

The Study of Using Retelling Strategy to Improve College Students' Listening Skill

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Abstract: In traditional English listening class, the most popular teaching pattern is solely based on "listening audio---answering questions---checking answers." However, students always feel confused about the content of listening materials and even don't know how to seize the key information during listening process. Moreover, due to exam-oriented education system, most students just receive listening training in a very passive way without efficient outcome, which leads to a much worse situation in English listening learning. Therefore, we need to make certain change on English listening Teaching Strategy, and one of good ways is to use the strategy of retelling in English listening class. Using retelling in English listening class is beneficial for students to seize English speaking and listening skills, as well as improve language ability. The author implements teaching activity according to students' actual level, combining retelling strategy with listening teaching. Through the comparison of test data, it is found that the retelling strategy is helpful to improve not only the efficiency of English teaching, but also students' oral and listening skills.

Keywords: retelling; listening skill; English listening class; English teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

As is known to all, English listening teaching has always been a significant and difficult part in English teaching. In CET4&6, the proportion of listening part attains to 35%, which students always feel helpless and depressed about it.

Jiang Weihuan(2006) study shows that students often encounter three problems in English listening, the first one is new words. Due to fast speech rate, students can't identify the liaison or sometimes they are really familiar with some words but feel difficult to recall the meaning. Second, thinking too much about certain information and missing the content behind. Sometimes students can understand the meaning of content but will soon forget it. Last but not least, students can't form a mental representation of whole meaning about heard context. Although they understand words, they can't get the whole meaning of it.

Above all, in order to solve students' problems in English listening, the author advocates retelling method according to the teaching experience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In English teaching, retelling is a process based on understanding and mastering the content of the original text, which is also the process of reproduction. Generally speaking, the completion of English retelling has put forward different requirements for students' memory, comprehension, generalization and summarizing ability. By retelling the main content of the text, students are better able to understand and memorize sentences and improve their listening skills effectively.

(1) Classification of retelling

C.E. Weinstein & L.M. Hume made classification of the retelling in 2003, that is the repetition of the basic learning task and repetition of the complex task. The repetition of basic learning tasks is a low level of memory, which emphasizes the repetition. It means that learners need to repeat the content again and again so as to increase the familiarity with it, at last, achieve the goal of enhancing memory. When using the strategy, learners are often asked to repeat major items. In order to enhance the effect of repetition, it can also use some strategies to make sentence more rhyming, or add some pictures and key words to strengthen their memory. This way is usually used to memorize new words, recite articles, etc. Complex learning task includes the process of understanding, retelling and recreation, which refers to use their own language to reorganize and summarize materials. It also provides opportunity for oral practice. This strategy requires learners to have a more positive attitude and higher conditions of understanding and memory.

(2) The theoretical basis and significance of retelling Retelling reinforce language output

Krashen mentioned five hypotheses of second language acquisition in 1982. Among them, the input hypothesis is the core of second language acquisition theory, which supports that language acquisition is accomplished by language input. Therefore, in language teaching, teachers should attach much importance to providing optimal language input to students. One of the most important conditions for language acquisition is comprehensible input. Famous linguistic Ellis holds that the frequency of language input is the decisive factor in language acquisition. Therefore, learners have to focus their attention on the materials whether they retell some

paragraphs or whole passage. Thus, it can ensure the high frequency of input. No matter it is vocabulary, phrases, or idiomatic expression, they are beneficial to learners' language input. Thus, language input can be strengthened through retelling.

Retelling improves language output

Skehan once divided the language knowledge of language learners into two parts: explicit language knowledge and implicit language knowledge. The explicit language knowledge includes phonology, vocabulary and grammar, which refers to the knowledge of target language in learners' consciousness, and it is the knowledge that can be clearly expressed by learners. While implicit language knowledge refers to internalized language knowledge that exist in the learners' sub consciousness, and learners can use it without hesitation. Through the use of this language model, we can get the following inspiration: "the more invisible language knowledge a person has, the more proficient he can use his target language." The learners can accumulate and consolidate language knowledge in repeated retelling, converting explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge, so as to expanding their invisible knowledge. What is more, it will also enhance their language sensitivity, language sense, as well as promoting learners' language acquisition.

3. RETELLING MAKES KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FROM SHORT-TERM MEMORY TO LONG-TERM MEMORY

The importance of retelling training is that it regulates attention and promotes short memory into long-term memory. According to Sternberg (1999), attention is a cognitive process which is divided into 2 parts: conscious attention and unconscious attention. Actively handled by sensory organs, people's storage memories will receive a great deal of information. Attention is not only a necessary condition for learning, but also a necessary condition for the encoding of long-term memory. It can make people use limited cognitive resources to respond quickly and accurately about meaningful stimuli in the external environment. Swain believes that learners' output triggers a range of conscious findings that facilitate the transformation from short-term memory into long-term memory and speed up language learning.

In the process of retelling training, learners can use the language knowledge to express the content of article, meanwhile, they can also pay special attention to language features of the sentences, vocabulary structures and so forth. This kind of conscious discovery leads to the knowledge transition from short-term memory to long-term memory. At the same time, learners will creatively use some new sentence patterns, which will be further strengthened in the process of retelling. In this way, learners will

deepen their perceptual knowledge and stimulate the transition to long-term memory.

Thus, the use of retelling in listening teaching can greatly arouse the enthusiasm of listeners and stimulate students' interest in learning. Retelling teaching method can not only improve students' attention, but also improve students' ability of memory and oral English ability of memory and oral English ability. Moreover, it can enhance students' language sense and increase students' comprehensive understanding, so as to achieve the purpose of "functional practices".

(3) Retelling strengthens the application of language Hammer (2000) considered that the three basic elements in foreign language class are engage, study and activate which are indispensable conditions in the class of stimulated social environment. To engage is to stimulate students' interest in learning English by games, music, discussion, drama and so on, encouraging them to join the class actively. To study is to help students seize language knowledge, including grammar, phonology, vocabulary and so on through class activities and exercises. And to activate is to let students apply the language freely and skillfully in different environment and situations. Therefore, retelling is an ideal method to improve students' ability to use language. It not only needs students' basic English skills, but also the ability to reorganize the materials, which aims to make listeners comprehend the content better. So retelling ability should be one of the most essential abilities that students have to seize it and learn its strategies and then use it freely as well.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

(1) Participants

The participants in this research are three junior college students, and they have already commanded basic English, which are equal to the level of senior high school students. Before and after the research, students are given the pre-test and post-test to measure their learning outcome.

(2) Research materials

In order to make students actively participate in this study, the BBC and VOA short news are chosen as our retelling materials. The degree of its difficulty changes from easy to medium to difficult gradually. And the purpose of the training is to let students obtain a sense of achievement after completing each retelling. The example material is as following:

There are two sides to a story, President Trump told reporters in a combative Q&A session at Trump Tower:

"The driver of the car is a murder. And what he did is a horrible, horrible inexcusable thing."

But, president Trump says not everyone protesting the removal of a statute of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, is a white nationalist or neo-Nazi:

“ I wonder, is it George Washington next week and is it Thomas Jefferson the week after. You really do have to ask yourself ‘where does it stop?’”

The President also condemned threats and acts of violence he said were carried out by members of the alt-left.

(3) Research procedures

When students do the listening training, firstly, they listen to an audio track twice, and then give a brief oral summary about this paragraph. When it comes to the third time, students need to repeat and write the sentences on paper while the audio is played to them sentence by sentence. Then the teacher should explain every sentence in detail and let students translate them so that they can comprehend the meaning of the paragraph. At Last teacher plays the audio again and students give their complete summary again to consolidate their knowledge and deepen their impression of paragraph. The teacher needs to summarize the retelling skills and strategies, giving the affirmation of students’ progress at the same time.

5. RESEARCH RESULT AND ANALYSIS

(1) Result analysis:

Before the experiment, English learners lacked the theory direction in speaking from teachers. When they retell the news paragraph, they are full of fear with a low voice. What is more, they don’t know how to reorganize the material again, which usually makes them feel at a loss. By interview, the result shows that they seldom did the retelling training in class because of the time limit, and they only know remembering the words. However, due to the lack of language environment, they remember words today and then forget the next day.

In addition, when studying in school, students seldom obtained the speaking training so that they don’t have courage to speak out even they have answers in their own mind. Therefore, they don’t have confidence in speaking English.

After the experiment, we can see that students have made an obvious progress in retelling. They can not only speak more fluently and confidently, but also seize the basic retelling strategies when they retell news. Through a lot of retelling training on class, both their oral expression ability and listening ability have been improved significantly. Moreover, this way has stimulated the students’ learning interests in English. The atmosphere of classroom was very lively, and students were very happy because they have opportunity to exercise their oral English in classroom.

(2) Inspiration and problems to teaching

In order to make more people understand the retelling method, and correctly know its importance, teachers should pay attention to the following points when applying the retelling method:

Correct students’ attitude towards the retelling

method

The retelling method is beneficial for English listening teaching, so the students should actively accept it. But the effect of retelling method can not be reflected overnight. It needs long time training so that students can achieve certain goals. Obviously, teachers should give students some encouragements and instructions in daily leaning.

(3) Teachers should pay attention to the choice of retelling materials

The length of retelling materials depends on students’ ability. In the beginning, the sentences had better not be too long, and do not contain too many new words. With the improvement of students retelling ability, teachers can gradually increase the length and difficulty of retelling sentences. As to the difficult sentences or even those that students can not understand, the teachers should guide students and let students repeat after them.

At the beginning of the retelling stage, the teacher can choose relatively easy stories to attract students’ interest and improve their self-confidence. Later, the teacher can gradually lengthen the story, add science, technology, history, geography and so on, even extend to the retelling of video materials to enhance the diversity of content, not only limited to BBC and VOA news, in order to adapt to different students English leaning with different levels.

(4) Correct students’ mistakes at the right time and give them confidence properly

When students make mistakes in the process of retelling, teachers shouldn’t interrupt students until they finish retelling, otherwise their thinking will be terminated. Teachers have to give students proper praise. What’s more, it is better to use euphemistic way to correct students’ mistakes in case of hurting their passion and enthusiasm. Thus, every student has confidence in taking part in activity and feels free to express himself or herself.

(5) Pay attention to the cooperation among students and improve their efficiency

Effective teaching must be based on a harmonious relationship between teachers and students. In this way, students’ imagination and creativity can be dug out. Actually, retelling is a complex task. Therefore, teachers should focus on students’ performance when retelling. Thus, students can express their views and explore their own talent. When students encounter difficulties, teachers should give timely guidance to help. Last but not least, in the process of retelling, teachers should teach students how to make notes and help them develop a good habit of remembering keywords. In addition, teachers should summarize the keywords which are easily overlooked during retelling. At the same time, teaching different shorthand note for numbers, words, phrases to students so that students can remember keywords in the shortest time at the fastest speed.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The above case study manifests the present situation and existing problems when students study English. So teachers should be aware that they have to find effective method to improve students' learning strategies. Most students haven't seized the ways to learn English effectively. In English teaching, it is beneficial to improve students' oral and listening abilities through retelling strategies. In practical teaching, teachers should not only cultivate students' autonomous learning consciousness, but also attach importance on how to retell passage in order to create a kind of self-study atmosphere. Moreover, retelling is a vital way to enrich and consolidate students' language knowledge. In addition, the choice and use of study is closely related to study effect. Therefore, learning strategies are playing more and more important role in English study nowadays.

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