

# The Application of Cooperative Learning in English Reading Teaching in Junior School

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**Abstract.** English reading occupies a large proportion in junior school. It helps to broaden students' horizon and stimulate students' interest in learning English. In the current period of English reading teaching in junior school, many students are not interested in reading because English reading is difficult for them. Therefore, in order to change the situation, Cooperative Learning, as a new teaching mode, has a positive effect on improving the efficiency of junior English reading teaching. It can highlight the subjectivity of students and provide equal opportunities for each student.

## 1. Introduction

English reading is an important way to increase interest and knowledge in English learning. Reading ability occupies an important position in English teaching, and the cultivation of reading ability is the most important part of English teaching. Cooperative Learning, as a new learning model, is a good way to improve classroom learning atmosphere and enhance students' academic performance. It is a teaching strategy based on student-centered and group-based learning, promoting and improving together for the same learning objectives.

## 2. The Analysis of the Current Situation in English Reading Teaching in Junior School

Reading is an important social and cultural skill that people need to master and develop in today's society. As one of the four basic skills of language learning, English reading plays an important role. English reading teaching in junior school is responsible for the construction of a relatively complete system of English language literacy for students. It is the key stage of the comprehensive accomplishment of students' comprehensive literacy of "listening, speaking, reading and writing".

### 2.1 Teachers' main position

At present, many teachers in our junior school still employ the *Grammar-Translation Method* and ignore the whole article's ideological construction. By using that method, students' oral and listening ability have been ignored and cannot achieve the purpose of training students' communicative competence. Besides, the teaching process of *Grammar-Translation Method* often depends too much on teachers. Teachers basically control the whole classroom, and students have fewer opportunities to participate in interaction.

### 2.2 Students' bad habits in reading

Nowadays, since students have not cultivated their proper interest in reading yet, they do not have good reading habits. Therefore, the reading status of junior school students in China becomes a problem. Many students are afraid of reading because of the length of the article or new words, so they lose interests in reading English and also lack confidence in reading.

### 2.3 Inflexible teaching method

Some teachers will let the students do a lot of exercises related to the language knowledge in the

text. It is not enough to ensure that students have enough time to read independently, and can't develop their reading skills smoothly.

Since the above problems exist in junior school English reading, it is necessary to employ a new teaching method to solve them.

### **3. Brief Introduction to Cooperative Learning**

As an innovative teaching mode, Cooperative Learning plays a positive role in improving teaching efficiency. In the process of Cooperative Learning, students can be both competitive and cooperative, which can also constantly stimulate students' motivation to explore knowledge. Group Cooperative Learning is a kind of teaching strategy, combining class students into a learning group according to certain requirements. Students jointly study and discuss the learning tasks set by teachers and jointly carry out learning activities, so that each member of the group can get better learning results.

Different countries have different names of Cooperative Learning theory and practice, such as "Cooperative Education", "Cooperative Teaching", etc., but the meaning is basically the same, in order to improve students' awareness of cooperation, social skills, innovative spirit and practical ability and so on. Because of that, it has been paid much attention from all over the world.

#### **3.1 Grouping reasonable division**

Carrying out Group Cooperative Learning helps junior school English teachers fully understand students' characteristics, the usual English performance, interest, and communicative competence. When dividing groups, there can be some differences of members in the group, but there is no big difference between the general level of different groups. The students in the group can learn from each other's strengths and help each other in the process of communication, so as to cultivate and improve the spirit of cooperation among junior school students.

#### **3.2 Cultivating Cooperative ability**

Because the application of Group Cooperative Learning mode in junior English reading teaching is relatively short, students will feel confused during cooperative study. Therefore, when developing Cooperative Learning in junior English reading teaching, students should avoid following blindly. Each group should have one group leader, and the group leader needs to collect, summarize and analyze the different opinions of the members in the group, and constantly modify and improve the conclusions in combination with the questions raised by the teachers.

#### **3.3 Regulating and guiding students**

Cooperative Learning should be timely and must have clear tasks. *The New Curriculum Standard* advocates *Task-Based Language Teaching*, and most tasks needs to be completed through cooperation. This requires teachers to thoroughly study teaching materials before class and design a challenging, open and exploratory task.

### **4. The Application of Cooperative Learning in Junior English Reading Teaching**

When we use Group Cooperative Learning to guide junior English reading teaching, we should first divide the whole reading class into three stages that is pre-reading stage, while-reading stage and post-reading stage.

#### **4.1 Pre-reading stage**

The purpose of pre-reading is to activate prior knowledge in an attempt to boost comprehension of the text, so that students can do well in the following activities. It involves some activities that students should finish before they read the whole passage in detail. Teachers always draw students' existing knowledge and arouse students' interests in this stage.

At this stage, teachers should enrich students' background knowledge and let students master the necessary language knowledge so that students will feel easy to read. When using Group Cooperative Learning in Junior English reading teaching, teachers must take full account of different reading materials and students' personality characteristics. The forms of activities can be: questions and answers, games, discussions, quizzes, etc.

Pre-reading stage can make students fully recognize what they have already known and make great use of that kind of knowledge for reading.

#### **4.2 While-reading stage**

Reading skills have to be paid much attention in while-reading stage. It involves activities or tasks that students should perform while they are reading. And the followings are the detailed steps to employ Cooperative Learning in while-reading stage.

First, the teacher should divide the whole class into several groups. Second, according to the activities, students should have plenty of time to do group work. Third, reading fast to understand the meaning of the passage. Fourth, reading in detail to get important information.

The common forms of while-reading activities are: T or F; Completing the sentences; Questions and answers; Filling in the chart; Filling in the blanks; Making a pair or making a competition.

By using Group Cooperative Learning in while-reading stage, some students can adjust their reading skills and use another reading strategies comparing to other group members and gradually develop accurate reading habits.

#### **4.3 Post-reading stage**

In order to assure long-term retention of what they have read, post-reading stage consists of many activities. It is actually a stage to examine or a chance to obtain the feedback on students' performance at while-reading stage. In order to help junior students deepen their thinking about reading, the teacher can conduct a series of teaching activities which can be formed as role play, discussion and interview.

The main task of post-reading stage is to check students' reading effect through speaking or writing, so it can be regarded as an output stage. The common activities at this stage include role play, retelling, discussion, interview and storytelling.

### **5. Conclusion**

Nowadays, it is the time of knowledge competition and such competition cannot be won individually. By using Cooperative Learning, students can discuss and analyze different types of junior English reading materials in the forms of grouping.

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