

A Research on the Application of Cooperative Learning in Rural Middle School English Teaching

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Abstract—Cooperative learning is based on modern social psychology, cognitive psychology and modern educational technology and so on as the theoretical basis, making full use of the dynamic factors in class and group activities for the basic teaching form. Team members will communicate with each other to finish the tasks assigned by the teacher. The teacher will take assessments, which are a series of teaching activities or strategies to finish the teaching goal. Cooperative learning is one of the new learning styles that the present basic education curriculum advocates. Nowadays, many scholars of China have done research on cooperative learning, but most of their researches only stay in the form of cooperative learning, which haven't made a deep research in the carrying out of cooperative learning in rural middle school. This paper researches the new curriculum and the data at home and abroad. By using questionnaire, interview and observation, taking Xinling Middle School of Enshi as an example, the author did an investigation on the situation of the application of cooperative learning in Xinling Middle School English teaching. The author finds some problems existing in the application of cooperative learning: the teachers lack enough understanding about cooperative learning; the division of groups is not reasonable; the students lack consciousness and skills of cooperative learning, etc. The author also finds some solutions to solve these problems.

Index Terms—cooperative learning, classroom teaching, problems, strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Cooperative learning theory has the most important influence and outcome in the present education theory. At present, the reform of fundamental education course has come to the stage of experiment. The reform of classroom teaching has become the key stage for the whole education reform; the reform of the teaching and learning strategies have become the center that people pay attention to. Cooperative learning has become a very important form of teaching organization in Chinese classroom teaching.

National Standards of English Curriculum (Experimental Edition, 2001) explicitly indicates: the focus of reform of English course is to change the situation of putting much more emphasis on grammars and lexical explanations, and of the tendency of overlooking learners' language performance on actual occasions. The reform advocates experience, practice, participation, collaborative and communicative learning style and task-oriented approach based on learners' interests, life experience and cognitive level, aiming at developing learners' comprehensive abilities.

Cooperative learning, as a theoretic and strategic system, is applied by many countries in the world. Many researchers have shown that cooperative learning is a creative and effective teaching approach. There has been a growing consensus among researchers about the positive effects of cooperative learning on students' achievements as well as social affective aspects.

For a long time, the traditional teaching only stressed on teachers and textbooks. Especially it laid stress on the teacher's authority to the students but neglected the influence of the students. In class the teacher spoke from the beginning to the end, but the outcome was not optimistic. The students learned by themselves and they accepted knowledge from the teacher, they didn't have cooperative learning in class and lacked their own ideas. The traditional teaching has the advantages of large capacity and costs less time in imparting the knowledge, but its single teaching organization form restricts students' language practice activities and the improvement on students' ability in using language. Classroom teaching needs to bring in a teaching mode that faces to all students and is helpful for them to carry out comprehensive language practice teaching, the teaching mode is cooperative learning.

B. Research on Cooperative Learning Abroad and in China

In the early 19th century, some American scholars began to do relative researches on cooperative learning. And then they applied the result of the research to the practice of local education. Dewey adopted the method of group cooperation in the school that was founded by him. In Dewey's view, learners did not learn in isolation; the individual learns by being part of the surrounding community and the world as a whole. He proposed a triangular relationship for the social construction of ideas among the individual, the community and the world. Over the past 30 years, many

researchers have made great contribution to the development of cooperative learning so that now it is used not only as a supplement to the traditional instructional methods but also as a coherent alternative learning means of organizing the classroom instruction in fundamental curriculum areas from science to language learning in the foreign countries, such as USA, Canada, Israel, Germany and the UK.

We notice that the research of western countries has the property of developing on different stages. And the research itself has undergone the course from the theoretical to the practice strategy. Currently, cooperative learning is used popularly in many schools in western countries. And its achievement is obvious. In addition, the foreign practical research manifests that cooperative learning is not only an executive means of learning for the students, but it is good and practical for teaching.

In our country the systematic research on cooperative learning started at the end of the 1980s. Group activities began to enter class teaching at the beginning of the 1990s; therefore it led to the inquiry about cooperative learning. And much progress was made in the mid 1990s. At the beginning of the 21st century it is its mature period (Wang, 2001, p.116). In our country the earliest areas where the research on the subject was done tentatively were Shandong Province and Zhejiang Province. In Zhejiang the subject of their research was how to improve all-round development of the students' characteristics, in which group interactive cooperative learning into classroom teaching and obtained some experience.

Cooperative learning is such an efficient activity that it has been widely used all over the world. In our country, it is also widely used in teaching. But to the combination of cooperative learning and middle school English teaching, there is no concrete and detailed research about it. So the author is going to do some research on it in the thesis.

C. *Purpose of This Research*

The purpose of this thesis is to combine the theoretical research with teaching practice. Taking Xinling Middle School of Enshi as an example, the author will do a research on the application of cooperative learning in rural middle schools of Enshi. The research methods of the thesis are: analysis of literature, questionnaire, interview and observation. The research object is two classes of Junior One in Xinling Middle School of Enshi. The author hopes to find out the problems and gives some strategies, helps the rural middle school teachers carry out cooperative learning activities more effective, to stimulate the students' enthusiasm in learning English and improve their academic performance, especially to improve their ability in applying English. Meanwhile, cultivate students' ability in cooperation and communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Definition of Cooperative Learning*

Research into cooperative learning dated back to the 1970s. Though the research and studies have undergone for nearly 40 years, it is hard to give unanimous definition of cooperative learning. Researchers and experts gave their definitions from various perspectives.

Professor Slavin (1995, p.2) states that "Cooperative learning refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content." D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson (1993, p.9) defines cooperative learning as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning". Another widely accepted definition is proposed by Jacobs (2002, p.9) and his colleagues: "Principles and techniques for helping students work together more effectively". Cooperative learning, according to Kagan (1991), was defined as "group learning activities organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others." Vermette (1998, p.32) defines cooperative learning as follows: A cooperative classroom team is a relatively permanent, heterogeneously mixed, small group of students who have been assembled to compete an activity, produce a series of projects or products, and who have been asked to individually master a body of knowledge the spirit within the team has to be one of positive interdependence, that is, a feeling that success for any one is tied directly to the successes of others. Moreover, these groups have to be assigned by the teacher and they have to include regular direct face-to-face interaction in the classroom setting. Chinese scholar Wang Tan (2002, p.6) states cooperative learning as a pedagogical strategy system in which students are promoted to cooperative in heterogeneous teams, achieve common academic goals and reward in the basis of team performance.

Sometimes cooperative learning is also called group learning. In fact, they are quite different even though students work in groups in both cooperative learning and group learning. First, in cooperative learning, students cooperate with each other in the same group but compete with the other groups. They make efforts to accomplish the group goals. Second, in cooperative team, each member has his own duty. Take a four-member group as an example, which each act as a host, a recorder, a reporter or a checker in the group. The host takes charge of the group discussion; the recorder is to set down the results of the discussion; the reporter is to represent the results of the discussion to the class; the checker monitors the learning and makes sure every member accomplish the task. Third, students are supposed to master social skills in cooperative learning so that groups can function effectively. Finally, there is a special assessment system for cooperative learning. Only if every member achieves the goal will the group get recognized.

B. *Theoretical Basis*

1. **Group Dynamics Theory**

The research of the group dynamics theory can be dated back to early 20th century. Kafka pointed out that group was a changeable dynamic group and members were interdependent with each other. Kafka's workmate Kurt Lewin analyzed the thought in detail. He said, "for one thing, the essential of the group lead to the result that it becomes interdependence between members of dynamic group. In the dynamic group, any change stating on members will cause the change on other member's state. On the other hand, members in nervous state can encourage group members to achieve the common expectation (qtd in Slavin, 1990, p.13-18)." Because of the explanation, people regard Kurt Lewin as the founder of group dynamics theory.

Cooperative learning just takes advantages of the complex dynamic relationship existing in all classrooms that teachers instruct students and increase with each other. Students learn more when they talk about a subject, explain an idea to another student, even argue about an idea, than when they hear a lecture or read a book. Rather than trying to suppress student-to-student interaction in the interest of "classroom order", teachers who use cooperative learning regard such interaction as an important learning resource, and they plan strategies to capture this energy to support and strengthen the learning process. The total amount of teacher talk is reduced and the amount of teacher-directed student-to-student interaction, and thus students' learning is increased.

2. **Constructivist Learning Theory**

The constructivist learning theory of cooperative learning believes that: learning is not only the process that from unknowing to knowing, but also is that the learners gain the new knowledge and experience based on the original cognitive structure and experience. Students' learning is not only accepted knowledge passively, but also is the process that builds the connection between the new and the old knowledge, recombination and actively construct learning. In the process, because learning activities are centered as learners and it is real, so it can stimulate learners' interest and motivation, also it reflects the individual learning style. Therefore, constructivist learning theory advocates that learning should be centered as students under the guidance of teachers. Its learning environment includes scene, collaboration, communication and significance. Under the teaching mode of constructivist, the teacher's role is the designer, organizer, promoter and evaluator. Using the learning environment factors fully exert students' initiative, enthusiasm and creative spirit (He, 1996, p.34-37).

Based on constructivist theory, English cooperative learning takes the students as the main body of teaching and the active constructors of knowledge. The students are not the passive receivers of outside stimulus or the objects of knowledge inculcation any longer.

3. **Developmental Theory**

The basic supposition of developmental theory is the children's interaction for the proper task can advocate their mastery of the important concepts. The children's cognitive and social development has grown through companions' interaction and association (Wang, 2001, p66).

Vygotsky (1978, p.86), a famous psychologist of former Russia, presented Zone of Proximal Development. He defines it as the distance between the actual development levels (solve the problems by themselves) and potential development levels (solve the problems by adult's guidance or cooperate with other excellent students). He points out that the most important feature of teaching is creating the proximal development area, also is the process that teaching cause and promote children's internal development. These internal development processes for children are possible in the scope of their relationship with friends and common activities, by the internal development process it later has become the internal wealth of children. Therefore, teaching creating the proximal development area not only embodies in the teacher's teaching, but also reflects in the partner's cooperation.

Enlightened by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the later scholars discussed the cognitive function of the companions' association from two aspects. One is that the companions teach each other. That is, the students with better abilities work as teachers. The other is that the companions cooperate with each other? (Wang, 2001, p.67). That is, the students communicate with each other equally and cooperate with each other.

Many supporters of Piaget appeal in schools for the learning task can improve the students' achievements. The students can learn from each other through interactions. Because of the discussions, there must be cognitive struggles. And because of the cognitive struggles, the insufficient deduction must come into being. At last through cooperation a better understanding will be reached.

4. **Social Interdependence Theory**

Social interdependence assumes: the structure of social interdependence determines the way of individual's interaction and the structure of activity. Positive interdependence produces positive interaction, encouragement between individuals and encourages each other to make great efforts to learn. Negative interdependence usually produces reverse interactive competition; individuals will hinder each other in efforts to gain the score. Under the situation that on interdependence exist, it will appear the phenomenon that no interaction. That is, on influence between individuals and they do things by themselves. This is the essence of social interdependence theory put forward by Johnson brothers.

The social interdependence perspective of cooperative learning presupposes that the way social interdependence is structured determines the way people get on with each other. Moreover, outcomes are the consequences of persons' interaction. Therefore, one of the cooperative elements that have to be structured in class is positive interdependence or

cooperation. When this is done, cooperation results in interactions as group members encourage and ease each other's effort to learn (D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson, & E.J. Holubec, 1993).

From the perspective of social interdependence theory, the core of cooperative learning theory can be expressed in simple words: When all people get together to work for a common goal, it depends on the strength of united. Students depend on each other provides motive for personal and enables them: (1) to do anything to promote team to success; (2) to help each other to make group successful; (3) to love each other, because people all like others to help themselves to achieve their purpose and cooperation can mostly increase the contact between each member (Wang, 2005).

C. *Significance of Cooperative Learning*

Cooperative learning is generally defined as a teaching arrangement in which small, heterogeneous groups of students work together to achieve a common goal. Students encourage and support each other, assume responsibility for their own and each other's learning, employ group related social skills, and evaluate the group's progress. The basis elements are positive interdependence, equal opportunities and individual accountability. Human beings are social creatures by nature and cooperation has been used throughout history in all aspects of our lives. Therefore, it follows that cooperative learning groups in schools would be used as a logical teaching method.

Within the framework of cooperative learning groups, students learn how to interact with their peers and increase involvement with the school community. Positive interactions do not always occur naturally and social skills instruction must precede and concur with the cooperative learning strategies. Social skills encompass communicating, building and maintaining trust, providing leadership, and managing conflicts (Goodwin, 1999, p.29-34).

In a word, cooperative learning can promote language learning from the following aspects:

(1) It can remove the students' fear from failure in learning English; students will receive more confidence from cooperative learning. Cooperative learning can promote students' initiative participation in learning English; it is good for the development of students. The final aim of cooperative learning is everyone will have progress in learning and it stimulates the students' interest and motivation in participating learning.

(2) It can train the students' ability in communication, for example, they can learn how to repeat the text and how to correct the defect of their own expression, how to ask a partner to clarify or prove, etc.

(3) Cooperative learning is good for students to cultivate the ability of handling interpersonal relations. When students do the cooperative learning, in order to achieve the success, they will cooperate and help with each other; they can learn how to handle the impersonal relations in the process of the cooperative learning.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Purpose*

By using questionnaires, interview and observation, the author researches students' cognition of cooperative learning, the situation of English teaching and teachers' lectures. The author researches on the application of cooperative learning in rural middle schools of Enshi to find the problems and give some strategies, so that can help teachers to carry out cooperative learning in English teaching more effective, improve the quality of teachers' teaching and increase the effect on students' learning.

B. *Research Object*

The author takes Xinling Middle School of Enshi as an example to do the research. According to the research on teachers and students, the author can know more about the situation of the application of the cooperative learning and find out the problems.

C. *Research Methods*

1. **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was translated into Chinese, making students understand well. The students were asked to finish it by themselves, aiming to get the data to help to find out the problems existing in the application of cooperative learning in rural middle schools of Enshi. The questionnaire was distributed to 110 students in two classes, 100 questionnaires were effectively back.

2. **Interview**

The aim of interview was to discover some problems that exist in the application of cooperative learning in rural middle schools of Enshi. There were ten questions in the interview. The interviewees were twelve teachers enrolled to Xinling Middle School of Enshi. The interview was required about 4-5 minutes. The data of the interviews were collected by making a note of teachers in the interview.

3. **Observation**

In order to find out the problems that exist in rural middle schools of Enshi, the author observed the process of carrying out cooperative learning class for three times.

IV. THE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

A. *Students' Problems*

1. Lacking Interest in Participating Cooperative Learning

Students are lacking enough understanding in cooperative learning, so they are lacking interest in participating cooperative learning. Only 31% of the students were very interested in cooperative learning. Cooperative learning really increases the opportunities for students to participate cooperative learning activities, but only 39% of the students liked to learn English with other students. In the practical operation, because some students were lacking interest in participating cooperative learning, the effect of cooperative learning was not optimistic. 68% of the students thought they learned English for the examination, 38% of them thought cooperative learning had a great help to them in learning English. It was usually the excellent students who spoke and discussed in cooperative learning activities, they played a leading role and helped other students in cooperative learning activities. Those students who were poor in learning had no interest in cooperative learning activities; they just listened to other students. When the teacher was around the cooperative learning group, they would pretend to join in the group's discussion. When the teacher walked away, they would chat something unrelated with the discussion with other students; they didn't attend the cooperative learning activities and had no motivation, either. Because some students couldn't see the advantage that cooperative learning brought to them, they were not interested in cooperative learning.

2. Lacking Consciousness and Skills of Cooperative Learning

When carrying out cooperative learning activities, many students lacked the consciousness and skills in cooperative learning activities. Only 41% of students usually took part in students' discussion. Most students had no strong consciousness in cooperation; also their ability in cooperation was not strong. Only 31% of students liked to discuss problems with other students. They neither cooperated with other students nor knew how to cooperate. In traditional teaching, teacher speaks from the beginning of the class to the end without a stop, students rarely have the opportunity to communicate and exchange their opinions. Only 26% of students thought their English knowledge was gained from learning with each other. Due to the influence of traditional teaching, many students rarely communicated with each other in class. It is related with the mental characteristics of students in countryside. Compared with the children in city, the children in countryside have fewer opportunities to communicate with the outside world; their characters are generally diffident and not good at expressing. Besides, most of the students are lack of skills in communicate with other students. Only 32% of the students usually gave out their opinions in discussing problems with other students. Only 38% of the students were good at discussing problems with other students. Some students usually interrupted the discussion in cooperative learning activities, for they didn't listen to other students' opinions, only 37% of the students listened to other students' discussion carefully. When carrying out cooperative learning activities, many students didn't take part in the discussion. For one thing, they didn't know how to express their opinion, so they kept silent most of the time. For another, many students thought it unnecessary to take part in the discussion because other group members would finish it. Influenced by the traditional idea, students pay more attention to the competition between them. They don't realize the benefits that cooperative learning brings to them, so they don't learn cooperative learning skills actively.

B. Teachers' Problems

1. Lacking Enough Understanding about Cooperative Learning

Some teachers were lacking understanding about cooperative learning; they knew the cooperative learning in form but didn't understand it in essence. Only 16.6% of the teachers had a deep understanding in cooperative learning. 41.6% knew about cooperative learning from television or newspaper, only 25% were trained by the higher educational administrative departments. They often regarded the group discussion as cooperative learning. Many teachers regarded cooperative learning as group discussions. 83.3% of the teachers thought it necessary to carry out cooperative learning in their English teaching, but only 25% of them had carried out cooperative learning in English teaching. Only 33.3% of them would communicate or learn from experts or scholars when they met the problems related with cooperative learning. They didn't know how to operate cooperative learning in the classroom teaching, they knew little about cooperative learning. 83.3% of the teachers said that the problems in group discussion were given at random by themselves. At the beginning of class, they would give out one or several topics, and then they ordered students to discuss these topics. A few minutes later, when students had discussed over, the cooperative learning is finished, but the outcome was not optimistic. Obviously it is not a real cooperative learning. 75% of the teachers' teaching modes were mainly as traditional teaching. In essence, the way of the teacher's teaching has not changed. In this way, students can't form the good habit of learning; it also may discourage the enthusiasm of student's study.

2. Unreasonable Group Division

The division of cooperative learning groups influence on students' participation in cooperative learning activities. 50% of the teachers usually divided cooperative learning groups according to students' seats. Only 16.6% of the teachers divided cooperative learning groups according to the students' learning score, ability, etc. 66.6% of the teachers thought that if they had carried out cooperative learning, the results and expectations were very different, the reason was that they didn't build the reasonable cooperative learning groups. If teacher only divide cooperative learning groups according to the order of students' seats, students can't form the complementary in learning. Some students who are good at learning are divided into one group, while students who are poor at learning in the other group. In this way, it is not good for carrying out cooperative learning activities, because the cooperative learning groups can't form the complementary. If the group members are all students who are not good at learning, it is hard for teacher to carry out

cooperative learning activities. When carrying out cooperative learning activities, teacher can't simply divide cooperative learning groups.

3. Not Identifying Role Correctly

In the opinion of traditional teaching, the teacher is the owner and initiator of knowledge, the teacher is also the master of teaching activities. However, when carrying out cooperative learning, affected by the opinion of traditional teaching, many teachers still keep their original roles in teaching. 75% of the teachers thought they were the masters in cooperative learning activities. Teachers didn't make full preparation for students' cooperative learning; also they didn't take part in students' cooperative learning activities. Only 8.3% of the teachers usually attended students' group discussion. Lacking teachers' participation, cooperative learning can't go on smoothly. While lacking teachers' guidance and supervise, the effect of cooperative learning activities isn't effective.

4. Lacking Effective Evaluation Mechanism

When carrying out cooperative learning activities, teachers are lacking effective evaluation system. 83.7% of the teachers only attached importance to the summative assessment in class discussion, but neglected the evaluation on the process. At the same time, teachers' evaluations are also not comprehensive. 75% of the teachers only evaluated on the final evaluation. When some teachers evaluated the group, they always attached importance to the evaluation of the whole group and ignored the individuals; in this way, students will lose confidence in learning. Because many students are concerned about teacher's opinion on their result of discussion, they hope the teacher can encourage them. If teacher isn't concerned about their views, they will lose interest and passion in taking part in the cooperative learning activities.

V. STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS

A. Making Clear the Goals of Cooperative Learning

Many teachers know little about cooperative learning. When carrying out cooperative learning, without identify objects, cooperative learning is only a form. Therefore, in order to make cooperative learning clear, teachers should do as follows:

First, teacher should design the form of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning can be divided into two forms: communication within the same group and communication between two or more groups (Han, 2005, p.35). When teacher designs the form of cooperative learning, he should think about the subject carefully. If a subject that researched by every group is consistent and poor in content, the teacher should adopt the form of cooperative learning: communication within the same group. If a subject that contains rich content can be divided into several profiles, the teacher should adopt the form of cooperative learning: communication between two or more groups; two or more groups share the task on study, the related content of several groups communicate and form the common opinion, at last the whole class will join in the discussion. Besides, teacher should learn more about cooperative learning. When designing the cooperative learning activities, teacher should also regard of the characteristic of different subjects, the content of teaching, student's age, etc. Teacher should combine the forms of cooperative learning to cultivate students' skills in communication and the ability of cooperative learning.

Second, teacher should choose a theme that is meaningful for cooperation. Cooperative learning is usually carried out around the theme of cooperation, for example, some problems or tasks. If the theme of cooperative is meaningless, it can't be used in cooperative learning activities. The effective theme of cooperation has the value and significance in cooperation; it can ensure the effective of cooperative learning. In a word, the effective theme of cooperation can complete the objectives course and cultivate students' interest in learning; also it can promote the progress and development of students.

B. Constructing Cooperative Learning Groups Reasonably

In order to make cooperative learning activities go on smoothly, teacher should construct cooperative learning groups reasonable. Constructing the cooperative learning groups reasonable is the basis and premise for carrying out cooperative learning. There are a variety of forms in the construction of cooperative learning groups. To construct cooperative learning groups reasonable, teacher should do as follows:

First, teacher should investigate students' basic situation. Affected by the family and learning environment, every student's basic situation is different. For example, some students have extroversion characters, while some students have different characters. Some students are good at learning but some students are poor at learning (Yu, 2008, p.29). Therefore, when teacher constructs cooperative learning groups, he should mix students into a group to make each member form the complementary. Teacher should do a research on students' learning, interest, etc, also he should know more about students' characters. In this way, the cooperative learning groups can be constructed reasonable.

Second, teacher should ensure the size of cooperative learning groups. The size of cooperative learning groups has certain effect on students' participation in cooperative learning activities. If the size of cooperative learning groups is too large, it is not good for students to take part in cooperative learning activities. Of course, the size of cooperative learning groups can't be too small. In classroom teaching, fixed cooperative learning groups are usually four to six students (Han, 2005, p.28). Teacher should know students' practical situation and construct the cooperative learning groups reasonable. Practice has shown that: When group members are more than six, it is hard to ensure every member to express their opinion actively and face-to-face communication is less. If there are too many group members, the

chance of communication between group members will be more and the time in discussion is shorter. In English teaching, according to the needs of the course, teacher should use different sizes of groups in different stages of applying cooperative learning.

C. Cultivating Students' Consciousness and Skills of Cooperative Learning

The skills of cooperative learning are not inherent. Many students who are in rural middle school are poor at the consciousness of cooperation. In cooperative learning activities, students who are poor at learning usually leave the tasks to those students who are good at learning. Although it looks good when carrying out cooperative learning activities, but the outcome is not optimistic. Therefore, teacher should first introduce the advantages and the general operation methods of cooperative learning to students. By doing this, it can generate students' desire on cooperation, investigation and increase their consciousness of cooperation (Yu, 2008, p.27). Teacher should be as students' guider, help students to make clear their roles and teach them what to do in cooperative learning activities. Teacher should encourage students to try their best to finish their tasks, ask students to help their group members when they meet difficulties. Teacher should make a plan and arrange the cooperative learning activities, organize students to attend cooperative learning activities. Besides, teacher should provide chances as much as possible for students to attend cooperative learning activities, so that can help students to learn the skills in communicate with other students and they will enjoy the cooperation.

Moreover, teacher should teach students some skills of cooperation. First, teacher should ask students to listen to other students, teach students not to break other students' speech too often, listen carefully and finally give out their opinion after gain some useful information on the basis of other students' speech. Second, if students have doubt in something, teacher should help them to make it clear. Third, Teacher should teach students the skills to express their own ideas clearly and how to organize cooperative learning activities. Fourth, teacher should teach students how to be a group leader and draw a summary speech. At last, teacher should teach students how to evaluate (Yu, 2008, p.28). For example, the self-evaluation and evaluate on group members, learning achievement and the attitude in cooperation. Students will make progress in communication and their sense and skills of cooperation. With the improvement on the consciousness and skills of cooperation, students will form the good habit of cooperation in learning. Students no longer receive information passively but gain the knowledge actively. Therefore, teacher should reinforce the training on students' consciousness and skills in cooperative learning. Teacher should learn more about cooperative learning and provide more chances for students to practice cooperative learning. In this way, it will build a good basis for carrying out cooperative learning activities.

D. Stimulating Students' Interest in Participating Cooperative Learning

Interest is the best teacher. If students are interested in the content of learning, they will learn actively and have a desire to learn. If students have no interest in the content of learning, they will lose the motivation in learning and will not learn actively. Interest has the effect of promoting learning. When we have no interest in something, we will be very disgust and want to escape from it. The interaction in the process of cooperative learning is mainly as students; teacher will give some help and guidance to students in appropriate time. In classroom teaching, there are some content that requires students to prepare in advance and know about the related content. Students need to find some information by themselves; it needs students to finish the task actively. In order to gain the desired effect of cooperative learning, teacher should design the content and time of cooperative learning carefully. Teacher should select the appropriate theme of cooperation; cultivate students' interest in learning.

E. Making Clear the Roles of Cooperative Learning

In the traditional English teaching, teacher is the owner of knowledge, also is the master of teaching activities. In the new curriculum, teacher's role has changed. Teacher is no longer the master of teaching activities but the guider of teaching activities. Teacher is not the center of teaching activities; students have become the center of teaching activities. Therefore, teacher should make clear his role in cooperative learning activities, change his role from the traditional teaching and become the guider of students.

When carrying out cooperative learning activities, teacher should take part in every cooperative learning group; listen to every group member's speech. Teacher should know the problems that appear in the process of cooperative learning activities and guide students to solve the problems (Han, 2005, p.37). Besides, teacher should give guidance to the students' skills in cooperative learning activities. Some students know little about cooperative learning, they lack of skills in communication. When carrying out cooperative learning activities, it will emerge different kinds of problems. Teacher should help them to solve problems and teach some skills to students in discussing problems. Teacher is the guider in cooperative learning activities, but he shouldn't interfere with students' cooperative learning activities too often, for it is not good for improving students' ability and skills in cooperative learning.

F. Building Effective Evaluation System

The effect of cooperative learning is dependent on the application of evaluation mechanism. The evaluation of cooperative learning includes the evaluation that teacher gives to students, group evaluation, self-evaluation, etc. In cooperative learning activities, teacher should inspire students, guide students to discover and innovate. Teacher's

evaluation should be centered as students' learning process (Wang, 2006, p.280). Teacher should put emphasis on the improvement of students' ability in learning and the skills in cooperation. At the same time, teacher should pay attention to the cultivation of students' ability in learning and innovation, make efforts to build a harmonious and equal atmosphere in cooperative learning activities. Cooperative learning's final goal is everyone can make progress in learning. Cooperative learning changes the evaluation from the individual's score to the learning group's score. The group's score is as a standard reward. In group evaluation, teacher should give appropriate evaluation to individual's enthusiasm, creativity and participation in cooperative learning. By doing this, it can stimulate students' enthusiasm in participating cooperative learning activities. When teacher evaluates the cooperative learning groups, he should combine the evaluation in the process of learning and result of learning. The process of group learning is not only referring to the students' score, but also refers to the attitude, efficiency and skill of group members. In a word, teacher should build an efficiency evaluation mechanism. In this way, the cooperative learning activities can gain the prospective effect.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper researches on the application of cooperative learning in rural middle schools of Enshi and finds some problems existing in rural middle schools of Enshi: the teachers are lacking enough understanding about cooperative learning; the division of groups is not reasonable; the students are lacking consciousness and skills of cooperative learning; the students are lacking interest in participating cooperative learning; the teachers can't identify their roles correctly; the teachers are lacking effective evaluation mechanism, etc. The author also finds some solutions to solve these problems.

Due to the limitation of condition, the author only does the investigation in Xinling, Enshi. The thesis finds out the problems existing in rural middle school English teaching. The thesis hasn't made the investigation in urban middle school English teaching. For the narrow range of the research, whether the research results are accurate still need to do a further research. For the time in the research is short, and the research subjects are confined to the rural middle school's individual class, it is still need to do a further research.

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