Integrated Application of Situational and Traditional Teaching in Primary School English Vocabulary Teaching

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Abstract: *As an international language, English has become an important bridge for people from all over the world to interact with each other. Therefore, English is one of the most significant subjects in the education area in China. With implementation of the China's new English curriculum reform, students now have to master more English vocabulary. This paper mainly analyzes the integrated application of Situational Teaching Method and traditional teaching mode, aiming to demonstrate the benefits of situational teaching and use situational teaching to help students master all the vocabulary by making good use of both the time in the school and the time at home.*

Keywords: *Situational Teaching; Primary School English; Vocabulary Teaching*

1. Introduction

As vocabulary is very important for students to learn English well and is the foundation for learners to study this language. The new curriculum reform requires students to master more vocabulary than before, which leads to some difficulties for teachers to teach English vocabulary in primary schools. Liu (2022a) putted forward that traditional teaching methods can lead to low learning efficiency of students because teachers pay little attention to students' interest and contexts. What is more, traditional methods like mechanical memorizing is meaningless due to the lack of related situations. Both teachers and students would find it difficult to teach or learn English vocabulary. These difficulties are caused by the disadvantages of traditional teaching methods, for example, rote-memorizing, translation and repetition in the class. [1] Some researchers in recent days have already realized the necessity to change the teaching methods. For instance, It is stated that vocabulary cannot be learned by independently, learning English for the first time needs teachers to provide students with interesting methods to make English vocabulary learning more funny (Li, 2022). Although many researchers and educators now are aware of the importance of utilizing situational teaching in the class, there are still many problems. For one thing, the problem of how to apply situational teaching to real class needs to be solved. For another, we need to figure out the way to use situational teaching after class or in exams in order to make students have more opportunities to learn English words in relevant situations. Masna, Y., Dahliana, S., & Martaputri, N. A. (2020) stated that it can be inferred that though situational methods are effective, teachers will face many difficulties in preparing the situational teaching materials in advance according to the survey. [2] In addition, (Liang, K., Hao, Y., & Zhao, J.,2021) also said that teaching by lecturing form is still supported by many teachers because the limited time and exam-oriented mode. They may do not have many opportunities to use more situational teaching methods. [3] According to the previous study, we can find that though many teachers are encouraged to make full advantage of situational teaching approaches in primary school English vocabulary class, they may still fail to use these methods in the class because they are lack of experience or innovation and they ignore the in-feasibility of applying this method to a large number of words for the time limit, exam-oriented model and lack of academic performance. So this study focuses on exploring the way to use contexts after class and in exercises by integrating traditional and situational methods. In this paper, the author demonstrated the current situations and definitions of both traditional teaching and situational teaching methods, illustrated the advantages of situational teaching, proposed some ways to apply situational teaching to real class and explored some alternatives to meet the standards of both exam-oriented and limited course situation and the goals of new curriculum reform by integrating traditional and situational teaching. In addition, the author also depicted how to integrate the two different teaching methods. Because YiLin version primary school textbooks and Collins COBUILD English-Chinese Learners' Dictionary are popular as tool books and widely used in Chinese schools, the author showed the

feasibility of integration of traditional and situational teaching by exemplifying some examples and English words in the two tool books.

2. Definitions of traditional and situational teaching

2.1 Definition of traditional teaching

Xu (2013) proposed that traditional teaching is conducted with explanation and definition. It requires students to remember the word list mechanically without many opportunities to practice and to acquire English vocabulary by matching words from Chinese translation to the English meaning, which leads to students' lack of interest in English vocabulary acquisition. [4] Cai (2017) said that traditional teaching is the teaching mode that teachers emphasize definitions and translations of English words, which is a spoon-feeding method. They just ask students to memorize the Chinese translations and the words written in English and do not pay attention to the cognitive cultivation. [5] It is also stated by Jiang (2021) that traditional teaching is the rote memorizing of students with great stress of reciting a large number of words. In general, traditional teaching in this paper refers to the English teaching method that is carried out in order to pass various examinations with little emphasis on fostering students' cognitive thinking and understanding of English words. [6] To be specific, traditional teaching is teaching English words by mechanical memory, translation and repetition. And this method cannot effectively stimulate students' interest and motivation in study, but it is really popular in China because it is suitable for China's large population and exam-oriented education system.

2.2 Definition of situational teaching

Hornsby (1980) found that the Situational Teaching Method is an approach in which teachers create scenes that are close to students' lives in order to make language and knowledge acquisition more effective, and he emphasizes the importance of combining the introduction of new vocabulary items with the scenes so that the introduction of new vocabulary is consistent with the situations created. [7] Fang (2011) proposed that the Situational Teaching Method is based on the theory of structural linguistics, which arouses students' learning potential and increases teaching efficiency by organizing the natural teaching situations, which suggests that the core of the approach is to develop students' full potential, stimulate their interest in learning and thus achieve the ability to use English. [8] Gu (2021) putted forward that this method is a way of teaching in which the teacher creates a situation that is interesting to the students and allows them to learn in the corresponding situation, aiming to put students at the centre of the class and cultivate their hands-on ability. [9] In other words, situational teaching method integrates the teaching contents with vivid situations by taking advantage of some teaching aids(videos, slides, computers, etc), which can stimulate students to think positively, arouse their interest and guide them to indulge themselves in the vocabulary learning atmosphere so as to meet with the teaching goals.

3. Current Situation of Situational Teaching and Traditional Teaching

Masna, Y., Dahliana, S., & Martaputri, N. A. (2020) stated that situational teaching is beneficial to stimulating students' interest and creating an effective class environment. It is obvious that lots of researchers are now paying attention to situational teaching approaches because these methods can increase students' interest in learning, improve teaching efficiency and arouse their motivation in English learning,etc. [2] Diana (2010) putted forward that games can attract students' attention easily and make the whole class noisy, which leads to the difficulty to maintain the order for teachers in the class and little time for teachers to explain the words to students. [10] Influenced too much by the promotion of situational teaching methods like role-play and game teaching, many teachers use contexts inappropriately, resulting in the teacher's failure to complete the teaching schedule because of noisy environment, students' lack of academic quality due to few chances for teachers to evaluate them and finally students' bad results in final examinations. What's more, in the context of China's large population base, it is impossible to eliminate entrance exams, totally adopt the face-to-face interview form of exams or conform to the preferences of all students. Their teaching approaches are still "one size fits all". It is suggested that situational teaching methods like role-play is time-consuming that is not suitable for limited course time per week and fails to fit for all types of students because some of them are introverted. And using role-play may make students be stuck for phrases and words, which requires teachers to take some feed-in measures at the same time, Habibullaevna. (2019) [11] Thus, it is

indeed necessary for teachers to take some feed-in measures to cater for all kinds of students and form students' test-taking abilities and emphasize their quality development at the same time by mixed teaching model. Liu (2022a) putted forward that the integration of situational teaching and vocabulary learning is effective because they are characterized by the following characteristics: the use of contexts can enhance students' memory, the use of vocabulary has communicative and associative functions that students can use English words to form communication skills through contexts and the use of contexts help students have a deep understanding of the words they have learned. [1] When situational teaching is integrated into vocabulary teaching, students and teachers can benefit a lot. Additionally, using traditional teaching like doing exercises appropriately can further consolidate students' memory because of the repetition and practice. So this paper aims to use an innovative way to improve English vocabulary teaching and learning efficiency-integrating situational teaching into traditional teaching mode in vocabulary teaching in primary stage respectively, which can effectively increase all students' interest, benefit their skills and boost their confidence in learning English. What is more, it can also help them get high scores in entrance exams and simultaneously cultivate their English academic performance, which promotes students' comprehensive development in both language proficiency and interaction skills.

4. The advantages of situational teaching in primary English vocabulary

4.1 Arousing students' motivation to learn English

Some research show that situational teaching methods can enhance student's motivation in learning vocabulary. For example, Masna, Y., Dahliana, S., & Martaputri, N. A. (2020) conducted a research by interviewing some teachers in primary schools. One teacher in the research said that situational teaching builds communication students and teachers so that it makes students understand vocabulary easily and arouse their motivation, and another teacher said that teachers can teach vocabulary through oral practice so that students can repeat themselves, motivating them to memorize the words especially when their friends mastered the words ahead of them. [2] Moreover, it is concluded by Jiang (2021) that teachers can use a special way of situational teaching-competition in the class to stimulate students. The author suggested that teachers can divide students into several groups, and then ask them to answer questions about the English words they have learned. The rule is that the particular group that answers the most words will win, which will cultivate students' competitive spirit and their learning quality as well. Using situational language teaching method can effectively attract learners' attention and stimulate their motivation to compete with each other. As teachers carry out lively and intriguing activities in class, they can effectively attract learners' attention and stimulate their enthusiasm and motivation to study more industriously. [6]

4.2 Increasing students' interest in English study

Situational teaching method can stimulate students' learning interest. For example, Liu (2022b) stated that situational teaching methods such as multimedia, game and role-play can make students be interested in English vocabulary learning because there are many ways to attract them. For example, the author suggested that bounce or pass the ball game should be used, in which teachers can divide students into several groups, the groups can be asked to pass the ball and pass the words, to know which group can finally pass them correctly and quickly. The author also said that games like dubbing can fascinate the students and strengthen their memory of the words and phrases they have learned. In this game, teachers should find some videos that students are enthralled with and ask them to do the dubbing so that the students are able to have more chances to practice English words and finally master them.[12] Cai (2017) proposed that story-telling is beneficial to cater to students' mental and age preferences in primary schools, which can provide meaningful and charming English contexts to students so as to stimulate their interest. [5]The application of the situational teaching model in the English classroom uses beauty as a breakthrough, emotion as a bond and thinking as a core, bringing students a different classroom experience and making them experience the joy of learning in the process of receiving knowledge. This approach not only enhances the efficiency of students' learning of English as a compulsory subject, but also helps to increase their motivation, interest and develop their love and interest for the subject, thus contributing to the long-term progress of English teaching.

4.3 Using English correctly in different situations

Manukyan. (2018) putted forward that role-play, as one of the methods of situational teaching, can be used to focus on language production in a way that enables students to use the words they have learned correctly. The author proved that after asking students who have already known present simple tense to do role-play in the class, teachers can improve the accurate usage of English. So that teachers are able to consolidate students' memory of the new words and guide them to use English tense correctly. [13] In addition, Xiao (2018) also suggested that taking advantage of situations can be an efficient way for students to master the profound word meanings and use them appropriately and flexibly to express their own perspectives in both writing and communication.

For example, "Dad", "father","male parent" must not be confused and should be used correctly by people in the corresponding situations."Dad" is used by children as informal oral English word in daily life. "Father" ,on the other hand, is a neutral word. While another English phrase "male parent" is a technical term that should not be used in spoken English. To be more specific, in Story Time, My family, Unit1,Grade 3, Yilin Edition, when teaching the word "father", teachers can give students some pictures to help them distinguish the words and phrase. The pictures should have three different contexts, and each one of them should be correspondent to the context of "Dad","father" and "male parent" respectively. For instance, in the first picture, there could be several children who are brothers playing football with their father and calling him "dad". The second should be in a formal occasion-A woman with her father is in a party, and she is introducing her father to friends in which she is saying "father". The last picture should be in a laboratory, where the biologist is referring to "male parent". Or teachers can just use a video clip to explain the differences to the pupils in the class. Therefore, teachers are supposed to pay more attention to the different forms of addressing so as to teach the children to use the words correctly in daily life through situational teaching methods. In conclusion, the use of situational teaching methods can benefit students in the accuracy of the targeted language usage.

5. Applying STM into traditional mode teaching to improve learning of   words and meanings in after class and non-class hours

The specific application of both situational and traditional teaching focuses on helping students master the words through integration of situational and traditional teaching methods. The large number of words can be learned more effectively with integration of situational and traditional teaching because it makes use of class time, after class time and non-class time.

5.1 Incorporation of contexts in exercises and exams

HAN, M., & WEI, N. (2016) putted forward that in China, each class has around three to four English courses a week in primary schools, which is definitely insufficient for students to learn English vocabulary thoroughly. If students do not have good habits to review the vocabulary after class, the learning efficiency would be very low and restricted. [14] Thus, the authors suggested teachers that they should put situational teaching methods into practice. It is stated that this method will improve the English teaching and learning in primaryschools to a large extent. The author took "Shopping", Unit 6, PEP Book 2B as an example, and putted forward that teachers can ask students to take some items that are common in the supermarket like books to the class in advance, and require them to pretend to be shopping and act it out. Students can interact with each other by using the English words and sentences they have learned and some help will be offered by teachers only when it is indispensable. In the whole process, students can exchange their goods and practice the new English words at the same time, which is a win-win strategy. This way is applicable and effective in class time. However, we are easy to miss the point that the time of English class is quite limited but the exams and reading exercises are quite commonly used in English study in the stage of primary school in China. So the non-class hours like the test and training time in the school can also be effectively used by teachers to compensate for the limited English course time in order to let students master all the English words needed as fast as possible by presenting those words within the curriculum as the exercises or tests every day. Teachers should not only use contexts to teach children in English class but also make good use of practical English materials as exercises in daily teaching schedule to create much more opportunities to train students' cognitive and understanding ability in vocabulary and enhance students' test-taking skills in the non-class hours.

Cai (2017). found that when exposed to relevant situations, students can predict and guess the

unfamiliar words' meaning easily, so it is easier than single traditional way to master the new words and their meanings. [5] Hence, if situational teaching methods like guessing and prediction of word meaning can not only be used during English class but also be flexibly applied in the examination and exercise period, the learning efficiency would be improved a lot. For example, teachers can use definitions and the example sentences from official dictionaries to create appropriate contexts for students and integrate these contexts into daily exercises. Specifically, in the Goldilocks and the three bears, Unit1, Grade 5, Yilin Edition, the abstract English words in this lesson like "afraid" and "hard" can be taught by adding the contexts given by official dictionaries to before class exercises and assignments. According to the Collins COBUILD English-Chinese Learner's Dictionary, afraid refers to the situation that you think that something very unpleasant is going to happen to you. This definition can be added by teachers in the assignments (reading part) to encourage students to predict the meaning of the word at first to give them the first impression of the new word. Li (2022) proposed that using situational teaching methods can make the meaning of polysemous and ambiguous words single and certain and make vague words specific in meaning. [15] Thus, contexts can also be applied in the exercises and exams. For instance, the word "hard" has various meanings, while students in the primary schools might only know one of the meanings. Teachers are supposed to choose several common meanings of this word as exam questions. To be specific, in the Collins COBUILD English-Chinese Learner's Dictionary, hard means something that is very firm to tough and is not easily cut or broken, and also stands for the situation that you treat someone unkindly. By adding the two contexts into exercises or exams can better help students understand the different meanings of a word, master the both high and low-frequency meaning and use these meanings to express themselves and communicate correctly. In conclusion, this approach can be considered as the combination with targeted words that prioritizes the situational teaching and takes traditional methods as supplement. Additionally, making good use of situations in both class and non-class hours can more comprehensively improve students' understanding of the profound meanings of English words, and timid students who are afraid of playing games in the class can also benefit from situational teaching.

5.2 Learn English vocabulary in contexts as entertainment

Vitasmoro & Candra (2019) stated that because children are active and they often be volatile, which needs more attractive methods used by teachers to encourage them to learn and make them stay concentrated. The author concluded that using cartoons can make the class environment more enjoyable, and students can get more interested in English words learning so that their learning efficiency will be improved a lot. [16] Animation characters are generally attractive for students in the primary schools. There are many examples to prove that many teachers now have taken action to combine cartoons with situational teaching methods to stimulate students without making them feel bored. However, due to the limited time span of English courses and the large number of assignments and exams in primary schools, children do not have enough time to digest and master what they have learned in the class in spite of the fact that they may have already learned vocabulary effectively in the school through class, assignments and exams. In other words, situational teaching methods used during class and exercises may still fail to meet the standard the new curriculum reform requires students to do. Aside from integrating situations to traditional teaching process, students' spare (entertaining) time can be made advantage of as well, which may achieve better results in that students are often relaxed and concentrated when watching cartoons or doing other types of things for entertainment. When the non-class time is taken into consideration, children's English vocabulary learning time span would be significantly extended. Teachers had better encourage students to watch some meaningful videos after class or take those videos as assignments to cultivate students' good habit of watching them. In this way, time spent by teachers on preparing situations in the class, to some degree, can be saved.

For instance, Mickey's Great Clubhouse Hunt can be of importance to the study of English vocabulary for pupils. In each episode, it will demonstrate some English words to children with some vivid pictures as hints. Specifically, in episode 14, season 1, Mickey's Great Clubhouse Hunt, it illustrates the English words-yellow balls and whistles with some repetitions of the words required by the Mickey Mouse in the cartoon. Students will unconsciously learn and, to some extent, remember these English words in their free time. There is no denying that this method has no fixed targets, in other words, it is a method used to consolidate students' memory of words after class randomly and is something like casual inspection. Because of its randomness, this method can only be adapted to the students who have already learned many English words. In general, learning vocabulary in spare time as entertainment can become a good way to check leakage and fill vacancy after class with no fixed word outline.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the requirement of English vocabulary students need to master in primary schools is getting more demanding than old days. It is crucial for teachers to take measures to help students achieve the goals. Situational teaching is used to improve teachers' teaching quality and students' learning efficiency. This paper first has a brief introduction of situational teaching and its current situations, later demonstrates some advantages of situational teaching with some examples. The author finds that using situations merely in class time might not be sufficient because of limited course time and the large number of words. Therefore, this paper focuses on the approaches to apply situations to non-class and after class time by taking textbooks, YiLin version, Collins Dictionary and cartoon-Mickey's Great Clubhouse Hunt as specific application examples separately. Teachers should use situations in English courses, daily exercises and spare time as well. So that students can feel a positive atmosphere of learning English with great fun in both home and school, and during both class and examination. Teachers adopt rich classroom and assignment forms and integrate these original methods to traditional ones, which can not only improve the students' interest, motivation and desire to learn English vocabulary in contexts, and their ability to pass exams and master large vocabulary, but also can make up for the limited time of English classes so as to maximize the benefits brought about by situational teaching methods. However, there are still some limitations in this paper: First, the author is not a professional teacher in primary school who does not have rich teaching experience. In the actual design and control of English vocabulary class, the author still lacks the enough corresponding ability. Second, there are many factors that can affect students' interest, the use of situational teaching in after class time may not be implemented thoroughly because it requires students' self-discipline and their own interest. For instance, some students might be fed up with cartoons and movies, which indicates that this paper needs further accurate research. Third, unlike English teachers, students in primary school have more than one subject to learn every day. If teachers integrate situational English vocabulary teaching in their class time, test time and after class time as well, they will be under pressure because of the tasks from other compulsory subjects like Maths and Chinese.

7. Suggestions for future studies

Further study needs to increase the research subjects and expand the research scope deeply, to concentrate on students in different stages. For example, students in the lower stage may be suitable for the use of situational teaching in class time and after class time. Because the pupils in this stage can be easily attracted by activities like role-play, games and cartoons. While for the senor students in primary school, the use of context trainings in exercises and exams can be more appropriate in that higher stage students have much more exercises to do that is in need of teachers' explanation through traditional methods in class, and there are many materials like reading comprehension in the exercises and exams, which can better fit the integration of contexts. Additionally, senior students may lack interest in games and cartoon, so the use of situational teaching in class and after class may not be effective for them. In general, the future study should pay attention to students in different ages and the author must make efforts to improve research skills and enrich professional experience in order to bring further benefits to situational English vocabulary in primary schools.

To sum up, this paper demonstrates the advantages of situational teaching. It focuses on the methods to combine situational and traditional teaching in order to maximize the benefits brought about by both the two teaching methods. This study puts forward some specific ways to integrate both situational and traditional teaching so as to provide primary teachers with better and more flexible teaching ideas.

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