Collaborative Learning For ESL Classrooms : A Handbooks for Teachers

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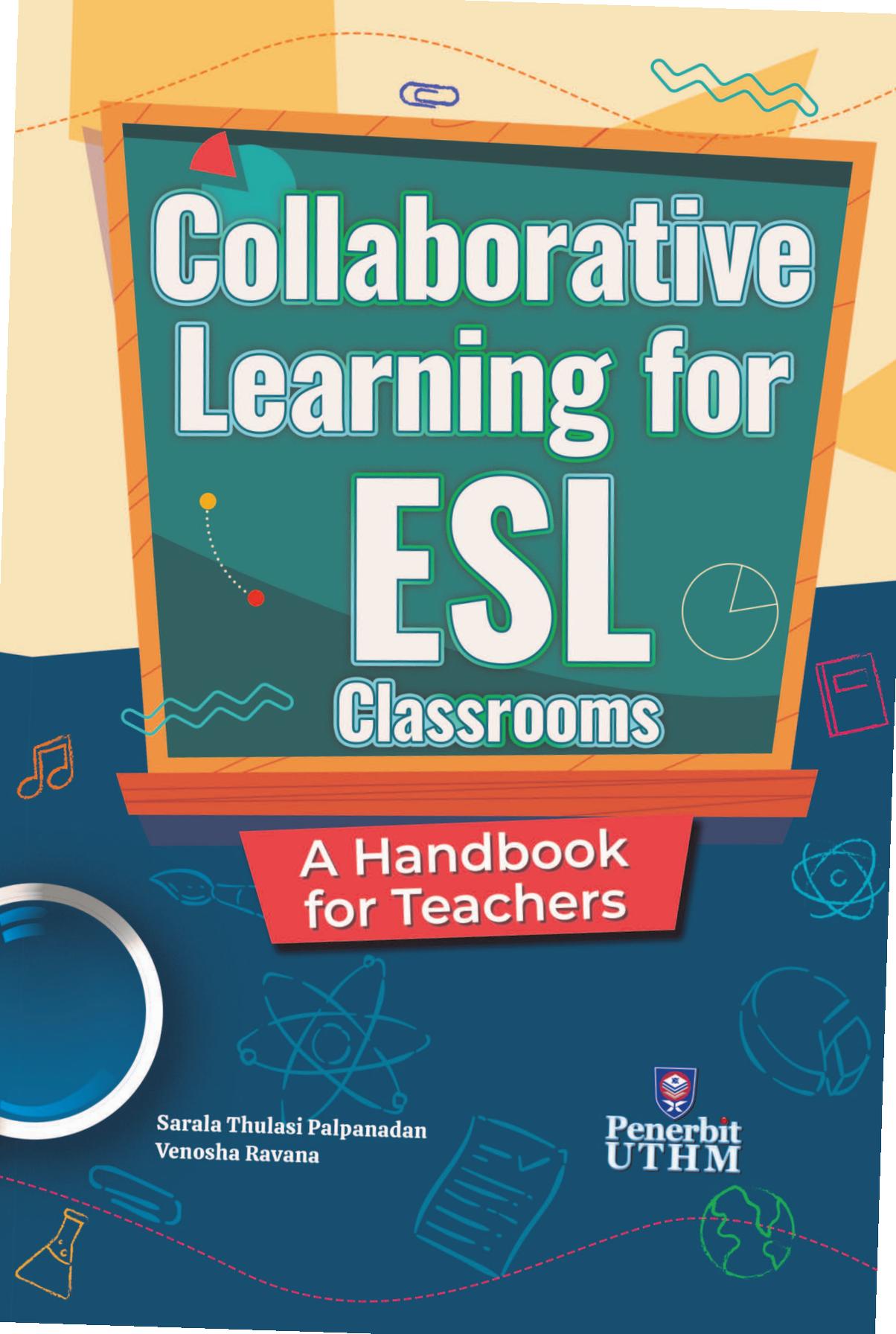Sarala Thulasi Palpanadan[1], Venosha Ravana[2]

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Abstract: This book a teaching support tool for teachers and researchers looking to expand their knowledge on the effective conduct of collaborative learning for ESL (English as a second Language) teaching and learning. It includes comprehensive descriptions of facilitation, active interaction, feedback and reflection strategies with ready-to-use materials such as lesson plan checklist, feedback forms and reflective journal entries. Teachers can also learn about conflict resolution in a collaborative learning environment based on suggestion given. The sample of ESL activities designed based on the strategies discussed in the book may also help teachers to practice and customise more ESL lessons with collaborative learning activities based on their preferences. All the ideas discussed in this book are applicable foe ESL classroom learning and also e-learning.

Keywords: Effective, collaborative, learning, researcher, journal

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DEDICATION

We humbly dedicate this book to our parents and educators

who raised us,

cared for us

and taught us.

Contents

OVERVIEW

This book is written mainly to serve as a teaching support tool for English subject teachers looking towards incorporating the collaborative learning theory into ESL activities. It contains easy-to-follow descriptions of the components that make up an effective collaborative learning approach-based ESL activity. The illustrations and examples are backed by popular theories and models such as Social Constructivism Theory, Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, and many more. A quick summary of the chapters in this book is as below:

Chapter One – Introduction to Collaborative Learning: This chapter describes the collaborative learning approach and how the four strategies of active facilitation, interaction, feedback, and reflection are utilized in a classroom activity. This section also helps teachers differentiate between simple group work and practical collaborative learning activities.

Chapter Two – Collaborative Learning for ESL Learners: This chapter introduces the English KSSR and KSSM curriculum and explains how collaborative learning can be used to elevate the activities in terms of communicative, collaborative, creativity, and critical thinking skills development.

Chapter Three – Planning for Collaborative Learning: This chapter shows how to prepare for a collaborative learning activity in terms of lesson objectives and grouping techniques. As for developing lesson objectives, references have been drawn from Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and Affective and Psychomotor domains. Grouping techniques are visited regarding methods to group students and manage groups of different sizes.

Chapter Four – Active Facilitation Techniques: In this chapter, teachers are enlightened about their roles as facilitators rather than traditional teachers in a collaborative learning environment. Active

facilitation techniques such as modeling, scaffolding, and stimulation for exploration are discussed with examples. Finally, this chapter has also discussed how peers can be assigned as co-facilitators during a collaborative learning activity and its benefits.

Chapter Five – Feedback and Reflection: Different feedback techniques such as formal, informal, summative, formative, and student-peer are visited with special emphasis on the student-peer technique. As for reflection, the 5R Framework has been used as a reference for teachers to guide students to perform self and group reflection efficiently. For this section, two types of feedback forms and one sample of reflective journal entries are provided as templates that teachers can directly use in their classrooms.

Chapter Six – Assessment Methods: Assessment methods are discussed in terms of individual and group assessments. A checklist has been attached to help teachers assess a collaborative learning activity for its planning.

Chapter Seven – Conflict Management: Conflicts that may arise during the planning, implementation, and assessment of collaborative learning activity has been discussed based on several themes.

Sample Activities: This section provides three examples of ESL activities using all the components discussed in the previous chapters.

It is hoped that all readers, especially teachers, would gain valuable insights on the ways to conduct collaborative learning activities effectively and be encouraged to integrate the approach more in their classroom activities.

PREFACE

Greetings from the authors,

Thank you for picking up this book! Whether you are a teacher, student, parent, or researcher looking to deepen your knowledge about collaborative learning practices, you have come to the right place!

With this book, we hope to provide instructional support to many wonderful educators aspiring to improve students' learning experience, particularly in Malaysian secondary schools.

Stay tuned for more follow-up books from this team!

Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Introduction to Collaborative Learning

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- ✓ Define collaborative learning
- ✓ Identify the strategies involved in collaborative learning
- ✓ Differentiate collaborative learning and group work

What is Collaborative Learning?

Collaborative learning can be understood as the act of learning by working together; however, it is not as simple as it sounds. More often, teachers or tutors mistake group work for collaborative learning as they believe that as long as students are seen to be working in a group towards an outcome, it is a collaborative learning task. This is a misconception! Group work may be a part of a collaborative learning task, but collaborative learning is more than that. This is precisely why many studies have reported that collaborative learning works only to a certain extent in Malaysian classrooms.

This chapter will expose you to the theories that form the foundation for collaborative learning practices. These strategies are involved in designing a practical collaborative learning task for Malaysian learners and the differences between group work and collaborative learning.

Collaborative Learning for ESL Learners

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- ✓ Define English language learning
- ✓ Describe reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills
- ✓ Briefly describe literature for ESL learning
- ✓ Understand the benefits of collaborative learning for ESL learners

English as a Second Language (ESL) for Malaysian Learners

The English language, which has an Indo-European origin, is now a language spoken by at least 1.35 billion people around the world. While it may not be the most spoken language, it is definitely popular as the modern lingua franca. English speakers around the world can be classified based on the categories that their countries fall into, such as:

- The inner circle with English as Native Language (ENL) speakers describes the countries where the children learn English and its dialects directly from their parents and local people. Examples of countries are: Britain, the United States, Australia
- The outer circle with English as Second Language (ESL) speakers describes the countries where children learn English and its dialects from formal education. The language is also used in education, administration, and other official uses as

11

Planning for Collaborative Learning

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- ✓ Develop clear learning objectives
- ✓ Identify strategies for lesson planning
- ✓ Describe different grouping techniques
- ✓ Work with small groups and large groups in a classroom

Developing Collaborative Learning Objectives

A learning objective is a clear description of what a student is expected to be able to do at the end of a lesson that he could not do before. It allows teachers to measure the impact of the lesson within the parameters of the specific lesson. A lesson may contain one or more learning objectives for the students. Some simple examples of clear learning objectives are:

- Students should be able to learn new vocabulary, understand their meaning in context, and use them correctly in a sentence (reading+ writing task)
- Students should be able to identify the correlation between identity and performance in Hamlet (English literature task)

CHAPTER FOUR

Active Facilitation Techniques

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- ✓ Describe facilitation techniques
- ✓ Assign peer as a facilitator in a collaborative learning lesson

Facilitation Techniques

In this book, techniques for facilitation have been derived from the Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory. The Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (CAT) describes the relationship between a master and an apprenticeship to transfer skills. In the setting of classroom learning, a teacher (master) attempts to transfer skills to an apprentice (student) to the point of desired mastery.

This is particularly useful for collaborative learning environments as students can learn from both teachers and other peers during collaborative work. This learning-though-guided experience not only helps students learn new skills from those with better knowledge and grasp of the skills, but it also helps peers who are capable of guiding weaker students develop a better mastery of knowledge and skills through soft teaching (indirect teaching).

The CAT offers six active facilitation techniques in sequence for general teaching-learning purposes. For collaborative learning purposes specifically, this book has identified three techniques out of the original

31

Feedback and Reflection Techniques

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- ✓ Describe different feedback and reflection techniques
- ✓ Utilise sample feedback forms
- ✓ Develop reflection questions
- ✓ Teach students to self-reflect using sample journal entry

Feedback Techniques

Sadler (1989) says that feedbacks contain verbal, gestural, or written information that a learner could use to bridge the gap between the current performance and the desired goal/outcomes. They are pedagogical tools that students can utilize directly to:

- Reason the marks/scores/grades they are given
- Understand and sharpen their strengths
- Identify and fix weaknesses
- Understand their current progress in learning
- Increase confidence and motivation
- Learn exact ways to improve certain skill sets

Assessment Methods

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

✓ Identify different methods of collaborative learning assessments
✓ Learn to utilise the checklist for collaborative learning lesson plan

Assessing Collaborative Learning

An assessment aims to inform students of their current progress in learning and encourage them to strengthen their performance. Assessments should be designed in ways that students would not feel discouraged or demotivated with the evaluation.

As for collaborative learning generally, teachers can evaluate students for their individual performance, group performance, or group functionality. In fact, these assessments can be performed by students themselves as well. In individual performance assessment, teachers can stimulate students to perform self-assessment and reflection other than the traditional way of teachers grading students. Next, for group performance, students can conduct peer feedback to evaluate other group members. However, as for group functionality, only the teacher can observe and assess depending on the overall group's performance.

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69

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