A Study on English Situational Teaching in Primary School

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Abstract. Situational teaching is a type of teaching method commonly used in English class. It emphasizes the participation of every student as well as communication and cooperation with each other. This teaching method is in line with the requirements of new curriculum standards for all-round development of students. Based on a series of cases, this paper studies situational teaching method in primary school English class, then analyzes its achievement through the comparison with traditional teaching method.

Introduction

Traditional teaching mode has made so deep influence that some primary English teachers are still using it. It means that teachers give lectures from the very beginning to the very end during the whole class. Students’ interest and enthusiasm has been overlooked, which does no good to the full-development of them. Rogers, an American educator, advocated “the meaningful learning.” He considers that learning requires the complete involvement of learners \cite{3}. And according to Primary English Curriculum, teachers should evoke students’ interest and inspire their enthusiasm.

With the reform of China’s education system, some teaching methods in line with new teaching concepts are constantly emerging. Situational teaching method is gradually introduced to Chinese education system, which embodies the idea that teachers should not be the indoctrinators but the organizers in teaching process. The whole teaching process should be teacher-led and student-centered. This is a trend of English teaching in China and it has been widely accepted by many scholars at home and abroad. In a word, situational teaching method is worthy of exploring and researching \cite{6}.

Literature Review

In ancient China, there was the germination of situational teaching thought. A widely spread story that Mencius’ mother moved three times shows the influence of environment on people. From then on, people tend to pay attention to education environment. Many scholars have been studying situational teaching incessantly. In the late 1970s, Li Jilin put situational teaching method into practice the first time, which achieved good results. Her book \textit{Situational Teaching and Research} is the first book about situational teaching theory in China, which lays a theoretical foundation for the development of situational teaching. Liu bin, deputy director of education commission, pointed out that situational education is developing with Chinese characteristics and it is effective to solve some problems existing in education. After that, situational teaching gradually expanded to different subjects in primary and secondary schools and achieved good teaching results.

Many foreign educators have made contributions in the study of situational teaching. In ancient western countries, Socrates was the earliest educator who had the idea of situational teaching. He argued that teachers should ask students questions and don’t tell them the answers directly. The communication between teachers and students is based on the questions to be solved and it makes students think actively to find out the answer. Situational teaching has been further developed by American educator Dewey. He said, “My five-step method of teaching also needs a situation which can stimulate thinking.” Stimulation requires teachers provide children with a situation that is related to experience. Richard, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S. make the preliminary exploration for the
situational teaching in modern education. From then on, more and more scholars made further research in the field. One of representatives is Brumfit who is the author of a book *The Function-National Approach: From Theory to Practice* in which he has further analyzed situational teaching. The scholar, Gavriel Meirovich believed that situational teaching can create a good atmosphere in teaching. Today the theory of situational teaching is still developing and being applied into practice.

**Methods Applied in Situational Teaching**

Students’ attention is attracted easily by specific pictures, audio, video and PPT, which are more explicit, vivid and lively than verbal description. For example, when learning words about animals in grade three, teachers make up a fairy tale “piggy looking for friends.” A picture of a big forest is shown in screen and teachers describe vividly with music, “Long long ago, there was a beautiful forest. Many cute animals lived there. There were Cats, Ducks and Rabbits. They are singing and dancing every day. How happy they are.” It is easier for students to distinguish words about animals with an interesting story. Meanwhile, students can watch and listen more to get a great amount of information with modern equipment. Watching vivid pictures from the video, students can get further understanding of sentences and words. Listening tape recorder is a certain step to get closer to native speakers’ pronunciation.

Most Children like playing games. Appropriate and interesting games can not only let kids have fun but also arouse their interest in taking active part in class activities, which can easily get the ability of using language unconsciously and naturally [7]. When learning words like head, eye, nose and mouth, teachers divide the whole class into several groups for a competition. Representatives are chosen on behalf of his group standing in front of the whole class. They are ordered to touch their organs according to instructions. In this way, most of students can focus their attention on this activity. Not only their listening skills get practiced, but also the collective sense of honor is enhanced.

Most of the words in primary school refer to specific things rather than something abstract. When we expose our students in this type of words, we’d better show them concrete things. Therefore it is easier for them to make sense and grasp new words with the help of visual teaching aids. When teaching some words about school supplies, teachers take out a pen and said, “This is a pen.” Then pointing to a pencil, they said, “That is a pencil.” After that students are asked to recognize the two words, pen and pencil. Teachers can make full use of the objects in classroom when teaching sentence pattern like, “What’s this and what’s that.” Pointing to the pen nearby, they ask, “What’s this? Is this a pen?” Pointing to the door in the distance, teachers ask, “What’s that? Is that a door?” Students can easily have a good master of the sentence patterns while answering these questions.

It is very important to create a pleasant learning atmosphere in class. Listening English songs is a better way to reach it. Teachers can integrate music and English teaching, creating a relaxed atmosphere [1]. Most students like chants and songs with strong rhythm since they have a strong memory for them. Therefore, teachers often reform some key point into chants and songs to help students to get a better memory. An example is when students finish learning the sentence pattern, “I like...Do you like...?” teachers make a song like that, “Fish, fish, I like fish. Do you like fish? Yes, Yes, I like fish,” then lead students to read it aloud and try to sing it as a song. With English songs, the atmosphere is liven up and students’ spirit is boosted. They have fun in learning while their learning efficiency is improved at the same time.

**Research Design**

The study includes study objectives, study objects, study contents and study methods [4]. This study is based on actual English teaching in primary English classes. It aims to make a comparison between the effects of traditional English teaching methods and situational teaching method by experiments and questionnaire. The subjects of the survey are students from Class one and Class two, Grade four of Yangshan foreign language school in Xinyang. There are 40 students in each class. One of the two classes, class one, adopts the situational teaching method. And class two,
adopts the traditional teaching method. Through specific data collected, we make a comprehensive analysis on student’s competence.

**Result and Discussion**

There are three tables in the case to make analysis. Table one is about students’ score in examinations. Table two is about students’ competence under the two different teaching methods. Table three is a teachers’ questionnaire on situational teaching. The following three tables include precise data and case analysis [2].

**Table 1. Test Score [unit, person].**

| Rate          | Class   | Excellent | Good | Fair | Fail | Qualified Rate |
|---------------|---------|-----------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Class One     |         | 10        | 15   | 5    | 10   | 75%            |
| Class Two     |         | 10        | 10   | 5    | 15   | 62.5%          |

Through the experiment of two classes, it can be found that situational teaching can stimulate students’ interest in learning and make some students with poor English show their interest in study. It also indicates that the implement of situational teaching can improve the performance of students who always fail in exams even in a short term. If situational teaching is applied for a long time, the performance of the whole class will gradually improve.

**Table 2. Student’s Comprehensive Quality [unit, person].**

| Abilities          | Class     | Percentage | Class     | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Ability to Use Language |         | 25         | 62.5%     | 20         | 50%         |
| Basic Oral Expression   |         | 20         | 50%       | 12         | 30%         |
| Sense of Innovation     |         | 20         | 50%       | 15         | 37.5%       |

**Table 3 Teachers’ Questionnaire on Situational Teaching.**

| The Title                                    | Options                                      | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Do you know about situational teaching?   | A. Don’t know                                | 10%        |
|                                              | B. Know little about it, but specific content is not quite clear | 35%        |
|                                              | C. Know very well                            | 55%        |
| 2. Do you often use situational teaching?    | A. Never                                     | 6%         |
|                                              | B. Often                                     | 65%        |
|                                              | C. Sometimes                                 | 29%        |
| 3. Do you think the group activities in textbook are necessary? | A. Necessary                                | 69%        |
|                                              | B. Not necessary                             | 31%        |
| 4. Do you collect other situational materials for situational teaching? | A. Collect                                  | 77%        |
|                                              | B. Don’t collect                             | 23%        |
Through the statistics, it can be found that situational teaching is quite effective in cultivating students’ comprehensive language-using ability. By learning, students can communicate fluently with sentences they have already learned. Meanwhile they can make sentences flexibly by using sentence patterns. Their spoken English has also improved and got closer to standard pronunciation.

Teachers are the organizer of each class. Their attitude and relevant knowledge about situational teaching play an important role [5]. Through the above questionnaire, we know that situational teaching is popular among teachers. Most of them have knowledge of situational teaching and think it is necessary to implement it into classes.

Conclusion

Implementing situational teaching in primary school English class is to stimulate students’ interest in learning and improve their communicative competence. In English classes, teachers should create a variety of situations and present students with key points in a variety of forms to make learning process more vivid. Appropriate teaching situation can not only reduce the difficulties in teaching but also draw students’ attention for a long time, changing the way from acquiring knowledge passively to grasping knowledge actively. Teachers become the guide and tutor while students themselves play the main role in class.

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