A Review of Cooperative Language Learning Approach

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Abstract: One of the focuses of the new curriculum reform in China is to promote the change of students' learning styles. It requires students to explore independently and cooperate in learning. Cooperative learning, also known as "group learning" or "team learning", is a learning method in which students work together to achieve learning goals. Cooperative Learning will change the previous teacher-student relationship, update the teaching model, and cultivate students' cooperative spirit. Based on the Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) method theory background, language theory, learning theory, teaching objectives, teaching syllabus, learning mode, teaching activities, learners' roles and teachers' role, the role of teaching materials, teaching procedures, and academic attitude towards it, through the general statement of this teaching method, this paper is aiming at introducing the method of Collaborate Foreign Language theory and showing a reference to foreign language teaching staff.

1. Introduction

Collaborative Language Learning (CLL) is part of a more general approach to teaching and learning, also known as Cooperative Learning (CL). CL is an approach to teaching and learning that maximizes the use of collaborative activities, both in pairs and in small groups of learners in the classroom, to facilitate language acquisition for learners. The definition of CLL is as follows:
Cooperative learning is a group learning activity organized in such a way that learning relies on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in the group and that each learner is responsible for their learning and is motivated to add to the learning of others. (Olsen and Kagan1992: 8) Cooperative learning can be traced back hundreds of years to even earlier proposals for peer tutoring and supervision, and the early 20th-century American educator John Dewey is often credited with promoting the idea of establishing cooperative learning in the general classroom on a regular and systematic basis (Rodgers 1988). It was more widely promoted and developed in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the forced consolidation of public schools and has been much improved and developed since then.
Cooperative Learning sought to do the following:

(1) Improve the achievement of all students, including those who are gifted or academically challenged;

(2) Help teachers build positive relationships among students;

(3) Give students the experiences they need for healthy social, psychological, and cognitive development;

(4) Replace the competitive organization of most classrooms and schools with a team-based, high-performing organizational structure. (Johnson, D., R. Johnson, and Holubec 1994: 2).

CLL is considered to be a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning and has advantages over traditional teacher-centered classroom approaches. In language teaching, its objectives are:

to provide opportunities for natural second language acquisition through interactive pair and group activities; to provide a method for teachers to achieve this goal that can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings (e.g. content-based foreign language classrooms); to focus students' attention on specific vocabulary items, language structures, and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks; to provide learners with the opportunity to develop successful learning and communicative strategies; for enhancing learner motivation, reducing learner stress and creating a positive emotional classroom climate.

CLL is therefore an approach to cross-mainstream education and the teaching of second and foreign languages.

2. Methodology

1.1 Linguistic Theory

Cooperative Learning is based on some basic premises about the interactive and cooperative nature of language and language learning. Premise 1, in a book entitled Born to Talk (Weeks 1979) on children's language, the author (and many others) argues that all general children growing up in a normal environment will learn to talk. We are born to talk...we may think of ourselves as having been programmed to talk…communication is generally considered to be the primary purpose of language"(Weeks 1979: 1)；Premise 2 refers to that most conversations or addresses are structured as conversations. "Humans spend most of their lives talking, and for most people talking is one of their most essential and engaging activities." (Richards and Schmidt 1983: 117)；Premise 3 is that the dialogue takes place according to an agreed set of rules for cooperation (Grice 1975); Premise 4 is to learn how to implement these principles of cooperation in your language through casual daily interaction;

Premise 5 refers to that one learns how to achieve cooperation in a second language by participating in interactive activities with cooperative structures. This involves using a progressive approach or sequential strategy to seriously prepare students in dialogue classes, systematically breaking rigid classroom procedures and allowing them to begin democratic and independent interaction. In this way, students learn step by step functional interaction skills while building team spirit or trust. (Christison and Bassano 1981: XVI). The practice of attempting to organize second language learning explicitly or implicitly according to these premises is collectively referred to as cooperative language learning. In its applications, CLL is used to support structural and functional models, as well as the interaction model of the language, because CLL activities can be used to

focus on language form or to practice specific language functions.

1.2 Learning Theory

Advocates of cooperative learning draw heavily on the theories of developmental psychologists Tean Piaget (e.g., 1965) and Lev Vygotsky (e.g., 1962) (both of whom emphasize the central role of social interaction in learning).

CLL advocates have proposed certain interaction structures that are considered to be the best options for learning appropriate rules and practices for conversing in a new language, and CLL also seeks to develop learners' critical thinking skills, which are considered to be central to any type of learning.

One method of integrating critical thinking instruction used by CLL advocates is called the question matrix (Wiederhold 1995). Wiederhold developed a series of collaborative matrix-based activities that encourage learners to ask and answer deeper alternative questions. Such activities are thought to promote the development of critical thinking. (The matrix is based on the well-known Bloom [1956] taxonomy of educational objectives devised by Bloom assumes that there is a hierarchy of learning objectives, ranging from simple memory of information to the formation of conceptual judgments.) Kagan and other language learning theorists have adopted this framework as the theory underlying cooperative learning.

CCL seeks to develop collaboration rather than competition in learning. Advocates of CLL in Liberal Studies emphasize the benefits of collaboration for learning: Collaboration is working together to achieve a common goal. In collaborative Students look for results that are advantageous to themselves and all other group members. Cooperative learning is the pedagogical utilize of bunch work through which students work together to maximize their possession and each other's learning. It may be differentiated with competitive learning in which students compete with each other to attain a scholastic objective such as an 'A'. Johnson et al. 1994:4) In a traditional competitive learning atmosphere, students see each other as competitors and do not easily develop harmonious peer relationships. As a result, students' psychological pressure to learn is excessive and not conducive to their healthy development. In second language teaching, McGroarty (1989) offers six learning preferences for ESL students within the CLL classroom: expanded recurrence and variety of moment language skills through diverse sorts of interaction; the possibility of developing or using language in ways that support cognitive improvement and upgrade language aptitudes; opportunities to coordinated language with content-based instruction; opportunities for teachers to include more curricular materials to stimulate students' linguistic and conceptual learning; freedom for teachers to acquire new professional skills, especially those with an emphasis on communication; opportunities for students to become resources for each other and thus take a more active role in their learning.

2. Instructional Design

2.1 Teaching Objectives

As CLL is an approach designed to promote cooperation rather than competition, the development of critical thinking skills and communicative competence through socially structured interactive activities can be seen as the overall objectives of CLL. More specific objectives will come from the context in which it is used.

2.2 Syllabus

CLL does not use any particular form of language syllabus, as a variety of curriculum-orientated activities can be taught through collaborative learning. As a result, we have found that CLL is used more regularly in content lessons, in ESP, linguistic use, articulation, and lexicon. CLL is defined as the systematic and well-planned use of group-based learning procedures as an alternative to teacher-led learning.

2.3 Learning Modes and Teaching Activities

Johnson et al., (1994: 4-5) have described three types of cooperative learning groups:
Formal collaborative learning groups which are from one lesson to several weeks. They are set up for specific tasks and allow students to work together to achieve a common learning goal; informal cooperative learning groups. These groups range from a few minutes to a lesson and are used to focus students' attention or to facilitate learning in direct instruction; collaborative-based learning groups. They are long-term, lasting at least one year, and consist of different learning groups with a stable membership whose main purpose is to allow members to support, help, encourage and assist each other in their academic success.

The success of CL depends critically on the nature and organization of the group work. It requires a well-structured learning process so that learners interact with each other and are motivated to increase each other's learning. Olsen and Kagan (1992) suggest the following key elements of successful group learning in CL: positive interdependence is achieved when team members feel that helping one member helps everyone and hurting one member hurts everyone. It is created by the structure of the CL task and by building a spirit of mutual support within the group. For example, a group could write an essay or the scores of group members could be averaged. Group formation is an important factor in creating positive interdependence. Factors involved in forming groups include the size of the group: this will depend on the tasks they have to perform, the age of the learners, and the time constraints of the course. Typical group sizes are two to four students; grouping students: The groups can be teacher-selected, random, or student-selected; students' roles in the group: Each group member plays a specific role in the group, such as noise monitor, rotation monitor, recorder or summarizer; individual responsibilities include group and individual performance, for example, by assigning each student a part of his or her team project score, or by

randomly inviting a student to share with the whole class, a group member or another group; social skills determine how students interact with each other. Some explicit instruction in social skills is often needed to ensure successful interactions; structure refers to how student interactions are organized and the different ways in which students interact.

Many types of activities exist that can be used with CLL. Coelho (1992b: 132) has described three main types of cooperative learning tasks and their learning focus, each with many variations: team practice begins with common input-skill development and fact mastery; all students learn the same material, and practice can follow traditional teacher-directed presentations of new material.

The task of the activity was to ensure that everyone in the group knew the answers to the questions and could explain how they got the answers or understood the material. Because students expect their teams to perform well, they coach each other to ensure that any member of the group can answer questions from all of them and explain their answers. When the teacher asks a question or assignment, anyone in the group may be asked to answer for the group. This technique is useful for both revision and practice tests; the group takes the practice test together, but each student ends up completing the assignment or taking the test individually.

On the collaborative project: students choose the topic/resources-discovery learning, with each group discussing a different topic. Students identify sub-themes for each group member; students use resources such as library references, interviews, visual media to get information; students synthesize their information for a group presentation: oral and/or written; each group member plays a role in the presentation; each group presents to the class. This approach places greater emphasis on individualization and student interest. Each student's assignment is unique. Students need to have extensive experience working in teams to be more effective. The following are examples of CLL Olsen and Kagan (1992: 88) explained.

Interviews: (1) students work in pairs; one is the interviewer and the other is the interviewee; (2) students switch roles; (3) each share with team members what they have learned in the two interviews.

Round-table model: (1) each team has a piece of paper and a pen. (2) Give the paper and pen to the student on his or her left. Each student takes a turn contributing. If it is oral, this structure is called a round-robin.

Reflect-Pair-Share model: (1) the teacher asks a question (usually a low consensus question). (2) Students think about their answers. (3) Students discuss their responses with their peers. (4) Students share their partner's response with the class.

Solving-Pairing-Sharing model: (1) teacher presents a question (a low or high consensus question) that can be solved with different strategies. (2) Students solve it individually. (3) Students explain how they solved in an interview or loop structure.

2.4 Learners' Role

The learner's main role is a member of a group and must work with other group members to complete tasks. Learners must learn teamwork skills and also be leaders of their learning. They are guided to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. Learning is therefore something that requires the direct and active involvement and participation of students. Pair work is the most typical CLL

model and ensures that learners spend the most time on the learning task. In pair tasks, learners alternate the roles of teacher, checker, recorder, and information sharer.

2.5 Teachers' Role

The role of the teacher in CLL is very different from traditional teacher-centered classroom teaching. The teacher must create a highly structured and organized learning environment in the classroom, set goals, plan and organize tasks, assign student groups and roles, and select materials and time (Johnson et al. 1994). An important role of the teacher is that of a facilitator of learning. The teacher must move around the classroom to help the students. During this time, the teacher interacts with students, guides them, refocuses their attention, asks them questions, clarifies, supports, extends their ideas, celebrates with them, and shows the emphasis. Based on the development of the problem, the following supportive behaviors are used: the facilitator gives feedback, redirects the group with questions, encourages the group to solve their problems, extends the activity, encourages thinking, manages conflict, observes students, and provides resources; (Harel 1992: 169) Teachers talk less than in a traditional classroom; they provide a wide range of questions to challenge thinking, prepare students for the tasks they will perform tasks and help students to complete learning tasks, they rarely give orders and impose; teachers also have the task of restructuring lessons so that students can learn collaboratively. The following steps are included Johnson et al. (1994: 9): using existing lessons, courses, and resources, and collaboratively constructing them; tailoring collaborative learning sessions to specific teaching needs, contexts, curricula, subject areas, and students; diagnosing problems that some students may have when working together and intervening to improve the effectiveness of learning groups.

2.6 The Role of Teaching Materials

Teaching materials play an important role in creating opportunities for students to work together. The same materials can be used in other types of lessons, but there needs to be variation in the way they are used. For example, if students are working in groups, there may be one set of materials for each person (or the group may have different materials), or each group member may need a copy of the text to read. Materials may be designed specifically for CLL learning (e.g. puzzles and information gap activities for commercial sales), modified from existing materials, or borrowed from other disciplines.

3. Procedures

Johnson et al. (1994:67-68) gave the following example: how would a collaborative learning session work when students are asked to write an essay, report, poem, story or review something they have read? Using a collaborative writing and editing portfolio arrangement; pairs check that whether each member's essay meets the criteria set by the teacher or not; they then receive an individual mark for the quality of the essay, and they can also score is based on the total number of

errors made by both in their respective essays. This is done as follows.

The teacher divides the students into two groups, with at least one good speaker in each group.

Student A describes what he or she intends to write for Student B. Student B listens carefully, probes with a series of questions, and outlines Student A's ideas. Student B hands the written outline to Student A. The other process is the opposite. Students each research the material they need for their essays, keeping an eye out for material that would be useful to their partner; students write the first paragraph of each essay together to ensure they all have a clear start; students write their essays; when students have finished their essays, they proofread them for each other, making changes in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, language use and other aspects of writing specified by the teacher. Students also make suggestions to each other; students revise their compositions, and then students examined each other's compositions and sign their names to indicate that each composition is error-free. During this process, the teacher monitors the students, intervening when appropriate to help them acquire the writing and collaboration skills they need.

4. Approval and Critique of Collaborative Language Teaching Methods

Proponents of the Collaborative Language Learning approach believe that new forms of learning, such as group learning and peer-to-peer learning, can greatly improve the monotonous mode of traditional teaching and make students more independent. Students can develop good interpersonal relationships in non-competitive relationships and realize that they cannot only fight for their interests, which is not only positive for learning, but also for shaping a successful life.

Opponents argue that there is too much diversity in the student body and that requiring students to work together while ignoring the differences in their academic levels may lead to negative consequences, such as average students coming to see that they are not as good as the top students, and top students becoming burned out on peer support over time, which may lead to the ultimate failure of group work.

5. Suggestions for the widespread use of Collaborative Language Teaching（CLT）

The successful use of CLT needs to be complemented by additional conditions.

Firstly, the teaching profession should be improved. The demands placed on teachers in the new era are becoming more and more severe. Teachers who simply read from a textbook have difficulty meeting the current learning needs of their students and attracting their interest. Over time, teachers become weary and students lose interest in learning.

Secondly, Attention should be paid to improving the psychological aspects of students. Students growing up in the traditional classroom and under test-based education will always consider individual achievement as the only criterion for their success. As a result, unhealthy competition between students is inevitable, and students are not willing to share their learning experiences and methods. Only when they are aware of their limitations will they ask their classmates for help, and only when every student has such an idea can cooperative learning be truly implemented.

Above all, the CLT has significant advantages over traditional ones, both in terms of improving teachers' skills and developing students' abilities. The widespread use of CLT should be brought to

our attention.

6. Conclusion

The use of discussion groups, group work, and pair work is often promoted in language teaching and other subjects. Often, such groups are used to vary the normal pace of classroom activities and to increase the number of students participating in lessons. However, such activities are not necessarily collaborative. In cooperative learning, group activities are the essential mode of learning and are a portion of a comprehensive theory and framework of educating and learning utilizing group activities. Group activities are carefully arranged to maximize students' interaction and to encourage their commitments to each other's learning. CLL activities can also be utilized collaboratively with other instructing strategies and approaches.

Unlike most language teaching programs, CLL has been extensively researched and evaluated, and the findings are generally supportive (Slavin 1995; Baloche 1998), although this research has rarely been conducted in L2 classrooms. However, CLL is not without its critics. Some have questioned its applicability to different levels of learners, arguing that some groups of students (e.g. intermediate and advanced learners) may gain more than others. In addition, it places considerable demands on teachers who may struggle to adapt to the new roles required. Proponents of CLL emphasize that it improves both learning and learner interaction skills.

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