

Exploration and Application of Cooperative Learning in Business Japanese Conversation Course

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Abstract—Cooperative learning is an ancient educational concept and practice. Its theoretical foundation is the theory of cooperative target structure. The Japanese teaching research on cooperative learning in China started around 2007. The content is mainly about the discussion and research application of reading and listening classes, and the necessity of cooperative learning from the psychological and cultural aspects. Under the premise of ensuring that the cooperative learning research should meet the four scientific standards, this article uses experimental data to compare and study the application of cooperative learning in business Japanese conversation courses. Through comparative research, the validity and limitations of cooperative learning in the course of business Japanese conversation are discussed. The application of cooperative learning in the Business Japanese Conversation Course can help improve student performance, increase students' enthusiasm for learning, and at the same time cultivate students' teamwork spirit during the learning process. However, cooperative learning has higher requirements on teachers. Teachers must ensure that the content of the lectures is appropriate. At the same time, teachers need to find and correct problems in a timely manner in order to better conduct group activities.

Keywords: *application, cooperative learning, business Japanese conversation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning is an ancient educational concept and practice. It was introduced to the United States in the early 19th century, and under the active advocacy of Dewey (J.), it occupied the mainstream position in American education. It was a creative and effective teaching theory and strategy that was revived in the early 1970s and made substantial progress in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. Because of its remarkable results in improving the social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom, improving students' academic performance in a large area, and promoting students to form good non-cognitive qualities, it has quickly attracted the attention of countries around the world and has become the mainstream of contemporary mainstream teaching theories and strategies. First, it has been hailed as "the most important and successful teaching reform

in recent decades".¹ The theoretical basis of cooperative learning is the cooperative goal structure theory of Doiqi (M.Deutsch, 1949). The cooperative goal structure makes the group members communicate more frequently. They help each other and encourage each other. A greater degree of self-esteem and acceptance by other members makes them more active in completing tasks and increases their achievement level faster. Dojki's collaborative goal structure sets up a situation where team members can reach their own goals only when the team is successful. Therefore, in order to achieve their own goals, team members must help each other for the team's success. That is, this way of rewarding based on group results creates a positive interpersonal relationship, which enables group members to give positive social reinforcement to the efforts made by their peers, such as praise and encouragement. This is not found in the traditional classroom structure of competitive goals.²

II. RESEARCH AND APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN JAPANESE TEACHING

Entering the keywords of cooperative learning and Japanese into China CNKI, a total of 122 papers can be found. The earliest thesis was in 2007, explaining the research on Japanese teaching of cooperative learning. China started around 2007. Bian Jiasheng et al. (2018) used cognitive starting point of foreign language learners as the starting point, and constructed a cooperative learning strategy for foreign language learners under the CTCL vision. Wu Liyin (2019) verified the effectiveness of cooperative learning theory in comprehensive Japanese courses, and also pointed out its limitations. Zhao Dongqian (2013) analyzed the non-motivation, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, output anxiety, and preparation anxiety by issuing questionnaires to Japanese learners, and discussed the need for cooperative learning in Japanese classes. Gu Hengqin et al. (2018) believe that cooperative learning can improve students' ability to read Japanese articles. Fengli Wang (2016) takes the group consciousness of the Japanese concave culture as the viewpoint, and believes that the Japanese teaching model of group cooperative learning in teaching is

¹ Chen Qi, Liu Rude, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Beijing Normal University Press, 2007

² <https://baike.so.com/doc/6234946-6448301.html>

scientifically feasible and necessary. Previous researches were mainly cooperative learning discussions and research applications for reading and listening classes and the analysis of the necessity of cooperative learning from the level of psychology and culture.

Conversation class, especially business Japanese conversation class has not been studied and discussed and this article intends to make up for this.

III. APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN BUSINESS JAPANESE CONVERSATION COURSE

A. Course feature analysis

According to Japanese customs statistics, the bilateral import and export volume of goods between Japan and China in 2018 was US \$ 317.53 billion, an increase of 6.8%. Among them, Japanese exports to China were US \$ 143.99 billion, an increase of 8.4%; imports from China were US \$ 173.54 billion, an increase of 5.5% ³. 2019 is the 41st year of the conclusion of the China-Japan Peace and Friendship Treaty. Under the guidance of the "Belt and Road" policy, China and Japan have continued to deepen economic and trade exchanges, and the demand for Japanese language personnel has also increased year by year. Japanese education, especially business Japanese teaching, brings new opportunities and challenges. Business Japanese, as its name implies, focuses on developing students' "Japanese + business" ability while emphasizes language and business skill. As of 2016, there are 253 schools (including colleges and universities) in Japanese language education at the university level in China. Most schools have developed comprehensive ability to use Japanese for business trade, business negotiation, and corporate management to meet the requirements of various types of modern economic and trade activities of advanced technical application of specialized personnel as the training target. When conducting business trade and business negotiations, the main investigation is business conversation ability and corresponding business common sense, including business etiquette.

B. Analysis of teaching methods

There are three generally accepted teaching methods, namely grammatical translation method, direct method, and communicative method.

1) *Grammar translation*: The indirect method is the earliest and still widely used grammar teaching mode, which is used by teachers to explain grammar projects by translating into the learner's mother tongue. This teaching method focuses on the learning of grammar and the cultivation of foreign language translation skills. As long as learners have a certain understanding and memory ability, they can master a large number of grammatical sentence patterns in a short time; they emphasize the transmission of

knowledge and the certainty of language knowledge. In this teaching environment, the frequency of using the mother tongue is greatly increased, and it can even be said that it is completely inseparable from the mother tongue. The disadvantage is that the grammar is misused in practical applications, especially in the teaching of approximate sentence patterns. If it is only explained by meaning, it is difficult for learners to grasp the differences.

2) *Direct method*: The direct method is a method of teaching the second language directly without using the mother tongue for literal translation. The theoretical basis comes from the process of infants learning their mother tongue. The direct method overcomes the disadvantages of the indirect method in the teaching process. Its strength lies in making learners understand each other's thinking habits and express them more idiomatically. Because this teaching method requires a high level of Japanese teachers, this teaching method is widely used in Japanese teaching for foreigners in Japan.

3) *Communicative approach*: Communicative teaching method is called communicative teaching method. Its teaching philosophy is to change the teaching mode in the classroom with teachers as the mainstay and students as the subject. Weaken the indoctrination of grammar theory, the ability to speak grammar appears in rich pragmatic scenarios, and highlight the application of oral expression. Teachers should complete the transition from teaching "correct grammar" to "directing helps communication." Learners are as bold as possible in real or simulated communication situations. It even allows learners to make grammatical mistakes in expressions without affecting communication. The advantage of this teaching method is to combine boring grammar knowledge with the cultural background behind its use.

C. Equations analysis of multiple learning models

The learning models are listed as below ("Table I").

³ https://countryreport.mofcom.gov.cn/record/view110209.asp?news_id=62832

TABLE I. LEARNING MODELS

Mode	Teacher status	Student in position	Representative form
Teacher-centered approach	Emphasize the central role of teachers in the teaching process	Students are receivers of knowledge	Direct teaching
Student-centered approach	Teachers mentor	Emphasize student proactive centrality in learning activities	Individualized teaching and inquiry learning
Learning community and oriented teaching model	Teachers are supporters, helpers, collaborators, and companions in the student's learning process	Emphasize teachers and students in a learning community	Collaborative learning, project-based learning

IV. INTRODUCTION AND APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

A. *Experimental teaching materials, members and implementation time*

Professor Slavin, one of the sponsors of collaborative learning research, has stated that collaborative learning research should meet four scientific standards. First, there must be a comparative study of the cooperative learning group with the control group learning the same material. Second, there must be evidence that the initial conditions of the experimental and control groups are equal. If students are randomly assigned, the standard deviation between the experimental group and the control group is within 50%. Third, the duration of the study was at least four weeks (20 hours). Fourth, the performance measurement must be performed for the teaching goals of the experimental and control groups. If the content of the experimental group and the control group are inconsistent, then a standardized test must be used to evaluate the goals pursued by all classes. [1] (P92-93)

The affiliated Dalian Jiaotong University School of Continuing Education (China-Japan Friendship Dalian Human Training Center). Professional training and adult education followed the four scientific standards of cooperative learning research, and the author chose Japanese language training commissioned by a well-known consulting company in May 2019.

Training content: Implement the training of business Japanese speaking ability improvement for the company's O3-O2 (ie conversation ability level 3-2) staff.

Training objectives: to improve business Japanese conversation ability through training, and to pass the second-level test of the business Japanese conversation ability test conducted within the company.

Training time: June to July 2019, a total of two months, a total of 32 hours.

Trainees: Non-Japanese graduates selected by the company, those who pass the Japanese Proficiency Test N2 but fail to reach the N2 level in speaking ability. There are six classes in total, with about 16 students in each class.

For trained teachers, there are 3 teachers, each in charge of two classes, to facilitate the comparative study of the cooperative learning group and the control group.

Selected Teaching Materials: Business Japanese Conversation published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press

Teaching method: experimental group → learning community orientation → cooperative learning control group → student-centered orientation → communicative approach

Test method: Participate in the company's business Japanese conversation ability test

B. *Specific implementation method*

One teacher is in charge of two classes. One class uses the communicative method to teach (for details, see the author's "Practice and Research on Communicative Method in Business Japanese Conversation Teaching" in 2018), and the other class provides the teacher as a classroom instruction while teaching the communicative method. The change of student status allows teachers to become supporters, helpers, collaborators and companions in the learning process of students.

Use standardized tests to assess student competence and class placement before formal instruction. Due to the varying levels of Japanese of the students, the comparison between the two classes (A and B) was abandoned, and the last four classes remained. Classes and F are the other two parallel classes of similar level (with better grades). Due to different student levels and different teaching teachers, the evaluation results will be conducted in the form of two sets of single columns, without parallel comparison ("Table II").

TABLE II. EXPERIMENTAL CLASS SITUATION

Classes	A	B	C	D	E	F
Number of people	15	16	16	15	16	18
Groups	×	×	Test group	Control group	Test group	Control group
Teachers	III	III	II	II	I	I

Teachers group experimental classes in parallel according to test results to ensure a balanced learning performance in

each group. Class C and E are divided into 4 discussion groups, each with 4 people.

The communicative teaching process in the control group class is based on the student-centered premise, and the teacher plays an organizational and guiding role in the entire teaching process. The combination of lectures and practice in the entire classroom, combined with micro-lessons or video clips produced by online teachers, teaches teachers to consciously increase the time for students to participate in conversations during the entire teaching process, putting students in a dominant position, greatly motivating students' learning and the classroom atmosphere is active.

The experimental group class adopts the cooperative learning method based on puzzles and the cooperative learning method of projects. Arrange students to preview online before class and complete group tasks. The jigsaw style is about content decomposition → assignment tasks → familiarity with the content → formation of an expert group → return to the initial group → group report. The cooperation method of the project is to perform exercises based on different scenarios and group reports.

The teacher reasonably arranges the assessment method after each task is completed, and confirms the group collective assessment or individual assessment according to the actual situation. The assessment method should be fair and reasonable.

C. Analysis of results

After completing 32 hours of teaching, organize employees to participate in the company's oral test in August.

TABLE III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Classes	C	D	E	F
Number of people	16	15	16	18
Groups	Test group	Control group	Test group	Control group
Qualified number	10	6	12	13
Pass rate	62.5%	40%	75%	72.2%

Classes E and F have a higher overall level before the start of the course, and the pass rate is relatively high, but the difference between the experimental group and the control group is not obvious; the pass rate of the C and D classes does not reach 70% less than the other two classes, but the results are compared Obviously, the over grade rate of class C using the cooperative learning method is significantly higher than that of class D ("Table III").

By investigating the teachers and questionnaires, the main differences between the two control groups are: First, basic Japanese is different. Second, for tasks of cooperative learning, students in class C need a lot of review to complete, and team members need to ask and help each other to complete. Third, the task of cooperative learning is relatively easy for most students in Class E, and the collaboration between groups has not really been demonstrated through

experiments. Fourth, the teaching method based on communicative method has many role-based scenario exercises. Although the group collaboration before and after class is not reflected, the scenario exercises in the classroom are undoubtedly group-based exercises.

V. EVALUATION OF THE VALUE OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN BUSINESS JAPANESE CONVERSATION COURSE

Although the experimental data of the second control group in this experiment did not meet expectations, through the questionnaire survey, the author found that the students in the experimental group had a positive attitude towards cooperative learning, and they would not feel the work due to group work after class too much, affecting work. The effectiveness of cooperative learning is mainly as follows: Enhanced teamwork awareness; deepened the understanding of the same group of students (colleagues); while answering questions and doubts for the group members, improved their Japanese level; the group-based assessment method greatly increases the enthusiasm of the group members for learning; completing assignments or tasks in groups, excluding some learners who are ashamed to take an active part because of language level, psychological rejection, or personality issues.

The limitation of cooperative learning is reflected in higher requirements for teachers. The E class and F class were affected by the learning content, which led to the limited group activities of the experimental group. The limitations are also reflected in cooperative learning requires teachers' timely participation and correction, and the individual group members are too lazy to learn, and lose the ability to think independently.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through the above analysis, it can be concluded that the application of cooperative learning in business Japanese conversation courses can help improve student performance and increase students' enthusiasm for learning, and at the same time can cultivate students' team spirit in the learning process. However, cooperative learning has higher requirements on teachers. Teachers must ensure that the content of the lectures is appropriate. At the same time, teachers need to find and correct problems in a timely manner in order to better conduct group activities. The effective combination of communicative teaching method of situational teaching and cooperative learning deserves further study.

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