

A Design of High School English Listening and Speaking Teaching Activities Based on Thematic Meaning

Yuchen Deng, Libin Duan

Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu

ABSTRACT

The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017) claims that themes provide the range of subject matter or context for language learning, and students' exploration of the thematic meaning should be the most important content of language learning. The teaching activity design of English listening and speaking class should also be theme-based to help students explore and express the theme meaning in the process of listening input and oral output. However, in the current teaching of English listening and speaking in senior high schools, teachers' interpretation of listening texts is limited to the superficial level such as vocabulary and grammar, and lack of exploration of the meaning of the theme, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students' core competence. Moreover, the transition of listening and speaking activities is not natural enough, resulting in students cannot transfer and use language knowledge in the new context. Based on this, this paper aims to explain the design principles of the teaching activities of English listening and speaking based on thematic meaning and discuss how to carry out it effectively so as to offer some advices for English listening and speaking teaching.

KEYWORDS

Activity design; English listening and speaking teaching in senior high school; Thematic meaning

1 Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017) emphasizes that students should grasp the basic ability to make use of the English language through English courses, and develop the basic language skills. Listening input and oral output is necessary for students to develop the ability to communicate with others in English. What's more, thematic meaning is emphasized in English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017), which is a guide for English teaching in China. However, in the process of English teaching of listening and speaking, most teachers pay much attention to the vocabularies and grammar instead of the exploration of thematic meaning, so that the transition of listening and speaking activities is not natural and coherent enough. As a result, students could not transfer and use what they have learned in the real context. Many researchers have done a series of studies linking thematic meaning to English teaching, while there are few studies focus on the English listening and speaking teaching. Therefore, taking an example of one English listening and speaking lesson, this study aims to offer some advices for English listening and speaking teaching.

2 Literature Review

English listening and speaking are essential parts of English teaching, as the input and output of English class. Krashen (1985) stated that it is not enough for language learners to rely solely on corpus input, but comprehensible input is a necessary condition for language acquisition. However, Krashen's input hypothesis only emphasizes the importance of the input of knowledge and ignores the practical application of knowledge. To solve this problem, Swain (1995) proposed the output hypothesis that language acquisition is an interactive process. Hanna (1955) made a systematic definition for the first time that thematic instruction is a purposeful learning experience focused on the understanding of a topic with social significance.

Since 1980s and 1990s, thematic instruction has gradually been introduced into China, and some scholars have begun to explore the basic connotation. As a kind of interdisciplinary teaching mode under curriculum integration, thematic instruction has been gradually applied in the field of education practice (Li Zuxiang, 2012). The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017) advocates the English teaching idea based on the exploration of thematic meaning. Since then, related researches on thematic meaning have been gradually enriched. Jiang Xia (2020) claims that teachers should take thematic meaning as the guide and integrate other elements of the curriculum.

This study includes three research questions: (1) What is the effect of the application of English listening and speaking teaching based on thematic meaning on students' listening scores? (2) What is the effect of the application of English listening and speaking teaching based on thematic meaning on students' participation in class? (3) What is the effect of the application of English listening and speaking teaching based on thematic meaning on students' learning interest in class?

3 Research Design

First of all, through literature review, it can be found that there are some problems in the current research of English listening and speaking teaching in senior high school. Through a questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers in a certain school, students' low degree of participation and learning interest in English listening and speaking can be reflected. The author takes the listening and speaking teaching of compulsory 3, module 4 *Sandstorms in Asia* as an example, and expounds how to set up the listening and speaking teaching activities based on the thematic meaning from three links: before listening, during listening and after listening. By studying the overall content of this module, the theme of this module is human and nature which is emphasized in English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017).

Table 1 Flow Chart of Teaching Design

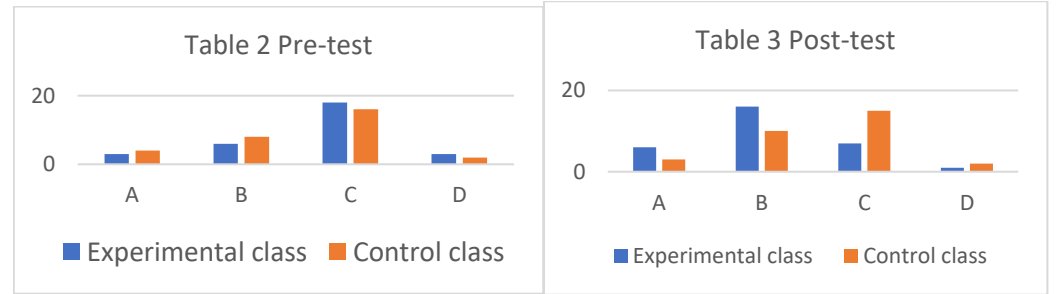
Activities	Purposes	The level of activities
Lead-in: Presenting two sentences and playing a video.	To arouse students' interest and introduce the topic.	Perception and attention
Before listening: Observing a picture and answering the question chain. ①What is happening? ②What is the cyclist wearing and why? ③What do you think happens to traffic in this situation? Why?	To training students' ability of picture-viewing, self-learning and critical thinking.	Acquisition and combining

While-listening:		
Presenting the news report in China Daily about the sandstorms in Beijing and answering the question chain.		
The first listening:		
Students are guided to answer the questions. ① "What example of coastal cities does David give?" ② "Why is the climate getting warmer?" ③ "How does the interviewer feel about the situation?"	To build up a scaffolding and be prepared for the oral activity.	Detection and application
The second listening:		
Imitating the tone of the speakers.		
After-listening:		
Presenting the posters and making a conversation with partners.	To guide students to think about the relationship between human and nature.	Reasoning and summary

4 Findings and Discussion

(1) Results and discussion of testing

At the beginning and ending of the experiment, the author gave the students the pre-test and post-test. There are four grades, in which 25-30 is classified as A, 19-24 as B, and 16-18 as C. The score below 16 is classified as D. It can be known that in experimental and control class few students can get A and most students only gain C. After the application, it can be founded that most students in the experimental class can achieve the B grade and the number of gain A has also increased, while most students in control class can only get the C grade.



Moreover, in order to ensure the accuracy of the experimental results, SPSS software was used to conduct an independent sample T test on the listening test scores of the two classes to analyze whether there were significant differences in the test scores of the experimental class and the control class in the teaching activities under different teaching methods.

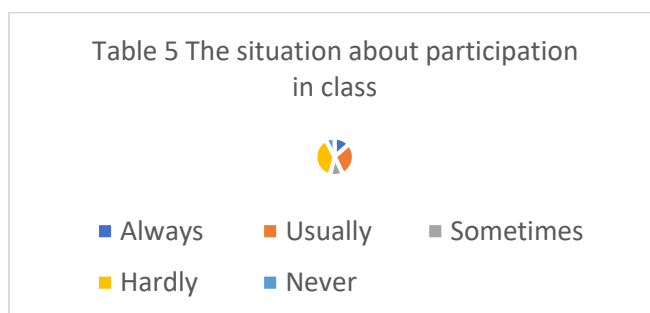
Table 4 Independent-samples T test of post test results

	Class	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
Post-test results	Experimental class	16.33	3.848	3.412	0.001
	Control class	13.41	4.945		

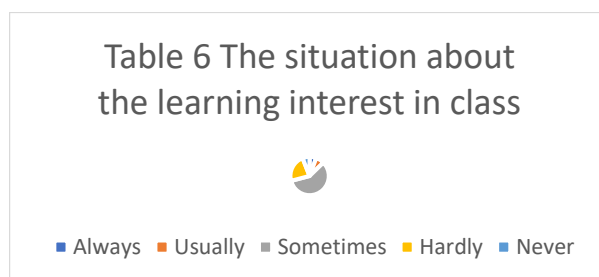
It can be seen from the above table that through independent sample t-test to compare the difference of post-test results in the experimental class and the control class. t is 3.412, and the corresponding significance probability is 0.001 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the post-test results between the experimental class and the control class. The application of teaching activities based on thematic meaning can be helpful for students.

(2) Results and discussion of questionnaire

By analyzing the questionnaires, there are 7.68% of the students never actively involved in the exchange of learning English in the classroom, there are 38.21% of the students in the class rarely actively involved in the exchange of learning English, and only 13.56% of the students said in English listening class can often actively involved in the exchange of learning English.



The reasons for this situation: For one thing, there is not enough time and opportunity for training. Moreover, students are unwilling to actively participate in classroom communication activities. Through the data analysis of the questionnaire, it can be found that there are 23.12% of the students are hardly interested in English listening and speaking, and 58.16% of the students have the normal interest in English listening and speaking. While only 5.63% of the students are very interested in English listening and speaking.



The reasons for this situation are as follows. The primary reason is that most students thought that it is not flexible, that is to say, the textbooks are the only teaching materials for students so that students felt that they just finished the mechanical task in the class instead of using it in a real context. What's more, teachers are dominated in the class so that students hardly have the chance to express themselves freely and communicated with others.

(3) Results and discussion of interview

Through the interviews with teachers, it can be proved that these activities can help improve students' learning interest and participation in class. One teacher that was interviewed told that

students were not very active in listening and speaking classes before and most of them were afraid to express their opinions, and only a few were active. But now, most students are actively engaged in the classroom. Meanwhile, they also suggested whether the class hours of listening and speaking class can be appropriately increased, because of the higher requirements on teachers.

5 Conclusions

This study validates the conclusion of Jiang Xia (2020) that teachers should design activities around thematic meaning. Moreover, this study makes a conclusion that the application of theme-based English listening and speaking teaching activities in high school has a good teaching effect in high school English listening and speaking class, and students' scores, interest and participation have been significantly improved. Due to the limitation of time, research resources and researcher's ability, there are still some problems existing in this application research. First of all, the number of samples of this research is not enough. Moreover, the teaching aids and resources are not varied. Generally speaking, teachers should have a reflection after each class, in which every part in this class should be paid much attention, so as to teacher would improve the effectiveness of this teaching.

References

- [1] Hanna, L.A. (1955). Unit Teaching in the Elementary School [M]. New York: Rinehart, 177-183.
- [2] Krashen S. (1985). Input Hypothesis-Issues and Implications [M]. London & New York: Longman.
- [3] Swain. M. (1995). Communicative Competence: Some Roles of Comprehensible Input and Comprehensible Output in Its Development [A]. In Gass and Madden (eds.), Input in Second Language Acquisition [C]. Rowley, mass: Newbury House, 235-253.
- [4] Jiang, Xia. (2020). Research on English Listening and Speaking Teaching in Senior High School Focusing on Thematic Meaning [J]. *Famous Teachers Online*, 19-22.
- [5] ministry of education. English Curriculum Standards for Senior Middle School (2017 Edition) (2018). [M]. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- [6] Li Zuxiang (Li, Zuxiang). (2012) Theme teaching: connotation, strategy and practice reflection [J] *Chinese Journal of Education*, (9): 52-56.