

A study of English vocabulary learning strategies in rural junior middle schools

Yuting Feng

Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu, China

Abstract: Vocabulary teaching is an important part of English teaching. However, in the actual teaching process, junior high school students cannot express their ideas accurately and smoothly because of their incomplete grasp of vocabulary meaning and lack of vocabulary. To cultivate students' language expression ability, teachers need to strengthen students' vocabulary accumulation. Junior high school students need to memorize a large number of words, and rote learning alone is not feasible. Therefore, teachers should not only teach students the basic knowledge of English words, but also teach students how to memorize words efficiently. This is also an effective way to improve the quality of junior high school English teaching. Considering the special environment in rural areas, it is necessary to help students learn vocabulary strategies and improve their vocabulary memory. This paper mainly discusses the English Vocabulary Learning Strategies of rural junior middle schools and the general characteristics of vocabulary learning concepts. In order to test whether junior high school students' mastery of vocabulary learning strategies will affect their own English proficiency, the author gives guidance to junior high school students in rural areas. This paper also puts forward some substantive suggestions on cultivating students' vocabulary strategies, with a view to providing some help to English teachers in rural areas in vocabulary teaching.

Keywords: Vocabulary teaching; Junior high school English; Learning strategy.

1. Research Background

The textbooks used by junior high school students contain a large amount of vocabulary. Most of the vocabulary is very necessary and useful in daily life, basic communication and future learning. These vocabularies are the cornerstone of the English language. Therefore, it is very important for rural junior high school students to learn English vocabulary better. However, the majority of rural junior high school students have limited motivation to learn English, and their basic English level is far lower than that of students in urban and developed areas. In addition, boring English words and their weak English foundation indirectly make students lose confidence in English vocabulary learning and interest in English language. Therefore, teachers need to adopt some effective and interesting vocabulary teaching methods to teach English vocabulary. The quantity and quality of vocabulary mastered by students is an important basic knowledge that affects the language ability of junior high school. The author finds that compared with urban schools, the phenomenon of English learning difficulties caused by vocabulary learning disabilities is more common in rural schools. The main reasons can be summarized as the following aspects: first, the concept of vocabulary teaching in rural schools is relatively backward, and a vocabulary passing mode based on small tests and supplementary tests has generally been formed. Teachers and students can invest more time to improve vocabulary learning. Secondly, while paying attention to the implementation of vocabulary, rural teachers often neglect the effective penetration of vocabulary learning strategies, resulting in the lack of systematic collation and internalization while students increase their vocabulary. For a long time, the burden of vocabulary memory has been increasing, but it is difficult to substantially improve the ability of language use. At the same time, limited by the educational horizon and the long-term educational paradigm, the vocabulary teaching in rural schools is more utilitarian,

mainly exam oriented, and teachers do not mobilize enough extra-curricular education resources. Therefore, it is difficult to create a real vocabulary learning environment in the classroom. The above factors lead to a general lack of awareness of using vocabulary learning strategies and the ability to use vocabulary learning strategies among rural students, resulting in a heavy burden on vocabulary learning and becoming a stumbling block for rural students to learn English. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively mobilize the awareness of using vocabulary learning strategies, promote their ability to use vocabulary learning strategies, give full play to the students' autonomous learning ability, and finally achieve the goal of improving the effectiveness of vocabulary learning.

1.1. Research Purpose

Most of the students in rural areas started to receive English education in junior high school, missing the golden age of English language learning. Most of them are left behind children, and most of the guardians are older elders, so they cannot guide and supervise their English learning. This has caused many students not to develop good learning habits, and English learning is a long-term accumulation process. The learning state cannot be maintained for a long time. Students only rely on classroom learning during school. Due to the lack of supervision on weekends and winter and summer holidays, the knowledge learned at ordinary times was not reviewed in time and was quickly forgotten, resulting in the unsatisfactory learning effect. Moreover, due to the relatively small number of young teachers in remote areas, the concept of English vocabulary teaching is relatively backward. English vocabulary teaching is still based on regular teachers' eulogy, translation of vocabulary, copying of vocabulary, dictation of words according to Chinese interpretation, and demonstration of example sentences. With the increase of learning difficulty, students have a fear of difficulties. Over time, students gradually lose interest in

English learning. Combined with the environment and educational background, it highlights the importance of English Vocabulary Teaching in rural areas and the urgent need for relevant research. For the majority of rural junior high school front-line English teachers, this study can help them understand the actual situation of rural students using vocabulary learning strategies, adjust the vocabulary teaching methods in time according to the corresponding characteristics, optimize the vocabulary teaching process, reflect on the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching, and then improve the vocabulary teaching ability. In general, this study investigates the use of vocabulary learning strategies among rural junior high school students, and analyzes the correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and learning outcomes through questionnaires and tests, so as to provide useful guidance for English teaching and learning in rural junior high schools.

1.2. Research Significance

Mastering vocabulary is an important component of English teaching and learning in junior high school. Whether it is based on the consideration of the development of students' language ability, or in view of the requirements of English for the secondary school entrance examination for vocabulary, it is of practical significance to overcome vocabulary learning obstacles. In terms of vocabulary learning, this research can explore the characteristics of vocabulary learning strategies used by rural school students in this area, understand the differences between urban school students and rural school students in vocabulary learning strategies, think about how to use their own learning resources, and improve the effectiveness of vocabulary learning through vocabulary learning strategy training, so as to help rural school students with English learning difficulties overcome the fear of memorizing vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Review of Foreign Studies

Foreign studies focus on the definition of vocabulary learning strategies. Rubin (1975) put forward the importance of vocabulary learning strategies and defined vocabulary learning strategies as follows: "vocabulary learning strategies refer to any steps, plans and practices adopted to acquire, store and use foreign language information". Through his research, the objectives of vocabulary learning strategies have been clearly explained, but the content and form of vocabulary learning strategies are not specific enough. Cohen (1998) made a clearer definition of vocabulary learning strategies in his research. He proposed that "vocabulary learning strategies are conscious behaviors and psychological activities of language learners. The purpose of these behaviors is to make it easier to learn foreign language knowledge and use foreign language skills". Oxford (1990) proposed that language learning strategies include direct and indirect strategies, which are equal and complementary. Direct strategies are directly related to the learning process, including cognitive strategies and memory strategies. Indirect strategies mainly include metacognitive strategies to adjust the cognitive process, emotional strategies to mobilize learning emotions, and social strategies to promote cooperative learning. They affect the language learning process through indirect influence. Hogben & Lawson (1996) classified vocabulary learning strategies into four categories: repetition recognition,

vocabulary feature analysis, simple analysis and complex analysis. Among them, repetition recognition includes repeated reading, copying and self-test. Nation (1996) proposed that the efficiency of vocabulary memory will be improved by sorting out the word list. Hucldn (2001) carried out relevant research on vocabulary guessing strategies based on specific context. By analyzing the effectiveness of different vocabulary learning strategies, linguist Brown & hatch (2001) summed up six steps of vocabulary learning, including: contacting new words, analyzing word forms, mastering word meanings, consolidating and strengthening, practical application and vocabulary research. The research results reflect the practice of vocabulary learning strategy research to guide vocabulary learning.

2.2. Review of Domestic Studies

The research on vocabulary learning strategies in China is multi-faceted, covering language learners at different stages. Yao Meilin and Wu Jianmin (2000) conducted a questionnaire survey on 134 junior high school students to explore their English vocabulary learning strategies. The research finds that junior high school students mainly use mechanical and simple vocabulary learning strategies. Their research also found that excellent vocabulary learners in junior high school would adopt more flexible and specific vocabulary learning strategies. When the difficulty of vocabulary learning is high, these excellent vocabulary learners will mobilize more vocabulary learning strategies. Yang Jinfeng (2004) studied the characteristics of vocabulary learning strategies used by 126 junior high school students, and explored the correlation between the use of vocabulary learning strategies and the results of the secondary school entrance examination. The results showed that there were 12 kinds of vocabulary learning strategies and the results of the secondary school entrance examination. Cai Xin(1998) proposed that among which the use of dictionary reference, context combination and repeated memory is the most frequent, but the use of association and classification strategies is less. Shi Hongyan (2010) conducted a study on English excellent students and students with learning difficulties in high schools in poor counties. The results showed that there were obvious differences between English excellent students and students with learning difficulties in their concepts of vocabulary learning and the characteristics of vocabulary learning strategies. Among them, English excellent students were better at using cognitive strategies and social / emotional strategies. The results of this study can be used for reference in the study of English vocabulary learning strategies in rural areas. Gao Yue (2004) conducted a research on 249 non-English majors to find out the effects of gender differences and differences in Arts and Sciences on College Students' vocabulary learning concepts and vocabulary learning strategies. Deng Fang (2012) carried out an empirical study on English vocabulary learning strategies in two junior two classes of a rural middle school in Anhui Province. Through the 13-week training of vocabulary learning strategies in the experimental class, it is found that the frequency of vocabulary learning strategies used by the students in the experimental class has increased significantly. Li Wenbo (2017) conducted an empirical study on vocabulary learning strategies for 76 junior high school students. Through the analysis of the questionnaire and the three-month vocabulary learning strategy teaching for the students in the experimental class, it is finally found that the vocabulary learning strategy

training can optimize the vocabulary learning strategy use level of junior high school students, and promote them to adopt more appropriate vocabulary learning strategies.

3. Research Methods

This study is divided into three stages: before, during and after the vocabulary learning strategy training. Before the strategy training, the students in the experimental class and the control class were surveyed with a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire and a word proficiency pre-test. The purpose of the questionnaire is to understand the characteristics of rural junior high school students' vocabulary learning concepts and vocabulary learning strategies before the strategy training. The results of the proficiency pre-test are used to understand the vocabulary level of the two classes before and after the training, and to provide a reference for the changes in vocabulary learning concepts and strategies before and after the training. In addition, the questionnaire survey results of the high score and the low score of the pre-proficiency test will also be compared to analyze the similarities and differences of vocabulary learning concepts and the use of vocabulary learning strategies between the excellent and poor students. After completing the preparatory work before the training, the author will conduct a two-month vocabulary learning strategy training in the experimental class, while the control class will continue to teach according to the inherent mode of the school. Based on the teaching situation of rural schools and taking into account the learning characteristics of rural students, the author generally insists on adopting a progressive training mode including six steps of "explanation, demonstration, reinforcement, application, evaluation and extension" in the experimental class. After the completion of the strategy training, the author will conduct a questionnaire survey on learning strategies and a post test on vocabulary level. The questionnaire was used to compare whether the vocabulary learning concepts and vocabulary learning strategies of the two classes had changed before and after the experiment. The post test results of vocabulary level are used to compare the pre-test data and analyze whether there is a gap between the vocabulary level of the control class and the experimental class before and after the training.

4. English Vocabulary Strategy Training in Junior Middle School

4.1. Metacognitive Strategy Training

Metacognitive strategies play a positive role in the process of learning. By optimizing the process of language learning, they can regulate cognitive strategies and indirectly affect the results of information processing. Training Metacognitive strategies can promote students' ability of autonomous learning, independent thinking and overall planning.

First, students should make short-term and long-term vocabulary learning plans under the guidance of teachers. The plan should be detailed to the number of words learned and the quality of learning results within a certain period of time. At the same time, according to the content of vocabulary learning, students should initially select the cognitive strategies that are most suitable for their learning characteristics and consciously strengthen their use. For example, when reviewing the topic of diet in Unit5, Volume 1 of the seventh grade of the people's Education Edition, students can give priority to the classification strategy, which

is divided into vegetable, fruit, eat, drink and dessert according to the type of food; Or divide the food into countable food, uncountable food, countable food and uncountable food according to countable and uncountable. Secondly, students should learn vocabulary in strict accordance with the plan. For students with poor learning consciousness and motivation, the form of pairing should be adopted to supervise the implementation of the plan. During the learning process, the students supervise the phased learning results by means of self-test, pairing mutual test, teacher sampling test and supervision, and punch in the schedule to track the implementation of the learning plan. At the same time of self-supervision or mutual supervision, students should constantly evaluate the learning process, think about the reasons for stage success or failure, and dynamically adjust the learning strategies used. At the same time, teachers can conduct targeted communication and guidance according to the written reflection completed by students regularly to help students with difficulties adjust their vocabulary learning process.

4.2. Cognitive Strategy Training

Vocabulary does not exist in isolation. Newly learned words often have similar features with the original language system in terms of sound, form and meaning. Association strategy is to make meaningful association with these characteristics, so as to establish the relationship between words or between words and images. These connections can be used as stimulating factors to improve word memory and reduce the learning burden of learners. At present, scholars at home and abroad have classified association strategies from different perspectives, and there is no unified standard. In this experimental study, the author classifies the association strategies into phonetic association, semantic association, singular Association and collocation association based on previous teaching practice.

4.2.1. Voice Association Strategy

The pronunciation characteristics of some English words can be associated with some Chinese Homonyms through association. For example, the pronunciation of "sleeve" can be associated with the Chinese homonym "make the force dance (sleeve)"; The Chinese homonym of the word "myth" is "secret things". You can remember the word by associating "myth is a mysterious thing". Although phonological association can make memory simple, it is not a natural and authentic way of vocabulary learning. Frequent use will not only increase students' memory burden, but also be detrimental to the development of students' English thinking. In the experimental class, teachers should clearly explain that this strategy is suitable for breaking through the difficulties of vocabulary learning, but it is not suitable for regular vocabulary learning.

4.2.2. Semantic Association Strategy

Semantic association is one of the most frequently used vocabulary association strategies. It takes semantic relations as a link and organically combines the new and old vocabulary of learners through association. Semantic association mainly includes synonymous Association, antonym Association, context association, polysemy of a word, etc. For example, when students learn a new word, they can put it together with the synonyms or synonyms they have learned before. For example, when students learn the word "many", the teacher can guide them to think of many, a lot of, lots of, quite a few, etc. with similar meanings through

brainstorming, and distinguish the synonyms with different usages with the help of example sentences. This can not only help students expand their vocabulary, but also master the usage of words. For example, when students learn the word "boring", teachers can arrange students to look up and sort out its antonyms, such as funny, interesting, enhancing, attractive, etc. It is worth noting that although there are many synonyms and antonyms in English vocabulary, in view of the weak language foundation of rural junior high school students, teachers should not overuse this strategy to avoid large memory burden.

4.2.3. Singular Association Strategy

Strange association refers to the learners connecting the old and new languages that are not directly related by exerting certain imagination. For example, many students often confuse November with December when they study. It is easy to distinguish the two words by associating the first letters N and D of the month with the Arabic numerals 11 and 12 through strange Association. However, due to the close combination of strange association with personal life experience, imagination and other factors, there are great individual differences. For example, sometimes the association that the teacher thinks is effective cannot have a strong resonance with the students. Therefore, teachers should focus on cultivating students' awareness of using strange associations, give play to the differences of students' individual imagination, and break through the difficulties and mistakes in vocabulary learning. However, similar to phonological Association, teachers in the experimental class should also clearly explain that strange association should not be widely used in conventional vocabulary learning, so as not to increase unnecessary memory burden.

4.2.4. Collocation Association Strategy

Collocation association refers to the combination of different words into lexical chunks, so it is also called lexical chunk Association. In junior high school English vocabulary, there are many combinations of such words. For example, common verbs and adverbs are collocated with sit down, run fast, work hard, eat well, etc; Verbs and nouns are collocated with "Songs", "watch", "TV", "play", "soccer", "milk", "a cow", etc; Adjectives and nouns are collocated with "exciting story", "boring speech", "lovely girl", "hot summer" and so on; Verbs and different prepositions form phrases with different meanings, such as turn on, turn off, turn up, turn down, etc. Through the combination of lexical chunks, students can better understand the meaning and usage of the words. And after the combination, the number of units that students need to remember is reduced, which is conducive to the storage and extraction of information. Therefore, when teaching vocabulary, teachers should try to combine words into meaningful lexical chunks, and conduct oral or written exercises in class. At the same time, teachers should reduce the number of individual and scattered words and increase the proportion of phrases in the vocabulary test.

5. Research Results and Discussions

First, most rural junior high school students have a traditional concept of vocabulary learning. Students generally believe that vocabulary learning is mainly through repeated recitation, which reflects the traditional vocabulary teaching mode of rural middle schools for a long time. However, rural junior high school students have also reached a regular level in the two learning concepts of "vocabulary needs to be

learned through application" and "vocabulary needs to be learned in combination with context". This is a new discovery of this study, which reflects that rural junior high school students have basically acquired correct vocabulary learning concepts, which creates favorable conditions for cultivating rural students' vocabulary learning strategies. At the same time, this new discovery also reflects the improvement of the overall quality of rural teachers, infiltrates the correct vocabulary learning concepts into students in daily teaching, and has a positive impact.

Second, as far as vocabulary learning strategies are concerned, the use of rural students is still relatively low. The main vocabulary learning mode is mainly through repeated reading or copying and Chinese translation. Although the vocabulary learning strategies of rural students are still based on traditional methods, this study finds that rural students have a better grasp of "application strategies" and use them more frequently. This shows that rural students generally form the habit of learning vocabulary through application. This new discovery may be related to the fact that rural English classroom teaching is gradually focusing on students as the main body, task-oriented and helping students learn new words through a certain context. However, students' use of cognitive strategies such as classification strategies, association strategies, context strategies, and word form analysis strategies is low, which indicates that rural students are generally unable to flexibly use different vocabulary learning strategies to learn vocabulary. Among the metacognitive strategies, rural students most often use selective attention strategies. This is a new finding of this study. It shows that the vocabulary learning obstacle of rural students is not that they do not know what to learn, but that they do not know how to learn. At the same time, it also reflects that rural teachers have a good grasp of the key and difficult points in vocabulary teaching, which provides favorable conditions for rural students to learn vocabulary. However, rural students' use of pre planning strategies is very low, which indicates that rural students are more passive in vocabulary learning and lack of independent planning consciousness. In social / affective strategies, rural students scored higher in "self-motivation", which is conducive to the formation of positive vocabulary learning motivation. However, the low score of rural students in the "asking for help strategy" indicates that rural students are less willing to actively communicate with teachers and classmates, so it is difficult for them to improve their vocabulary learning strategies through active communication. Therefore, rural teachers need to pay more attention to the individual differences of students' Vocabulary learning characteristics and provide targeted guidance on learning methods.

Third, through comparison, it is found that there are similarities and differences in vocabulary learning concepts between students with learning disabilities and students with learning disabilities. Both the excellent students and the poor students in rural areas have strong traditional vocabulary learning concepts. It is generally believed that vocabulary learning cannot be separated from repeated memory. This shows that the vocabulary learning concepts of the excellent students and the poor students are deeply affected by the traditional vocabulary teaching mode in rural areas. However, compared with the poor students, the excellent students have more flexible vocabulary learning concepts. They not only recognize the traditional concept of vocabulary learning, but also accept the concept of vocabulary learning through use

and context. Therefore, compared with the students with learning difficulties, the excellent students are more likely to accept and adopt different vocabulary learning strategies. Therefore, in the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers need to pay attention to the impact of differences in vocabulary learning concepts on vocabulary learning.

6. Limitations and Prospects

6.1. Limitations

The results of this study show that vocabulary learning strategy training can have a positive impact on rural students' vocabulary learning. Therefore, rural English teachers should actively and deliberately train students to master scientific and effective vocabulary learning strategies in their daily teaching, so as to improve the effectiveness of rural students' vocabulary learning. The implications of the findings of this study for vocabulary teaching in rural junior high schools are as follows:

Although the overall quality of English teachers in rural areas is constantly improving, it is still necessary to recognize the large gap between urban and rural teachers and the level of teaching and research. Rural teachers should consciously improve the theoretical level of vocabulary learning strategies, increase the practical experience of vocabulary learning strategies training, and constantly adjust the traditional vocabulary teaching concepts and teaching methods. Although traditional vocabulary learning strategies still have positive significance for rural students' vocabulary learning, rural teachers still need to organically integrate effective vocabulary learning strategies into traditional vocabulary teaching, so as to change the current situation of vocabulary learning mainly by increasing time input and mechanical repetition, and finally transform students' mechanical memory of vocabulary into deep-seated learning.

Although this study has solved the previously established problems, there are still the following shortcomings:

There are great individual differences among students, which are closely related to their age, gender, growth environment, cognitive style, academic level and so on. Individual differences have a profound impact on the choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies. Although the training content selected in this study has discussed some differences, it is not deep enough and comprehensive enough. Therefore, the relationship between individual differences and the use of vocabulary learning strategies needs to be further explored.

6.2. Prospects

The follow-up research also needs to further understand the impact of vocabulary learning strategies on vocabulary

learning effectiveness and learning of different individuals through observation and analysis of vocabulary learning of different experimental learners, so as to enhance the practical promotion value of this research. At the same time, this study is only conducted in one grade. Whether other grades can also explore a set of training models worthy of universal promotion in combination with the characteristics of learning needs to be tried by the majority of rural frontline teachers. Finally, it can truly integrate vocabulary learning strategies with vocabulary learning in the whole junior high school stage, and fundamentally narrow the gap between urban and rural students in vocabulary level.

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