HOW TO APPLY COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN EFL TEACHING

Approved: _David Chitwold_   Date: April28, 2009

            Paper Advisor

HOW TO APPLY COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN EFL TEACHING

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Yi Shao

（Oscar）

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is an advanced teaching technique with many advantages. Cooperative learning benefits both teachers and students and improves students learning outcomes, because students must also teach their fellow classmates, thus strengthening their knowledge of the material as well as the other learner who then hears the information in terms of peer language. According to Slavin (1987), students using cooperative learning within small groups can master teacher-presented information better than students working by themselves. Kagan (1994) also found: "cooperative learning promotes higher achievement than competitive and individualistic learning structures across all age levels, subject areas, and almost all tasks." There are many types of cooperative learning we can use, but how to combine the different types of cooperative learning in EFL (hereafter referred to as English as a Foreign Language) classroom is the question worth discussing and researching. In this paper, some specific examples in EFL classes about how to combine or implement cooperative learning will be introduced.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The traditional education methodology is mainly based on students learning individually and emphasizes the reciprocal effect between students and teachers as well as students and books. However, as new education pedagogy develops including the application of some new education concepts such as learning by discovery, solving problems together, more discussion in class, etc., cooperative learning education theory is paying more attention to the reciprocal effect among students. Cooperative Learning (hereafter referred to as CL) is just this kind of education methodology that emphasizes the mutual effect and cooperation between students. According to Millis and Cottell (1998), CL is a technique that de-emphasizes competition and instead encourages students to work together and to succeed as a team. Students must help each other in order to succeed and promotes student enjoyment of others doing well. CL benefits both teachers and students in that student learning outcomes may improve because they must also teach their fellow classmates, thus strengthening their knowledge of the material as well as the other learners who then hear the information in peer language.

CL is an advanced education methodology, but the question of how many types of CL teachers could use in English as a Foreign Language (hereafter referred to as EFL) and how to apply CL in EFL class if CL is to be an effective method. These are the key questions worth discussing and

researching.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is how to apply cooperative learning in EFL classes.

Purpose of the Research

Cooperative learning is a relatively new education methodology. There are many different types of cooperative learning strategies. Therefore, So how to apply cooperative learning methodology in EFL class is the question worth researching and discussing.

Significance of the Problem

How to apply cooperative learning in EFL classes more efficiently and be more useful is very important to improve studying outcomes for students.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this paper, it was assumed that all research and review of the current literature was accurately reported. It is also assumed that the literature will make recommendations on how best to use the research available.

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over fifty (50) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included

"Cooperative Learning", "English teaching" and "Second Language Acquisition".

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the concept of CL will be conducted. A second review of literature relating to the advantages of CL will be conducted. A third review of literature on how to apply CL in EFL teaching will be conducted. The findings will be summarized and recommendations will be made.

Linkage of Theory

Cooperative Learning is a relationship in a group of students that requires positive interdependence (a sense of sink or swim together), individual accountability (each member of the group needs to contribute and learn), interpersonal skills (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution), face-to-face positive interaction, and processing (reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better).(Taken from The University of Minnesota's Cooperative Learning Center Website, www.co-operation.org.)

Definition of Terms

Cooperative learning: According to Millis and Cottell (1998), CL is a technique that de-emphasizes competition and instead wants students to work together and succeed as a team; Students must help each other in order to succeed.

EFL: English as a foreign language

Bloom's Taxonomy:

According to the original taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Bloom, et al.. 1956), Bloom's Taxonomy consists of 6 parts:

Evaluation: Making judgment about the value of ideas, works, solutions, methods, materials, etc.

Synthesis: Putting together of elements and puts so as to form a whole.

Analysis: Breakdown of the material into its constituent parts and detection of the relationships of the parts and of the way they are organized and of the way they are organized.

Application: The use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations.

Comprehension: An understanding of the literal message contained in a communication. Three types of comprehension behavior are translation, interpretation, and extrapolation.

Knowledge: The recall of specifics and universals, the recall of methods and processes, or the recall of methods and processes, or the recall of a pattern, structure, or setting,

LEP: Limited English Proficiency

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

<u>What is Cooperative Learning?</u>

According to Fogarty (1999), "Vygotsky's educational theory suggests

that individuals first learn through person-to-person social interaction, and

then internalize knowledge individually". Based on this theory, Cooper and

Mueck (1990) describe: "CL is a structured and systematic instructional

design in which small groups work together toward a common goal." The

implementation of CL in the classroom means that all members in a group can

learn together through person-to person interaction, and will subsequently

perform better as individuals. (Johnson, 1998) CL is an education

methodology that emphasizes the mutual effect and cooperation among

students in class. Johnson et al (1996) described CL as involving the use of

small groups in instructional environments where students work together to

maximize their own and each others' learning. According to Millis and Cottell

(1998), CL is a technique that de-emphasizes competition and instead

encourages students to work together and to be successful as a team; Students

must help each other in order to succeed. This also promotes student

enjoyment of others doing well. CL also benefits both teachers and students in

that student's learning outcomes may be improved because they must also

teach their fellow classmates, thus strengthening their knowledge of the

material as well as the other learner who then hears the information in peer

language.

The Five Characteristics of Cooperative Learning

"Cooperative learning represents many years of research, theorizing, and practical efforts toward understanding how to improve group functioning in educational contexts." (Johnson, el. al. 1991; Kagan, 1994) While definitions of CL are different, common characteristics generalized by some scholars (Jacobs, Ward, Gallo, 1997) criteria are:

1. Positive Interdependence - By helping other group members actually are helping themselves. If students are positively interdependent with their group mates, they are more likely to concentrate on task and help each other to learn.

2. Individual Accountability - The feeling that all group members are responsible for participating in and learning from the activity. If students who feel individual accountability are more likely to try to learn by themselves rather than letting others do the work and learn for them.

3. Collaborative Skills - The skills to help work with each other. With appropriate collaborative skills, students know how to help each other, how to disagree constructively, etc.

4. Classroom management - Coordinating student learning needs careful thought and new procedures in the use of groups. Examples of classroom management issues in CL are: how students are seated;

how many students in each group; what the composition of each

group is; getting the attention of students while they are working in

groups; and keeping order in the classroom.

<div align="center">The Advantages of Cooperative Learning</div>

The research indicates that there has been a renewed interest in CL as

an approach to improve academic achievement, intellectual development, and

language learning. Research also indicates that CL promotes higher

achievement than all other forms of individual learning across age levels,

subject areas, and all tasks with possible exception of rote and decoding kinds

of tasks. Students who have been taught with the use of cooperative learning

techniques have performed much better than students in traditional elementary

classrooms (Stevens & Slavin, 1995), in secondary classrooms (Nichols &

Miller, 1994), and at the college level (Franklin, Griffin, & Perry, 1994).

"There is substantial evidence that students working cooperatively in small

groups can master teacher presented information better than students working

on their own." (Slavin, 1987) CL not only increases learning, but also has

shown to improve students' social skills (Stevens & Slavin, 1995) and

perceptions of ability and valuing of content (Nichols & Miller, 1994) and to

reduce student anxiety (Keeler & Anson, 1995). The use of CL pedagogy

enhances the achievements of students and improves their attitude toward

learning (Johnson et al. 1991; Slavin 1985). More importantly, CL provides a

more hospitable environment so students can more efficiently grasp the key

concepts when compared to a traditional class. (Bohlmeyer and Burke, 1987)

Compared to both individual and competitive and learning, CL may be the

most effective teaching method for the achievement of performance objectives

in college and adult education settings. (Johnson, 1998) "To implement CL

successfully, it is necessary to foster a positive interdependence among group

members by holding individuals accountable for their own performance,

which gives students the incentive to learn and to contribute to the learning

process."(Holubec 1992; Peek et al. 1995; Ellis and Fouts 1997) Research

(Cohen, 1984) has also shown that "CL fosters language development and

integration of language and content through increased active communication

and use of language for academic and social functions. In the traditional

language classroom, teachers do most of talking but only 25 percent of

students actually listen to the teacher." Furthermore, as suggested by Cohen

(1984), student language production is sequential, which results in minimal

student language production. Cohen further suggests that up to 80 percent of

CL class time could be scheduled for activities that include opportunity for

student talk. This increased communication time can be vital and beneficial to

language learners, especially limited English proficient (LEP) learners who

usually receive less teacher and peer communication in the tradition classroom.

There are many important differences between cooperative and

traditional settings. Traditional classrooms are competitive environments and

the following scenario is an example of what happens repeatedly: The teacher

asks a question. Students raise their hands in order to be called on. The teacher calls on one student and at that moment, the other hands go down. Now the student who was called on begins to answer: if the student was unsure of the exact answer or how to correctly word his/her response, the other students sense an opportunity. They may have another opportunity to answer the question and receive the approval of the teacher. Their hands shoot up and begin to wave again while the first student slumps down in to the chair, eyes lowered. The traditional classroom can set up negative feeling among students when the failure of one increases the probability of success for others. It is possible that the traditional classroom is designed to minimize language development among students.

In a cooperative classroom each student is working with three other students. The students are engaged in team building and social development activities; they know each other well and have learned to provide support and assistance to each other. When one member of the group struggles or has difficulty, the other members are willing to provide assistance. They provide a needed encouragement or help the student formulate an idea. All members of the group are aware that there will be individual accountability on test day, and for their team to do well each of them must master the material. The success of any student is appreciated by the other members of the group. Students feel the support of their teammates and feel safe to experiment with unfamiliar language forms and ideas. Talking and negotiating with three

supportive others (or with just one other when pair work within teams is used) is more effective than learning from a lecture given to the whole class. Furthermore, the linguistic complexity of communication increases as the learners are engaged in learning new information, giving explanations, offering rationales, and showing integration of information (Olsen and Kagan, 1992). This increased complexity often results in higher quality work as students better understand each other and provide more opportunities to practice their linguistic skills----gestures and facial and shoulder expressions.

<u>How to Apply Cooperative Learning in EFL</u>

There are many types of Cooperative Learning, such as Think-Pair-Share, Roundtable, 3 Step Interview, Discovery Method, etc. Each CL activity focuses on different language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing. The following part is mainly to demonstrate how to apply different CL varieties on specific EFL class. The following is an expansion and adaptation of a lesson which was originally written by Daniel D. Holt (1992).

Instructional Setting

Delivery Mode: English

Students: advanced, intermediate, low level

Grade Level: secondary school or technical college

Group Size: Four students per group in different English language proficiency

Content: English Language Development

Lesson Objective: Students will get comprehend the meaning and implication of the fable and improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English.

Before doing the following activities, the teacher should read the fable "The Fox and the Crow" to the class with the help of posts to make the content more understandable two times. Students may listen and take notes (words, phrases, sentences) to help themselves memorize details later.

The following is a simplified version of the Aesop's fable: (Holt, 1992)

The Fox And The Crow

Once upon a time, there was a crow who found a large piece of tasty cheese. He quickly put it in his mouth and flew up into a tree. A hungry fox walked under the tree and suddenly saw the crow and the cheese. She carefully planned what to say. "O Crow," she said, "You are a really fine bird! What beautiful feathers and eyes you have! It is too bad that you cannot sing."

The crow was very happy to hear such nice things. He was even happier that he could show the fox that he could also sing beautifully. But as he opened his mouth to sing, the cheese dropped to the ground in front of the fox. The fox quickly ate the cheese with great enjoyment.

Moral: He who listens to flattery forgets everything else.
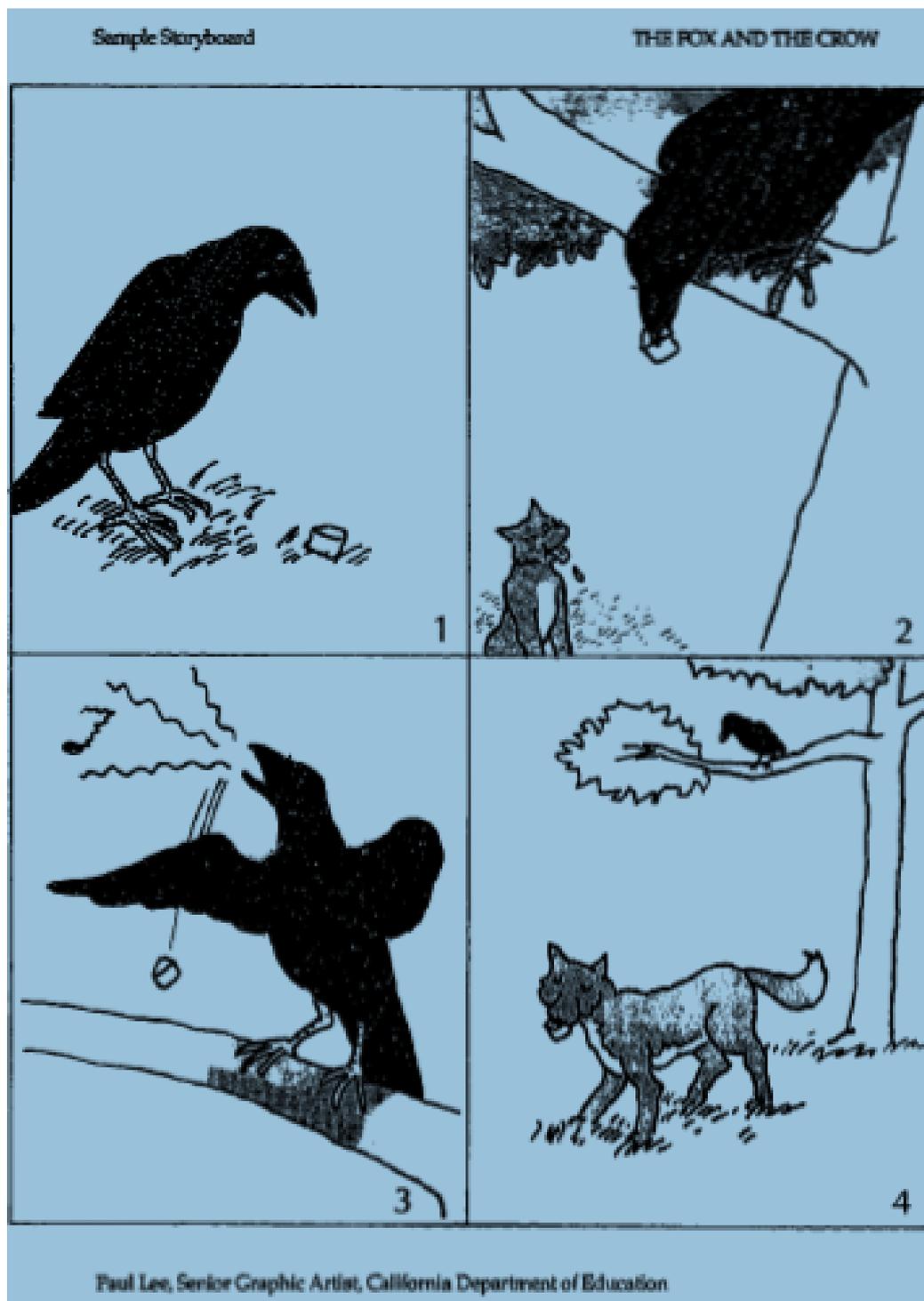
Suggested Activities by Holt include:

1. Brainstorming.

a. Tasks are assigned for each member on a team of four (recorder, reporter, facilitator and time keeper)

b. Each team receives a Venn diagram with "fox" labeled on one side and "crow" on the other.

c. Each team is given six minutes to find at least five points that the fox has or does that crow does not, five points that the crow has or does that the fox does not, and five points that the crow and fox have in common. (Write common points in the middle space of the Venn diagram; write unique elements of the fox in the left space, and write unique characteristics of the crow in the right space.) Each student should contribute answers when filling in the Venn diagram.

d. Then, two teams work together for five minutes, with reporters from both teams sharing their diagrams. Members from both teams can add new items or delete items.

e. Then all diagrams with all team member name included will be posted in the assigned area.

FOX   CROW
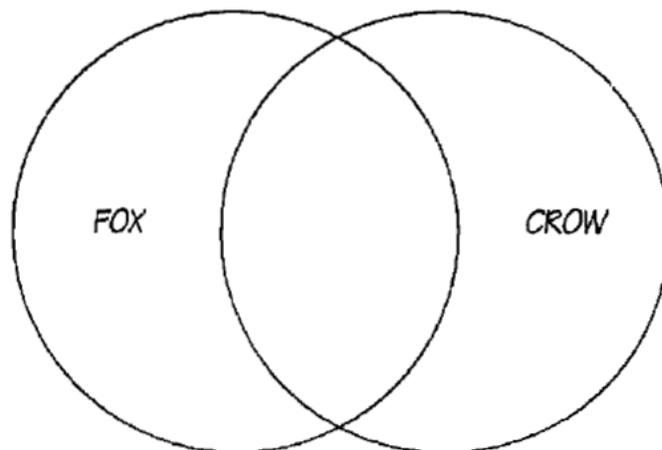
2. Group Discussion.

a. Teams generate questions to ask other teams about the fable. Roles are assigned as above. Recorders records questions.

b. Each team selects its best question and one team member to share it.

c. Team representatives share their team's best question with the whole class.

d. At the conclusion of the questioning activity, three other activities can follow. They include Cooperative Review, Numbered Heads Together, and Send-a-Problem which are explained as follows.

3. Cooperative Review

a. A student of one team (e.g., Team 1) asks a question and calls on another team (e.g., Team 2) to answer.

b. Team 2 discusses the answer fully, the team 2 reporter gives the answer. Team 1 determines whether the answer is correct or not.

c. Team 2 asks a question and the review continues. The teacher may stimulate students' enthusiasm by giving points to each team.

4 . Numbered Heads Together

a. Students in each team have a number, #1, #2, #3, #4.

b. The teacher asks a question about the fable. Questions for this activity should be at knowledge and comprehension level (Blooms et al, 1956).. (Questions may be generated by the teacher, borrowed questions from other teacher, or from those generated in the Cooperative Review activity)

c. The teacher gives time to each team to discuss their answers. The discussion structure can include some of the followings: (1) all team members close their eyes and think of the answer by themselves; (2) they open their eyes, put their "heads together" and share their answers and agree on the answer; (3) make sure that all members know the answer.

d. Teacher calls a number at random (e.g. #2) to answer the question. The first #2 to raise his or her hand is called on to answer. Teacher can also have all #2s work together and write the answers when calling on #2.

5. Send-A-Problem

a. Each team member writes the question and answer on two sides of a paper respectively.

b. One student collects four papers from each team and passes them to another team.

c. Students form pairs in each team. Each pair takes two questions, then Student #1 asks student #2 a pair of questions; Student #3 asks student #4 the other two questions. Two pairs then exchange questions and repeat process.

6 . Sequencing the Story

a. Team members are given individually cut pictures that represent the story. (See sample pictures of "The Fox and The Crow" in this chapter.)

b. Each student takes one of the cut pictures and makes a one or two-sentence description of the story.

c. Each team member tells his or her picture description to other team members. Team members retell the story in proper order after agreeing on the sequence.

7.Strip Story

a. The teacher prepares packets of four one-sentence strips, each strip describing one of the pictures of the story. One packet of strips is prepared for each team.

b. The teacher assigns a facilitator in each team and distributes one packet of strips to all teams respectively.

c. Each member on the team takes a strip randomly and spends some time memorizing the main idea, making sure each member read recite it correctly.

d. Team members return strips to their team facilitator.

e. Students on the team seat themselves in order of story sequence.

f. Each team may perform its story for another team or for the whole class with extended dialogues, actions, etc.

8. Group Discussion

a. Roles are assigned to team members. Team members brainstorm to generate the morals of the fable and reach consensus on their favorite moral.

b. The recorder of each team writes their teams' moral on the chalkboard.

d. The teacher opens a class discussion on each of the morals, finding the similarities, differences, underlying meaning and so forth.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cooperative Learning is an advanced teaching approach with many advantages. It is a structured activity with purpose. There are many types of CL: Think-Pair-Share, Roundtable, 3 Step Interview, Discovery Method, Send-a-Problem, Flashcard Teaching, Scripted Cooperative Dyads, Cooperative Note-Taking Pairs, Think-Pair-Share, Peer Editing, Reciprocal Peer Tutoring, Paired Annotation, Team Anthologies, Reciprocal Letter Writing, Jigsaw, With-in Team Jigsaw, Dyadic Essay Confrontations, Guided Reciprocal Peer Question, Structured Controversy, Problem-based learning, Group Investigation, Thinking-Aloud Paired Problem Solving, Team Learning, etc.

There are usually four group roles in CL: Group Facilitator, Group Recorder, Group Reporter, and Timekeeper. Group roles should be frequently rotated so all team member experience the various responsibilities. The teacher in a CL class setting is the facilitator and student learning is the focus.

As teachers, we should ask this kind of questions of ourselves: How are the students learning? How can I tell if they are learning the material? Are they relating to me, the instructor? Are they relating to the other students? What is the learning experience like for the students?

Appropriate instruction in diverse language settings depends on respecting the domain of usefulness of each activity. Therefore, teachers must

select and modifying activities that will maximize learning opportunities and

provide positive outcomes for language learning students.

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