

Implementing Good Group Work in ESL Classrooms

Brad Bell

Department of English Studies
University of the North

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Quotable Quote

'Group work is problem solving in groups, it's socialising in groups, it's discovering and educating one another. It's education. I dunno. It's difficult to describe. It's a whole combination.'

Simon Turner, Haenertsburg, April 1998

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

For the last two decades, group work has been considered a valuable teaching and learning strategy in English Second Language (ESL) classrooms, and, in some respects, superior to teacher-centred methods (Ellis 1994). Equal learner participation in the language class is difficult to achieve in a traditional teacher-fronted class. As Konaré (1994: 7) notes, 'The quick, bright or pushy few are waving their arms about and forcing the pace of the lesson, impelling the teacher to call on them to answer. The frustration of the weaker students causes them to opt out.' Group work is one possible solution to these types of problems. Group work increases language practice opportunities, improves the quality of student talk, helps to individualise instruction, promotes a positive affective climate, and motivates learners to learn (Long and Porter 1985: 207-208). It is for reasons such as these that group work is a cornerstone of Curriculum 2005.



Not all group work, however, is 'good group work'. Wong-Fillmore (1982) has found that unstructured group work results in very little language acquisition in general, while Swann (1992) has found differences in the types of interaction and resultant language acquisition of males and females. The literature on these two areas, namely gender differences and small group dynamics, is discussed in more detail below.

1.2 Gender differences

With regards to gender differences in society, in the classroom, and particularly in small groups, the literature is fairly clear that males tend to dominate females. This is not only true of school-going and college age learners; it even appears to be true from pre-school. DeHart (1996: 81) reviews recent research to conclude that there is 'ample evidence of the existence of gender-distinctive linguistic interaction patterns in pre-schoolers' peer relationships.'

Two different lines of explanation are offered for these differences around puberty and early adolescence. The first is the 'socio-cultural' explanation, which suggests that girls are socialised from an early age into accepting a submissive role within society which they carry over into the classroom. The second is the 'different development' explanation, which suggests that boys and girls are at different psychosocial stages of development, and have different needs and priorities, around puberty and early adolescence. Some examples of the patterns of gender dominance in social and educational contexts are presented below. These examples are followed by the views of some authors who hold to the socio-cultural explanation. Finally, the views of those who subscribe to the different development explanation are presented.

1.3 Examples of Gender Differences

The different patterns of male-female communication styles begin outside the classroom. Maltz and Borker (1982: 196-197) note that 'study after study has shown that when men and women attempt to interact as equals in friendly cross-sex conversations they do not play the same role in interaction.' They identify five patterns of cross-sex conversation which are specific to women, namely:

1. Women display a greater tendency to ask questions
2. Women perform more of the routine social interaction to facilitate the flow of conversation
3. Women make greater use of positive minimal responses (e.g. 'mm hmm')
4. Women adopt a strategy of silent protest when they have been interrupted or ignored, and
5. Women explicitly acknowledge the existence of the other speaker (e.g. using pronouns such as 'you' and 'we').

Maltz and Borker (1982: 198) also identify five patterns of cross-sex conversation which are specific to men. These are:

1. Men are more likely to interrupt women
2. Men are more likely to challenge or dispute a woman's utterance
3. Men are more likely to ignore a woman's comment
4. Men use various strategies to control the topic of conversation, and
5. Men make more direct declarations of fact or opinion.

Differences such as these do not, however, remain outside the classroom. In terms of examples of gender differences in an educational context, Yopez (1994: 122), summarising research in traditional teacher-centred classrooms from 1963 to 1990, notes that teachers:

1. Direct more higher-order questions to males,
2. Make more frequent eye contact with males,
3. Call on more males to answer questions,
4. Allow male students to interrupt female students,
5. Initiate more contact with male students, and
6. Give higher levels of feedback and encouragement to males than females.

With reference to the primary school learner, Gilbert (1995: 4) found that:

1. Researchers have identified sexist stereotypes in classroom materials.
2. Women's experiences are marginalised in reading texts, and
3. There is unequal 'access' to classroom talk, teacher time and question type.

Gilbert goes on to comment that gender issues in the classroom are complex. She concludes that 'how we might make sense of the complexities of the classroom site to adequately account for gender, and how we might alter classroom dynamics to acknowledge power differentials between boys and girls, are still difficult and intricate questions.' (1995: 5).

One possible way to alter classroom dynamics is to separate boys and girls into same-sex groups, so that one gender has less opportunity to dominate the other. Gass and Varonis (1986: 341) have found that, for Japanese adults, males dominated the conversation when in mixed-sex dyads, but that talk was evenly distributed between members of same-sex dyads, both male and female.

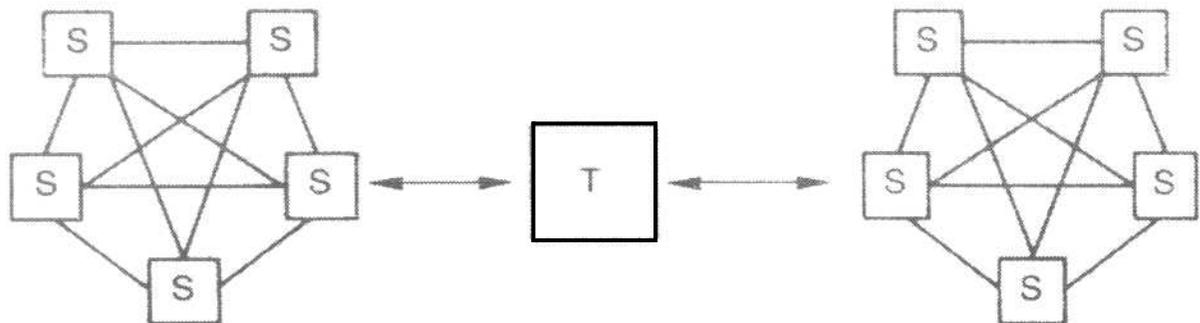
This discussion leads to Research Question No. 1: Is interaction more equally distributed in same-sex or mixed-sex groups for Grade 7 learners in ESL classrooms?

Furthermore, Bolognini *et al* (1996: 234) feel that 'most research agrees that girls have lower self-esteem than males in early adolescence. Boys' better self-esteem seems obvious in domains such as athletic competence, but this is not the case for social and cognitive competences'. This difference is compounded by the different affective consequences (what Flannery *et al* (1994: 12) call the 'hormone-affect link') of the hormone cycles which become prominent at puberty. The general agreement that girls have lower self-esteem may explain to some degree the girls' acceptance of their submissive role in the classroom, even though the girls may well be ahead of the boys in terms of social and cognitive development.

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 3: Are Grade 7 girls socially and cognitively ahead of boys? Do girls understand and apply turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills, and acquire new ESL grammatical forms, better than boys?

1.6 Group Dynamics

Group work is found in a variety of forms. Nation (1989) discusses four styles commonly found in language learning situations. These include the 'combining style', the 'co-operating style', the 'superior-inferior style', and the 'individual style'. The selection of group work style has implications for the selection of group members, the seating arrangement of groups, the interaction patterns within groups, and the types of tasks set for the groups. This project promotes a style of group work which may be labelled 'mixed-ability group work with peer-tutoring'. The most important factor in group work of whatever form, however, is that it increases learner-learner interaction, as illustrated by the following diagram from McDonough and Shaw (1993: 229):



One of the reasons that group work is enjoying more support in the South African education system is that learner-learner interaction is beneficial to all concerned. Allwright (1984: 156-158) discusses four benefits of interaction, particularly learner-learner interaction, in the classroom. These benefits are:

1. Interaction is pedagogically useful to promote the transfer of classroom learning to the outside world
2. Interaction, as a form of communication, is a learning process in itself
3. Interaction involves learners more deeply in the management of their own learning, and
4. Interaction enables learners to discuss their learning on a meta-level.

Allwright (1984: 162) goes on to identify at least five different aspects of interaction management, namely:

1. Turn (i.e. who gets to speak when)
2. Topic (i.e. what is to be spoken about)
3. Task (i.e. the demands made on the mental operations of the learners)
4. Tone (i.e. the socio-emotional atmosphere of the interaction), and
5. Code (i.e. the explicit mode, language, register, accent, etc.).

1.4 The Socio-cultural Explanation

In terms of the socio-cultural explanation of gender differences, Maltz and Borker (1982: 198) suggest that the males' displays of power in conversation reflect their socio-political dominance in society. Yopez (1994: 123) refers to research which suggests that teachers, who are mostly completely unaware of their own gender biases, are not the cause of the differences between males and females in the classroom. Rather, she feels that 'students enter the classroom with differences already inculcated in them by their families and by society, which their teachers then perpetuate.' The teacher would thus be performing the role of what Alsaker (1995: 430) terms a 'distal socialising agent'. One of the objectives of this research project is to measure the impact (if any) that a teacher might have who indirectly tries to reverse the stereotypes that learners bring into the classroom with them.



Anna Malatsi

A further gender-related dynamic occurs when speakers of another language, who are members of another culture with its own norms, learn English and about English-related cultures with norms different to their own. As Schenke, with particular reference to gender, notes, 'ESL students are often (seen to be) caught in competing requirements about who they are meant to be and who they desire to be' (1996: 156). This creates a situation where females, for example, are expected to be submissive outside the classroom, but are encouraged to speak out with confidence and authority in the ESL classroom.

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 2: Will a teacher who deliberately, but indirectly, tries to reformulate learners' gender attitudes through the use of gender-related ESL language learning materials cause any change?

1.5 The 'Different Development' Explanation

Developmental differences between boys and girls are also important. The 'competing requirements' which ESL learners feel with regard to gender roles may well be intensified around the time of puberty and early adolescence. This stage, as Bolognini *et al* (1996: 234) point out, 'is a period of gender-role intensification, when boys and girls will be pressured to adopt more differences in their interests, domain values and activities.' In fact, they conclude their three-year longitudinal study with the observation that 'a boy's identity is developed through a process of separation and autonomy, whereas a girl's development is one of becoming a person of relationships' (1996: 241). DeHart (1996: 81) has found this to be true from a very young age: 'By age 5, girls' discourse with peers has consistently been characterised as collaborative and mitigated, whereas boys' peer discourse has been characterised as controlling and unmitigated.'

These types of psychosocial differences have been observed to influence the nature and quantity of language used in group work settings. Savicki *et al* (1996: 220), for example, found that men use more task-focused and vulgar language in groups (and, incidentally, do not often change their minds as a result of group opinion, nor are they satisfied with group processes). On the other hand, women have been found to use more individually-oriented language in groups (and to be satisfied with group processes and to change their minds to bring about group consensus).

1.7 Training Learners in Group Dynamics



Abner Maponya

Interaction, however good it maybe, is not automatically effective and productive; it is also not maintained without skill and effort. Noting this, Allwright (1984: 168) comments that 'this creates a new role for the language teacher – that of 'learner trainer'. Most learners will probably need training in how to be efficient and effective managers of their own learning, and this prospect prompts a number of thoughts. Firstly, our learners' first need may appear to be for training as language learners in the classroom, but in the long run we hope that any learner-training they get would continue to be useful to them outside the classroom, long after the language course itself is over.'

In this project, the learners at the participating schools will be trained in two specific sets of skills, namely:

1. Turn-taking skills, and
2. Peer-tutoring skills

Both of these sets of skills, as used in this project, have been adapted from Allwright (1988: 175-176 and 207). Allwright first drew up his taxonomies of turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills after observing the nature of the interaction between teacher and students at the university level in the United States and the United Kingdom. His taxonomies are not prescriptive, as he does not try to prescribe how other people in other contexts should take turns and tutor their peers. The taxonomies are descriptive, i.e. they reflect the way people actually interacted during his observations.

More specifically, the turn-taking skills adapted to this project include:

(a) Turn getting

Strategies to Learn

Accepting turns, Taking turns, Making turns

Strategies to Avoid

Stealing turns, Missing turns

(b) Turn giving

Strategies to Learn

Making personal and general solicits

Strategies to Avoid

Fading out, Terminating with no solicit

Furthermore, the peer-tutoring skills adapted to this project include:

(a) *When to identify the error*

Immediately

Delayed

Ignored

(b) *Who should correct the error*

The person who identified the error

The person who made the error

The group as a whole

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 4: Are Grade 7 ESL learners able to be trained successfully in the theoretical understanding and practical application of turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills?

1.8 The Organisation and Management of Group Work

There are four basic organisational choices which need to be made in order to manage group work effectively in the ESL classroom. These include:

1. Class size
2. The size of groups
3. Mixed-ability or streamed groups
4. The types of tasks suitable for group work, and
5. The role of the teacher during group work.

One of the organisational choices to be made in the management of group work in the language classroom regards class size. Class size is considered by some to militate against good group work, while others feel that it makes group work even more necessary. Kilfoil and van der Walt (1997), for example, are of the view that the physical characteristics of large classes make group work untenable. They write (1997: 41) that 'if fifty or more learners are crammed into a classroom designed to accommodate thirty, there is unlikely to be scope for arranging the classroom seating more informally or for convenient movement to divide the class for group work.'

McGreal (1989), on the other, is of the opinion that the pedagogic dynamics of language learning make group work a requirement for large classes. He states (1989: 17) that 'grouping has been identified as a major technique for reducing the depersonalising effect of large EFL classes. When the class is divided into smaller units, many learning activities can be undertaken that would not otherwise be feasible in a large class, particularly those of a communicative nature such as group problem-solving or information-gap activities.'

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 5: Can ESL group work be implemented effectively and productively in schools of different types and classes of different sizes?

The second organisational choice regards the size of groups. Group size has a direct effect on the amount of interaction each group member can have (Long 1976: 288). The smaller the group, the more interaction (and productivity) is possible, while the larger the group, the more chance there is that certain individuals will become marginalised and excluded, or start 'groups within groups.' Groups of four or five learners appear to be an ideal balance (Long 1976: 290). Johnson and Johnson (1991: 64) support this, saying, 'Six may be the upper limit for an experienced and skilful co-operative learning group ... Co-operative learning groups have to be small enough that everyone is engaged in mutual discussion while achieving the group's goals.'

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 6: Will the amount of positive learner-learner interaction in good group work of 4-5 learners, doing common ESL language-learning tasks, be significant?

The third organisational choice in the management of group work is between 'mixed-ability' or 'streamed' groups. Mixed-ability groups have learners of different proficiencies mixed together in the same group, while streamed groups consist of a group of learners from the same proficiency band. Johnson and Johnson (1991: 65) recommend that 'teachers maximise the heterogeneity of students, placing high-, medium-, and low-ability students within the same learning group.'

Mixed-ability groups are preferable for the following reasons (Long 1976: 290):

1. Mixed-ability classes are a feature of the education system
2. Mixed-ability groups produce a higher quality of output
3. Mixed-ability groups ensure a more equal distribution of language practice opportunities, and
4. Mixed-ability groups are enjoyed as much by students as other types of groups.

Also, as Johnson and Johnson (1991: 65) note, 'more elaborative thinking, more frequent giving and receiving of explanations, and greater perspective taking in discussing material seem to occur in heterogeneous groups, all of which increase the depth of understanding, the quality of reasoning, and the accuracy of long-term retention.' Whether streamed or mixed-ability groups are ultimately used, both types of groups ideally need to be formed by the teacher, who, after conducting some form of placement evaluation, is best able to assess the actual proficiencies of the learners.

Another reason for teachers, as opposed to learners, deciding on group membership is that learners quite naturally tend to group themselves with their sets of friends. While this may be seen as positive from some perspectives, such as that learners find it non-threatening to work with friends (Sarwar 1991), it does not, however, always result in focused or balanced groups. Breen (1985: 146) notes that 'sub-groupings which are asymmetrical with the dominant classroom culture also emerge and prosper, such as anti-academic peer groupings.' McGreal (1989: 17) puts it more bluntly: 'All the potential troublemakers gravitate towards one group, which becomes a gang.'



Tom Chauke

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 7: Are ESL learners in mixed-ability groups able to help and tutor one another in an effective manner that results in measurable progress in 'correct' grammar acquisition for learners of all abilities?

The fourth organisational choice regards the types of tasks used during group work. Savova and Donato (1991: 13) feel that there is a category of special activities appropriate for group work, and that 'few, if any, textbooks provide truly meaningful real-world tasks to be carried out in the inter-personal setting.' They define these special activities as possessing four features: the activities are meaning-centred, open-ended, constructed on the real world, and integrate various skills. Other practitioners (e.g. Kilfoil and van der Walt 1997), however, find applications for group work in most 'normal' class tasks. For example, if the class will do an oral exercise, or a poem, etc. on a particular day, then the learners can just as well do it in groups as alone. While the types of tasks conceived of by Savova and Donato are ideal, and the more that are included in text books the better, they are not a necessary pre-requisite for good group work.

This discussion contributes to Research Question No. 6: Will the amount of positive learner-learner interaction in good group work of 4-5 learners, doing common ESL language-learning tasks, be significant?

The final organisational choice to be made in the management of group work in the language classroom regards the role of the teacher. Long (1976: 291) recommends that there is flexibility within the course of each lesson. A lesson may begin, for example, with a lockstep stage involving direct instruction, before

moving on to a group work phase which results, ultimately, in a group report-back session. The teacher will obviously play different roles during these different phases.

Most teachers are used to presenting direct instruction or facilitating whole-class discussions. It is the facilitation role that needs to be played during the group work phase that presents new challenges. As Long (1976: 292) has observed, 'it is more difficult for the teacher not to continue to dominate the class, either physically, in terms of no longer occupying a central focal point at the front of the room, or verbally, in terms of no longer doing most of the talking. It is difficult for the teacher, trained and practised in the lockstep system, to learn to circulate unobtrusively among groups as they work, checking that guidance or assistance is forthcoming from a group member when it is needed, but resisting the temptation to jump in with a correction or the 'right' answer, thereby undermining the confidence of the group in its own ability to seek out 'right' answers.'

As Prodromou (1991: 2) comments, 'the demands on the teacher are greater, paradoxically, not less, than in conventional teacher-centred approaches.' Due to all the facilitation that the teacher must do during group work (e.g. circulating, observing, monitoring, controlling, encouraging, resolving conflicts, redirecting, etc.), McGreal (1989: 19) remarks that 'the teacher must not become less active in the classroom, but rather less the centre of activity.'

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 8: Will active facilitation by teachers during group work ensure that learners still enjoy the same level of teacher-learner interaction and do not become more mischievous?

1.9 Group Work and Grammatical Competence

Spada and Lightbrown (1989) have concluded that some interactive teaching methods produce little evidence of grammatical competence amongst ESL learners. Group work is typically associated with activities designed to promote communicative competence, not grammatical competence (Rivers 1987). In fact, the simple appearance of group work is taken by Frölich *et al* (1985: 48) as their first of five features used to rate the communicative orientation of a second language classroom. Modern teacher-training manuals reinforce this distinction, even though it is not necessarily correct. For example, McDonough and Shaw (1993: 223) begin their chapter on "Group and Pair Work" with the statement that 'from the perspective of methods used in the classroom, asking students to work in groups or pairs has come to be taken for granted as a natural, integral part of language learning behaviour and of communicative methodology.'

While groups are excellent vehicles for communicative language learning, this one application does not exhaust their full potential. Group work may, in fact, promote the acquisition of grammatical accuracy just as well, if not better than, traditional instruction. Grammar teaching invariably and unnecessarily reverts to teacher-centred modes of instruction, of which the efficacy is sometimes questioned (Long 1983). There is some debate as to whether learners in puberty and adolescence acquire grammatical accuracy through parameter-setting (as do children) or parameter-switching (as do adults), or as to what exactly constitutes the neurophysiological mechanism for language acquisition in puberty (Westphal 1989: 84). This project will assume that a mechanism of some sort exists for second language acquisition in adolescence (including Grade 7 learners), and will not enter into this debate.

Some authors, following Krashen (1982), also distinguish between language learning (the conscious knowledge of rules derived from formal instruction) and language acquisition (the creative construction of meaning derived from comprehensible input). Breen (1985: 143) observes that classroom interaction 'exists on a continuum from ritualised, predictable, phatic communication to dynamic, unpredictable, diversely-interpreted communication.' It is possible that group work, with its predominance of dynamic, diversely-interpreted language, actually provides an optimal context for both language learning and acquisition. Group discussion (particularly in mixed-ability groups) is rich in comprehensible input and natural communication, while, at the same time, occasional instances of peer-tutoring create personalised formal instruction opportunities.

Some SLA theorists (see Seliger 1983:181-182 for example) view language acquisition as a process going through several stages, namely:

1. Exposure to new language,
2. The formation by the learner of a hypothesis as to how the language should be used,
3. The testing (often unconsciously) by the learner of the hypothesis,
4. The reception of feedback from the learner's audience, and
5. The reinforcement or modification of the learner's hypothesis.

According to this and similar views of SLA, group work provides an ideal context in which to acquire language. There is, firstly, exposure to a greater variety of new language when learners listen to their many peers rather than a single teacher (who may only talk for a part of the lesson and then prescribe an exercise from a text book). Secondly, there is far more opportunity for learners to test their hypotheses of how new language should be used, because they have far greater opportunities for verbal interaction in groups than in a whole-class situation. Finally, learners can receive highly personalised feedback that is relevant to them individually from a small group of peers, which is not always the case in a whole-class context.

This discussion contributes to Research Question No. 7: Are ESL learners in mixed-ability groups able to help and tutor one another in an effective manner that results in measurable progress in 'correct' grammar acquisition for learners of all abilities?

1.10 Peer-tutoring in ESL Groups

The concept of peer-tutoring in a second language class raises the question of quality, i.e. will the L2 learners acquire the 'wrong forms' from other L2 speakers who make mistakes themselves? Porter (1986) suggests that, in groups that do not function well, ESL speakers may not readily acquire grammatical and sociolinguistic competence from other ESL speakers. The answer to this question is complex: it involves a discussion of:

1. Institutionalised (and hence 'acceptable') varieties of English,
2. The cognitive 'disconfirming data filter' hypothesis,
3. The relative quality of a learner's contribution in a whole-class context,
4. The relationship between formal instruction and group work, and
5. A survey of related empirical studies.



The majority of ESL learners at school in South Africa and Black South Africans who speak at least nine different African home languages. Some researchers (for example, Makalela 1998) believe that Black South African English (BSAFE) shows consistent lexical, phonological and syntactical patterns regardless of the home language, geographical area and even educational level of the speakers. This means, in their view, that BSAFE is now an institutionalised variety (or formal dialect) of English, which deserves to be taught in schools, used in public broadcasting, etc. It is already the case, similarly, that Scottish English, Australian English and United States English are the acceptable varieties in Scotland, Australia and the United States. Accepting or rejecting the view that BSAFE is an acceptable variety in South Africa will influence the number and seriousness of 'errors' a person perceives in the discourse used by ESL learners in group work.

Another issue is that of the 'disconfirming data filter' hypothesis (Seliger 1983: 183). Working within the tradition which accepts the notion of some form of Language Acquisition Device (LAD), researchers have noticed that not all language data (whether initial exposure or feedback) is processed and absorbed by the LAD. Some linguistic data, particularly that which 'does not fit' a learner's current or established hypotheses, is filtered out. This means that, if a learner has already acquired a particular linguistic form, or is even in the process of acquiring it (by testing a hypothesis formed from what the learner heard on radio or TV, read in a newspaper, or heard from a teacher, for example), he or she will not necessarily acquire the 'wrong form' from a peer during group work.

The quality of an individual's contribution in a whole-class context sometimes leaves much to be desired. Teachers may have to cajole a learner to speak out at all, and may then find that the learner mumbles something in embarrassment and sits down again as quickly as possible. As Long (1976: 286-287) noted many years ago, 'working face-to-face with peers, relieved of the need for grammatical accuracy in everything they say, students are more likely to experiment - to use language creatively - than when nominated to speak publicly in front of fifty class-mates and the inhibiting figure of the teacher.'

Furthermore, Long and Porter (1985: 215) found that 'the amount and variety of student talk were found to be significantly greater in small groups than in teacher-led discussions. In other words, students not only talked more, but also used a wider range of speech acts in the small-group context.' From this perspective, then, group work offers a greater quantity and wider variety of learner participation than whole-class contexts. For example, learners learn how to repair broken down dialogue (by verifying meaning, defining requests, or indicating lexical uncertainty, for example), how to prompt the completion of dialogue, and how to monitor and correct an interlocutor's language. The same learners would probably never learn such skills in a teacher-dominated class.

A particular relationship exists between formal language instruction and mixed-ability group work with peer-tutoring. The learners in the groups, particularly the more proficient 'tutor' (who need not actually be formally identified as the social leader of the group), attempt, through co-operative learning, to complete and achieve what the teacher has set them. The groups are not independent in the sense that they negotiate their own learning path, or decide what they want to do or focus on. Rather, the learners attempt to learn from the teacher and then teach one another what they have just recently learned themselves. In this way, the teacher and/or text book remains the 'model' of correct English in the classroom. In the sense of the quality of the model, then, learners working in groups will be no worse off than those working in a whole-class situation, since the teacher and/or text book remain the same.

Finally, some empirical research into the accuracy of student production and the accuracy of student correction during small group work has been summarised by Long and Porter (1985: 222). They found that, in terms of accuracy of initial production, the L2 output of learners in unsupervised small groups is exactly equal to that in 'public', whole-class work conducted by the teacher. Furthermore, they also found that the quantity and quality of correction and completion in small group work is extremely high, with ESL learners miscorrecting other ESL learners during unsupervised small group work only 0.3% of the time. Long and Porter (1985: 223) conclude that 'the fact that the level of accuracy maintained in unsupervised group work has been found to be as high as that in teacher-monitored lockstep work should help to allay fears that lower quality is the price to be paid for higher quantity of practice.'

This discussion also contributes to Research Question No. 7: Are ESL learners in mixed-ability groups able to help and tutor one another in an effective manner that results in measurable progress in 'correct' grammar acquisition for learners of all abilities?

Another question related to that of quality concerns the language acquisition of the leading learner in the group, i.e. the tutor. If he or she monitors and occasionally corrects the language of the other learners during group work, what about his or her own language development? It must be acknowledged that the motivation behind the practice of peer-tutoring is primarily teacher-centred. Kilfoil and van der Walt (1997: 42) provide the following reasons why peer-tutoring should be implemented in the language class:

1. Peer-tutoring relieves the teacher of the burden of giving individual attention to each learner, and
2. The faster learners are kept occupied after they are finished their own work without the teacher having to plan supplementary activities for them.

It is also not difficult to see how peer-tutoring can benefit all the other learners in the group. But what benefit (if any) accrues to the tutor? Kilfoil and van der Walt (1997: 42) suggest that the tutors reinforce their own knowledge as they tutor. This notion is supported by McGreal (1989: 18), who believes that 'peer teaching has been found to be effective – even though it is often the student-teacher [i.e. tutor] who learns the most from teaching other students.' No empirical evidence in support of this notion could be found: only assertions from respected authors.

This discussion also contributes to Research Question No. 7: Are ESL learners in mixed-ability groups able to help and tutor one another in an effective manner that results in measurable progress in 'correct' grammar acquisition for learners of all abilities?

This project measures the effectiveness of training learners in specific language-based group work skills in the ESL classroom. However, since English is widely used as a language of learning, the skills investigated in this project are transferable, i.e. learners can acquire them in their English class and then use them during group work in their other classes as well.

1.11 Definition of the Problem

Through the observations and interviews conducted during the first stage of this project, a clear impression was gained that most of the regular ESL teachers prefer, or default to, teacher-fronted modes of teaching, which includes 'cluster work'. This may be due to reasons such as:



1. A lack of specific knowledge of how to teach and manage the 'mechanics' of group work,
2. The impression that group work requires extra teacher preparation, for which the teachers feel they lack the time, and
3. The teachers' impression that their text books and/or syllabus do not allow them scope for group work.

The first three weeks of this project's observation phase, which were recorded on video tape, indicated that the teachers' understanding of group work does not go beyond the superficial level of physical arrangement. This may be called 'cluster work', i.e. the physical arrangement of learners into groups of four to six, sitting around a common group of tables which have been pushed together.

However, despite the physical appearance of group work this may give, the teacher still dominates the lesson in the same manner as a physically teacher-fronted classroom. 'Domination' means that the interaction (e.g. interpretation of instructions, answering of questions, etc.) is still between the learners and their teacher, as opposed to between learner and learner. The practice of 'chorusing' is a feature of the domination characteristic of cluster work. Savova and Donato (1991: 13), commenting on this superficial type of group work, say that 'this aggregate of individuals amounts to little more than individual activity in the presence of another.' The majority of learner-learner interaction during cluster work which was observed on the video tapes was non-constructive interaction, e.g. joking, playing, distracting, etc.

In two of the three schools in which observations were conducted, the teachers allowed the learners to choose their own group members. This, not unexpectedly, led to the formation of largely single-sex groups based on social intimacy. This voluntary gender segregation has been documented before: "Classes that broke into self-selected small groups split along gender lines, which is not unexpected: Genders have been shown to segregate naturally in American society, and individuals will cross racial lines before they will cross gender lines" (Yepez 1994: 130). In the one school in which the teacher arranged her learners into groups, the teacher used the criterion of intelligence/language fluency as perceived by herself. Her groups were thus 'streamed' (not 'mixed ability') groups, with the 'faster' groups sometimes doing different exercises to the 'slower' group.

The observations conducted during this phase showed quite clearly that:

1. There is a recognition on the part of teachers that group work is something good, but that
2. Learners (and teachers) lack a conscious knowledge of the specific skills needed for successful group work, i.e. turn-taking, equitable gender interaction and peer-tutoring skills.

This discussion leads to Research Question No. 9: Is mixed-ability group work with peer-tutoring superior to cluster work in terms of increasing positive learner-learner interaction and decreasing chorusing?

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

The discussion in the introduction, together with the information gathered during the initial phase of this project, has resulted in the following nine research questions:

1. Is interaction more equally distributed in same-sex or mixed-sex groups for Grade 7 learners in ESL classrooms?
2. Will a teacher who deliberately, but indirectly, tries to reformulate learners' gender attitudes through the use of gender-related ESL language learning materials cause any change?
3. Are Grade 7 girls socially and cognitively ahead of boys? Do girls understand and apply turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills, and acquire new ESL grammatical forms, better than boys?
4. Are Grade 7 ESL learners able to be trained successfully in the theoretical understanding and practical application of turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills?
5. Can ESL group work be implemented effectively and productively in schools of different types and classes of different sizes?
6. Will the amount of positive learner-learner interaction in good group work of 4-5 learners, doing common ESL language-learning tasks, be significant?
7. Are ESL learners in mixed-ability groups able to help and tutor one another in an effective manner that results in measurable progress in 'correct' grammar acquisition for learners of all abilities?
8. Will active facilitation by teachers during group work ensure that learners still enjoy the same level of teacher-learner interaction and do not become more mischievous?
9. Is mixed-ability group work with peer-tutoring superior to cluster work in terms of increasing positive learner-learner interaction and decreasing choring?



2.2 Research Design

Brumfit and Mitchell (1990: 11) distinguish between three different types of 'pure' research designs which are appropriate for language classrooms. These are 'descriptive', 'intervention' and 'experimental' designs. This project, as a pilot, uses an intervention approach to investigate answers to the research questions listed above. Brumfit and Mitchell (1990: 12) describe an intervention study as follows: 'Interventionist studies are those in which some aspect of teaching or learning is deliberately changed, so that the effects can be monitored. Thus ... new types of learning activity may be devised or used in an environment where they were not previously used. The setting is the normal one for teaching and learning, but the research monitors the effect of changes which have been deliberately introduced.'

While intervention studies can attain high levels of rigour through the use of a variety of data collection techniques (e.g. authentic recordings, interviews and pre- and post-tests) and multi-observer analyses, few absolute conclusions may be drawn since no control group is used. The benefit of including a control group in a true experimental design is that there is a much more formal control of variables, resulting in a higher confidence in the conclusions which are reached. However, the disadvantage of the formal control of

variables in a classroom setting is that it 'stops the classroom from being at all typical' (Brumfit and Mitchell 1993: 12). Thus, this project follows an intervention design, which allows the impact of new techniques to be measured (in a variety of ways), while still allowing the learners to act 'naturally' as far as possible.

2.3 Project objectives

More specifically, the objectives of this project are as follows:

1. To identify a sample of three schools,
2. To observe and video tape existing ESL teaching and learning practices in these schools,
3. To elicit the perceptions of the regular ESL class teachers on group work,
4. To conduct a pre-test of learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking and peer-tutoring, of gender attitudes, and of competence in specific verb forms,
5. To conduct a series of intervention lessons, and to video tape the learners' interaction during these lessons,
6. To conduct follow-up interviews with the regular ESL class teachers, and to conduct a post-test (equivalent to the pre-test),
7. To analyse and compare the actual changes (if any) between learner understanding and interaction in the observation and intervention phases, and
8. To synthesise the findings, both empirical and qualitative, into a set of materials which could potentially be used for teacher in-service training workshops.

2.4 Sample of Schools

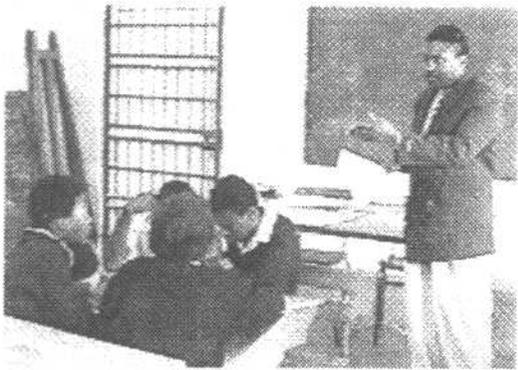
This project was conducted in three schools. School X is an ex-DET urban township school with a large Grade 7 ESL class (50 learners). School Y is an ex-DET rural farm school with a mixed Grade 7 and Grade 8 ESL class. School Z is an ex-HOA urban school with a non-racial, multi-lingual (English, Sepedi, Xitsonga and Tshivenda) Grade 7 English class. These three types of schools have been selected for this study, since a common perception is that group work would not be successful in such schools, as these particular conditions make group work 'too difficult'.

The specific schools within each of these categories were selected for practical reasons. Firstly, the principals of each of the schools were willing to co-operate with the research project. Furthermore, all the schools are within a 35-km radius of the University of the North, which allowed all three schools to be visited at different times on the same day. Grade 7 classes were chosen for this study since the results may be generalised to both the senior primary and junior secondary phases.

2.5 Evaluation of Effectiveness

Equivalent forms of written exercises/tasks (see Instrument 1 below) were administered at the beginning and end of the intervention phase (i.e. pre- and post-tests). These tasks were used to measure the learners' gender attitudes, theoretical understanding of turn-taking and peer-tutoring, and competence in four selected verb forms.

Semi-structured interviews (see Instrument 2 below) with the regular class teachers were also conducted at the beginning and end of the project. These interviews provide access to the perspectives and concerns of the



regular classroom teachers. This introspective data is potentially valuable for the sensitive and relevant design of teacher-development workshop materials.

Finally, the data recorded on video tape from both the observation and intervention phases was empirically 'category analysed' (see Instrument 3 below) by a team of three different raters, two of whom were consultants external to the project. The ratings for each category from the

observation phase and the intervention phase were compared, and all changes measured for significance.

2.6 Data collection instruments

Data was collected and analysed according to three different instruments. These are as follows:

1. Pre-test (and post-test of an equivalent form)
2. Interview schedules (for before and after interviews with the regular class teachers), and
3. Video tape category analysis.

2.6.1 Instrument 1: Pre-test

The pre-test (and post-test of an equivalent form) contains seven questions. Questions 1 and 2 were used to gain insight into the learners' gender attitudes. Questions 3 and 4 were used to measure learners' understanding of turn-taking. Question 5 was used to measure learners' understanding of peer tutoring. Finally, questions 6 and 7 were used to measure learners' competence in the past simple, past progressive, present simple, and present progressive verb forms. The full draft of the pre-test is printed in Table 2.1 below:

NAME: _____ SEX: _____ GRADE: _____ SCHOOL: _____

QUESTION 1

Imagine you and your class mates are working in groups. Will you choose a boy or a girl to be the leader of your group? Why?

.....
.....

QUESTION 2

Between boys and girls in your class, who do you think are more active and faster learners? Why?

.....
.....

QUESTION 3

Sipho: I think Bafana Bafana are the best team in Africa.

John: No doubt about it. What do you think, Isaac?

Sipho: I'm telling you, they're so good I watch every match!

What went wrong when these people were talking to each other?

QUESTION 4

Andrew: When I grow up, I'm going to buy a Toyota because Toyotas are the best.

You: No, I actually like Mazdas the best

speaking } Siphon: Well, I think ...

together } John: No, you don't understand ...

Add what you think you would say on the empty line.

QUESTION 5

Teacher: Today in your groups you must practice "always buy".

Mary: When I go to town, I always buy chips.

Jane: When I go to the general dealer, I always buy Coca Cola.

Martha: When I go to the shop, I am always buying chocolates.

You:

What will you say or do when you see that Martha has made a mistake?

QUESTION 6

Example: He (sit) sits on a chair

I (talk) _____ to my father yesterday. He (watch) _____ TV when I arrived at his house last night. He often (watch) _____ cricket when there is a match. When I knocked, he shouted, "I (watch) _____ TV, dear. Can you answer the door?"

QUESTION 7

My brother (walk) _____ to the taxi rank with me last Saturday. While we (walk) _____ to the taxi rank, we heard someone shouting. The taxis always (come) _____ to the same place to collect passengers. While the taxi (drive) _____, the passengers pass their money to the front.

Table 2.1: Pre-test

2.6.2 Instrument 2: Interview schedules

The semi-structured interview schedules contain a series of questions on a variety of topics. One of the main purposes of the information collected with these interview schedules is to provide access into the minds of the regular ESL teachers so that relevant and sensitive materials for use in INSET workshops can be designed. The full text of the two interview schedules is printed in Table 2.2 below:

TEACHER: _____ SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____

1. Some people say that group work wastes class time. Do you share this view? Why?
2. How often do you use group work? Why?

3. What are some of the practical problems you experience while you are running group work? Can you think of any solutions to these problems?
4. What do you think are some of the advantages of using group work in your English language classes?
5. Suppose there were no practical or administrative problem to using group work in your own class, can you think of any educational disadvantages group work has?
6. Do you think group work or the teacher-fronted style is more advantageous to the learners?
7. What do you think "group work" is? Can you define it for us?
8. Do you feel that mixed-sex groups or single-sex groups are more productive? Why?
9. Do you feel that boys and girls have equal learning opportunities in your English classrooms?
10. What skills do you think your learners need before they can work in groups effectively?
11. Do you think it's possible for you to do good group work in this classroom with your learners? Why?
12. What should a teacher do in his or her language classroom while the learners work in groups?
13. What are some of the special factors, pressures or demands that girls experience in class?
14. Do you feel that your learners usually understand the teaching materials you use with them?
15. What do you understand by the term "gender stereotyped" language?
16. From the perspective of a language teacher, what do you think Curriculum 2005 is?
17. When we have to implement OBE in our English classrooms. how will you adapt your teaching strategies?
18. When you do group work, what is the best way of choosing which learners work in which group?
19. Do your learners already possess group work skills, or do you need to train them first?
20. What can you as the teacher do to make sure learners in groups do not become playful and distracted, but rather focus on their task and take responsibility for completing their work?
21. What are the roles that should be played by learners while they are working in groups?
22. If you have a class of learners, and you find that they don't have group work skills, how would you go about actually training them to develop group work skills?
23. What are some of the ways that learners can or should use in order to take turns fairly in groups?
24. Do you think it is possible for learners to improve their grammatical competence when they are working in groups and can help teach each other and themselves?
25. What can you as a teacher do, when your learners are working in groups, to make sure that boys and girls have an equal amount of talking time?
26. How can you as a teacher measure your learners' ability to use group work skills effectively?

Table 2.2: Interview schedule



2.6.2 Instrument 3: Categories for Analysis of Video Data

The data on video tape was analysed on a macro-level by three raters using a category system. According to this system, raters watch the video tape closely, make judgements as to what types of interaction are happening, and score this interaction in a set of pre-defined categories. The categories used in the analysis of this project's data on video tape are adapted from Allwright (1988), and are presented in Table 2.3 below.

School: _____		Phase: _____			Tape No.: _____		
		M1	M2	M3	F1	F2	F3
Interaction with teacher	Call teacher/ask question						
	Volunteer/answer question						
	Chorusing						
	TOTALS						
Positive interaction with peers	Turn-taking/discussing						
	Peer-tutoring/ organising						
	Responding to decisions						
	TOTALS						
Negative interaction with peers	Challenging/arguing						
	Playing/distraction						
	Ignoring/not responding						
	TOTALS						

Table 2.3: Categories for analysis of video tapes

The columns headed 'M1' to 'F3' on the analysis sheet represent the specific learners in the 'foreground group' being analysed for a particular observation or intervention lesson. For example, 'M1' refers to the first male in the group, while 'F1' refers to the first female, etc.

2.7 Inter-rater reliability

Three raters observed and scored every video tape. The reason for this is that the rating of video tapes involves subjectivity, thus a more accurate rating may be arrived at through the process of triangulation, or averaging the scores of three raters. As Allwright (1988: 176) himself acknowledges, 'these categories are clearly of the high-inference type, which means in practice that the principles of coding are difficult.' The raters who scored each tape did not feature in that specific tape themselves. Thus at no time was any researcher involved in rating the impact of his or her own lesson.

Since category analysis is an imprecise science, a conscious effort was made to standardise the interpretations of the three different raters for this project. To begin with, a rating workshop was held during which interpretations of the various categories was discussed, together with the variety of actions which could fall into each. Practice runs at rating short sections of two different tapes were conducted, and the ratings and reasons behind them were compared and contrasted in an effort to arrive at a common

understanding of the categories. Finally, inter-rater reliability tests were conducted every six tapes to make sure the common interpretation of the categories remained satisfactory.

For the final inter-rater reliability test, a sample of five categories per video tape for all 24 video tapes (i.e. 120 points of comparison) for each of the three raters was compared in a correlation matrix, the results of which are presented in Table 2.4 below:

	Consultant 2	Project Researchers
Consultant 1	0.928	0.899
Consultant 2		0.920

Table 2.4: Inter-rater Reliability Correlation Matrix

All correlations are very strong, indicating a high reliability between the interpretations and scores of the different raters.



2.8 Fieldwork

After observing the regular teachers conducting group work over a four-week period, the fieldworkers in this project acted as participant-observers for a 10-week period, during which the Grade 7 ESL class at each of the three schools were visited for one period per week. For half of this period, the learners worked in mixed-sex groups, and in single-sex groups thereafter. After the classroom-based data collection was completed, an English competition was arranged for the learners at the schools involved in the study. In this way, the learners, teachers and schools involved in the study were thanked for allowing the researchers access to their classrooms.

The fieldwork for this project was conducted at each of the three research sites on the same days for one day per week. The schools have four English periods of 30 - 35 minutes per week, so the observation and intervention lessons account for approximately 25% of the learners' English class time. The intervention phase contained one lesson less than originally proposed due to the threatened teachers' strike by three national unions towards the end of the second quarter. With this in mind, it was decided to conduct the post-test one week early to make sure it got done, and to sacrifice the final intervention lesson.

2.9 Intervention procedures

A reasonably standard approach was followed during the 15 intervention classes which were conducted amongst the three schools. Apart from administrative procedures (such as dividing learners into groups, etc.), a typical lesson consisted of four educational segments, which were as follows:

1. Specifying objectives
2. Group work skill/Grammar structure (explanation & demonstration)
3. Actual group work task(s)
4. Report-back from groups

Some of the intervention lessons were based on worksheets which were photocopied and handed out to each group, while others were based on information which was written on the chalkboard by hand during the course of the lesson. When the video tapes of the lessons were analysed, there was no difference in the success of the group work when these two different media/aids were used.

For the first educational segment of the lesson (see the two examples of lesson plans below), the learners were introduced to the objectives of that particular lesson. These objectives, when appropriate, included both the particular group work skill and a particular grammar point. The objectives were explained as clearly as possible to the learners so that they knew what to focus on during the course of the lesson.

The second segment of the lesson consisted of an explanation and demonstration of the particular group work skill to be practised during that lesson. The explanation was given verbally by the teacher to the class as a whole (while the learners were physically arranged into groups, i.e. 'cluster work'). A pre-arranged demonstration was sometimes then role-played by the learners, often reading their part from a prescribed dialogue (see the two example lesson plans below).

The third educational segment of the lesson consisted of the learners actually working in groups and completing their task(s). The learners were given a range of common classroom tasks (e.g. fill-in-the-gap, comprehension, expanding words into sentences, etc.) and were required to complete these tasks co-operatively. At no stage were advanced materials specifically designed for group work (e.g. information gap, jigsaw, etc.) used. We specifically used common classroom tasks for two reasons:

1. We wanted to measure the impact of the language-based group work skills without introducing new types of materials (a confounding variable) at the same time as well, and
2. We wanted to use tasks and materials that regular teachers would realistically be able to locate or design themselves if they were to conduct group work in their own classes.

The final educational segment of each lesson consisted of a report-back session from the groups. After all the groups (ideally) had completed their tasks, a spokesperson from each group would explain what answers or solutions his or her group worked out for a particular question, and then a spokesperson from the next group would do likewise for the next question. After each spokesperson presented a solution/explanation to the rest of the class, there was opportunity for the other groups and for the teacher to follow-up with further questions, or debate the accuracy of the answer. A selected portion of the transcript of video tape no. 21 is presented in Table 2.5 below, as an example of group report back.

- | | |
|-----|---|
| T: | That's what you ought to to to do. Lend me your ears. Okay! I said I'm giving every group a chance [...] group one is going to read aloud what they have written and then if they think they are correct, they have done the whole thing the correct way, then they will say so, but then if you think they aren't correct, then you correct them. All right? |
| Ss: | mmmm |
| T: | Right. Start one person please, and you read aloud for the whole class... |
| S: | He is [...] the door. He is writing his homework. He is going to the office. He is eating. He is sitting he is sitting in his [...] |
| T: | [...] I suppose. |

Ss: He is looking to his friend.
 T: Okay.
 S: He is running away from the police.
 T: Okay. Right! Do you think you got them right?
 Ss: Yes.
 T: Do you? Are they right or what? Did they do the right thing?
 Ss: Yes.
 T: Okay. Lets go to [...] Listen up there! You listen up there because I wouldn't help them ... get these things right. Okay.
 S: [...]
 T: [...] do you think you did? Do you think they did?
 Ss: Yes.
 T: Right [...] Group three...

Table 2.5: Transcript of group report back

All the intervention lessons followed this basic, four-stage lesson outline. As a result, the learners spent about 30% of the period actually working in groups (i.e. about 10 minutes in a 30-35 minute lesson), with the remainder of the time spent on administration, organisation, and cluster work.

2.9.1 Lesson Plan 1: Turn-taking

1. Objectives

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1.1 give turns to others by asking what they think, and
- 1.2 avoid ending what you say without asking what others think

2. Teaching

Today you are going to do some group work. This means that you will spend some time talking to your classmates during the lesson, not only listening to and answering the teacher. When you talk to your classmates in small groups it is important that everybody has an equal chance to say what they feel or think. The only way you can make sure that this happens is if you develop turn-taking skills. Today you are going to learn one of these skills, namely asking other people what they think. Take a look at the differences between these two conversations:

Conversation 1:

- Peter: I think that boys are stronger than girls because they always do the hardest work at home like gardening and painting.
- Sarah: Girls are strong because they always do household work like cleaning the house and they cook for boys.
- John: Boys and girls are equally strong because they all do some work at home.

Conversation 2:

- Peter: I think that boys are stronger than girls because they always do the hardest work at home like gardening and painting. What do the rest of you think?
- Sarah: Girls are stronger because they always do household work like cleaning the house and they cook for boys. How do other people feel?
- John: Boys and girls are equally strong because they all do some work at home. Who disagrees with me?

Underline the extra words in Conversation 2. What is the main difference between these two conversations?

.....

.....

What are two other ways of asking other people in general what they think?

.....

.....

3. Group work

Read through the statements in Column A and choose the best question from Column B to come after each one. You may only use each question from Column B once, and one question from Column B will be left out in the end.

A1:

A2:

A3:

Which qu

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Choose w

Father:

Mother:

Peter:

John :

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4. Conclu

Report-ba

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Summary

Arrangem

Column A: Statements	Column B: Questions
A1: My brother and I like soccer ...	B1: Who else enjoys sport on TV?
A2: Yes, I also like soccer. I enjoy watching Bafana Bafana on TV ...	B2: Does anyone else like soccer?
A3: No, I don't, I like to go to the stadium when Bafana Bafana plays.	B3: What do the rest of you think?

Which question comes after A1?

Which question comes after A2?

Which question is left out?

A family of four (father, mother and two sons), is gathered around the dining room table during lunch. Choose what question each person asks (except for John) from Column B:

Column A: Statements	Column B: Questions
Father: Someone broke the window....	B1: Does anyone else know?
Mother: I also noticed that....	B2: Can anyone tell me who that person is?
Peter: It's not me....	B3: How do other people feel?
John: I'm sorry, it's me. I threw the ball through the window and it broke.	B4: Have you children heard what your father said?

What question does Father ask?

What question does Mother ask?

What question does Peter ask?

4. Conclusion

Report-back from groups: What answers did you choose for the two exercises? Choose one person from your group to present your answers to the rest of the class.

Summary of main point: What is the most important thing you learned during this lesson today?

.....

.....

Arrangements for next lesson: What topic will you be covering in the next lesson?

.....

2.9.2 Lesson Plan 2: Peer-tutoring

Objectives:

Today, we will learn two things:

1. When one of your friends makes a mistake, tell them that they have made a mistake, and help them get it right
2. Use the kind of "doing words" which go with "how often" words

Exercise 1: Correcting your friend's mistake

Read this passage, and see how Anna corrects Siphso.

- Siphso: I sometimes goes to town alone.
Anna: Oh, I see. But that sentence is not correct; rather say I sometimes go to town alone.
Siphso: Thanks Anna, I appreciate that.
Anna: Then, what do you often buy once you are there?
Siphso: I am buying some sweets, fruits, and ice-cream.
Anna: Great, those are good things you often buy, but rather say I often buy some sweets, fruits and ice-cream.

When someone corrects your mistake, they are helping you.
Don't feel upset or silly. In fact, you can thank them for their help!

In the rest of this lesson, you must help your friends by correcting them when they make a mistake.

Exercise 2: "Doing words"

"Doing words" are words which tell us what someone or something does. For example, in this sentence:

The boy kicks the ball.

the doing word is "kicks".

What are the doing words in these sentences? Draw a circle around them. Remember, if one of your friends makes a mistake, tell them the right answer.

1. The teacher always shouts at the naughty child.
2. The man watched TV last night.
3. My mother is cooking food.

Exercise 3: "How often" words

In English, there are some small words which tell us "how often" something is done. In this sentence:

The teacher always shouts at the naughty child.

the "how often" word is "always".

What are the "how often" words in the following sentences? Draw a circle around them. Remember, if one of your friends makes a mistake, tell them the right answer.

4. Kagiso sometimes buys sweets at the shop.
5. Tebogo never does his homework.
6. I am usually on time for school.

Exercise 4: "Doing words" with "How often" words

When a "doing word" comes after a "how often" word, the "doing word" must always be in its short (or 'simple') form. The short form looks like this:

<u>"doing word"</u>	<u>short form</u>	<u>(long form)</u>
sit	sit or sits	(am sitting)
drink	drink or drinks	(am drinking)

Remember: When we are talking about "he", "she" or "it", we must always put an "-s" on the end of the doing word.

Exercise 5: "Doing words" with "How often" words

Read the following passage. First, draw circles around the "how often" words. Then fill in the "doing words" in the empty spaces. Remember, if one of your friends makes a mistake, tell them the right answer.

You know, I like Kagiso. She always (7) _____ her homework. She is a hard-working girl. People who work hard at school usually (8) _____ success in life. They often (9) _____ good jobs, and make lots of money. Now Peter never (10) _____ hard at school. He sometimes (11) _____ with the other pupils, and at other times he (12) _____ out the window. In the past, people normally (13) _____ that boys would get good jobs and have money. They thought that girls would work at home. Now, that is not true any more. Girls who always (14) _____ hard will also be successful.

2.10 Research Outcomes

This pilot project was designed to produce two different types of outcomes, namely

1. A report containing (a) a description of the manner in which gender influences small-group interaction in Grade 7 ESL classrooms, and (b) an evaluation of the impact of training learners in turn-taking and peer-tutoring strategies in large classes, mixed-level classes, and non-racial classes, and
2. A programme, with printed materials and a training video, which could potentially be used for in-service teacher-development workshops to promote the use of good group work in ESL and other classrooms.



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Table 3.1

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

Three main types of data analysis are conducted, namely:

1. Scores derived from pre-test and post-test responses
2. Multi-observer macro-level category analyses of data on all video tapes
3. Micro-level analyses of selected video tapes.

The results of each of these different analyses are presented below.

3.1 Pre- and Post-tests

The questions in the pre-test and post-test elicited responses which are analysed in terms of four different areas of interest, namely:

1. Gender attitudes
2. Understanding of turn-taking
3. Understanding of peer-tutoring
4. Proficiency in four selected verb forms.

3.1.1 Gender attitudes

The gender-related attitudes of the learners in the three schools were measured by Questions 1 and 2 (printed above in Table 2.1) of the pre- and post-tests. These questions were designed to measure the impact of the indirect use of gender-related language learning materials on the attitudes of learners. By 'indirect' we mean that the teacher, learners and group task would be focused on a non-gender-related language activity, but the content of the stimulus material for that activity would be gender-related. For example, a comprehension which called for precise definitions would focus learners on the structure of definitions, but would require them to read a gender-related passage as the basis of their task. The gender-related materials which were used in this indirect manner promoted equality of the sexes, and challenged gender-specific stereotypes.

The learners' responses to the two questions were grouped into gender-related categories (e.g. boys choose boys, boys choose girls, etc.). The number of learners making choices in each category were recorded for both the pre- and post-tests, with choices and changes for Question 1 indicated by cross-tabulation in Table 3.1 below.

Q1 Pre-test	Q1 Post-test			Total
	Boy	Either	Girl	
Boy	16		6	22
Either		3	1	4
Girl	2	1	36	39
Total	18	4	43	65

Table 3.1: Cross-tabulation of gender scores (Q1)

The scores reflect that there was very little change in gender attitude as measured by Question 1. Only 15.4% of learners changed the gender of the person they would prefer as their group leader (change is indicated in Table 3.1 and after by italics), while 84.6% did not change at all (no change is indicated in Table 3.1 and after by bold face).

In terms of gender, the majority of what change did occur is accounted for by six boys who preferred boy leaders in the pre-test, but who later chose girl leaders in the post-test. An additional one learner chose either a boy or girl in the pre-test, but chose a girl in the post-test. The swing towards girl group leaders thus accounts for 70% of the overall change in gender attitudes.



In terms of schools (ignoring the small number who chose "Either"), four out of twelve (i.e. 33%) of learners at the farm school changed their gender attitudes, three out of seventeen (i.e. 18%) of learners at the multilingual school changed their attitudes, while only one out of thirty-one (i.e. 3%) of learners at the township school changed their gender attitudes.

Thus, even though the overall amount of change for Q1 is small, the largest single proportion of what change there was is accounted for by boys at the farm school who, after the group work intervention, changed their preference to girl group leaders.

The results for Question 2 are presented in Table 3.2 below.

Q2 Pre-test	Q2 Post-test			Total
	Boy	Either	Girl	
Boy	15		<i>2</i>	17
Either	<i>1</i>	1	<i>1</i>	3
Girl	<i>6</i>		39	45
Total	22	1	42	65

Table 3.2: Cross-tabulation of gender scores (Q2)

As with Q1, there was again very little change in gender attitudes. The same number of learners (i.e. 15.4%) changed their choice of which gender is the "more active and faster learner", while the majority (i.e. 84.6%) showed no change at all. In other words, there is no significant difference between the distribution of attitudes, as measured by both Q1 and Q2, before and after our intervention. The learners appear, very strongly, to hold precisely the same gender-related attitudes both before and after our intervention. Thus the indirect use of gender-related materials, used for approximately 25% of the learners' class time, was ineffective in influencing the learners' gender attitudes.

In terms of gender, a closer analysis of the small amount of change that did occur reveals that the direction of change was largely towards boys. Six girls who chose girls in the pre-test, together with one learner who chose either, all felt that boys were the more active and faster learners in the post-test.

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In terms of schools, two out of twelve (i.e. 17%) of learners in the farm school changed their attitudes, five out of twenty one (i.e. 24%) of those in the multilingual school changed, and three out of thirty-two (i.e. 9%) learners in the township school changed.

Thus, even though the overall amount of change for Q2 is again small, the largest single proportion of what change there was is accounted for by girls at the multilingual school who, after the group work intervention, changed their perceptions and felt that boys are the more active and faster learners.

Taking Q1 and Q2 together in terms of gender, the amount and direction of what little gender attitude change there was is equal between boys and girls. However, this amount of change is not equal between the different types of schools. On average, one out of every four learners (i.e. 25%) at the farm school changed their gender attitudes, one out of every five (i.e. 21%) did likewise at the multilingual school, while only one out of every seventeen learners (i.e. 6%) at the township school changed their gender attitudes.

3.1.2 Turn-taking

Question 3 (printed above in Table 2.1) in the pre- and post-tests measured the learners' understanding of turn-taking in small groups. Question 4 was also supposed to provide an indication of the learners' understanding of turn-taking; however, the question was poorly worded and caused confusion and misinterpretation amongst the learners, so it is excluded from this analysis. Question 3 was designed to measure the impact of the specific training in turn-taking skills the learners received from the researchers during the intervention phase. In writing a response to Question 3, the learners simply demonstrated their theoretical understanding of turn-taking, not their practical skill in actually taking turns in small groups. The level of practical skill was measured by the analysis of our data on video tape.

The learners' answers were scored as "A" for an acceptable answer, "X" for an unacceptable answer. A summary and analysis of the scores are presented in Table 3.3 below.

Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Pre-test	.42	65	.50	.06
Post-test	.63	65	.49	.06
	Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
Difference	.22	3.37	64	.001

Table 3.3: Analysis of theoretical understanding of turn-taking: Overall (Q3)

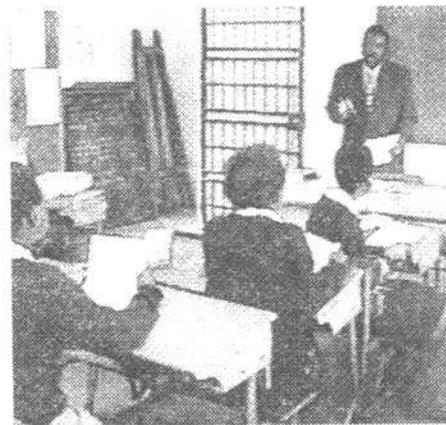
The analysis of the difference in scores between the pre- and post-tests indicates that there is a significant overall improvement of 22% ($p = 0.001$) in the learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking. Thus, the specific training of the learners in turn-taking skills during the intervention phase had a significantly positive impact on the learners' understanding of turn-taking in small groups.

An analysis of the changes in learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking in terms of gender is presented in Table 3.4 below.

	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Girls	Pre-test	.45	38	.50	.08
	Post-test	.74	38	.45	.07
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.29	3.88	37	<.001
	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Boys	Pre-test	.37	27	.49	.09
	Post-test	.48	27	.51	.10
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.11	1.00	26	.327

Table 3.4: Analysis of theoretical understanding of turn-taking: Gender (Q3)

As can be seen from Table 3.4, a significant majority of the overall improvement in the learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking is accounted for by the large improvement (29%) in the girls' scores. The boys' scores also improved somewhat (11%), but this improvement is not significant by itself. In fact, the large improvement made by the girls, in conjunction with the fact that there are eleven more girls in the sample than boys, accounts for the significance of the overall improvement by the entire sample, i.e. the girls "carried" the boys. This is illustrated in a different manner, i.e. cross-tabulation, in Table 3.5 below.



	Q3 Pre-test	Q3 Post-test		Total
		A	X	
Girls	A	17		17
	X	11	10	21
	Total	28	10	38
Boys	A	7	3	10
	X	6	11	17
	Total	13	14	27

Table 3.5: Gender cross-tabulation of theoretical understanding of turn-taking (Q3)

As Table 3.5 shows, of the 17 girls who scored acceptable ("A") answers in the pre-test, all of them scored acceptable answers again in the post-test, i.e. there was no regression. Of the 21 who scored unacceptable answers in the pre-test, 11 of these (i.e. 52%) improved their understanding and scored acceptable answers on the post-test. This resulted in an overall total of 74% of girls scoring acceptable answers in the post-test.

However, of the 7 boys who scored acceptable answers in the pre-test, 3 (i.e. 43%) regressed and scored unacceptable answers in the post-test. Of the 17 boys who scored unacceptable answers in the pre-test, only 6 (i.e. 35%) improved their understanding and scored acceptable answers in the post-test. This resulted in an

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overall total of only 48% of boys scoring acceptable answers in the post-test. It is clear that the girls' theoretical understanding of turn-taking improved far more than that of the boys, and, again, the girls' large improvement "carried" the boys and resulted in an overall improvement.

Furthermore, an analysis the changes in learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking in terms of school type is presented in Table 3.6 below.

	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
<i>Farm School</i>	Pre-test	.42	12	.51	.15
	Post-test	.33	12	.49	.14
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	-.09	.43	11	.674
<i>Multilingual School</i>	Pre-test	.81	21	.40	.09
	Post-test	.95	21	.22	.05
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.14	1.83	20	.083
<i>Township School</i>	Pre-test	.16	32	.37	.07
	Post-test	.53	32	.51	.09
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.38	4.31	31	<.001

Table 3.6: Analysis of theoretical understanding of turn-taking: Type of school (Q3)

The largest improvement (38%) in theoretical understanding of turn-taking was made by the learners at the township school. The learners at the multilingual school made a smaller improvement (14%), but the level of understanding they demonstrated in the pre-test (81%) was already higher than that achieved by the township school learners in the post-test (53%).

In the case of the farm school, the learners actually scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test. We interpret this as a difficulty in written English expression, rather than a decline in learners' understanding of turn-taking. This interpretation is supported by the significant increase in actual turn-taking demonstrated during small group work by these same learners as recorded on video tape.

3.1.3 Peer-tutoring

In a similar manner, Question 5 of the pre- and post-tests (printed in Table 2.1 above) was designed to provide an indication of the learners' theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring. This question was asked in order to measure the impact of the specific training the learners received in peer-tutoring skills during the intervention phase on their understanding of peer-tutoring. The practical skill of the learners in actually tutoring peers during small group work was measured from the data on video tape.

Responses to the question such as 'I will correct her' were not accepted as satisfactory, while answers giving an indication of *how* the learner would correct Martha were accepted. An analysis of the scores of the learners' responses to Question 5 are presented in Table 3.7 below.

Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Pre-test	.20	65	.40	.05
Post-test	.65	65	.48	.06
	Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
Difference	.45	6.43	64	<.001

Table 3.7: Analysis of theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring: Overall (Q5)

The analysis of peer-tutoring scores for Question 5 indicates that, as with their understanding of turn-taking, the specific training of the learners in peer-tutoring skills during the intervention phase had a significantly positive impact (45%) on the learners' theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring in small groups.

An analysis of the changes in learners' theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring in terms of gender is presented in Table 3.8 below.



	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Girls	Pre-test	.18	38	.39	.06
	Post-test	.68	38	.47	.08
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.50	5.53	37	<.001
	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Boys	Pre-test	.22	27	.42	.08
	Post-test	.59	27	.50	.10
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.37	3.41	26	.002

Table 3.8: Analysis of theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring: Gender (Q5)

The understanding of peer-tutoring by both boys and girls increased significantly, but the understanding of girls (50%) increased more than that of boys (37%). In both cases, however, it appears from the learners' responses in the pre-test that they understood peer-tutoring far less than they did turn-taking, which might help explain the large improvements both boys and girls made. These improvements are illustrated in a different manner, i.e. cross-tabulation, in Table 3.9 below.

	Girls	Boys

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	Farm School	Multilingual School	Township School

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	Q3 Pre-test	Q3 Post-test		Total
		A	X	
Girls	A	6	1	7
	X	20	11	31
	Total	26	12	38
Boys	A	5	1	6
	X	11	10	21
	Total	16	11	27

Table 3.9: Cross-tabulation of theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring: Gender (Q5)

As is illustrated in Table 3.9, 7 girls provided acceptable answers in the pre-test, but 1 regressed in the post-test. Conversely, 31 provided unacceptable answers in the pre-test, and 20 of these improved in the post-test. Overall, 26 out of 38 girls (i.e. 68%) provided acceptable answers in the post-test. On the other hand, 6 boys provided acceptable answers in the pre-test, but 1 of these regressed. Of the 21 who provided unacceptable answers in the pre-test, 11 improved. Overall, 16 out of 27 boys (i.e. 59%) provided acceptable answers in the post-test.

An analysis of the changes in learners' theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring in terms of school type is presented in Table 3.10 below.

	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Farm School	Pre-test	.17	12	.39	.11
	Post-test	.08	12	.29	.08
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	-.09	1.00	11	.339
Multilingual School	Pre-test	.43	21	.51	.11
	Post-test	.90	21	.30	.07
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.48	3.63	20	.002
Township School	Pre-test	.06	32	.25	.04
	Post-test	.69	32	.47	.08
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.63	7.19	31	<.001

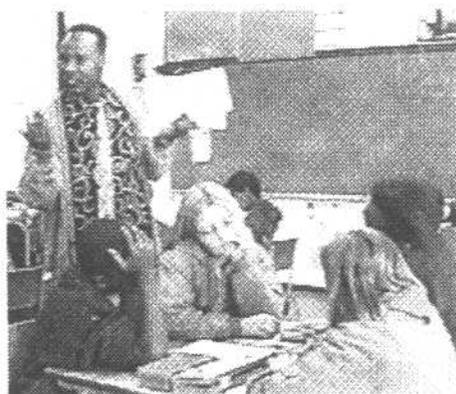
Table 3.10: Analysis of theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring: Type of school (Q5)

The largest improvement (63%) in theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring was again made by the learners at the township school. The learners at the multilingual school made a smaller improvement (48%), but the level of understanding they demonstrated in the post-test (90%) was higher than that achieved by the township school learners (69%).

In the case of the farm school, the learners again scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test. We again interpret this as a difficulty in written English expression, rather than a decline in learners' understanding of turn-taking, since the actual turn-taking demonstrated during small group work by these same learners as recorded on video tape increased significantly.

3.1.4 Verb Forms

The final two questions of the pre- and post-tests (printed in Table 2.1 above) are designed to measure the learners' proficiency in four selected verb forms. Group work is known to be effective for the acquisition of communicative competence, so the purpose of these questions is to measure the impact of the specific training of learners in peer-tutoring skills on their acquisition of grammatical accuracy, i.e. selected verb forms. It is assumed that the acquisition of specific verb forms reflects the acquisition of grammatical accuracy in general.



The numbers of learners' acceptable responses for each of the particular verb forms are presented in Table 3.11 below. Since there are two questions for each form of the verb, the scores are out of double the number of learners in the class. Thus, figures such as 9/24 in the right-hand column represent an improvement of 9 correct scores out of 24 questions (in a class of 12 learners).

	Verb Form	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
<i>Farm school</i>	Past Simple	15	12	-3/24
	Past Continuous	0	1	1/24
	Present Simple	0	9	9/24
	Present Continuous	0	3	3/24
<i>Multi-lingual school</i>	Past Simple	33	38	5/44
	Past Continuous	8	27	19/44
	Present Simple	19	42	23/44
	Present Continuous	16	23	7/44
<i>Township school</i>	Past Simple	38	45	7/72
	Past Continuous	0	0	0/72
	Present Simple	17	30	13/72
	Present Continuous	0	1	1/72
<i>Overall change</i>	Past Simple		+10/140 (7%)	
	Past Continuous		+20/140 (14%)	
	Present Simple		+45/140 (32%)	
	Present Continuous		+11/140 (8%)	

Table 3.11: Correct responses to verb form questions (Q6 and Q7)

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Table 3.12:

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Boys	Girls

Table 3.13:

Both boys and girls improved markedly. An analysis of variance is presented in Table 3.14 below.

Farm School

Apart from the past simple form for the farm school, and the past continuous form for the township school, the learners showed improvement for all other verb forms. The largest improvements were made for the present simple form (32%) and the past continuous form (14%). These changes were measured by a paired t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 3.12 below.

Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Pre-test	2.17	65	1.53	.19
Post-test	3.42	65	2.24	.28
	Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
Difference	1.25	6.94	64	<.001

Table 3.12: Analysis of verb forms: Overall (Q6 and Q7)

The analysis presented in Table 3.12 indicates that the overall improvement in correct verb forms is indeed significant. This indicates that peer-tutoring has a significantly positive impact on the acquisition of grammatical accuracy. An analysis of the improvements in correct verb forms, with reference to gender, are presented below in Table 3.13.

	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
<i>Girls</i>	Pre-test	2.13	38	1.42	.23
	Post-test	3.26	38	2.24	.36
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	1.13	4.79	37	<.001
	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
<i>Boys</i>	Pre-test	2.22	27	1.69	.33
	Post-test	3.63	27	2.27	.44
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	1.41	5.05	26	<.001

Table 3.13: Analysis of verb forms: Gender (Q6 & Q7)

Both boys and girls showed significant improvements in their acquisition of verb forms, but the boys improved more (1.41) than the girls (1.13). This is the first time that the boys have out-performed the girls. An analysis of the improvement in verb form scores, with reference to the types of schools, is presented in Table 3.14 below.

	Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
<i>Farm School</i>	Pre-test	1.25	12	.87	.25
	Post-test	2.17	12	1.75	.51
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.92	1.84	11	.094

Multilingual School	Pre-test	3.76	21	1.26	.28
	Post-test	6.05	21	1.16	.25
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	2.29	8.81	20	<.001
Township School	Pre-test	1.47	32	.98	.17
	Post-test	2.16	32	1.22	.22
		Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
	Difference	.69	3.47	31	.002

Table 3.14: Analysis of verb forms: Type of school (Q6 and Q7)

All three schools show a reasonable to large improvement in verb form scores. The multilingual school improved the most (2.29), the farm school improved well (0.92), and the township school's improvement (0.69), although the smallest, is still significant.



The final statistical analysis for verb forms measures the improvement made specifically by the 'tutors' of the various groups. The question was raised in the introduction as to whether the learners with higher scores in the pre-test would, in fact, learn anything while they peer-tutored the members of their groups, who had achieved lower scores than themselves. In this project, there is a total of fourteen groups in all three of the schools. The pre- and post-test scores for Questions 6 and 7 are compared for the 'tutors' of thirteen of these groups, as one 'tutor' did not submit her post-test. The analysis of the improvement made by these tutors is presented in Table 3.15 below:

Test	Mean	Number	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean
Pre-test	3.69	13	1.49	0.41
Post-test	4.69	13	2.50	0.69
	Mean	Paired-t	DF	Signif. (2-tailed)
Difference	1.00	2.14	12	0.05

Table 3.15: Analysis of tutors' own improvement in verb forms (Q6 and Q7)

It is clear from the results in Table 3.15 that the 'tutors' did, in fact, make a significant improvement in verb form proficiency. While the amount of improvement by the 13 'tutors' (+1.00) is slightly lower than the improvement for the 52 non-tutors (+1.31), it is still statistically significant. In fact, the average score of the 13 'tutors' in the pre-test (3.69) is higher than the average score of all other 52 learners in the post-test (3.10). The 'tutors' are thus not retarded by their tutoring role; they also made good improvements themselves.

3.2 Macro-level Category Analysis of Video Data

The average scores for each of the four categories of learner interaction per tape are presented in Table 3.16 below. An indication of the particular research phase during which each video tape was recorded is given

down the left hand column of the table. Each score given in Table 3.16 is a 'per learner average' for the middle 20 minutes of the lesson recorded on video tape. These figures were derived from the interactions of the members of the clearly visible 'foreground' group only.

	Tape	School	General Interaction Categories			
			<i>With teacher</i>	<i>Positive with peers</i>	<i>Negative with peers</i>	<i>Chorus</i>
<i>Observation phase</i>	01	Farm	2.13	2.53	5.40	1.33
	02	Multilingual	1.75	0.58	0.92	9.33
	03	Township	0.00	0.17	4.72	16.00
	04	Farm	2.33	1.13	1.07	50.67
	05	Multilingual	1.07	2.67	1.33	1.33
	06	Township	0.00	1.17	0.28	4.67
	07	Farm	2.56	0.61	0.17	7.67
	08	Multilingual	1.00	1.47	0.53	2.67
	09	Township	0.17	0.00	0.25	8.00
<i>Intervention phase (mixed-sex groups)</i>	10	Farm	1.33	5.08	0.25	0.42
	11	Multilingual	2.67	1.50	2.08	0.42
	12	Township	0.40	3.20	0.60	0.53
	13	Farm	1.42	4.25	1.50	0.33
	14	Multilingual	1.50	6.75	2.17	1.92
	15	Township	0.00	15.83	2.08	1.67
	16	Farm	1.33	13.00	0.00	0.00
	17	Multilingual	0.67	14.83	7.25	0.00
	18	Township	0.53	12.60	1.80	0.27
<i>Intervention phase (same-sex groups)</i>	19	Farm	0.00	11.22	1.11	2.33
	20	Multilingual	2.78	10.11	4.78	4.33
	21	Township	0.22	5.11	1.56	5.00
	22	Farm	1.78	19.89	1.67	1.11
	23	Multilingual	0.89	13.00	1.67	1.00
	24	Township	2.11	9.44	0.56	1.67

Table 3.16: Macro-analysis of video tapes

Summary statistics of Table 3.16 are presented for the observation phase and the overall intervention phase in Table 3.17 below.

		Interaction with Teacher	Positive Interaction	Negative Interaction	Chorusing
Observ. Phase	N	9	9	9	9
	Mean	1.22	1.15	1.63	11.30
	S.D.	1.02	.95	1.99	15.48
Interven. Phase	N	15	15	15	15
	Mean	1.18	9.72	1.94	1.40
	S.D.	.90	5.28	1.85	1.51

Table 3.17: Summary statistics of video category analysis

Tukey HSD multiple comparison tests were undertaken between the three different phases (i.e. observation phase, mixed-sex intervention phase, and same-sex intervention phase) within each category of interaction. The results of these multiple comparisons are presented in Table 3.18 below.



		Phase A	Phase B	Mean Difference	Std. Err.	Sig.
Interaction with teacher	Observation phase	Intervention: Mixed sex		.13	.45	.96
		Intervention: Same sex		-.07	.51	.99
	Intervention: Mixed sex	Observation phase		-.13	.45	.96
		Intervention: Same sex		-.20	.51	.92
	Intervention: Same sex	Observation phase		.07	.51	.99
		Intervention: Mixed sex		.20	.51	.92
Positive interaction with peers	Observation phase	Intervention: Mixed sex		-7.41*	1.97	<.01
		Intervention: Same sex		-10.31*	2.20	<.01
	Intervention: Mixed sex	Observation phase		7.41*	1.97	<.01
		Intervention: Same sex		-2.90	2.20	.40
	Intervention: Same sex	Observation phase		10.31*	2.20	<.01
		Intervention: Mixed sex		2.90	2.20	.40
Negative interaction with peers	Observation phase	Intervention: Mixed sex		-.34	.92	.93
		Intervention: Same sex		-.26	1.03	.97
	Intervention: Mixed sex	Observation phase		.34	.92	.93
		Intervention: Same sex		.08	1.03	.99
	Intervention: Same sex	Observation phase		.26	1.03	.97
		Intervention: Mixed sex		-.08	1.03	.99

Table 3.18:

The amount between lean intervention negative peer work with pe

Positive inter changed into in the interve no significant

Chorusing de group work (the amount o

The turn-taki specific areas decreased.

3.3 Micro-an

The differen taking/discus and same-se intervention results are pr

Chorusing	Observation phase	Intervention: Mixed sex	10.68*	4.53	.07
		Intervention: Same sex	8.72	5.06	.22
	Intervention: Mixed sex	Observation phase	-10.68*	4.53	.07
		Intervention: Same sex	-1.96	5.06	.92
	Intervention: Same sex	Observation phase	-8.72	5.06	.22
		Intervention: Mixed sex	1.96	5.06	.92

Table 3.18: Multiple comparisons of interaction categories

The amount of interaction between the learners and the various teachers, as well as the negative interaction between learners, during the observation phase, the mixed-sex intervention phase, and the same-sex intervention phase did not change significantly at any point. The amount of teacher-learner interaction and negative peer interaction during cluster work is thus approximately equal to that during co-operative group work with peer-tutoring.

Positive interaction between learners increased significantly ($p < .01$) when cluster work (observation phase) changed into group work (intervention phase). However, the amount of positive interaction between learners in the intervention (mixed-sex) and intervention (same-sex) groups is approximately equal. Gender thus has no significant overall impact on positive interaction in general.

Chorusing decreased reasonably significantly ($p = 0.07$) when cluster work (observation phase) changed into group work (intervention phase). As with the positive interaction, however, there was again no difference in the amount of chorusing during the intervention (mixed-sex) and intervention (same-sex) phases.

The turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills in which the learners were trained thus had a positive impact in two specific areas of classroom interaction related to group work: Positive interaction increased while chorusing decreased.

3.3 Micro-analysis: Mixed-sex vs. Same-sex groups

The differences in scores of one specific form of positive interaction between peers, namely turn-taking/discussion (which falls within the Positive Interaction category), was compared between mixed-sex and same-sex groups. The scores for the mixed-sex groups were taken from tapes recorded during the first 3 intervention lessons, and the scores for the same-sex groups from the last two intervention lessons. The results are presented in Table 3.19 below.

		Boys	Girls
Farm school	In mixed-sex groups	N = 6 Avg. = 7.78 Std. Dev. = 3.95	N = 6 Avg = 4.39 Std. Dev. = 2.95
	In same-sex groups	N = 3 Avg = 8.33 Std. Dev. = 4.93	N = 3 Avg = 13.22 Std. Dev. = 3.42

Multilingual school	In mixed-sex groups	N = 7 Avg = 6.76 Std. Dev. = 6.14	N = 5 Avg = 4.53 Std. Dev. = 3.17
	In same-sex groups	N = 3 Avg = 9.89 Std. Dev. = 4.67	N = 3 Avg = 7.78 Std. Dev. = 0.69
Township school	In mixed-sex groups	N = 6 Avg = 1.83 Std. Dev. = 2.72	N = 8 Avg = 13.33 Std. Dev. = 8.45
	In same-sex groups	N = 3 Avg = 3.67 Std. Dev. = 1.86	N = 3 Avg = 7.56 Std. Dev. = 2.46

Table 3.19: Turn-taking scores in mixed- and same-sex groups

The samples for the following analyses are very small (ranging from 3 to 8), which makes the interpretation of the statistics less authoritative. The differences between the mixed-sex and same-sex group scores within each school were analysed using the Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test (which takes sample size into account). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.20 below.

Farm school	Boys in mixed-sex groups	Q=2.233 Q _{crit} =3.033	Girls in mixed-sex groups
		Q=0.296 Q _{crit} =3.033	*Q=4.750 Q _{crit} =4.111
	Boys in same-sex groups	Q=2.278 Q _{crit} =3.033	Girls in same-sex groups
Multilingual school	Boys in mixed-sex groups	Q=1.143 Q _{crit} =3.033	Girls in mixed-sex groups
		Q=1.361 Q _{crit} =3.702	Q=1.335 Q _{crit} =3.702
	Boys in same-sex groups	Q=0.775 Q _{crit} =3.033	Girls in same-sex groups
Township school	Boys in mixed-sex groups	*Q=5.109 Q _{crit} =4.046	Girls in mixed-sex groups
		Q=0.624 Q _{crit} =2.998	Q=2.045 Q _{crit} =2.998
	Boys in same-sex groups	Q=1.143 Q _{crit} =2.998	Girls in same-sex groups

Table 3.20: Analysis of turn-taking scores between mixed-sex and same-sex groups

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed)



Of the twelve different changes in the average scores of turn-taking/discussion, only two are significant (remembering that the small sample sizes mean that the results should be interpreted cautiously). The first of these is that, in mixed-sex groups, the girls at the township school took more turns during discussion than the boys working in the group with them. When these same boys worked in a boys-only group, however, the number of turns they took during discussion doubled (mixed-sex avg =1.83; same-sex avg =3.67). This increase is not statistically significant (due to the small sample sizes of 6 and 3 respectively),

but it provides an indication that same-sex groups promote equality of interaction better than mixed-sex groups.

The second significant change is that the low number of turns taken during discussion for the farm school girls working in mixed-sex groups increased significantly when those girls worked in same-sex groups. In this particular instance, it appears to be to the girls' advantage to work in same-sex, not mixed-sex, groups. This, too, indicates that same-sex groups promote the better quality of interaction.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Significant Findings

The statistical data collected during our research project supports ten significant findings. These may be summarised as follows:

1. **The indirect use of gender-related language learning materials has no significant influence on the existing gender stereotypes learners bring into the classroom with them.** The analyses of Question 1 and 2 from the pre- and post-tests revealed that the majority of learners (84.6%) did not change their existing preference for either a boy or girl group leader, or their existing perception that either boys or girls are more active, faster learners. The small number of changes (15.4%), if Questions 1 and 2 are taken together, were made equally by boys and girls, and equally for boys and girls.
2. **The learners' theoretical understanding of turn-taking increased significantly as a result of the training they received in turn-taking skills.** While the understanding of both boys and girls increased, the girls (+29%) increased far more than the boys (+11%), and contributed the major share of the overall improvement. Both girls (45%) and boys (37%) showed a higher level of existing understanding of turn-taking skills than of peer-tutoring skills in the pre-test. Furthermore, while the understanding of the learners at the township school increased the most (+38%), the learners at the multilingual school achieved the highest final scores on the post-test (95%).
3. **The learners' theoretical understanding of peer-tutoring increased significantly as a result of the training they received in peer-tutoring skills.** Again the understanding of both boys and girls increased, with the girls (+50%) again increasing more than the boys (+37%). Compared to their understanding of turn-taking, both girls (18%) and boys (22%) understood peer-tutoring less at the time of writing the pre-test. As with turn-taking, the learners at the township school improved the most (+63%), but the learners at the multilingual school still achieved the highest final score (90%).
4. **The learners' acquired a significantly higher level of grammatical accuracy after a period of peer-tutoring.** Both boys and girls showed significant improvements in the four selected verb forms, but, in this case, the boys (+1.41) improved more than the girls (+1.13). The learners at all three schools made measurable improvements, with the learners at the multilingual school improving the most (+2.29) as well as achieving the highest final score (6.05). The learners at the farm school improved well (+0.92), while those at the township school also improved significantly (+0.69).
5. **The 'tutors' themselves also acquired a significantly higher level of grammatical accuracy while they peer-tutored the other members of their groups.** The 13 of the 14 tutors for which paired data are available made a significant overall improvement (+1.00), even though the other 52 non-tutors made a slightly larger improvement (+1.31). Thus 'tutors' are not retarded by their role of peer-tutoring the other members of their groups; they do acquire new language forms themselves during this process.

6. **The interaction between teachers and learners was approximately equal for both cluster work and good group work.** During the observation phase, when the regular teachers were doing cluster work with their classes, they spoke to their learners the same amount (i.e. 1.22) as the researcher-teachers did during the intervention phase (1.18). This is interesting in the light of one of the fears some language teachers hold for group work, namely that the teacher must speak enough to provide a good model of native-like proficiency for their learners to learn from. If this is a significant factor in second language acquisition, group work will not affect it.
7. **The overall positive interaction between learners was significantly higher for good group work than for cluster work.** During cluster work, positive learner interaction was limited (1.15), but it improved eight-fold in the intervention phase (9.72). Positive interaction between learners, whether in relaxed discussion or more formal peer-tutoring, is one of the major goals and benefits of group work. This project has thus demonstrated that significantly improved levels of learner-learner interaction can be achieved in all types of schools if the learners are trained properly.
8. **The overall negative interaction between learners was approximately equal for both cluster work and good group work.** During the cluster work of the observation phase, the learners interacted negatively with one another slightly more (i.e. 1.63) than they did positively (1.15). However, while the positive interaction increased eight-fold during the intervention phase, the negative interaction remained almost the same (i.e. 1.94) as during the observation phase. This answers the worry that some teachers may have, namely that group work provides too much opportunity or temptation for learners to play around, behave badly and make too much noise. With regards to well-trained learners, however, the opposite may be true. During cluster work (i.e. observation phase), approximately 59% of *all* learner-learner interaction was negative, whereas during good group work (i.e. intervention phase) only 17% was negative.
9. **Chorusing was lower for good group work than for cluster work.** During the observation phase, teachers on average required their learners to chorus after them 11.30 times per lesson, whereas this dropped eight-fold to only 1.40 times during the intervention phase. Chorusing is viewed as an outmoded pedagogic technique by those more supportive of a communicative approach to language learning, so this large decrease in chorusing is a "fringe benefit" of good group work.
10. **It appears that same-sex group promote more equal opportunities for interaction than mixed-sex groups.** Remembering that sample sizes were small, the number of turns taken during discussion was higher when the girls at the farm school worked in same-sex groups (13.22) rather than the low amount of talking the girls did (4.39) while boys dominated the mixed-sex group work. Also, the average number of turns taken during discussion by the boys at the township school doubled when they worked in same-sex groups (3.67) as opposed to mixed sex groups (1.83). This shows that, in different contexts, it is not always any one sex that dominates group interaction, since same-sex groups were seen to benefit both boys and girls in different circumstances.



Furthermore, when, during the observation phase, the regular teachers allowed the learners to select their own groups, the learners voluntarily selected same-sex groups. Finally, it appears that Grade 7 girls are socially and cognitively more developed than boys, but may have lower self-esteem and confidence than boys. Same-sex groups would allow both boys and girls to develop with equal opportunities.

4.2 Conclusions

These ten findings support five general conclusions. These conclusions, which are the result of a pilot study based on only three different schools, are as follows:

1. Good group work can be done effectively in most types of schools, including those felt to be 'too difficult', e.g. rural farm schools, township schools, and multi-lingual schools.
2. Good group work can be achieved through a change in teaching approach from cluster work to co-operative group work. No new teaching aids, equipment or special materials are necessary.
3. Learners can and should be formally trained in specific turn-taking and peer-tutoring skills; these skills do not 'come naturally'.
4. All learners, both 'tutors' and non-tutors, benefit from (well-trained) peer-tutoring in mixed-ability groups.
5. Gender does influence interaction within mixed-sex groups; same-sex groups appear to promote equality of interaction.

4.3 Recommendations for future research

From the practical experience of conducting the field work and data analysis for this project, two lessons have been learnt, namely:

1. There is a need to place a conference-style microphone in the centre of the foregrounded group to record a better quality sound when the learners speak to each other. The microphone which is built in to the video camera cannot pick up individual voices clearly, even if the camera is placed very close to the learners (which ours was). The video camera's microphone also picks up a host of other classroom and corridor sounds, which interfere with the quality of learners' recorded voices.
2. It is better (i.e. more reliable) for a group of raters to analyse a large number of video tapes intensively in a continuous session, rather than small numbers of video tapes on a week-by-week basis. Even though it requires intense concentration, these sessions appear to have a higher inter-rater reliability than sessions separated by six days at a time.

4.4 Follow-up Research

This research project was only a pilot study. There are certain areas of group work and the implementation of group work which were not covered, but which could follow on from this project in the future. Some of these are:

1. The effectiveness of the INSET-appropriate materials (worksheets and video) which were developed as a result of this project. For example, are the materials successful in allowing regular teachers to implement good group work in a range of schools? Do they encourage the development of reflective practitioners who are able to self-evaluate their own group work?
2. The learners' own perceptions of and preferences for group work. In this study, the teachers, but not the learners, were interviewed. This is because of the possibility that the learners may be influenced in their short-term perceptions as much by the novelty value of the project (e.g. new faces, new teaching techniques, new equipment like the video camera, etc) as by their insight into group work. For example, it has been suggested that same-sex groups promote equality of interaction better than mixed-sex groups do. How do learners feel about this? What arrangements do they prefer?
3. The impact of more sophisticated forms of group work, or of purpose-designed group work tasks and materials, on the second language acquisition of learners. For example, this project used mixed-ability co-operative groups. Do other forms of groups work, such as streamed groups or jigsaw groups, allow for superior language acquisition?



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Training Materials

As part of this project, a set of materials potentially suitable for teacher in-service development has been developed. This set consists of:

• Handouts and worksheets
• CD-ROM and PAL video

These materials are available from:

English Studies
University of the North
Campus X1106