THE IMPLICATION OF “DOUBLE-REDUCTION” POLICY ENGLISH CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Xizhe Zhang
Laibing Liu
Shuai Wang
Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand

As the number of subjects in English learning increases, so does the difficulty level for students. Cooperative teaching and learning approaches are being promoted in English classrooms to address this issue. The aim is to help students develop an interest in the language and strengthen their knowledge and literacy skills. This teaching method creates a relaxed learning environment where students can interact and communicate with each other during class discussions. The approach aligns with the "Double Reduction Policy" established by the Chinese government.

Keywords: cooperative learning; double reduction policy; English classroom management

Xizhe Zhang
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: education, English teaching, class room management, pedagogy
E-mail: xiaozhe3233@gmail.com

Laibing Liu
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: education, English teaching, class room management, pedagogy
E-mail: liul@sau.ac.th

Shuai Wang
Researcher, Southeast Asia University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: education, English teaching, class room management, pedagogy
E-mail: shuaiw@sau.ac.th
Background

The 21st century is witnessing the integration of the global economy through intelligent means, emphasizing the win-win nature of artificial intelligence. The development of a country depends on the joint efforts of the economy, culture, science, and technology. Similarly, an individual's growth relies on teamwork, where the team can achieve a better self and the individual can contribute to the team's improvement (Chen, 2019).

Cooperative learning is an effective method that has been widely used in primary and secondary schools in China, especially after the implementation of the "double reduction" policy (Guo, 2022; 2020). This approach can significantly benefit students by stimulating their enthusiasm, promoting the essence of education, and enhancing their development. However, cooperative learning in English classes has yet to achieve the desired results in classroom management.

As an educational administrator, it is essential to incorporate cooperative learning into classroom management, as it requires teachers to cultivate students' learning abilities (Bores-Garcia et al., 2021; Ehsan et al., 2019; Chen, 2019). Although the new curriculum standards have created new requirements for cultivating the core quality of English subjects, traditional teaching methods still exist. Therefore, reformed and innovative English classroom teaching, such as cooperative learning, can improve students' classroom participation and enthusiasm (Zhang, 2022).

Literature review

Understanding the principles behind cooperative learning

Cooperative learning is an effective method of learning that can enhance students' awareness of independent learning and their ability to learn independently. The theory behind cooperative learning is based on the idea that a group of students can collaborate to complete a learning task. Each student has a specific role and responsibilities when working together, allowing them to learn from each other and work as a team.

Through cooperative learning, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses, complement each other's abilities, and develop a more active learning environment.

The primary objective of cooperative learning is to improve students' learning psychology. In addition to fostering teamwork, cooperative learning can help improve students' academic performance (Mills, 2023).

By working on group tasks, students can engage in communication and interaction, which can help them achieve common goals. In this process, students can improve their ability to learn independently while simultaneously developing their cooperative spirit (Keramati & Gillies, 2021; Mills, 2022).

The theory suggests that everyone is responsible for the group's accomplishments and can benefit from the group's results. Consequently, the interaction between individuals and other members becomes a crucial aspect. Being accountable for the group's achievements allows everyone to share in the success, and an individual's performance assessment depends on their interactions with others.

Sharan & Sharan (2021) have used cooperative learning as a teaching method. In this approach, students work in small groups and assist each other in their learning process. The
THE IMPLICATION OF “DOUBLE-REDUCTION”

definition of cooperative learning emphasizes the importance of division of labor, cooperation, and mutual help among students.

Each student needs to take responsibility for their group for successful collaboration. Researchers such as Keramati & Gillies (2021), Millis (2023), and Sharan & Sharan (2021) have studied cooperative learning for over 30 years in America. They define the cooperative learning structure and explain it as a relatively flexible form of classroom interaction that promotes creativity and social interaction.

Cooperative learning has been accepted by scholars both domestically and internationally. From an internal perspective, it stimulates the initiative of participants, and from an external perspective, it promotes the development of the entire team. Different research suggests that cooperative learning has various implications for teaching and learning.

**Cooperative learning strengthens students' teamwork consciousness and cooperation ability**

Collaboration in learning can boost communication, learning, and growth, regardless of the subject matter. Cooperative learning involves students gradually enhancing their cooperation and learning abilities through continuous practice and adaptation (Tran, 2023). This approach is beneficial for tasks requiring full group cooperation or intense competition among groups. Cooperative learning enables quick problem-solving and achieving learning objectives while strengthening relationships and teamwork within the group (Tran, 2023; Millis, 2023). In other words, cooperative learning is not only an essential method for learning English, but it is also of significant value for students' growth and lifelong development.

**Cooperative learning stimulates students' learning interest and motivation**

Cooperative learning methods in groups can effectively stimulate the interest and motivation of senior high school students in English learning. This method helps students find the exciting aspects of English learning and fosters motivation to learn English (Chen, 2019).

One of the significant benefits of cooperative learning is that it places individual students in small groups, creating a study unit. In group learning, students work hard to complete learning tasks and achieve goals to avoid negatively impacting the team's progress. As a result, other group members can motivate students who do not like learning English, enhancing their interest in learning and motivation levels.

Guided by teachers, cooperative learning creates a democratic, relaxed, and harmonious atmosphere, promoting students' imagination and learning initiative. Participating in cooperative learning, where each student takes on a defined role, takes the form of a group game and greatly benefits students' enthusiasm for learning (Tran, 2023; Millis, 2023).

**A clear division of labor**

After the study group is determined, the English teacher should let each group clarify their tasks and division of labor independently or with the teacher's help. In other words, in the process of cooperative learning in the future, each group should have a clear division of
labor that is not disorderly and independent. Faced with problems, group members should not tear each other down, and no one will accept each other. This is not allowed.

Generally speaking, the student with the highest English score is the group leader, responsible for deciding and organizing all the study matters in the group. The other students played their roles under the explicit instructions of the group leader (Bores-Garcia et al., 2021).

When they met problems, they discussed them, and the group members worked together to gather collective wisdom. Students with solid learning abilities are recommended to be the deputy leader of the study group to help the leader organize the English learning within the group, strengthen the group's competitiveness, and coordinate the relationship between the group members so that the team members can cooperate and learn efficiently.

In English classroom teaching, after the English teacher has arranged the learning objectives or tasks, each group should cooperate effectively, learn efficiently, and compete for excellent groups according to specific methods or steps under the unified arrangement of the leader and deputy leader (Bores-Garcia et al., 2021; Chen, 2019; Ehsan, 2019; Shen, 2015).

Among the group members, whether it is for oral English answering training, English reading practice, English writing surprise, or English word memorization competition, as long as they can cooperate harmoniously and tacitly, they can occupy a considerable advantage in learning efficiency and effect, activating the English classroom atmosphere and making the classroom teaching wonderful (Millis, 2023).

**Independent learning**

Cooperative learning can foster independent learning, especially when combined with group learning. This approach has proven particularly effective in improving students' English reading abilities. To cultivate students' English reading ability, teachers must effectively plan and organize classroom group cooperation training, be patient, and offer guided assistance. In contrast, students must be encouraged to independently and actively participate in observing, imitating, comparing, and helping each other. This type of cooperative learning can significantly improve learning ability and teaching outcomes (Sharan & Sharan, 2021).

Furthermore, this approach helps teachers update their teaching concepts, methods, and research abilities. In theory, this can help them better understand cooperative learning methods in the classroom and the necessary methods for cooperative learning in junior middle school English reading teaching. In practice, cooperative classroom learning can be introduced to middle school English reading teaching practice, promoting innovation in teaching models, methods, and pathways, ultimately improving the teaching quality. This approach has been proven to change teachers' teaching methods and students' learning modes to achieve the best teaching effect (Chen, 2019).

In the actual teaching activities, through the implementation of group cooperative learning for a certain period, we found that students actively participate in the discussion, and their independent learning ability is significantly improved. Female students are more willing to express themselves in a team and become more confident (Millis, 2023). This shows that cooperative learning is better than traditional English teaching methods.

However, suppose students can adhere to it for a long time to ensure that the group cooperative learning method will continue in the long run. In that case, they need to adhere to
the following principles: to grasp the "authenticity and applicability principle" to create the corresponding cooperation situation in English class, the design should be in line with the psychological characteristics of the current middle school students and the experience of daily life.

The teaching content should be as realistic as possible, and the activities should be conducive to students' English knowledge and language skills to improve their language application ability. Adhere to the principles of "student-oriented" and diversified evaluation. When carrying out group cooperative learning, teachers should always pay attention to students' subjectivity and create a favorable learning environment through teaching design, implementation, and evaluation so that students can change from "I want to learn" to "I want to learn." At the same time, the evaluation of students should be unique according to their level, and diversified evaluations should be given to increase students' confidence so that each student can see their progress (Chen, 2019; Shen, 2015).

**Chinese curriculum standard**

Curriculum standards in China are guidelines that teachers use to define the nature, goals, content, and recommended teaching methods for a particular subject. These standards help create teaching materials, lesson plans, and assessment tools. They are used to manage and evaluate the curriculum at the national level. The standards outline the knowledge and skills, processes and methods, and emotional attitudes and values students should develop at different stages of their education. They establish each course's nature, objectives, and content framework and provide suggestions for teaching and evaluation.

**English in China**

With the spread of globalization, English has become the most widely used language globally, making it inevitable for the Chinese to learn it. Since the late Qing Dynasty, China has been striving for simultaneous development with the world, and the English language has played a significant role in this effort. For centuries, English has been considered the gateway to the outside world and the key to successful communication. English language education has always been a topic worth studying in China, and due to social changes, it has experienced numerous ups and downs. The author reviewed the history of English education in China in four phases: early China, the Republican period, after the founding of New China, and after 1978.

English language education in China can be traced back to the 1860s, when it was only offered in church schools run by foreign missionaries, primarily in commercial ports. At that time, the primary teachers were the early missionaries to China. The Republic of China was established in 1912 after the Xinhai Revolution, which led to the collapse of the feudal imperial system and brought about significant changes to the country's economy, politics, culture, and educational system. The Ministry of Education replaced the Qing dynasty's Ministry of Education, outlawed the use of the original textbooks, and converted the nation's academies into schools. This brought about a new school system, and as a result, the Republic of China's educational system developed independently, with the English educational system gradually taking shape.

After the establishment of New China, the state focused more on Russian language education while neglecting English instruction. It was not until 1956 that English courses were gradually introduced in universities, and the Ministry of Education released the Circular
on Foreign Language Subjects in Secondary Schools, which marked the end of this situation. However, during the Cultural Revolution, English education was once again significantly impacted. Only after China underwent reform and opened up English education did it begin to gain momentum. (Ministry of Education, China, 2001)

Nine-year compulsory education in China
The nine-year compulsory education policy in China enables students over six years old nationwide to have free education at both primary schools (grades 1 to 6) and junior secondary schools (grades 7 to 9). Tuition The government funds the policy, which is free. Schools still charge miscellaneous fees. Senior secondary school (grades 10 to 12) and college education are not compulsory and free in China.

English in Chinese Curriculum
English has become the most widely spoken language globally due to the spread of globalization, and learning English is now essential for the Chinese. Since the mid-19th century, during the late Qing Dynasty, China has been trying to achieve development alongside the rest of the world. English has played a vital role in this process, as it is considered to be the gateway to the outside world and the key to successful communication. For centuries, the learning and teaching of English have been a crucial topic of discussion in China.

English teaching has been a part of the Chinese school curriculum since 1862, but it was not until 40 years later that it became an official subject. The first official curriculum standards for secondary schools that included English were established in 1902. Since then, the Chinese school system and curriculum have gone through four different historical stages: the Japanese model (1902–1922), the American model (1923–1949), the swinging period (1950–1977), and the reformation and innovation period (1978–present) (Liu & Wu, 2015).

The Chinese Ministry of Education introduced the Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform in 2001 to focus on each student's overall development. This shift included the introduction of curriculum standards for each subject and emphasized the importance of a high-quality English curriculum for all students. The revised 2001 curricular requirements aim to provide a holistic and coherent English curriculum from the third grade of elementary school until graduation from high school. According to the 2001 New Curriculum Standards, the English curriculum objectives are divided into nine levels according to the level of proficiency, adopting the internationally recognized concept.

On April 21, 2022, the Ministry of Education promulgated the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) (hereafter referred to as the New Curriculum), which provides a new guideline for curriculum reform and teaching practice in the new era. The new curriculum standards reflect and summarize 11 years of curriculum reform practice. They are committed to implementing the fundamental task of establishing moral education in the new era.

The “Double Reduction”
The General Office of the Central Committee of China's Communist Party and the General Office of the State Council jointly released their Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Compulsory Education Students (the "Opinions").
THE IMPLICATION OF “DOUBLE-REDUCTION”

1. The opinions of the "Double Reduction" policy took immediate effect on the day of their release.

"Double Reduction," in the opinion, refers to reducing the total amount and time of commitment required by school homework and reducing the burden of off-campus or after-school training programs. Based on the opinions, the double reduction policy is intended to improve the overall quality of school education, reduce excessive study burdens, protect students' health, relieve parents' burdens and anxiety, and reduce social inequity. Furthermore, the "Double Reduction" policy will regulate and standardize off-campus training, including both online and offline training, and strictly implement the Compulsory Education Law, the Protection of Minors Law, and other laws and regulations governing the education industry.

Changes in language education policy in China
Since 1978, English gradually became the dominant foreign language in China, which accompanied the implementation of the state policy of opening to the outside and the reform. (Zhang, 2016)

China's Ministry of Education issued a foreign language policy in 2001, mandating that primary school students start to learn English as a compulsory subject in the third grade. From this point on, English officially became a subject in China's compulsory education curriculum standards and, together with Chinese and mathematics, became one of the three main subjects.

During last year's legislative meetings, a government adviser proposed removing English and other foreign languages from schools' core subjects and university entrance exams. The Chinese, he claimed, spend too much time learning English—and too few go on to use it.

The Ministry of Education issued 16 curriculum standards (2022 version), including compulsory education curriculum plans and Chinese. In the new standards published in 2022, English accounts for a significantly lower percentage of total class time compared to the past, accounting for only 6–8% of total class time. In contrast, physical and health education account for 10–11% and the arts for 9–11% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2001, 2022).

The Implications of “Double-Reduction Policy”

English is a widely spoken and utilized worldwide language as one of the UN's official working languages. English is the primary language used in the majority of international conferences. English is a second or official language in about 20 different nations.

English is an essential language for communication in many professions, including international politics, business, culture, science and technology, the military, and transportation. Developing our skills and abilities to become generalists with English proficiency is crucial to raising our international standing, promoting foreign trade, speeding up the "Four Modernizations" process, and encouraging our nation to participate more actively in global economic, scientific, and military fields.

These factors are all related to China's expanding external opening. It is crucial to enhancing our nation's standing abroad, fostering foreign trade, speeding up the "Four
Modernizations" process, and encouraging our nation to participate more actively in global economic, scientific, and military affairs.

The initial productive forces are technology and science. The foundation of global competitiveness is the rivalry in science and technology, and the development of science and technology depends on the support of education. Updates to current products and the introduction of new technologies are now more common in China. At one point, China's electronic industry and technology were far ahead of the rest of the world, demonstrating the importance of education in promoting the development of science, technology, and manufacturing. Science and technological advancement are stimulated by educational reform and improving English education.

China faces challenges as internationalization picks up speed, but it also creates a wealth of new opportunities. Nevertheless, relying solely on our own research is insufficient if we want to master a variety of technologies quickly. We also need to learn cutting-edge science and technology from other nations.

Understanding the English language, the world's most widely used technical language, is a precondition for such communication and learning. Take the computer industry as an example. Although many computer operating systems now have Chinese counterparts, many programs are still created in English throughout the development phase, and many high-tech programs and materials are also written in English.

The majority of professions in today's society require the use of English. In addition, the college graduation requirement for English is either the fourth or sixth grade. Fluency in a foreign language will even provide you with an advantage when applying for jobs. This demonstrates that learning English well can improve a person's competitiveness and that it is not an optional topic. English is the most frequently spoken language in the world; therefore, expanding students' understanding of it will be highly beneficial to students in the future.

Therefore, integrating cooperative learning into classroom management and introducing the double reduction policy will support China's modernization effort and its integration into the world when it comes to education. This approach also helps both English language teachers and school teachers regarding classroom management.

References


THE IMPLICATION OF “DOUBLE-REDUCTION”


---

*Paper submitted* 17 November 2023
*Paper accepted for publishing* 12 December 2023
*Paper revised* 26 December 2023
*Paper published online* 30 January 2024