BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ELT TEACHERS ON THE USE OF GROUP WORK

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at finding out the beliefs of ELT teachers regarding group work, the procedures they follow in doing group work, the ways that they deal with problems they come across and the frequency of their using group work in their instruction. This is a descriptive study. The data for the research were collected by a questionnaire given to 30 preparatory class teachers working at high schools with preparatory classes in Muğla town centre, and by observation of 10 randomly selected teachers using group work during their instruction. Some of the data collected through the questionnaire (Part A) have been analyzed by t-test using SPSS. Some of the data collected through the questionnaire (Part B) and classroom observations have been analyzed according to Miles and Hubbermann's (1994) qualitative data analysis. The results have shown that the majority of English preparatory class teachers believe that group work is an effective way of achieving academic, intellectual and social goals, and is advantageous in many ways. Nevertheless, the teachers use group work technique with low frequency and not in the most effective way. The problems that they come across include over-use of native language, noise, and some students disturbing others, and some other problems which often stem from the way the teachers carry out the activities.

Key words: *Groupwork, Pairwork, Communicative language teaching, Task-based learning*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin grup çalışmalarına yönelik düşünce ve inançlarını, ne sıklıkla grup çalışması yaptıklarını, ayrıca grup çalışması yaparken hangi süreçleri kullandıklarını ve bu süreçte karşılaştıkları sorunları nasıl çözdüklerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma betimsel bir çalışma olup, verileri sormaca, gözlem ve video kayıt yoluyla toplanmıştır. Muğla Merkezindeki Yabancı Dil Ağırlıklı Liselerde çalışan 30 öğretmene verilen bir sormaca ve her okuldan bir öğretmen olmak üzere rasgele seçilen 10 öğretmeni gözlemleyerek toplanmıştır. Sormaca yoluyla toplanan verilerin bir kısmı (A Bölümü) SPSS kullanılarak t-test ile analiz edilmiş, diğer kısmı (B bölümü) ile gözlem verileri Miles and Hubbermann'ın (1994) niteliksel veri analizi yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada yer alan İngilizce

öğretmenlerinin çoğunluğu dil öğretiminde grup çalışmasının öğrencilerin akademik, zihinsel ve sosyal amaçlarını gerçekleştirmek için oldukça etkin bir teknik olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Ancak sormaca sonuçlarına ve gözlenen öğretmenlerin derslerinde öğrencilerin etkinlik sırasındaki tepkilerine göre grup çalışmasını yeterince sık ve etkin bir şekilde kullanmadıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Grup çalışması sırasında karşılaşılan sorunlar; öğrencilerin İngilizce konuşmak yerine Türkçe konuşmaları, gürültü yapma, diğer gruptaki öğrencilere sataşma ve rahatsız etme gibi sorunların yanı sıra öğretmenin grup çalışmasını başlatma ve uygulama sürecinden kaynaklanan sorunlar olarak sıralanabilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Grup çalışması, İkili çalışma, İletişimsel dil öğretimi, Göreve dayalı öğrenme*

Introduction

English as a foreign language is given great importance in Turkey, and so students are required to start learning English in the fourth grade of their primary education. If they attend high school, they continue having English courses as a foreign language as part of the curriculum. Those who attend Super or Anatolian High Schools study English more intensively during their first year, which is called "preparatory class." The main approach adopted for the Anatolian High School (Preparatory class, and plus, 9th, 10th, 11th grades) English Course Program is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (TC Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2002, p.16). Therefore, most of the language teaching faculties of universities recommend teacher candidates to plan and teach their lessons according to the principles of CLT. Although other approaches and a variety of methods (Larsen-Freeman, 2001) such as direct method, audio-lingual method, silent way, desuggestopedia, community language learning, total physical response, task-based learning, multiple intelligence, and content-based learning are also taught in methodology courses in ELT departments, the focus is mainly on the CLT. Thus, the teachers start their profession with considerable knowledge about the specific techniques of CLT. Teachers with more experience are also informed about this approach through in-service courses. The other important factor of English classrooms in the country is the text books. Almost all of the text books used in high schools claim to be communicative and often written by British or American authors, and they provide teachers with a variety of materials prepared according to the principles of this approach.

Considering the teacher education at universities and in-service training courses, one can believe that all the English teachers can use the teaching techniques of CLT perfectly in their classrooms with the help of their materials which are communicative. Nevertheless, there are not many studies which confirm this. On the contrary, teaching grammar is given the highest priority. The free practice sections of the lessons are usually kept short for the sake of catching up with the syllabus. The role of the teacher is usually the transmitter of knowledge, and the students are not given many opportunities to communicate in the target language. Moreover, mostly discrete grammar rules and vocabulary are asked in the examinations. The backwash effect of the examinations leads students to ignoring the functions of the language, and thus to

focusing only on discrete knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. As a consequence, we have graduates of these programs who are inefficient in using English communicatively.

This study is concerned with one of the outstanding characteristics of CLT; that is, group work. In this study, group work is used as "a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language" (Brown, 2001, p.177). Larsen-Freeman (1986, p.132) points out that "activities in the Communicative Approach are often carried out by students in small groups. Small numbers of students interacting are favoured in order to maximize the time allotted to each student for learning to negotiate meaning." In many studies in which having students work in groups proved to be advantageous (Bejarano, 1987; Doughty, 1986; Klinger, 2000; Pica,1987; Porto, 2001; Sharan, 1990; Swain, 2001; Cohen, 1986; McGoarty, 1989; Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz & Slavin, 1998; Fall & Webb, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Stevens & Slavin, 1995). According to Brown (2001), use of group work has many advantages in the communicative classroom in that it offers an embracing affective climate as well as generating interactive language, and it is a step towards individualizing instruction because it promotes learner responsibility and autonomy. The rationale of having students work in groups comes from three sets of assumptions on learning: (1) behavioral perspective; students become more motivated to learn when they work in groups as they share the rewards as a group, (2) cognitive developmental perspective; when students work in groups, the assistance of more skilled peers and the interaction to solve cognitive conflicts among peers facilitate learning, (3) social interdependence perspective; when students co-operate, they promote each others' efforts to learn (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p.39).

Advantages of group work are that it generates interactive language that it offers an embracing affective climate; that it promotes learner responsibility and autonomy, and that it provides opportunities for individualized instruction (Harmer, 2001). In spite of the advantages of group work, some teachers may not use it for a number of reasons. Some teachers think that group work does not work well with some students who only like individual study. Some teachers may avoid doing group work because they think group work is not worth the time and effort because students will be exposed to imperfect language models and incorrect feedback among peers or group members. Other teacher concerns are about the classroom management difficulties that group work brings such as the teacher's losing control of the class, noise and indiscipline and students' over reliance on native language (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1994).

Less use of group work may lead to less communication in class, and therefore, the program may produce learners who are less confident in using the target language communicatively. By this way, the preparatory class does not reach its specific goals stated by The Ministry of Education such as; "1) Student will be able to read and understand an English passage correctly; 2) Students will be able to write about their feelings, ideas and impressions in an understandable way; 3) Students will be able to speak and understand English with natural speed, punctuation, and pronunciation" (TC Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2002, p.43).

Some common types of group work activities include pair work, games, role-plays, projects, brain-storming, group discussion and information-gap activities. The

main phases of classroom procedures for group work follow this sequence; 1)pre-group work phase; organizing the groups, distributing activity sheets, giving instructions, 2)while group work phase; letting students time to do the activity and providing feedback by the teacher, 3)post- group work phase; debriefing.

Group work is important in the context of Turkey in the sense that the students do not have much chance to communicate in the target language outside the classes. As there are not many people who can speak English well, they cannot practice at home with their family members. The students, therefore, can only hear and use the target language in the classroom. Group work provides them plenty of opportunities to practice as this technique provides the students a topic to talk about and partners to talk with. It is also seen as an effective way of maximising the practice time per student.

Keeping in mind the importance of group work in Turkish context, our research aimed at finding out in what way and how often English preparatory class teachers practice group work in Muğla context. We believe that through actual information about the teachers' beliefs on group work such as how often they use it, what problems they come across while doing group work and how they cope with these problems, this study might inspire teachers and teacher trainers in pre- and in-service teacher training institutions, and education faculties in preparing courses which better-address the needs of teachers regarding group work activities.

The research questions are as follows:
1. What are preparatory class teachers' beliefs about group work activities?
2. How often do they use group-work technique?
3. What problems do they come across while doing group work?
4. How do they cope with these problems?

Methodology

Participants

30 English preparatory class teachers working in Anatolian and Super High Schools in Muğla city center. The English preparatory class is the first year of all schools, where the age students are between 14 and 16. The syllabus for the English preparatory class at any school in Turkey has to cover the functions and language areas determined in "Anatolian High School (Preparatory Classes, 9th, 10th, 11th grades) English Course Program" (TC. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2002). In all schools, all of the participants of this study follow the same syllabus and teach students with the similar materials within 25-hour per week schedule in 36 weeks in an academic year.

As seen in Table 1 below, out of 30 participants, 43,33 % are males whereas 56,66 % of them are females. 76,66% of them have graduated from faculty of education, and 23,33 % teachers have graduated from faculty of Science and Literature. Thus, it can be stated that most of the teachers have been trained as a teacher of English intensively for four years. The most experienced participant has been teaching for 25 years whereas the least experienced participant has been teaching for 3 years. Half of the teachers have a teaching experience of more than 15 years, and the other half have a teaching experience of between 3 and 15 years. 10% of teachers have worked at a primary school, 26,66% of them have taught at middle schools and 46,66% of them

have worked at a high school without a preparatory class before. Half of the teachers have never been to a seminar or workshop about group work before. 33,33% of them have been to such seminars or workshops only once, 6,66% of them have done it twice and 10% of them have done it three times. The data presented show that at least half of the teachers have some orientation about group work techniques, as they have participated in either a workshop or seminar about it at least once. Among the 30 teachers who responded to the questionnaires, 10 teachers were randomly selected for observation so that one teacher, at least, should represent a school (see Table 2).

Table 1, Demographic Information of the Participants

	f	%
Gender		
Male	13	43,33
Female	17	56,66
Faculty graduated		
Faculty of Education	23	76,66
Faculty of Science and Letters	7	23,33
Teaching Experience		
3-14 years	15	50
15-25 years	15	50
Work Experience		
Primary School	3	10
Middle School	8	26,66
High School	14	46,66
Seminars/Workshops attended		
Never	15	50
Once	10	33,33
Twice	2	6,66
Three Times	3	10

Table 2, Background Information of Observed Participants

Participants	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
Gender	M	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	F	F
Teaching Experience	24	18	20	13	12	20	10	14	8	18

Data Collection

The data for the research came through two instruments. The first one is a questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and conducted with 30 English preparatory class teachers in Muğla town centre. The other data collection tool is video recordings from 10 of the questionnaire respondents' lessons. Both instruments were

pilot-tested before being actually conducted in order to foresee and avoid any problems which may harm the validity and reliability of the results. Item-test correlation results were between 0.53 and 0.81.

The first instrument is a questionnaire which was developed in the light of the research questions and the literature reviewed by the researchers on various elements of group work. It consists of three parts. Part A, which consists of 15 likert scale type items, was intended to reveal the participants' beliefs and assumptions about group work. Part B, 9 open-ended questions with possible answers pre-determined for the participants to tick, along with blanks to fill-in in case they have a different answer than the pre-determined ones. It aims to gather information about how often and the way the teachers implement group work in their classes. Part C is related to the participants' demographic information with 6 questions asking about their gender, the programs they have graduated from, experience and the seminars or workshops about group work which they have attended. The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire has been assessed as 0.72, which means that the instrument is relatively reliable.

The second instrument is the observations through video recordings. The participants were video-recorded while implementing the two group work activities which were developed by the researchers, but no information has been given to them as to how they are going to use it. The teachers were asked to use these activities to be able to observe and analyze their and their students' performances on the same material. Another reason is that providing them with the activities beforehand would guarantee that all participants would be ready and be prepared with appropriate group work tasks on the date of the observation.

Data Analysis
The data from the questionnaire were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The data collected from part A of the questionnaire have been analyzed by a t-test through SPSS. On the other hand, the data collected from part B of the questionnaire have been analyzed by qualitative analysis. In addition, the video recordings were transcribed and analyzed by using categorization according to Miles and Hubbermann's (1994) qualitative data analysis. Then, the results were interpreted in terms of the research questions of the study. The video recordings were interpreted by the researchers in terms of the overall structure of lesson design; 1)pre-group work phase; organizing the groups, distributing activity sheets, giving instructions, 2)while group work phase; letting students time to do the activity and providing feedback by the teacher, 3)post- group work phase; debriefing. In addition, we have looked into how teachers deal with warm up, transitions between activities, follow up, the problems, and the strategies to overcome these problems during group work. T-tests have also been used to find out whether the variables such as their gender, the faculty they have graduated from, and the number of seminars they have been to would result in a significant difference on their responses to the items relating to teachers' beliefs about group work.

Results

The first research question of this study aimed at finding out the beliefs of English preparatory class teachers about group work. The researchers looked at their beliefs in terms of effectiveness of group work, aim of using it, advantages of it and some common teacher concerns about it. Our results reveal that most of the teachers believe that group work is an effective technique (90%) to attain many kinds of intellectual and social learning goals (83.3%) (see Table 3).

Our next question tried to find out how frequently the teachers used group work activities. In order to get detailed data, the frequency of pair work and group work were asked separately in order to avoid any confusion of concepts on the part of the teachers. Pair work was found to be the most frequently used activity type (80 %), and group work was found to be the third most frequently used activity type (53.3%) (see Table 3). However, the researchers have found out that three teachers in the observation group had difficulties in understanding and implementing the pair work activity during the observations. Furthermore, two teachers (T2, T6) misunderstood the group work activity. One of them used it as a pair work and the other assigned it to students as homework. The reason for this contradiction might be the fact that the teachers "think" they are doing pair or group work without knowing that they are doing it in the wrong way. It was inferred from the observations by looking at the overall structure of the lessons that at least half of the teachers observed (50%) were in need of clarifications on what group work is and what it is not.

A similar conclusion was drawn regarding the aim of using group work. Although most of the teachers (83.3%) agreed with the statement about the aim of group work stated in the questionnaire, only two of the 10 teachers were observed to have been using it effectively in their lessons. The other eight teachers seemed either not have understood the aim of group work or, simply, not have been using it even though their belief is that group work can provide students with the knowledge, concepts, skills and understandings they need to become happy and contributing members of our society. The reason might be that the teachers lack the skills to use group work effectively although they believe that it is useful for the students' communication in the classroom.

Our data about the advantages of group work have revealed that teachers tend to believe that group work is advantageous in many ways. The most accepted advantage of group work was that it often creates a more relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere than traditional teaching techniques (93.04%). They also believe that group work makes students more responsible (80%), enhances students' social skills (83.35), and provides a richness of alternatives to structure interactions between students (80%). More than 76% of the teachers believe that group work increases the time students spend on task, which was the least accepted advantage of group work (see Table 3). These results again show that teachers are aware of what advantages group work can bring into their teaching, but they might be in need of being informed about how to make most of group work in their teaching practices according to the observations.

On the other hand teachers strongly disagree or disagree on the following points: group work is not really worth the time and effort (96.7%), only low achieving

students benefit from group-work (70%), and teachers cannot prepare the students to a competitive world by teaching them how to cooperate (70%) (see Table 3).

Table 3, The Frequency of Teacher Responses to the items in the Questionnaire

	Strongly Agree and Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree and Disagree (%)
Group work is an effective technique for achieving many kinds of intellectual and social learning goals.	90	10
The most important goal of group work is to provide students with the knowledge, concepts, skills and understandings they need, to become happy and contributing members of our society.	83.3	16.6
Group work makes students more responsible.	80	20
Group work enhances students' social skills.	83.3	16.6
Group work increases the time students spend on task.	76.6	23.3
Group work provides a richness of alternatives to structure interactions between students.	80	20
Group work often creates a more relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere than traditional teaching techniques.	93.04	6.6
Only low achieving students benefit from group-work.	30	70
Group work means forcing some students to work with others they do not like.	40	60
Group work means free ride for some, and extra work for others.	76.7	23.3
Teachers cannot prepare the students to a competitive world by teaching them how to cooperate.	30	70
Group work is not really worth the time and effort.	3.3	96.7
I often use pair work in my classes.	80	20
I often use group work in my classes.	53.3	46.7
While assigning students to groups, I assign them randomly or just let them choose their own groups.	50	50
While assigning students to groups, I consider the ability of students.	50	50
I intervene in the activity when necessary.	90	10
I select tasks from the course book being used.	67.6	32.4
I select tasks from other sources.	73.3	26.7
I also design my own tasks for the pair/group work activity	63.3	36.6

The t-tests results have revealed that the variables such as their gender, the faculty they have graduated from, and the number of seminars they have been to resulted in no significant difference on their responses to the items relating to teachers' beliefs about group work (see Table 4). Then there is no difference in being an ELT graduate or non-ELT graduate. This implies that teachers need to be trained not only on

the theoretical issues, but on the practical issues such as the steps to follow while implementing group work and the strategies of dealing with some certain classroom management difficulties while doing group work.

Table 4, T-test Results According to Variables Such as Gender, Faculty
**   Graduated, and Seminars Attended**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Significance
Male	13	33.1667	3.9505	0.730	0.472
Female	17	31.3125	8.0723		
Faculty of Education	22	31.3182	4.8244	-1.224	0.232
Faculty of Science and Literature	6	35.0000	11.1355		
Never been to a workshop/seminar before	13	32.0000	8.5049	0.100	0.921
Has been to a workshop/seminar before	17	31.7500	4.8511		

The third research question was related to what problems they come across while doing group work. In order to find this out, some certain pre-instructional decisions such as the group size, group composition, source of materials and whether teachers intervene in the activity were asked in the questionnaire. Some of these applications were considered while analyzing the video recordings as well.

The results related to group size revealed that teachers tend to prefer having groups of four students when they do group work. The data from the observations also confirm this information. Six out of 10 teachers had most of their students work in groups of four. Kagan (1994, p.6.2) suggests that the ideal group is composed of four members. As a result, it seems that teachers have found the most effective group size with their own experiences.

Group composition was another pre-instructional issue that was investigated. The results have shown that half of the teachers (50 %) consider the ability of students while assigning students to groups while the other half assign them randomly or just let them choose their own groups (see Table 3). It was also observed that two of the 10 teachers changed students' places according to their level of achievement and the rest of them, excluding the two teachers who had misunderstood the activities, formed their groups randomly.

The results regarding the concern of intervention have shown that more than 90% of the teachers were in favor of intervening in the activity (see Table 3). It was also observed that only one teacher did not intervene in the first activity, and all of the teachers who did the second activity visited the groups to understand what the students were doing and to give feedback and guidance.

Our results have also shown that teachers often select tasks for group work from the text book (66.7%) and from other sources (73.3%). In addition, 63.3 % of the teachers also design their own tasks (see Table 3). The students' responses during the observations however left the implication on the researchers that students were not very familiar to the activities since they had difficulty in understanding the instructions in most cases.

The results about the seating arrangement have shown that students often sit in rows in most classes due to the physical conditions of the schools. This has been confirmed by our observations that the classes are too crowded in most cases, and this makes harder to change the places of desks according to different types of lessons both because of the time it takes and the noise it makes. In seven of the eight cases observed in which group work was done, students had to lean over their friends or stand up to join the second activity. This made it even more difficult for the teacher to make sure that everybody was on task.

According to our findings regarding the group work, the most common problem was the use of native language (L1). This was the most frequent problem that was observed in the video recordings as well. The instructions of four teachers were not clearly understood by the students. None of the teachers except T7 announced how much time the activity would take. Only three teachers gave examples of what to do in the first activity whereas none of whom included this in their instructions for the second activity. Although the use of L1 was observed as a problem in eight of the 10 classes, only in two of these cases did the teacher do something about it. The other six did not consider it to be a problem at all. Both of the teachers who dealt with this problem warned the students not to speak in Turkish. One of them also consistently used the target language even if the conversation was initiated in the native language by the students.

Most of the teachers (76.6 %) agreed that group work means free-ride for some and extra work for others. It means that some students do not participate in the activities and do not take responsibility; however, others in the same group take over-responsibility and carry out the task (see Table 3).

Other problems which were noticeable among our findings were the noise and students disturbing others during group work. Although the teachers warn the noisy or disturbing students as a strategy to overcome these problems, the noise and disturbing behaviors often have stemmed from the teacher's way of presenting the activities in most of the cases.

The last research question was how teachers cope with these problems mentioned above. The main coping strategies which were found out in our results included wandering around the class and observing what students are doing during group work (16.7%); warning the students who cause problems (10%), and providing clues and prompts while giving instructions (6.6%). Other coping strategies reported were assigning students randomly during the reporting phase, forbidding native language, choosing the best and the fastest group at the end of the activity, assigning group leaders, giving reinforcement, encouraging students use short and simple sentences and rewarding those who have performed best.

Discussion

The research results show that the majority of English preparatory class teachers believe that group work is an effective way of attaining intellectual and social goals. The teachers use group work techniques in their classes though not very often and not in the most effective way. The classroom management problems that they come across include over-use of L1, noise and some students disturbing others, which often stem from the way the teachers carry out the activity. The teachers usually wander around the class in order to observe and provide feedback, provide extra clues and prompts, and warn the students as strategies to deal with these problems.

Forming appropriate groups is another important issue. The research by Webb (1984) showed that the groups are more functional if they are gender and ability balanced. On the other hand, as structuring such groups demands teacher's time, teachers may choose to assign students to groups randomly if the groups are not to stay together for more than a couple of lessons (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p.104).

The teachers participated in this study were in favour of intervening in the activity. The literature review supports the teachers' decision. Wolfe (1993) suggests that the teacher's role during group work activity is observing groups work in order to make sure that everybody is participating; giving assistance when needed; making on-the-spot error corrections when communication among group members is hampered; and making notes on errors that can be discussed after the activity."

Based on the research results, the researchers have the opinion that some teachers skip the group work activities in the text book. We feel that the teachers might have other tasks other than group work in mind. In addition, teachers' not doing warm up or follow up for the group work activities in order to relate these to students' existing knowledge decreased possibility that teachers are able to design or adapt group work tasks. But the reason for teachers' skipping warm-up and follow-up phases could be because of the fact that they did not consider these activities as part of their teaching. Their actual aim might have been just to show the researcher how activities worked when implemented but not to teach or practice the language areas where these activities expected to create communication in the classroom.

The fact that most classes are too crowded might therefore have demotivating effect on the teachers in deciding whether to use group work because it is difficult to monitor many groups at once. When the video recordings were analyzed, it was seen that the teachers could not cope with certain problems or even could not notice them while they were trying to attend the groups in some instances. For example, in one instance of observation, a few pairs of students finished the activity earlier, and they disturbed other pairs. The teacher did not notice this problem because she was attending to other pairs at that time.

The use of native language was the most frequent problem that was observed in the video recordings as well. The reason for this might have been the fact that most of the teachers observed failed to give clear instructions in the target language. Instructions must be given in a very clear, specific, detailed and unambiguous manner, using illustrations or demonstrations if possible (Wolfe, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2001). Other reasons for students' using their native language may stem from the fact that the task is too difficult, that the task requires more English

than they have already known, or that the students are not knowledgeable about the topic (Bassano, 2003). Furthermore, noise and indiscipline may also occur in such cases. The teacher needs to make sure that the task instructions are clear and everybody understands what the task requirements are (Carless, 2002) and that the level of the task matches the level of the students. Brown(2001; p.180) also points out 'a mismatch between the students' level of proficiency and the tasks' demands and students' feelings that the task is not interesting or relevant for their learning aims. In addition, teachers ignore the usage of L1 by the students because they might be more concerned with the accomplishment of the task rather than which language it is accomplished through.

On the other hand, the most common doubt regarding group work appears to be the free-rider effect. "The free-rider is an individual who will accept the team grade but who does not work" (Kagan, 1994; pp.4 and 9). When there is no grading involved, some students may "sit back and let others do the work" (Cohen, 1994; p66). This is also a free-riding problem. The teachers usually have the habit of evaluating each student's work in its own right, and the students are also used to being evaluated in terms of the projects they produce individually. This might lead students to focusing on what is produced, rather than on what is learnt which in turn might lead them to leaving the job to more able ones in the group instead of trying to learn. Kagan (1994; pp.4 and 9) suggests the formation of individual accountability to avoid any free-rider or workhorse to develop. In order to create individual accountability, the teacher can, for example, give random oral examination in which students are randomly selected to present the group's work to the teacher, and the class instead of relying only on the group product (Johnson& Johnson, 1994; p.87).

As for the problem that some students do not participate in the activities, this might be due to the fact that students do not understand in what ways their learning can be facilitated by group work. According to Johnson & Johnson (1994, p.90), students can be taught how to function productively in a group, otherwise they may not participate at all or they may escape responsibility.

The noise and disturbing behaviors of students often have stemmed from the teacher's way of presenting the activities in most of the cases. For example, the class was noisy during the reporting phase in the case of T1 because he had collected the materials before reporting began, and the students were not interested in what was being read by the teacher since their materials were on the teacher's desk, out of their reach. In the cases of other teachers, some groups were late and were disturbed by others who had finished or those who waited for the others finish their tasks caused noise. The teachers tried to overcome this problem by warning those students and helping the groups who had not finished yet. Noise is inevitable in a group or pair work activity because a speaking activity cannot take place in silence. It can be tolerated as long as students carry out their tasks without disturbing or interfering the other groups. Teachers should monitor the groups carefully during the activity. In addition, having background music in a low tone is useful in order to filter the noise.

The coping strategies of teachers regarding the problems during the group work may be listed as wandering around the class and observing what students are doing during group work; warning the students who cause problems; providing clues and prompts while giving instructions; assigning students randomly during the reporting phase; forbidding native language; choosing the best and the fastest group at the end of

the activity; assigning group leaders; giving reinforcement to encourage them to take part in the activity; encouraging students to use short and simple sentences; and rewarding those who have performed best. We believe that teachers are in need of gaining experience on applying them into their teaching practice.

Conclusion

Group work is an indispensable activity providing students plenty of opportunities to practice in an ELT classroom. Keeping in mind the importance of group work in Turkish context, our research aimed at finding out the beliefs of ELT teachers regarding group work, the procedures they follow, the ways that they deal with problems they encounter, and the frequency of their using group work in their instruction. For this purpose, the data were collected by a questionnaire given to 30 preparatory class teachers working at high schools with preparatory classes in Muğla town centre, and by observation of 10 randomly selected teachers using group work during their instruction.

The results have revealed that the majority of English preparatory class teachers are generally in favor of using group work and believe the effectiveness of it. Nevertheless, the teachers use group work technique with low frequency and not in the most effective way. Although they are aware of various coping strategies to some extent, they come across various problems in practice including over-use of native language, noise, some students' disturbing others, and the problems which often stem from the way the teachers carry out the activities.

We have the implication out of the research results that it is necessary to organize in-service training sessions in order to create awareness and provide some hands-on experience for the teachers. They appear to be in need of guidance on practical issues about how to implement group work activities and how to avoid or cope with some certain problems. Furthermore, as no one class is the same as the others in nature, teachers could do action research in their classes. By this way, how group work works, which problems occur during group work and why these problems occur, can be found out and solutions can be generated according to the specific needs of the particular class.

The last, but not the least, teachers should go through hands-on workshop experience in various training sessions in which they work in groups so that they can learn the premises underlying group work better.

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