

Influence of Cooperative Teaching of English Reading Teaching in Junior High School

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Abstract

As a carrier of information, English is used worldwide in numerous domains of humankind life. From the perspective of following the development trend of times and meeting demands of the country and personal development, learning English is indispensable. As an indispensable part of junior high school English teaching, reading teaching still needs the continuous improvement.

Keywords

Cooperative Teaching; Reading Teaching; Junior High School English.

1. Introduction

Junior high school English is a crucial subject of quality education. As a significant part of deepening education reform and promoting quality education in all aspects, individuals expect that English teaching in junior high schools will achieve the best result which is beneficial to the all-round and life-long development of the students. English reading has become the main input for English learners in China. What's more, the importance of reading is reflected in various forms of English tests, when it comes to diversity and quantity, the proportion of reading comprehension is so large that the English reading teaching is highly valued by school and educators. Educators attach importance to improving the way of teaching. By analyzing the current situation in junior high school English reading teaching and the influences before and after using cooperative teaching in junior high school English reading teaching, this paper attempts to understand the role of cooperative teaching in the teaching process. And the conclusion of this research obtained through observation provides experience and suggestions for educators to improve teaching, which is of great significance for the overall development of students.

2. Introduction to Cooperative Teaching

Cooperative learning is a creative and effective teaching theory and strategy that originated in the United States in the early 1970s. It has been greatly advanced from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Its effectiveness in improving the classroom atmosphere and improving students' academic performance attracted the attention of the world. And then it becomes one of the mainstreams of teaching theory, and was praised as "the most important and most successful teaching reform in last decade". Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, cooperative learning has been studied and experimented in China, and effective results have been achieved.

People generally agree that cooperative teaching refers to a teaching strategy in which students have taken the initiative to cooperate with teachers rather than the way of teaching which is dominated by teachers. It is a kind of teaching method that groups of students with different levels to help each other and accomplish certain learning tasks together. In other words, cooperative teaching refers to the teamwork of all participants in the teaching process for achieving effective teaching results. It is characterized by interpersonal cooperation and interaction in teaching.

2.1 Classification of Cooperative Teaching

Like students, there are significant differences between in teachers' knowledge structure, the intelligence level and cognitive style. There are apparent differences in processing teaching content-selecting teaching method and designing teaching even teachers teach the same subject. This difference is a kind of valuable teaching resource. Teachers can complement each other with the help of interaction and communication.

The cooperation between teacher and student overcomes the disadvantages of teacher-centered teaching and students' blind learning. Teacher-student cooperative teaching thinks teacher-student cooperation as the basic starting point, emphasizing the relationship of equal cooperation between teachers and students. Based on the new equal cooperative relationship between teacher and student, they respect and trust each other, and carry out practical activities of education and teaching in a cooperative way. Teachers play the role of guide and cooperator in this process. This teaching method has two prominent characteristics: emphasizing the cooperation between teachers and students, and emphasizing the development of students' personality.

Cooperative learning among students is an indispensable part of cooperative teaching. Educators believe that every student is an individual with unique and abundant information resources that is worth communicating and interacting with each other. The students vary in their characters, interests, capacities and backgrounds of learning. They should cooperate in the tasks and discussions to arrive at a shared understanding of the truth in a specific field. The students help each other under the guidance of the teacher. After clarifying the teaching tasks and requirements, they are responsible for certain work according to their own abilities and willingness, giving full play to their individual potential, and finally cooperate to fulfill the team tasks for the collective honor and individual honor.

3. The Current Problems of English Reading Teaching

English reading teaching is the practice of reading under the guidance of the teachers. The goal is not only to teach English language point, but also to train readers' reading strategies and skills in the process of reading so as to understand the author's writing intention and improve their reading comprehension. Nevertheless, the real situation of junior high school English reading teaching is not as good as people imagine. Actually, there are quite a few issues in the process of English reading teaching in junior high school due to the influence of many factors.

3.1 Insufficient Vocabulary Knowledge

Through long-term observation, it is found that the vocabulary that junior high school students themselves master is inadequate. Teachers command students passively receive knowledge. Either the teacher directly explains the vocabulary one by one according to the word list or barely interprets the new words encountered in reading. This kind of vocabulary teaching is so fragmentary and brief that it is difficult to attract students' attention to learn more vocabulary. There is no doubt that limited vocabulary will hinder students' reading.

In addition to inadequate vocabulary, vocabulary confusion often occurs in junior high school English teaching. From the perspective of linguistics, words have many meanings. Vocabulary development is not only a quantitative breakthrough, but also the deep understanding about the different levels of the vocabulary. The purpose of accumulating vocabulary is not only need to understand the conceptual meaning of words in the dictionary, but other meaning of words like connotation, emotional meaning and social meaning. Due to the differences in ages, experiences, nationalities, geography and other factors, the connotation meaning of words have distinctive characteristics. It varies from person to person and from case to case. As an example, the dragon is a symbol of nobility and auspiciousness in China, while it represents evil in western countries. For the reason that teachers do not correctly figure out the multiple meanings of vocabulary, students often make mistakes in using vocabularies.

3.2 Lack of Cultural Knowledge

The relationship between language and culture is interdependent. Brown has demonstrated that the acquisition of a second language is also the acquisition of a second culture (194). That is to say, while we are learning a language, we are also studying the national culture. Indeed, people can understand the customs, lifestyle, religious beliefs, aesthetic and other cultural characteristics of different countries with the language. However, it is found that most teachers do not attach importance to the teaching of cultural knowledge. For instance, when teachers guided students learn an article about Christmas, teachers focused on teaching the strange words as well as the grammar about the festival. However, they neglected to teach about the cultural background of Christmas like its origin, moral and influence. That situation is not conducive to students' profound understanding and rational use of English culture. In fact, teachers believe that cultural teaching is only to adjust the classroom atmosphere, so they neither teach carefully and rigorously nor require students to master it. Therefore, students do not pay attention to the absorption of cultural knowledge. Students are often confused when the two language systems cross.

3.3 Single and Fixed Teaching Content

Some teachers focus on the teaching of knowledge points in reading. They divide the complete and meaningful articles into several scattered knowledge points and impart them to students. On the premise that the teacher explains vocabulary and grammar, the students do targeted exercises. They are always using this approach regardless of the genre of the article so that they ignore the understanding of the main idea of the article as well as the explanation of relevant information. On the contrary, some teachers highlight abstract understanding of the article. They do not guide students to carry out the necessary analysis of the complex sentences so that students do not know what should do when they encounter complex sentence structures which contain lots of new vocabulary or key information. It seriously affects their reading speed and comprehensive understanding of reading materials.

What's more, the textbooks selected in junior high school English reading is not innovative enough and lacks the characteristics of the times, which makes it difficult for students to pay attention to them. Teachers select reading texts from the perspective of examination. The reading materials stress the exercise of knowledge points like vocabulary, grammar and the sentence structure. Many students hold the view that these materials are isolated from their real life. How can the dull materials arouse students' strong desire for knowledge?

Therefore, educators need to set up more reasonable and diverse teaching contents to ensure the all-round development of students.

3.4 The Unbalanced Relationship Between Teacher and Student

Every student is an individual with a unique personality. Their differences are reflected in students' personality, learning habits, original knowledge and so on. Due to the heavy curriculum tasks of teachers and the excessive number of students in the classroom, teachers do not have too much energy and time to teaching according to the diverse characteristics of each student. In fact, teachers spend most of their time explaining the knowledge points, ignoring to adjust the teaching progress according to students' mastery of reading. Today, education is not "teaching the students in accordance with their aptitude", but "teaching the students in the same way without discrimination". Teachers use fixed and unified criteria to measure students' learning performance, taking no particular consideration of their different interests and capacities, which cannot promote students' overall development based on students' own level.

There is a misunderstanding that knowledge imparted by teachers is authoritative so that students can not violate teachers' wishes. To a certain extent, the rules during teaching, teaching objectives, teaching contents and teaching progress are all determined by teachers subjectively. Students, as receivers of knowledge, can only follow the wishes of teachers and cannot violate the rules formulated by teachers. With the constant renewal of teaching concepts, teachers have realized the importance

of students. But the students' freedom in the teaching process is still limited. Teachers still control students' learning behavior. That is to say, students are still in a passive position. Therefore, they need to be given more opportunities to show themselves.

4. The Influence of Cooperative Teaching

Through observation and comparison of the actual teaching effect before and after applying the cooperative teaching in the English reading teaching, we can find that the influence of cooperative teaching in the teaching of English reading in junior high school can be effectively solve some problems arise in the teaching of English reading in junior high school now.

4.1 Impact on Students' Knowledge

To accomplish the cooperative task set by the teachers, the members of the group actively participate in the division of labor and cooperation, use diverse learning tools and combine their own knowledge for active exploration and reflection. This method can help students increase their language knowledge like vocabulary and grammar more effectively because the level of knowledge and skills each student possesses is dissimilar. They can learn more language knowledge like new words and new sentences from their classmates. Furthermore, students may also be good at different things. Cooperative teaching can integrate students' various knowledge. It can provide more opportunities for students to stimulate their potential. In addition to increasing language knowledge, cooperative teaching also contributes to the accumulation of cultural knowledge. Robert claims that language is an integral part of culture. If we want to really learn a language well, we need to master its cultural background and cultural patterns and norms (127). Before assigning cooperative learning tasks, educators will supplement the reading text with background knowledge, which is actually the cultural connotation of English-speaking countries embodied in the English text. Understanding the cultural characteristics contained in the text make it easily for students to grasp what the author wants to convey in the text, so while helping students to understand the background knowledge of the text, teaching can also broaden their horizons and enhance their interest in studying English culture.

4.2 Impact on Students' Skill Development

Students may adopt different reading strategies for the same text. Through the comparison of the results of each group and the study of the group members' reading skills, students choose the most suitable reading skills according to the requirements and objectives, such as skimming, intensive reading and extensive reading. In cooperative learning group, students must take on a certain division of labor around the cooperative tasks proposed by instructors. They must communicate with their members and share relevant information with each other, which is a good chance to express their opinions. If the students are so timid that they do not have the courage to speak out their true feelings and ideas, there is no doubt that the process of teaching and learning would not achieve better results. In student-centered cooperation learning, every student can speak freely and the discussion among peers will be more relaxed. Therefore, compared with the teacher-led teaching process, there will be more interaction in students' cooperative learning. After a long period of cooperation practice, students mastered the skills and abilities of communicating with others. Students' senses of cooperation and team spirit have also been further strengthened since they must do their best to fulfill their division of labor in order to accomplish the common task of cooperation. Competitive relationships among groups also reinforce students' learning motivation.

4.3 Impact on Students' Emotional Attitude

The teaching objective and the contents are suitable for students' learning situations. They will not be too simple so that students lose their desire for knowledge and they will not be too difficult so that students lose self-confidence in learning. In addition to proper teaching contents, equal cooperative learning and task competition among group members also enable students to actively participate in English reading learning. What's more, self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teachers' evaluation can make students understand their problems and shortcomings of reading teaching thoroughly, so that

students can make targeted changes in their learning styles. Cooperative teaching gives more space to students, hence students have more opportunities to choose their favorite learning style. Thus, students are willing to become part of English reading learning.

4.4 Impact on Teachers' Development

Respect for students is the basic principle of cooperative teaching. In cooperative teaching, the teacher aims to take full account of students' academic ability and personality factors, use various teaching textbooks and methods to attract students' attention and guide students to actively participate in learning and stimulate the development of their own zone of proximal development. All teachers' activities are carried out around students' learning progress. It can find that the application of cooperative teaching can make the teacher and students communicate and learn from each other in more harmonious environment. Meanwhile, to make students perform better in language knowledge, English reading strategies, learning habits and various skills, teachers are required to improve their professional quality. Furthermore, it is essential for the instructors to enhance personal charm, which can give better guidance to students. Therefore, cooperative teaching objectively promotes the development of teachers themselves.

5. Conclusion

Cooperative teaching method is one of the most typical representatives among these reasonable and effective teaching methods. As we all know, English reading teaching in junior high school is an important part of English teaching. It needs the long-term active cooperation of both teachers and students. There are many problems in English reading teaching in junior high school nowadays due to its complexity. Comparing the different effects before and after applying cooperative teaching during English reading teaching in junior high school, we finally found that cooperative teaching can effectively solve some problems in English teaching in junior high school for the reason that the cooperative teaching has a good influence on students, teachers and the teaching mode. To a great extent, it also promotes the improvement of the educator's teaching quality. Meanwhile, the application of cooperative teaching enriches the teaching mode. In a word, the purpose of this teaching is to effectively stimulate students' interest in learning, using diversified and reasonable teaching strategies to achieve the optimization of teaching effect. It is hoped that the cooperative teaching will be further explained and introduced concretely and accurately so that the English teaching educators can get more inspiration from it to improve teaching.

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