Teaching Young Learners How to Work Together: Pedagogical Ideas for Language Teachers

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Abstract : An increasing body of research has explored patterns of interaction and peer support among young learners. Although some studies suggest that young learners can collaborate and support each other, other studies indicate that young learners may lack the ability to work together and support one another when interacting on classroom tasks. Moreover, despite the claims that peer collaboration is conducive to learning, studies have not paid enough attention to the "how" to enhance peer collaboration on classroom tasks. To fill this gap, this "how-to" article proposes that teaching young learners how to work together is a powerful pedagogical tool that can greatly improve collaborative behavior and a sense of mutuality among young learners. This article will pay particular attention to primary schools and the context of English as a foreign language. It will first review literature related to patterns of interaction and peer support conducted in the cognitive and sociocultural framework. It will then address what it actually means to collaborate. At the heart of the article, it will discuss some practical pedagogical ideas for language teachers, which entail teaching collaborative principles and strategies that will help their students to support each other and engage in communication with each other.