Research on Online Education of English Listening and Speaking

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*Abstract:*With the continuous development of the Internet, the sharing and opening of high-quality resources not only improves the level of educational resources serving teaching, but also bring opportunities and challenges to the reform of junior high school education and teaching. Under the background of a global COVID-19 outbreak, the whole-time and whole-scale online education is a necessary teaching approach in the pandemic situation. Based on the inevitable advent of the era of online education, this paper takes the junior high school online English listening and speaking courses as its study object. From the perspective of studying online listening and speaking education and with relevant teaching theories, it tries to put forward solutions to the problems existing in the current online education of English listening and speaking through analyzing the problems in English teaching on the "est100" platform. There is much research on the teaching of junior high school students' English listening and speaking ability, but little from the perspective of online education. On the basis of existing research results, this paper discusses the shortcomings of current online English listening and speaking education with cases, and puts forward suggestions for improvement, so as to provide reference for further optimization of online English listening and speaking education.

1.   Introduction

The current outbreak of covid-19 has had a great impact on the whole world. In order to effectively control the epidemic, the Chinese government has implemented comprehensive and effective measures. Among them, the implementation of online education to realize students' learning at home has a profound impact on the national education system, because the full-scale implementation of online education is a huge challenge involving the application of teaching technology, teaching quality assurance and teaching management. Online teaching is a teaching method that has been committed to be promoted in China's field of education. The *Ten-Year Development Plan of Education Informatization* issued by the Ministry of education proposes promoting the integrated development of information technology and teaching, and promoting the intelligent teaching environment. The proposal of this task has established the development direction of education informatization in the new era [1]. The *Focus of Education Informatization in 2014* also points out that, based on the practical problems in educational reform, integrating teaching and information technology should centered at promoting the deep integration [2]. Through the national policy, we

can understand that the use of modern information technology in teaching is the general trend of the development of the times. The integration of education and information technology has become one of China's strategic objectives in the new era, which also makes the traditional classroom teaching face great challenges. Junior high school, as the important joint between primary school and high school, is an important stage, in which English learning is significant. According to the *New Curriculum Standard for Junior High School English*, as for junior high school English teaching, teachers should take the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability in language usage as the goal, the basics of which include grammar and vocabulary, and the language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. Junior high school English listening and speaking courses pay more attention to the cultivation of this comprehensive ability [3]. Listening and speaking is not only the difficult part and key point of teaching, but also the core standard to judge whether the teaching is good or bad [3].

In view of current situation, how to better integrate technology into teaching and to better improve the teaching effect at the same time as using the technology to serve education, has become a meaningful research question. On the basis of existing research, this study explores the characteristics, current situation, existing problems and related theories of online teaching of English listening and speaking. According to the study results and case analysis, it gives thoughts and suggestions for online English teaching.

2. Research on teaching listening and speaking online

2.1. A brief introduction to online education of listening and speaking

Language is the most important tool in communication. Speaking and listening is the bridge of communication and expression between people, and also an important part of language learning. In English learning, learners' language level can be reflected by speaking and listening to a certain extent. *English Curriculum Standards (2017)* points out that junior high school students should be able to extract useful views from written and oral materials, try to use different educational resources, communicate with others with correct intonation and pronunciation for topics related to daily life, and further form certain language expression ability on this basis [4]. The *Outline of National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* points out that at the stage of basic education, teachers should help students learn to study, and pay attention to cultivate their ability to adapt to the society and self-learning. While updating teaching concepts, teachers should also improve teaching methods, giving full play to the role of modern information technology and encouraging students to learn actively by means of information [5][6]. The intelligent English teaching based on Internet technology optimizes learning resources and enables students to acquire more learning materials and knowledge through modern learning methods such as Internet sources, online experts, peer collaboration, and so on. At the same time, it also promotes personalized education – students can choose the time and place of class independently and control the learning progress freely [7]. Therefore, the use of technology in junior high school English listening and speaking teaching not only is an innovation of traditional teaching methods, which can cultivate students' awareness and ability to use tools to solve practical problems in learning, but also promotes the development of online education to a certain extent.

Therefore, the teaching methods of different disciplines in many institutions are transiting from the main face-to-face teaching to online teaching, or to a hybrid mode of face-to-face and online teaching [8]. The impact of online teaching on language learning is no exception, because there is growing evidence that the use of hybrid methods in language learning can enhance effectiveness [9]. For example, online education continues to be an integral part of higher education institutions in the United States, with every three students enrolled in at least one online course in a semester [10]. In

the past decade, we believe that language teachers need to master specific skills such as information and communication technology before they can develop online teaching ability and become successful teachers online [11]. However, it is no longer controversial today, because the Internet has become an indispensable part of our daily life, and it also plays an important role in the field of education. However, as for current conditions, how to use the Internet in online education is the key issue. Therefore, developers, practitioners and researchers play a key role in helping the whole field of second language learning to master and properly use the Internet [12].

2.2. Relevant theories of listening and speaking education

2.2.1. Sociocultural theory

At first, the sociocultural theory developed in 1920s in Russia. It was an academic school based on Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology [13][14]. It was not until the late 1970s that it became much influential in the western way of thinking. Robbins , Johnson , Hampel and other scholars have done in-depth research on the impact of sociocultural theory on education [15][16][17]. Robbins pointed out that the theory studies how human social activities are connected with mental activities through communication [15]. Sociocultural theory holds that the mental process of individuals is related to the historical background, culture and system, and emphasizes the role of the following three cultural factors – artifacts including technology and language, concepts, and activities including work and education – in the development of higher mental functions such as the use of language and other signs, self-awareness and so on. In terms of the impact of sociocultural theories on knowledge, Johnson concluded that in social activities, the knowledge used in information exchange is obtained from the recognition of the practical group after rethinking and reorganizing the life experience, rather than built on the principle summed up through the observation of phenomena or through summary of the textbook and theories [16]. As mentioned above, the sociocultural theory holds that learning is a social phenomenon promoted by tools such as information environment. Under the influence of today's information environment, while interacting with information and communication technology (ICT), we generate the formation and communication of meaning through these tools with constraints (different ways of interaction) and possibility, as well as the language used [17].

In the process of online teaching, teachers should deeply realize that since technology has become a part of the social environment in which they study, when the environment changes, the interaction and learning methods of students will also change. This can help teachers understand how to better carry out online teaching to some extent.

2.2.2. Situated cognition and learning

Situated cognition is an important learning theory which integrates constructivism and anthropology, which was formed in the middle and late 1980s. In 1989, Brown et al. published *Theoretical foundations of learning environments*, which systematically and completely discussed situated cognition and learning theories [18]. After the 1990s, the situated cognition theory began to penetrate into various fields of education research, including basic education, higher education and adult education. In view of the influence of situated cognition and learning theory on the process of learning and teaching, some scholars have carried out specific research, including Wang Wenjing , Yao Meilin , Hampel , and Lave & Wenger [17][19][20][21]. Wang proposed that in the theory of situated cognition and learning, meaningful learning can happen only when learning is embedded in the context in which the knowledge is applied [19]. This theory emphasizes the importance of external learning environment in learning. Without learning situation, learners cannot master and understand knowledge. Only by integrating the three aspects of culture, learning activities and situation, can learners realize meaningful learning. Although this theory also emphasizes the construction of

meaning, it focuses more on the influence of situation on learning. Scenario design is an important part of the whole teaching design and occupies a certain position in teaching. Different scenario designs will produce different learning effects [20]. According to Lave and Wenger , human cognition is based on activities and situations. Therefore, it is necessary to provide real activities and situations in teaching to help learners create opportunities for understanding and interaction by reflecting how they could use knowledge in real life [21]. At the same time, attention should be paid to the teaching of implicit knowledge, so as to construct a learning mode for learners and cultivate their confidence [17]. After all, the essence of learning is a process of interaction between students' learning environment and other participants in the process of practical activities, and it is also a process of cultivating learners' ability to transfer skills and solve problems [21].

Online education provides technical support for the theory of situated cognition and learning, which provides theoretical basis for online education. In the teaching process, students can obtain relevant information by using the Internet and mobile devices to solve practical problems. In order to improve learners' ability to solve practical problems by transferring knowledge, in the process of online teaching, we can design a real situation for learners to help them combine learning with real life.

2.2.3. Constructivism learning theory

In the 1990s, constructivism emerged in the field of educational psychology. Vygotsky, Bruner and other psychologists extended the theory from the perspectives of human society, psychology and cognitive structure, further enriched and developed the content of constructivism, and finally formed a relatively complete constructivism theory, which became a kind of orientation of philosophy, culturology and pedagogy, and enabled its application in teaching and education [22][23][24]. On this basis, Wang Zhuli and Zheng Yunxiang developed and innovated the constructivism theory [25][26]. They believed that learners can choose learning resources that meet their needs and interests according to their own learning progress and degree. Cai Yanmei proposed that constructivism emphasizes the dynamic nature of knowledge and that learning is an active process of construction [27]. Constructivism holds that the knowledge acquired by learners is not from the instruction of others, but acquired by the sense-making in a specific environment with the help of learning materials and others. According to the theory, an ideal learning environment should contain four elements – meaning construction, cooperation, situation, and conversation. It emphasizes the guiding role of teachers and the dominant position of students. It holds that in the teaching process, teachers should not inculcate and tell, but should provide students with various materials to help learners carry out sense-making [28].

The enlightenment of the theory to this study is that in classroom teaching, teachers can provide students with necessary learning materials for sense-making by using modern technology, simulate the real learning situation, and help students to master the knowledge they learn and use it in real life.

3. Current situation and problems of online listening and speaking teaching

Due to the limitation of time and space, traditional classroom (offline) teaching cannot achieve satisfactory in its depth and breadth in after-class practice, consolidation and implementation, feedback adjustment and other teaching steps. Although in the simple offline teaching, teachers provide students with rich curriculum resources, learners often stay in the "listening" process, a state of listening but not practicing. So, it is difficult to consolidate the learning effect, and is also impossible to get personalized guidance through feedback in time [29]. However, the convenience of online education provides conditions for learners to learn English listening and speaking at any time to a certain extent. The application of mobile technology enriches the way of English learning. For

example, for junior high school students, online learning environment can enhance the flexibility of learning time and increase the opportunity to practice oral English, so that the face-to-face learning and teaching in the classroom and the practice of oral English before and after online courses could be combined, which can not only help learners master basic knowledge, but also extend the space and time of English listening and speaking practice to a certain extent [30]. Therefore, with the development of the times, the Internet will become the center of all educational activities. Teachers teach with the help of the Internet, and students learn with the help of the Internet. People can transfer and share information unlimited on the Internet. The Internet has become the cradle of knowledge development, and offline activities will be the supplement and expansion of online activities [31]. From the perspective of practice and theory, online education has many advantages, including strong accessibility, flexibility, affordability and easier access to timely feedback [32]. In recent years, researchers are more and more interested in online education. However, according to the current situation, there are also many problems in the process of online teaching. I summarized the following prominent problems:

First, the resources available for training language teachers' online teaching ability are scarce [33]. The problems existing in online education cannot be solved with the current training framework of online teaching. At the same time, there is no mechanism that can help language teachers to transform these theoretical frameworks into practices [34]. Due to the lack of thorough understanding of the dynamics and principles of online teaching, language teachers, to a certain extent, do not have enough ability to better complete online teaching tasks and achieve teaching objectives [34].

Second, nowadays, the use of the Internet has affected the language teaching and learning process to a certain extent. In this multicultural, multilingual and multimodal space, there are a large number of online resources with learning potential. These choices with many purposes and almost impossible to manage include educational games, factual or reliable information, and so on [35]. Considering the need to combine teaching philosophy, teaching objectives and activities to be used in the classroom, language teachers need to be able to select resources suitable for their own teaching content from a large number of network resources, and convert the online space into their own available space [36]. However, in the classroom, some language teachers may not have the ability to effectively use these technologies [37].

Third, there will be some problems between the network environment of online teaching and the learning environment expected by teachers. In the process of online teaching, there is an inevitable need for intermediary tools. Whether language teachers can choose and use them properly is also a factor to be considered. Different mediation tools emphasize on different functions, such as the forum focusing on reading and writing and the video conference focusing on oral and listening ability, etc. [36]. And some teachers with certain online teaching experience proposed that in the process of online teaching in a specific environment, some students will use additional tools, such as Baidu Translation or other online dictionaries in the process of interaction [36].

4.   Case analysis of online education pattern

This chapter will analyze the online teaching pattern of junior high school English listening and speaking based on the "est100" platform [38]. "Est100" is a platform for "Internet + Education", based on the idea of "creating a satisfying platform for middle school English preparation". It has various modules used to enhance students' listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. These modules are widely used in listening and speaking teaching. Researchers hope that with the "est100" platform, students can develop the ability in the following three aspects. First, students have accurate tone and pronunciation, and can hear and understand the meaning of basic dialogue. Second, students can actively express their own ideas in English. Finally, students have a certain ability to use information software. In practice, firstly, "E-Listening & Speaking" is used to construct the listening and speaking

teaching scene. Secondly, students are asked to practice the consolidating and comprehensible dialogues provided by the "est100" platform, helping students transfer their listening and speaking ability to the actual situations by group interaction, and helping them to master the listening and speaking ability by sharing their works on the platform. Finally, in-class assessment is realized by the scoring function of the system, ensuring the scientificity and integrity of the teaching pattern. Through online teaching experiment, the researchers finally come to the conclusion that the platform can improve students' listening, to a certain extent, and improve the accuracy of students' oral pronunciation and information reporting ability. At the same time, students' information literacy and learning initiative can also be improved. However, I found that in the Internet-based environment, there are several problems in using "est100" platform for online teaching of listening and speaking.

The first problem is that the platform has the risk of disclosing learners' privacy and academic achievements. This risk includes two aspects. First, the platform needs a mobile phone number which has been registered with user's real name in the registration stage, and learners will receive messages from the platform in the subsequent learning process. I think this not only disturbs the learners' lives, but also has a risk of disclosing users' privacy. Secondly, in the process of uploading learners' works, teachers have the responsibility to ensure that their works will not be provided to other users or websites without the permission of learners, because this involves the problem of disclosing learners' academic achievements.

The second problem is the lack of effective classroom monitoring. Learners can still use their mobile phones freely in the process of using the platform for online learning. Without the restriction of Internet, some students may look up dictionaries or use Baidu Translation, which affects their mastery of knowledge, and others may use other entertainment software while using the platform to learn English listening and speaking. However, for junior high school students whose learning is their main task, this situation is not conducive to the cultivation of students' self-control.

The last problem is that this teaching process doesn't take the students' difference into consideration, so that students could not be taught in accordance with their ability. Through case analysis, I think that the platform needs to strengthen the integration of teaching resources. Because students are individuals with cognitive and personality differences, each student's listening and speaking level is different. However, the practice materials provided by the "est100" platform are of strong unity. Therefore, using the materials with unified question types to carry out standardized teaching is not conducive to the development of students' personality, and also affects their comprehensive ability of English listening and speaking. Moreover, the learning resources provided by the platform are mainly based on school textbooks. In the case of different learning ability and situation of each student, for the students with strong learning ability, the resources provided by the platform cannot further train students' listening and speaking ability, and it is also not conducive to expanding their learning horizons, which cannot improve learners' own listening and speaking ability.

5. Suggestions to teaching online listening and speaking

First of all, online listening and speaking teaching based on the Internet can bring users a more practical communication experience and improve students' enthusiasm. However, in view of the problem that students will use other software during classes, which will affect the learning effect, I think it can be solved from the following points:

First, teachers should help students fully realize the significance and purpose of online teaching based on the Internet. By improving students' cognitive level, they can understand that the use of this method is to help them improve their English listening and speaking level. Moreover, teachers should fully realize that in the teaching process, in order to meet the personalized needs of learners, they should use the rich resources on the Internet intermediary platform, but can't just regard a certain platform as the source of cultivating students' listening and speaking ability. Teachers should learn to

integrate various network resources with the teaching pattern of junior middle school English listening and speaking, so as to build a relatively comprehensive pattern and stimulate students' interest in learning and attract students' attention.

Second, in online teaching of English listening and speaking, the selection of teaching resources should focus on practical application in consideration of students' learning ability and actual basis, so as to meet their development needs. Good teaching resources are generally practical, learnable and reasonable, and can stimulate students' learning enthusiasm [39]. In order to achieve this effect, it is necessary to select and integrate resources effectively and deal with the content of resources properly. Specifically speaking, in the process of integrating teaching resources, we need to pay attention to the following three points. First, based on the related concepts of listening and speaking teaching, such as the sociocultural theory, situated cognition and learning, and constructivism learning theory, teachers should choose and makes good use of different online teaching platforms to construct a language listening and speaking training board with a happy atmosphere and can stimulate students' interest. Secondly, on the basis of considering the current situation of students' ability, teachers should choose the resources that pay more attention to the basics and practices. Thirdly, with full consideration of students' age, ability, and interest, teachers can integrate the practice materials closely related to the real life, so as to stimulate students' self-expression and encourage them to use network resources to study independently and actively carry out interaction of people with people and people with computer in learning, so as to ultimately achieve the goal of students' spontaneous learning.

Third, teachers should be fully aware of their role in teaching. Teachers should not only enable language learners to master professional language knowledge, but also need to cultivate students' social interaction skills and help students develop group cohesion and successful communication [40]. No matter what kind of teaching philosophy and education style language teachers adhere to, their role in language classroom includes encouraging learners to use language beyond their current ability and providing them with support. Teachers also play a mediating role in order to better help the understanding between interlocutors [41]. Teachers should also realize that the online guidance and offline interaction with students change the teacher's role significantly. Therefore, when teaching online, the teacher's role is not only a designer, supervisor and organizer, but also a participant who keeps pace with the students. According to the needs of students' level and teaching content, teachers need to keep pace with students in grasping the learning progress, arranging learning tasks and evaluating students' learning effect. At the same time, teachers also need to understand the significance of creative teaching, that is, the role of creativity in different language teaching methods. Creativity can make language practice more interesting and diverse [42].

Fourth, in the case of not knowing the students, teaching will inevitably deviate from the actual situation of students. As a result, students cannot keep up learning, have low interest, and passive cope with English learning. Therefore, in order to improve the teaching effect of English courses, teachers should first analyze students' English learning and classify students according to the real conditions together with their targets. On this basis, they can select a proper online platform, integrate teaching resources, and then decide the teaching contents. In the process of the above case analysis, we can find that mixed class teaching has brought a lot of inconvenience to English listening and speaking education. Teachers usually teach with the reference of middle-level students and is difficult to take care of the level of the whole class. For students with poor English foundation, to a certain extent, it has hit their enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, mixed classes cannot meet the requirements of the students who have great English ability and affect the quality of English teaching to a certain extent. Therefore, teachers can first observe the state of students' listening in class and the methods of communication and interaction between teachers and students through face-to-face teaching. After understanding the characteristics of students and mastering the first-hand information

of students' situation, teachers can carry out teaching at different levels, that is, different teaching arrangements for different students.

Based on the above theories and findings, I propose a listening and speaking teaching pattern to guide current teaching. While designing the online English listening and speaking courses, teachers should not only avoid the teaching pattern of presenting the content in textbooks in slides, but also avoid forgetting to integrate the network teaching resources according to the current situation of students in the design of diversified classroom activities and extracurricular knowledge. The current junior high school listening and speaking education can combine online learning resources with offline effective classroom teaching to break the time limit and extend the classroom to extracurricular learning platform.

In the design of classroom teaching, the first thing is to clarify the actual teaching objectives. We should analyze the learners in advance, mainly from learning characteristics and learning needs. Because in the online classes, students are the center of teaching activities all the time. The biggest feature of online teaching is to help students realize spontaneous and personalized learning. Therefore, teachers can collect current students' level of listening and speaking, psychological characteristics, learning style and students' daily lives by means of offline teaching, so as to comprehensively consider the setting of course content on the basis of understanding students' situation, and carry out hierarchical teaching if conditions permit. The teaching pattern of online listening and speaking courses can be divided into pre-class, in-class and after-class teaching.

Before class, teachers can arrange speaking and listening tasks related to teaching objectives on the platform, so that students can make full use of their spare time to complete learning and have an understanding of the use of the platform. The tasks assigned by teachers should make full use of the various functions of the platform, and the carefully designed teaching tasks should be able to mobilize the students' senses. To a certain extent, the understanding of classroom teaching tasks and contents can help students better learn with online classroom.

While teaching, after determining the learning objectives, types of tasks and learners' current level, the teacher integrates relevant teaching resources on the Internet, selects the theme close to the students' real life and different degrees of difficulty on the basis of English listening and speaking textbooks, presents the teaching contents in diversified forms, and creates a learning environment close to the reality, thus stimulating students' interest in learning. Students can choose the theme that is close to their real life from different contents according to their own preferences, and then form different dialogue groups. The form of interaction includes student-student interaction, human-computer interaction and teacher-student interaction. To a certain extent, this teaching form can help students fully grasp the content of the classroom and achieve the effect of efficient input and output of language. In this process, teachers should not only ask students to choose their own forms of interaction, encourage students to communicate and explore through the network platform, but also show students the precautions and methods of interaction between students and students, and especially human-computer interaction, so as to avoid the negative impact of operation and technical factors on the learning effect.

The teaching task after class is also realized through the platform. Because each dialogue group chooses different communication forms and contents and accordingly forms different learning paths, teachers need to evaluate and analyze the learning results according to the data provided by the platform. The analysis is still in the form of a group to summarize the content of classroom learning, and to answer the doubts about the classroom content. Teachers supervise the learning progress of students through the platform, which can not only timely answer questions and solve doubts, but also timely adjust teaching focus and difficult parts, which can help students master and use the learning content more efficiently to a certain extent.

6.   Conclusion

With the advent of the sci-tech economy, knowledge economy and information age, English learning is becoming more and more important. For junior high school students, English is also an essential course. Online education of English listening and speaking stimulates the enthusiasm of learners to a certain extent, and promotes the improvement of learners' listening and speaking ability. Whether taking online teaching as the leading way or combining online teaching with traditional classroom teaching has realized the flexibility of time and the diversification of methods, and the content of teaching resources has also been correspondingly supplemented. To a certain extent, it helps learners to achieve personalized learning. However, there are still many problems in current online teaching. From the perspective of online listening and speaking teaching, this paper takes junior high school English online listening and speaking courses as the research object. Through the analysis of online teaching based on the "est100" platform, three main problems have been found. For example, the online teaching platform has the risk of disclosing learners' privacy and academic achievements, there lacks effective classroom monitoring while teaching, and students cannot be taught in accordance of their aptitude because of not considering the individual differences. I try to raise solutions to solving the existing problems in online English teaching with existing teaching theories.

Due to the insufficient conditions and the limited time and scope of investigation, there are still many deficiencies in this study. For example, this study is based on the theoretical basis and has not carried out practical operation, and the analysis of the research results is not deep enough. These all need to be further explored in the future. In studying future online teaching pattern, I will make further research on the test evaluation system and monitoring system of online teaching.

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