

Study on the Application of Situational Language Teaching Method to English Teaching in Junior Middle School

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Abstract

English is one of the main subjects in middle school education and it is also a subject for teaching language that requires high involvement both on teachers and students. However, the traditional teacher-centered teaching model only emphasizes teacher's teaching while ignoring students' learning. In this kind of teaching situation, students accept knowledge passively, which is not helpful in stimulating students' interest in English learning, but also in improving students' comprehensive ability. As an effective teaching way, the situational language teaching method enables new language focus to be demonstrated and practiced through meaningful situational activities by creating vivid situations. It is not only meets the requirements of context in English teaching, but also conforms to the guidance of the English curriculum reform and standards. Using situational language teaching method in class can bring many benefits for both students and teachers but it also have some deficiencies in English teaching. Based on the concept and principles of situational language teaching method, this paper mainly discusses the effective values and disadvantages of it.

Keywords

English teaching; Teacher-centered teaching model; Situational language teaching method; English curriculum.

1. INTRODUCTION

"English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education" emphasizes that English teaching should develop four fundamental English skills of students, that is, listening, speaking, reading and writing, whose ultimate goal is to make students have the ability to communicate with others in English, which puts forward higher requirements. At the same time, it emphasizes that English learning should improve students' comprehensive competences from the perspective of value to students' personality development. Therefore, English teaching must be changed from the boring and single teaching system to more lively and connotative teaching system.

Besides, it emphasizes modern foreign language education should focus on the process of language learning and advocate students to experience and understand language in real context. Language learning requires a lot of inputs, so English curriculum should provide learning resources that close to students, life and the time.

As one of the modern foreign language teaching methods, situational language teaching method stresses that new language focuses are taught and practiced through situational teaching, which is in line with the English curriculum standards for context requirements. Meanwhile, language learning is different from other subjects in that it requires more on the environment. Comparatively speaking, language learning in natural environment is much more effective than in classroom environment. By improving the classroom environment and making it closer to the natural environment, SLT focuses on solving the obstacle on foreign language learning for Chinese students, which conforms to the development requirements of language

teaching. With the guidance of SLT, English language classroom is no longer the output of knowledge, but a good place for students to use English to develop their mental functions. As a teaching method, SLT is very familiar to many compulsory teachers. However, as a teaching method applied in middle school English teaching, how is the values of the application of SLT? So, it is significant to make a study on this aspect.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD

2.1. Definition of situational language teaching method

The early situational language teaching, also known as the audiovisual method, is a teaching method based on the direct method and the listening and speaking method using audiovisual means. The UK was the first country to bring situational teaching into the classroom. During the development of SLT, experts and scholars have different definitions of SLT due to different time and research backgrounds.

Hornby (1980) pointed out that SLT is to introduce the scenarios into the teaching activities to make the teaching scene settings more vivid and specific, helping students to better acquire knowledge and improve students' language skills.

Zhang Hua (2000) believes that SLT is based on the situation and contains real problems and events in the situation, therefore, in the process of solving and analyzing problems or events, students can make a positive and autonomous understanding of learning objects and master teaching methods.

Based on the above definitions of SLT and other relevant literature's viewpoints the author may safely draw the conclusion: the SLT refers to that teachers purposefully introduce or create vivid and specific scenes with certain emotional colors and images to arouse students' certain attitude experience, thereby stimulating students' learning emotions and helping students to understand the teaching materials and develop their psychological functions.

2.2. The principles of situational language teaching method

As a necessary teaching method, teachers should follow certain principles in the process of implementing SLT.

As follows:

1. The principle of authenticity

Authenticity refers to that teachers should create situations consisting with students' daily cognitions and real activities according to their life experience.

Through real and relevant situations, students can relate their experience previously stored in cognitive structures to the new knowledge currently learned and extend them to new structure. And the cognitive structure of learners will be restructured and transformed by integrating the previous knowledge into new knowledge. So situational authenticity refers to the degree of connection between the learning situation and the actual use of new knowledge and skills.

2. The principle of communication

According to Shu Baimei (2005), communicative competence refers to a person's ability to communicate with others in a language. It can produce many grammatical sentences, and it can use these sentences at the right time and in the exact way depending on the situation. In the practice, teachers should use information gaps to create situation and provide students with different information. In this way, students can interact with each other, exchange information and complete tasks.

3. The principle of interesting

In psychology, learning can combine intellectual and non-intellectual factors. Intellectual factors refer to a person's cognition, such as observation, memory, imagination, etc. Non-intellectual factors include emotion, will, attention, interest etc. Of these factors, interest is what promotes language learning for students. The interest of learning plays an important role in students' language acquisition process and affects their language proficiency.

4. The principle of creativity

For language learners, how to create new language structures based on previous knowledge in their minds is very necessary. In foreign language teaching, mechanical methods are usually used to generate imitation, recitation, reading, and other scenes. These methods are difficult to cultivate students' ability to create new language. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to combine the teaching materials and the characteristics of students and create specific situations suitable for students' actual situation and cultivate students' imagination and creativity.

3. THE APPLICATION VALUES OF SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD

3.1. Improve classroom quality

The SLT effectively overcomes many drawbacks of the traditional teaching method, which will help to improve students' class performance, comprehensive quality and moral cultivation. As an old saying goes: interest is the best teacher of all knowledge. The most reasonable time for students to learn English is when they are in high spirits and they have the will to do it. Besides, students are able to concentrate highly in the situation set up by the teacher so that the learning quality can be improved effectively.

3.2. Improve students' practical ability

The SLT emphasizes the integration of learning, knowledge, emotion, competition and action, which stimulates students' practical application ability to a great extent and makes students more actively engage in learning. Students can have a better understanding on the essence of English based on vivid situations created by teachers, and the teaching methods used by teachers closing to reality, laying a solid foundation for students to use English and highly improving students' practical ability.

3.3. Improve students' creativity

In the situational teaching activities, the classroom atmosphere is more inspiring and creative, and teacher-led teaching keeps students actively involved in classroom so that students' imagination and creativity can be enhanced continuously. Students do not just receive knowledge mechanically from their teachers but develop an inner interest in the English learning, which arouses their desire for knowledge in English, expands the depth of students' thinking and allows students to learn actively so as to develop good learning habits and innovative ability.

3.4. Improve students' key competence

The SLT consider students as the main character in the classroom through the construction of different situations. At the same time, teaching is no longer limited to the classroom, through good teaching design, teachers combine English knowledge with real situations, changing the book-based teaching situation and improving students' English communication ability comprehensively. Through the simulation training of authentic situations, students can recognize the importance of English learning to improve their key competence and promote their all-round development.

4. THE DISADVANTAGES OF SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD

When teachers use the SLT, they integrate their true feelings and passions into the knowledge so students' will to listening will be greatly improved. However, some teachers' inappropriate use of the SLT can lead to failures in teaching.

Sometimes the use of SLT by some teachers mainly stays at the level of stimulating students' interest and presenting knowledge. They regard stimulating students' interest and enthusiasm as the main purpose of their situational teaching, but ignoring the function of the SLT, that is, promoting the mastery of language knowledge and skills. Sometimes the orientation of the teaching situation is too unconventional. If teachers do not have enough ability to complete it, it will not only fail to achieve the ideal teaching effect, but also reduce the students' acquisition of knowledge. Sometimes teachers do not have enough awareness of students' cognitive ability, which leads to the mismatch of teachers' teaching contents and students' comprehension ability, making students lose self-confidence and desire to learn.

All these situations will lead to the failure of the application of SLT in the junior middle school English teaching, resulting in low classroom efficiency and reducing students' enthusiasm for learning.

5. CONCLUSION

In addition to cultivating students' vocabulary, reading and grammar competences in English teaching and learning, it is also very important to develop their communicative skill. The SLT can help students improve their learning skills, language skills and communication skills. Meanwhile, the extensive application of SLT can mobilize the enthusiasm of students to learn English, improve the quality of classroom teaching, develop students' language ability and promote the cultivation of students' key competence.

To sum up, the rational use of SLT in middle school English teaching has a positive effect on improving the quality and efficiency of it. However, although the application of SLT has certain positive significance, many teachers still do not grasp the essence of SLT, and the application of SLT is relatively one-sided, which requires teachers to keep improving in future teaching.

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