

A SLIGHT RESEARCH IN JIGSAW READING TECHNIQUE AS AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING METHOD

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Abstract. Different learning strategies in fact have one and the same aim, similar target – to improve the level of knowledge, to brush up the language proficiency, to make the lesson as effective as possible and attractive at the same time. The present article is a kind of a slight research in the field of teaching methods – namely, in a quite popular nowadays, among scholars, technique – jigsaw activity. It was not just an attempt to describe the technique, to show its variants and how they could be applied in practice, but also to identify its pluses and minuses in case they do really occur. In the end of the article, making a final conclusion, I came with some pieces of advice that definitely will help in case you accept the challenge to implement the technique in the frame of your classes.

Key words: technique, learning strategy, reading, jigsaw, effectiveness, cooperation

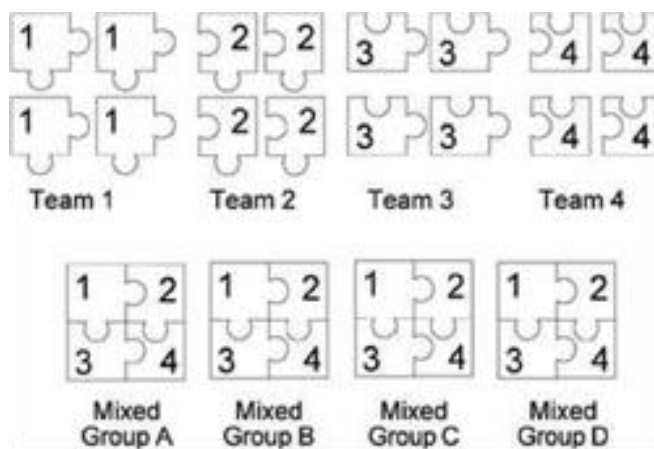
Introduction. There are a lot of methods and techniques used by teachers during the lessons, the aim of which is to make the process of studying not only more effective but even more attractive for students. As a result, the process of learning from a hard and boring procedure could be turned into something interesting, capturing and active. One of such methods is the technique called “jigsaw”. It could be integrated into the lesson structures differently, in diverse activities, for different language proficiency levels – for reading, listening or even speaking activities. In fact, the clue of the method is exactly the same for all the enumerated activities, but I prefer to use it mostly as a reading technique.

Jigsaw technique – what is it? Jigsaw method or technique is a cooperative

learning strategy that empowers each student of an "initial" group to concentrate on and study one aspect of a topic, a certain part of a cohesive text.

The technique of Aronson jigsaw is considered by specialists in learning as one of the most representative techniques that implement cooperation in the classroom [1]. It was thought-out by the social psychologist Elliot Aronson to help weaken racial groups in compulsorily integrated schools, that is why it could be met quite often in the specialized literature as Aronson technique. The Jigsaw method is beneficial for students learning, making the educational process more comfortable and attractive due to its gaming facet.

The technique separates the class into mixed teams to work on small problems that the group organizes into a final outcome [2]. For example, an in-class project is divided into topics. Students are then split into teams with one member assigned to each topic. Working independently, each student learns about his or her topic and presents it to their group. Next, students gather into groups divided by topic. Each member presents again to the topic group. In same-topic groups, students merge points of view and synthesize information. They create a final report. Finally, the original groups reconvene and listen to presentations from each member. The final presentations provide all group members with an understanding of their own material, as well as the findings that have emerged from topic-specific group discussion [3]. Schematically, the process of the described technique looks as shown in figure 1:



(fig.1 – Jigsaw Activity Structure)

The Aronson jigsaw technique has several variants that could be used successfully while working with a reading part [4]:

- We can take two or even more separate stories (depending on the number of students in the class or on the formed “home” groups. If you have several news stories that share a theme - for example two separate stories on cybercrime - prepare comprehension questions for each story. Give one half of the class (Group A) one story, and the other half (Group B) the other. The students read their article, answer the questions and check understanding. Students then pair up with someone from the other group and tell them about their story, and listen to the other one. To help students remember their story you may get them to take notes. Alternatively, the students can keep the article with them to refer to. Be careful though, as lazier (or ingenious) students will either read the article aloud, or simply give it to their partner to read!

- One story that is split in smaller parts according to the number of “home” teams. Nearly all the stories can be obviously divided in several parts. Follow the same procedure as above, but giving each group only one half of the story [5]. When the students are recounting their half of the article, make sure that the student with the opening half goes first.

- Another variant of the technique is the partition of the issue of the lesson into subtopics, so that each formed group works with a specific theme and in the final part the whole class could have a clear understanding of the basic subject [6]. As a result, jigsaw technique makes it possible for students to be introduced to material and yet bear a high level of personal responsibility.

No matter the variant you select, the objective of this work is to implement cooperative learning [7] in your class through the jigsaw technique. A closed survey has been carried out in order to measure the usefulness, advantages and disadvantages of the Aronson technique and the use of the method in developing workout routines [8]. Mostly, the students felt that the group work through the jigsaw method had helped to supplement the theoretical concepts. The main benefits reported were ranked as: enhancing their critical and reflective thinking, being a learning facilitator tool, being a motivational tool and improving their relationship with their partners [9].

Advantages and disadvantages of the jigsaw technique. Implementing one or another method in our work we clearly come across either some advantages or disadvantages of the used strategies. The studied case – Aronson jigsaw technique - is not an exception in this respect. It really revealed both, assets and drawbacks.

The pros of the technique could be listed as follows:

a. Students have the opportunity to teach themselves instead of having material presented to them. The technique fosters depth of understanding. It definitely develops self-esteeming.

b. Each student has practiced it in self-teaching, which is the most valuable of the entire skill teacher can help them learn. It is about discipline and self-responsibility.

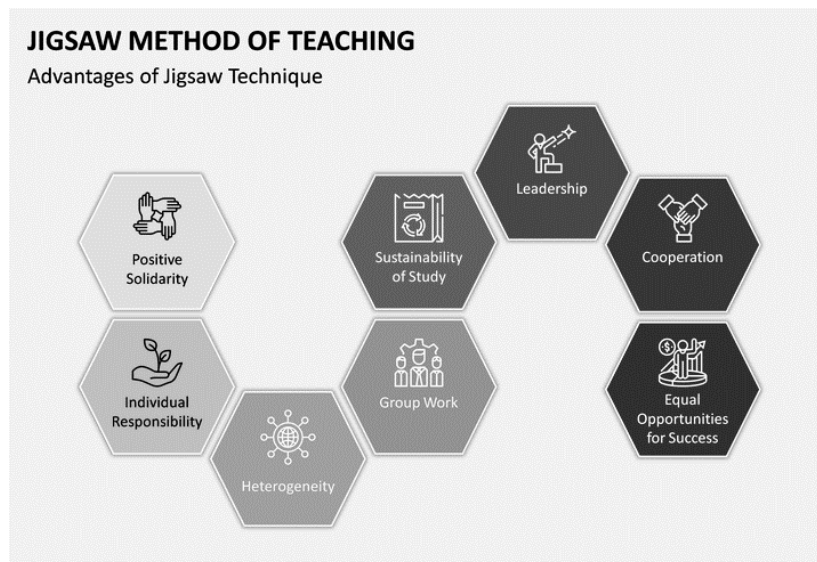
c. Students practice in peer teaching, which requires that they understand the material at deeper level than student typically do when simply asked to produce or reproduce a studied material. And here we can speak about cooperation.

d. Students become more fluent in use of English – which is fact is the target of our main objective.

e. Each student has a chance to contribute meaningfully to discussion that is difficult to achieve in large group discussion. Each student develops an expertise and has something important to contribute. At this very point we could speak obviously about sustainability.

f. Asking each group to discuss a follow-up question after individual presentation fosters real discussion – which is the straight way to success.

All these aspects, i.e. the advantages of the Jigsaw Method, are perfectly depicted in figure 2:



(fig.2 – Advantages of Jigsaw Method)

Unfortunately, even if the advantages of the method are prodigious, the strategy has some lacks or disadvantages that could be summarized as goes:

1. It takes much time to organize the group. The teacher should make groups that combine the students who have different aptitudes and skills.
2. If students do not get into their group quickly enough or read their initial texts rapidly enough, it will run out of time.
3. If one or two obstinate students do not participate in the common work, a whole group or even two will lose out on a piece of the text.
4. The class situation become noisy, so the teacher needs to control the students, which again is time and energy consuming. It could lead to boring feature for some of the active students.
5. The teacher cannot monitor all groups at once and it could sometimes usher to chaos in the teaching space.

Conclusion. The jigsaw technique is considered by teachers and students to be a teaching-learning method beneficial for promoting self-study, completing the information obtained in the class and facilitating learning of the proposed objectives. Being engaged in all the above-mentioned activities students are more motivated and satisfied. Moreover, students' achievement on reading comprehension taught by using Jigsaw Strategy is more significant than those taught by usual, so-called traditional reading and reproducing method.

It is stated that Aronson jigsaw, for a greater success, requires social skills, which include leadership, decision-making, trust building, communication, and conflict management skill. All these, are developed, trained and strengthen within the jigsaw technique.

Based on the conclusion it is suggested to the following:

- Teacher should consider the most suitable method of the effective strategy to teach students on learning competences

It is really important to motivate students in terms of increasing their learning attitude so that the students achieve the lessons happily and easily especially on learning reading competence

My advice, at that point, is to use jigsaw technique and other strategies on teaching reading competence because the strategies are suitable as lesson target and, at the same time, help students not to lost their learning eagerness.

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