

Study on Vocabulary Teaching based on the Thematic Context in Senior High School English

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Abstract

However, according to what the author has observed in practice, many vocabulary classroom teaching is often carried out mechanically and out of context, resulting in poor word memory effect for students, even thinking that vocabulary learning is difficult and numerous, and over time they lose interest in English learning. In recent years, many senior high school English teachers have conducted in-depth research on English vocabulary teaching based on thematic context, and found the following problems: lagging teaching beliefs, lacking of real thematic situations, and neglecting of word memory. Based on this, this paper expounds the strategies to solve the problems, that is, to update the teaching concept and strengthen the theme awareness; create a specific themes and combine vocabulary teaching with context; attach importance to vocabulary memorization and strengthen theme teaching. It is hoped that it can play a certain auxiliary role in the research of high school English thematic vocabulary teaching, so as to make high school English vocabulary teaching more vivid and efficient.

Keywords

Thematic Context; Vocabulary Teaching; Senior High School English.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is the most basic material that constitutes a language, and it is the foundation of all language activities. Vocabulary learning is an important part of students to improve their language ability and cultivate key competence. Effective vocabulary teaching is a prerequisite for improving students' basic skills such as listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing. We know that if someone want to firmly remember the meaning and usage of a word, he can't just solely rely on rote memory. Its specific meaning can be reflected in the theme of the context, so it is particularly important to pay attention to the teaching of English vocabulary based on the theme of the text. By analyzing the problems existing in vocabulary teaching in senior high school, this paper tries to provide teaching strategies based on thematic context to promote students' vocabulary learning.

2. Problems Identification

This chapter includes an analysis of the existing problems in English vocabulary teaching. The current vocabulary teaching still focuses on the pronunciation, spelling and meaning of words. Whether it is to present vocabulary in a concentrated manner or to explain vocabulary usage in an extended manner, students often understand vocabulary and its usage out of context, and the conversion is blunt and lacks integrity, hierarchy and coherence. Scholars have emphasized the importance of vocabulary teaching and that teaching vocabulary in context can help students better grasp the different meanings of vocabulary and use vocabulary more accurately and appropriately.

With the continuous advancement of the new curriculum reform, more and more teachers have realized the importance of vocabulary teaching and its contextualization, but vocabulary

teaching has not attracted the attention it deserves in English teaching. This contradictory phenomenon can be explained from two aspects: (1) insufficient understanding of the cognitive and psychological process of vocabulary acquisition; (2) Lack of effective vocabulary teaching methods and means (Dai & Ren , 2005). Many teachers have designed the vocabulary teaching method that tend to be “tightly scripted” and lack of unity, level and consistency, make it hard for students to establish a direct link between English vocabulary and concepts ones that leave no room for students to establish a direct link between English vocabulary and concepts, and reduce the students in identifying and processing in the process of vocabulary knowledge internalization degree. At the same time, students often understand vocabulary and its usage out of context, fail to grasp the main line and experience the joy of language learning (Chen & Wang , 2010). So how to make students learn vocabulary more efficiently based on thematic context is the question that this paper focuses on.

3. Problem Solutions

From the previous part, it is clear that this paper aims to solve two problems in teaching vocabulary, that is the teacher’s understanding of thematic context and vocabulary teaching in context. Teachers need to have an in-depth understanding and analysis of the thematic context before they can be well used in actual English vocabulary teaching, and learn to construct and sort out different thematic context to deepen students’ understanding and mastery of vocabulary.

3.1. Updating Teaching Concepts and Strengthen Theme Awareness

The New Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) emphasize that all language learning activities should be carried out in a thematic context. Therefore, the study of English vocabulary must be guided by thematic context, which covers man and self, man and society, man and nature, and involves humanities and social sciences and natural sciences. Therefore, in vocabulary teaching, teachers should guide students to obtain the meaning and usage of vocabulary and sort out and classify them based on different discourse types around a specific thematic context.

Under the background of the new curriculum reform, senior High school English teachers must abandon the traditional backward English teaching concept and innovate the educational concept which conforms to the current situation of modern education and is beneficial to students’ development.

3.1.1. Innovating the Way of Vocabulary Memorizing and Constructing Different Thematic Context

Teachers should guide students to avoid merely mechanical memory, that is, to learning by rote, and create text theme situations to guide students to learn English words skillfully and regularly. Vocabulary learning depends on text or context. Different Vocabulary imply different cultural meanings. Therefore, paying attention to the corresponding cultural background is a necessary condition for learners to understand vocabulary correctly and use vocabulary correctly. On the basis of existing knowledge, teachers need to create an authentic context centered on meaning and provide students with rich vocabulary learning materials. Teachers can choose to use intensive reading textbooks or online multimedia resources related to thematic context for in-depth vocabulary learning (Tian, 2015).

3.1.2. Enriching Teachers’ Own Teaching Notions

Teachers themselves should enrich English teaching theories, delve into teaching methods from multiple angles, avoid traditional lagging ideas, and use new teaching concepts to bring students a new English learning environment. In the entire high school English teaching, students are the main body of learning. Teachers should continue to explore and innovate teaching concepts to make students truly fall in love with English. This will not only increase

students' enthusiasm and academic performance, but also the relationship between teachers and students will become more and more harmonious, and the efficiency of high school English teaching will become higher and higher.

In vocabulary teaching, teachers should pay attention to guide students to explore the rules of words, such as prefix, suffix, root, affixes, etc. of words, just like the radicals of Chinese characters. Students can master these rules to reduce the difficulty of remembering words, and can also cultivate students' independent learning ability. In addition, when teaching vocabulary, students can be appropriately supplemented with some background knowledge of words to help them understand different language and cultural backgrounds, so as to better master relevant vocabulary. For example, the word "minister" means a senior member of the government who is in charge of a government department or a branch of one. "Minister" in Europe and America comes from "serving", and the reason for "serving" is because mini- means "small", such as minibus, mini-skirt, minute, minimum, minimize. Coincidentally, our country's cadres are also called "Civil servants", which shows that there are many similarities between cultures around the world.

3.2. Creating Specific Themes and Combining Teaching with Context

The learning of any language requires the carrying of context. Without a suitable context, the language vocabulary cannot be studied in a targeted manner. High school English vocabulary learning is no exception. English teachers need to create contextual teaching on specific text topics, so that learning activities can be carried out in a certain context, so as to carry out vocabulary teaching in an orderly manner.

Teachers should not just blindly instill vocabulary knowledge to students, but guide students to perceive and understand the meaning of related topics through listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing, and learn to use words correctly to express the information and meaning of related topics. Meanwhile, in the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers should combine the presentation of word blocks with the theme context, and guide students to use mind maps to sort out the habitual collocations of phrasal verbs, prepositional phrases, noun phrases, adjective phrases and adverbial phrases. Build different lexical semantic web according to the topic to expand the vocabulary. In addition, teachers should pay attention to constantly reproduce relevant words in the context of relevant themes, and in a large number of language learning activities, strengthen the sense of language, transfer the ability to use words, and finally achieve the internalization of words. Moreover, teachers also need to know that the acquisition of a word is not immediate, but a dynamic, circular and gradual process (Schmitt,1998).

3.2.1. Expanding Vocabulary through Certain Context

Vocabulary learning is not isolated and one-sided. The connotation and meaning of words need teachers to lead students to conduct in-depth research in the relevant context. Because the stiff matching of words with a Chinese meaning will make students feel confused, and students will encounter such a situation—they know the Chinese meaning of the word, but cannot properly translate the word in the sentence. This is that they do not have a thorough grasp of the word when learning vocabulary, but just memorize the Chinese meaning of the word. That is why students encounter words they know in exams or assignments, but cannot understand the meaning of sentences correctly. In view of this situation, learning vocabulary in a specific context is beneficial to deepen students' understanding of the meaning of the word, and can get twice the result with half the effort in terms of vocabulary memory. High school students have a good understanding ability to draw inferences from one another. Therefore Teachers should lead students to learn and expand vocabulary in the context, and guide students to discover, explore, and cooperate independently, so as to learn language vocabulary in a targeted way under the thematic context.

For example: After students learned Module3 Music (FLTRP book2), students will often encounter the word perform whether in newspapers or homework. Many students only remember the word perform means “acting in a play”, but when it appears in the weekly study report phrases such as perform an operate, students will wonder what it means “acting in an operate”? Is it in the operating room that the patient is operated at random and then the wound is sewed into a flower? It’s clearly not logical. At this time, teachers can use this example to let students feel that mastering a word is not just memorizing the Chinese meaning of the word. If this is the case, they will be helpless when encountering other collocations or putting them in different sentences. Thus, to master a word, we should not only know its pronunciation, spelling and meaning, but also master its syntax and collocation (Laufer,1998). Students can be asked to guess what the perform here means? And it turns out that the correct translate here is “have an operation”, so that students can understand that the translation of words in different contexts should not be too stiff, and they should properly understand the words according to the current context, so as to conform to the meaning and logic of the sentence. This can not only increase students’ initiative in vocabulary learning, but also make students feel the charm and fun of English learning.

3.2.2. Using the Semantic Contrastive Analysis of Subject Words to Learn Vocabulary

When learning a word, we should not only learn its basic meaning, but also compare and analyze the collocation and usage of different words in relation to related words. In English vocabulary learning, we often encounter some words whose Chinese meanings are very similar or even identical, but they are very different when combined with the specific context, and similar words cannot be used instead of each other, otherwise the meaning of the whole sentence will change or lead to ambiguity. High school students have a certain vocabulary foundation, so teachers guide students to learn such synonyms by comparing the meaning and collocation of words to guide students to deeply analyze the connotation differences of words and learn to use different words in different contexts. Teachers can list several groups of similar themes for comparative analysis, so that students can see the similarity of the basic meaning of the vocabulary and the difference in the connotation meaning, and then guide the students to learn to accumulate vocabulary, enrich the connotation, and apply the vocabulary correctly, so as to improve the efficiency and effect of vocabulary teaching and learning.

For example, Words such as argument, debate, discuss and quarrel all have a certain meaning of controversy, but there are also subtle differences, and the choice of words in different contexts is also different. Argue means that one party insists on its own opinions, positions and viewpoints, and tries to persuade the other party by arguing. Debate refers to a formal or public Debate between two opposing parties, such as an opinion. Discuss is the most commonly used word, which refers to expressing views, opinions, etc. on one or some issues in order to unify understanding and solve problems. Quarrel is an unfriendly, loud Quarrel between two people or groups about something, especially a Quarrel or bicker.

After the teacher has explained the meaning of the four words, four more example sentences should be given for the students to fill in the blanks with these four words, so as to deepen the students’ mastery of the difference between these words and to test whether the students have mastered what they have learned. Examples are as follows:

She ___ the case for bringing back the death penalty. (argued)

Politicians will be ___ the bill later this week. (debating)

We need to ___ when we should go. (discuss)

She ___ with her brother over their father’s will. (quarrelled)

3.3. Attaching Importance to Vocabulary Memorization and Strengthen Theme Teaching

High school English teachers should not only use various strategies to stimulate students to learn English vocabulary, but also use various methods to strengthen students' memorization of vocabulary and effectively strengthen thematic English vocabulary teaching.

3.3.1. Guiding the Students to Analyze the Word Formation of the Vocabulary Theme for Memory

Teachers should help students build a common foundation of high school English and promote students' interest in English vocabulary learning. Construct and sort out the knowledge framework with a certain language foundation, and realize the flexible application of vocabulary knowledge. In vocabulary teaching, teachers can guide students to learn vocabulary through word formation of theme words, so as to promote students to master the method of vocabulary memory, increase learning motivation, participate in classroom exploration more actively, and consolidate the language foundation. Teachers can help students categorize and memorize thematically structured vocabulary, which has obvious word-formation methods, such as adding prefixes or suffixes to form new words. Of course, this way of memorizing vocabulary also requires students to master the meaning of the root word, otherwise it can not achieve a good memory effect. For example, the root act means "do something" or "perform a fictional role in a play, film, or television", and suffixes and prefixes can be added to form different new words, such as actor "an actor is someone whose job is acting in plays or films." (or--a noun suffix denoting man); active "moving or tending to move about vigorously or frequently" (the adjective-forming suffix--ive.); inactive "not doing anything" (in means not--the negating prefix in-); activity "a situation in which sth is happening or a lot of things are being done" (noun suffix -ity). Teachers can give more examples of this kind to deepen students' understanding.

3.3.2. Encouraging Students to Accumulate Vocabulary by Integrating into the Context

In English learning, we will naturally encounter many new words, but new words will be included in a certain theme context, because words are inseparable from sentences, and sentences are inseparable from chapters. Teachers can guide students to subdivide long-term vocabulary learning goals into short-term goals, and then guide students to specify new words in different thematic contexts. In a word, not directly points out that the word meaning, but to guide students to use the context, that is, various known information, to infer and judge the meaning of some new words. Because each word in the reading material has a mutually restrictive relationship with the words or sentences or even paragraphs before and after it. If there are many new words in the text, it will be difficult for students to understand. Teachers can also use examples to guess the meaning of words, so that students can learn vocabulary by analogy. To sum up, using various known information to speculate and judge the meaning of words is a very important reading skill, and it is also a good way to integrate into the thematic context to accumulate vocabulary and expand vocabulary.

4. Conclusion

According to the author's observation, compared with traditional vocabulary teaching in which teachers teach the usage and students take notes, teachers have begun to focus on vocabulary teaching guided by the theme context and relying on discourse, which is also in line with the concept of the new curriculum standard and can effectively To strengthen students' vocabulary learning, and make students feel that vocabulary learning is not a dull and boring thing. However, textbooks with limited capacity cannot increase the frequency of repeatedly contacting the same word, and the context in which words appear in the text is relatively simple,

so students can only contact the usage of words in limited context or only understand the core semantics of words in the textbooks (Tian, 2015).

In addition, the middle schools that the author observed used FLTRP 2004 English textbooks, which were relatively old. Teachers need to collect teaching resources consistent with the theme context of the textbook, create the real context close to the actual life of students, provide students with rich and new teaching resources, to make up for the deficiency of the content of the textbook. Exposing students to the latest and most popular things can also stimulate students' interest in learning, promote students to be more active in learning, and help them accumulate vocabulary knowledge and improve their vocabulary ability. However, this will undoubtedly increase the work pressure for front-line teachers. If one person works alone, there may be problems such as inaccurate grasp of materials, difficult collection, and small amount of language materials presented at last. At this time, the English teaching and research team should cooperate and clarify the division of labor of teachers. We can discuss and discuss the most suitable real and fresh language materials for students' learning situation, or adapt some language materials together, in order to achieve the best learning effect, but also reduce the pressure on teachers to innovate vocabulary teaching to a certain extent, and work together to make progress in English teaching.

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