

A Case Study of Experiential Teaching Method in EFL Listening

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to survey the effectiveness of experiential method in EFL listening. One comparative experiment has been conducted between experimental method and the traditional way of single dimensional training. The subjects in the experimental group for the new method are 53 freshmen at Jilin Business and Technology College while the control group subjects participating in the traditional way are the 52 freshmen at the same school. After the research was carried out for one year, the post-test outcomes gathered from the two groups were analyzed using SPSS software. The result demonstrates the advantage of experiential teaching method over the traditional way of listening. These findings of the research have concluded that the experiential method might be encouraged in the future teaching.

Introduction

The experiential method in EFL listening as a new teaching method is the outcome of rapid growth of EFL education in China. The fixed classroom teaching makes the student become the container of knowledge and become obedient to the teacher's will. This kind of teaching mode is valid to the knowledge that the student need. Its disadvantage lies in its separation from the knowledge system. The aim of implementing the new method is to improve college students' listening ability.

The Content and Definition of Experiential Learning

“Experience” is a familiar word for us and everyone could use different language to describe his “experience”. People often named the internal feeling, realization or self-experience caused by the external world and situation as “Experience”. “Experience” ever existed in the old Chinese books. In the modern Chinese dictionary the explanation of “experience” is “To know the things around through practice” “experience by itself.” In English, “experience” means knowledge or skill that you gain from doing a job or activity, or the process of doing this. In the philosophy, it means a kind of internal action from heart connected with life and existence.

David A. Kolb (with Roger Fry) created his famous model in Fig. 1, which includes four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and testing in new situations. He represented these in the famous experiential learning circle. The first stage is a learner to carry on the concrete fulfillment. The second stage is in time of practice to carry on the concrete experience. Learner learns from the feedback of the environment in study and observes the result of one's behavior. Then he discovers some clues that can help to understand the behavior. At the third stage, the learner forms the new methods and carries on the plan based on the new one. The fourth stage is assumption of examination and comprehension about whether the result of imaging is accurate or not.

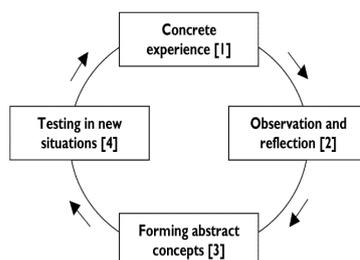


Figure 1. Kolb's model of experiential learning circle

As above shown , the author defines that experiential learning is a learning method , taking the learners as the center through the combination of the practice and rethinking to acquire knowledge , skill and attitude. It not only includes the direct and active experience, which combines the concrete observe and reflection together, but also contains the result of learning and the processing of the learning. Experiential learning emphasizes the role of the learning played by the individual's experience. It doesn't indicate new knowledge and ability acquired in doing, while it pays more attention to the summary and reflection of the experience and the process of mastering the skill and knowledge.

The Design of Experiential Teaching Method in EFL Listening

College English course standard emphasizes that with the teacher's help, the students should obtain the interest, life experience and the cognition in the study. The students should practice, participate, cooperate with the teaching method and the exchanges, According to this standard, implementing the new teaching method will make use of the experience study and encourage the students to learn with the creative attitudes, and urge the student to think much and think lately and think in the learning process .Thus it will develop the student's frontier spirit and the innovation ability.

The Content of Experiment

The Subjects. The subjects in the experimental group for the new method are 53 freshmen at Jilin Business and Technology College while the control group subjects participating in the traditional way are the 52 freshmen at the same school, both of whom major in accounting. Before the experiment, the writer has tested the subjects' listening ability. The pre-test material comes from the part of listening in Band-4 examination.

Experimental Material. The Experimental material is New Horizon College English 2 , Viewing, Listening& Speaking by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and additional materials are offered when it is needed in the teaching process.

Experimental Procedure. The procedure is depicted in Fig. 2. Two tested are administered. One was done before the experiment called pre-test and the other is administered after the experiment called post-test. The pre test is aimed to assess the students' English level at the beginning of the experiment. The purpose of the post-test is done to evaluate the effects of experiment. According to the theory of experiential teaching method, the author designs the new teaching activities. The aim is to construct, implement and examine the possibility of the new teaching mode in English class and judge whether the new method surpasses the traditional teaching method or not.

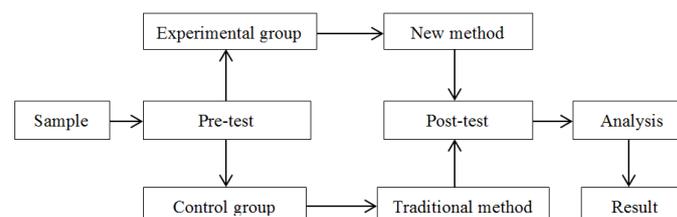


Figure 2. The Experimental procedure to teaching method in college English listening

Design of the New Activity. According to the listening theory and psychological rule, the expert of listening teaching, Mary Underwood, summarizes these three steps. Generally, the teaching of listening class includes three steps which are pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening.

Pre-listening Activity. The teacher lets the students understand the new lexis: robot, pollution, astronaut, apartment, rocket; grammar: future tense; structure: will, yes or no questions with short answers; Then , let the students look at the picture about robots. The students are asked to predict the picture, and then answer these questions: What do you see in the picture? What are they doing? What is the difference between them and human being?

While-listening Activity. Let the students finish the exercises, listen and circle the prediction in this activity.

- () People will have robot in their homes.
- () People won't use money. Everything will be free.
- () Books will only be on computers, not on paper.
- () Kids won't go to school. They will study at home on computers.
- () There will only be one country.
- () People will live to be 200 years old.

Listen and Draw. In this type, the students are required to draw pictures. This produces amusing variations. But the vocabulary the students do not know needs to be pre-taught. Then the teacher describes the picture in English and let the students draw the picture on the paper. The description of the picture is following: First, draw a circle in the middle of the page. It should be about 4 cm in diameter. Then draw a long line above the circle. It is 3 cm length. It should not touch the circle. Then draw a triangle below the circle. The top of the triangle just touches the bottom of the circle. Now on the right side of the circle, draw a square. It should be slightly larger than the circle. Inside the centre of the square, draw a small oval.

Post-listening Activity. In this stage the teacher can judge how well the students have understood the listening material. The teacher may design the task of discussion. Take unit one as an example after listening to the material, these questions may be given to discuss in small groups. What things can robots do? Are they useful or not? Let the students discuss these questions with their partners. The advantage of this aspect is that teaching listening has focused on the process of listening rather than the result of listening.

Result

The pre-test outcomes and the post-test outcomes of the control group and the experimental group are summarized in Table 1, which shows the difference in scores achieved by two groups. The result shows that the experimental group achieved a significant improvement in the level of listening in Band-4 Examination.

Table 1. The statistics of the experiment

	Group	Above 200	190-200	180-190	170-180	160-170	149.1-160	Below 149.1
Pre-test	Experiment(53students)	3.8%	9.4%	15.1%	26.4%	22.6%	11.4 %	11.3%
	Control(52students)	2.7%	18.9%	26.8%	18.4 %	26.3%	3.5%	3.4%
Post-test	Experiment(53students)	5.6 %	24. 6%	35.7%	12.7%	13.6%	7.8%	0
	control(52students)	3%	19.1%	31%	20.3%	25.3%	1.1%	5.8%

Discussions

The post-test result shows that the students in experimental group achieve higher scores on the test of listening ability than those in the control group. It can be concluded that the new experiential teaching method has positive effect on improvement of college students' listening ability. However, the experimental teaching method also encountered some difficulties and problems which are needed to pay attention to. In the experimental class, the effect is not obvious for the students with poor English ability. This part of the students benefits from the experience of teaching in a small extent. In the future teaching, easier activities should be added in the classroom, so that all students could be involved, which is the aim of this kind of teaching design.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that students in the experimental group had achieved better accomplishment in post-test than pre-test. The new teaching methods are welcomed by the students

when they are applied to English class, which is demonstrated by the students' class performance. It proves that the experiential learning is suitable for college English. The limitation will be researched and solved in the future. In the teaching plan, more basic knowledge should be added and more chances should be given to the students, making them have the confidence and courage to learn English further.

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