

Research on Strengthening College English Cooperative Learning under Network Environment

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Abstract:

With the rapid development of information technology, network has been applied pervasively to teaching. However, in college English teaching, researches that put cooperative learning in the network environment are only a few to count. Based on the analysis of the implementation and current situations of college English cooperative learning, the paper places cooperative learning in the informationalized English learning and proposes several feasible strategies and suggestions to enrich the theoretical system of cooperative learning and guide teaching practice.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning; Network Environment; College English

1. Introduction

Currently, Cooperative learning is a more popular teaching theoretical system full of originality and effectiveness all over the world. Fouts, a Famous American education-alist said in his Research on Educational Innovations, “If cooperative learning is not the biggest educational innovation in the temporary era, then it is one of the biggest at least”. A large number of theories and practice prove that cooperative learning plays an immeasurable role in creating fine learning atmosphere, improving students’ learning initiative and cultivating their cooperative spirit and competence. Cooperative learning can foster students to help each other and make common progress in learning and it can also stimulate students to bring out their best, which will sooner or later lead to the harmonious development of their intelligence, ability and social emotions. In addition, cooperative learning plays a vital role in enhancing students’ cooperative ability, organizing and coordinating ability and co-learning ability.

Network cooperative learning is a product combining network teaching and cooperative learning and is a new learning style. The cooperative learning based on the network refers to the fact that several learners form a collaborative team and complete a certain learning task together under the guidance of teachers and with the help of the relevant technologies including internet and multimedia. In the process, learners take advantage of network interactive platform, distribute responsibilities, help each other and give play to the collective synergy effect to complete the task together. In a word, network cooperative learning refers to the cooperative learning supported by network technologies. Network information resources

provide cooperative learning with unprecedented conveniences and rich resources. Rich network resource is a resource pool for cooperative learning. In English learning process, learners can search for the required information and carry out the arrangement, processing and sharing of the materials to accomplish the construction of knowledge. It is of great importance in searching for materials before class, demonstrating achievements in class, communicating and cooperating after class and sharing teachers’ resources. Supported by the network technologies, the usage rate of educational resources is increased and the restrictions on space and time are shattered, which happens to coincide with the concepts of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is an open learning form. Openness is accompanied in several steps including pre-class preparation, in-class cooperative learning and after-class communication. In the learning process, learners have to make their learning fruits public and the overall learning fruits of the team should also be reported to classmates and teachers. Network provides precisely a convenient platform to record the study of the team and bears various fruits, forming a cooperative and open learning resource platform. Therefore, in the rich network environment, strengthening the cooperative learning of college English will give full play to advantages of the both sides and further promote the development of college English teaching.

2. General Description of Cooperative Learning

2.1 Definition of cooperative learning

Spring up in 1970s in America, cooperative learning has become a widely adopted classroom teaching organizing form throughout the world. From the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s, research on cooperative learning made substantial progress in America and Canada. Slavin, a major representative of cooperative learning is of the opinion that cooperative learning refers to a classroom teaching technology where students are engaged in learning activities in teams and obtain rewards and recognition depending on the achievements of the whole team. Johnson and Johnson, from the center of cooperative learning in Minnesota University in America maintain that cooperative learning is making use of teams in teaching so as to make students attend common activities to foster the learning of them and others to an extreme. From the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, researches and experiments concerning cooperative learning emerge and achieve good result and cooperative learning is widely applied to the classroom teaching in China. To be brief, cooperative

learning is a mutual learning where students have a clear-cut assignment of responsibility in order to complete the common tasks. Cooperative learning encourages students to work together for the benefit of the group and the individual and fulfill their ideals in the process of finishing the common tasks. To some extent, cooperative learning is a kind of social interaction and a process of promoting students' subjective development and social development by the mutual dependence and communication among students. It lays emphasis on the interpersonal interaction among students and stresses that students achieve learning goals and complete learning tasks by the mutual cooperation in the teaching process. In cooperative learning, students realize their goals by the mutual cooperation, and therefore, cooperative learning is also a learning process with clear responsibilities and mutual cooperation.

2.2 Implementation meaning of college English cooperative learning

2.2.1 Enliven the classroom atmosphere and arouse students' interest in learning English

The teaching of cooperative learning is organized in groups. Students take part in group discussion and cooperate for a common goal, which transforms the single competition to the competition among groups and reduces students' psychological anxiety greatly. In this way, students' involvement degree in college English class is immensely enhanced, and at the same time, varieties of group cooperative learning modes will stimulate learning interest among group members and enhance their self-confidence and self-respect and so on. Besides, plenty of teaching practice proves that cooperative learning modes is superior to the previous independent learning in improving English learning achievements, teaching efficiency and teaching quality. The tense classroom atmosphere can be alleviated in cooperative learning, which is something beyond reach by other teaching methods and naturally students' learning interest is improved.

2.2.2 Cultivate students' cooperative spirits and cooperative competence

The current society is a cooperative and competitive society and the competition is based on cooperation. The cooperation competence is a requirement of any post and the current society. In the process of cooperative learning, team members are assigned with different tasks and the knowledge can be gathered, arranged and shared after discussion. In the learning process, not only should team members consider their own task progress, but they should also take the conditions of other students' into account, especially the group leaders, who play a role of planning and controlling. In this way, it helps improve students' personal leadership abilities and their coordination abilities.

2.2.3 Promote sense of mission and sense of responsibilities

When carrying out cooperative learning in college English classroom, each member of the group works hard for a common goal and their sense of responsibilities goes throughout the whole process. It is every member's responsibility to complete their tasks on time, help others

finish tasks and optimize the fruits of the team, which will invisibly cultivate college students' competence in communication effectively and promote the sense of mission and sense of responsibilities of every member in the team. Effective cooperative learning makes great difference in helping students cultivate their sense of mission and sense of responsibilities. Not only do students improve their abilities and master skills, but they also cultivate their emotions and attitudes.

2.2.4 Formulate and develop scientific and effective assessment methods

The assessment of cooperative learning lays emphasis on the mutual study and mutual progress of students and it advocates the competition on the basis of cooperation. The evaluation forms of cooperative learning are beneficial to setting out the various evaluation systems in college students. In the assessment process, diversified evaluation styles go throughout, including teacher evaluation, within group evaluation and among group evaluation, which embodies the developing evaluation and not the summative evaluation and provides a new way of thinking in the reform of assessment system. Cooperative learning regards cooperative awareness and skills as an important aspect in evaluating students. It attaches great importance in knowledge study and pays attentions to the cultivation of students' cooperative skills. In the evaluation process, students are capable of finding their shortcomings and carrying forward their strengths.

3. Strategies and Suggestions of Enhancing College English Cooperative Learning under the Network Environment

The development of information technology and the popularity of network open up a new road for college English cooperative learning and inject new vitality into college English teaching. In the concrete implementation process, however, there are still some problems. For instance, both teachers and students have a low degree in understanding cooperative learning theories and their cooperative awareness is weak, which leads to few network cooperative learning; Students' weak initiative in learning will inevitably give rise to insufficient pre-class preparation. Teachers fail to list network resources into cooperative learning in designing cooperative learning as a result of their poor guidance; In cooperative learning classroom, teachers tend to ignore the use of network resources in classroom and can not give full play to the active role of network resources for cooperative learning; The assessment mechanism in cooperative learning is at will and does not form the reasonable evaluation mechanism; Communications in English study after class between teachers and students and communications between students and students are scarce. Network platform is not effectively employed and the resource sharing rate after class is comparatively low. In view of the above-mentioned problems, it is essential for us to take appropriate measures to further improve the college English cooperative learning under the network situations.

3.1 Improve teachers' cooperative learning quality and information awareness

As designers and implementers of cooperative learning, teachers' knowledge and quality decide directly the smooth process of cooperative learning. In order to further enhance the cooperative learning, teachers are supposed to change firstly. In carrying out cooperative learning, teachers should not treat it with the traditional concepts and theories. In order to avoid the blindness and formalization in teaching practice, teachers should fully understand the connotation of cooperative learning, including its theoretical foundation and the procedure of cooperative learning and so on. It is advisable for college English teachers to take advantage of rich resources and consult relevant materials to enrich their cooperative learning theoretical knowledge of cooperative learning and improve their accomplishment of cooperative learning. The study of theoretical knowledge enables teachers to transfer their concepts actively and better instruct the practice. In the daily work, English teachers should present themselves bravely, share with others, develop self cooperative spirit, maintain a cooperative attitude, communicate actively with colleagues and students and enhance the cultivation of cooperative concepts. When cultivating cooperative concepts, teachers should also improve their information awareness. In the temporary society, network information resources have already been penetrated into every aspect of our life. In cooperative learning, both teachers and students should treat network resources as a convenient tool and indispensable factor and make full use of network information resources and strength information awareness.

3.2 Organize the preparatory work before cooperative learning

The smooth implementation of cooperative learning depends heavily on teachers' preparation. The rational learning strategies established in the preparation stage is the precondition of successful cooperative learning. Teachers' preparatory work mainly consists of selecting proper learning contents, making the goals of cooperative learning clear and design the process of cooperative learning. First of all, the selection of learning contents should meet with the concepts of group learning and the themes have expansiveness, which will help to foster the communication and cooperation between students to the utmost. Secondly, before the implementation of cooperative learning, goals of the class should be made clear. Students are required to be equipped with certain cooperative competence as well as network use ability, apart from the abilities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Finally, in designing learning process, the positive roles of network resources for the cooperative learning should be taken into account, no matter in the introduction stage, unfolding stage or in the summary stage. When dividing cooperative learning groups, teachers should achieve rational division of labor and optimized distribution. According to students' personality, specialties and opinions of other group members, teachers provide guidance and accomplish role assignment, mak-

ing each member find his own place in the group and stimulating their initiative. Moreover, it is equally important for students to participate in the pre-class preparation. Students should also take advantage of network resources and search for the required learning materials actively to ensure the success of cooperative learning.

3.3 Improve the process of cooperative learning

According to the role orientation of teachers in cooperative learning, teachers should improve their classroom regulation ability and guidance ability. On one hand, teachers' ability of classroom controlling is an effective safeguard of cooperative learning. Teachers are required to give play to their regulation ability and actively guide students to solve problems independently by using mobile network tools. On the other hand, teachers should attend the group discussion voluntarily to learn about the situations of cooperative learning. If students encounter some difficulties, teachers can adopt some measures in time to ensure the success of the team discussion. A fair learning environment needs to be set up to encourage students to get involved in the report of the group fruits actively. Students are the subjects of cooperative learning and their cooperative awareness should be appreciated without doubt, therefore, students' cooperative awareness and cooperative spirit should be improved. In cooperative learning, students are required to have cooperative awareness and cooperative spirit, dare to undertake their own work, help each other, bear the task of the group together and become an individual with cooperative awareness and dedication spirit.

3.4 Establish scientific and reasonable assessment mechanism

It is one of the guarantees that ensure the success of cooperative learning to carry out cooperative learning and establish scientific, reasonable and effective assessment mechanism in college English classroom. Thus, the assessment mechanism of cooperative learning should be perfected and the scientific assessment system should be set up. In view of the current status of college English, the assessment modes are single and the assessment contents are simple. In the long run, it will discourage gravely students' interests and enthusiasm in cooperative learning. Collectivization of the assessment standard is also an intrinsic requirement of English cooperative learning. Assessment subjects of cooperative learning should also be polybasic, including students, teachers and cooperative groups. The diversification of assessment subjects is able to help teachers and learners find problems from different perspective and report feedbacks from many aspects, which is more adapted to the concepts that cooperative learning fosters the overall development of students. The nature of cooperative learning decides that its assessment modes are multidimensional and comprehensive, including group assessment, personal assessment, within group assessment, among group assessment and so on. College students have already been equipped with the evaluation abilities and self-reflection awareness. Therefore, multifaceted evaluation gains everything and loses nothing no matter for the individual students or for the cooperative

groups. Not only can it strengthen the self-reflection and self-instruction of team members, but it can also activate the atmosphere of the class.

3.5 Take advantage of network tools to enhance after-class communication

English is a subject which needs repeated learning and should be reviewed and consolidated with a great amount of time, so the after-class communication seems more important. Network is a trans-time-and-space communication platform and provides teachers and students with convenient conditions. Teachers can set up QQ group to ensure the cooperativeness and communicativeness of cooperative learning. Teachers can also realize resource sharing and manage cooperative learning via blogs, emails, wechat and so on. Meanwhile, network is a beneficial supplement for classroom English cooperative learning since it combines audios, videos, pictures and other multi-dimensional learning materials needed for English study. Certainly, the smooth implementation of after-class communication requires the active cooperation and communication of students in the final analysis. Students are required to set up the ideal of after-class cooperative learning in mind, take advantage of communication platform set by English teachers reasonably and carry out after-class cooperative learning and communication positively to give full play to the learning role of network.

4. Conclusion

The rapid development of information technology makes network an important means of learning foreign languages for college students. Strengthening college English cooperative learning under the network environment can not only improve students' autonomous learning abilities, but it can broaden the route of English teaching and promote the further development of college English teaching. Therefore, in college English teaching, it is advisable for teachers to adopt appropriate strategies to guide students to carry out cooperative learning with the help of network resources and combine the advantages of cooperative learning and network to accelerate the development of college English cooperative learning.

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