

Developing Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Teaching Vietnamese in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: Developing group work skills for students holds particular significance in the context of educational reform in Vietnam today, as this foundational skill provides the basis for shaping and enhancing students' communication and collaboration competencies. We conducted a survey with 18 teachers and 208 third-grade students in Hoang Mai District, Hanoi, to investigate the current state of teaching practices related to this skill. Based on the findings, we propose several practical pedagogical measures to foster group work skills among third-grade students, thereby contributing to improving the quality of Vietnamese language instruction in primary schools and meeting the requirements of the new general education curriculum.

KEYWORDS: Education; Group work; Skill; Student; Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the ongoing comprehensive reform of education in Vietnam, the shift from passive teaching methods to more active and learner-centered approaches has become an urgent requirement. The objective of teaching is no longer limited to the transmission of knowledge but also aims to foster students' autonomy, creativity, and the development of essential competencies. Among these, group work skills play a particularly significant role, as they are not only an effective mode of learning but also provide a favorable environment for students to practice communication and collaboration. Through group work, students learn how to share responsibilities, listen attentively, respect differing opinions, and work together to achieve common learning goals.

At the primary level, especially in grade 3, students are undergoing important changes in both linguistic thinking and social cognition. This is a critical period when they are not only acquiring knowledge but also developing foundational skills that will serve their long-term learning and life. Within this process, the Vietnamese language subject holds a central position, helping students to enhance their ability to use language, build confidence in communication, and strengthen their expressive capacity.

However, current teaching practices reveal that third-grade students' group work skills have not yet reached the expected effectiveness. Many students remain passive and hesitant in expressing their ideas, lacking the ability to coordinate, share, and support peers in group activities. On the teachers' side, a considerable number still encounter difficulties in selecting and applying appropriate teaching methods and techniques, leading to group work activities that are not truly effective.

This paper seeks to propose several measures to develop group work skills for third-grade students, thereby contributing to improving the quality of teaching Vietnamese at the primary level and meeting the requirements of the ongoing general education curriculum reform in Vietnam.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Some Basic Concepts

2.1.1. Skills

There are many definitions of skills. K. K. Platonov and G. G. Golubev (1977) stated that: "*A skill is the capacity of an individual to perform a task successfully with the required quality under new conditions and within an appropriate period of time*" [4]. Hoàng Phê, in the *Vietnamese Dictionary*, defined skills as "*the ability to apply acquired knowledge in a particular field to practical situations*" [3, p. 520]. Inheriting the viewpoints of earlier researchers, we consider skills as an individual's ability to flexibly apply knowledge, experience, and modes of action to successfully accomplish a specific task, achieving results consistent with predetermined objectives and meeting certain standards under given conditions, even when those conditions change.

2.1.2. Group Work Skills

We hold that group work skills of students refer to the ability to cooperate with peers in accomplishing shared tasks, which is demonstrated through communication, collaboration, sharing responsibilities, and jointly achieving common learning goals.

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2.2. The Current Situation of Teaching to Develop Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Vietnamese Language Lessons in Vietnam

To investigate the current situation of teaching practices aimed at developing group work skills for third-grade students in Vietnamese language lessons in Vietnam, we conducted a survey with 18 teachers and 208 third-grade students from three primary schools in Hoang Mai District, Hanoi: Mai Dong Primary School, Linh Nam Primary School, and Vinh Hung Primary School.

2.2.1. Objectives and Content of the Survey

- To examine teachers' perceptions of the importance of cultivating group work skills for third-grade students in Vietnamese language lessons.
- To assess the current state of group work skills among third-grade students through their observable behaviors during Vietnamese language classes.
- To explore the methods that teachers have employed to enhance group work skills for third-grade students in Vietnamese language lessons.

2.2.2. Survey Methods

The primary methods used were questionnaires and classroom observations.

2.2.3. Survey Results

2.2.3.1. Teachers' Awareness and Perceptions of Training Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Vietnamese Language Lessons

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of Training Group Work Skills for Students

<i>Evaluation Level</i>	<i>Number of Teachers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very necessary	10	55.6%
Necessary	6	33.3%
Less necessary	2	11.1%
Not necessary	0	0%

The survey results show that the majority of teachers are clearly aware of the importance of developing group work skills for third-grade students in Vietnamese language lessons. Specifically, up to 88.9% of teachers (16 out of 18) chose the levels "necessary" and "very necessary." However, 11.1% of teachers (2 out of 18) considered this skill only "less necessary." This indicates a lack of consistency in teachers' perceptions, which may lead to differences in how group-related teaching methods and techniques are applied in actual classroom practice.

2.2.3.2. The Current Situation of Third-Grade Students' Group Work Skills as Reflected in Vietnamese Language Lessons

Through classroom observations of a Vietnamese language lesson in which group activities were organized for third-grade students, it was evident that their group work skills still showed many limitations. In terms of participation, while some students actively engaged in discussions and expressed their opinions, a considerable number remained passive, contributed little to the discussion, or failed to complete the assigned tasks. This indicates that students' sense of self-responsibility and initiative is not yet strong.

Regarding listening and respecting others' opinions, only a few students demonstrated this skill effectively. Many lacked concentration, often interrupted their peers, and did not show the ability to listen attentively, which reduced the overall effectiveness of group discussions. Similarly, the spirit of cooperation and mutual support was not fully developed, as instances of "working individually" or relying heavily on a few active members were still common.

In summary, third-grade students generally lack initiative, self-discipline, and genuine collaborative skills. Particularly, essential competencies such as attentive listening, respecting peers' viewpoints, and providing mutual support remain weak, directly affecting the effectiveness of group activities. This situation highlights the urgent need for appropriate pedagogical measures to foster and enhance cooperative skills among students in Vietnamese language learning.

2.2.3.3. Measures Used by Teachers to Enhance Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Vietnamese Language Teaching

In addition to examining teachers' perceptions and the current state of students' group work skills, we also focused on surveying the measures that teachers have applied in Vietnamese language lessons.

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Table 2. Measures Used by Teachers to Enhance Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Vietnamese Language Teaching

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Number of Teachers Applied</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Group discussion	18	100
Learning games	6	33.3
Learning games	2	11.1
Placemat technique	3	16.7
Role-play technique	1	5.6

The survey results show that group discussion is the most familiar measure, applied by all teachers (18/18, accounting for 100%). Meanwhile, other active teaching techniques were used less frequently: 6 teachers (33.3%) employed learning games, 3 teachers (16.7%) used the placemat technique, 2 teachers (11.1%) applied the jigsaw technique, and only 1 teacher (5.6%) made use of role-play. This indicates that although teachers have paid attention to fostering group work skills, their approaches remain relatively monotonous, relying mainly on traditional methods. Modern techniques that have the potential to promote cooperation and creativity among students have not yet been regularly implemented, which has limited the effectiveness of developing group work skills for third-grade students.

2.3. Some Measures to Develop Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Teaching Vietnamese

2.3.1. Principles for Developing Measures to Enhance Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Teaching Vietnamese

2.3.1.1. Ensuring Purposefulness

The measures must be designed with clear objectives: not only to improve the effectiveness of Vietnamese language learning but also to cultivate essential skills such as communication, collaboration, attentive listening, and problem-solving. Each measure must align with the learning outcomes prescribed in the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

2.3.1.2. Ensuring Feasibility

The measures must be practical and implementable in real classroom contexts, suitable for available facilities, class size, allocated time, and the organizational capacity of teachers.

2.3.1.3. Ensuring Inheritance

The measures must inherit existing teaching theories while incorporating creativity and innovation to meet the demands of educational reform. Inheritance is reflected in leveraging the strengths of existing forms of group activities while building upon foundational skills that students have already developed in earlier grades.

2.3.1.4. Ensuring Student Activeness

Group activities must encourage the active participation of all students, fostering initiative in sharing ideas, engaging in discussion, and collaborating. Teachers should assign tasks appropriately, provide open-ended challenges, and create a supportive environment that stimulates students' confidence and creativity.

2.3.1.5. Ensuring Suitability to Third-Grade Students' Psychological and Linguistic Characteristics

The measures should be designed in line with the psychological traits and language abilities of third-grade students, while also ensuring sufficient appeal to spark their interest and motivation in learning.

2.3.2. Proposing Measures to Develop Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Teaching Vietnamese

2.3.2.1. Applying Active Teaching Methods and Techniques

To foster group work skills among third-grade students, it is essential to employ active teaching methods and techniques. The methods and techniques presented below serve as orientations for teachers when teaching Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, as well as Vocabulary and Sentence Practice.

a. Some active teaching methods and techniques for developing group work skills in third-grade students

- The Game-Based Method

The game-based learning method organizes educational activities through games, where students engage in playful yet instructional situations, thereby acquiring knowledge in a natural and engaging way. To enhance group work skills for third-grade students in Vietnamese language learning, this method can be applied in the following areas:

+ Teaching Writing

The use of game-based learning in Writing instruction (particularly spelling practice) creates an engaging and lively classroom atmosphere, enabling students to internalize and apply spelling rules in a natural and enjoyable manner. Through games, students practice accurate spelling, identify and correct common spelling errors (such as distinguishing sounds, rhymes, tonal marks,

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capitalization rules, etc.). In addition, this method develops language competence (recognizing correct words and sentences), fosters group work skills (collaborating in groups, dividing tasks, and supporting each other), and enhances students' motivation, thereby increasing the effectiveness of spelling lessons.

+ Teaching Vocabulary and Sentence Practice

In Vocabulary and Sentence Practice, integrating games helps create a relaxed yet dynamic learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively and enthusiastically. When playing group-based games, students not only practice mobilizing their vocabulary, classifying and using words accurately, but also experience the spirit of competition and collaboration with peers. Such activities strengthen group cohesion, help students become more confident in presenting ideas, while fostering listening and peer feedback. As a result, game-based activities not only consolidate and expand vocabulary and linguistic rules but also provide motivation for learning, cultivating a genuine interest and enjoyment in studying Vietnamese for third-grade students.

- The Role-Playing Method

+ Teaching Reading

The use of role-playing in Reading lessons not only helps students practice accurate and expressive reading but also deepens their comprehension of the content and meaning of texts. By embodying the characters in stories, students have the opportunity to demonstrate appropriate intonation, gestures, and emotions, thereby enhancing their literary appreciation. At the same time, this method encourages creativity, builds confidence in communication, and develops students' speaking and listening skills. Importantly, role-playing fosters group work skills as students must coordinate, assign roles, and support each other in order to complete the activity effectively.

+ Teaching Speaking and Listening

Applying role-playing in Speaking and Listening instruction—particularly in storytelling lessons—is of special significance, as it not only enables students to remember and recreate stories vividly but also contributes to the development of language competence and communicative ability. Through taking on different roles, students practice speaking coherently, expressing ideas with suitable intonation, gestures, and facial expressions, thereby improving their capacity to convey emotions and messages of the story. Moreover, role-playing requires students to listen attentively and respond to their peers, strengthening collaboration and teamwork. More importantly, this activity stimulates students' interest in learning, immersing them in the world of characters, fostering empathy with situations, and internalizing the moral and social lessons embedded in the narratives. Thus, role-playing in storytelling lessons serves not only as a means to develop speaking and listening skills but also as an avenue for educating primary students in values, attitudes, and emotional growth.

- The Jigsaw Technique

+ Teaching Writing

The application of the jigsaw technique in Writing instruction helps third-grade students develop language competence in a comprehensive way. First, it allows them to practice writing skills through the processes of generating ideas, organizing content, and constructing a coherent structure for their texts. In addition, this technique fosters speaking and listening abilities, as each student is required to present the part assigned to them and listen to their peers in order to complete a collective product. This process also provides opportunities to practice communication and collaboration skills, as students must distribute tasks, coordinate, respond to, and support each other to reach consensus. Thus, the jigsaw technique not only improves students' writing performance but also strengthens their sense of responsibility and capacity for teamwork.

+ Teaching Speaking and Listening

The use of the jigsaw technique in Speaking and Listening lessons creates opportunities for students to practice communication skills in a natural and effective way. Through discussion and exchange within "expert groups," followed by sharing in "jigsaw groups," students develop speaking skills (presenting ideas clearly, coherently, and appropriately for the audience) and listening skills (active listening, acknowledging peers' contributions, responding, or posing questions). At the same time, they enhance collaboration skills by learning to coordinate, assign roles, and support one another to complete group tasks. This process prepares students to communicate confidently and assertively, serving both their learning and the development of essential social competencies.

+ Teaching Vocabulary and Sentence Structures

The application of the jigsaw technique in Vocabulary and Grammar lessons enables students to consolidate linguistic knowledge while simultaneously practicing cooperation skills through task-sharing. Instead of passively receiving information from the teacher, students actively investigate different parts of the content and then share their findings with the group. This process helps them develop language competence while also strengthening speaking and listening skills (presenting, listening, and responding), along with collaboration skills (task assignment, coordination, and consensus building).

- The Placemat Technique

+ Teaching Writing

The application of the placemat technique in Writing instruction is designed to foster both independence and collaboration among students. Each student is given the opportunity to express their own ideas on the topic within their individual space, thereby

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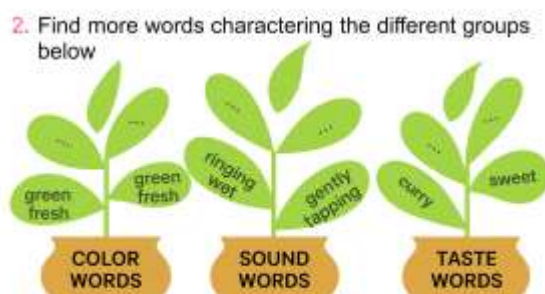
cultivating habits of independent thinking and active written expression. Afterward, students engage in group discussions to compare, supplement, and reach consensus on their ideas, which are then synthesized into a collective group product. This activity not only strengthens writing competence (the ability to produce coherent and topic-focused texts) but also enhances speaking and listening skills (presenting, listening attentively, and giving feedback), while simultaneously nurturing group work skills such as respecting individual opinions and achieving collective agreement.

+ Teaching Vocabulary and Sentence Structures

The use of the placemat technique in Vocabulary and Grammar lessons enables students to actively construct their understanding of Vietnamese language knowledge through a combination of individual and group activities. Each student has the opportunity to explore, reflect, and propose their own answers to the lesson tasks (e.g., identifying vocabulary by theme, classifying words, constructing sentences, or applying punctuation). Through subsequent group discussion, comparison, and consensus building, students not only consolidate their language knowledge but also develop essential communicative skills, including expression, attentive listening, and collaborative interaction. Thus, the placemat technique contributes to improving the quality of Vietnamese language learning while fostering active learning behaviors and a sense of shared responsibility within the group.

b. Some Examples of Applying Active Teaching Methods and Techniques to Develop Group Work Skills for Third-Grade Students in Vietnamese Language Instruction

- Using the Game Method in Teaching the Lesson “Practice” (Week 5, Lesson 10) [5].



1) Preparation

+ The teacher draws three trees on A0 sheets of paper. Each tree is associated with a key category: *Color*, *Sound*, and *Taste* (the number of A0 sheets corresponds to the number of teams).

+ Green leaf-shaped cards are prepared for students to write words on.

+ The class is divided into teams.

2) Procedure

+ The teacher introduces the game: “*The Magical Garden*”.

+ Rules of the game:

When the teacher gives the signal “*Start*”, each team finds words corresponding to the categories (*Color*, *Sound*, *Taste*), writes them on the leaf cards, and attaches them to the correct tree. The team that generates the largest number of correct words within the shortest time wins.

Time limit: 3 minutes.

+ Students participate in the game.

The teams compete by writing words on the leaf cards and attaching them to the appropriate trees. For example:

✓ *Color*: green, red, purple, yellow, black, brown, white, pink, sky blue, crimson, golden yellow...

✓ *Sound*: rustling, dripping, pattering, clattering, murmuring, swishing, trickling, rumbling, roaring...

✓ *Taste*: nutty, spicy, bitter, tangy, sour, sweet-and-sour, bland, salty, sweet...

Sharing and Announcing Results

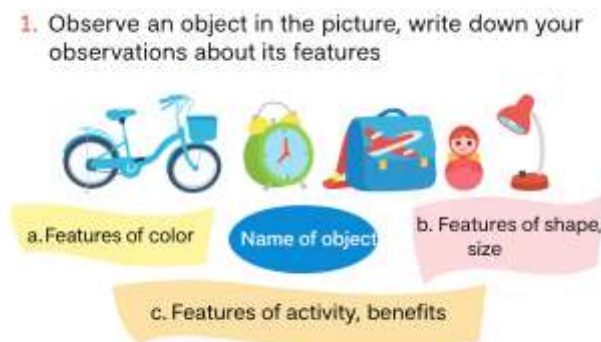
+ The teacher and the whole class check and supplement the vocabulary.

+ Announce the winning team (the one that found the most correct words).

+ Praise and encourage the teams to create learning motivation.

+ Using the jigsaw technique to organize the lesson “Writing a Descriptive Paragraph about an Object” (Week 10, Lesson

18).



1) Preparation

- + The teacher prepares pictures of familiar objects (e.g., a bicycle, alarm clock, school bag, desk lamp...).
- + Students are divided into three expert groups, each responsible for one observation criterion:
 - ✓ Group 1: Characteristics of color.
 - ✓ Group 2: Characteristics of shape and size.
 - ✓ Group 3: Characteristics of function and use.

2) Procedure

- + Step 1: Work in expert groups.

Each group discusses and records characteristics based on the assigned criterion. For example:

- ✓ Group 1 – *Color*:

Bicycle: sky blue, with a white basket, black saddle.

Alarm clock: green, with red hands.

School bag: blue, decorated with a red airplane image.

- ✓ Group 2 – *Shape and size*:

Bicycle: two equal-sized wheels, straight frame, curved handlebars, rectangular basket.

Alarm clock: round face, large numbers, two hands showing hours and minutes.

School bag: rectangular shape, with straps, medium size suitable for carrying books.

- Group 3 – *Function and use*:

Bicycle: used for going to school, leisure activities, and exercise.

Alarm clock: used for telling time and waking up in the morning.

School bag: used for carrying books and school supplies every day.

- + Step 2: Form jigsaw groups.

The teacher rearranges students so that each new group includes members from Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3.

- + Step 3: Sharing in jigsaw groups.

Each student presents the information prepared by their expert group. Other members listen attentively and take notes to compile complete information about the object.

3) Presentation and Feedback

- + Representatives of the jigsaw groups present their synthesized descriptions of the objects.

+ Other groups provide comments and add details. The teacher evaluates the results, praises cooperation, and provides guidance on improving clarity of expression.

2.3.2.2. Building a Culture of Cooperation in Teaching Vietnamese

a. Objectives

- To create a friendly and democratic learning environment in which students are encouraged to listen, share, and respect one another.

- To develop and strengthen students' cooperative skills, enabling them to work in groups effectively.

- To integrate the cultivation of a cooperative culture into specific learning activities in Vietnamese, thereby improving knowledge acquisition and fostering students' language competence.

b. Implementation

- Step 1. Establish group cooperation rules

- + The teacher and students discuss and agree upon basic principles for group work.

- + Typical rules may include: listening to peers, not interrupting while others are speaking, respecting differences, and ensuring that each member has a specific task.

- + The teacher records these rules on the board or posts them in the classroom as a constant reminder.

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- Step 2. Assign clear roles within the group
 - + Each group should have designated roles such as: leader (facilitates discussion), secretary (takes notes), presenter (reports results), and timekeeper (monitors progress).
 - + Roles are rotated by activity or week to give every student the opportunity to experience and practice different responsibilities.
- Step 3. Create positive motivation for students
 - + During group activities, the teacher observes and promptly encourages behaviors such as helping peers, sharing ideas, attentive listening, and providing constructive feedback.
 - + Recognition can take the form of praise, group or individual commendations, or awarding bonus points to foster enthusiasm for cooperation.
- Step 4. Provide feedback and make adjustments after activities
 - + At the end of each group activity, the teacher allows students to self-assess and share reflections on their cooperation: what went well and what needs improvement.
 - + The teacher adds comments, provides guidance, and encourages students to adjust their behavior for more effective collaboration in the future. Over time, this process fosters a sustainable culture of cooperation in learning.

2.3.2.3. *Promoting Students' Self-Management in Group Activities*

a. Objectives

- To provide opportunities for students to take initiative and build confidence when participating in group activities.
- To train students in skills of organization, coordination, task delegation, and monitoring group work.
- To foster a sense of personal responsibility linked with collective responsibility.
- To contribute to the development of communication and cooperation skills, autonomy and self-learning, as well as the ability to self-assess and make adjustments in learning.

b. Implementation

- The teacher presents the learning tasks and requirements, while the groups themselves decide on the methods of organization and task distribution.
- Roles such as group leader, secretary, timekeeper, and reporter are agreed upon within the group and rotated regularly so that every student has the opportunity to experience different responsibilities.
- The teacher observes and intervenes only when necessary, creating opportunities for students to handle situations and solve problems independently.
- After each activity, the group conducts self-assessment regarding task completion and members' cooperative attitudes; the teacher provides feedback, encouragement, and guidance to reinforce students' self-management.

2.3.2.4. *Strengthening Process Assessment to Encourage Group Cooperation*

a. Objectives

- To ensure fairness and objectivity in group activity assessment, accurately reflecting the contributions of each member.
- To encourage a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and mutual support within the group.
- To help students identify their strengths and limitations during collaboration, thereby adjusting their working methods for greater effectiveness.
- To foster students' capacity for self-assessment and peer assessment, while enhancing individual accountability within the collective.

b. Implementation

- Assessment is carried out by the teacher, through student self-assessment, and via peer evaluation among group members.
- The teacher establishes specific evaluation criteria such as level of participation, cooperative spirit, responsibility for assigned tasks, and the overall quality of the group product.
- During group activities, the teacher observes students' progress, effort, and cooperative attitudes throughout the process.
- The teacher provides feedback and recognition, rewarding both individual students who demonstrate active engagement and groups that show strong teamwork, while also pointing out areas for improvement. Forms of encouragement may include bonus points, public praise, or displaying group products to promote cooperative spirit.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cultivating group work skills among third-grade students is of great significance, as it not only enhances the effectiveness of Vietnamese language instruction but also contributes to the formation and development of communication and collaboration—key components of students' core competencies. This paper has clarified the necessity of developing group work skills for third graders in Vietnamese language teaching, emphasizing it as an essential requirement in the current context of educational reform. Survey findings indicate that while teachers acknowledge the importance of group activities, their classroom implementation remains limited; students, meanwhile, still lack initiative and show insufficient listening, cooperation, and peer-support skills. From this reality, the

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study proposed four measures: employing active teaching techniques, building a culture of cooperation, promoting students' self-management in group work, and strengthening process-based assessment. Experimental results confirmed that these measures are both feasible and effective, encouraging students to participate more actively and collaborate more efficiently, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of Vietnamese language teaching at the primary level in Vietnam.

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