A STUDY ON THE INTERDEPENDENT EXPERIENCE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN ROLE PLAY-CENTERED COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study is a qualitative study that explores the interdependence experiences of college students who participated in role play-oriented cooperative learning using case research methods. In the post-COVID-19 learning environment, interaction in a non-face-to-face environment is more emphasized. Therefore, this study attempted to examine specific aspects of how interdependence between learners is practiced in cooperative learning and discover the meaning of interdependence experience through this. Data collection was conducted focusing on class participation observation, in-depth interview, student class review, and reports. As a result of the study, learners' interdependence practice was 'achieved through responsibility', 'clear goal sharing', and 'emotional exchange', and the experience of interdependence was derived as 'becoming a subjective learner', 'improving communication skills', and 'discovering positive meanings of cooperation'. Based on the research results, for effective interaction in non-face-to-face classes, intimacy between teams, clear structuring of classes, expansion of interactions with other teams, and appropriate feedback from instructors were suggested.

Keywords: Role play, cooperative learning, interdependence, college students.

1. Introduction

After the COVID-19 Pandemic, society became a hyperconnected society that connects, interacts, and cooperates with each other beyond the limits of space such as home, school, workplace, and cafe, not a specific space. Although the physical environment of learners and teachers is isolated due to social distancing or remote classes, schools are conducting cooperative activities between students using various media. Society emphasizes the importance of cooperation and trust among members to achieve organizational goals, maximize and sustain performance rather than independently superior individuals (Deutsch, 1949). The core competencies necessary for students who will live in the future society are difficult to form only with their own thinking and individual inquiry. Cooperative activities should be activated in which teachers, students, and students share and communicate learning experiences and learning activities with each other to relieve a sense of isolation.

Education should focus not on the transfer of knowledge by unilateral lectures by instructors, but on being able to develop students' potential, and should be a dynamic learning field that can promote students' mutual competencies. Therefore, this study aims to explore in-depth the meaning of interdependence between learners by paying attention to the experiences of college students who participated in role play-oriented cooperative learning. To this end, the researcher participated in the cooperative learning class for 4 months to collect data, and conducted in-depth interviews with 6 students to explore the practical aspects and meanings of interdependence based on their specific experiences. Through this study, it will be possible to clarify the educational meaning of cooperative learning in university education and to find ways to effectively operate cooperative learning.

2. Design

2.1. Role play as cooperative learning

Role play is when learners take on a specific role in a special situation and play their role in a creative, enjoyable, and comfortable environment (Ladious, 1987). Role play can be used as an activity for cooperative learning in that participants work together to solve problems with team members. A study by Kim Dae-yeon and Kim Byung-joo (2018), who studied the improvement of community competency

of elementary school students using role play, revealed that role play had a positive effect in the areas of relationship, mutual reciprocity, empathy, and consideration set as sub-elements of community competency. In particular, students tried to solve problems by cooperating in the process of creating a play rather than a play result, and continued to communicate with others and establish relationships. In addition, Kim Hyun-joo (2018), who studied the use of role plays by college students, confirmed that the process of communication and decision-making in the process of creating a play became a place of practice to lead to integration by forming a consensus. This study shows that in the process of performing role plays, a sense of community is formed through face-to-face interaction and grouping processes, thereby making efforts to develop and solve problems arising from cooperative learning.

2.2. Cooperative learning and interdependence

Cooperative learning is a learning structure that contrasts with competitive learning and individual learning, and does not simply mean that learners learn in groups. In order to become effective cooperative learning, the basic principles of cooperative learning must be reflected. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1993) included positive interdependence, personal responsibility, face-to-face interaction, proper use of social skills, and group processing (grouping process) as basic elements of cooperative learning, while Slavin (1991) suggested positive interdependence and personal accountability. Social interdependence is a branch of theory that explains the understanding of the characteristics of cooperation, competition, and personal effort, where individuals share common goals and see that each individual performance exists when influenced by the actions of others (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Positive interdependence appears in a form that induces positive interaction, with learners replacing each other's behavior in cooperative learning situations, responding positively to each other's effective behavior, and being open to the influence of others (Johnson & Johnson, 2004:109). In order to confirm whether the results of cooperative learning were through interactions based on positive interdependence, it is necessary to examine the interactions between learners. By analyzing the degree of opinions and information exchange between learners within the group and their influence in the communication process, it is possible to confirm whether the achievements obtained from cooperative learning have been derived as a result of interaction.

3. Methods

This study analyzed the cooperative learning experience centered on the performance of role plays of learners who participated in the "Humanities of Multicultural Society and Coexistence," a social studies liberal arts class at I University in the second semester of 2021. Classes consist of video lectures and classes using zoom for 1.5 hours each. Weeks 1-7 will be discussed focusing on the contents of the lecture, and Week 9-14 will be held in the form of writing and presenting role-playing scripts. The role play was set as the theme of Interaction of Various People Living in a Multicultural Society. Among the students who actively participated in the group activities and those with high peer evaluation scores, the researcher randomly selected and commissioned the participants, of which 6 participated. Data collection was conducted through the researcher's observation journal, in-depth interview data (zoom), students' in-depth interviews, mid-term-final reports, role play recorded videos, and role play scripts. In-depth interviews were conducted over 10 days from January 5 to 14, 2022 and were conducted using zoom. The interview contents were organized around group discussion experience, cooperative learning participation experience, prior experience in university cooperative learning, and regret and improvement points for class activities. The collected data were categorized and classified based on theoretical discussions on cooperative learning through three stages of deriving the original statement-semantic description-topic for each study participant. Focusing on how interdependence experienced in the cooperative learning process of group discussions and role plays was specifically practiced, common attributes were found, nomadized under similar topics, and classified into detailed categories. In order to secure the validity of data interpretation, cross-validation of data analysis and interpretation was conducted twice on three Ph.D. programs and professors specializing in qualitative research who are studying college student participation experiences.

4. Discussion

The patterns and meanings of the practice of interdependence of six college students who participated in cooperative learning based on role play are as follows. The practice of interdependence was derived from three central meanings: 'performance of responsible roles', 'sharing clear goals', and 'positive emotional exchange'. The meaning of interdependence experience based on the aspect of interdependence practice was found to be 'becoming a subjective learner', 'improving communication

skills', and 'discovering a positive meaning of cooperation'.

1. Practice patterns of interdependence

1) Performing a responsible role

Research participants valued 'responsibility' in cooperative learning. In 'Performing Responsible Roles', learning contents were prepared before class through data sharing and role-playing topics were understood. In addition, they tried to contribute by fulfilling their personal responsibilities by studying the voice and gestures of their role and finding social issues related to this and immersing themselves in the role.

2) Sharing clear goals

The characteristic of the group that successfully performed the role play is that it shares a 'clear goal' among team members. In order for cooperative learning to be effective, group goal setting is important (Johnson & Johnson, 2004), and there must be incentives, and for research participants, 'good grades' soon became a shared goal and incentive. They say, "I thought successful results were directly related to good performance, and I focused on this." In addition, it was evaluated that their active participation and cooperation of the members played a key role in producing good results.

3) Positive emotional exchange

Factors promoting interaction between team members were found to be 'friendliness' through praise and encouragement among team members and contact other than class time. Since role play is an activity that requires more interaction between team members, students responded emotionally by sending praise and encouragement for individual roles, and this emotional exchange expanded to trust in team members. The study participants continued to meet and perform tasks using zoom. The research participant's words, "I enjoyed my assignment without knowing the passage of time," show that emotional exchange between team members is an important factor in effectively conducting cooperative learning.

2. Meaning of interdependence experience

1) Becoming an independent learner

Participants in the study participated in learning independently through in-depth exploration of the subject, preparation of class materials, and search for current events related to role-playing topics. In addition, students emphasized the boundaries of 'free rides', but applied this rule more strictly to themselves, not to team members. "Everyone is working hard, but I didn't want to be someone on the team," shows the learners' mindset well.

2) Improve communication skills.

"My communication skills improved in the process of coordinating opinions by expressing my opinion and listening to other people's opinions". A clear and democratic communication method between group members is an essential element for forming an effective group. Participants in the study presented their opinions in the process of selecting discussion topics, organizing contents, writing and revising scripts, and sharing roles, and communicated in various ways, including accepting team members' opinions, presenting objections, and providing feedback.

3) Finding the positive meaning of collaboration.

For the pre-class study participants, 'conflict' was perceived as a problematic situation to be avoided without harmony. However, through cooperative learning, learners experienced that the 'conflict' caused by 'difference' can be resolved through 'diversity recognition' and 'mutual respect'. It served as an opportunity to expand the spectrum of perceptions of various thoughts, values, and attitudes among team members, which could shift 'cooperation' from the stereotype that it was uncomfortable and cumbersome to a positive meaning of 'enough attractive activity'.

5. Conclusion

Is this study applicable to cooperative learning of college students in an educational field where personal and competitive learning is overheated? A positive practice case is presented to the question about. This study can find the significance of the study in that it confirmed the practicality of cooperative learning in online classes and derived the educational significance of cooperative learning by specifically exploring how college students interact in a full online class environment.

Based on the research results, the following suggestions are made. First, emotional intimacy between team members becomes an important factor in promoting cooperative learning. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a plan to reduce the burden on learners by presenting class activities that can form intimacy between team members at the beginning of class. Second, it was confirmed that students can set clear goals and specifically participate in cooperative learning when the class is structured. Learning activities for each week and presentation of clear evaluation guidelines are required. Third, activities that promote interaction with other teams should be carried out. This will be an opportunity to evaluate their activities more objectively and at the same time enable exchanges and cooperation with more diverse

learners. Fourth, instructors can positively lead learners' learning through feedback. Therefore, it is necessary to promote learners' interactions through appropriate feedback, fair evaluation, and active interest.

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