

Issue on cooperative learning:
A perspective from a SA background
EFL Teacher of a English Village Classroom

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Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Background to cooperative learning
- ▶ Current situation
- ▶ Implication for teaching and conclusion



Introduction

- ▶ Purpose : to critically evaluate cooperative learning and demonstrate a task role of language activities in establishing cooperative learning implementation.

- ▶ Why cooperative learning?

To learn co-operatively,

1. What can we do?
 2. How do we achieve?
 3. When do we do it?
 4. What do we need to pay attention to?
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Background to cooperative learning

- ▶ A global definition

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals.

Cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups. (Ken Bruffee, 1995)



Cooperative Model

- The teacher maintains complete control of the class.
- Students work in groups to accomplish a goal.
- Teacher asks questions, then provides additional articles for the students to read and analyze.
- Teacher then asks students to work together to answer questions.
- Specific structures. eg. Jigsaw



Current situation

- ▶ Research has indicated, that the wealth of research findings and developing discussion might mean that suggested language educators are faced with a potentially incomprehensible range of options for use in their classrooms.

(Borg, 2010; Burgess & Hetherington, 2002; Truscott, 1999)



Perspective from a South Africa setting

- ▶ Context: English as first language
- ▶ Top down instead of bottom up
- ▶ Elementary school: diary, newspaper articles, show and tell (presentation)
- ▶ High school: essays on Poetry, comprehension, essays on novels
- ▶ Oral presentation
- ▶ 8th grade, group presentations



Relation to schooling in SA

- The teacher assesses the progress of each group and provides suggestions about each group's approach and the data generated.
- Teacher would be available for consultation.
- Teacher facilitates the process by asking for frequent progress reports from groups.
- Teacher facilitates group discussions about group dynamics and helps with conflict resolution.



Collaborative learning

- Collaborative learning is based on the model that knowledge can be created within a population where members actively interact by sharing experiences and take on asymmetry roles
- Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers. (Ken Bruffee, 1995)



Collaborative Model

- Groups assume almost total responsibility for answering the question.
- Students determine whether they have enough information to answer the question.
- If not, they identify other sources of information.
- The gathering of sources are distributed among the group by the group. (Brodie and Davidson, 1998)



Similarities

- Both use group work.
- Learning tasks are designed to suit group work.
- Both have the student groups 'share and compare'.
- Both present their findings.
- There's an emphasis on interdependence while maintaining individual accountability. (Spencer Kagan, 1989)



Major Differences

- Cooperative learning deals exclusively with traditional knowledge.
- Members work on problem solving or take on an assigned role.
- The teacher moves between groups and observes interaction.
- The teacher intervenes when appropriate.
- Finally, student groups report back briefly, or present a report.
- Mastery of facts, development of cognitive and social skills.

(Spencer Kagan, 1989)



Major Differences

- Collaborative learning ties into social constructivist movements.
 - Members are asked to organize themselves and to combine their efforts and negotiate among themselves: who performs what tasks.
 - The teacher does not actively monitor and allows groups to take responsibility for their own work.
 - Students work independently for submission in final form.
 - Development of autonomy and knowledge construction.
- (Spencer Kagan, 1989)



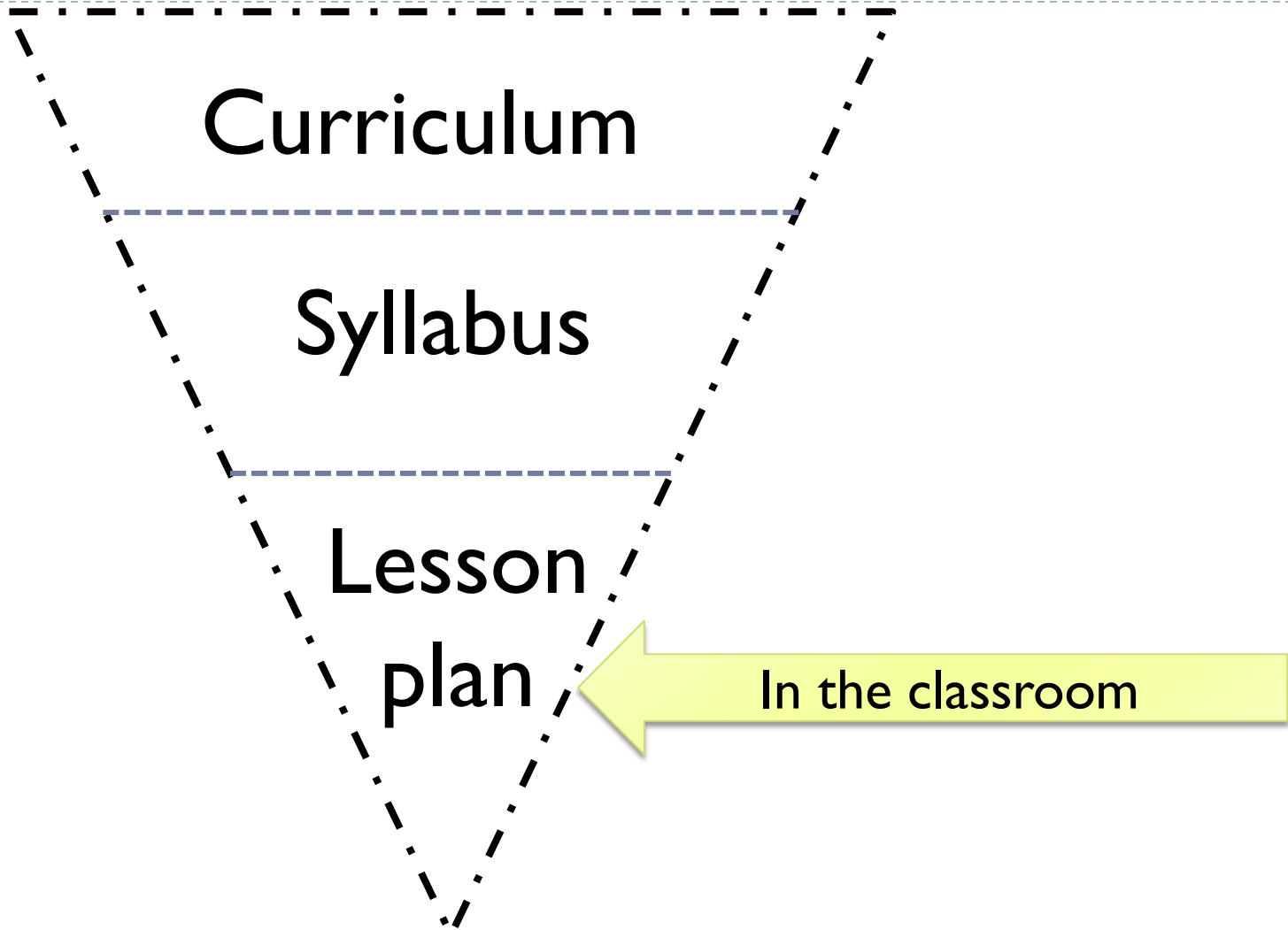
Question

- ▶ What cultural differences exist in the acceptance of both cooperative learning and collaborative learning?

- ▶ Does the Taiwanese social setting lend itself to work individually or cooperatively?



Cooperative learning in which level?



▶ Why cooperative learning?

To learn co-operatively,

1. What can we do?
2. How do we achieve?
3. When do we do it?
4. What do we need to pay attention to?



Task: writing a postcard to a friend

- ▶ Warm up
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Read and comprehension
- ▶ Analyze the grammar
- ▶ Task I (controlled)
- ▶ Task II (less controlled or no controlled)
- ▶ Overall grammar handout

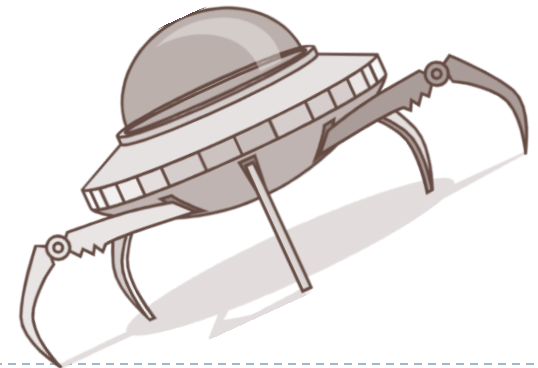


Let's think about this

► Why cooperative learning?

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Things to pay attention to

- ▶ One of them is the environment: Classroom
- ▶ Purpose: this is where learning is taken place
- ▶ Supportive, comfortable to build up their confidence



Conclusion

Our aim should be to develop social and communicative skills in four modules, similarly, to prepare them to master the language proficiency in every context.



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- ▶ Although cooperative learning has been around for many years, it is still in the fetal phase at our school.
 - ▶ The goal of implementing collaborative learning is ambitious, but I see our own English Village as an opportunity to achieve these goals. It doesn't have to stop here.
 - ▶ We as English teachers can modify any classroom into an opportunity to achieve these outcomes.



Thank you for listening

