

Application of Team Teaching in the English Language Class

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Abstract

This paper strives to ascertain the use of teamwork as an instructional strategy in an English language lesson, in a typical Nigerian classroom. Teamwork is the ability of people to work together to achieve a common purpose and team players are the high achievers in the team whose main preoccupation is to see that teams achieve their stated objectives. Our major argument in this paper is that teamwork is a very effective teaching methodology which has been found useful in many other countries in the developed world and which is workable in the Nigerian classroom, especially with its characteristic large class sizes.

Keywords: Teamwork; High achievers; Cooperation; Team spirit; Collaboration.

Introduction

Team teaching can be described as a situation where two teachers work together to teach a lesson. Using a related term to describe the concept, Haynes (2007: Online) states that co-teaching involves two credentialed professionals who are partners in the instruction of the lesson. One professional is usually a classroom or subject area teacher and the other is a certified ESL (English as a second language) teacher.

One thing that comes out of the above definition is that both teachers are professionals who are in a collaboration to work together to bring about desired learning outcomes in the learners. Both teachers have similar and equal responsibilities for planning the lesson although their delivery may differ in many ways. Furthermore, because two teachers are involved, the teacher-pupil ratio in that learning environment is reduced and they are exposing pupils/students to different learning methods that could not have been achieved with only one teacher. The above teaching methodology obviously involves a lot of teamwork and the spirit of “team play”. It is only the teachers who have acquired the skill that can function effectively in the above teaching environment and so we need to briefly consider the concept of teamwork.

Teamwork is the ability of people to work together to achieve a common purpose and team players are the high achievers in the team whose main preoccupation is to see that teams achieve their stated objectives and it is a wonder to consider the progress made when people work in agreement not minding who gets the credit. Many countries especially in the developed world have come to see the significance of team teaching in the classroom, that is, where two teachers work together to teach a lesson. In a country like Japan and many other countries in the developed world, team teaching is employed effectively where a native English speaker is paired with an assistant teacher who speaks the local language. Other third world countries adopt team teaching because of their typical large classes because many teachers have come to realize that it is easier to manage large classes with two teachers than with only one teacher. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to see the applicability of team teaching in an English language class in Nigeria.

Points to note for successful team teaching

1. **Communication:** teachers who teach together need to be in constant communication with each other. They should meet either daily, weekly or before class to plan, exchange ideas, develop and maintain a healthy relationship.
2. **Goal-oriented activities:** goals and expectation for each lesson must be discussed.
3. **Appropriate teaching methodologies:** teaching methodologies must be discussed so that each teacher understands the other’s experiences and methods. This is to avoid confusion and clashes during the lesson.
4. **Mutual trust:** display trust of each other’s skill and abilities.

5. **Cooperation:** Team teachers need to cooperate with each other. They must be aware that each person has a responsibility to fulfill. One teacher must not undermine the authority of the other teacher. They must meet to decide roles and responsibilities before the class.

Why should English teachers be interested in teamwork?

1. Globally, teamwork has become the culture of most international organizations and institutions that today, employers search for people with effective team work skills for employment
2. Teams provide opportunities for the exhibition of multiple skills from team mates
3. Team work is more result oriented and goals better achieved when a team strategy is employed rather than when individual skills are manifested.
4. Pupil/Students also need to learn to function in a team environment to enable them develop teamwork skills for their adult life.
5. Research has shown that pupils/students learn when tasks given require social interaction and group work.

Pre-teaching discussions between team teachers

Teachers involved in collaborative teaching must have pre- teaching discussions to deliberate on and decide the proposed line of action, teaching methodology and the activities they intend to employ in the classroom. The following factors must be considered:

1. Ensure curriculum, goals (both general and specific) are understood by both teachers.
2. Meet before the class to discuss expected learner outcomes and the lesson plan to foster cooperative class management.

Specific points to discuss:

- What are the objectives of today's lesson? What learner outcomes are we expecting today?
- What activities shall we employ in today's lesson?
- Do we have teaching aids/materials? Are they appropriate?
- What are our specific roles today?

After class meeting:

At the end of the class, the teachers must also meet to give themselves the opportunity to reflect on the outcome of the lesson. Their reflections may be made along the following lines:

- Reflections about the lesson whether it was successful or not.
- Were goals achieved?
- Did we derive the expected learner outcome?
- What did not work according to plan?
- Improvements/suggestions about how it could be done better.
- Ideas should be expressed honestly
- Corrections made sincerely and politely.
- Exhibition of mutual respect for each other's abilities and skills.

Strategies in team teaching:

1. **Specification of roles:** When adopting team teaching in the classroom, roles should be specified as indicated earlier to know who is doing what in a specific lesson. Teachers may decide that one person takes the prominent role of teaching the lesson while the other acts as an assistant. For example, in teaching letter sounds, the lead teacher for the day stands in front of the class holding the flash card and models the sound, while the assistant moves around ensuring learners are repeating the sound and responding appropriately.
2. **Collaborative/alternative teaching strategy:** The teachers may collaboratively teach the lesson in a balanced way. While one models the sound, the other teaches learners how to write the sound. Here responsibilities are balanced between the teachers. Alternatively, one teacher teaches the lesson while the other brings in contributions once in a while when necessary.
3. **Teach and write strategy:** The lead teacher teaches the lesson while the other writes down notes, important points and instructions on the board. Example from an English lesson: Nouns. While the teacher introduces the topic and tells learners to provide examples, the other writes down on the board

the examples produced by learners along with any important point or definition given by the lead teacher.

4. **Parallel Teaching:** The class may be divided into two groups and each teacher is allowed to teach the groups simultaneously. This provides opportunity to exhibit different styles and learners are exposed to different teaching methodologies.

Team Teaching in an English Language Class

Warm up exercises: These are activities to prepare learners to participate in an English lesson. They should therefore be easy, simple and short. Some examples are:

- a. **Use of questions:**
 - i. What objects/things can you see in the classroom/outside? (Useful for teaching Nouns).
 - ii. What did you do (eat) this morning? Can be used for a lesson on "Tense (simple past)
- b. **Spelling warm-up exercises**
 - i. Class can be split into different (five or six) teams
 - ii. Split the blackboard into the same number of spaces.
 - iii. Let learners take turns going to the blackboard to write the words
 - iv. The teachers say the words to be written
 - v. Points should be given to the team that writes the word first even if it is not correctly spelt.
 - vi. An additional point should be given for every correctly spelt word.

Teacher Activity: Lead teacher says the word while assistant guides and supervises pupils' writing on the board.

- c. **Framing question warm-up activities**
 - i. Divide the class into different groups
 - ii. Provide handout that has only answers to each group
 - iii. As a group, they should discuss and provide questions to the answers
 - iv. Learners take turns asking questions

Sample answers are presented below:

- a. My pet's name is Cindy
 - b. We live in Lagos
 - c. I love to eat apples
 - d. I am seven years old
- Other activities that may be employed are;

- e. **The E.T. and Elliot word search** (comprehension)
- f. **Word puzzles; days of the week** (vocabulary).
- g. **Phonics practice;** students go through a list of words
- h. They should circle the ones with the short "o" sounds.
- i. They do a word search (puzzle).

Practical activities

1. Team teaching in a phonics class
2. Team teaching in a comprehension lesson (lead teacher teaches while assistant teacher supervises students to ensure they are reading along).
3. Team teaching in a grammar class

Advantages of team teaching

In a bid to serve the needs of language learners, team teaching has been introduced in many schools especially in Europe, while in Nigeria, we may find the strategy trickling into a few private schools. The concept seems to have gained some degree of popularity today because of some of its good points. Below, we present some of the advantages of team teaching in a language lesson:

1. Because two professional teachers are involved, the method draws on the complementary skills and abilities of both teachers.
2. It presents opportunities for the two teachers to provide student-support.
3. More practical group work is sustained.
4. Better and effective supervision

5. Better teacher/student ratio
6. Large classes are better managed
7. Exhibition of varieties of skills in class
8. Efforts, talents and skills are combined to enhance learners outcome

Some significant quotes about teamwork important to the teacher

- A team is more than a collection of people. It is a process of give and take (Glacel & Roberts Jr.)
- A team player is one who unites others toward a shared destiny through sharing information and ideas empowering others and developing trust. (Dennis Kinlaw)
- There is no “I” in “Teamwork”. (Unknown Source)
- Team work: Simply stated, it is less me and more we. (Unknown Source)

Conclusion:

This paper has tried to highlight the advantages of integrating team work as a strategy for instruction in the classroom. According to Robert Yates in teamwork quotes, it is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit, presupposing people working collaboratively for the well-being of the learners without selfish interests.

Needless to say that collaborative or team teaching has become a very significant aspect of teaching in international circles, as many teachers are beginning to explore the available options and teamwork has come to dominate the global work-culture in such a way that many companies present team spirit as one of the criteria for employment. Consequently, team teaching which embodies collaborative work should be encouraged in the Nigerian classroom, to enable students acquire the required skills for teamwork and to prepare them for the future work force. Considering the large classes that characterize most classrooms in Nigeria, team teaching should be incorporated in the Nigerian educational system as a strategy to enhance better classroom management and control and to ensure more teacher-effectiveness in the teaching/learning process. Based on the foregoing, the major finding of this research is that team teaching is a significant instructional strategy that has been recognized internationally which is also applicable in the Nigerian English language classroom. It is also a useful strategy that can help teachers manage large classes for more effective lesson delivery.

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