



# The Application of Cooperative Learning in Senior High School Oral English Teaching

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**Abstract:** Cooperative learning plays an important role in oral English teaching in senior high schools. English teachers should design cooperative activities in time according to students' oral English level and learning needs, strengthen cooperative consciousness and stimulate cooperative motivation. Its effective strategies include: Build a safe and interactive cooperative learning environment to stimulate students' willingness to communicate; Design diversified cooperation tasks to activate the vitality of classroom learning; Establish a multi-cooperation evaluation mechanism to promote the all-round development of oral English.

**Keywords:** Oral English teaching; Cooperative learning; Effective strategies.

## 1. Introduction

In senior high school English teaching, the effective implementation of oral English teaching is not only an important part of language learning, but also directly related to the cultivation of students' language communicative competence and the improvement of their comprehensive quality. With the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017Edition)[1] attaching importance to students' core literacy, oral English teaching is no longer limited to imitation training of pronunciation and intonation, but pays more attention to students' ability to communicate in real context. The formation of this ability has a far-reaching impact on students' future academic development, entrance examination and even their language use ability in real life and international communication.

Cooperative learning is a kind of learning conducted in a cooperative way. As a kind of teaching method, cooperative learning has two main functions, one is to enhance students' learning effect by reducing the differences between students' cognitive framework and curriculum knowledge framework, and the other is to promote students' socialization development[2]. In the process of oral English teaching, group cooperative learning, as a fruitful teaching strategy, has been paid more and more attention. Students discuss specific oral tasks in groups, discuss communication strategies, and sort out and accumulate common expression materials, which not only enhances the richness of language input, but also enhances the pertinence and flexibility of language output. At the same time, through mutual experience sharing, language imitation, feedback and evaluation, students can find their own problems in oral expression and make timely adjustments, so as to continuously optimize the accuracy and fluency of oral expression. Compared with the traditional teaching method, which is teacher-centered and students passively accept knowledge, group cooperative learning can better embody the teaching concept of "taking students as the main body". Students actively think, dare to express and dare to try in interactive cooperation, which effectively enhances their self-confidence and enthusiasm for expression. Cooperative environment also provides a more authentic and natural communication context for language learners, which helps to reduce language anxiety, break through psychological barriers and stimulate students' intrinsic learning motivation. In the continuous practice and interaction, students gradually master communication skills, improve language control ability, and move towards a higher level of language application. In addition, group cooperation also cultivates students' team consciousness, sense of responsibility and critical thinking ability, promotes the coordinated development of language learning and interpersonal skills, and meets the requirements of high school English teaching in the new era for the development of students' comprehensive literacy. Therefore, the effective integration of cooperative learning mode into oral English teaching is the key path to achieve the goal of English Curriculum and comprehensively improve students' language ability .

## 2. The connotation of cooperative learning

The concept of cooperative learning can be traced back to the United States in the early 1970s. This teaching theory and strategy made substantial progress from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and because of its remarkable effectiveness in improving the social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom, and improving students' academic performance in a large area, it quickly attracted the attention of all countries in the world and became one of the mainstream teaching theories

and strategies in contemporary times. Scholars in different countries have different definitions of cooperative learning. The following are the definitions given by several well-known scholars at home and abroad and my own understanding of cooperative learning.

Abroad, Robert Slavin (1980)[3], director and professor of the Center for Educational Research and Reform of Johns Hopkins University School of Education in the United States, thinks that cooperative learning refers to the classroom teaching technology that students engage in learning activities in groups and obtain awards according to the results of their whole group. David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson (2011)[4] believe that cooperative learning is to use groups in teaching, so that students can work together to maximize their own and others' learning.

In China, the concept of cooperative learning has also been widely concerned and studied, and different scholars have given their own definitions in their research. Wang Tan[5] believes that cooperative learning is an activity that takes learning groups as the basic organizational form, systematically uses the interaction between teaching dynamic factors to promote learning, and takes group achievement as the evaluation standard to jointly achieve teaching goals. Liu Yanjin and Wen Sihan (2016)[6] believe that the classroom of cooperative learning is like a small society, and emotional attitude factors are the glue that unites members of society.

In my opinion, the concept of cooperative learning is a very efficient and enlightening way of learning. It emphasizes the process that team members achieve their learning goals through active interaction, communication and cooperation.

### **3. Current Problems in oral English teaching in senior high schools**

The lack of oral English ability not only affects students' language ability and college entrance examination scores, but also reflects that their core literacy such as cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability have not been developed simultaneously. In the long run, it will lead to the narrowing of international vision and the weakening of cross-cultural communication ability, reduce the spread of China's voice, and affect the competitiveness and leadership of talents[7]. At present, there are three main problems in oral English teaching in senior high schools.

The first is that students' oral expression ability is weak and their willingness to communicate is low. One of the important reasons is the lack of effective cooperative learning mechanism in the classroom. Many classrooms still focus on teachers' lectures and individual responses, ignoring the interaction between students, and lacking cooperative oral activities such as group discussion, role-playing and situational dialogue, which leads to the lack of safe and relaxed language output environment for students. Especially under the pressure of examination, students are generally worried that grammar mistakes or inaccurate pronunciation will be criticized by teachers or laughed at by classmates, which will lead to oral anxiety and further inhibit their willingness to express themselves. At the same time, the existing cooperative task design is often a mere formality, with simple content and lack of real communication context, which makes it difficult to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and language use needs. In addition, some teachers lack systematic guidance on the organization of cooperative learning, and the classroom management is loose, which leads to the inefficiency of group activities and the inability to form effective interaction. In fact, cooperative learning, as a student-centered teaching mode, can not only promote the real input and output of language, but also help to cultivate students' communicative competence, autonomous learning ability and teamwork consciousness. Therefore, in oral English teaching in senior high schools, we should attach importance to the design and implementation of cooperative learning, and stimulate students' desire to express themselves through scientific grouping, situational creation and task-driven, so as to enhance their language application ability in real context and gradually improve their oral English level.

The second problem is the rigidity of learning activities. This is closely related to the lack of effective cooperative learning arrangements in the classroom. Many oral activities still remain at the level of mechanical repetition and scripted reading, such as single sentence pattern drills, designated dialogue reading, etc., lacking real situations and communication goals, resulting in students' low enthusiasm for participation. In the absence of cooperative learning, students lack opportunities for interaction and thinking collision, and it is difficult to stimulate students' creativity and express ideas in the learning process. In contrast, cooperative learning emphasizes student-centered, and through group cooperation, role division and task-driven, students can negotiate meaning and solve problems in real context, thus effectively improving their oral English ability. However, teachers ignore the cooperative mechanism in teaching design, which leads to the lack of task diversity and thinking challenges in oral English class, and students are in a state of passive acceptance for a long time. In order to change the current situation of rigid learning activities, teachers should introduce communicative, exploratory and collaborative oral tasks, such as group project report, situational discussion, viewpoint debate, etc., with the help of cooperative learning to stimulate students' expression potential and promote oral teaching from "doing tasks" to "solving problems with language".

The third problem is the simplification of evaluation methods. The single evaluation method in senior high school oral

English teaching is one of the important factors that affect students' oral English development and classroom participation. One of the key factors is the lack of a multi-evaluation system based on cooperative learning. At present, the oral evaluation in most schools is still mainly in the form of individual reading, recitation and single oral test, which emphasizes the results and ignores the process, and the evaluation criteria are vague, lacking the investigation of students' language application ability in cooperative communication. This evaluation method not only fails to fully reflect students' actual communicative competence, but also tends to ignore students' active participation, negotiation strategies and language transfer ability in cooperative learning. At the same time, cooperative learning should provide rich evaluation opportunities, such as peer evaluation, group presentation, cooperative task performance, etc., which can better reflect students' language ability and communication literacy in real context. However, in actual teaching, due to the lack of cooperative learning-oriented evaluation and design ability of teachers and the limitation of classroom time and mechanism, cooperative evaluation is often ignored or a mere formality, and an effective feedback and incentive mechanism cannot be formed. In order to break the dilemma of single evaluation method, formative evaluation should be closely combined with cooperative learning. Through multi-dimensional and multi-angle evaluation methods, we should not only pay attention to language correctness, but also pay more attention to students' expressive ability, participation and teamwork performance in the process of cooperation, so as to promote students' comprehensive oral ability.

#### **4. Effective application strategies of cooperative learning in oral English teaching in senior high schools**

In order to effectively solve the common problems in oral English teaching in senior high schools, such as "students' weak oral expression ability, low willingness to communicate", "rigid learning activities" and "single evaluation method", this paper puts forward three teaching strategies based on cooperative learning, aiming at improving students' confidence in language expression, enthusiasm for participation and comprehensive oral English ability by optimizing classroom structure and interaction mechanism.

##### **4.1 Build a safe and interactive cooperative learning environment to stimulate students' willingness to communicate**

In view of students' weak oral expression ability and low willingness to speak, teachers should create a safe, inclusive and interactive language learning environment through cooperative learning to effectively alleviate students' anxiety and withdrawal in oral expression. First of all, group construction should be carried out reasonably, and the way of "peer support+heterogeneous grouping" should be adopted, so that students with strong language ability can be paired with students with weak expression ability to form a mutual learning community, so that disadvantaged students can gain trust and support in cooperation and are more willing to express themselves. Secondly, teachers should carefully design low-threshold and gradual cooperative tasks, such as information gap, group story answering, role-playing games, real situation simulation and other activities. These tasks are easy, interesting and communicative, and help students to express themselves naturally in real or near-real language environment.

Classroom management should focus on creating a non-threatening communication atmosphere. Meanwhile, teachers should encourage students to express original ideas, and emphasize that "language is used for communication, not for perfection", thus alleviating students' excessive concern about grammatical errors or inaccurate pronunciation. Teachers can also use "encouraging feedback" and "fuzzy error correction strategies" (such as retelling and guiding correction) to help students improve their language expression in a relaxed way, rather than directly interrupting or denying it. By setting up a mutual discussion mechanism within the group, students are encouraged to correct mistakes and complement each other in their expression, which is not only conducive to improving the quality of expression, but also helps to enhance the sense of identity and belonging among peers. In addition, staged presentation or reporting opportunities can be arranged, such as group presentation and small-scale exhibition competition, which not only enhances students' sense of accomplishment, but also enables them to gradually adapt to the process of public expression in the collective. Under this continuous cooperative interaction and positive encouragement, students will gradually overcome the psychological barrier of "fear of making mistakes", enhance their confidence and ability in oral expression, and improve their level of real language use.

##### **4.2 Design diversified cooperation tasks to activate the vitality of classroom learning**

In view of the single form and rigid content of learning activities in the current oral class, teachers should use the concept of cooperative learning to design communicative tasks with diverse forms, clear goals and challenging contents to promote the transformation of oral class from "mechanical practice" to "real communication". In practice, teachers can

adopt the way of “task-driven+group cooperation”, and set up diversified activities such as group project report, situational debate, opinion negotiation and role task solving, so that students can realize multi-level output such as meaning negotiation, language organization and opinion expression in cooperation.

These activities should be close to the reality of students’ life or social hot topics, and enhance the realistic relevance of learning and language use motivation. For example, organize a group lecture with the theme of “Suggestions on Campus Environmental Protection” and “Comparison of Chinese and Western Festival Cultures”, so that students can realize knowledge construction and language processing in the process of task promotion through information search, viewpoint integration and language negotiation. Through cooperative forms such as role discussion, information completion and achievement display, students can improve their language fluency and communication strategies in multiple rounds of interaction, and break through the learning mode of simple imitation and recitation. Besides, teachers should pay attention to hierarchy and progressiveness in task design, gradually enhance the complexity and cognitive challenges of tasks, and push students to move from surface language output to deep logical expression and critical thinking. In this process, cooperative learning not only enriches the classroom forms, but also enhances students’ desire to express and learning vitality, and constructs an efficient oral English classroom centered on “communicative tasks”.

### **4.3 Establish a multi-cooperation evaluation mechanism to promote the all-round development of oral English**

In terms of the problem that the evaluation method in oral English teaching in senior high schools is single, and the results are emphasized over the process, a comprehensive evaluation mechanism combining diversification, process and finality should be established under the background of cooperative learning, so as to give full play to the feedback and incentive functions of evaluation. Traditional reading, reciting or single question-and-answer evaluation can not fully reflect students’ communicative competence, and it is difficult to encourage students to actively participate in cooperation. Therefore, teachers can introduce the concept of “process evaluation+cooperative evaluation”, and adopt the methods of group mutual evaluation, peer mutual evaluation, self-reflection. For example, after the task of the group project is finished, students are organized to evaluate and score each other around the task completion, language expression quality, group cooperation degree, etc. At the same time, teachers give individual feedback and suggestions based on observation records to help students adjust their expression strategies and cooperation methods in time. Teachers can also set up an “oral English growth portfolio” to record students’ performance videos, language output texts, and self-evaluation in order to form a visual track of personal growth and enhance their sense of purpose and accomplishment in oral English learning. In addition, the cooperative ability itself should be included in the evaluation dimension, such as the initiative of language interaction, the skills of listening and responding, the attitude of negotiation and compromise, etc., so as to promote students to learn to communicate in expression and improve themselves in cooperation. By establishing a cooperative evaluation system based on multiple subjects (teachers, peers and self), oral English class will no longer be a performance field for “answering questions alone”, but an interactive space for students to grow together, thus comprehensively improving students’ comprehensive language literacy.

## **5. Conclusion**

Under the guidance of core literacy, the effective application of cooperative learning in senior high school oral English teaching will not only help to solve the problems of students’ low willingness to communicate, rigid learning activities and single evaluation methods, but also cultivate students’ language application ability and comprehensive literacy in real communication. By building a safe and interactive cooperative learning environment, designing diversified cooperative tasks, and establishing a multi-cooperation evaluation mechanism, cooperative learning provides students with a broader platform for language practice, stimulates their learning motivation, and promotes the coordinated development of thinking quality and team spirit. In the future, senior high school oral English teaching should continue to deepen the application of cooperative learning, fully leveraging its positive role in improving students’ comprehensive language proficiency and core literacy, and laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and cross-cultural communication.

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