Our Stories:
Adventures
in Teaching English

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中小学英语教学 论坛

英语学习与教学发展新趋势

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现代科技与文明的快速发展，交通的便利，使世界越变越小，国际交流与合作日益扩大。世纪之交的社会、经济、科学技术的快速发展对外语学习提出了新的要求。各行各业对外语水平及外语人才的需求，又引起了各个方面对外语学习的重视、开发和研究。世纪之交时期的外语教学由此发生了巨大而十分深刻的变化。这种变化发生在外语学习和教学的各个方面，如：教学指导思想，课堂教学方式，教学内容，教材编写，教研方法，以及学习态度。综观方方面面的变化，对外语学习产生最大影响的变化当属人们对外语学习与教学理念的变化与认识。归纳起来，有十个方面的转变，成为外语学习与教学的新趋势。

一、外语学习与教学的研究由外语教学法单一学科向多边缘跨学科方向的转变

综观 20 世纪外语教学的发展，教学方法的探讨是主流，从语法翻译法、直接法到听说法，从情景教学法、交际法到认知法，从全身反应法、暗示法到任务教学法。先是流派纷呈，后是多元并存，可以称之为"方法的时代"（Rogers，2000）。外语教学法成为外语教师培训的必修课。进入 60 ~ 70 年代以来，随着应用语言学、第二语言习得研究的不断发展，外语教学的研究受到心理语言学、社会语言学、跨文化交际学、语用学等新兴学科的启发，开始探讨母语及第二语言习得理论、语言学习者的个体差异、语言学习者学习策略、语言教学环境等方面。外语教学研究已成为一门具有多学科交叉，理论与实践并重，以语言描写理论、语言学习理论、语言使用理论为基础，涉及语言学、教育学、心理学、社会学、语言测试学以及计算机辅助教学相关领域的综合学科。世纪之交，语言教学研究生和外语教师培训的课程有应用语言学、第二语言习得理论、外语教学法等。出版的教材内容也反映了这种学科交叉的发展趋势，如：Gass 和 Selinker 的 Second Language Acquisition：An Introductory Course（2001）；Larsen-Freeman 和 Long 的 An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research（1991）；Lightbown 和 Spada 的 How Languages Are Learned（1999）；Mitchell 和 Myles 的 Second Language Learning Theories（1998）等。

二、外语学习与教学研究的重点由怎样教转向怎样学

Larsen-Freeman（1987）在回顾语言教学法发展时提出，语言教学所涉及的诸领域可以概括为三个领域构成的三角，即语言学习者/学习（怎样学）；语言/文化（学什么）；教师/教学（怎样教）。百十年来，人们着重研究语言本身（特别是对语言的描写）和教学方法。认为只要把语言描写好了，再找到一种最好的教学方法，一般人都会学好一门外语。但事实并不是这么简单。同样的老师，同样的教材，同样的教法，但总是有的学的好，有的学的不好，甚至很差。为什么呢？英国英语教学专家 Harmer（2000）指出，成功外语课堂的三个基本要素是投入（Engage），学习（Study），运用（Activate）。语言学习者是否积极投入是有效学习的必要前提。外语教学研究者们开始关注外语学习的主体、语言学习者本身的因素和特征，关注学习者个人之间

的差异，研究造成这些差异的内部的和外部的各种因素，研究学习外语的心理特征和语言过程。我国教育部2001年颁布的全日制义务教育和普通高级中学《英语课程标准》对课程总体目标的描述也反映了重视学习者因素的发展趋势。《英语课程标准》认为"学生的综合语言运用能力的形成建立在学生语言技能、语言知识、情感态度、学习策略和文化意识等素养整体发展的基础上。语言知识和语言技能是综合语言运用能力的基础，文化意识是得体运用语言的保证。情感态度是影响学生学习和发展的重要因素，学习策略是提高学习效率、发展自主学习能力的保证"（2001：6）。

三、外语教学内容也开始由重语言技能向重内容教学发展

交际教学理论的兴起与发展使人们认识到外语教学要创造有意义的学习情景，要使用有意义的、自然的、生动活泼的、真实的语言素材。外语教学内容经历了从重语言知识到重语言知识和语言技能，从重语言和文化到重语言能力和内容教学的过程。以有意义的语言交流为基础、用外语学习知识、获取信息为目的教学活动为基础的外语教学成为当今外语教学的显著特点和发展趋势。教师在教学活动中让学习者用英语提出问题或要求，表达感情，查找信息，完成一项任务等等。使他们学到有用的、地道的、真实的语言，而不是矫揉造作的课堂对话。

四、外语教材编写和使用开始向教学资源方向发展

随着教学内容的变化，人们对于教材的编写及其作用，也有了新的认识。新的教学理念已不再把教材看作是教学的金科玉律，而把它看作是一种教学资源。尽管选择教材是教学中的一个重要步骤，但是教师对所选教材进行创造性的使用才是最重要的。灵活地和创造性地使用教材应是教师的一项基本功。因为，无论教材有多好，都不会时时刻刻完全适应每一个班级、学生或老师，总会有这样或那样的问题。当教师认为教材内容或编排对他的学生不合适时，有经验的老师会采取删减、替代、补充或改编的解决办法。教材是一种重要的课程资源，对于教师来说，课堂教学应该是如何更好地"用教材"，而不是简单地"教教材"。"尽管选择教材是教学中的一个重要步骤，但是教师对所选教材进行创造性的使用才是最重要的"（Harmer，2000：118）。

五、外语教学方法也由过去遵从一种方法体系向综合式、折中式方向发展

综观百年外语教学法演变的发展，可以大体上将其分为四个不同的历史阶段（Stern，1983）。每个阶段都有占据主导地位的外语教学方法。每一种方法都反映了一种思潮。这些不同的教学法大体上反映了两种主要的语言观：经验主义的语言观和心智主义的语言观。这两种语言观对学外语应强调大量的习惯模仿，还是心智的意识和天赋；在外语教学中采用演绎法，还是归纳法，有着截然不同的观点。哪一种教学法能更好地帮助外语学习呢？王佐良教授在80年代的一次座谈会上曾经生动地指出，Some methods are useful to some people sometimes in some places; no method is useful to all people all times in all places。进入80～90年代后，大部分外语教师认识到，学习者千差万别，学习目的各不相同，教师风格因人而异，不同阶段有不同的任务。以积极的态度来接受教学法上的不同思潮，采取包容、明智的折中立场（sensible middle view），是世纪之交外语教学的显著特点和主要发展趋势。这种折中式的立场和趋势体现在外语教学的各个方面，如：语言学习与语言习得，语言知识与语言运用能力，语言结构与语言功能，演绎法与归纳法等。

六、外语课堂教学方式也开始给予学生更多的关注

传统的外语教学课堂主要是教师讲授。第二语言习得关于学习者个体差异的研究给外语教师带来了观念

上的变化。以学生为中心，强调学生参与，关心学生学习差异和原因，激励学生讲英语，让学生多投入、多练习，外语学习活动化，学习活动交际化的理念也越来越多地被外语教师所认可。课堂教学由单纯的精讲多练转变为让学生大量接触语言信息，反复练习、接触和运用，分阶段逐步掌握语言；强调外语学习要多输入、多练习和多接触；强调教师课上教学与课下指导的结合，语言习得与语言教学的统一。近年来，受第二语言习得关于语言发展过程的研究和交际教学法教学思想的影响，外语教师对学生语言错误的认识也有了明显的转变。过去强调语言的正确性，对学生语言练习中的错误往往是有错必纠，惟恐误人子弟。结果是不少学生惧怕失败，不愿练习，自然无法取得进步。现在的理念是既强调语言的正确性，更要强调语言的流利性，鼓励学生大胆练习，勇于冒险。通过学生的体验、参与、实践和合作，实现学习目标，形成积极的学习态度，促进语言实际运用能力的提高。

七、外语教学界越来越关注外语教学研究方法的规范性

随着应用语言学和外语教学研究的深入，"实证研究方法"越来越多地受到外语教学研究界的重视，定量分析的作用越来越重要。简单地观察语言学习或教学，从经验的角度、主观地下结论的研究方法被逐渐抛弃。根据 Lazaraton（2000）对国外四种主要英语教学刊物 91～97 年刊载论文的统计分析，定量研究的论文（292/88%）大大多于定性研究的论文（33/10%），有 7 篇属于部分定性研究的论文，占 2%。随着实证研究方法越来越多地受到我国外语界的重视，国内外语教学研究开始从印象式的定性走向量化（高一虹，1999），从定性研究转到定性研究与定量研究的结合（刘润清，1999）。根据高一虹等对我国四种主要中文外语刊物的分析，国内近年来外语教学研究方法发展趋势的主要特征是：1）定量研究在数量上的增加和质量上的提高；2）定性（质化）研究的出现；3）个人经验和看法的下降（1999）。针对国内大多数外语教师缺少研究方法的训练和统计知识，国内不少重点大学开设了语言学研究方法课程，引进了这方面的主要专著，如：James Brown 的 Understanding Research in Second Language Learning（1988）；Herbert Seliger 和 Elana Shohamy 的 Second Language Research Methods（1989）；Jo McDounough 和 Steven McDonough 的 Research Methods for English Language Teacher（1997）；Michael Wallace 的 Action Research for Language Teachers（1998）等。一批由国内专家撰写的外语研究方法专著也已出版，如：林连书的《英语实验研究方法》（1995）；桂诗春、宁春岩的《语言学方法论》（1997）；刘润清的《外语教学中的科研方法》（1999）等。

八、外语教学中知识呈现方式的变化

现代科学技术的飞速发展，特别是计算机网络的广泛使用，给外语教学手段，尤其是外语知识的呈现方式带来了前所未有的机遇。广播电视、卫星转播、计算机辅助外语教学课件开发、电子邮件、电子词典、电子图书、语料库、人机对话、机器翻译、计算机外语考试、机器阅卷、互联网络论坛、多媒体课堂教学、信息高速公路、远程教学、网络大学等新技术都给外语学习的方式、教师的作用和课堂教学模式带来了新的变化和挑战。千百年来，外语课堂教学依靠的是一本书、一支粉笔再加上老师一张嘴。计算机和信息技术进入外语教学领域为 CALL（Computer Assisted Language Learning）提供了物质条件和技术支持。音像文字结合、图文并茂的现代化外语知识呈现方式将会消除外语学习的单调，使外语学习更加轻松有趣、形式多样；发现式和探究式语言练习的形式将消除学生外语练习时的紧张和焦虑；现代化语言学习手段和方式将给学生提供弹性的学习时间、学习环境、学习内容、学习模式和评估方式，加快教育个性化的进程。

九、外语学习者的队伍和学习目的也发生了变化

过去人们有一种误解，认为只有智商很高的人才能学会外语，所以到高中或大学才开设外语课（Johnson，

2001）。现在，外语学习者的队伍已远远超出高中生和大学生的范围。这支队伍的扩大，一是学习者年龄大大降低，许多中小学校已开设外语课，二是学习者类别呈现多样化的发展趋势，如：机关干部、公司职员、出租车司机、城市居民等。这也将给外语工作者带来新的教学任务和研究课题。学习目的也发生了根本性的变化，由学习目的单一转为学习目的多样化。过去把外语学习当作一门知识学习，学习外语可以阅读外语文献或文学名著，提高人文素质和修养。现在把外语当作一个跨文化交流的工具，谋职、就业、晋级或移民的必备条件。学习目的则要强调用字当头，听说领先，注重交际能力，注重语言运用。教学则要考虑不同学习者的目的和需求。

十、外语测试与评价向综合性和规范化方向发展

测试对语言教学有很大的反拨作用，新的发展趋势倡导建立能激励学生学习兴趣和自主学习能力发展的评价体系。评价体系应由形成性评价和终结性评价构成。在英语教学过程中，应以形成性评价为主，注重培养和激发学生学习的积极性和自信心；终结性评价注重检测学生综合运用语言技能和语言应用能力。英语考试应着重考查学生在真实情境中正确、合理使用语言的能力，要兼顾听、说、读、写能力的考查。要体现新时期对语言技能的综合要求，对教学产生积极的导向作用。大规模的考试向规范化方向发展。

结语

新的发展趋势给外语教师带来了更多的机遇与挑战。要求我们从教学理念、理论学习、教学内容改革、教学技能和技术更新、教学研究规范等诸方面跟上发展，不断进取，不断提高，为外语教学做出新的贡献。

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Cooperative Learning in English Learning Classroom

Wang Hongjun　Liu Yanhua

Introduction

Cooperative learning is one of the greatest success stories in the educational innovation history. From the 1970s, cooperative learning strategies become so commonplace that they are often seen as a standard part of educational practice, not as an innovation. However, what is cooperative learning? It is defined in many ways. Rich (1993) defines it a generic term that is used to describe an instructional arrangement for teaching academic and collaborative skills to small, heterogeneous groups of students. And Johnson and Johnson (1989) have more specifically defined cooperative learning with four necessary components: face-to-face interaction, positive goal interdependence, individual accountability, and demonstration of interpersonal and small group skills.

Most definitions have in common the notion of the instructional use of small class groups or teams where peer interaction plays the key role in learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991; Ravenscroft, Buckless, & Hassall, 1999, cited in Koppenhaver & Shrader, 2003). Cooperative learning typically requires placing students in small teams enabling collaborative work on assignments, in attempt to maximize each other's learning. Team members work cooperatively together to achieve a common goal and share leadership, responsibility and influence to facilitate learning. Cooperative learning includes a variety of instructional techniques aimed at student-centered learning and the development of student interpersonal skills (Siciliano, 2001, cited in Koppenhaver & Shrader, 2003).

As an English teacher, I always involve some cooperative learning activities in my teaching. It is a useful learning tool in learning English for ESL (English as second language) students. In this article, I will discuss this student-centered learning strategy: cooperative learning activities in terms of my own teaching practice in China. As well, I will point out some advantages and disadvantages of using cooperative learning activities in English learning classroom. And the aim of this article is to inform some peers in China to have a fresh look on this pedagogical method in their own pedagogical area.

Literature Review

A lot of research has been done to emphasize that cooperative learning does indeed enhance student performance (e. g. Johnson et al., 1991; Ravenscroft et al., 1999). Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups in which pupils work together to maximise their own and each other's learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). In cooperative learning classrooms, the pupils are expected to help, discuss and argue with each other; assess each other's current knowledge; and fill any gaps in each other's understanding. When properly organised, pupils in cooperative

learning groups make sure that everyone in the group has mastered the concepts being taught (Slavin, 1995).

Cooperative learning strategy has been suggested frequently for use in bilingual classrooms (e. g. Calderon, 1990; Cummins, 1986; Slavin, 1990). Calderon, et al, (1998) mentions that there are many reasons that cooperative learning seems particularly appropriate for bilingual education. Cooperative learning is likely to be particularly beneficial to students in transitional bilingual programs when they are making the transition from their native language to English. Research on learning ESL has shown that for students to reach high levels of proficiency, they must engage in a great deal of oral interaction, jointly negotiating meaning and solving problems. "Language acquisition is determined by a complex interaction of a number of critical input, output, and context variables" and that cooperative learning "has a dramatic positive impact on almost all the variables critical to language acquisition" (Kagan, 1996, p. 1, cited in Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998).

Research in Israel (Sharan et al. , 1984, cited in Calderon, et al. , 1998) and in Turkey (Acikgoz, 1991, cited in Calderon, et al, 1998) has shown positive effects of cooperative learning on learning English as a second language class. A study of Cambodian-American students acquiring English in the Philadelphia schools also showed positive effects of a program based on cooperative learning on these students' English proficiency (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996; Slavin & Yampolsky, 1991, cited in Calderon, et al, 1998).

Cooperative learning is an excellent means of involving students with limited English proficiency. And it makes sense for all teachers who have limited English proficient pupils in their classes because all students are given frequent opportunities to speak; a spirit of cooperation and friendship is fostered among classmates (Cochran, 1989, cited in Michelle, 1999).

However, there is little research that has been done on Chinese students learning English in classrooms. It appears that using cooperative learning activities may be a more suitable way for a country like China with a large population in English learning classes.

Using Cooperative Learning Technique in English Classroom in China

As for English learning class in ESL countries, using cooperative learning activities will be more effective. As we all know, the common ability of English learning for students consists of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. The key goal of learning English is to communicate and interaction is one of the main methods to practice English. With such a large amount of population in China, it is a big problem to find a good way in learning English. Because of the large population of China, the traditional English class always contains 40 to 60 students in lots of schools. All the students have no chance to interact with the instructors and each other in traditional classes. What the students do is just listening to the instructor. All these problems need instructors to involve some useful teaching methods into the traditional English teaching classes. It seems that using cooperative learning activities will be a better way in English class to lead to a better result.

According to Kagan (1994), there are over fifty forms of cooperative learning in classroom learning. Ultimately, each teacher must decide which of the cooperative-learning techniques to use and the relative amount of total in-class and out-of-class time devoted to cooperative learning according to the nature of the student population and the type of educational outcome to be fostered. As an English teacher, I always use cooperative learning activities in my teaching

and involve several different forms of cooperative learning techniques depending on the actual nature of the students and environments of the class, for example: Think-pair-share, Jigsaw, Problem solving, Storytelling, Role-plays, Open-ended free conversations, or Peer tutoring after class.

Advantages of Using Cooperative Learning

Putnam (1997) distinctly compares cooperative learning and traditional learning groups. It is obvious from this comparison that cooperative learning has much more benefits in the classroom learning.

Cooperative vs. Traditional Groups	
COOPERATIVE	TRADITIONAL
positive interdependence	no positive interdependence
individual accountability	no individual accountability
cooperative skill instruction	no cooperative skill instruction
concern for peer learning	little concern for peer learning
heterogeneous groups	homogeneous groups
teacher selected groups	student selected groups
student reflection and goal setting	no student reflection and goal setting
teacher observation and feedback	no teacher observation and feedback
equal opportunity for success	uniform standard for success

(taken from Putnam, 1997)

This figure clearly shows that cooperative learning a well-planned, sophisticated instructional strategy designed to promote content learning, trust in others, critical thinking skills, friendships across gender, racial and ethnic differences, and respect for diversity (Retrieved April 15, 2004, from *Academic achievements http: //curry. edschool. virginia. edu/go/secme/coop. html*).

Students in cooperative learning groups frequently demonstrate both higher achievement and greater productivity. In numerous additional studies, researchers have found cooperative learning to be more effective in promoting academic achievement than traditional and competitive environments (Laughlin, 1965, 1972; Laughlin & Jaccard, 1975; Laughlin, McGlynn, Anderson, & Jacobson, 1968; McGlynn, 1972, cited in Marr & Mary, 1997).

Promoting Knowledge Acquisition

Students in cooperative groups were found to use search and retrieval strategies more frequently than students in traditional learning situations which may enable students to achieve great more academic outcomes than their peers who work in traditional learning environments (Marr & Mary, 1997). During the process of sharing information, new solutions and ideas can be gained, which does not occur when students work individually. Still, during this process, there will be the information transfer from one peer to the other and the group to the individual. Individual students are

able to increase their mastery during this process (Marr & Mary, 1997). In addition, the positive effects of cooperative learning environments may also promote students' academic achievement.

Teachers always worry about how much the students can gain because they cannot ensure that the lecture suits all the students, especially in a large size class in China. Using cooperative learning in China is an effective tool to help students to develop their content knowledge. I always involve this strategy in my class, especially the form of Think-pair-share, Jigsaw and get good effects. The group members are all always actively to collect information to the group task question and likely to share what they have got with other peers. Still I will invite each member randomly in each group to do a presentation to their whole group or to the whole class. During the entire process, each student is motivated to learn and easy to grasp more content knowledge in comparison to sitting silently and listening to the lecture in the classroom. Also I use other forms of cooperative learning like problem solving or storytelling, both of which can help students deepen their understanding of the content.

Enhancing Language Proficiency

As ESL student in the English classroom, there is another significant benefit of using cooperative learning. It will certainly enhance the language proficiency of the students in the areas of reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, language expression. Language is the main tool for human communication. Cooperative learning largely provides more opportunity for the students to practice their oral English. As well, students may broaden their vocabulary storage and develop other English skills like reading, writing and listening.

Using cooperative learning in my class is an effective way to enhance the students' language proficiency. Students working in groups need to share what they have got for the group assignment to other group members and discuss them. Searching material may increase their reading skills and contribute to their vocabulary storage. While sharing information with peers, students are asked to use English only. Everyone may get chance to practice and have to practice, especially for the students with limited language proficiency. In addition, I often work as monitor in each group to help them with their interaction. A student in each group is asked to do a small presentation for the group members or for the whole class. Everyone should express his opinion at least four times during a semester. As well, Role-playing and Open-ended free conversations are some other forms that I often use in teaching to improve students' oral skills. The result after a semester appears that all the students in my class make a rapid progress with their reading, writing, listening, and oral presentation especially.

In sum, cooperative learning is a more effective way to promote content knowledge acquisition and enhance the language proficiency of the students, especially in large size class. It helps students feel successful at every academic level. In cooperative learning teams, low-achieving students can also make contributions to a group and experience success, and all students can increase their understanding of ideas by explaining them to others (Retrieved from April 15, 2004, from *Social skills* http://www. ericfacility. net/databases/ERIC-Digests/ed306003. html).

The other advantage of cooperative learning is the increase in social skills of students. In cooperative learning, structures are designed to encourage such pro-social behaviors as active listening, cooperation, and respect for others, even the evaluation of each peer's behavior on specified criteria and reports his or her perceptions to the teacher or peers for discussion or grading (Cooper, et al, 1994). Cooperative learning has also been linked to increases in self-esteem, attendance, time on task, enjoyment of school and classes, and motivation to learn, as well as a decrease in dependence on the teacher (Cooper, et al, 1994).

Developing Problem-solving Skills

Cooperative learning tends to emphasize face-to-face problem solving skills. In cooperative learning environment, high-level problem-solving skills are more frequently needed and developed than in traditional class because members are exposed to much more alternative problem-solving strategies than in traditional class (Cooper, et al, 1994).

Problem-solving skills are one of the weaknesses of Chinese students because they were taught to do completely as what the teachers ask during their primary and secondary school. Learn to solve problem by themselves is quite so unfamiliar to them but more important in their future career. So they are likely to develop this skill. Cooperative learning properly provides the opportunity for students to develop this skill. As in my class, in order to find the right solution to group assignment I gave them in advance, each student need to search the relevant information as much as possible before sharing with other group peers. In the process of information sharing, group members need to criticize the information gathered by other peers and summarize them with preparation to the following discussion. The more conceptual the task is, the more higher-level reasoning and critical thinking are required and the more problem-solving skills are developed. Students can improve their problem-solving skills gradually during the process of cooperative learning in classroom.

Improving Social Competence

When individuals work together to complete assignments, they must interact with each other to promote each other's success. To work together as a group, students need to engage in such interactive abilities as leadership, trust-building, conflict-management, constructive criticism, encouragement, compromise, negotiation, and clarifying (Stahl, 1994). During this process, students' social competencies can be improved.

Cooperative efforts with caring peers tend to increase personal ego-strength, self-confidence, independence, and autonomy. Cooperative groups in my class often provides an environment in which students may develop both their interpersonal and small group skills needed to work effectively with diverse schoolmates. Students learn how to communicate effectively, provide leadership, help the group make good decisions, build trust, repair hurt feelings, and understand other's perspectives. The more individuals work cooperatively, the more they see themselves as worthwhile and as having value and the more autonomous and independent they tend to be. Students can practice social skills frequently in cooperative activities. Johnson & Johnson (1999, cited in Cooper, et al, 1994) indicate that cooperative experiences are necessary for the healthy social and psychological development of individuals who can function independently.

Promoting Interpersonal Relationships

Cooperative learning has also been accepted to improve interpersonal relationships among students from different ethnic backgrounds. Cooperative groups help students establish and maintain friendships with peers. Students who are isolated or alienated from their peers and who do not have friends are more likely to be at risk for violent or destructive behavior in society than those who experience social support and a sense of belonging (Retrieved from April 15, 2004 from http: //www. ericfacility. net/databases/ERIC-Digests/ed306003. html).

Students in my class become much closer than I began to teach them 1 year ago. No one in the class is neglected and no one wants to be neglected. They respected each other and like to work together on their assignments even in other courses. In some extend, this close interpersonal relationship also promote their academic achievements. In addition, skills of improving interpersonal relationship with other peers are the foundation for the success in their social career in future.

Disadvantages of Using Cooperative Learning

Every coin has two sides. So does the cooperative learning strategy. Using cooperative learning activities in classroom may cause some problems. Studies by Collins (1970), Langer & Beneventi (1978) and Hill (1982) indicate that cooperative learning is too time-consuming, too diffuse in responsibility, and too informal to bring about high level learning of complicated material older students need to know (Lord, 2001).

From the teachers' perspectives, cooperative learning are viewed as being too costly in terms of the time required to have students reach acceptable levels of achievement. Many of us feel that we already have too much content to teach in the forty-five to fifty contact hours per term available in many courses (Cooper, et al, 1994). As well, as Gardfield says (1993), teachers may feel uncomfortable losing their role of being on center stage, performing in front of appreciative students (Lord, 2001). In my teaching practices, I often choose some proper texts not all texts to involve cooperative learning techniques. And during the process, I always give students a time limit to ensure the lecture time.

From students' perspectives, because students are used to sitting in lectures where they are not required to talk, solve problems, or struggle with learning new material, students may resist an activity that appears challenging and difficult, forces them to think, and does not allow them to be passive learners (Lord, 2001). Therefore, using cooperative learning activities may cause a few students only sharing others' achievements instead of contributing. To deal with a sandbagger who will not contribute, we suggest keeping close tabs on groups as they work. During cooperative learning class time, I am always a monitor moving from team to team to ensure every group member to be a contributor.

As teachers, we must realize the two sides of the cooperative learning activities. It is a good way to introduce the combination of traditional lecture and cooperative learning activities in the teaching practices. While using cooperative activities, in order to ensure the effective implementation, we should keep a clear specification of the instructional goal or objective, design group work to promote some attitude, to teach something, or to give practice in performing a task, and determine some form of individual student assessment.

Conclusion

In this article, I just reviewed some research studies on cooperative learning activities in classroom. Then focusing on the English learning in ESL countries, I mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of this learning strategy integrated with my own teaching experience in China.

In general, cooperative learning activities are an effective tool for students, especially in language learning class with large size like China. Cooperative learning is not the easiest way to teach, but it is a part of everyday classroom life and leads to social and academic success for all students. These skills should be consistently practiced and reinforced as students and teachers build a classroom community respectful of all learners.

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