

The Application of Autonomous-Cooperative Learning in Senior High School English Writing Teaching

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Abstract

With the implementation of the new curriculum reform, it has become one of our teaching objectives to stimulate and cultivate students' interest in English writing. If students like to learn English, they can establish self-confidence, develop good learning habits and effective learning strategies, and then develop the ability of autonomous learning and cooperative spirit. As an advanced teaching method, autonomous-cooperative learning model is gradually widely used in the student-centered teaching practice, which is an important breakthrough and supplement to the traditional teaching mode. Among the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, English writing has always been a weak part in students' English learning.

This paper tries to combine the autonomous-cooperative learning mode with English writing teaching in senior high school. Through stimulating students' interest in autonomous learning and actively carrying out group discussion, cooperative learning can be carried out so that students can master effective writing strategies and improve English writing.

Key words: Senior High School English; Writing teaching; Autonomous-cooperative learning

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional senior high school English teaching has always been based on Teachers' teaching and students' listening, and it is somewhat exam-oriented. Knowledge is instilled into students. They are silently passive receivers of knowledge, which is not conducive to students' English learning (Long, 2014, p.70). The *New Standard of English Curriculum* for senior high school requires students to optimize their learning methods, improve their autonomous learning ability, develop lifelong learning ability and obtain the ability of sustainable development (Jiao, 2018, p.68). The main goal of teachers is to teach students how to learn English autonomously and cooperatively, so as to help students develop lifelong learning ability. Once students master this skill, it is easy to acquire more knowledge and skills to meet the needs of social development.

At the same time, the ongoing high school English teaching reform also requires English teachers to change the traditional teaching methods, fully stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and develop students' autonomous-cooperative learning ability. In addition, students are prone to anxiety while writing, which is not conducive to the normal improvement of students' English writing (Zhang, 2017, p.110). Autonomous-cooperative learning model can not only help to solve these problems, but also make students feel more relaxed and comfortable in this learning environment. Therefore, we should actively carry out autonomous-cooperative-learning mode in English writing class (Kang, 2019, p.26; Shen, 2019, p.49).

DEFINITION OF AUTONOMOUS-COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Autonomous-cooperative learning is a combination of autonomous learning and cooperative learning. There are many theories related to autonomous-cooperative learning, among which the most representative is constructivism. Constructivism holds that “knowledge is not acquired by teachers, but by learners in a certain situation, namely, social and cultural background, with the help of other people (including teachers and learning partners) in the learning process. It is obtained by means of meaning construction with the help of necessary learning materials (Gao, 2008, p.12). Learning is a process in which learners construct meaning continuously and actively, and it is based on their experience, needs and beliefs. It is not only a simple absorption of information from the object. The formation of individual knowledge depends on the understanding formed through communication and cooperation with others, that is, social construction (Boud, 1988, p.17; Benson, 1997, p.98).

Based on constructivism theory, autonomous-cooperative learning is a cooperative learning method which combines the characteristics of autonomous exploration of students in autonomous learning and the advantages of students’ active interaction in cooperative learning. It takes group cooperation as the organizational form, students’ cooperation as the main activity, and aims to cultivate students’ practical ability and innovative consciousness

APPLICATION OF AUTONOMOUS-COOPERATIVE LEARNING BEFORE WRITING CLASS

In the English writing class, we should make good use of autonomous-cooperative learning mode to improve students’ English writing. Before the autonomous-cooperative learning was put into the senior high school English teaching, what the teacher should do is not only the preparatory work required by the traditional teaching, but also something special concerned with the autonomous - cooperative learning. This mainly includes four procedures.

The first procedure is the group division and role-play. The division of the autonomous-cooperative learning team should consider the following factors: group-dividing mode, the scale and composition of the team. The scale of the team is generally composed of 3-6 students and a larger scale should formalize the role of each team member. The principle of the “inter-team homogeneity, inner-team interagency should be followed. Divide the whole class into study teams so that the team members become the study partners. In order to ensure them to finish their own task and have effective cooperation, each

group member should be assigned different roles in the group.

The second procedure is to teach some cooperation skills to the students. If teachers merely encourage students to work together or arrange some cooperation procedures, it is not enough to guarantee the efficient collaboration of team members. Only when students master cooperation skills in some degree can cooperative learning be carried out successfully. Thus it is necessary for the students to be well trained to get cooperative skills at the beginning of the application of autonomous-cooperative learning.

The third procedure is to select the teaching content. Here, we divide teaching contents into two types, the controversial topics and the non-controversial ones. In traditional classroom teaching, most non-controversial contents are taught by teachers. To let students acquire and understand knowledge is the teaching objective. In autonomy-cooperative learning, this type of topics should be also chosen as the subjects of cooperative learning. Because the group members discuss with each other explain to each other, check with each other, so that it provides students a place to practice. The controversial topics are especially suitable for autonomous-cooperative learning team to discuss. Such topics often do not have single correct answer. The main topics of the autonomy-cooperative learning teaching should be the controversial ones.

The fourth procedure is to select the room arrangements. How to arrange the team in the classroom will affect the team function. In traditional classroom teaching, the students sit in a straight row, facing to the teachers. This arrangement naturally is not conducive to the team members to take activities together. This kind of arrangements is generally not be used in the autonomous-cooperative learning. There is also a kind of the team arrangement which all the team members are getting together with their face-to-face to each other. One study shows that in this arrangement, students spend most of the time in the learning tasks and also it is conducive to cooperative activities of the students. Therefore, this kind of team arrangement is generally used in the autonomous-cooperative learning

APPLICATION OF AUTONOMOUS-COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN WRITING CLASS

In order to improve students’ comprehensive ability in English, students are supposed to practice their ability of English listening, English speaking, English reading and English writing. The autonomous-cooperative learning could be applied to all of these classes. Here the author introduces a specific example in English writing class and the detailed procedures of an autonomous-cooperative

learning class, so that we can analyze how to apply the autonomous-cooperative learning to the in-class stage of senior high school English teaching.

After the bell rings, class is beginning. The task-based teaching method is generally used in senior high school teaching, it consists of three elements: pre-task, while-task and post-task. If it is the English reading class, the three elements are pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. And in English writing class, they are pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing. Teachers can combine these three steps to carry out the autonomous-cooperative learning in the class, and attempt to examine the specific application of the autonomous-cooperative learning in the three stages. The detailed example is consists of six steps.

Step one is to assign writing tasks. In order to motivate the students, the teacher makes a clear introduction about the writing task and requirement. For example, as the topic of friendship, each student has friends and has a lot to say about friendship. The teacher gives the students some necessary directions, and encourages every member in the groups to participate before brainstorm. Moreover, writing task should be based on how much the students know about the target language, and what their interests are.

Step two is to do the group discussion. This is a pre-writing stage and serves as a warming-up. The students are encouraged to think, discuss, exchange views and share their ideas, so that they can gather rich materials and information for writing. Then, the students write down all the ideas. This step might last 5-10 minutes and students' cooperative skills could also be improved. Group members first analyze the given topic together to decide what type of writing it is and what tense and person they will use in writing, then they exchange ideas, explore further information, look up the new words, phrases and complement more information so that members can further perfect or develop writing ability.

Step three is to do the cooperative writing. After a thorough discussion, students are supposed to have rich materials and information. At this point, they are asked to go on writing their articles. Group members are supposed to write a draft in pairs. That is to say two students finish one article, and each group two articles. Maybe each student speaks out his or her own sentences, and then they would choose the best one. If one student has difficulties, he or she can turn to his or her partner or group members for help, but not copy. The teacher monitors progress during this time. Visiting each group and offering help is needed.

Step four is peer editing. After group members finish writing their articles, the teacher should give instructions for editing. While editing, focus should be on content and meaning not on grammar. Some questions as follows may be put forward as a rule. For example:

- (1) What is the writer's main idea? Is it clearly stated?
- (2) What supporting details does the writer give to

develop the main idea?

(3) Where should the author add more details?

(4) How does the writer organize the composition?

Then the team takes the time to do peer editing. Editing must go on again and again, so three styles of peer editing are included. The first one is group-members editing. Two pairs of group members in a group go over the writings of each other's, but not their own. While editing, students in pairs can underline good words, sentences in red and make comments and hold a discussion on the main ideas, clarity of expression in their writing. The second one is intergroup editing. Articles of each group are collected and distributed to another group anonymously. Each group evaluates another group's articles on the aspects of both content and form such as the development of ideas, organization, content, spelling, punctuation, language usage and so on. They should not only give marks of the article but also do some necessary or suggestible correction. Then articles are given back. Team members discuss problems in their composition and find ways to improve them. At last, group leader ask the two pairs in the group to rewrite legibly. As they are rewriting, they can make more changes. After they finish the writing, the checker makes sure the two pairs go over their articles carefully. Finally, submit their writing to the teacher. The third one is whole class editing. One student who can be at the average level in one or two groups copies his or her writing on the blackboard, and the rest of the students in the class correct the obvious language errors. This can not only offer a model for students of the below-average level who may have trouble getting started, but also help the class avoiding such errors.

Step five is the second draft. When the students get their writing back, with editing mark from their peer readers, they should read it carefully again, give a further thought to the first draft, do some necessary revision and finish the second draft. As they are rewriting, they may think of more changes that they would like to make. After finishing the writing, students are required to go over it carefully to see if the language sounds correct and if the message seems complete and understandable. Finally, students hand in their writings to the teacher.

Step six is multiple evaluations. The traditional evaluation subject is single, mainly by the teacher to evaluate the situation of students' learning English. Now students are encouraged to participate in the evaluation actively. Students' self-evaluation, students' mutual evaluation and teachers' evaluation should be combined. Autonomous learning emphasizes students' autonomy, and self-assessment can strengthen students' sense of self-responsibility. Through the understanding of their own achievements and shortcomings, the students can learn self-reflection, diligence in thinking, and gradually grow into independent learners, laying the foundation for lifelong learning after entering the society. Students' mutual evaluation in the group can help students learn

to communicate and cooperate and improve their interpersonal skills. In the evaluation, students learn to respect others, understand others and appreciate others, so that students can learn from each other's strong points and trust others, treat themselves and others fairly.

APPLICATION OF AUTONOMOUS-COOPERATIVE LEARNING AFTER WRITING CLASS

In the post-class learning stage, the homework of English writing can be designed as role-playing activities. The members of the group can take turns to play the role of the teacher to teach others to practice English writing independently and cooperatively, so as to consolidate and strengthen the learning effect of English writing. When students play the role of teacher, they will face some problems, such as how to choose the topic of writing, how to explain the topic to everyone, and so on. By teaching others' learning methods, students can better understand what they have learned in class, which can greatly improve the effect of classroom learning.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the application of autonomous-cooperative learning in senior high school English teaching, we find that autonomous-cooperative learning is more effective than traditional instruction in promoting students' English learning. Autonomous Learning and cooperative learning promote each other. Cooperative learning encourages students to participate in activities. Teacher-student interaction can promote language acquisition and help students reduce their dependence on teachers. It is this interaction that makes students realize their responsibilities in language learning, find their own shortcomings and learn from each other. Both autonomous

learning and cooperative learning are learner centered, which arouses students' initiative and enthusiasm. Compared with traditional teaching, autonomous-cooperative learning can significantly improve students' English writing skills. Autonomous-cooperative learning can reduce anxiety, improve students' learning motivation, cooperative ability and interpersonal skills, and improve learning efficiency and academic performance. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out autonomous-cooperative learning in senior high school English writing teaching to improve students' English ability, which is worthy of research and application by all English teachers.

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