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The Facilitating Role of Peer Mediation for Classroom Participation in French Immersion

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Abstract: Students need to participate in many group activities and use French in the French immersion class. However, when students negotiate differences and resolve interpersonal conflicts, they often lack sufficient interaction resources, and thus the depth and length of classroom participation are limited. Based on the self-determination theory and the social interdependence theory, combined with the language context of French immersion teaching, this study examines the promoting effect of peer mediation in three dimensions of participation: behaviour, cognition, and emotion. The results show that the procedural scripts and role structures offered by mediation training give students a stable discourse identity; perspective-taking and problem-restructuring promote deep language processing; the devaluation of the mediation context and psychological safety help reduce second-language communication anxiety. At the same time, to effectively operate peer mediation, the authority of the teacher needs to be adjusted and mediation scripts should be adapted according to students' French proficiency. The results are limited by the implementation circumstances. Peer mediation can be organised institutionally to encourage more students in the French immersion class to participate; however, the extent of its impact is still limited by the environment of implementation.

Keywords: Peer Mediation, French Immersion Teaching, Classroom Participation, Self-Determination Theory, Second Language Communication Anxiety.

1. Introduction

French immersion teaching combines subject content with French language learning, and students need to participate in a lot of collaboration and expression from the start of their studies. The model has been quite successful in Canada, for example. However, a neglected contradiction is that although students frequently use French in communication, they may lack the means to address conflicts in French. When facing conflict, students may use their first language or remain silent; thus, the quality of "actual communication" is reduced and sustained participation in class becomes difficult.

The main measure of teaching effectiveness is classroom participation. Fredricks and others have listed the three types: behaviour, cognition, and emotion. This system has been widely used in research on second-language teaching [1]. Each student's speech and negotiation in the French immersion classroom serve to learn both language and content. Therefore, mechanisms to enhance the quality of peer interaction may also promote classroom participation.

Peer mediation is a real-life way to train students to be neutral third parties who can help their peers solve conflicts through a set of procedures. The goal of the "Peer Mediation" project at Saint Joseph Agricultural Vocational High School in Reunion Island is to allow students to learn how to solve minor conflicts among themselves, such as living together harmoniously, non-violent communication, listening and empathy. Boursier has said on the Canopé podcast that mediation learning "slowly calms the classroom atmosphere", and students have shown "new expressions" and gained more self-confidence. Halberg's action research on a high school's peer mediation course in the United States showed that when students feel competent, autonomous and connected during mediation, their willingness to participate and engage significantly increased, and the growth in belongingness reached a statistically significant level [2].

Thus, peer mediation is not only for addressing conflicts after they occur, but also may inspire students to speak up in class through interaction. This paper hopes to create a dialogue between peer mediation and research on French immersion teaching, and to explore how students' participation in French immersion classes is promoted through the mechanisms and dimensions of peer mediation. What are the conditions for its normal operation?

2. Theoretical Framework: Dual Perspectives of Self-Determination Theory and Social Interdependence Theory

According to the above questions, the two theoretical foundations that need to be studied are: why peer mediation is motivating for participation, and how to incorporate it into the interaction structure of the classroom.

Theories of self-determination focus on the intrinsic motivation to participate. If the environment can meet the needs for competence, autonomy and belonging, then intrinsic motivation and engagement will be enhanced. Halberg developed the peer mediation course based on the above theory. The three paths to satisfying the three needs in mediation training are relatively clear. Competence results from learning skills. After learning to listen and manage their own emotions, use neutral words and reframe problems, students have obtained a set of communication tools that can be used independently to resolve conflicts with peers. Autonomy is the freedom of choice in roles and self-management of solution selection. The mediator does not decide for the parties in conflict; instead, they help the parties reach a voluntary agreement. Halberg also indicated that it is not easy for students to be aware of their own capabilities in meeting these needs, and autonomy is not spontaneously acquired; rather, organised support from teachers is required in the design of the course. Belonging is provided by the peer network in the mediation practice. The mediator carries out

service-oriented activities in the class and addresses the actual needs of students directly.

The thirdly, the theory of social interdependence. It is neither positively associated nor negatively associated. When one's goals can be achieved by depending on others, positive interdependence is formed, and cooperation increases. Peer mediation establishes an institutionalised positive interdependence in the classroom, and the efficacy of the mediator is contingent upon the willingness of the conflicting parties to communicate. The mediator will also help the two parties reach a compromise in the dispute. This interdependence is especially prominent in French immersion classrooms, as immersion classrooms naturally have a large number of cooperative learning activities. Bourgoin and Le Bouthillier investigated the first-year French immersion classrooms and found that language arts teachers often organise teaching in groups, and students work independently with their peers to complete second-language literacy tasks [3]. Peer mediation provides a built-in way to handle internal conflicts in this pattern, and when there are differences in cooperative learning, the mediation process turns the handling of these differences into another form of cooperation.

There is a judgment at the intersection of the two theories: Peer mediation promotes classroom participation not by reducing conflicts negatively, but by actively constructing an interaction structure that meets basic psychological needs and forms positive interdependence relationships at the level of the conditions for participation occurrence.

3. Analysis of the Participation Dimensions: The Behavioral, Cognitive and Emotional Promotion Paths of Peer Mediation

This judgment should be based on the actual circumstances of participation. The following are examples of how peer mediation functions in terms of the three dimensions of behaviour, cognition and emotion, as distinguished by Fredricks et al.

The change in behaviour is relatively easy to observe. Participation in the French immersion classroom will be graded according to whether one voluntarily speaks and participates in group activities. However, for beginners, voluntariness cannot be explained by attitude alone; frequently, the primary cause of silence is a lack of confidence due to insufficient interaction experience. A set of operational discourse procedures is provided by peer mediation to help students who do not know how to start expressing themselves find an opening for expression. A change in role results in an increased emphasis on identity change; the mediator is no longer the one who has to wait to be called upon but now needs to lead the flow of communication himself. A typical case of the teacher's "new expression" in the French Canopé podcast is given below.

The level of cognition is also reduced. The two functions of a mediator are to present the positions and emotions of both parties in their own words, and to change the focus of conflict from "who is right and who is wrong?" to "what problems do we need to solve together?". Restatement is indirect and emotional; Transformation is achieved by conditional and negotiating language. Lapkin, Swain and Smith have shown in their research that, in cooperative activities, the peer conversations of French immersion students can produce "language-related segments" and motivate students to observe various expressions of language and engage in deeper learning [4]. Mediation is not limited to the activities in the classroom; it also has actual communication partners and specific goals, thus promoting a different type of cognitive engagement. The report from the Agriculture High School in Reunion Island also includes mediation in the psychological-social ability system. The goals of self-awareness, self-control, constructive decision-making and constructive communication are all highly in line with the demands of deep language processing.

Based on cognitive analysis, the language skills needed for mediation are higher than those used in daily classes. Participation can also refer to changes in emotions and other non-cognitive factors. Emotional involvement is frequently ignored but may be one of the primary reasons. The primary reasons why students are hesitant to speak in a foreign-language class are the fear of making mistakes and ridicule. The two features of the mediation context that directly reduce anxiety are: first, the goal of the speech is not to show off language skills but to achieve communication; thus, there is no pressure for evaluation; second, the mediator maintains neutrality and guarantees the confidentiality of the conversation for the participating students. The British students in Sellman's study reported that "problems can be solved without difficulty", and a similar feeling of security is also required in an immersive classroom; only when relaxed will students be willing to use French in other situations [5].

4. Adaptability in an Immersive Context: The Integration Logic of Language Learning and Peer Mediation

It is not immediately obvious whether peer mediation can be used in a French immersion class. This practice was first developed in a regular classroom. With the introduction of the dual goal of an immersive classroom, will there still be room for adaptation? After all, a mechanism that functions well in a typical classroom may not be suitable for the combined demands of language and content in an immersion teaching environment.

The Organisation Structure is shown below. The French immersion classroom presented by Bourgoin and Le Bouthillier has students used to rotating among study stations and learning centres to complete language proficiency tasks in groups. Such a foundation of peer interaction provides the necessary conditions for peer mediation. In other words, the mediation mechanism is not starting from scratch but is added to the existing cooperative learning system, and a path for internal conflict remains.

Another is that of low density of peer interaction. According to the research by Swain and Lapkin, peer conversations in French immersion classrooms often have a dual function of communication and cognition, and language-related parts naturally occur in this interaction [6]. A high density of people leads to more opportunities for language use and an increased risk of conflict. If there is no dispute resolution mechanism, the large-scale interaction will be problematic. Peer mediation can provide students with a "procedural language" for managing conflicts in the target language, and thus, instead of being a disturbance, conflicts can also become a new learning opportunity.

The mediator is also expected to provide "language scaffolding" for the participants. The necessity of conducting

the mediation in French is itself a requirement for the mediator's language ability, and it also offers students with stronger language skills an opportunity to practice their skills in actual communication. Students with weaker language skills are also learning; they are absorbing new vocabulary, different ways of expressing emotions and restructuring problems through negotiation in mediation [7]. Halberg's research shows that peer mediation and youth participatory action research can be combined to help foster a sense of social responsibility among young people, solve real problems and promote social fairness; they are both highly effective solutions. In a French-immersion class, this game can also be used to teach some new vocabulary, and the act of teaching is a practice of the target language.

5. From Training to the Classroom: The Conditions for the Transformation of Peer Mediation Skills into Daily Participation Behaviors

Convenience refers to how simple something is to use, and although convenient, it is not necessarily good. It will be determined whether the peer mediation training can be used as a continuous resource for daily classroom activities based on several factors. Short-term effects and the long-term retention of skills are different problems, and the latter is often ignored.

The first condition is the decontextualization of skills. If the training is only about conflicts, then only the procedures for handling special cases will be learned; otherwise, these skills will not be useful in daily communication and peer assessment. Stevahn et al. have found that, in order to enhance the transmission of conflict-resolution skills to peer interactions outside of school, integrating these training sessions into the general course work is more effective than organizing them separately. In a French immersion classroom, the training content should include expressions applicable in daily group collaboration, rather than being limited to the fixed script of the mediation process [8].tent should include expressions applicable in daily group collaboration rather than being limited to the fixed script of mediation procedures.

The second is the reconstruction of class interaction norms. In order to use mediation skills effectively, people need to feel safe enough to speak freely. Sellman believed that the peer-mediation system should be in line with the culture of the school. Based on data from the nine schools in England, he found that peer mediation was most effective in schools with substantial changes in labour division and the development of new cultural tools. A headmaster said that all the reward-and-punishment systems were teacher-led; mediation was not. The two are in conflict; if the focus of classroom management is "no interruptions and no arguments", students' voluntary conflict resolution may be seen as "disruptive behaviour" rather than "active participation" [9].

The third condition is the continuous availability of mediation positions. Students with mediation skills who have few opportunities to assume mediation roles after training may have their skills deteriorate due to a lack of practice. Halberg found that students are more motivated when they feel competent, autonomous and connected; however, "helping the students meet these needs on their own is a problem". The cultivation of students' mediation abilities should be included in the overall organisation of French-immersion classes. Bourgoin and Le Bouthillier's "learning station" model is an integrated path that has divided students into learning stations for independent group work in language literacy and rotated them through roles of process observers for low-intensity continuous practice of listening and retelling.

The three conditions lead to the same conclusion: the facilitating effect of peer mediation on classroom participation is not automatic; rather, it depends on how well the training content aligns with the structure of daily interactions in the classroom.

6. Implementation Conditions and Limitations: The Boundaries of Peer Mediation Effectiveness

The quality of the connection is shown in the specific constraints at the implementation level. Among them, the most difficult to manage is the reorganisation of teacher authority.

Sellman used activity theory to believe that for peer mediation to be effective, teachers need to reduce their authority, power and control, and entrust trust and responsibility to the students. Teachers are reluctant to change their view of authority, unwilling to show skills themselves, and thus fail in projects. It is even more difficult in French immersion classes; teachers have to give up the sole right of conflict management and learn to let students deal with it in French. If teachers correct students' language mistakes often or lead the conversation, students will not learn to communicate independently. A principal said: Peer mediation is compressed to "one hour per week", and the rest of the time is still teacher-led disciplinary system, "All reward and punishment systems are teacher-led, but mediation is not, these two will conflict".

The Extent of organisation in the mediation process is also necessary. The British way of peer mediation is to teach students a five-step process through role-playing and circle games: the mediator listens to both sides in turn, paraphrases to help them hear better, allows both sides to express their feelings, each proposes a solution, and finally reaches an agreement [10]. When changing to a French-immersion classroom, the difficulty of the script language should be suitable for the students. The French education system has developed structured procedures to promote peer mediation, but the difficulty has been designed for French native speakers and needs to be localised for use in immersion classes.

There are two defects. Firstly, the mediator's behaviour may be peer pressure. The group in the immersion classroom is close-knit, and the mediator is often referred to as "a teacher-like manager of the people". Sellman's research found that when students speak to their teachers about problems, one of them may be unhappy because someone else is in trouble. With a peer mediator, you know you won't get in trouble. Second, there are limits to the transmission of mediation skills. Harris used modelling theory to study the mediating effect of mediators and the learning outcomes of conflict parties in peer mediation. He found that mediators can effectively model conflicts, and the parties in conflict can also learn conflict-resolution knowledge, attitudes and skills to some extent; thus, their behaviour changes and disciplinary problems decrease [11]. However, this transfer process requires the cooperation and learning willingness of both sides in the conflict to some extent. In French immersion

classrooms, the mediation effect is also subject to the cooperation of other parties involved; if the students do not have the will to participate in mediation, the mediators' modelling effect will be difficult to translate into shared skill development for both sides.

7. Conclusion

Peer mediation can motivate students to participate in class by altering the circumstances of peer interaction rather than suppressing conflicts. Mediation training can provide students with a set of procedural scripts and explicit role structures at the behaviour level to offer them a stable basis for speaking in class. Perspective-taking and problem reconstruction at the cognitive level require the use of more advanced language functions than in typical questions. The mediation centre is a non-threatening place, and there will be no fear of judgement or disclosure of personal problems in class as well. However, these effects do not happen automatically; one easily overlooks that whether the mediation skills learned in special training can be used in daily classroom interaction is also a factor. It depends on whether the content of mediation has been decontextualised, whether the norms of class interaction have also been modified, and whether the mediating function is continuous. Although there are certain deficiencies, peer mediation in French-immersion teaching also has other benefits.

In fact, it provides an institutionalised operating system for "real French communication" by having students negotiate differences and repair relationships in French, thus learning the language and civic literacy simultaneously. The application of the French agricultural education system has shown that this framework is feasible in the environment of French-language teaching. Halberg used the theory of self-determination to find empirical evidence supporting the promotion effect of mediation course participation. At the same time, it should be pointed out that research on peer mediation in French immersion classrooms is still lacking and the existing evidence is mostly indirect support. In the future, some research will investigate the particular effects of mediation training on all aspects of participation in natural classroom situations, pay close attention to the interaction relationship among different levels of language proficiency and changes in participation, and explore the necessary conditions for transferring mediation skills to daily life.

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