

Original Article

Comparison of English Learning Strategies between Urban and Rural Junior High School Students under the Background of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract - This paper mainly investigates the use of English learning strategies by middle school students in different regions (towns and villages), compares the survey results, analyzes the overall situation of the use of English learning strategies by urban and rural students, and discusses the differences in their use of English learning strategies and how to cultivate rural students' English learning strategies under the background of rural revitalization strategy. This study aims to help students in different regions use English learning strategies more effectively to improve their learning efficiency and develop their autonomous learning ability. Meanwhile, I hope that more English teachers can pay attention to students' learning strategies and strengthen the guidance and training of learning strategies to improve teaching quality.

Keywords - English learning strategies, Rural revitalization strategy, Urban and rural education.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

On October 18, 2017, Comrade Xi Jinping put forward the rural revitalization strategy in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Du (2018) and Du (2019) found that the present biggest shortcoming of China's education development is rural education, which mainly lies in the high-quality and balanced development of junior middle schools. Luo (2020) pointed out that implementing a rural revitalization strategy provides a rare opportunity for developing rural education. The development of rural education will also inject strong vitality and provide a steady stream of power for rural revitalization. English learning strategies are a research hotspot in foreign language learning. In China, the comparative study of learning strategies among different learning groups (excellent students and poor students, urban students and rural students, etc.) is a field that scholars pay attention to. Examples Wu(2019), Wei(2006) and others.

Meanwhile, Ge (2019) points out that the overall situation of the research literature found that educational

culture is one of the research hotspots in the academic circles on rural revitalization strategy. Therefore, it is of practical significance to discuss the differences in learning strategies between urban and rural middle school students from the perspective of rural revitalization. And from the comparative data of English learning strategies of urban and rural students, we can see the similarities and differences in the education of these two groups and can also reflect on whether the rural revitalization strategy has a certain impact on narrowing the education gap between urban and rural areas.

1.2. Research objectives

Firstly, to analyze the current English learning strategies used by middle school students in urban and rural areas, teachers should pay more attention to learning strategies and help students use learning strategies effectively.

Second, explore the effective ways to cultivate rural students' English learning strategies under the background of rural revitalization strategy.



2. Literature Review

According to the relevant literature, the author believes that foreign studies on foreign language learning strategies began in the 1970s, with Rubin, Naiman and others as the representatives. Since then, the research field has been developing in-depth, and a research upsurge has been set off at home and abroad. Although there are abundant achievements in studying language learning strategies at home and abroad, researchers have not reached a consensus on the basic issues, such as the definition of language learning strategies. Here, we select the definitions put forward by representative scholars. Stern(1983) thinks language learning strategy is the trend or characteristic of language learners' methods. Rubin(1987) thinks that learning strategies refer to the language system used by learners in the learning process, which is helpful for the development of learners' self-constructed language system and directly affects learning skills. Oxford(1990) pointed out that language learning strategy is a concrete behavior that can learn more quickly, happily and effectively. Based on the viewpoints of many scholars, the author defines foreign language learning strategies as how learners actively adopt a series of methods and skills to promote language learning to learn the language effectively.

Meanwhile, foreign studies on foreign language learning strategies can be roughly divided into four main stages. The first stage is from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, and qualitative studies are the main ones. The second stage is from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. The research field is flourishing, and many achievements have emerged. The third stage was in the late 1990s when the research field stagnated, and the number of published documents dropped significantly. The fourth stage is the beginning of the 21st century, and foreign language learning strategies have become popular again. Scholars have been exploring new research methods and perspectives. The research contents of foreign language learning strategies mainly include the definition of language learning strategies, the influence of learners' styles and social and cultural factors on foreign language learning strategies, the training mode of language learning strategies, and the relationship between language learning strategies and language achievement or level. The research on foreign language

learning strategies in China began in the 1980s, marked by HuangXiaohua's master's thesis entitled "An Investigation of Learning Strategies in Oral Communication That Chinese EFL Learners in China Employment", completed in 1984 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Wen(2004) divided domestic research into two stages: the embryonic stage (1984-1992) and the full-scale start-up stage (1993-2003). In the embryonic stage, the research object is single, the scope is limited, and the results are sporadic. During the comprehensive start-up stage, the research team developed rapidly, the research methods were diversified, the scope was broadened, and many achievements emerged. Since then, the study has entered a period of full prosperity.

Moreover, the research mainly involves summary research, comparing language learning strategies among different learning groups, the relationship between language learning strategies and language achievement, the relationship between language learning strategies and autonomous language learning, language learning strategy training and so on. According to the data retrieved by CNKI, there are many comparative studies on language learning strategies among different learning groups in China. Still, the research objects are mainly adult English learners, and the research on primary and secondary school students is insufficient. So, comparing the foreign language learning strategies of middle school students in urban and rural areas under the rural revitalization strategy is innovative.

3. Research design

3.1. Theoretical basis

Based on Piaget's constructivist learning theory(constructivism emphasizes the active constructiveness of learning.), this paper makes a qualitative and quantitative study on English learning strategies of urban and rural middle school students. It analyzes the use and differences of English learning strategies in urban and rural middle school students.

3.2. Research objects

This questionnaire survey selected 73 junior high school students in a city and 84 junior high school students in rural areas in xiushui county, Jiujiang, Jiangxi Province.

3.3. Research method

Questionnaire survey method and literature research method.

3.4. Research questions

What is the overall use of English learning strategies of junior high school students in urban and rural areas?

Are there differences in English learning strategies between urban and rural junior high school students?

How do rural junior high school students cultivate English learning strategies under the rural revitalization strategy?

3.5. Research tools

3.5.1. Questionnaire

This questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is the personal situation of the subjects, and the second part is Oxford's (1990) Learning Strategy Survey Five-Level Scale, which has 50 items. Each project adopts a five-point system (1 means that it does not meet my situation at all; 2 means that it does not meet my situation; 3 means that it is a bit in line with my actual situation; 4 means that it conforms to my actual situation; 5 means that it is completely in line with my actual situation. Students choose their numbers according to their actual situation. Oxford(1990) pointed out that the average value of each strategy indicates the probability of using the strategy. The average value is in the range of 1.0 to 1.4, indicating that

the subjects "never use this strategy"; the average value is in the range of 1.5 to 2.4, indicating that the subject "occasionally uses the strategy"; the average value is in the range of 2.5 to 3.4, indicating that the subjects "sometimes use this strategy"; the average value is in the range of 3.5 to 4.4, indicating that the subjects "often use this strategy"; the average value is in the range of 4.5 to 5.0, indicating that the subjects "always use this strategy".

3.5.2 SPSS26.0

4. Questionnaire survey and analysis

In this survey, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 200 questionnaires were recovered, among which 157 were valid, and 43 were invalid. Among them are 73 questionnaires for urban middle school students and 84 for rural middle school students.

4.1. Analysis of survey results

Xu(2006,2008) analyzed the reliability and validity of SILL and concluded that the scale's internal consistency reliability coefficient α is 0.94. At the same time, Qin(2003) pointed out that the general reliability coefficient above 0.90 is considered to have higher reliability, which shows that the SILL scale is a scale with higher reliability. Meanwhile, the chi-square value of the scale is very small, and all other fitting indexes are greater than 0.90, which shows that the model fits the sample data well and that the scale has high efficiency.

4.1.1. Overall use of English learning strategies by middle school students in urban and rural areas

Table 1. Test Results of Subjects

Student Resources	Urban students (N=73)	Rural students (N=84)
Memory strategy (m)	2.30	2.18
Cognitive strategy (m)	2.54	2.47
Compensation strategy (m)	2.88	2.78
Metacognitive strategy (m)	2.26	2.23
Emotional strategy (m)	2.36	2.31
Social strategy (m)	2.18	2.14

Table1 shows that urban students use compensation strategies most frequently(M=2.88), followed by cognitive strategies(M=2.54), emotional strategies(M=2.36), memory strategies(M=2.30), metacognitive strategies(M=2.26) and social strategies(M=2.18). The average scores of these six strategies are all over 1.5,

which shows that these six strategies have been used by urban middle school students in the process of learning English. Meanwhile, from the highest average score of compensation strategy, it can be known that urban students are relatively good at using guessing and circuitous methods to make up for their lack of language knowledge

when learning English. Wu (2019) once pointed out that students don't like to ask teachers or classmates for vocabulary learning methods when learning English, and they don't often cooperate with classmates to learn. It may be because urban students are more aware of the pressure of further education, so they seldom help and promote each other through cooperation. Meanwhile, it can be seen from Table 1 that rural students use compensation strategies the most frequently(M=2.78), followed by cognitive strategies(M=2.47), affective strategies(M=2.31), metacognitive strategies(M=2.23), memory strategies(M=2.18), and social strategies the least frequently(M=2.14) The average scores of these six strategies are all over 1.5, indicating that these six

strategies have been used by rural junior high school students in learning English. Meanwhile, from the highest average score of compensation strategy, it can be known that rural students are better at using guessing to make up for their language defects when learning English. And rural students have the lowest scores in social strategies, probably because rural students have an inferiority complex and are afraid to ask teachers for help. The data of urban and rural students have once again confirmed the research of Li(2002) and Hou(2004). In a word, the frequency of learning strategies used by junior high school students in urban and rural areas is at a medium level, and it is still necessary to actively guide students to pay attention to learning strategies.

4.1.2. Similarities and differences in the use of English learning strategies between urban and rural middle school students
Memory strategy

Table 2. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.62	73	1.075	1.156
2.36	73	.903	.816
2.45	73	.972	.946
2.41	73	.984	.968
3.01	73	1.359	1.847
1.92	73	1.024	1.049
1.81	73	.967	.935
2.03	73	1.040	1.083
2.07	73	1.032	1.065

Table 3: Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.42	84	.921	.848
2.11	84	.865	.747
2.15	84	.857	.735
2.25	84	1.040	1.081
2.85	84	1.285	1.650
2.19	84	1.092	1.192
1.65	84	.871	.759
2.00	84	.905	.819
1.98	84	1.041	1.084

Table 4. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	1.232	.269	1.397	155	.164

Oxford(1990) claims that memory strategy stores language information effectively by using association, image, recording and other skills, which are used to remember and review new information. Table 4 shows no significant difference between urban and rural junior high school students' overall use of memory strategies(Sig=0.164>0.05). The difference is insignificant because Zhu(2009) said that memory strategy is a memory process that we consciously carry out, and external factors have little restriction on memory strategy. Therefore, urban and rural students can still keep the group gap relatively stable under the current situation of unbalanced teaching resources. Meanwhile, according to Oxford(1990), memory strategies can be divided into four categories:

establishing a contact network in the brain(items 1, 9), using images and sounds(items 3, 4, 5, 6), reviewing in a planned way(items 2, 8), and using actions(item 7). From Table 2 and Table 3, it can be seen that both urban and rural students have the highest average score in using sound and image, indicating that both urban and rural students use this sub-strategy frequently. It may be because junior high school students are good at using their hearing and imagination to help them learn new English knowledge. Meanwhile, urban and rural students have the lowest frequency of using action strategies, which may be just like the research of Kang(2014); because of shyness and anxiety, students rarely use gestures and other methods.

Cognitive Strategy

Table 5. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
3.67	73	1.292	1.668
2.11	73	1.021	1.043
2.82	73	1.135	1.287
2.49	73	1.094	1.198
2.21	73	1.118	1.249
3.58	73	1.142	1.303
1.90	73	.900	.810
1.85	73	.892	.796
3.11	73	1.242	1.543
2.67	73	1.167	1.363
1.96	73	.978	.957
2.55	73	1.167	1.362
2.62	73	1.319	1.740
2.05	73	.984	.969

Table 6. Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
3.62	84	1.347	1.347
2.18	84	1.209	1.209
2.94	84	1.334	1.334
2.36	84	1.196	1.196
2.30	84	1.127	1.127
3.23	84	1.551	1.551
1.82	84	.895	.895
1.90	84	.931	.931
2.77	84	1.599	1.599

2.46	84	1.023	1.023
1.70	84	.621	.621
2.51	84	.976	.976
2.82	84	1.594	1.594
1.99	84	.711	.711

Table 7. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	1.960	.164	.784	155	.434

Oxford(1990) pointed out that cognitive strategies can effectively understand and master language skills through analysis, reasoning and other skills. Table 7 shows that the overall use of cognitive strategies in primary strategies of urban and rural junior high school students is not significant(Sig=0.434>0.05). Meanwhile, Oxford(1990) classified cognitive strategies into four sub-strategies: practice(item 10, 11, 12, 13, 17), receiving and sending information(item 15, 16), analysis and reasoning(item 19, 21), and establishing rules for input and output (item 14, 20, 22, 23).Analyzing the frequency, it can be found that receiving and sending information is the most frequently used by urban junior high school students, while practice

strategy is the most frequently used by rural junior high school students. It shows that urban junior high school students tend to use various extracurricular resources, such as film and television, while rural junior high school students prefer mechanical practice. It may be because urban junior high school students have relatively perfect teaching environments and learning conditions. The differences in the use of this sub-strategy between urban and rural junior high school students can reflect the viewpoint put forward by Wen(2004): environmental factors, including cultural background, learning conditions, teaching environment and learning tasks, will have an impact on foreign language learning strategies.

4.1.3 Compensation Strategy

Table 8. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
3.15	73	1.023	1.046
2.36	73	1.147	1.316
2.66	73	1.436	2.062
3.42	73	1.257	1.581
2.32	73	1.129	1.274
3.37	73	1.339	1.792

Table 9. Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
3.08	84	1.067	1.138
2.20	84	1.183	1.296
2.57	84	1.365	1.862
3.27	84	1.302	1.695
2.33	84	1.079	1.165
3.24	84	1.276	1.629

Table 10. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	.816	.368	.895	155	.372

Oxford(1990) states that a compensation strategy effectively addresses the obstacles of insufficient language knowledge in language communication by guessing and other means. It can be divided into two sub-strategies: reasonable guessing (item 24, 27, 28) and overcoming the limitations in speaking and writing(item 25, 26, 29). Table 10 shows that urban and rural junior high school students' overall use of the first-level compensation strategy is not significant(Sig=0.372>0.05). Tables 8 and 9 show that urban and rural junior high school students use reasonable guesses relatively frequently, and urban junior high school

students use them more reasonably frequently. It may be because, in daily teaching, teachers will consciously guide students to guess the meaning of words by using context instead of looking up every new word. The reason why they use the two sub-strategies more frequently may be just as the conclusion of Tan(2014), that is, urban students have the higher initiative in English autonomous learning. Therefore, urban junior high school students are better at thinking activities and actively guessing new words.

Metacognitive Strategies

Table 11. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.32	73	1.026	1.052
2.21	73	.881	.777
2.64	73	1.046	1.094
2.62	73	1.209	1.462
1.78	73	.821	.674
1.78	73	.886	.785
1.95	73	.880	.775
2.18	73	1.072	1.148
2.82	73	1.072	1.148

Table 12. Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.35	84	.963	.928
2.05	84	.917	.841
2.55	84	1.155	1.335
2.75	84	1.279	1.636
1.85	84	.843	.711
1.77	84	.910	.828
1.99	84	.963	.928
2.13	84	1.039	1.079
2.64	84	1.168	1.365

Table 13. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	.790	.376	.222	155	.824

Oxford(1990) points out that metacognitive strategy regulates language learning through organization, arrangement and evaluation. It can be divided into establishing a learning focus(item32), arranging and planning to learn (item 30, 33, 34, 36, 37) and evaluating

learning(item 32, 38). It can be seen from Table 13 that the overall use of metacognitive strategies is not significant (Sig=0.824>0.05). From Table 11 and Table 12, it can be found that urban and rural junior high school students establish key points relatively frequently, which may be

because, in class, teachers will help students to establish key points of subject learning to better cope with exam-oriented education. And although urban students *Emotional strategy*

have a slight advantage in the three sub-strategies, the overall difference is not big. It is consistent with the research results of You(2019).

Table 14. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.85	73	1.221	1.491
2.63	73	1.219	1.486
2.79	73	1.236	1.527
2.45	73	1.236	1.529
1.44	73	.726	.527
1.99	73	1.034	1.069

Table 15. Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.64	84	1.248	1.558
2.49	84	1.187	1.409
2.81	84	1.227	1.505
2.55	84	1.284	1.648
1.58	84	.853	.728
1.77	84	.910	.828

Table 16. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	2.870	.092	.443	155	.659

Oxford(1990) thinks that emotional strategies control emotional input in the learning process by employing self-encouragement, reducing anxiety, etc., and are used to manage and standardize emotions. It can be divided into three categories: self-motivation (item 40,41), overcoming anxiety (item 39,42) and understanding their own emotions (item 43, 44). From Table 16, it can be seen that the overall use of emotional strategies is not significant(Sig=0.659>0.05). From Table 14 and Table 15, it can be found that the frequency of self-motivation strategies used by junior high school students in both urban and rural areas is relatively high, indicating that they

are good at self-encouragement, try their best to relieve learning emotions, thus exerting their learning initiative. It is consistent with the research conclusion of Hu(2007), that is, middle school students are good at using self-suggestion strategies to adjust their learning emotions. Meanwhile, urban junior high school students get the highest score on item 39. It shows that urban junior high school students perform better when facing anxiety. Rural junior high school students get the highest score in item 41, which shows that rural junior high school students can know their learning status clearly and encourage themselves further.

Social strategy

Table 17. Urban Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
2.85	73	1.175	1.380
2.40	73	1.199	1.437
2.47	73	1.226	1.502

1.51	73	.899	.809
2.19	73	1.174	1.379
1.66	73	.804	.645

Table 18. Rural Table

Average value	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Variance
3.01	84	1.227	1.506
2.20	84	1.210	1.465
2.15	84	1.125	1.265
1.65	84	1.100	1.000
2.23	84	1.068	1.141
1.62	84	.849	.721

Table 19. Independent samples T-Test

	F	Significant	t	variance	Sig. (double tail)
Assume equal variance	.527	.469	0.289	155	0.773

Oxford(1990) claims that social strategy is not only the communication strategy of contacting and communicating with native speakers to master the target language but also the strategy of cooperative learning with other learners. Social strategies are summarized into three aspects: questioning (items 48,49), cooperation(items 45, 46, 47) and sympathy. Table 19 shows that the overall use of social strategies is also not significant(Sig=0.773>0.05). Tables 17 and 18 show that the frequency of cooperative learning strategies used by junior high school students in urban and rural areas is relatively high, indicating that both urban and rural junior high school students prefer cooperative learning with their classmates. It is consistent with the research conclusion of Zhang(2015), that is, junior high school students use cooperative strategies more than other sub-strategies. And urban and rural junior high school students get the highest score in item 45, indicating that urban and rural junior high school students are still willing to engage in social activities to improve their learning.

To sum up, there is little difference in the frequency of English learning strategies used by urban and rural junior high school students. Still, the frequency of learning strategies used by urban junior high school students is slightly higher than that of rural students. It may be because China requires local governments to implement the rural revitalization strategy actively. Under this

background, local governments prioritize developing rural education and narrowing the educational differences between urban and rural areas. And with the rapid development of online learning, online courses have become more and more developed, making up for the educational gap between urban and rural areas. However, it still takes some time for rural education to catch up with the pace of urban education. Therefore, the state, society and teachers should pay more attention to cultivating students' learning strategies in rural areas.

4.2. Ways to cultivate English learning strategies in rural areas under the background of rural revitalization

4.2.1. Establish a guarantee mechanism for educational resources

Stern(1983) believed that the social environment is the primary factor affecting and restricting the process of foreign language teaching. It can influence teaching and learning. Therefore, firstly, we should make overall planning the layout of rural basic education. Second, as Luo(2020) said, increase financial input, update rural teaching facilities, and strengthen the infrastructure construction of rural schools. Third, ensure that the average wage income level of school teachers is not lower than that of local civil servants so that those rural teachers can devote themselves to education.

4.2.2. Promote the balanced allocation of teachers in urban and rural areas

Qi(2019) proposed that the balanced allocation of the quantity and quality of teachers between urban and rural areas is an important task for developing compulsory education. Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of rural teachers, directionally train rural teachers and substantially tilt rural school teachers' professional title evaluation system. Second, strengthen the allocation of special post teachers in rural schools and prioritize meeting the supplementary needs of teachers in poor areas. Third, enhance the professional attraction of rural teachers, promote the reform of rural teachers' salary policy, increase the welfare input of rural teachers and guarantee the basic living conditions of rural teachers. Fourth, encourage rural and urban teachers to communicate and narrow the gap.

4.2.3. Improve the professional ability to exist, rural teachers

Training students' English learning strategies require teachers' guidance, and only teachers with certain qualities can give students correct guidance. Moreover, Shu (2008) put forward that besides the basic qualities teachers should possess, a qualified English teacher must also possess the special qualities that a language teacher should possess and the special qualities of foreign language teaching. Therefore, first, the local government can introduce the system of full-time study for rural teachers, actively cooperate with universities, improve their educational level and enhance their educational and teaching abilities. Secondly, according to Tan(2014), schools can cooperate with relevant education departments to formulate a series of practical research topics and encourage teachers to

participate in research to combine the theory they have learned with teaching practice. Thirdly, as Pang(2020) put forward, it is necessary to innovate and improve the rural teacher training policy system. Local governments should establish a long-term training mechanism for rural teachers, arrange reasonable training, and enhance teaching ability.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

This paper mainly makes a questionnaire survey on the use of English learning strategies of middle school students in different regions (towns and villages). The analysis data shows no significant difference in this survey's overall use of English learning strategies between urban and rural junior high school students. However, the use frequency of urban junior high school students is still slightly higher than that of rural junior high school students. Meanwhile, in the sub-strategies of the six first-level strategies, the frequency of their use is slightly different between urban and rural junior high school students. To sum up, more and more attention has been paid to developing rural education under rural revitalization. However, it still takes some time to improve rural education and narrow the gap between urban and rural education, which requires the joint efforts of the government and educators.

5.2. Shortcomings

In the final 157 questionnaires, some students may not take them seriously, affecting the survey results to a certain extent. Moreover, this survey was only conducted in two schools with a single object, and the universality of the research needs to be verified.

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