. This study tries to indicate some theories based on experts definition about understanding of cooperative learning, the purpose of cooperative learning, understanding of number heads together (NHT), and characteristic of NHT technique.

Keywords: *Number Heads Together, Language, Teaching*

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A. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Understanding of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a method of teaching where students need to work in a group. Usually this cooperative learning is purposed to do a specific task. Jacobs and Loh (2002:1) explain that cooperative learning as principles and techniques to help the students work together more effectively. While, Kagan (2002: 3) defines that cooperative learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small and heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal.

Johnson and Johnson (2000 :9) state that this method can help students to develop the leadership skill and the ability to work as a team with instructional use of small groups so that students work together to build an effective teaching learning process. In other words, this method can help students not only to develop their skill to work with others as a team but also to develop their skill in leadership competence.

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching method using a variety of learning activities to improve students' understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is not only responsible to understand the material but also to help teammates in the teaching and learning process. Cooperative learning is considered to be successful when students can work on the assignment collaboratively until all members successfully understand the material and complete it.

In cooperative learning method, the students study in small groups to help each other. The group usually consists of different levels of students' ability in English, different genders, and different ethnicities in the classroom. Even though they are different, they can stay together for the same purpose. Thus, they are accustomed to working well together as a team (Slavin, 2004:1).

1.2 The Purpose of Cooperative Learning

The purpose of cooperative study is to create the learning situation which can form the habit of students to work in a group, besides, the understanding of the students about the material is the primary purpose of this cooperative study. According to Isjoni (2009:27) there are three main purposes of cooperative learning as follows;

The first purpose of cooperative study based on Isjoni is to improve students' achievement academically. Cooperative study is not only improving upper students' ability but also lower students' ability. It can be seen through the classroom activities of cooperative study itself. All techniques in cooperative study develop grouping techniques. In grouping techniques the upper students help the lower students and the lower students adjust themselves with upper students.

The second purpose is to teach students the acceptance of individual differences. This method extends the opportunity to the students to accept people's differences of their background in a group. The purpose of the method is not only focus on the academic achievement but also on the improving

students' characteristic to respect people difference in their environment.

The last purpose of cooperative study is to develop students' ability to socialize with other people. Through this cooperative study it is expected that students be able to interact, work together as a team. This is the model of cooperative study.

1.3 Understanding of Number Heads Together (NHT).

Number heads together is a technique in cooperative learning method which is developed by Kagan (2002 :88). This technique urge students to solve the given problems or questions in a group and sharing what they already know with others.

Moreover, Based on Olsen and Kagan in Richards and Rodgers (2001:196) that there are four key elements of NHT's group. The group consist of positive interdependence, group information, individual accountability and social skills.

Firstly the positive interdependence appear when each member of the group aware that helping one member will effect to all member in the group and dropping one member will effect to all members. Thus, they have to be helpful and supporting for their own good because the score of the group is the accumulation result of each member of the group.

Second is group formation. This factor is the most important among other elements to creat positive interdependence in the group. Richards and Rodgers (2001:196) state that there are some factors involve in setting up group. They are:

1. Establishing the size of the group. one group is usually consist of three or four people.
2. However, the teacher also need to consider some factors in group formating such as the level of difficulty of the task, the age of group member, and the limitation time for the lesson.
3. Deviding students into some groups. the member of each group can be either teacher choice or students choice. it can be acceptable if the member of the group devided randomly. but, teacher selected is recomended to creat a group which consist of heterogeneous in students' achievement, ethniciiti and gender.
4. The role of the students in the group become one of the aspects that teacher need to pay her/his attention to.
5. The members of each group has their role in the group activities. a member can be a group's chairman or summarizer.

Furthermore, the third element is individual accountability. It is about individual performance. For example, the teacher calls students' number randomly to share ideas or answer the given question.

The last element is social skills. The social skills established the way how the students interact and share their ideas with each other as a teammates.

The writer conclude that NHT technique is one of method to help students to work cooperatively by putting them in a small group form of three, four or five students and organizing them the numbering system.

1.4 Characteristic of NHT Technique

According to Cruikshank (2006:238) there are four characteristics which is found in all techniques of cooperative learning method including Number Heads Together (NHT) technique.

The first characteristic is how is the group team made up. In deviding groups the teacher should consider that it should be contained of heterogenous of gender and academic ability. It is purposed to make students easier to work as a team with the result that students can improve their speaking skill together. Moreover, heterogeneity in a group will develop their personality and sicial development.

The second characteristic is in choosing the task to be discussed by the students. Choosing the task is highly influential to the effectiveness of cooperative learning. It must be suitable for a spesific students' ability. While giving the task, all members of a group are asked to master the given material. If they found some problems while discussing the task, the students who have understood will explain the material.

The next characteristic is groups' rule of behavior. It is about rising the individual responsibility which must be considered mostly. However, the objective of cooperative learning is not only focus to make students understang about the material but also building the personal ability to organize the group and rising the individual accaountability to trust the leader of the group.

The last characteristic is motivation and reward system. The students' motivation is appear because there is an opportunity to

understang the material. Whereas reward system will grow to make students' motivation bigger and bigger. Through reward system students will be motivated to understang the material. In this case, reward is not only a gift but an approbation also known as reward.

B. CONCLUSIONS

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative learning strategy that holds each student accountable for learning the material. Students are placed in groups and each person is given a number (from one to the maximum number in each group). The teacher poses a question and students "put their heads together" to figure out the answer. The teacher calls a specific number to respond as spokesperson for the group. By having students work together in a group, this strategy ensures that each member knows the answer to problems or questions asked by the teacher. Because no one knows which number will be called, all team members must be prepared.

This cooperative learning strategy promotes discussion and both individual and group accountability. This strategy is beneficial for reviewing and integrating subject matter. Students with special needs often benefit when this strategy is used. After direct instruction of the material, the group supports each member and provides opportunities for practice, rehearsal, and discussion of content material. Group learning methods encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and to learn from one another, as well as from the instructor (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994).

Cooperative learning has been shown to increase student achievement, race relations,

acceptance of special needs students, and self-esteem (Slavin, 1995).

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