Effects of Cooperative Learning on Learning Achievement and Group Working Behavior of Junior Students in Modern French Literature Course

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Abstract

This study reported on the results of a quasi-experimental research to explore the effectiveness of using a cooperative learning method on students' academic achievement, their group working behavior and their perception and opinions towards cooperative learning in a Modern French Literature course. The sample included twelve junior students majoring in French who registered in Modern French Literature course in the second semester of 2010 at Rangsit University. The sample was further divided into three groups and each group contained four of more or less competent students. The Learning Together technique of the Cooperative Learning method was used as treatment to teach 12 topics of the 14 topics of the Modern French Literature Study Guide, written by the researcher for the 2010 academic year. For the last two topics of the Study Guide, each student was required to self-study the content prior to class. During the 11 weeks of the experiment period, the effects of using cooperative learning on students' learning achievement were examined through the results of the pre-tests and post-tests, administered to the class before and after each topic, and through the results of oral presentation and group work quality assessed by the teacher and by the audience after each session. The group working behavior was examined through the teacher's appraisals, and through the self-assessment of each member after group working.

The results revealed that the use of Learning Together technique raised significantly the students' learning achievement at 0.01 statistical level. Especially, the students whose pre-test scores were rather low benefited the most from cooperative learning, as their post-test scores were apparently increased. The results also indicated that, according to the teacher's assessment, the students gained group working skills at a high level while they self-evaluated their group working skills from a high to the highest level. Regarding their perception of cooperative learning, the overall satisfaction with Learning Together technique was positive, ranking from a high level to the highest level. (The means are between 4.38-4.76).

Keywords: Cooperative learning, learning together technique, learning achievement, group working behavior, critical thinking, student perception.

The study was aimed to test the effects of Cooperative Learning method on learning achievement of the junior French major Students in Modern French Literature course;

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then to investigate the effects of cooperative learning method on their group working behavior ; and finally to survey their opinions towards cooperative learning. The study was conducted from October 2010 to August 2011 and funded by Teaching and Learning Support and Development Center of Rangsit University.

Background of Thai Culture

In a wider view, like most of Asian Buddhist countries, Thai culture is influenced by Buddhism, a religion of peace and harmony. In a narrower view, Buddhists in each country have their own characteristics. Thais have been known to be "very good-natured and easy-going". (Nguyen, n.d.) In everyday life, Thai people often say "mai pen rai" or "no problem" in a bad or unhappy circumstance. Thais are friendly and smile easily because life should be fun or "sa-nook". Nevertheless, they usually show their timidity in public rather than express their emotions.

Socially, Asians are reported to be closer linked to their families and depend on authority figures. (Jersabek, 2010 : 164) But distinctly, Thais are much more social learners as they often get together in groups and discuss among their peers what they are to do or what is unclear.

In term of ethnography, the Chinese were the largest number of non-Tai in Thailand and were the largest Chinese population in Southeast Asia. (LePoer, 1987). By using assimilation policy, Thai governments encouraged Chinese to become Thai citizens. Many generations later, the Sino-Thais were successfully integrated into Thai society, particularly by intermarriage to facilitate their commercial activities. And most of them played important role in the drive of Thai economy.

In terms of values, the earlier Sino-Thais transmitted their beliefs and social values to their ascendants. This is why "filial piety [of Confucianism] plays an important role in Thai society". (Ngugen, n.d.) Parents and the elderly are the most respectful persons and children were taught to avoid contrasting views with them. Gradually, familial respect is extended to respect for the elderly and the authority, including teachers, in Thai society.

Background of Thai Education System

The cultural and social background discussed above contributed greatly to one-way teacher-student teaching method. Thus, the rote learning methodology is deeply ingrained in the Thai school system. (Foley, 2011) Thai teachers tend to dominate the class and the students would be embarrassed asking questions or trying for problems' solutions in a class. Since 1999, the Education Act promulgated by the Ministry of Education approved a student-centered learning approach to learning. Teacher who deals with small classrooms has more chances to design teaching methods that turn major responsibility over to the students and he or she plays a coaching role in the learning process. But in huge classes, which is generally the case of most of the subjects, the teaching pedagogy remains teacher-directed. Hence, the majority of Thai students are not being taught to think for themselves and to solve problems. In Thai classrooms, they are passive and wait for the

transmitted knowledge from the teacher. It is a big task and a challenge for the teacher to change this kind of attitude in order to engage them in their own learning.

Background of the Research

Since 2004, the researcher has been in charge of Modern French Literature course which is a student-centered one. The main objective of the course is to develop critical thinking of the students. To reach such a goal, the students must be well-disciplined at a high level. As we discussed in the background of Thai education system above, Thai students are generally passive and not familiar with thinking and problems solving. The problem encountered by the researcher before this study was that most of the students were not well-prepared neither for the content nor for the closed-ended or open-ended chapter exercises before coming to class. In order to motive the students to become personally involved in the learning, to do their pre-reading and to engage themselves actively in the task assigned, the researcher had studied different types of teaching methods, and found Cooperative Learning very interesting. We were persuaded that cooperative learning would probably solve our problem and contribute to meet our objective, as cooperative learning creates positive social skills among the students who would learn from each other and encourage each other through group working. And that would fit the fact mentioned above that Thais students are social learners. Additionally, with cooperative learning, the students learn by doing, their learning would be accordingly active comparing to one-way teaching method. Nevertheless, to achieve such a change, the students must be mentally prepared for the treatment. With this in mind, cooperative learning techniques are analyzed, chosen and designed to fit our classroom situation.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985, cited in Apple, 2006), human beings have three basic needs : relatedness, competence, and autonomy. It seems that cooperative learning methods are appropriate to this psychological principle. Apple (2006) has taught English in all levels of education in Japan and cooperative writing is among his current interests. He wrote that "teachers who had used effective environment for learning and thus had helped students reach their learning potential." (Apple, 2006: 279) And as declared Dee Dickinson, a former school administrator who had experience teaching at all levels from kindergarten to university, and was the founder of *New Horizons for Learning*, Faculty of Education at John Hopkins University :

> Cooperative Learning enhances children's ability to construct knowledge as they engage in discovering new ideas with each other. In addition, it enhances students' self-esteem and helps teachers with classroom management… (Dickinson, 1994: 20)

Cooperative Learning and its Effectiveness

According to the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota, cooperative learning requires five elements : Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Interpersonal Skills, face-to-face Interaction and Group Processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). This "five pillars" model for cooperative learning has been well studied. Da-

vid and Roger Johnson have been at the forefront of cooperative learning theory for four decades and cooperative learning is among the most well researched of all teaching strategies. Many research studies all over the world have shown that when compared to other methods of instruction, cooperative learning is one of the most effective ways for students to maximize their own learning and the academic achievement of their classmates (New Horizon, 2008, Johnson & Johnson, 1994, Slavin, 1995).

Various Methods of Cooperative Learning

Each cooperative learning method has its own process. In The Jigsaw method, a member from each home group who is assigned for the same topic, forms a new group of specialists to study together that topic. After that, he goes back to his home group and teaches what he had learned to the other members. In The Student-Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) method, all the members of the group study the assigned topic together and do the individual test of each section and finally the overall test. The mean of all individual tests of each student is called basic scores. The difference between the basic scores and the overall scores is called developed scores. In the third method, Team-Assisted Individualization (TAI), members in the home group study the assigned content and do the exercises. Those who fulfill 75% of the exercises will continue with the overall test. Those who gain less than that will rework on the exercises until they get 75% then they can follow the others. The total points gained by the members represent the scores of the group. In the fourth method, Team Games Tournament (TGT), members in the home group study the assigned content and each of them, and depending on his poor or good capability, represents their group to compete with the other groups in a question-answering competition. The scores of the members are those of the group. In Group Investigation (GI), the members of the group divide the assigned content into sub-contents and each member provides the relevant answer or explanation of each sub-content before coming back to the group for discussions and conclusions. The Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method is especially designed to develop reading skill, including reading comprehension and integrated composition. The Complex Instruction (CI) method combines various knowledge and skills by emphasizing on the task designed by the teacher to match each student's ability. And the last one is the method created by Kagan (Kagan, 1989), the Co-op Co-op technique of cooperative learning. In the Co-op Co-op technique, students work in group to produce a particular group product in order to share with the whole class and each member shares material with multiple sources and makes a particular contribution to the group.

Learning Together Technique

Learning Together technique refers to one model of cooperative learning presented by Johnson & Johnson (1994). The principles of Learning Together consist of *heterogeneous grouping, positive interdependence, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing*. Heterogeneous grouping is considered on the basis of mixed ability as obtained by past achievement. Positive interdependence among group members is formed through setting a common goal, assuming a common identity, applying the same resources, getting the same reward and so forth. Individual accountability is regulated

through individual preparation and testing, responses to teacher's questions, and presentation of their group work. Lastly, group processing gives evidence of learners' achievement as a group and plans the learners for further cooperative activity.

Literature Review

Two approaches used in second language teaching

According to Apple (2006), two main approaches used in second language teaching are Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and social-cultural theories such as the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of Lev Vygotsky and the Activity Theory of Leontiev. In the first approach, learners memorize and repeat sets of rules and patterns. In the second approach, learners use the second language as a part of communication process. However, in this case, the input must be regulated by L2 peers or experts, as learning is seen as a result of social interaction with the members of the community. For second or foreign language learners, the best community for them is the language classroom community. And Apple found cooperative learning very helpful in that such community : "cooperative learning techniques allow EFL learners to actively participate in the classroom activities where learners use their different understandings of how the world operates, leading to stronger personal ties between group members, more well-defined individual identities, and a greater sense of membership in the learning community." (Apple, 2006: 296)

Research papers on cooperative learning in language classrooms

During the decade 1990, some papers dealt with the development of four language skills in classrooms by using cooperative learning method. Wei & Chen (1993, cited in Liang 2002) conducted a questionnaire survey to investigate 263 college students' perception of cooperative learning. The results of the questionnaire showed that cooperative learning offered students more opportunities to practice four language skills and increase vocabulary retention. And more than 50 percent of the participants felt that their four language skills improved. Chen (1998, cited in Liang 2002) investigated the effects of cooperative learning method of Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) on 143 freshman college students. Through open-ended interviews, 12 students with different levels of English proficiency informed that cooperative learning reinforced their development of four language skills in English.

Regarding oral communication skill, the findings of Liang (2002) and Zhang (2010) showed the beneficial effects of cooperative learning. Liang (2002) collected data from two oral tasks, scores of monthly examinations, motivational questionnaires, student interview, and teacher review to achieve methodological triangulation. The major findings of his study suggested that cooperative learning helped significantly to enhance the junior high school learners' oral communicative competence and their motivation toward learning English. Based on his conclusions, he recommended cooperative learning to be integrated into the junior high school English instruction as part of the Nine-Year Joint Curriculum in Taiwan. He also proposed the application of cooperative learning in EFL

teaching, and especially suggested for teacher development in cooperative learning. (Liang, 2002: iii)   Apropos of Zhang (2010) who compared cooperative learning with traditional instruction, he found cooperative learning promote productivity and achievement and provides more opportunities for communication. Moreover, cooperative learning responds to the trend in foreign language teaching method with focusing on the communicative and effective factors in language learning. Consequently, "cooperative language learning is beneficial in foreign language learning and teaching." (Zhang, 2010:83)

In the matter of reading and composition skills, different methods of cooperative learning were used by teachers-researchers. But mostly, the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) was chosen. Sitthilert (1994, cited in Wichadee 2005) investigated the effects of the cooperative learning method of CIRC with 106 high-school students. The findings revealed that the English reading comprehension achievement of the experimental group was higher than the control group. The Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) helped low achievement students improve their ability and the opinions towards classroom atmosphere were positive. Mulmanee (2009) examined the effects of the cooperative learning method of CIRC with 32 high-school students in Bangkok. The findings indicated that the English reading comprehension achievement of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group ($p < .01$). The researcher also suggested for teacher practices in cooperative learning before using it.

Some researchers, without specifying the method they used, tried cooperative learning in their English reading classes. It was the case of Chang (1995, cited in Liang 2002) who compared traditional instruction with cooperative learning method in a college English reading class. A general test and a summarization test were administered to each method. The results indicated that the average scores of students in cooperative learning were about two points higher than that of the students in teacher-oriented class.

Other kinds of cooperative learning method were also administered to develop the reading skill of the students such as STAD and Co-op Co-op technique. Wichadee (2005) studied the effects of cooperative learning on English reading skill development of 40 first-year students at Bangkok University. Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD) technique of cooperative learning was used with the sample group over an eight-week period. The results indicated that the students obtained higher reading comprehension scores for the post-test than the pre-test scores at the .05 level of significance. Most students rated cooperative learning moderately positive and they performed good cooperative learning behaviors in their tasks. (Wichadee, 2005) Buatum (2010) investigated the achievements on critical reading of 63 freshmen students who learned with the Co-op Co-op technique of cooperative learning. She also compared the achievements on critical reading of the students with different critical reading competency. It was found that the students' post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores and the achievements of the students with different critical reading competency were significantly different at.05. Her students expressed their strong agreement with the Co-op Co-op technique of cooperative learning.

Some papers involved with general English and proficiency as those of Wei (1997, cited in Liang 2002) and Chen (1999, cited in Liang 2002). Wei (1997, cited in Liang 2002)

surveyed 80 college students' reflections upon one of the cooperative learning methods of Jigsaw. The results showed that more than 50 percent of the participants thought that Jigsaw helped improve their general English language proficiency. Chen (1999, cited in Liang 2002) examined the English development of students in junior colleges by comparing traditional method and cooperative learning. The results revealed that the students in cooperative learning gained significantly higher scores (p<.05) on the overall test and the cloze test than those in the control group.

In terms of others skills in language classrooms, the work of Somapee (1999, cited in Wichadee 2005) seemed interesting as she examined critical thinking skills of the students in Business English course by comparing traditional group work method with cooperative learning. The findings showed that the post-test scores of students through cooperative learning were remarkably higher than those of students in traditional group work method.

Regarding social atmosphere and learners' motivation, several papers claimed that cooperative learning encouraged a new learning environment and/or raised students' motivation. Chu (1996, cited in Liang 2002) examined the effects of the Jigsaw activity of cooperative learning on 118 freshman students in a college English class. The findings indicated that over 90 percent of the students perceived that cooperative learning helped build an intimate learning and social atmosphere in the classroom. And as already mentioned above, the study of Liang (2002) asserted that cooperative learning encouraged learners' motivation. Towards Chen (2005) who dealt with several instruction methods, studied how the implementation of cooperative learning activities, incorporating the cooperative learning (CL) the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) of Howard Gardner, and the notion of Whole Language Approach (WLA) in college EFL classrooms have effect on students' language proficiency and attitude. The results of his study showed that the motivation in learning English was enhanced a great deal for the experimental group that was taught using the CL and MI ideas. Based on his insight gained from the study, CL, MI, WLA and Language Learning Center were recommended to be integrated into the Junior College English curriculum. (Chen, 2005: 2)

Learning Together as the Most Appropriate Cooperative Learning Method for this Study

As the main objective of the Modern French Literature course is to develop critical thinking of the students and the researcher aimed to solve the problem encountered as mentioned in our background. At the same time, we intended to encourage, with group working and presentation skills, the solidarity and the intimate learning atmosphere among the students. The notion of helping each other is the most obvious in Learning Together technique which requires the equal contribution of each member of the group in their learning process as well as their accountability. Consequently, we found Learning Together the most appropriate cooperative learning method for this study.

Method

This quasi-experimental research involved the sample of twelve junior students majoring in French who registered Modern French Literature course in the second semester of 2010. The sample was divided into three groups and each group was composed of four of more or less competent students.

Research questions

1. Can Learning Together technique raise significantly students' learning achievement ?
2. Can Learning Together technique provide the students with group process skills and problem solving skills ?
3. Can Learning Together technique help the students to develop presentation skills ?
4. How do the students perceive Learning Together technique of cooperative learning ?

Scope of Study

Learning Together technique of cooperative learning method was used to teach 12 of the 14 topics of the *Modern French Literature Study Guide*, written by the researcher for the second semester of 2010 academic year.

A class session lasted 90 minutes and covered the learning of one topic. For the last two topics of the *Study Guide,* each student was required to self-study the content before coming to class. During the 11 weeks of the experiment, the effects of using cooperative learning on students' learning achievement were examined through the results of the pre-tests and post-tests, administered to the class before and after each topic, and through the assessment of oral presentation and group work quality by the teacher and by the audience after each class. The group working behavior was determined through the teacher's appraisals of self-preparation to group work and during-the-group-work behavior of each student, and through the group working self-assessment of each group member. The overall satisfaction with Learning Together technique was investigated through the students' perception.

The sample was divided into three groups of four or more and less competent students, by considering their French grade point average of the two recent academic years. Each group received a name and the same treatment and was responsible for the group working and the presentation of four topics, alternatively.

Here are seven steps of how Learning Together technique of cooperative learning was administered to teach the 12 topics to the sample group.

1. Four members of each working group do the pre-test, then go back to study the assigned topic in which they will learn about one contemporary French writer,

his/her biography, list of literary works, key concepts and a page of one of his/her literary works.

2. Each member of the group consults dictionaries in order to help each other to understand the literary work page of the writer.
3. When the content of the page in 2.2 is clear for them, they discuss in group to specify genre, form, objectives, writing style and enunciator of the literary page.
4. Then the group finds keywords and principal themes of the literary page.
5. After that, the group tries to give relevant answers to the questions at the end of the chapter.
6. In some topics, it is possible that the group has to deal with the comparison between two similar concepts. For example, in the first topic, the group who is responsible for that, has to compare the existentialist concepts in Jean-Paul Sartre with Buddhist notions.
7. In this step, the group makes an appointment with the teacher who will check their comprehension, encourage them to think and discuss until they can analyze correctly the text and get the right themes and the relevant answers to the questions of the chapter. With regard to the comparison of concepts which is quite difficult, the teacher checks if their comprehension is clear enough to point out the similarities and the differences of both concepts. The teacher gives more explanation, if necessary, and tries to let the group members express the maximum of their opinions.
8. When everything is clear, the group prepares for topic presentation in class which normally takes place one or a few days later. In class, the audience does the pretest. Then, members of the working group help each other to explain the concept of the writer and give a detailed analysis of the literary page. For the exercises at the end of the chapter, the group members let the audience try to find out the themes of the literary work and the answers to the questions before they give their own ones. In the comparison part, they encourage the audience to discuss and share with them. Sometimes, they learn more from the audience who has different points of views.
9. As soon as the group finishes each presentation, the teacher distributes the post-test to all of the class. She also distributes various evaluation forms. The audience evaluates presentation and work quality of the group while each member of the working group self-evaluates his/her group working behavior and gives opinions on cooperative learning (LT). At the end of each class, the teacher evaluates work presentation and work quality of each member as well as the working process of the group.

Research plan and timeframe

During the first month of research plan, the researcher surveyed a variety of instructional methods and analyzed the content of the 2010 *Modern French Literature Study Guide*, the objectives of the course and the learners, in order to choose an appropriate model of cooperative learning method.

In the second month, two weeks before the start of the new semester, the research instruments as followed were constructed:

- The pre-tests and post-tests of each topic of the *Study Guide*;
- The presentation and work quality assessment form which will be assessed by the teacher;
- The presentation and work quality assessment form which will be assessed by the audience students;
- The group working behavior and group work quality assessment form which will be assessed by the teacher;
- The self – assessment on group working behavior; and,
- The questionnaire to survey the opinion of each group member towards cooperative learning.

At the beginning of the first class, the researcher explained to the class the objectives of the course by informing the students that cooperative learning will be used as the instructional method. Then, I distributed the class schedule to show how and when group working and presentation of each group will be carried out. I clarified when each research instrument will be administered. After that, I divided the students into three groups of four of mixed abilities by basing it on their grade points obtained from French course in the previous semester.

From the second to the fourth month, the Learning Together technique of cooperative learning method was administered to the teaching of chapter one to chapter twelve of the Study Guide and the data was collected with the instruments constructed.

During the fifth month, individual pre-class content prepared method was applied for the last two topics of the Study Guide and the data was collected with the pre-tests and post-tests.

In the sixth and seventh months, the collected data was analyzed and interpreted.

The findings were summarized and the report was written in the eighth month.

Then the report was reviewed by an educational expert during the ninth month and in the tenth month, the researcher effectuated the corrections recommended. Finally, the report was submitted to the Teaching and Learning Support and Development Center of Rangsit University who funded this study.

Timeframe

10 months from October 2010 (two weeks before the beginning of the second semester) until August 2011.

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis and t-test were used to analyze the data as follow :

1. The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, t-test verification, and frequency.
2. The presentation and work quality scores were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, and t-test verification, and the scores assessed by the teacher were compared to the scores assessed by the audience students.
3. The group working behavior and group work quality scores assessed by the teacher were analyzed by mean, frequency and interpreted according to a Four-Steps Scale proposed by the researcher.
4. The self – assessment on group working behavior scores were analyzed by frequency and interpreted according to a Five-point Likert Scale.
5. The group members' opinions towards cooperative learning scores were analyzed by frequency and interpreted according to a Five-point Likert Scale.

Results and Discussion

Regarding the effect of cooperative learning method on learning achievement, the results revealed that learning achievement of the students was significantly higher after cooperative learning at the level of 0.01, especially the students whose scores of the pre-test were quite low gained the most benefit from Learning Together technique. This supported the findings of Chang (1995, in Liang 2002) and of Keramati (2009) that teaching by cooperative learning contributed to higher learning achievement of the students than by traditional instruction. The results were also consistent with those of Wichadee (2005) that the post-test of the students after cooperative learning scored higher than the pre-test. Based on this point of results, and to reply to the research question number one, we acknowledged that Learning Together technique raise significantly students' learning achievement.

In the matter of group working behavior (volition, cooperative effort in group working and self-discipline during the work), the findings indicated that the mean of group working behavior assessed by the teacher scored at a high level while the mean of self – assessment on group working behavior of the three groups scored at a high level to the highest level (The mean of the first group is 4.67, the mean of the second group is 4.42 and the mean of the third group is 4.40). This was in agreement with the results of Chen (1998 cited in Liang 2002) that, with cooperative learning, the learners were encouraged to help and respect each other, and were responsible for their own learning. As regards Liang (2002), his findings showed that cooperative learning help significantly increase speaking skill and motivation in learning English. Consequently, the findings replied to the research question number two that Learning Together technique provide the students with group process skill and problem solving skill.

Concerning group work quality (individual task quality and group work presentation) assessed by the audience students, the results showed the scores' mean at a very good level

(the mean of the whole class is 7.02 from the total of 8 points), while the mean assessed by the teacher scored at a good level (The mean of the whole class is 6.27 from the total of 8 points). But when comparing the assessment of group work quality of the audience with that of the teacher, the t-Test value (-3.55) showed no significant difference between them. Based on these results, we found the answer to our third research question that Learning Together technique helped the students develop their presentation skill.

With regard to students' opinions towards cooperative learning, the results showed that the first group was satisfied by the method at the highest level (The mean is 4.76), while the second and the third groups were satisfied by the method at a high level (The mean is 4.44 and 4.38, respectively). This was consistent with the findings of Sitthilert (1994 cited in Wichadee 2005) who studied the effect of cooperative learning on teaching English comprehension and on classroom atmosphere. The results revealed that the mean scores of experimental group were higher than those of control group and the experimental group was satisfied with the classroom atmosphere. As for Saiyud (2010) who explored the effect of cooperative learning on critical reading skills in Thai language, she found the post-test scores of the students higher than the pre-test scores and the students were agreed with the cooperative learning as teaching method at a high level.

In terms of students' perception and opinions, the findings suggested that most of the students were satisfied by the Learning Together technique at the highest level and they ranked Learning Together technique the most suitable instruction method for this course (The mean is 4.53). If we considered the rankings by item of each group, we found that, the first group ranked first the fifth item : they found LT technique the most beneficial as they "learned the real values of various things through cooperative learning". According to the second group, the third item was ranked first to show their high satisfaction level of LT technique which was different from self-study method. (The mean is 4.75), while the third group ranked first the first item as they "realized they played important role in their group" at a high level (The mean is 4.67).

To sum up and to reply to the fourth research question, by considering the rankings by item of the three groups, the results showed the overall perception of cooperative learning of the students as followed : They pointed out that, firstly, LT technique was the most beneficial especially when it helped them "learn the real values of various things through cooperative learning" (The mean of the three groups is 4.67). Secondly, they found LT technique "encouraged their development of critical thinking skills" (The mean of the three groups is 4.58). And thirdly, LT technique was for them, "an instruction method which was suitable for the teaching of the course" (The mean of the three groups is 4.58).

Originality of the Research and Success of Cooperative Learning in Thai social Context

First of all, when we decided to use LT technique in this research, we intended to make student-centered approach effective, since our students were familiar with the rote learning. And the results showed that cooperative learning as our treatment contributed to the success of the student-centered approach in the Thai context where students are social

learners. The precise steps of cooperative learning helped systematize their social learning. This is why our findings reported the mean of group working behavior assessed by the teacher scored at a high level and the mean of self – assessment on group working behavior of the three groups scored at a high level to the highest level.

In the second place, all research papers on cooperative learning in language classrooms mentioned in the literature review dealt with four language skills, one of the four skills or general English and proficiency, while our study coped with a Modern French Literature course. And our second intention to use LT technique was to increase the participation of the students in the learning process. The finding indicated that LT technique facilitated the switching of the passive to the active learning method. In our cooperative learning classroom, learners were responsible for their pre-class learning activities and for the comprehension of the others students during the class. Each member in a group had to do his or her part of the whole work, then helped each other to present it to the class. Supported by the teacher and by other members of the group, each speaker was able to overcome his/ her diffidence. They assimilated what they learned and were proud of their work.

In the third place, we discussed above in the background of Thai education system that Thai students are not being taught to think for themselves. However, with LT technique, our students were trained to do that : they were responsible for their own learning from the beginning to the end of the chapter they were to do. According to our results, the students found LT technique "encouraged their development of critical thinking skills" (The mean of the three groups is 4.58). And this was the strength of this research as the main objective of the course is to develop critical thinking of the students.

Fourthly and finally, since Thai students are also weak at problem solving, our finding suggested new issue about the success of LT technique in developing problem solving skills of the students during their group work and group presentation. Here are two examples. For the first case, when one of the members in the group was sick on the presentation day, the other members discussed to choose a substitute who stood in promptly the sick person. In another case, when a group started working together late and asked the teacher to postpone the class, the teacher turned responsibility over to the group by telling them to negotiate with the members of the following group if they were happy to replace them. As the answer was negative, the leading group decided to speed up their work and was able to present it on time. In their points of view, the students reported that LT technique helped them "learn the real values of various things through cooperative learning" (The mean of the three groups is 4.67) and LT technique was "an instruction method which was suitable for the teaching of the course" (The mean of the three groups is 4.58).

Suggestions

1. As the main objective of the course is to develop critical thinking of the students and the results revealed that learning achievement of the students was significantly higher after cooperative learning at the level of 0.01, especially the students whose scores of the pre-test were quite low gained the most benefit from Learning

Together technique. This suggests that it would be possible for the teacher to apply cooperative learning with other course in which the teacher intends the learners to develop their critical thinking.

2. The findings indicated that the mean of group working behavior and group work quality assessed by the teacher scored at a high level while the mean of self – assessment on group working behavior of every group scored at a high level to the highest level. This means that Learning Together technique is helpful in developing interpersonal skills and problem solving skill of the students, when integrated into the course that requires group discussion before or during the class.

3. The mean of presentation and work quality assessed by the teacher scored at a high level while the mean of presentation and work quality assessed by the audience scored at the highest level. This implies that Learning Together technique helped to develop presentation skill of the students.

4. The overall results of the study has led us to say that cooperative learning would be one of the most attractive choices for teachers who aim to replace teacher-centered instruction by student-centered strategy.

Limitation

The study was an action research in Modern French Literature course. As there was only one group of junior students majoring in French when conducting this study, the researcher was obliged to select the whole group as the experimental group without a control group. The conclusions drawn from the results may be different if applied to other studies with different design of research.

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