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LEARNING NEW CONTENT MATERIAL THROUGH COOPERATIVE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

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Abstract:

It can be assumed that there is a possibility of a positive impact on the stages of development of language skills through cooperative group discussion training if that one coincides with students' willingness to move to the next language level. Learning new content material through cooperative group discussions using communicative techniques proved to be effective with a highly competent speech in a foreign language with a minimum number of grammatical errors, moreover the spirit of cooperation in the classroom unites people and contributes to the creation of a friendly atmosphere in which it is pleasant to work and which increases the motivation of not only students, but also the teacher working with them.

Keywords: conceptual comprehension, knowledge-construction activity, thought-provoking questions, socio-cognitive strategy, holistic, synthesis, constructivist, taxonomy.

The current findings indicate that the students who are encouraged to ask simple questions do not necessarily result in better learning. Rather, high-level questions involving coherence and limitations are related to greater conceptual comprehension .

These discoveries lend support to the notion of a correspondence between level of questioning and level of knowledge-construction activity, suggesting that type of questioning used may determine the possible level of knowledge construction that occurs.

It is indicated that in cooperative discussion contexts, structured and explicit guidance in asking thought-provoking questions elicited explanations mediate and improve learning. One explanation is that the format of the question stems can help learners to produce thoughtful questions that make them to think about and discuss their ideas in specific ways and to invent a great diversity of creative links among these ideas. Even primary age students can be taught questioning skills and trained to use highly worked out question to produce thought-provoking questions about material presented in their lessons and, hence, that guided cooperative questioning is a viable socio-cognitive strategy for use in classroom settings.

The students' question-asking capability should be fostered and made intentional through instructional interventions, and can be led to enhanced performance on a range of science tasks that include prose learning, investigations, knowledge mapping, as well as knowledge construction statements and explanations given during verbal discussions. The strategies used in the classroom and in curriculum must be such as to require more questioning and explaining on the part of the students.

The studies show that students who asked high-level questions received better scores on the conceptual performance test than those who asked only simple questions, indicating a direct relationship between depth of questioning and prior conceptual knowledge. There is a relationship between the quality of students' questions and achievement as well as their conceptual understanding, are important but not unexpected. For students to think conceptually, they need the chance to search for big ideas—to generalize, summarize, and draw conclusions by looking at their learning in a holistic way. One pedagogical implication of this finding is for teachers to design learning tasks that provide opportunities for students to ask questions that would help them link disparate bits of knowledge into a coherent whole. Such tasks might require students to pitch their thinking at levels which include the application, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas.

Students engaged in activities in small groups which focused on facts and procedures, are of a surface-learning approach and generate little productive discussion. In contrast, wonderment questions, which include comprehension, prediction, anomaly detection, application, and planning questions, lead students to wonder more deeply about their ideas.[3] These questions were indicative of a deep learning approach and stimulate students to give explanations, formulate hypotheses, predict outcomes, thought-experiment and plan next steps. Thus, problem-solving activities evoke more and a wider range of wonderment questions than teacher-directed activities where students ask mostly

procedural questions when following step-by-step instructions. Although the students do not always ask wonderment questions spontaneously, they are able to generate such questions when prompted to do so. During the activities some of the students are disposed to ask questions while others not, but the wonderment questions stimulate both the questioners themselves and other students to give answers.

From the observations it is clear that teachers need to recognize the learning approaches adopted by their students, to encourage students to ask wonderment questions at a deep level, be sensitive and responsive to the type and depth of questions that students ask. Teachers should present classroom activities in ways that will encourage problem-solving instead following instructions to obtain expected answers since the nature of classroom tasks and cognitive demands required of the students influences the type of questions that students ask. Furthermore, one should not be forgotten, it is urgently recommended not to leave students on their own to ask questions because there will be a need to provide prompts and explicitly orient students towards asking questions as part of class activities.[6]

What about the nature of instruction, there is a question if the kinds of questions that students ask depend on the type of instruction that their teachers use. Students from active learning, co-operative groups are able to pose better and higher level questions after reading chapters from a textbook than those taught in a traditional lecture format. The active learning class employ student-centred, constructivist-based, and interactive instructional approaches where students work in cooperative learning groups, are given problems for discussions, and encourage to ask questions about items and issues from assigned readings, lecture topics, and personal experience. On the other hand, the traditional class is taught using a lecture format with little time allocated for open discussion and questions. A taxonomy of questions presented in both classes displayed that the questions from the active learning group became more insightful, thoughtful, content-related, and research-oriented, and were not easily answered by consulting the textbook or another readily available source. [4,12] In contrast, the quality of students' questions in the traditional class was largely unchanged. So, providing students with criteria to evaluate their own questions also holds promise for improving student questioning.

The attempts to change the atmosphere of traditional lecture and tutorial sessions and enhance the quality of teacher-student and student-student classroom interactions will stimulate active learning and enhance the quality of classroom interactions, teaching incorporated students' questions in small group work tutorials, conference lectures that addressed topics of scientific, technological and social interest, practical laboratory sessions, and mini-projects. There will be an increase in students' engagement in learning over time, as indicated by the number and quality of questions asked by students. [5,126] However, since this study did not include a control group, it is possible that the increase in students' engagement was due to the students getting to know their lecturers better and developing a stronger knowledge base with which to engage in the subject.

If to sum up the results of the studies show that the cognitive level of questions posed by students is, to some extent, dependent on the nature of instruction. Instruction that enhances students' ability to ask good quality questions includes adopting some or all of the following pedagogies: the use of active learning in cooperative groups; student engagement in different projects; deliberately creating a questioning environment by providing a variety of opportunities for students to pose questions; and having students read research papers. What these pedagogies share in common is that they all explicitly require students to ask questions by immersing them in a learning environment that *values* questions. The students engaged in thoughtful tasks experience the various phases of inquiry that reflect the nature of science. These include being challenged by alternative points of view and debating them, justifying their assertions, and posing questions to resolve doubts or seek answers in different situations where they have to pose questions to steer and extend their own thinking.

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