

Employing Group Work for Task Performances in a Task-based Learning Classroom: Evidence from a University in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Although the pedagogical contributions of cooperative learning to improve the classroom teaching and learning practices have been discussed extensively in the literature, little has been known about the use of group work for task performances in the classroom, especially with regard to the enhancement of English as a foreign language (EFL) students' speaking performance. The present study reported a classroom teaching practice of a university teacher in Thailand and explored whether group work can positively impact the speaking performances of 106 first-year Thai university EFL students. The course was taught using the group work method in a task-based learning (TBL) framework for 12 weeks. Survey questionnaires and students' in-class speaking performance scores were used as the data for this study. Findings revealed that although Thai students were new to the group work method, they held a positive attitude towards it. Students believed that performing in-class tasks and activities in groups could help them develop and improve their English language skills as it allowed them to work collaboratively with their classmates. This study adds to the literature on classroom teaching pedagogy, specifically group work and cooperative learning, with implications on materials design.

Keywords: collaborative learning; group work; task performances; task-based learning; teaching practice

INTRODUCTION

Group work is one of the most popular collaborative and cooperative learning strategies that all teachers commonly employ. Its popularity may stem from the belief that it offers classroom teachers a convenient technique to bring students together and learn from and with each other. As a collaborative learning technique, group work turns classroom learning into learner-centered (Hung & Mai, 2020; Lau & Jin, 2019), where students take control of their own learning experiences by doing classroom learning tasks exercises collaboratively. Several other studies in the literature (Hung & Mai, 2020; Wilson et al., 2017; Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020) have maintained that group work increases the interaction among learners, which is crucial to the improvement of their learning and academic achievement. For example, Hung and Mai (2020), who conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the implementation of group work in Vietnam, revealed that Vietnamese teachers acknowledged the significance of group work in their classes to improve students' academic achievement. They believed that by employing group work, students would be provided with opportunities to practice the language, explore their speaking abilities, and reduce their speaking anxiety. Similarly, Wilson et al. (2017), although of different contexts and participants, explored students' perceptions of teamwork skills in various assessment tasks at a university in Australia. The results revealed that students favored doing some classroom and laboratory activities in groups. They believed that performing some classroom activities would prepare them for their future careers, which require and value teamwork skills.

Despite the reported positive contribution of group work towards students' learning, other scholars (Carless, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Swan, 2005) have challenged its effectiveness as a classroom technique since they believed that group work might only limit the chance of the students to practice their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Such a belief towards group work may hold true, especially in the real classroom context, where some students may only depend on some of the group members to do the work for them. In a recent study conducted by Costouros (2020) on the use of Jigsaw cooperative learning, it was found that not all students held a positive attitude towards active learning activities and group work in class. To Costouros, students hated doing too many activities in the class as they thought they were not learning anything from them. In other words, some students may not perform well in their group assigned tasks, which may also affect the performance of the entire group.

Given the contradicting views on group work towards students' learning process, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the use of group work to enhance students' learning by situating the investigation on Thai EFL students' speaking performance. Thus, the present study reported a classroom teaching practice where group work in a task-based learning (TBL) framework was used in a Thai university English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. This study is of particular importance in Thai EFL classrooms, especially because, based on anecdotal records, Thai learners are emotionally sensitive when asked to perform a task in the classroom individually. Additionally, group work and other active learning activities may "not have been sufficiently researched to be validated empirically" (Liu et al., 2018, p. 1) in Thai university classrooms. This study aimed to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To identify the impact of group work among Thai learners' speaking performance in an EFL classroom using the TBL framework
2. To examine whether engaging the students in different group tasks and activities in the classroom can guide them to enact roles and perform different language use and functions (Ellis, 2009)
3. To shed light on the issues of teaching English language speaking skills to Thai EFL students using group work

The findings of this study would imply different approaches to teaching and learning pedagogies, especially on designing teaching materials that are effective and suitable for university undergraduate learners, particularly in the EFL context.

GROUP WORK IN A TBL FRAMEWORK

Task-based learning is an approach to foreign and second English language teaching that engages students to perform different interactive and authentic tasks in the classroom. In other words, TBL is a set of pedagogical tasks that expose students to use their own knowledge of different language skills needed in the "real world" (Salimi et al., 2012). Nunan (2004) defined pedagogical tasks as classroom activities that engage students in comprehending, manipulating, producing, and interacting using the target language. Such the use of the target language through different pedagogical tasks requires grammatical knowledge so that learners can convey meaning. However, this does not mean that grammatical form should focus on the tasks; rather, the focus should be on the meaning. Likewise, Ellis (2009) also emphasized that although 'task' should be considered the fundamental element when designing any language program, it should also be remembered that 'meaning' is its fundamental focus. Nunan (2004) further asserted that any pedagogical task should have a sense of completeness, being able to

stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle, and an end (p.4).

TABLE 1. A framework for designing task-based lessons (Ellis, 2006)

	Phase	Examples of options
a)	Pre-task	* Framing the activity (e. g. establishing the outcome of the task) * Planning time * Doing a similar task
b)	During task	* Time pressure
c)	Post-task	* Number of participants * Learner report * Consciousness-raising * Repeat task

While there has been a pedagogical change in approaches and methodologies in classroom teaching and learning, TBL has attracted teachers, policy-makers, and researchers and gained popularity as an approach to language teaching in the 1980s (Dailey, 2009; Lenchuk & Ahmed, 2020; Wang, 2008). The main goal of task-based language teaching and learning is that learners should be able to complete different authentic tasks using necessary language skills in a given time for them to succeed in learning the language (Ellis, 2009). It provides EFL learners with an excellent opportunity to use the skills needed to survive in the “outside world” (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). According to Ellis (2012), when a learner practices the language regularly to interact and complete different tasks, effective learning will be attained. More importantly, classroom interaction through engaging the students in many language tasks is vital for language learning. Such classroom interactions can be done by employing group work where students are given various language tasks. Although pedagogically, group work does not necessarily lead to active learning; however, it should constitute elements that promote active learning. These elements include a physical activity where students interact and collaborate towards successful learning in the classroom. It involves talking, reflecting, reading, writing, and listening through paired activities, small and big groups, and project collaborations. Thus, in TBL, group work is seen as one of the strategies that can bring active learning in the classroom as students work together towards meaningful fulfillment of the tasks.

Although there is a plethora of studies on TBL as employed in different ELT contexts (see Albino, 2017; Bao, 2019; Lenchuk & Ahmed, 2020; Ulla, 2020; Zhang & Luo, 2018) that explored the impact of TBL on classroom instruction and students’ language learning, and students’ speaking performance and confidence, there is a paucity of studies with regards to its implementation using group work in an EFL context. In addition, much of the studies on TBL focused only on improving individual students’ language learning skills. For example, Albino (2017) conducted a study on the speaking fluency of EFL learners in Luanda, Republic of Angola, through the task-based approach to teaching. His instrument for collecting the data was a picture description given before and after the teaching. The findings revealed that the EFL learners improved their speaking fluency, as evident through their speech speed, increased grammatical accuracy, utterances, and interactional language.

The study of Munirah and Muhsin (2015), which investigated Indonesian students’ speaking improvement in accuracy and fluency through a task-based approach in the classroom, showed that students’ speaking accuracy could be improved by using a task-based approach to teaching. It was also revealed that a task-based approach motivates students to learn and improves students’ self-confidence. The researchers concluded that TBL delivered a positive impact on students’ speaking accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, a study conducted by Sariçoban and Karakurt (2016) of 56 university students in Turkey revealed that students’ listening and speaking skills greatly improved through the use of various task-based activities

in an EFL classroom. The researchers also stated that EFL students had a favorable opinion on using a task-based approach to teaching. Based on the result of the study, the researchers concluded that task-based language activities also played an essential role in improving EFL students' listening and speaking skills.

In the local setting, the study conducted by Sinwongsuwat (2012) reexamined the two main tasks (interview and role-play), which were used to evaluate the speaking skills of Thai learners. The purpose of the study was to assess the capacity of these two tasks to evaluate the students' speaking skills and make a recommendation about which task is more helpful towards a natural conversation. From the findings, a non-scripted role-play enabled learners to naturally converse using the English language in a communicative setting. It was thought that with constant practice, non-scripted role-plays would help students to develop their English language skills proficiently.

Thus, this present study attempts to address the gap in the literature by employing group work in a TBL-EFL classroom. It is expected that the result of this study will not only inform EFL teachers of the classroom pedagogy, particularly the implementation of group work in a TBL classroom, but other practitioners, curriculum developers, and policy-makers will also be able to consider and prepare appropriate materials and activities for EFL learners. The creation of well-designed and carefully planned classroom activities that engage students in various group work activities will positively impact developing and improving students' language learning skills.

THE TEACHING CONTEXT

With English being considered and referred to as a lingua franca among the nations in the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) region (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Lim, 2016; Ulla, 2018), the need to effectively communicate and to be understood in English among the people is necessary. Thus, an increasing interest in improving the quality of English language teaching (ELT) (Madrugno et al., 2016) can now be seen among the schools in the region. For example, in Thailand, foreign English language-speaking teachers teach English and help the local teachers in many of the classrooms across the country (Ulla, 2019). Likewise, the English language is being introduced to students starting from Grade 4 in Cambodia (Tweed & Som, 2015). While in Vietnam, the National Foreign Language 2020 Project was created to strengthen the students' language proficiency and the teaching competency of the teachers (Dudzik & Ngoc Nguyen, 2015). Therefore, Stroupe and Kimura (2015) asserted that improving the education system, including English language teaching, can positively impact the region's political and economic stability.

Although English is a foreign language in Thailand, Thai learners are taught and encouraged to speak in the English language with speaking activities from the textbooks and other ELT materials prepared by their English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, which may not be task-based. In fact, the English language has been introduced to the students during their primary years at school. However, despite the emphasis on learning how to communicate, students' oral communication proficiency level may still be a problem and concern among teachers when they come to their final year. This problem may stem from the lack of speaking confidence, vocabulary, and the inability to utter clear sentences among Thai university students.

Consequently, schools in Thailand, both private and public, are now making ways to address this condition primarily that English has been used as a lingua franca and as a working language among the nations in the ASEAN region (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Lim, 2016; Ulla, 2018). The teaching of English in some schools is now

strengthened. Foreign English-speaking teachers are now helping the local teachers in English language teaching (Ulla, 2019). Similarly, the ability to communicate and understand the English language is given more emphasis in the classroom by employing different student-centered teaching methodologies. Thus, the use of different collaborative and language tasks and various interactive activities in EFL classrooms and teaching methods and approaches that emphasize the use of the language for communication and interaction may be widely employed among ELT classes in the country. Among these approaches to language teaching, the use of task-based language teaching and learning in an EFL classroom offers a positive impact on students' language learning as it gives an "emphasis on learner-centeredness and relevance is achieved by analyzing the learners' real-world needs and interests" (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007, p. 108).

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

Employing the purposive-convenience sampling method, 106 first-year university students who were enrolled in the first term of 2018-2019 in a university in a southern part of Thailand answered the study's survey questionnaire. Of these 106 Thai EFL learners (79 females, 27 males) who belonged to six groups in one of the General English classes taught by two English teachers (the researcher and one other teacher) in the university, only 14 volunteered to be interviewed. These students, whose ages ranged from 19-21 years old, had a CEFR English language proficiency level of B1-B2 (based on their university English placement test). They took different courses at the university and spoke Thai and English as their first and foreign languages, respectively. They were informed about the study's objectives and the reason why it was being conducted. It was also emphasized that their participation was voluntary, no grades would be deducted nor added for those who participated and those who did not participate, and all the gathered data would be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

A survey questionnaire (Ulla, 2020) and in-class task performance scores were the data collection methods employed in the present study. The survey questionnaire, which was written in both Thai and English languages, asked learners to describe their perceptions of a task-based language classroom. There were 13 items in the questionnaire, and it had a Likert-scale of 5 with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree as indicators. To be effectively understood by the participants, the questionnaire was validated and checked by a colleague to identify any errors, including ambiguous or confusing statements.

In addition, the scores in 4 in-class task performances were also used to describe the impact of TBLT towards students' language performance. All the scores from the six groups of students were tracked and recorded in one common folder through the use of a Google sheet (Microsoft Excel).

TABLE 2. The course plan

Task plan	
Week 1	Course Introduction
Week 2	Pre-test (individual interview)
Task 1	1. Describing one's favorite artist;
Week 3	2. Booking, reserving, and cancelling a concert ticket online;
Week 4	3. Talking about and describing a performance.
Task 2	1. Ordering foods, drinks, and desserts;
Week 5	2. Offering and asking for foods;
Week 6	3. Making a reservation;
	4. Inviting someone for dinner;
	5. Asking about and describing food experiences.
Task 3	1. Talking about locations;
Week 7	2. Asking for and giving a recommendation;
Week 8	3. Making a comparison about cities;
	4. Asking for a direction;
	5. Asking for transportation information.
Task 4	1. Asking about people's activities and plans;
Week 9	2. Asking for and giving suggestions;
Week 10	3. Asking for and checking of information.
Week 11	Individual interview
Week 12	Post-test (individual interview)

THE TEACHING PRACTICE: GROUP WORK IN TBL

To ensure consistency in the conduct of the different classroom tasks, the teachers involved in the study attended an orientation prior to teaching the course. The course plan, as well as the speaking rubrics, were explained so that a clear understanding of the course is achieved. Furthermore, the teaching material, including the course plan used for this course, was designed and developed by the language teachers in the university. The material was designed for a 2-hour EFL class every week for 12 weeks. It consisted of four units/topics, where every unit had to be finished in two weeks.

Following the TBLT framework of Ellis (2006), the following phases of TBLT implementation was conducted.

A. Pre-task

At the start of every 2-hour class session, the students were assigned into groups and a vocabulary exercise was given to acquaint them of the words and phrases that they were expected to use in the different tasks later in the class. Then, a pre-task was introduced. Students were given a model through either a video or a listening script for them to familiarize the tasks. The pre-task could be a roleplay, group discussion, and group presentation that requires group work for the students to successfully perform it. Students had to discuss the model task in their respective groups using the target language. In their discussion, they had to point out the language function and how it was used in a certain context.

B. During task

Following the discussion, students were then given a practice task that was related to the pre-task. Such a practice task gives the students plenty of opportunities to practice within their groups. At this stage, students were monitored by their teacher for some misuse of words and phrases or some other language issues. Other language issues and concerns could be addressed in the class after the given time for practice task.

C. Post-task

Finally, a group presentation task was given to students to exhibit their understanding and knowledge in applying the task in a real-world setting.

FINDINGS

THAI EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A TASK-BASED LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

For the purpose of the data presentation and analysis, percentages for strongly agree and agree, and those for strongly disagree and disagree were combined and compared against the percentage for neutral. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

TABLE 3. *The percentage of students' perceptions of group work in a TBL framework*

Statements	Agree (n-106)	Neutral	Disagree
Group tasks and activities in the class help me to...			
1. be motivated to learn English.	79%	20%	1%
2. be confident with my English-speaking skills.	69%	27%	4%
3. improve my English vocabulary.	85%	12%	3%
4. perform and do the tasks in the classroom using the English language.	73%	24%	3%
5. share and exchange ideas with my classmates using English.	72%	23%	5%
6. share and express my ideas to my teachers in the English language	58%	41%	1%
7. talk to foreigners using the English language.	84%	10%	6%
8. ask questions to my teacher in English.	59%	40%	1%
9. answer the questions of my teacher in English.	67%	31%	2%
10. pronounce English words clearly.	67%	32%	1%
11. use English as my daily language.	46%	46%	8%
12. improve my presentation skills.	73%	21%	6%
13. improve my communicative skills.	73%	24%	3%

Based on the survey questionnaire data presented in Table 3, the students had a very positive perception with regards to performing various tasks through group work. Generally, the results showed that most of the students agreed that group work would have a positive impact on their language learning and practice. Improving their vocabulary was the first item that almost all of the students agreed on. It had a percentage of 85, which means that these students strongly believed that by doing tasks in a group, their knowledge of vocabulary would be improved. They also perceived that group work can assist them to talk to foreigners using the English language (84%), and motivate them to learn English (79%).

Another important result from the survey was the perceived improvement of the students' communication and presentation skills. They believed that group work can improve their confidence in performing and doing the tasks in the classroom using the English language (73%), improve their presentation skills (73%), improve their communicative skills (73%), confidently share and exchange ideas with their classmates using English (72%), and be confident with their English speaking skills (69%). However, despite these positive perceptions of group work, there were still a few areas where students were neutral or disagreed about group work's impact on language learning. Forty-six percent of the students remained neutral about whether group work helps them to use English as their daily language, and 8% disagreed that it did; while another 42% stated the same about sharing and expressing their ideas to teachers and asking questions (41%) to their teachers in the English language.

PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS IN THE DIFFERENT SPEAKING TASKS.

The four in-class speaking performances were done in groups where students before they performed the task were presented and given a model of the language use and function through either a video clip or a script from an audio dialogue. After the presentation of the model, the students were given the time to practice the reenactment of the model task in their respective groups. For their final performance, they were given a different task to perform.

TABLE 4. Students' group performance in a TBLT classroom

	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4
Max	7.5	8.5	7.5	8
Min	4	4	0	4
Average	5.98	6.6	5.99	6.4
SD	0.88	1.14	1.13	0.75

As a result, table 4 above shows the maximum, minimum, average, and standard deviation scores of each task performed by the students in the class. Tasks 1 and 2 revealed that both had a maximum score of 7.5 out of 10, while a highest score of 8.5 was recorded in task 2. However, a minimum score of zero was recorded in task 3 as a result of student's absence from the class. Furthermore, looking at the average scores, task 2 has the highest score of 6.6 with a standard deviation of 1.14 compared with task 4 with 6.4 and 0.75 SD, task 3 with 5.99 and an SD of 1.13, and task 1 with 5.98 and a standard deviation of 0.88.

Generally, based on the maximum scores of the students in each task, they performed well in task 2 and in task 4 with a maximum score of 8.5 and 8, respectively.

DISCUSSION

This study presented a classroom teaching practice that employed group work in a TBL framework to identify its impact on Thai EFL students' classroom speaking performance. First, the findings suggested that student-participants held a positive perception of group work implementation in their EFL classes and its impact on their learning, development, and English language improvement. While they were engaged in different tasks through group work, they also could use and practice the language to perform those tasks in the classroom. These findings support previous studies that learning English with different interactive language activities positively affects students' learning English. The studies conducted by Munirah and Muhsin (2015) and Sariçoban and Karakurt (2016) confirmed that a task-based approach had greatly helped not only in motivating students to learn and to enhance their self-confidence in speaking and listening, but also in developing their speaking fluency (Albino, 2017), improving their writing skills, and vocabulary learning (Bao, 2019). Given the crucial role of motivation in success in learning English (Ochoa et al., 2016), the importance of group work in supporting students' self-confidence and motivation towards learning English cannot be underestimated.

Second, this study has also found that group work plays a vital role in improving the students' English language skills. Based on the findings, students could do better in group work as they could help each other perform well in their presentations. One factor contributing to the students' improved performances when they are in a group is that they could rehearse, memorize, and correct each other's mistakes before the performance. However, it should be noted that the improved performances of the students could also be attributed to the support given by the classroom teachers. Providing the students with support, giving them a model task, and a script would facilitate confidence among students when doing group tasks. Students would be guided on what to say and do and how to use the language in their group task

performances. This type of support is particularly important for students at remedial and beginner levels like the students in this study. Costouros (2020) mentioned that “each student in the group is responsible for their part of the work, but the common goal is to teach each other. They do not work in isolation; they have accountability for the learning of the whole group as well as their own learning” (p.166). Thus, this finding corroborated other studies in the literature (Hung & Mai, 2020; Lau & Jin, 2019; Wilson et al., 2017; Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020) that emphasized the crucial role of doing group work on learners’ language learning.

However, while the mentioned relevant studies focused on the significant contribution of group work in language learning, these studies were not situated in a TBL framework. Thus, the present study gave a different perspective of doing group work in a TBL classroom where it contributes significantly to students’ improvement of their speaking skills. Although Carless (2004), Prabhu (1987), and Swan (2005) objected to the implementation of group work in a TBL framework, this present study argued that for Thai EFL learners who are not widely exposed to different contexts where different language functions are presented and who are culturally shy, the use of group work in a TBL framework could have a positive impact not just on learning the language but also on the use of the language in a communicative context.

Although a number of studies have explored the effectiveness of an individual interview as one of the classroom assessments, one study conducted in Thailand (Sinwongsuwat, 2012) reported that individual interview assessment might limit the English conversational skills of the students as it does not offer real interaction in a context where the language is used. Likewise, individual performance may create anxiety as students do not have someone to perform with, no script, and no language guide to work. Students cannot rehearse their performance in most cases, especially in an interview or just in a simple question and answer activity in the classroom. The tendency is that students may perform poorly in this type of speaking situation. This is true for most Thai students, who are typically shy and reserved, especially in speaking English, as with other cultures in Asia. They are anxious about performing a task individually. They do not volunteer to speak in the classroom, answer questions from the teacher, and express their opinions for fear of embarrassment and humiliation (Bruner et al., 2015). This was confirmed by the student’s survey responses where they expressed doubt that group work would help them ask questions and express their ideas to teachers (see table 3, items 6, 8, and 11). Although individual interview assessment may not be effective in all Thai EFL classrooms, the speaking practice it offers may be a promising avenue for EFL students to practice and be confident in using the English language in their daily lives.

Generally, in the Thai EFL classroom context, group work in a TBL’s framework positively impacted students’ overall classroom performance, which contributed to improving their English language skills. Apparently, the classroom performances were used for scaffolding students’ weaknesses in the English language by emphasizing speaking and language production. How much progress is made by the students through the help of the different language tasks and activities conducted in their EFL classes should be reflected in the post-test results. Consequently, the present study results showed that a few students categorically improved as far as their performance was concerned. This result can be considered a significant development since students had a positive attitude towards group work, considering that English is still a foreign language and that learning it may be challenging (Ulla, 2020). They needed more time and exposure to the contexts where the use of the language is deemed significant. Likewise, to become effective language learners, they need to be challenged, the learning goals carefully set, and the classroom and learning environment non-threatening (Khoshshima, 2017; Mahdi, 2015). Group work can be an avenue where students can practice their communication skills. It may expose them to use and practice their knowledge and understanding of the different language skills through different language tasks

in the classroom; thus, preparing them to communicate in the real world (Salimi et al., 2012). Alvarez-Bell et al. (2017) mentioned that when students participate “in team discussions during the readiness assurance process (i.e., team quizzes) and during problem-solving activities, students would realize that they can achieve higher levels of understanding of the course material through cooperative learning” (p. 143).

CONCLUSION

The present study aims to examine the impact of group work on Thai students’ speaking performance. Generally, the results showed that although there is no best single method to teach English and to make the students motivated to learn the language in an EFL classroom (Mahdi, 2015), group work in a TBL framework provides a motivating and authentic avenue for the students to develop and enhance their English-speaking skills. The results of the group task performances indicated that students performed better when they do the classroom tasks collaboratively. This result also confirmed the students’ positive perceptions toward group work in a TBL framework. However, while students held positive perceptions towards group work, careful consideration in designing and conducting classroom language tasks and activities should be borne in mind to achieve maximum language learning. For example, teachers may first consider the authenticity of the materials whether or not these reflect the lesson's real objectives. It should also be considered that learners may have a different perception of doing tasks with the same students. Thus, putting them in different groups in different tasks may help towards meaningful collaboration and interaction.

The study was only conducted in one university in Thailand, and it was aimed only at examining the impact of group work on students’ speaking performance. Although TBL is a well-researched area, more studies that focus on group work contribution in a TBL framework towards students’ speaking proficiency in EFL contexts, especially in the ASEAN region, should be conducted to impact language pedagogy in the region. Studies that concentrate on the effectiveness of group performance on students’ language learning should also be undertaken to bridge the gap between the present study results and the existing literature.

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