COOPERATIVE LEARNING FOR UNDERGRADUATE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING CLASSES

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Abstract

Cooperative learning has been widely applied and studied in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and its advantages have been acknowledged, both in school contexts and in tertiary education. Although some scholars believe in the distinction between cooperative learning and collaborative learning, and that collaborative learning is more suitable for tertiary education, some others also believe that the terms are actually interchangeable. Despite the different ideas of the distinction and interchangeability of the two terms, there are evidences of the use of cooperative learning in tertiary education. Among the studies on the use of cooperative learning in higher education are those on the application of cooperative learning in the teaching of translation and interpreting. This paper discusses how cooperative learning is used and studied in the context of translation and interpreting classes in undergraduate program.

Keywords: cooperative learning, interpreting, translation, undergraduate

Introduction

Cooperative learning has been described as "an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small group of learners in the classroom" (Richard and Rodgers 2001, p. 192). It is also described as "group learning activity 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." (Olsen and Kagan in Richard and Rodgers, 2001, p. 192). In other words, cooperative learning is a learning strategy where learners work in groups to achieve a certain learning goal, and in which each member of the group is not only responsible for his/her own learning, but also for the learning of other members in the group. Unlike the traditional group works, the varied structures of cooperative learning techniques allow each member of the group equal participation and mutual interdependence. In a more detailed fashion, Kagan and High in Astuti (2016, p. 134) give the description of cooperative learning as "a teaching method in which students work in groups and their social interaction in the group is structured to ensure positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, and simultaneous interaction."

Studies on the successful application of cooperative learning (CL) have been widely conducted. Slavinin Wang (2012, p. 109) even claims that CL is one of the most successful learning strategies explored in the history of education research. The advantages of cooperative learning have also been acknowledged. Cohen in Nejadghanbar and Mohammadpour (2012, p. 21-23) has proven that the CL strategies contribute to the promotion of higher order thinking, socially acceptable behavior, and interracial acceptance. In the school contexts, it has been proven that cooperative learning strategies are effective in increasing student achievement across all grade levels and subject areas (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). In Indonesian schools context Cooperative Learning was explicitly mandated for use in the 2006 curriculum. In more recent curriculum, the 2013 curriculum, it is not explicitly stated as one of the learning strategies in school, but it is suggested that student-centered learning, active learning and learning in groups are used, which also means that CL is

applicable. My study on the applicability of CL in different classroom contexts (Yuliasri, 2012) proves that the group of teachers (of different courses/subjects) under study did not have knowledge and understanding of CL techniques prior to treatment (CL workshop), but were then able to create teaching scenarios demonstrating their ability in applying CL in their classroom contexts upon completion of the workshop, which also shows applicability of CL in different contexts across subject areas. Practicing CL in the context of Indonesia, however, some challenges are faced. In her article about Indonesian novice teachers' professional identity as practitioners of cooperative learning, Astuti (2016) suggests that unavailability of community of cooperative learning practitioners is one among the challenges that English as a foreign language (EFL) novice teachers in Indonesia may face in developing a professional identity as practitioner of cooperative learning.

This paper will discuss the applicability of cooperative learning to teach translation and interpreting at undergraduate level. To have clear idea of what cooperative learning is, prior discussion will also be made on its interchangeability with and distinction from collaborative learning and evidences of how CL is used in higher education.

Cooperative Versus Collaborative Learning

Barkley et al (2005) state that in terms of group learning some authors use the term 'cooperative' and 'collaborative' interchangeably, which mean that students work interdependently on a common learning task. However, they also suggest that there are some authors who distinguish between the two. In view of the distinction, cooperative learning is understood as a group learning strategy that requires students to work together on a common task, sharing information, and supporting one another. The teacher acts as a facilitator of learning and traditionally has the authority

over the class and be the subject matter expert. In this case, the teacher takes control over the class through designing and assigning group learning tasks, managing time and resources, as well as monitoring students' learning by checking to see that students are on task and that the group process is working well (Cranton; Smith in Barkley et al, 2005). Collaborative learning, on the other hand, requires that students learn independently and do not depend on the teachers as the authority on the subject matter content or group process. Bruffee in Barkley et al (2005) suggests that in collaborative learning the teacher is not responsible for monitoring the group learning; the teacher acts as a collaborator, becoming a member of the learning community in search of knowledge.

Not only based on the process of learning, the distinction of the two terms is also based on the goal of learning. Bruffee quoted in Barkley et al (2005) suggest that the goal of cooperative learning is to work together in harmony and mutual support to find the solution, whereas the goal of collaborative learning is to develop autonomous, articulate, thinking people. He also suggests that cooperative learning may be appropriate for school children, while collaborative learning is more appropriate for college students.

In addition to the authors who believe in the interchangeability and distinction of cooperative and collaborative learning, other authors believe that cooperative learning is a sub-category of collaborative learning (Cuseo in Barkley et al, 2005), while others believe that cooperative and collaborative learning is a continuum, from the most structured cooperative learning to the least structured collaborative learning (Mills & Cottell in Barkley et al, 2005).

Despite the distinction made between cooperative and collaborative learning as discussed above and the growing practice of using the term collaborative learning in higher education, there are some authors who use the term cooperative learning in higher education. With this regard, Barkley

et al (2005) use the term *CoLTs* for the techniques they introduced. *Co* stands for either "cooperative" or "collaborative" and *LTs* stands for "Learning Techniques". In other words, cooperative and collaborative learning are used interchangeably. In this paper, the term cooperative learning may also be interchangeable with collaborative learning.

Cooperative Learning in Higher Education

As mentioned previously, some authors use cooperative learning in higher education context. Some studies have also been made on the use of cooperative learning in this context. For example, in the field of teacher education, some studies on the use of CL includes the one conducted in 2002 by Venman et alcited in Alabekeeet al (2015, p. 69), which examined the attitude of prospective teachers about CL and the potential effects on them. The findings of the study reveal that prospective teachers have a positive attitude to cooperative learning and that it has a significant impact on the students' involvement in the classroom. Another study was one conducted by Mahmood and Ahmad (2010) which studied the effects of Cooperative Learning vs. Traditional Instruction on prospective teachers' learning experience and achievement. The use of Traditional Instruction (TI) was compared with Cooperative Learning Loosely Structured (CLLS) and Cooperative Learning Students Team Achievement Division (CL STAD) model in Master's Program of Education in Pakistan with thirty-two student teachers used as the subjects of the study. The study concludes that cooperative learning enhances prospective teachers' academic achievement as compared to traditional instruction. It also promotes enriched, enjoyable and interactive learning experience.

There are some underlying situations of the two studies above. Venman et alas cited by Alabekee et al (2015) suggest that even experienced teachers fear to use CL for

the following reasons: fear of losing control of the class, lack of teacher confidence, limited time for content coverage, the feeling of difficulty in the assessment, fear that participation is not the same with students. In the case of Pakistan (Mahmood and Ahmad, 2010), most teacher educators used traditional instruction, which means teacher-centered lecture plus question session during or after lecture. This is, perhaps, similar to the case of Indonesian tertiary education, as observed, which needs further study. Mahmood and Ahmad (2010) suggest that CL is better conducted in less structured fashion during the transitional phase between traditional instruction and more innovative, learner-centered teaching.

In an informal interview with one of my colleagues, in her witness of the use of CL in her Ph.D program in the US, she admits that most of her class discussions (with prior requirement of students' reading) were carried out in CL format even though her professors did not always explicitly tell the students the names of CL structures/techniques used in their teaching. This shows that CL is applicable in higher education context, even at post-graduate level.

Cooperative Learning in Undergraduate Translation and Interpreting Classes

As has been discussed above, CL is also commonly applied in tertiary education. In the case of undergraduate program, CL can also be used to teach translation and interpreting. In the EFL context of Indonesia, most undergraduate English Studies Programs offer separate courses of Translation and Interpreting. It is therefore important to see the possibility of applying CL in Translation and Interpreting Classes in Undergraduate Program. This section will review the use of CL in teaching Translation and Interpreting as has been applied and studied by some authors.

Lee (2012) studied the use of CL (collaborative learning, in her term) in translating a travel guide. She used 32 junior students majoring in Applied Linguistics

and Language Study at a university in Northern Taiwan. To structure deliberate learning activities to reach the goal and enhance collaborative learning, a series of preparatory activities were done to familiarize the students with concepts of translating travel guides. Firstly, the instructor-researcher made the students do text analysis of the source text and discuss in the groups the function of the source text and the possible readers as well as the corresponding function of the target text and the target readers. Then, the instructor-researcher joined the discussion to see the suitable strategies that might be used to translate, and real examples were given. Afterwards, students were given the translation assignment tobe completed in group by a deadline. The research findings show that collaborative learning can to someextent improve students' translation performance. It should be noted, however, that instructor's constant guidance and feedback were still needed during the step-by-step process of learning before doing the independent work, so students did not get lost. It is therefore suggested that during the preparatory activities teacher join the discussion from time to time to give support and design follow up activities. To avoid 'safe' translation, it is also suggested that teacher lead analysis of complicated sentences for translation. This study confirmed some previous studies that revealed students' need for teacher's feedback and guidance.

A study of the use of Cooperative Translation Task (CoTT) done by Wang (2013) in undergraduate Translation class focuses on the student interaction during the translation class. The class was designed using Prototype II of CoTT consisting of 5 sessions: written peer-response; student seminar and teacher seminar; oral peer response; oral teacher response; and final revision. She based her research on Communicative Translation Teaching (CTT), which implies the need for the teacher to integrate multiple tasks such ascooperative learning and peer tutoring,

which all encourage interactions. She also referred to the official guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education for the teaching of Translation which encourage teachers to utilize (a) group discussion and presentation, (b) peer correction, (c)error analysis, (d) translation criticism, and (e) comparative analysis. Finding of the research shows that with CoTT interactions among students and teachers benefited students in a deep learning oftranslation, development of critical thinking, and cooperation between/among translators.

Another study on the use of CL in translation class was a classroom action research applying CL techniques in Indonesian-English translation class (Yuliasri 2014) reveals that the application of CL techniques, specifically *think-pair-share* and *jigsaw*, in the Translation class could improve the students' diction, grammar, and rendering of message/content of the texts. The students were also more active, motivated, enthusiatic, interested, and they gained better understanding of translation techniques. Inputs from their teammates were useful in improving the quality of their translation as they became aware of their mistakes.Additionally, students perceived that varied translationswere gained from the group works. Interestingly, despite their appreciation of the use of CL, the questionnaire also revealed that they also wanted lecture and needed more teacher's feedback as well as more varied practice.

The discussion of the studies on the use of CL in undergraduate Translation classes imply that despite the need to shift from the traditional teacher-centered class to a more learner-centered one, teacher's guidance with examples and also feedback are still needed. It is therefore suggested that in undergraduate program Translation class is done by optimizing the teacher's role as a moderator and collaborator, while gradually minimizing the students' dependence on teacher's 'lecture'. Further research is needed to see how different structures of CL work in Translation class, and what kinds of

teacher's guidance and feedback are effective for the improved learning process and outcomes in translation class.

Interpreting, as an older activity than translation, hasbeen the object of research less often than translation(Schaffner, 2004). It also seems that less hasbeen written on interpreting than on translation. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there are also less studies on the pedagogy of interpreting compared to translation. In the teaching of Interpreting, which is the oral form of translation, classroom action research was done by Krouse (2010), applying CL techniques. The research aimed at finding out whether employing CL activities would improve participants' perceptions of working in small groups.Her basis for using CL in her interpreting class is the fact that interpersonal skills and critical thinking are important for interpretersand that CL is one approach that addresses interpersonal and critical thinking skills. Johnson andJohnson in Krouse(2010) argue that working in cooperative groups increases student achievement and has significant effects on the development of positive social relationships and improved social skills. In the research she incorporated Jigsaw technique. Open-ended questions were used to survey students' attitudes before and after the courses. Findings of the research show the reduction of student resistance toworking in small groups. It is expected that with students being more open to small group work, they will develop better interpersonal skills and peer learning.

The study on the use of CL in interpreting class above puts emphasis on the collaborative skills in the learning process. Further studies are needed to see whether CL techniques are applicable in enhancing the interpreting skills. I would propose that some structured techniques are adapted. For example, adapting Jigsaw technique by replacing the individual working session into pair-work interpreting session before the home group work session. Three-step interview technique may also be adapted by changing the interview activity

with interpreting activity. Similarly, think-pair-share technique might be adapted for interpreting practice and peer feedback.

Conclusion

Cooperative Learning (CL) has been widely studied, and the benefits of using it have also been acknowledged. Research studies show applicability of CL across different subject areas and at different levels of education. This is also true with the context of teaching Translation and Interpreting at undergraduate level, although interpreting has been less explored than translation. Further adaptation and studies of CL in Translation and Interpreting classes are needed.

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