

# Cooperative learning in English writing teaching

郭霞

(牡丹江师范学院 西语系 黑龙江 牡丹江 157012)

Abstract: Writing plays an important role in our daily communication among the four basic language skills. However, in China, both the teacher and students do not attach much weight to English writing in school education. Many problems exist in the current teaching of English writing. Cooperative learning is a creative and effective teaching theory based on interaction among group members. This essay mainly explores the possibility of combining cooperative learning and English writing teaching together.

Key words: cooperative learning; English writing; group members

中图分类号: H319

文献标识码: A

文章编号: 1672-1578(2011)04-0007-02

## 1 Introduction

Writing is a complex process of language communication and is also a creative thinking process. Writing is playing an important part in the course of human civilization history and promotes the development of human society. Writing is such a useful language skill needed in real life communication that both the teacher and the students should pay great attention to the training of this practical skill. How, on earth, can the teacher develop students' writing ability effectively? Applying cooperative learning in English writing teaching may be one practical solution to this question.

## 2 Problems existing in traditional writing class

### 2.1 Over emphasis on "product" and insufficient guide to "process"

In the process of writing teaching, many teachers misbelieve that assigning writing and correcting writing means everything to writing. Under such circumstances, the teacher cares little about how the student writers have shaped their products and he overemphasizes the grammatical structures of the product and ignores the process of writing. An inevitable result of teacher's giving little guidance to how to write a composition is that students will lose confidence and interest in English writing and write in a perfunctory manner, laying many words together according to grammatical rules.

### 2.2 The teacher neglecting the interaction among students

In traditional English writing classrooms students are usually in the control and direction of the teacher, writing passively according to the teacher's explanation within a given time. In the process of writing students will have no opportunities to think, discuss together, express their views and communicate with peers in order to complete the writing task. During such teacher-centered process, students' thinking ability cannot be fully developed, which doesn't agree with the development that students need in body and mind.

### 2.3 Students' lack of motivation to English writing

One of the important reasons why students are weak in writing skills is that they lack motivation to write. Most students have no clear aims to learn English writing and don't know the real purpose of English writing. Many of them think that the purpose of writing is to reinforce what they have learned to pass examinations. At the same time, single and boring teaching method and low marks in writing also make students lose interests and enthusiasm in English writing. The findings indicate that there might exist a number of pitfalls in our English writing teaching. These drawbacks were chiefly attributed to the teachers' methods to English writing teaching.

## 3 The significance of adopting cooperative learning in writing teaching

Cooperative learning is such an efficient activity that it has been widely used all over the world. Roger T. Johnson and David W. Johnson defined that cooperative learning is a relationship in a group of students that requires positive interdependence, individual accountability, interpersonal skills, face to face primitive interaction and processing. In this educational approach, students and the teacher are in a state of dynamic cooperation and build up an intimate learning atmosphere in the language classroom. Since we admit that the traditional teaching method in English writing teaching does have some drawbacks for the past few years in China, we may try adopting cooperative learning in writing teaching. By doing so the student-centered class has taken the place of the teacher-centered class and students become the main body of classroom learning in writing. Therefore their interests in English writing will be greatly motivated. In addition, the adoption of cooperative learning provides a good way for the students to carry out communicative learning practically and effectively. Cooperative learning can promote the development of English writing ability greatly.

## 4 How to adopt cooperative learning in writing class

### 4.1 Designing cooperative learning activities before writing class

A teacher must design cooperative learning activities carefully before writing class. This is a crucial step to affect whether the cooperative learning succeeds or fails in writing class. The teacher should make a deep research into his students and the writing content while he is preparing his lessons. In English writing some cooperative learning activities are simple while some are more complicated. In order to design complicated cooperative learning activities the teacher must design each step carefully and plan the time of each step in carrying out writing teaching. Good designs and preparations for cooperative learning activities before the writing class are very important.

### 4.2 Arranging cooperative learning groups in writing class

This is a concrete thing that a teacher must encounter when organizing cooperative learning in writing class. It is not so easy to arrange all the students properly. The teacher must be familiar with the students including their interests, hobbies, characteristics and English level in order to arrange the cooperative learning groups well. There are usually the following three group forms: (1) heterogeneous groups and homogenous groups. (2) two-person groups, four-person groups

(下转 22 页)

交际中所假设的使话语得以进行的一种底线,是人们理解话语的基础”(束定芳,2000:205)。

### 3 合作原则对康德四范畴的借用

与对康德的四范畴比较可以看出,格莱斯在合作原则的各个总则上借用了康德的四范畴框架,他将四个原则命名为“质”、“量”、“关系”、“方式”这是对康德四范畴的一种借用。而合作原则中的第一个原则:“(一)量的准则(The Maxim of Quantity)所含的1、2细则,“提供足够的信息”和“不提供超出的信息”中的“足够”和“超出”构成一对反义。这也是符合康德的“正一反”定律的。

当然,他也对此范畴在语言上的应用进行了相应的修改,首先是从命名上来看:合作原则第四个总则,合作原则称为“*man-ner*”中译“方式”,而康德的范畴中第四个为“样式”。其次,除第一个原则外其他各个原则都做了相应的变化。“(二)质的准则(The Maxim of Quality)。(1)不说你认为是假话的话;(2)不说你缺少足够证据的话。”这里“假话”与“缺少足够证据的话”是无法构成反义对的,我们可以看出是格莱斯根据语言使用的实际情况对绝对意义中的“正一反”定律提出的修正。由于语言使用的多变性、不确定性,使得格莱斯无法用康德的“三分法”对语言的使用进行分类。这一点在其后的第三、第四原则与康德三、四范畴的巨大差异中更可以明确得到证实。

从上述的修改中我们可以看出格莱斯的“方式”更适合用于对言语的规范、在各原则的具体细则上,格莱斯的修改也是相对合理的,总之,作为在康德的四范畴理论启发下提出的“合作原则”没有为康德的范畴定义所约束,在具体的应用下能够发现并指出合理的具体解释原则。

### 4 结语

作为一切学科工具的哲学,其指导作用是毋庸置疑的。对语言学而言“哲学是语言学研究的出发点和归宿”(赵彦春,2004:1)。从二十世纪二三十年起,西方哲学进入了第三次转折,其

研究重心逐步转移到语言本身。哲学家开始强调知识的确定性、可验证性。语言哲学应运而生。根据对自然语言的不同态度,语言哲学家内部分为两派。数理逻辑学家弗雷格、罗素和早期的维根斯坦等认为自然语言不够完善,应该建立人工语言他们被称为人工语言学派、形式语言学派。而摩尔、赖尔、后期的维根斯坦、奥斯汀、斯特劳森等则坚持对日常语言进行分析,他们认为自然语言是完善的。此类研究成果为现代语言学的发展,特别是语义学和语用学的发展,奠定了基础。这一派哲学家的许多观点被当作语言学理论,如维根斯坦的含义和指称理论、奥斯汀的言语行为理论和格赖斯的合作原则。

参考文献:

- [1] 丕之, 汝信. 黑格尔范畴论批判[M]. 上海: 上海人民出版社, 1961.
- [2] 格拉日丹尼科夫, 曹一建译. 哲学范畴系统化的方法[M]. 北京: 中国人民大学出版社, 1988.
- [3] 海德格尔著, 彭富春译. 诗·语言·思[M]. 北京: 文化艺术出版社, 1991.
- [4] 康德. 纯粹理性批判[M]. 北京: 商务印书馆, 1956.
- [5] 李福印, Koenraad Kuiper. 语义学教程[M]. 上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 1999.
- [6] 束定芳. 现代语义学[M]. 上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 2000.
- [7] 亚里士多德, 方书春译. 范畴篇·解释篇[M]. 北京: 商务印书馆, 1997.
- [8] 赵彦春. 语言学的哲学批判[M]. 重庆: 重庆出版社, 2004.

作者简介: 常淑丽(1970.9—), 女, 山西芮城人, 成都电子机械高等专科学校外语系, 副教授, 大学本科, 文学学士。研究方向: 英语教育及应用语言学。

苗萌(1982.9—), 女, 四川成都人, 成都电子机械高等专科学校外语系, 讲师, 研究生, 文学硕士, 研究方向: 认知语言学。

(上接7页)

or six-person groups. (3) long-term groups and temporary groups. The teacher can choose an appropriate group arrangement according to the writing task.

#### 4.3 Carrying out cooperative learning in writing class

At the beginning of the writing class, the teacher should assign the cooperative writing tasks and present the demands clearly and in detail. In carrying out cooperative learning activities the teacher must have some organizational competence so that the cooperative learning activities in writing class go on smoothly and successfully. In the course of cooperative learning activities, the teacher should walk around the classroom, supervising each group and giving guidance and help when needed. At the same time the teacher should pay more attention to what the students of lower achievements do and try to lead them to catch chances to interact with other group members to form good writing plan.

#### 4.4 Summarizing cooperative learning after writing class

After students' group work the teacher should give proper assessment, giving more praise and encouragement. And it is also essential for the teacher to make investigation, collect feedback information, reflect defects and evaluate students' performance in cooperative learning from all aspects after the writing class. Doing so is helpful to the improvement of teaching writing in cooperative learning method. The teacher can collect successful experience and summarize the failure steps by observing students' group activities, correcting

students' homework and talking with the students after the class. Little by little a good cycle of group cooperative learning in writing class will be built.

### 5 Conclusion

The adoption of cooperative learning in writing class can initiate the students' enthusiasm for English, make learning environment light, natural and real, conducive to students' writing learning. In cooperative writing class students can work cooperatively on writing issues so that both positive interdependence and individual accountability of students are promoted. In a word, by applying cooperative learning in writing teaching students' English thinking, writing skills and all-round excellent characteristics such as active cooperation and effective communication are fully developed and improved in the learning process.

References:

- [1] Dulay, H. Cooperative Learning and Communication [M]. Buckingham: Psychological Bulletin, 1983.
- [2] Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. Making Cooperative Learning Work [M]. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.
- [3] 束定芳, 庄智象. 现代外语教学—理论、实践与方法[M]. 上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 2009.
- [4] 王坦. 合作学习的理念与实施[M]. 北京: 中国人事出版社, 2002.

作者简介: 郭霞(1977—), 女, 黑龙江省牡丹江市人, 牡丹江师范学院西语系讲师, 硕士, 主要研究方向: 英语课程与教学论。