

A Review of Situational Language Teaching

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Abstract

Situational language teaching is a kind of English teaching method that focuses on learning in a simulated real environment, aiming to stimulate students' learning interest and motivation by creating specific language situations. This method originated from the theory of applied linguistics in England and has been widely used and developed in China. Its core idea is to integrate the learning content into the vivid teaching situation, and promote the active participation and all-round development of students through the cultivation of emotional resonance and practical skills. Situational teaching method emphasizes the importance of teachers to create specific teaching situations, combine cognitive and emotional activities, take teaching content and teaching goals as guidance, create vivid learning scenes through multimedia, physical objects and other means, concretize abstract information, and improve students' learning interest and participation. This method not only focuses on the cultivation of students' language skills, but also focuses on the cultivation of students' thinking ability and problem-solving ability. In China, situational teaching method has a long history, and similar teaching ideas have existed since the Spring and Autumn Period. Scholars such as Li Jilin further clarified the characteristics and concepts of situational teaching and promoted its wide application in primary and secondary schools. However, there are some potential drawbacks to situational teaching methods, such as increasing the difficulty and complexity of teaching. Nevertheless, its significant advantages, such as promoting practical use and enhancing learning motivation, still make it an important means in English teaching. In the future, situational teaching method is expected to be applied and developed in more fields.

Keywords

Situational language teaching; English teaching; Literature review.

1. Introduction

Context and learner motivation are integral to cognition and learning, which is often overlooked in traditional pedagogy. The situational approach breaks through this limitation and has gained wide attention. Situational language teaching is an approach proposed by the British applied linguists in the 1930s to the 1960s, where these methods were highly applicable in teaching language. Derived from the Direct Method, situational language teaching approach has more systematic in terms of the principles and procedures that could be applied and the selection of the content of language course (Palmer 1917,1921). Since an oral approach should not be confused with the obsolete Direct Method, a language learner should be bewildered by a flow of ungraded speech, suffering all the difficulties he would have encountered in picking up the language in its normal environment and losing most of the compensating of better contextualization in those circumstances. (Patterson 1964:4) As derived from oral approach, situational approach is the same. Many Chinese senior high schools adopting the same approach implies that they will be very effective in teaching the language and making the students understand better.

The main connotation of situational teaching method is "situation." Situational teaching is inseparable from the common "feelings," which requires teachers to deduce or reproduce the situation for students through a certain medium, whether it is the language description of the situation or multimedia presentation of the situation and the emotion in the teaching material content, so that students engage in the "true feelings" active learning. The second is the "environment," teachers need to fully demonstrate their professional skills, and reasonable use of teaching technology to create a variety of colorful situations for students (Zhang Xinyue, 2021).

In order to foster a positive, practical environment, spark students' attention, and deepen their emotional experiences, teachers might set up scenarios in the classroom that are relevant to and reflective of the topic being studied. Allow pupils to develop their cooperative and communicative skills as well as their pragmatic ability (Su Xiuyu, 2023). Situational teaching method is based on the teaching content and teaching objectives, through the teacher to create a specific teaching situation, the combination of cognitive and emotional activities to stimulate students' interest in learning. Although different scholars have different definitions of the concept of situational teaching method, through sorting out the relevant literature, most scholars emphasize two aspects of situational teaching method: teachers create situations according to the teaching content to enable students to understand knowledge and develop students' abilities for the purpose.

2. Theoretical Basis

This section would introduce theoretical basis of situational language teaching from language acquisition theory; constructivism theory; and behaviorist habit-learning theory.

2.1. Language Acquisition Theory

Language acquisition theory is the hypothesis of Chomsky's "language acquisition device" and Krashen's second language acquisition theory. Chomsky believes that people have the innate instinct to acquire language, because there is a genetic "language acquisition mechanism" (LAD) in the human brain (Long Wenzhen, 2003). It also works for second language acquisition. It also works for second language acquisition. Krashen's theory of language acquisition is mainly a model of input hypothesis. Specifically, the "input hypothesis model" consists of five interrelated core hypotheses, which are: (1) Language acquisition-learning hypothesis; (2) Natural sequence hypothesis; (3) Surveillance hypothesis; (4) Language input hypothesis; (5) Affective filtering hypothesis.

Language input theory holds that language acquisition is accomplished through language input, and the main focus of teaching should be on providing the best language input for students, so as to promote language acquisition. According to the acquisition theory, people gradually acquire language ability through a large amount of contact with or input of natural and understandable language materials in the language environment, and language cannot exist in isolation from the specific environment. Without the specific language environment, language cannot be acquired. Therefore, the theory of language acquisition has high requirements on the situation.

2.2. Constructivism Theory

The ideas of constructivism are derived from the theory of cognitive processing and the ideas of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner. Constructivism learning theory holds that the acquisition of individual knowledge is a unified process of objective and subjective, and knowledge is constructed by learners themselves. Rather than being passed on by others, learning is a self-constructive process. Constructivism believes that subject, context, collaboration and resources are the four conditions to promote teaching. The learner's knowledge is in a certain situation,

with the help of others. Such as cooperation between people, communication, the use of necessary information, etc., through the construction of meaning. Constructivism advocates situational teaching. They believe that teaching should make learning happen in a situation similar to the real situation, with the goal of solving the problems students encounter in real life. The content of learning should choose the real task, and it should not be simplified to deal with it, so that it is far from the real problem situation (Chen Qi and Liu Rude, 2002:103). According to their description, in English teaching, teachers can use multimedia and other means to create situations, in a series of situations, can effectively improve students' learning enthusiasm, abstract to concrete, boring to interest, monotonous to visual. Make students enjoy learning, learning, in this case, they can take the initiative, easy to acquire knowledge, the realization of constructivism theory teaching.

2.3. Behaviorist Habit-learning Theory

It addresses primary the processes rather than the conditions of learning. "The fundamental is correct speech habits... The pupils should be able to put the words, without hesitation and almost without thought, into sentence patterns which are correct. Such speech habits can be cultivated by blind imitative drill." appointed by Frisby. (1950, vol. 3: 9) Like the Direct Method, Situational Language Teaching adopts an inductive approach to the teaching of grammar. The meaning of words or structures is not to be given through explanation in either the native tongue or the target language but is to be induced from the way the form is used in a situation. "If we give the meaning of a new word, either by translation into the home language or by an equivalent in the same language, as soon as we introduce it, we weaken the impression which the word makes on the mind" (Billows 1961: 28). Explanation is therefore discouraged, and the learner is expected to deduce the meaning of a particular structure or vocabulary item from the situation in which it is presented. Extending structures and vocabulary to new situations takes place by generalization. The learner is expected to apply the language learned in a classroom to situations outside the classroom. This is how child language learning is believed to take place, and the same processes are thought to occur in second and foreign language learning, according to practitioners of Situational Language Teaching.

3. Research of Situational Approach at Home and Abroad

This section is about to explicit a brief summary of present studies of situational language teaching approach, including research home and abroad.

3.1. Research Abroad

In 1989, Smith Brown, Ijder: Colin, and Paul Duguid published a study titled "Situational Cognition and Learning Culture" in the journal Educational Researchers. In this work, they discussed the situational approach in detail and conducted a thorough analysis. In order to effectively mobilize students' non-intellectual factors, promote their thinking development, and mobilize their enthusiasm for learning, the author contends that knowledge and situation cannot be independent from one another and that learning knowledge must be based on a specific situation. During the process of learning knowledge, students create mental images in their minds.

The idea that traditional teaching is dull and unable to pique students' emotional interest has been altered by the situation teaching approach, which uses multimedia, images, objects, tales, and music to create learning scenarios for students. Situations must be created in order to give abstract information a physical and visible form. They suggest cognitive apprenticeships as an alternative to the method. The author demonstrates the salient characteristics of this teaching approach in two math teaching cases: One is Schaefeld's technique of problem solving, in which students present issues to class and professors and students investigate to discover answers;

students study the magic phalanx and deduce general principles via group effort and practice. The second is Lambert's lesson on multiplication. The instructor presented a straightforward multiplication issue to the class in the first step. The students then wrote a tale to solve the problem in the second stage. Finally, in the third stage, the students presented the standard procedure and provided a summary. Students employ conceptual knowledge as a tool and use it flexibly based on their own cultural backgrounds, guided by their professors. Students' collaboration and contact with one another are crucial to this process since it allows for group thinking exchanges, cooperative discussions, and the teachers' role of "scaffolding" in order to accomplish the situational teaching objective.

3.2. Research at Home

The concept of situational teaching has already been included into the educational system in ancient China. Confucius, the great Chinese educator, developed a special "situational" teaching approach to impart knowledge and virtue as early as the Spring and Autumn Period, almost 3,000 years ago. As such, the circumstance has always played a crucial role in education and learning, both historically and currently.

The theory of situation teaching in China was first put forward in 1978 by Li Jilin, a teacher from the Second Affiliated Primary School of Nantong Normal in Jiangsu Province. She thinks that the "truth, beauty, emotion and thought" in China's "artistic conception theory" provides a good reference for situational education, and puts forward the four characteristics of situational teaching - "form truth", "emotion", "meaning far" and "reason in it". She constructs the classroom paradigm from the three dimensions of "child-knowledge-society", which has made great contributions to the development of situational teaching in our country and inspired the majority of scholars. Since then, the situational teaching method has been gradually applied to primary and secondary schools and colleges. Of course, this teaching method pays more attention to the training of English listening and oral expression. In the concept of the teaching method, some scholars have further refined the concept. Li Jilin (1978) once argued that all situations "have 'intelligence' as the core", that is, "accompanied by 'emotion' with 'reason'". Sui Mingcai pointed out in his book *The Theory of English Teaching* that the teaching situation refers to the environment or activity background in which the language knowledge can exist and be applied, and the language knowledge that students want to learn not only exists in it, but also can be used in it. Situational language teaching is applying in many aspects of teaching process, not only just in English language teaching.

4. Comment

In this section, the author will present his understanding of situational language teaching approach by narrating its merits and demerits.

4.1. Merits of situational language teaching approach

As one of the most-widely-applied modern language teaching approach in current China, situational language teaching gets its merits compared with traditional language teaching approaches.

Firstly, situational approach could arouse learners' interest by creating a authentic and imaginary language context, from which learners are able to communicate their thinking and emotions by using the target language, express their views and understandings about a topic.

Secondly, situational approach is able to active learners. In situational teaching, the role of teachers is to guide students and create various opportunities and conditions for them to learn and use language independently. Students are the subjects of learning, are independent and creative people, only let them actively participate in teaching activities, give full play to their

enthusiasm and initiative, in order to make students learn to learn and use target language, rather than just passively accept knowledge.

Also, situational language teaching is good for learners to cultivate the competence of using language comprehensively and for improvement of teaching and teachers' literacy.

4.2. Demerits of situational language teaching approach

However, some scholars believe that the situation teaching method has shortcomings.

Like "injection" teaching, situation teaching cannot fundamentally solve the task of cultivating students' verbal expression in modern teaching. It neglects the overall comprehensive training and ignores the specific interpretation of language. Wang Wenjing (2003) believes that the situation created by this teaching method is not real, and these problems are not an integral part of social activities. Although the learning task is completed in the process of problem solving, the identity of the learner does not fundamentally change. Students passively accept the imagined situation, without active experience in the field. Education is only regarded as the preparation for students' future development, and is not regarded as a meaningful behavior in the real society. This phenomenon goes against Dewey's thought and theory. At the same time, because of the virtual nature of the created situation, everyone has different understandings and feelings of the situation. The hypothetical emotional experience varies from person to person, so the situational approach has its limitations. In addition, the exploration of situational teaching method is based on schools, without breaking through the barriers of traditional schools, and the thinking is slightly narrow and the coverage is not extensive. In addition, it cannot be ignored that the teaching process of situational teaching method is very time-consuming and inefficient. In the selection and creation of situations, it is necessary to grasp the goal and focus of teaching, which requires teachers to have a higher quality, and has a certain challenge to teachers' teaching ability.

5. Conclusion

After reviewing the application of situational language teaching, we can clearly see the importance and influence of this teaching method in modern English teaching. Situational language teaching not only breaks through the neglect of cognition and learning environment in traditional teaching methods, but also greatly improves learners' learning motivation and effect by introducing situational learning environment.

Originating from British applied linguists from the 1930s to the 1960s, situational language teaching is a further development of the direct method and is more systematic in the selection of language teaching principles, procedures, and course content. This teaching method emphasizes that learners learn the language in a simulated real environment, and through the teacher's guidance and the reproduction of the situation, learners can understand and apply the knowledge more deeply.

The core of situation teaching lies in the creation of "situation". Teachers need to use various means, such as language description, multimedia display, etc., to build an environment that is closely related to the content of the students. In such an environment, students can not only get access to real language materials, but also experience the actual use of language in the situation, so as to deepen their understanding and memory of language.

In addition, situational language teaching also pays attention to the construction of "environment". Teachers need to make full use of teaching resources and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. This includes not only the physical environment, such as the classroom layout, the use of teaching equipment, etc., but also the psychological environment, such as the teacher-student relationship, the classroom atmosphere, etc. A positive and harmonious

learning environment can stimulate students' interest in learning, improve their enthusiasm and participation in learning.

In China's senior high schools, more and more schools have begun to adopt the situational language teaching method. Through practice, we find that this method has achieved remarkable results in improving students' interest in English learning and enhancing their ability to use the language. At the same time, situational language teaching also promotes the interaction and communication between teachers and students, and provides a strong support for the construction of a harmonious teacher-student relationship.

To sum up, situational language teaching is an effective teaching method, which stimulates students' interest in learning and improves their language application ability by creating a real learning environment and contextualized teaching content. In the future English teaching, we should continue to explore and improve this teaching method to better meet the learning needs and development requirements of students.

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