

An Analysis on the Cooperative Learning of Tibetan Students' English Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT. *Cooperative learning is of great importance for English teaching in middle school. In traditional teaching environment, teachers are the main characters who speak a lot and likewise, students have fewer chances to talk, which causes an estrangement between teacher and students and influences teachers' teaching and students' learning. New curriculum idea calls for the way of "learning on their own, cooperation and inquiry learning". By giving the definition of Cooperative Learning, this article mainly focuses on the analysis of cooperative learning's advantages and disadvantages, putting forward its main problems in the process of application of cooperative learning and the specific strategies.*

KEYWORDS: *Cooperation between teacher and students, English teaching and learning introduction*

1. Introduction

In the traditional teaching principles, great reverence to teachers and anyone who is older than oneself is considerably stressed, which invisibly influences the closeness between teacher and students through learning English. However, it does not seem to be a good way for an English learner. For being a language learner, loving to learn or speak and without any diffidence in using it is definitely important. Education is a highly complicated process in which teacher plays an instrumental role. In this paper, I will mainly discuss the cooperative learning between teacher and students within the background of middle school students' English teaching and learning situations in Tibetan areas.

In traditional teaching environment, for teachers are occupying the most of the time in class and students, the principal part, is always loaded tons of homework assigned by every teacher, through which they try their best to perform themselves. Therefore, it will inevitably form a vicious circle: "teacher assign the homework---students do the homework---teachers correct the homework---teachers reassign the homework---students redo the homework.....", through this way, teachers just immerse themselves into homework and most importantly, they have no interest in teaching contents and they have no time for academic research and study.

2. Problems of Today's English Teaching and Learning Environment in Tibetan Areas.

According to education reform recently, teachers are required to create circumstances to let the students be the center of the learning and develop their capability of making researches and learning on their own. However, in the process of teaching practices in rural areas, this kind of requirements is faced with a lot of problems.

2.1 From teacher's Perspective

Even though this is the era of 21st century and information age, there are still a number of English teachers in the rural areas who still do not possess the ability of using media, Power Point, collecting online teaching resources, absorbing external advanced teaching principle or methodology and other teaching techniques to facilitate and have a better presentation about the teaching contents. Thus it makes it harder for both the teacher and students to make improvements in the capability of listening and speaking. On the other hand, many English teachers in the rural areas are not the ones who majored in English during the college years, so it attributes to the fact that those schools are in the destitution of professional teachers. Then it has been causing the problem of imparting the wrong pronunciation to the students and misleading these new hands to the wrong direction. Especially on the part of learning pronunciation, it would be difficult for students to correct their pronunciation on their own.

2.2 From family's Perspective

Students in rural areas are different from those in urban areas in the respective of economy, culture, ideology, study motivation and etc. In the comparison with those students in cities, students from rural areas have ubiquitously lower knowledge level and more significantly, they have little conception about how the English is. In order to support families and seek financial resources, parents in rural areas usually go to other places or families to support their families on the basis of leaving their own aged parents and young little children behind. In this condition, they have no choices but to go on a life that is a long separation between children and family. And thus children's education is ignored totally and let alone improvement and experience of learning a foreign language like English.

2.3 Lack of Language Environment for Learning English

In the schools of rural areas, students only have the habit of speaking English in the class, but after class they scarcely use English to communicate with others or express their feelings. The students who speak English after classes will be sneered at by the others. Because they do not have the chances or environment of speaking English, students usually feel shameful or diffident to use English. Thus lack of the purpose or interest in learning this subject, English is only used for dealing with passing the examinations.

3. Advantages of Cooperative Learning

3.1 The Changing of Roles

In cooperative learning, there is a close connection between students and students, teachers and students. In the learning process, the thing that might be easily neglected is listening to the speaker in order not only to show great respect to the others, but also improve and get the important idea from the speaker as well. With the popularity of using English in our daily life, the request for students to master this language is getting stricter. It makes necessary for us to try and improve new teaching methodology so as to let students gain the most efficient knowledge in a relaxing and peaceful ways.

3.2 Changing the Angle of Teaching from "Individual" to "Team"

With the development of society, team spirit has become a vital component in our life. Especially for middle school students, it is necessary for them to know the importance of cooperation with others. For everyone in this society is an individual who lives in a group or community, it is only in the ways of communication, cooperation and sharing, that we can keep up with the time and social development, and vice versa. Students at the age of middle school is not mature enough to cope with all the things happen in his or her life, especially in learning a new language like English. He or she may need a partner to talk with and practice oral skills that is needy in speaking, so it would be a difficult and devious way to go if one keeps solo in mastering English.

3.3 Giving Full Scope to Students to Play the Key Role in Class

English class is the course of practicing course, which requires cooperation. Students take listening as an instrumental part in the traditional teaching and on the other hand they are considered as a containers, thus the ongoing class is in need of teachers to give orders and instructions. The application of cooperative learning makes it possible for teachers to be the organizer of the class learning, and what they need to do is the basic interpretation to the fundamental knowledge. Sometimes there will be drills that should be practiced by students under the instructions of teacher, which paves the way for teacher to have a better understanding about how the students progressing forward in the field of language acquisition and its usage.

3.4 Good for Fostering students' Utonomic Learning

Students at middle school are endowed with the characteristics of emulation and the desire to be more excelled than others. Thus what appears in the class of English teaching in middle school is that students usually will do the preview on their own beforehand and sometimes can even reach the criterion of excellence in

learning a new lesson. In a sense this can bridge the gap existing between the teacher and students by giving students a sense of superiority.

Cooperative learning can propel mutual assistance and improvement among students. For an English learner, it is of great importance for students to put what is learned in the classes into practices, because theories are only theories if we keep them in books and minds. It is not meaningful until we put them into practices again and again. The same goes for learning a new language. Making groups and let students participate in the activity can let those who used to be the outsider become the participator. Which also indicates that in the process of learning, those who have mastered all the knowledge and skills can help those who do not. Then an invisible power can urge those who usually do not like reading have an impetus to reach a new language level. Then teacher is in the role of instructor of making progress and heighten their capability of organizing and communicating with others.

4. Disadvantages of Traditional Cooperative Learning

4.1 Social and Historical Background

In traditional cooperative teaching and learning environment, the dignity of the teaching profession is overly praised by ancient intellectuals in old times, thereby formed the distinctive social status between teachers and student. As is known to all, respecting for teachers and valuing the education is the essence of our culture and which should be greatly fostered and enhanced. But students' ubiquitous fear and keeping distance to teachers is caused by advocating over-respect for teachers. No matter a student's conduct is right or wrong, the student will defer to the teacher since it is teacher's authoritativeness that is more important according to the traditional teaching doctrine. The one who does not comply with the teacher will be reproached and if the situation is worse, it would be possible for students to be punished physically and disgusted by the teacher. Under this unique and narrow-minded condition, students' individual creativity and special ideas will be restricted invisibly, and thus it is students innate talent in learning new things including another language is killed pitifully.

There is an ancient saying which reads: "he who teaches me for one day is my father for life.", which on the other hand also indicates the distinctive social status between the teachers and students. This sort of teaching mode in traditional feudal society is unshakable but more inveterate in the minds of teachers and students. The lack of trust between the relationship of teacher and students make it harder for the students to make communication with their teachers of their own accord, thus many problems may occur in the study or daily life which can not be consulted to the teachers who in the most of time are the nearest one for students. Especially in the condition of study, for instance, a math learner may need help in the face of problems of figuring out the right answer, however, it is a devious and time-consuming way for us to find the right answer immediately without the guidance and help of a teacher. So students may waste a lot of time on the unimportant things that can be easily coped with by the assistance of teachers without having that kind of estrangement.

4.2 Putting Students in a Passive Position

In the teaching process, teacher is playing the role of knowledge giver as well as the core part of the activity, but students are the receiver. In the part of teaching methodology, teacher is like a soloist who is giving performance to the students or the audience, which makes the traditional teaching form goes into the condition that teacher keeps talking continuously, writing on the blackboard and having students been tested. However, things go contrary to students who just keep continuous listening and copying what is written on the blackboard and memorizing what is assigned without having the real experience of communication with teacher. On the teaching evaluation, teacher is the only appraiser while students are in the role of object that is being evaluated by the teacher. Students who are cultivated under this sort of teaching circumstance are usually orthodox in his or her behavior and always follow teacher's advice, thus in normal condition, it would be a harsher situation for these students to be creative and unique in the research field or daily problem-solving issues.

4.3 The Relationship between Teacher and Students is Only Restricted to the Classes

As students, especially for those who are still in the time of adolescence, it is boarding school where they in the most of cases finish their nine-year compulsory education according to the condition existing in our country. So it might be a delicate problem if the relationship between teacher and students just restricted only in the classes. Because students at this age is not mature enough and have no idea if they encounter some psychological and daily life problems. Nevertheless, traditionally, the relationship between teacher and students just restricted

to the education only, and more importantly, education at that time is only deemed as a knowledge output by teachers, no matter students can input or not, it is just an knowledge transmitting activity. Consequently, it would be a tough task for both the teacher and students to shape a relation that is democratic and fair.

5. Solutions to Applying the Cooperative Learning between Teacher and Students.

5.1 Good Preparations Must Be Done Beforehand in Order to Have an Efficient Class

As is known to all, it is of paramount importance for teachers to make the teaching plan so as to let students have some “nutritious” to learn and assimilate. Especially in today’s society, students overall knowledge is far better than couple of decades ago due to the Internet and other electronic facilitators. Thus it will be an embarrassment for teachers if they are asked various questions by students in whose mind teachers are versatile in everything known and unknown. During the practice of putting what has planned beforehand in the classes, as leaders, teachers have the responsibility of organizing students into different groups of four or at least three. Group organizing not only helps students with their speaking ability, but also with their communicative skills as well. For sometimes, students who are introvert are usually have difficulty in talking to different levels of people, which is not a good temperament that fits to having an interview or hunting a job in the long run. Consequently, when one is involved into a group that requires talking and practicing, he or she may be forced to share their unique ideas or listen to other people’s perspectives with careful attention. Learning a total new language in a sense is a process of inputting and outputting, which needs learners to talk and listen. Group organizing thus gives students and teachers not only the golden chance to cooperate with each other, but also provides both of them to fulfill the goal of learning on their own.

5.2 Making Teaching Goals

Making expectant goals for planning a class is of great importance for having an efficient class. For instance, designing a very interesting lead-in part for a class so as to stimulate students great interest in acquiring new knowledge and which is a good way to fulfill the expectant goal in that class. Anticipate some might-have-been problems and the strategies beforehand in order to continue the class smoothly. For instance, it is possible for some students to forget what has been learned in previous class that is the key point for learning a new lesson, and at this time teachers must have some tactics to remind those students of learned knowledge by giving them language hints like words or sentence structure. Or some students may not have done the preview so that the contents of the new class may be very difficult for them to assimilate, in this point, teachers may have to spend a few minutes in letting those students have a short-time preview by their partners’ assistance. In the traditional teaching mode, grammar teaching is far more important than speaking and other aspects in English. So it tends to have the possibility of not having enough communicative skills for students when it really comes to the time for using English in real life.

5.3 The Application of Reward Structure

According to the book of *The Principle and Practice of Cooperative learning* (Wangtan, 2002.4), positive reward structure is a good way to the fulfillment of cooperation between teacher and students. In the cooperative reward structure, one students’ success can propel another one’s success and a positive relationship exists among the students. Teachers, as a director in the class, should exploit the role of bringing all the students into activity in order to reach the expectant teaching goals. English teaching and English learning is one and whole process, which requires an effective cooperation between the teacher and students. From the experience of my internship as an English teacher, it can be clearly seen that giving reward after a group competition is a good way of motivating students’ learning interest.

6. Conclusion

In brief, English is an interesting subject. The teacher should pay attention to cultivate students’ learning interest, which can make students have autonomous learning all the time. The teacher in English teaching process, besides the instruction in knowledge and basic skills, must grade students to carry on the autonomous learning positively to educate students English thinking pattern, improve their English cooperative learning ability. English is a language that has strict grammatical structure and rules for learning pronunciation, thus it is

a tough way to go to learn English well without an instructor's help. Consequently, mutual cooperation between teachers and students play an instrumental role in mastering English.

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