

## Reflection on the College English Collaborative and Coordinative Learning Mode

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### Abstract

With the full implementation of new curriculum reform, collaboration and coordination have become the main teaching mode in college English instructing process. It offers a great opportunity for students to acquire English knowledge, which is of great significance to improve students' communication skill, their competence of thinking as well as cooperative spirit. This paper explores the cause of implementing cooperative and coordinated learning mode in college English teaching, discusses its specific implantation strategy combined with practical cases.

**Key words:** Collaborative and coordinated; Learning mode; College English teaching

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### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the rapid development of market economy urgently calls for various kinds of outstanding talents with strong comprehensive and practical quality. College English teaching faces many new challenges in terms of higher requirements for the English level of college students. The learning mode of collaborative and

coordination with its focus on language practical activities is believed to enliven the atmosphere of discussion in class and stimulated the enthusiasm of students in the process of teaching and learning English as well. Therefore, the collaborative and coordination learning mode are regarded as the indispensable trend of the reform of college English teaching, which is supposed to be emphasized by the majority of English teachers and executed reasonably as quickly as possible.

## 1. AN OVERVIEW OF COLLABORATIVE AND COORDINATIVE LEARNING MODE

### 1.1 Connotation, Features and Important Ways

Proposed by a famous American educator David Koonts in 1970s, college English collaborative learning mode means indicates that students carry out cooperative and mutual learning of clear-cut assignment in certain groups or organization teams in order to accomplish common English learning tasks. Within the framework of collaborative and coordinative study process, students need to combine their personal interests with the collective interest to achieve success. Currently, collaborative and coordinative learning mode has aroused widespread concern among the educational system and has become the mainstream of English educational reform as well.

Now that the learning mode of cooperation and coordination in college English teaching emphasizes the cooperative and interactive features among students, advocates finishing learning tasks through the cooperation of students in groups, it includes such characteristics as clarity of responsibility, coherence of coordination and mutual collaboration. It shall systematically take advantage of the learning mode of cooperation and coordination for college English teaching, which mainly needs to coordinate the relationship of each dynamic factor and takes the general performance of student groups

as evaluation criteria. The important specific elements include: heterogeneous grouping, face to face interaction promotion, personal responsibility, social skills and group self-assessment, and so on.

To be specific, learning mode of cooperation and coordination in college English teaching can be divided into several kinds according to the number of cooperative person in group, such as personal statement, two-student cooperation, group discussion and class discussion and other modes. Personal statement means several students make a statement about 2-3 minutes on the basis of some thought-provokingly selected jokes, pieces of news or introduction of certain cultural phenomena by themselves, other students are responsible for pointing out their advantages and disadvantages during or after presentations; two-student cooperation requires that the students should sit close relatively to work together and accomplish a task of English learning, the teacher will check the effectiveness of two-student cooperation so as to impel them to reach a consensus on one information; group discussion, with purpose of showing off and developing the full wisdom of every student, aims to organize student group to carry on enthusiastic classroom discussion, grasp the hot topics related to the content of text for debating firmly, share their personal opinions in the group freely and democratically. What's more, in terms of the content of college English course it can be divided into question evolution mode, role playing mode, discussion discovery mode and other modes. The question evolution mode mainly applies to the lesson of spoken English in college English. It can implement questions and answers effectively and push students to answer and focus on the topics interested by them. Let us take the topic of "The Trust Factor" as an example. Certain student groups can make discussion on "trust" or "trust crisis" because trust or trust crisis is the hot problem of current society and closely related to the content of teaching materials. The discussion discovery mode mainly aims at the teaching content of the theme for topic discussion, which could be the content closely related to heated topic of society, and also could be the content closely related to learning life of students, the students can diverge their thinking in the discussion, accept the views of other students, reflect on each personal opinion and ultimately comprehend this topic thoroughly.

## **1.2 Significance of Implementation**

### **1.2.1 Stimulating Students' Learning Motivation and Enthusiasm**

The learning mode of cooperation and coordination in college English will take group as unit, the group member will learn more with common goal under the clear-cut assignment of responsibility. During the process, language learning competence of the students would be improved, their motivation of achievement would be stimulated, participation of the students in English class activities

would be greatly enhanced. Moreover, the group members can help and influence each other in the independent, cooperative and exploratory cooperation interaction, with the stimulation of the enthusiasm for learning English as a result.

### **1.2.2 Improving Students' Performance and Cultivating Sound Language Study Habits**

During the process of implementation of college English cooperative learning mode, its concept of education enhances the improvement of English learning abilities of the students to a large extent, such as independency, competitive ability and cooperative ability. Meanwhile, with implementing the learning mode of cooperation and coordination, the relaxed atmosphere can improve the psychological atmosphere of the students and improve the performance of the students. Moreover, during the process of cooperative learning, it can achieve the maximization of exchanges in English between not only teachers and students but also students and students by means of exploration and research. It cultivates good language habits of students through frequent communication.

### **1.2.3 Lessening the Burden on Teachers and Improving Relationship Between Teachers and Students**

The learning mode of collaboration and coordination is mainly significant to students, and the independent exploration learning among students plays an important role in the process of English teaching and learning with the students as the center and occupying a dominant position. Under such circumstances, the main task of teachers will be transferred from teaching language materials to guide the students to finish task-based class activities and assignments. In this case, the teaching work of teachers would be greatly reduced. Teachers only need to carry on pertinent teaching on the basis of individual differences among students, meanwhile, during the process of cooperative learning, the teachers participate in group discussion as an organizer, and no longer play the role of instructing as knowledge indoctrinators, which largely improve the relationship between the students and the teachers. The equal exchange relationship between the students and the teachers is in favor of improving English teaching efficiency.

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## **2. THE CAUSE OF IMPLEMENTATION**

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### **2.1 Requirements Under the New Features of College English Teaching Material**

At present, the college English teaching material of China mainly is the fourth generation of teaching material, which wrote in the framework of being "student-centered", which the biggest characteristic is to promote independent learning. There are some new characteristics in the fourth generation of teaching materials used for current college English teaching: advocating new mode of classroom teaching assisted by computer network;

putting emphasis on teaching of listening and spoken English while maintaining the requirements for reading, writing and translation in traditional teaching material; taking common type of writing in current English and literary style sample as material and using the teaching way of single unit of topic form; highlighting the feature of aiming at the improvement of the language application ability of students, for example, using pair work, group discussion, debate and oral and written ways as various as possible.

## 2.2 Current College English Teaching Prospect

Under the influence of subjective and objective factors, the current situation of college English teaching is not very optimistic. The specific problems are illustrated as follows. To begin with, there is so many established large classrooms with too many students. Along with the unceasing expansion of source of college students, it sets the teaching form of large class (70-80 students) in English course in many universities, but the teaching efficiency is not good due to too many students and largely different performance. What's more, generally speaking the language competence of students needs to be improved urgently. Under the current and established college entrance examination system, "spoon-feeding" teaching way and "teaching by holding one's hands" instructing method in high school enables students to be reluctant to really participate in classroom activities voluntarily. Therefore, students couldn't really grasp English knowledge so that the practical application ability and communicative ability of students is hard to be satisfied, which makes them hardly adapt to the competitive and fast developed society and talents market well. Last but not the least, the limited instructing hour is also one of the elements that should be emphasized considering the current prospect of college English teaching. As far as the English practical activity is concerned, it probably occupies main teaching content, so it is difficult to complete classroom task once improper operation occurred. In this way, English teachers obviously feel the urgency of classroom time. To some extent, through conducting cooperative and coordinative class or extra-curriculum activities among students, the problem of lack of teaching time for teachers in class could be solved more or less.

## 2.3 Existing Teaching Method

The existing teaching method could not meet the needs of college English teaching requirements. Currently, grammar translation method, literal translation method as well as traditional listening, speaking and communicative language teaching methods are applied in many universities. These teaching methods have great capacity and have had a great impact in English teaching process previously in certain period. For example, grammar translation method puts an emphasis on the rules of

English grammar, vocabulary memory, text translation and so on. The teaching of listening and speaking can enable students to develop proper language habits by dividing language into four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the above mentioned methods show limitations due to higher and more requirements for college English teaching in the new era. Although communicative language teaching can help to improve English communication ability of the students, it neglects cooperation and mutual assistance between students, ignores the cultivation of communication ability of the students. The mere purpose of focusing on listening and speaking ability improvement of students puts more importance to the formation of language, emphasizes machinery control communication, and ignores the content and meaning of language, which is not conducive to stimulate initiative and creativity of the students.

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## 3. A CASE STUDY

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Taking the learning mode of coordination and collaboration implemented in English study as example, it arranges the following links and carries out teaching work. The selected material is unit 5 book 1 of Integrated Course published by Shanghai Foreign Languages Press entitled "Romance".

### 3.1 Design Stage

- (a) Analyzing teaching materials, and choosing contents adapt to cooperation and coordination learning;
- (b) Choosing a new class of 39 students making investigation on the English learning interest, learning attitude and learning ability of students in the class, and taking the college entrance examination score of the students as a reference to figure out the English level of students.

### 3.2 Preparation Stage

- (a) Since newly enrolled freshmen are not very familiar with their classmates, their learning and daily life are more willing to fall into company with their roommates, the students will be grouped according to bedroom, 4 groups for girl students and 3 groups for boy students.
- (b) Carry out training activities. It will implement the learning mode of cooperation and coordination for the content of chapter "Romance" for the students in groups, introduce the methods and rules of cooperative learning with different learning contents to the students, and advocate the students to actively cooperate with each other in the process of English learning.

### 3.3 Implementation Stage

- (a) The assignment of tasks in classroom during the 1<sup>st</sup> period: i) Explain the culture point of romance, lead to its constituted phrase, and tell about the source of Valentine; ii) Learn new words, and point out the difficult sentences or long sentences encountered in preparation;

iii) Focus on learning and exchanging romantic love story text, and point out grammar of sentence that is difficult to understand, and make explanations on key points and difficult points. For example: “He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn’t, the girl with the rose”. For those inexplicable sentences of relatively more grammars, the teacher can guide the student to make the exchange of ideas and analysis.

(b) The assignment of tasks after class during 1<sup>st</sup> period: i) Review new words and difficult sentences in the text; ii) Each group shall prepare a story about “romantic love”, and request every student of the group use about 20 sentences to make oral presentation.

(c) The assignment of tasks in classroom during 2<sup>st</sup> period: i) Have a spot check on the text learning of each group; ii) Check whether the students have grasped new words in “Language Focus” in groups, and choose some students to make a dictation; iii) Check the learning situation of Language Focus II and III, finish cloze test behind the article and explain the difficult sentences in Translation.

(d) The assignment of tasks after class during 2<sup>st</sup> period: Learning Text B in groups, and assign tasks to every group, the first group will finish Comprehension together with the sixth group; the third group will finish Translation together with the fourth group; the second group will finish Language Practice together with the fifth group.

(e) The assignment of tasks in classroom during 3<sup>st</sup> period: i) The representative of every group will explain the practice of group members on Text B; ii) The group members will tell about romantic love story prepared by the group in the form of “Fan-tan” game; iii) Supplementary listening practice.

(f) The assignment of tasks after classroom during 3<sup>st</sup> period mainly reviews early learning and previews next unit of learning contents.

### 3.4 Conclusion Stage

Under the learning mode of coordination and collaboration, some students would be more active in the early cooperation, but they will become lazy gradually along with the elapse of time, therefore, the teacher should give scientific supervision. After finished cooperative learning contents, the teacher shall make comments and give scores according to task completed situation. It can be found that the explanation and analysis of culture points in 1<sup>st</sup> period can stimulate participation enthusiasm of students, which exercises oral communication ability of students; in 2<sup>st</sup> period, it make supplementary learning on contents which hasn’t been finished in last lesson, and arrange group activity after class, strengthen real-time communication between groups; the check activity in 3<sup>st</sup> period strengthens the feeling of group members who sharing hardship and endeavors, strengthens competition sense of students and inspires their learning enthusiasm.

## 4. PROBLEMS NEEDS TO BE CAUTIOUS

### 4.1 Proper Timing and Rational Grouping

It is not necessary that the college English cooperative learning mode must run through the whole classroom teaching, rationally choosing the best timing for cooperation learning can effectively play the role of cooperative learning. Moreover, the rational grouping becomes extremely important after selected proper cooperative timing. Considering character, gender, record, ability and other factors of the students, teachers can make scientific grouping, and advocate students to help each other, especially for students with relatively weaker communicative competence.

### 4.2 Scientific Execution

In college English teaching, it should scientifically implement cooperative learning activity if teachers want to execute English cooperative learning mode in a more effective and efficient way. Actually, debate is a very challenging and interesting form of exercise, which can help to improve people’s language competence and thinking ability. In college English teaching, teachers should create the debate situation for physical and mental development of the students and cultivate comprehensive ability of them combined with teaching materials and hot social topics. For example, when teachers talk about the content of “Holiday”, it refers to the problem of “whether the Spring Festival that is the traditional holiday of China should be inherited”. It is the open problem which can be considered and discussed freely with more than one answer. In order to enable students to use their knowledge to answer, it can carry on the intense debate in the classroom by dividing students into several groups. The affirmative side can explain it from the view of “Spring Festival is a traditional Chinese festival, should be inherited”, while the opposition side should explain it from the view of “New Year firecrackers are more likely to cause air pollution, noise pollution and increase child safety hazards as a result”. Before the debate contest, the teachers should guide the group to find various kind of information and data supporting their views as much as possible, which can improve the highly concentration power for success and enhance their sense of collective honor, cooperative ability and communication ability in English study.

### 4.3 Appropriate Regulation of Teachers

Although the learning mode of cooperation and coordination in college English teaching is mainly about the activities of students, as a guide, the teacher must also enhance awareness of the role of cooperative learning, and play the regulatory role of guide. In this case, teachers should develop the consciousness of coordination and stimulation during the process of cooperative learning in order to ensure that the proposed cooperative learning

task can stimulate the desire and enthusiasm of students. Meanwhile, the form of cooperative learning activity applied should be able to meet the student's demands for English learning, language aesthetic appreciation and language communication. Finally, the teacher should also improve the efficiency of learning mode of cooperation and coordination under the strong consciousness of participation and supervision.

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## CONCLUSION

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In summary, the learning mode of collaboration and coordination in college English teaching carries the features of effective feasibility and urgent necessity. In order to effectively play an important role in learning mode, college English teachers should guide and participate in cooperative learning activities of the students, through scientific and abundant form of teaching activities, it can give more opportunities for students to foster comprehensive ability in applying English in the practical situation and improve their English level as a whole in the long run.

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