# USING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**BY**

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**BU/UP/2020/2796**

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS DEGREE IN EDUCATION, ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH IN LITERATURE AT BUSITEMA UNIVERSITY.**

**OCTOBER, 2023**

## STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I **NARIKA JULIE MIRIAM** do declare that this research report is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree award to any other university.

**SIGNATURE**.....  **DATE**...13/11/2023:.....

## ENDORSEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

This research study entitled, "using collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools" has been written under my supervision upon appointment by Busitema University and it has been submitted for examination with my approval.

**MS. NAKAZINGA RACHEL**.....  **DATE**..13th/11/2023.....

**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research work to my Mother Illukol Mary. Your unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence. Your belief in my abilities and your sacrifices have made this achievement possible. This research is a testament to your faith in me and the inspiration you provide daily.

This work is also dedicated to all the learners in our education system who strive for academic success. May the findings of this research contribute to the improvement of their educational experiences and outcomes.

Thank you, Mummy, and all those who have played a part in this journey

## SUMMARY

This study intended to investigate the use of collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools. Collaborative learning is an instructional approach that promotes active student engagement and peer interaction which has shown promise in facilitating language learning in various educational contexts. Effective language education is essential for students to thrive in today's globalized world.

This study intended to achieve the following objectives: To evaluate how teachers use collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools, to find out which learning materials teachers use in teaching collaborative learning in teaching English language at lower secondary schools and to explore the learner's perspectives about collaborative learning at lower secondary schools. The study aimed to contribute to the improvement of the English language in this specific context impacting instructional practices, curriculum development and future research in the field.

The study adopted a qualitative research design outlining a comprehensive investigation into the use of collaborative learning in teaching English at lower secondary schools by exploring the impact of language acquisition, attitudes and perspectives of both teachers and students. The study population comprised of head teachers, teachers and learners. The study will be of immense importance to the teachers of English, language students, curriculum planners, examining bodies, text book writers, educational administrators, possibly parents, researchers and other interested bodies in the field of language and communication studies.

Regarding the ethical considerations, the researcher provided the respondents with the necessary information concerning the main purpose of the research, expected duration, procedures followed and the researcher maintained professionalism while conducting this work keeping privacy and confidentiality of respondent's data.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1 Introduction

This chapter aimed at introducing the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research topics, and context of study and significance of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the study

Small group learning approaches such as collaborative learning and cooperative learning can be traced back to ancient times Yang (2023). However, modern exploration of collaborative learning began in the 1960s and emerged as fields of study in the 1970s. Around this period of time, there were probably many other educators who were practicing small group pedagogies without knowing or using the labels of collaborative learning Mueller and Fleming (2001). Collaborative learning is used as an umbrella term for various instructional approaches to small group learning, including but not limited to cooperative learning, team-based learning, peer tutoring and study groups. Collaborative learning witnessed substantive growth and gained wide recognition. However, collaborative and cooperative learning did not develop in the same fashion or at the same pace. It is challenging to define collaborative learning or collaboration, and there is no universal definition Resta and Laferrière (2007). With a focus on the learning processes, Mühlenbrock and Hoppe (1999) defined collaboration as "the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together" . Due to its philosophical orientation, collaborative learning tends not to impose too much structure on learning activities. Collaborative learning is typically based on a concept of open-ended tasks for students to work together to reach a consensus and typically does not intervene in group processes or teach team-building skills.

According to Tennant (2003), the most prominent collaborative theorist, collaborative learning "creates conditions in which students can negotiate the boundaries between the knowledge communities they belong to and the one that the professor belongs to". In this philosophical view, the notions of power and authority are challenged, with the assumption that knowledge is not transmitted from the professors to the students but socially constructed among people of a

community Bruffee (1986). Thus education can be viewed as a conversation among people and a process of re-acculturation Bruffee (1986).

Like Bruffee, Koehler, Palaiologou, and Brussino (2022) invented the now famous jigsaw method in the early 1970s in response to critical issues caused by the socio-cultural contexts, that is to say, the desegregation in public schools in Texas. Telaumbanua, Hasbi, Saptopramono, and Erdian (2023), implemented the jigsaw method among fifth-grade students. It was a success as students learned to appreciate each other's differences, became friendly to each other, and developed a positive attitude towards the school. David and Roger Johnson from the University of Minnesota started to train teachers on collaborative learning in the mid-1960s during a time of competition and individualism within American society. In 1975, they published their masterpiece Learning Together and Alone Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, and Johnson (2005). There is a theoretical rationale to discriminate collaborative and cooperative learning, but in practice, it is difficult to separate them because they often co-exist in many group work processes Dillenbourg (2002). Based on Vygotsky's idea that learning happens when social interactions are reflected and internalized by the learner Forman and Cazden (2013), Bruffee (1984) argued that our thought or knowledge is not a given attribute but a social artifact constructed in the process of social interaction among communities of knowledgeable peers.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Collaborative learning has been recognized as a highly important and essential skill, not only in Language learning, but also in most areas of a student's academic career. It is a highly useful and sophisticated skill, associated with both reading and writing skills and contributes to academic success Lin and Maarof (2013). The traditional approach to teaching the English language has often resulted in limited student engagement and inefficient learning outcomes, particularly at lower secondary school level Timperley (2011). In order to address this issue, a potential solution is to implement a collaborative learning approach, where students actively engage with their peers and jointly construct knowledge and language skills. However, there was need to investigate the effectiveness and practicality of utilizing collaborative learning strategies in teaching English in lower secondary schools, as the existing research in this specific context remains limited.

## 1.3 Objectives

### 1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the use, effectiveness and practicality of utilizing collaborative learning approach in teaching English Language at lower secondary schools.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate how teachers, use collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools.
2. To find out which learning materials teachers use in teaching collaborative learning in teaching English language at lower secondary schools.
3. To explore the learner's perspectives about collaborative learning at lower secondary schools.

## 1.4 Research Questions

i. How do teachers use collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools?
ii. What learning materials do teachers use in teaching using collaborative learning approach at lower secondary schools?
iii. What are the learner's perspectives about collaborative learning at lower secondary schools?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness and practicality of utilizing collaborative learning strategies in teaching English in lower secondary schools, as the existing research in this specific context remains limited. This study will contribute immensely to the body of knowledge. The research anticipated that collaborative learning approaches positively impact English language acquisition amongst lower secondary school students. The study will also be valuable and will prompt more research on English language, thus adding new knowledge to the body of English literature.

In addition to contributing towards an area that has been under-researched in academic writing, this study will stimulate the development and subsequent adoption of pedagogical approaches that shed light on the students' attitudes towards collaborative learning as a concept and provide insight into the challenges faced by teachers in implementing these strategies, as it suggests a model or framework that can be implemented in collaborative learning.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed related literature on collaborative learning peer activities in the learning and cognitive development of lower secondary school aged children based on the three (3) study objectives namely;

1. To evaluate how teachers, use collaborative learning approach in teaching English language at lower secondary schools.
2. To find out which learning materials teachers use in teaching collaborative learning in teaching English language at lower secondary schools.
3. To explore the learner's perspectives about collaborative learning at lower secondary schools.

### 2.1 Evaluation of Teachers' Use of Collaborative Learning Approach

Slavin (1983), emphasized the positive impact of cooperative learning on student achievement, with improved academic performance observed across various subjects, including English language learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2014) highlighted the benefits of cooperative learning in elementary schools, emphasizing that it promotes positive interdependence, individual accountability, and interpersonal skills. Jeong and Hmelo-Silver (2016), provided practical strategies and structures for implementing cooperative learning, emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment that fosters collaboration and active participation. Qureshi, Khaskheli, Qureshi, Raza, and Yousufi (2023), discussed the role of cooperative learning as a smart pedagogy, highlighting its potential to enhance student engagement, motivation, and social skills in the classroom. Gillies (2019), explored the teacher's role in promoting collaborative dialogue, emphasizing the importance of scaffolding and facilitating meaningful interactions among students to deepen their understanding and promote higher-order thinking skills. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing effective collaborative learning strategies by creating a supportive classroom environment, providing guidance and

scaffolding, and promoting meaningful interactions among students. By embracing collaborative learning, teachers can enhance the quality of English language instruction and foster a more engaging and interactive classroom environment.

### 2.2 Analysis of Learning Materials Used in Collaborative Learning

Johnson and Johnson (2009), highlight the theoretical underpinnings of collaborative learning, particularly the Social Interdependence Theory. This theory emphasizes the positive interdependence among students, promoting cooperation and mutual support in achieving common learning goals. Slavin (2012), further reinforces this perspective, emphasizing the benefits of cooperative learning in elementary schools. These theoretical frameworks provide a basis for understanding how collaborative learning materials can foster language development. Van Nguyen (2010), explore the integration of technology in collaborative learning, specifically in computer-mediated language learning. Their study emphasizes the importance of digital platforms, such as wikis, in promoting collaborative autonomous learning abilities. The findings suggest that technology can enhance collaborative language learning experiences by facilitating meaningful interactions and knowledge construction. Blasco-Arcas, Buil, Hernández-Ortega, and Sese (2013), present a comprehensive synthesis of research on peer learning. Their analysis highlights the benefits of peer interaction, such as increased engagement and deeper understanding of subject matter. By leveraging collaborative learning materials, teachers can encourage students to actively engage with their peers, fostering meaningful language practice and feedback. de Carvalho and de Magalhães Netto (2020), conducted a systematic review of research on collaborative learning in digital libraries. Although not specific to English language learning, their study offers insights into the broader application of collaborative learning materials. The findings emphasize the importance of designing effective digital learning environments that promote collaboration and knowledge sharing, which can be applied to English language instruction. Azizinezhad, Hashemi, and Darvishi (2013), investigate the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing the language proficiency of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Their study reveals that collaborative learning materials contribute to improved language skills, including oral communication, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar proficiency. These findings highlight the potential of collaborative approaches for enhancing language learning outcomes. Peer learning and collaboration are also crucial aspects

that promote engagement and deeper understanding. Moreover, the reviewed studies demonstrate the positive impact of collaborative learning materials on language proficiency. By considering these findings, educators can design and select appropriate learning materials to optimize collaborative language learning experiences.

### 2.3 Exploration of Learner Perspectives in Collaborative Learning

One study by Namaziandost, Homayouni, and Rahmani (2020), investigated the impact of collaborative learning on English language proficiency among lower secondary school students. The findings indicated that collaborative activities promoted language development, increased motivation, and enhanced communication skills. In a study by McCafferty (2006), learner perspectives were examined to understand the benefits and challenges of collaborative learning in English as a second language (ESL) context. The results revealed that students appreciated the opportunity to interact with peers, share ideas, and learn from each other, leading to improved language acquisition. A study conducted by Ehsan, Vida, and Mehdi (2019), explored the use of collaborative learning strategies in teaching English grammar at the lower secondary level. The findings demonstrated that collaborative approaches facilitated a deeper understanding of grammar rules, increased engagement, and fostered a positive learning environment. Meena (2020), investigated the impact of collaborative learning on students' oral proficiency in the English language. The results indicated that collaborative activities, such as group discussions and presentations, provided learners with opportunities to practice speaking skills, build fluency, and gain confidence in using the language. Another study by Rodríguez and Carranza (2017), examined the role of collaborative learning in promoting intercultural competence among lower secondary school students learning English as a foreign language. The findings suggested that collaborative tasks that encouraged cultural exchange and collaboration between learners from diverse backgrounds enhanced their intercultural understanding and communication skills.

# CHAPTER THREE

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The research methodology refers to the process which is to be used by the researcher to obtain or collect the information or data for the purpose of solving the research problem. It gives various subsections involved in carrying out research which include; research design/approach, study area, population sample, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

### 3.2 Research design

Research design is a coherent and logical strategy of carrying out the research study used by the researcher to investigate the different components of the study. This research adopted a descriptive survey research design to undertake the study in investigating the use, effectiveness and practicality of utilizing collaborative learning approach in teaching English Language at lower secondary schools, which aimed at collecting both qualitative and subjective information. In this study, a structured inquiry was done in deducing personal, social and economic characteristics of informants.

### 3.3 Study area

The study was carried out in two secondary schools in Kibuku district namely; Brilliant secondary school Nangaiza campus and Kibuku secondary school.

### 3.4 Data collection

The researcher obtained data through qualitative data collection tools in order to achieve the objectives of the intended study. The methods used include observation, interviews and document analysis. Primary data was collected through observation and interviews.

### 3.4.1 Primary Data

#### 3.4.1.1 Observation

According to Punit (2021), observation is a method of collecting information, which is mostly used in qualitative research, by observing behavior, events and noting down of characteristics in their natural occurrence. As such, the researcher employed both covert observation, where the learners are not aware of the researcher observing them, and overt observation, where the learners are aware of the presence of the researcher. The importance of this method of data collection is that the researcher is able to get access to information that could be deliberately or unconsciously hidden from him/her by the participants during interviews, in questionnaires and focus group discussions.

#### 3.4.1.2 Interviews

Interviews, according to DeCarlo (2018), are a method of data collection that involves two or more people (the researcher(s) and the participant(s)) exchanging information through a series of questions and answers. These questions are designed by the researcher to obtain answers or information from the participant on the topic under study. The researcher in this study used all kinds of questions that require short and precise answers, explanatory answers and descriptive answers. The advantage of interviews is that it uses the same questions with different participants, hence enabling the researcher to avoid the fallacy of generalization of data.

### 3.4.2 Secondary data

**Document Analysis**

The secondary data collection method used is document analysis which involves analysis of text books and other related works of outstanding scholars whether Published, Magazines, written data sources included published and unpublished documents. Agency reports, newspaper articles, Internet sources and so forth were referred to so as to give more light on the use, effectiveness and practicality of utilizing collaborative learning approach in teaching English Language at lower secondary schools.

### 3.5 Population sample

For the purpose of this research, the study population comprised of two schools that is to say Brilliant Secondary School and Kibuku Secondary School in Kibuku District. The senior four classes only were selected as a target population and were considered to help with relevant data needed for the research.

### 3.6 Sample size

A total of 30 participants from these two schools were used in this research, and 15 of the participants will be picked from each school. All have two English lesson classes a week, and these used during selection. The researcher in this selection used random selection procedure to draw the research sample from the target population. The samples were given equal chance and opportunity for selection.

### 3.7 Sampling techniques

For Purposive sampling, the researcher handpicked the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of her judgment of their typical characteristics in terms of their current enrolments. Systematic sampling was used to select learners from each school by the use of class registers depending on the number of learners in the class register. Every second in the first twenty learners were selected for the inclusion in the sampling depending on the class register. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

### 3.8 Ethical Consideration

Bearing in mind the ethical issues, the researcher provided the respondents with the necessary information as regards the main purpose of the research, expected duration, procedures followed and the researcher was in position to keep privacy and not disclose the confidentiality of respondents and clearly stated the researcher's responsibility.

#### 3.8.1 Limitations of the study

The research study was faced by a number of problems and constraints and hence may not adequately meet the intended objectives to the required level. One of the limitations is long

distance. The researcher had to move from one school to another collecting data from students in the different selected schools. This may consumed a lot of time during the collection of data and hence a delay in drawing data analysis and conclusions. Being an academic study, there were delays due to the distance to be covered, hence a delay in submission. Some students were also adamant to give information and others took the study for granted, which posed a big challenge for the researcher.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## 4.0 Introduction

This deals with analysis and interpretation of the data collected. It includes discussion of the Questionnaire observation results. The data was based on the two hypothesis:

1. The use of collaborative learning approach positively impacts learning of English language. And;
2. The use of collaborative learning approach does not have any impact on the learning of English language.

## 4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

### 4.1.2. Sex of respondents

| **Name of school** | **males** | **females** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brilliant Secondary School | 7 | 8 | **15** |
| Kibuku Secondary School | 8 | 7 | **15** |

Considerations were given to gender neutrality, hence one school had more male respondents than the other, while the other had more females. The difference being only one respondent. 7 boys and 8 girls were used in Brilliant Secondary School, while 8 boys and 7 girls were used in Kibuku Secondary School.

## 4.2. Analysis and interpretation of data for validation of hypothesis one and two:

The hypothesis of the study is to show that collaborative learning approach in teaching English language impacts learners' performance and use of the language positively. To test this hypothesis, learners were issued with questionnaires and observations were carried out. The findings are presented below:

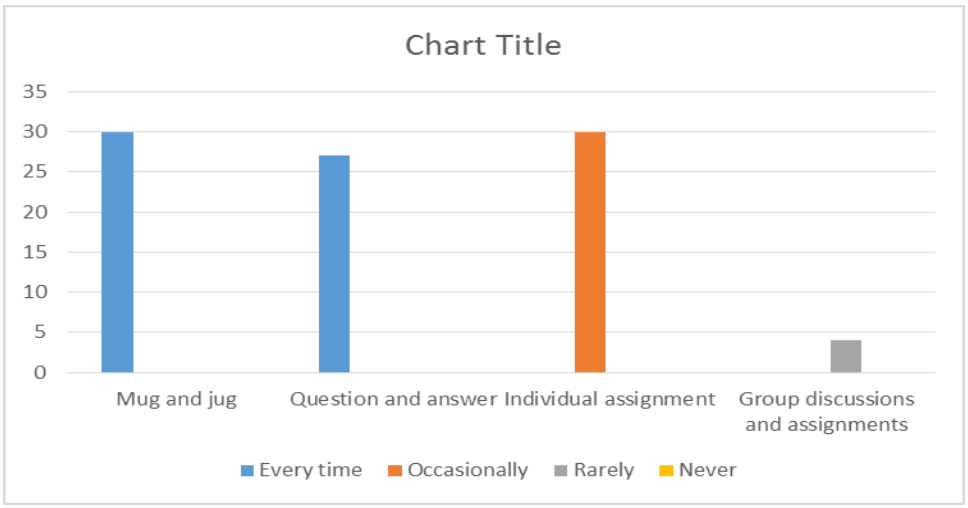
### 4.2.2. Predominantly used teaching methods:

| **Teaching approach** | **Brilliant S.S** | **Kibuku S.S** |
|---|---|---|
| Group discussions/assignments | 4 | 3 |
| Individual assignments | 15 | 15 |
| Question and answer | 12 | 9 |
| Mug and jug | 15 | 15 |

### 4.2.3. How often these approaches are used in teaching (combined results for two schools):

| **How often** | Mug and jug | Question and answer | Individual assignment | Group discussions and assignments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Every time | 30 | 27 | | |
| Occasionally | | | 30 | |
| Rarely | | | | 4 |
| Never | | | | |

This information has been presented on the graph below to show the difference in use of the different methods above:




### 4.2.4. Opinion on impact of collaborative approach on the use and performance of English language:

| School | It has a positive impact | It has no impact | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brilliant S.S | 19 | 8 | 3 |
| Kibuku S.S | 23 | 5 | 2 |

From the interactions with the teachers, it can be confirmed that teachers rarely applied collaborative learning approaches in their language classes. They confessed to majorly using mug and jug, question and answer and giving individual assignments to the students. Most of them confessed not to know about think-pair and share method but have knowledge on group discussions and assignments. They took no interest in these because they believe that many learners will be passive participators. However, the new lower level curriculum teachers agreed to the importance of collaborative learning.

### 4.3. Discussion of results

General findings:

The researcher discovered that most teachers of language in senior four class did not make appropriate use of collaborative learning approaches like group discussions and assignments, and think-pair and share. They preferred to use mug and jug, where the teacher is in charge of the entire learning process, and learners are passive receivers of knowledge. Furthermore, they also used individual assessment at the end of the lesson, giving students personal exercise. They prohibited discussions of such assignments, calling it malpractice.

Most learners were aware of the collaborative learning methods, however, they had rarely participated in such; group discussions and assignments. Many confessed to have used such methods on their own arrangements with fellow students in science subject discussions, but had not done so in English language. Many think that reading English language, and more, discussing it is a waste of time, since it is not as difficult as the science subject. In their discussion groups, English language was not on the list of subjects to be discussed.

When analyzed, the performance of the students varied greatly, with a big gap between the good performers and bad performers. It can be noted that this is a result of individual learning approaches and teacher centered teaching.

During one of the purposive observation sessions, the teacher was requested to use the collaborative approach to see if it has an impact on the students learning. Previous observations indicated dullness during studies, with some students rarely participating in the class, and some dozing off, while others engaged in various activities outside their classroom activities. The teachers often woke them up with warnings such as ‘you just have days to UNEB and you are playing. You should be paying attention.’ Another was ‘you came here alone, and you will leave alone.’ However, when asked to employ group discussion and assignment in one class, the researcher discovered that the learners interacted freely, with the class being lively. Learners freely expressed their views, and during time for discussion of their findings, learners easily expressed their responses in terms of group. The teacher confirmed an improvement in their participation and liveliness.

With the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, the speaking skill among the students was not well taught and practiced among the learners because the teacher was the only active speaker and participant in the class. Furthermore, the performance of the students can be judged according to this lack of participation of the learners, lack of group activities and assignments for the class.

It can be noted that the gap between the well-performing students and the poorly performing students in the subject is a result of the lack of the collaborative learning strategies where the good performers would be of help, but they are not allowed to share their knowledge with their peers since group activities are not promoted and used during class time.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

## 5.0. Introduction

After a detailed discussion of the findings of the study a summary of the study, conclusion and general recommendations were drawn

### 5.1. Summary

The research used both students and teachers of English language during the study. The students in focus were the senior four students. During the study, the researcher used majorly observation method to collect data by observing, secretly or openly, English language classes during the week to confirm the information got from the students using questionnaires and interviews with the teachers. The results expressed the impact of collaborative teaching strategies. The findings and the results of the study have been discussed in chapter four above.

### 5.2. Conclusion

From the findings of this study the following conclusions about the use of collaborative learning approaches in teaching English language were drawn;

There is a strong impact of collaborative learning strategies on the learning of English language in secondary school. Using group discussions, group assignments and think-pair and share during class time and after class can greatly improve on the involvement of students in soliciting knowledge and help in involving those who passively attend classes.

Having four skills, the speaking skill cannot be properly nurtured in learners by making them passive attendants of such sessions. It is through collaborative learning that learners get to air out their views and put the language to use in classroom situations, which stresses the importance of the collaborative learning strategies in the teaching and learning of English language.

These strategies also enable a teacher to identify the weak students through their methods of expression in their groups, which are under his or her supervision during the class time. When learners passively attend mug-jug sessions, the teacher is unable to differentiate between weak and good students since all are passive attendants. But when given the chance to participate, he

or she is able to sheave out the weak students by observing their participation and involvement in the group activities.

### 5.3. Recommendations:

Teachers of English language need to adopt and put to use collaborative learning strategies in ordinary level. Having noticed the importance of these strategies on the students' use and performance of English language, teachers need to use these strategies during their class times.

One major problem of these strategies is that, when not controlled, they become misused and cause disorganization of the learning process. As such, teachers should be controllers of these strategies in class, putting a time frame and guidelines on how the groups are going to be conducted.

Furthermore, teachers should also ensure that passivity does not recur during group activities. When not properly supervised and guided, some students become even more passive during group activities than they would during mug-jug classes. As such, the groups should be strictly followed to ensure every students should participate. This can be by reducing the number of participants in a group.

Lastly, group should be assigned based on the potential of students in the subject. Each group should contain at least one or two performing students in order to be helpers of the weak students. Students can best learn from each other. As such, good performers should be situated in each group and be encouraged and strictly followed to ensure they are helping their fellow students.

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