

The Application of Cooperative Learning to English Listening Teaching in High School

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Abstract: Group cooperative learning is a kind of concept and method widely used in the field of teaching, which can highlight students' subjectivity status, strengthen students' sense of responsibility for learning, and provide students with a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere. Based on analyzing the listening problems in senior high school, this study puts forward some operational strategies and methods on how to use cooperative learning in senior high school English Listening teaching.

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 clearly requires: To develop students' English language skills is to enable them to understand the information, opinions, emotions and attitudes conveyed by oral and written texts through listening, speaking, reading, writing and other activities, and to create texts orally and in written form according to different purposes and audiences by using the language and cultural knowledge they have learned. Therefore, teachers are required to take into account the cultivation of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English teaching. Practice has proved that the traditional listening teaching mode can not actively promote the development of students' listening ability, and it is easy to make students bored and resist. Based on this, how to improve the quality and efficiency of listening teaching has become an important direction of current education reform.

Group cooperative learning has been proved to be a creative, scientific and effective teaching mode, which is widely used in the teaching practice of basic teaching stage. *The English Curriculum Standards for Senior High schools* promulgated in 2003 explicitly points out: the overall goal of the high school English course is to make the students in compulsory education stage of English learning basis, further defined the purpose of learning English, develop the ability of autonomous learning and cooperative learning, form effective English learning strategies, and cultivate the comprehensive language using ability. The latest version of *the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High schools* issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 further puts forward the requirement to develop students' cooperative learning ability. Thus, cooperative learning is an important direction of our teaching reform. Applying cooperative learning to high school English listening teaching can increase the opportunity of interactive training and enhance students' awareness of independent learning, which is conducive to the ultimate goal of cultivating students'

listening skills. Based on the analysis of the existing problems in senior high school English listening, this study discusses the application strategies to improve the efficiency of listening teaching, aiming to provide reference for the reform of senior high school English listening teaching.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is widely used in many countries in the world, which is a creative teaching theory and strategy. However, due to different teaching practices and cultural backgrounds in different countries, researchers have different definitions of cooperative learning. According to Olsen and Kagan (1992), cooperative learning is 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. Besides, Yang Yisheng (1997) believed that cooperative learning is an interactive learning method. That is to say, a group is a learning unit, and each member each member of the group is responsible for some aspects of the overall leaning task so that every group can complete the learning task successfully. What's more, scholar Huang Zhengjie (2004) stated that cooperative learning means that students work together to achieve a common goal, which is not only selfish but beneficial to others. Based on the above, it is not difficult to find that although there is no unique definition of cooperative learning, it covers the following aspects: first, cooperative learning is a kind of interactive learning; second, each member of a team has a common goal and their own tasks; third, students are responsible for their own and their peers' learning.

2.2 Research Achievements of Cooperative Learning at Home and Abroad

Since its emergence, cooperative learning has been adopted by many countries around the world and widely used in the basic education teaching system. It has achieved remarkable results in improving the social psychological atmosphere in the classroom and improving students' academic performance. It is called as 'the most important and successful teaching reform in recent decades' (Vermette,1994). Thus, many experts and scholars carried out a lot of researches on cooperative learning. In the 18th century, Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell took advantage of their resources to vigorously promote and implement cooperative learning in Britain, and then, brought this concept to the United States. In the early 1970s, Johnson brothers in the University of Minnesota made a deeper study of cooperative learning and put forward the theory of five factors of cooperative learning on the basis of integrated motivation and social interdependence theory. In China, as early as in ancient times, our ancestors put forward the idea of learning from others, which is the earliest form of cooperative learning in China. In modern times, many educators in our country have also carried out a series of explorations on cooperative learning and excavated its value in teaching. Wang Tan proposed that cooperative learning method can effectively improve students' performance and promote the formation of good non-cognitive psychological quality of students. Shu Baimei and Zong Ping (2004:187) pointed out to that it is very necessary for students to discuss and learn in groups, which can improve students' cooperative ability, and is also an important skill needed in society. Kang Li (2012:105) proposed that group cooperation can help students to alleviate the negative effects such as loneliness and frustration caused by individual learning, and students can interact and compete in groups to complete tasks together. Wu Xiaoling (2009:152) also believes that cooperative learning can take care of individual differences of learners, thus reducing anxiety and improving learning enthusiasm. These scholars' researches mainly focus

on mining value of cooperative learning and its use in the teaching of the feasibility, but how about combining cooperative learning and English teaching research, to some extent, is lack. Since, this paper mainly studies how to apply cooperative learning to senior high school English listening teaching, and discusses the feasible method, aiming at providing references for the reform of high school English listening teaching.

3. Problems in English Listening Teaching in Senior High School

3.1 Teaching method

The author made a survey of English listening teaching in some high schools in Nanchong city and interviewed some English teachers. The results show that most of the English teachers still adopt traditional teaching methods when cultivating students' listening skills, that is, through listening to tape and doing exercise. This teaching model has the following two major problems: firstly, the input of students' listening content is limited to exercises in textbooks or listening materials in the college entrance examination over the years which are so dull and boring that cannot arouse students' interest in learning. Secondly, communication in daily life is often full of hesitation and pause, inaccurate grammar and accent, therefore, only using the recorded materials provided in textbooks to teach listening is not conducive to the improvement of students' listening comprehension and oral ability, and violates the ultimate goal of language learning for communication. In addition, some of the high school English teachers often ignore the student-centered teaching concept when conducting listening teaching. The teacher talks too much in class which makes students lack the consciousness of independent learning and the spirit of active exploration.

3.2 Teaching Arrangement

The improvement of listening skills is a long cumulative process, which needs to take a lot of time and energy. Due to the tight time and heavy teaching tasks in high school, many English teachers will ignore listening teaching so that they often devote most of the class time to reading, writing and grammar teaching and only use a small part of the class time for students to practice English listening. Teachers' neglect of listening teaching directly leads to students' and even parents underestimate the importance of English listening. In addition, since English is a foreign language for students, they have little or no use of English in their daily life. Therefore, the time they can contact and use English is mainly in English classes. However, as many teachers hardly arrange listening courses in class, the listening training of Chinese students is far from enough, which also leads to the imbalance phenomenon that Chinese students are good at reading but extremely weak in listening and speaking.

3.3 The Separation of Listening and Speaking

Students' language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. In daily communication, these four skills are often used in combination and are rarely used alone, especially listening and speaking skills. In addition, oral training is essential when cultivating students' listening skills, because a large amount of language input is the premise of language output, and a large amount of language output can stimulate and exercise students' language input ability. Therefore, it requires teachers to set up corresponding activities in listening teaching, so that students can use listening and speaking skills together. But in the current high school English listening teaching, teachers often separate listening and oral English training. When cultivating

students' listening skills, they just set up input activities such as listening to recordings and doing exercises without setting corresponding output tasks, which ignores the promotion of oral English for students' listening ability and does not meet the needs of language use in daily life. Teachers separate listening and speaking teaching which reduce students' opportunities to speak English, and once language input is limited, language input skills are difficult to develop.

4. The Application of Cooperative Learning in Listening Teaching

4.1 Groups with A Clear Division of Labor

Group is the basic form of implementing cooperative learning. Dividing groups scientifically is the first and most critical step in applying cooperative learning. Scientific and reasonable grouping can reduce the anxiety of group members, form a relaxed and harmonious learning atmosphere, improve students' learning efficiency, and cultivate students' ability and spirit of cooperative learning. Therefore, when grouping students, teachers should consider their learning levels, personality characteristics, interests and hobbies, etc., and adhere to the principle of "homogeneity between groups, heterogeneity within groups". Heterogeneous grouping is when a diverse group of students is put in the same cooperative learning group. This mixed group may consist of students of varying ages, educational levels, interests, special needs, etc. Students are of approximately the same age, but function on different academic, social, and emotional levels. Homogeneous grouping in educational settings is defined as groups of students organized so that students of similar instructional levels are placed together. This way of grouping is conducive to intra-group cooperation and inter-group competition which can stimulate students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning. Taking FLTSPR Book 1 Unit 2 Unfamiliar English Expressions as an example, before listening, the teacher divides the class evenly into several groups. There isn't much difference between groups, but there are differences in learning ability, interests and learning styles among group members. In this activity, each member of the team has their own corresponding tasks, including finding new online words, explaining their meaning and application occasions, and finally forming a summary report. In this process, in order to complete the common tasks of groups, each member will actively participate in the activities and have discussions and exchanges ideas, which can stimulate the needs of oral communication and promote the improvement of their listening skills.

4.2 The Teaching Concept of "Student- Centeredness"

In domestic senior high school English listening teaching, teachers have not changed their original teaching concept, and still give priority to his own teaching in class, while students are always in the position of passive indoctrination in the teaching link, which leads to the unclear or even dislocation of the roles of teachers and students. The training of listening skills, to a large extent, depends on practice not knowledge learning. Therefore, teachers should change their teaching concepts, taking students as the center of the whole class, giving students more learning autonomy, enhancing students' sense of responsibility for themselves and their learning, and improving their autonomous learning ability. Taking FLTSPR Book 1 Unit 2 Unfamiliar English Expressions as an example, while listening, the teacher gives the tasks for each group: filling in the form according to the information mentioned in the recording and showing the three dialogues about Dim Sum, Cellfish and LOL in the role-play way. In this task, students must complete the information record and language organization by themselves, the teacher will not require students to use a single sentence pattern or certain vocabulary, students have a lot of autonomy for their speaking. By cultivating listening skills through group cooperation, students can have a better

understanding of their own learning situation—finding deficiencies and making improvements. At the same time, when members of a group complete a task together, students can help and learn from each other which can improve their awareness and ability of independent learning.

4.3 Interactive Training in Activities

Cooperative learning mainly focuses on group communication and discussion activities, which can effectively make up for the lack of classroom time, teachers' limited energy and students' little listening training. In English teaching, a difficult problem is that how to make students brave enough to express themselves in English. In the face of teachers and the whole class, students are afraid of making grammar mistakes or incorrect pronunciation so that they tend to avoid speaking English. Therefore, in order to encourage students to speak English and train their listening skills in communication, it is necessary to establish a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. According to the investigation and study, in group activities, students are more willing to use English to communicate, because in front of a few companions, the anxiety of making mistakes will be reduced. What's more, students can increase their English speaking and listening practice with other members in group which can effectively cultivate their listening and speaking skills. At the same time, communication with peers is more consistent with the use of language in daily life to improve students' communicative ability. Taking FLTSPR Book 1 Unit 2 Unfamiliar English Expressions as an example, after listening, based on the information obtained in the listening material, students discuss two questions in small groups: What other unfamiliar expressions do you know? And when and how to use unfamiliar expressions appropriately? Students first discuss and exchange their ideas in groups, and then form a summary and share it among groups.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the application of group cooperative learning in high school English listening teaching is conducive to improving the problems of traditional listening teaching, such as teacher-centered teaching, single teaching method and separation of listening and speaking teaching. In group cooperative learning, students participate in discussion, exploration, the division of labor and cooperation, and are responsible for their own and others' learning, which highlights the subject status of students in the listening class, and is conducive to improving students' awareness of independent learning and communicative ability. However, teachers need to realize that improving students' listening ability through group cooperative learning is a long-term process and cannot be accomplished overnight. And in the process of implementation, teachers should constantly carry out group adjustment and updating activities according to the real reaction of students so as to truly integrate cooperative learning into listening teaching. The author believes that cooperative learning as an interactive learning method, can become an effective method to improve English listening teaching in domestic senior high schools with the efforts of the front-line teachers.

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