

A Study on the Cooperative Learning Mode in Business English Reading Course

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of globalization, the importance of business English in higher education is increasingly prominent. This paper aims to explore the effectiveness of introducing the cooperative learning mode in teaching business English reading course. This paper first analyzes the current situation of teaching business English reading course, and then discusses the application of cooperative learning mode in teaching business English reading course. Finally, through empirical research, the effectiveness of cooperative learning mode in improving business English reading ability is verified.

Keywords: business English, reading teaching, cooperative learning mode, reading course, effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Business English as an important component of English teaching in universities, aims to cultivate comprehensive talents with good English communication skills and professional knowledge in the business field. However, the current approach to teaching business English reading primarily relies on teacher-centered instruction, neglecting students' actual needs and active involvement. The cooperative learning model, as a student-centered teaching method, can enhance students' active participation and cultivate teamwork skills. This article will explore the application and effectiveness of cooperative learning mode in business English reading teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Cooperative Learning Mode

Collaborative learning is a teaching strategy that emphasizes interaction and collaboration among group members to achieve common learning goals. Johnson and Johnson's (1989) research suggests that cooperative learning can enhance students' learning motivation, social skills, and academic achievement. Slavin (1995) proposed several collaborative learning models, such as team competition, student team achievement division (STAD), etc. These models are widely used in different educational environments. Kagan (1994) indicated that cooperative learning promotes communication between students and improves language skills in language teaching.

B. Business English reading teaching

As an important part of professional English teaching, business English reading aims to improve students' reading comprehension ability in business environment. Dudley-evans and St John (1998) discussed the

diversity of business English curriculum design, with emphasis on purpose-specific content. Traditional methods of business English reading teaching often focuses on text analysis and vocabulary learning, but it lacks attention to the actual business situation and communication skills. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasized the importance of combining language learning with real-world scenarios.

C. Collaborative Learning and Business English Reading

In recent years, researchers have begun to explore the possibility of applying cooperative learning to business English reading. For example, Zhang's (2013) study showed that cooperative learning methods can improve the reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities of business English students. Some studies, such as the work of Li and Liu (2015), have shown that the application of cooperative learning in business English reading teaching not only improved students' reading comprehension abilities, but also promoted their teamwork and communication skills.

THE APPLICATION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN BUSINESS ENGLISH READING

The cooperative learning model emphasizes interaction and cooperation among students, and teachers play the roles of guides and facilitators in this process. In the teaching of business English reading, teachers can design diverse cooperative learning activities, such as group discussions, role-playing, case analysis, etc., to enable students to apply the knowledge they have learned in practical business scenarios, improve reading ability and communication skills.

The cooperative learning model of business English reading is helpful to improve students' reading comprehension and cultivate their cross-cultural communication skills through group cooperation, real business scene simulation and interactive discussion, strengthen the ability of practical application. In Business English teaching, this model is expected to become an effective teaching method to help students master business English skills better.

A. Group Cooperative Learning Model

The application of group cooperative learning model in business English reading teaching provides a platform for students to cooperate with each other, promote their in-depth understanding of the business text and the sharing of industry experience. This model encourages students to actively participate in the discussion, through interaction within the group, to deepen the understanding of business professional knowledge.

1) Promoting deep learning: Students are motivated to explore more complex and higher-level business concepts in an environment that promotes deep learning group collaboration. Through collective intelligence, students can understand the multi-dimensional problems in the business situation more comprehensively. As Ning (2010) pointed out, the cooperative learning model effectively supports students' in-depth analysis of complex business texts, helping them build a stronger professional knowledge base. In a collaborative group learning environment, students can explore complex business concepts in depth through discussion and collaboration. For example, a teacher may organize students into groups to discuss an article on international market analysis, asking each group to present its own insights on market trends and to debate these insights within the group. Through such activities, students will not only be able to understand the content of the article more deeply, but also learn how to present and support their own views in a team.

2) Enhancing practical application capabilities: Practical skills through group work, students learn not only theoretical knowledge, but also to connect this knowledge with the real world of business. Work together to analyze real business cases or market trends so that students can better understand and apply what they have

learned. Research by Anderson and Thompson (2021) shows that group learning activities that combine real business cases can help students apply theoretical knowledge to practice and improve their integrated problem-solving skills. By simulating real business scenarios, students can apply what they have learned in practice. For example, teachers can design a group project in which students are asked to analyze the market expansion strategy of a fictional multinational corporation and make their own recommendations. In this process, students need to use key vocabulary and expressions from Business English reading, as well as apply critical thinking to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

3) Promoting cross-cultural communication: In a global business environment, understanding and respecting different cultural backgrounds is essential for business English learning. The group cooperative learning model provides students with a platform for cross-cultural communication, so that they can be more comfortable in the actual business communication. As described by Tseng (2017), through cross-cultural group interaction, students can better understand business practices and communication methods in different cultural contexts. Teachers can organize groups of students to work together on a case involving cross-cultural management. For example, analyze the problems of cultural differences encountered by an international team during the execution of a project and discuss how these problems can be solved through effective communication. Such activities can not only improve students' cross-cultural communication skills, but also enhance their teamwork spirit.

Real Business Case Analysis

Real business case analysis plays a vital role in business English teaching. By allowing students to analyze these cases, they not only improve their reading comprehension, but also develop the ability to use language in real business situations. In interpreting and discussing real-world business problems and situations, students can combine theoretical knowledge with practical application. This practice-oriented approach is especially important for developing business English professional skills.

1) Deepening understanding and application

By analyzing real cases through cooperative learning, students can gain a deeper understanding of business concepts and strategies. This in-depth learning process helps students use their English skills more effectively in a real-world business environment. As Guo et al. (2014) pointed out, incorporating real-world situations into classroom instruction can greatly increase students' interest and participation.

Enhancing teamwork and communication skills

Analyzing business cases in teams also strengthens students' Collaboration and communication skills, which are indispensable in a business environment. Through group discussions, students learn how to express their views, listen to others, and work together to develop solutions. This collaborative process, as emphasized by Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991), not only improves students' academic achievement, but also promotes the development of social skills and team spirit.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN BUSINESS ENGLISH READING

Although cooperative learning in reading has many advantages in cultivating business English abilities, it also faces some challenges and problems. The following is a detailed discussion of these challenges and issues.

A. Group dynamics issues

Uneven participation among members: In a group, there may be a phenomenon of "free riding", where some

members contribute less and rely on the work of other members. The reason is that individual members may lack motivation or confidence and be unwilling to contribute their own viewpoints. This leads to some group members bearing an excessive workload, while others may miss out on learning opportunities.

To solve this problem, teachers can ensure that each member has responsibility and opportunities to participate through role allocation or clear task division. For example, the study of Kim et al. (2016) suggested that in cooperative learning, some students tend to hide behind more active students. Teachers can organize groups of students from different cultural backgrounds to work together on a case involving cross-cultural management. For example, analyze the problems of cultural differences encountered by an international team during the execution of a project and discuss how these problems can be solved through effective communication. Such activities can not only improve students' cross-cultural communication skills, but also enhance their teamwork spirit.

Individual differences or different opinions among members may lead to internal conflicts within the team, affecting the learning effect. Differences in values, learning styles or personalities among members that may lead to disagreements. Poorly handled conflicts can reduce team effectiveness and affect the entire learning process. Solution to this is: teachers should promote open communication and respect for diversity, and intervene to help resolve conflicts when necessary. Johnson and Johnson (2017) discussed the management of conflicts within a group, emphasizing the importance of constructive conflict resolution for learning. When there are differences of opinion within the group, the teacher can guide students to use "consensus decision-making". For instance, in a discussion on marketing strategies, if the group members have different views on a certain strategy, the teacher can guide them to list their views and then find a solution acceptable to all through discussion and compromise.

B. Language proficiency differences

There may be significant differences in the English proficiency of the group members, especially in diverse teaching environments, with high-achieving students likely to feel under-challenged and low-achieving students likely to feel unable to keep up. The impact of this is that high level students may feel suppressed, while low-achieving students may feel discouraged. Layered teaching and personalized learning tasks can help meet the needs of students at different levels. Zhang (2018) found in his research on Chinese students that differences in English proficiency significantly affect their participation in group discussions. In order to meet the needs of students with different levels of proficiency, teachers can design tasks with different levels of difficulty. For example, students with higher levels of English proficiency can be assigned more complex analytical tasks, such as writing business reports, while students with lower levels of English proficiency can be assigned more basic tasks, such as vocabulary learning and sentence translation.

Also, students with stronger language abilities may dominate discussions, while other students may retreat, resulting in a decrease in participation among students with weaker abilities. Sonnayi and Alapati's (2021) study showed that students with stronger language abilities tend to be more dominant in group activities. This may hinder the participation and development of low-achieving students. To solve this problem, teachers can design activities to ensure that every student has equal opportunities to speak. Teachers can also design individualized learning tasks for each student to ensure that they are able to progress at their own level. For example, for students with weak reading skills, teachers can provide additional reading materials and exercises to help them improve their reading comprehension.

C. Teacher roles and guidance

Teachers may lack experience or necessary training in effectively managing collaborative learning groups, resulting in ineffective promotion of learning. Insufficient teacher support. Lack of effective guidance and

support may lead to low student engagement. So, regular teacher training and professional development plans are necessary. Gillies (2016) emphasized the crucial role of teachers in promoting effective collaborative learning.

Teachers can support cooperative learning groups through observation and feedback. For example, while students are engaged in group discussions, the teacher may circulate among the groups to observe student participation and provide guidance as necessary. For example, if a student is found to be silent during a discussion, the teacher can encourage them to put forward their own ideas and provide some thought-provoking questions to guide their participation in the discussion.

A fair and effective assessment of collaborative learning processes and outcomes is also a challenge, especially when considering individual contributions and group performance as a whole. It is a little difficult to evaluate the individual's contribution to the team fairly. This may lead to unfair assessment, affecting the enthusiasm of students. Hence, it is necessary to use a variety of evaluation methods, including self-assessment, peer evaluation and team evaluation. Graesser et al. (2018) discussed the complexity of cooperative learning assessment and proposed a comprehensive assessment model.

In addition, schools should provide regular training and professional development opportunities for teachers to help them enhance their abilities and skills in teaching cooperative learning. For example, regular collaborative learning workshops can be organized and experts and experienced teachers can be invited to share the latest research findings, their teaching practices and practical strategies on cooperative learning. Moreover, teachers can enhance their cooperative learning teaching skills through online courses and workshops, such as how to design effective group activities and how to assess the effectiveness of group work.

D. Course content and materials

Finding business English reading materials suitable for cooperative learning can be challenging, requiring materials that are both colorful and relevant. Finding materials that meet both learning objectives and are suitable for collaborative learning is a major challenge. Teachers should carefully select and design materials to ensure that they are both challenging and achievable. Wang's (2019) research suggested that selecting business English materials that are relevant to students' actual experience can increase student engagement.

And it is important to ensure that cooperative learning covers all necessary areas of business English knowledge and skills to avoid knowledge blind spots. In cooperative learning, it is sometimes possible to neglect the teaching of some core business English skills. Teachers should ensure that the curriculum is comprehensive and balanced between theoretical learning and practical application. Huxham and Vangen (2013) stressed the importance of balancing theory and practice in cooperative learning.

Cultural and background differences

Collaborative learning in a multicultural context requires consideration of cultural differences to ensure that all students can learn in a respectful and understanding environment. Cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings and communication barriers. Therefore, teachers should enhance cultural awareness. Thomas and Ely (2020) discussed cooperative learning in multicultural classrooms and pointed out that teachers need to cultivate cross-cultural awareness.

Students from different cultural backgrounds may have different communication styles and habits, which may affect the efficiency of communication within the group. Nguyen's (2019) study suggested that cultural

differences may lead to differences in communication styles and preferences among students in group discussions.

Technology and resources

Additionally, it should be noted that modern collaborative learning often relies on technology tools and platforms, but not all students have equal access to technology resources. In resource-limited settings, it is a challenge to ensure that all groups have access to necessary learning materials and support, when resources are limited.

In a word, although cooperative learning in business English teaching has its significant advantages, but also with many challenges. Solving these problems requires the active involvement and planning of teachers, including the development of appropriate group strategies, the adaptation of teaching methods and the provision of appropriate materials and resources, and to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. In addition, continuous teacher training and professional development are also essential for the effective implementation of cooperative learning.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the impact of cooperative learning in reading on business English proficiency is multifaceted. It not only enhances students' language skills, but also promotes their critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork skills, and understanding of the global business environment. This teaching model provides a solid foundation for students to enter the real business world, enabling them to better adapt and succeed in the international business environment. Cooperative learning in reading has many advantages in cultivating business English ability, but it also faces some challenges and problems.

Through a review of the application of cooperative learning in business English teaching, this paper concludes that cooperative learning is an effective teaching model that helps improve students' business English abilities. Through group cooperation and real case analysis, students not only improve their reading comprehension level, but also cultivate cross-cultural communication and practical application skills. Future research should further delve into the dynamics of group collaboration, combine technological means, and focus on the role of teachers in this process. This is expected to provide more scientific and effective methods and strategies for teaching business English reading.

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