

The Application of Cooperative Learning in English Study

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Abstract. Cooperative learning, as a new teaching approach, has been widely applied to teaching practice all over the world since its first emergence in America. After the theory of cooperative learning being introduced to China, it has accelerated Chinese educational reform. The mode of cooperative learning has been combined with English study to overcome the disadvantages of traditional English teaching mode by advocating the implementation of cooperative learning in English education. In this paper, the theories of cooperative learning as well as its definition are analyzed, and it briefly introduces the overall implementation process of cooperative learning in English study and discusses the strategies for implementation from the demands of English teaching, cultivation of English-speaking ability, and cultivation of students' cooperative skills.

Introduction

Cooperative learning is a teaching approach with practical effect, which was firstly developed in America in the 1970s. Its main method is to divide students into different groups and to encourage students to study cooperatively so as to complete a common task. During cooperative learning, theories of sociology and psychology are introduced to class teaching with great importance to the effect of interpersonal relationship on cognitive development. Thus, some teaching disadvantages in traditional class are effectively overcome to some extent. Both the teaching mode and the teaching efficiency are reformed and improved. Since cooperative learning can effectively improve class atmosphere and improve students' results and cooperative abilities, it has been widely applied to teaching practice.

In recent years, discussions and experiments on cooperative learning have greatly increased, indicating it has been a hot topic among educators and researchers; however, researches on middle-school cooperative learning are still immature. Thus, by analyzing the theories of cooperative learning, the concrete implementation of cooperative learning in English class teaching is studied, which can provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for English teaching reform.

Types of Cooperative Learning

Theoretical studies and teaching practices on cooperative learning have lasted for several decades. But there are certain practical differences during the combination of cooperative learning and teaching practice because researchers study the topic from different angles. According to its concerns and combined with researches and practices over past years, cooperative learning can be mainly divided into the following types.

Instructional Type. The instructional cooperative learning attaches great importance to the role of teacher, during which the teacher should have an instructional, centered and dominated role. The teacher should present the main class materials to students for their cooperative learning so that students can focus their attention on the materials. The teacher's instruction has a direct relation with students' cooperative learning.

Procedural Type. The procedural cooperative learning is based on group cooperation and development of social skills, which extends much attention to the efficiency of group learning as well as the interaction among group members, and thus each member's initiative and activeness can be mobilized.

Structural Type. Structural cooperative learning means to use basic structure during group cooperative learning, which was invented by Cardan. The structural cooperative learning is an

entity containing various structures indeed. The so-called structure is a series of steps and described behaviors; while the structure itself is not restricted by concrete academic contents.

The Necessity of Applying Cooperative Learning to English Study

Cooperative learning cultivates language ability comprehensively, and its development is based on verbal skills, verbal intelligence, learning attitude, learning methods as well as humanistic quality and so on. Compared to other subjects, English is really a special subject. First, English is a verbal educational subject which is different from other subjects; second, although Chinese is also a verbal educational subject, it is different from English besides some common features. The characteristics of English are listed as follows.

Memorability. English, as a verbal educational subject, its memorability lies in that students should memorize lots of English information so that they can make good preparations for future English learning. In order to learn English well, students should memorize large amounts of English vocabularies, tenses, grammatical principles as well as fixed phrases, and thus they can use English proficiently.

Cultural Differences. There is a big difference between Chinese and English, within which the cultural difference is even bigger. On one hand, from the angle of linguistic system, English belongs to Indo-European language, but Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language. The differences between the two languages lie in the different pronunciations, grammatical rules as well as expressions and so on. For example, English verbs have changes of tenses, but Chinese doesn't.

Applicability. English is a language with the widest speakers around the world, which has indicated its obvious applicability. We can apply it to daily communication only if we can master it. As a communicative tool, English also offers us ways to communication and information gaining.

Application of Cooperative Learning in English Teaching

Set Goals and Plans. It is a prior task for English cooperative learning to set goals and formulate plans during the preparation stage. On one hand, the English teachers should have a good understanding of the knowledge they are going to teach before conduct cooperative teaching rather than cooperate with students simply. The purpose of cooperation is to make students better understand the knowledge by taking students' actual situation into consideration so as to achieve cognitive goals.

Design Tasks for Cooperative Learning. During cooperative learning in English class, the English teachers can cultivate students' cooperative awareness and learning abilities by designing cooperative tasks. In this way, students can express their opinions and know others' opinions while completing cooperative tasks. Meanwhile, during cooperation and communication, students can also master English language knowledge and English communicative skills.

Make Heterogeneous Grouping. Cooperative learning in English class is carried out with small groups, during which the scale and members of the group can great influence the members' initiative. If the group is too large with too many group members, then each member can get limited tasks. Thus their learning goals for cooperative learning can't be reached.

Conclusion

Traditional English teaching values quantitative evaluation since it believes that quantitative evaluation is relatively objective. However, students' personalities can't be evaluated quantitatively during English cooperative learning, let alone their non-intellectual factors such as growth and progress. Therefore, various methods should be used to evaluate cooperative learning with equal importance to the results and the implementation of cooperative learning. On one hand, evaluation of cooperative learning concerns about students' independent learning, cooperative discussion as well as communication. It pays attention to students' learning situations in each phrase with more importance to students' approaches, mind, experience and interpersonal relationship and so on so as

to conduct formative evaluation. On the other hand, evaluation on cooperative learning can't be restricted to methods of exams and tests. Besides, some non-quantitative evaluation methods such as qualitative method can be used to conduct evaluation, such as face-to-face interview, questionnaire, growth file as well as situational test. Through these methods, students' growth and development during cooperative learning can be evaluated objectively and comprehensively.

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