

# The Use of Situational Language Teaching in Secondary School English Classroom under Thematic Meaning

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**Abstract:** This article mainly explores the application of situational language teaching under the theme meaning in middle school English classrooms. This teaching method helps students better understand the meaning and usage of language by integrating language learning into real-life scenarios. By creating natural, authentic, and enjoyable situations in the classroom, students can learn and use English more actively, thereby improving their language proficiency. Based on The English Curriculum Standard for General High School (2017 Edition), theme-meaning teaching is quite important and has lots of advantages. During teaching process, teachers can design teaching objectives, contents and activities based on theme meaning of every unit or module. Therefore, combine thematic meaning with situational language teaching, and adopt the situational language teaching under the theme meaning is an effective teaching method in middle school English teaching, which helps improve students' English proficiency and overall ability.

**Keywords:** English Study; Situational Language Teaching; Thematic Meaning.

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous updating of educational concepts and the constant innovation of teaching methods, situational language teaching has become an important teaching method in the modern education field. Situation is a platform for students to build body of knowledge and theme meaning and is also a key factor to help students understand texts and transfer texts[1]. In English teaching, situational language teaching can help students better understand and apply English language knowledge, and improve their English communication ability. Meanwhile, combined with the theme significance, situational language teaching can also help students better understand and master the learning content, thereby enhancing their learning interest and learning effectiveness. This article aims to explore the application of situational teaching language teaching under the theme significance in the middle school English classroom, hoping to provide some useful insights for the innovation of English teaching methods and the improvement of students' English ability.

Some applications about situational language teaching are classified in this article. Situational language teaching are usually used in the real situation and teachers use this method to improve their expressive ability in the authentic context. Teachers' aims are usually around the curriculum standard and every unit or module has a theme. Teachers set up some teaching objectives and teaching stages according to the theme. Listening, speaking, reading and writing, these skills can be improved and cultivated through situational language teaching. Some teachers or scholars claimed the importance and necessity of situational language teaching and took some examples.

## 2. Thematic Meaning

### 2.1. Thematic Meaning

The English Curriculum Standard for General High School (2017 Edition) lists thematic context as one of the six elements

of English curriculum content, and it is the first element, whose importance cannot be calculated[2]. Many subjects, besides English can adopt theme-based teaching and learning; therefore, the study of teaching and learning around themes is not unique to the subject of English. The origins of theme-based teaching can be traced back to the theme-based curriculum teaching model adopted in the United States in the 1950s. For students, the goal of comprehensive development requires giving full play to students' thematic constructivism and subjective initiative because this teaching model is based on the constructivist model of teaching and learning and the theory of multiple intelligences, and the adoption of thematic teaching facilitates the achievement of this goal[3]. According to Yuan Dingguo and Zhu Dequan, in a specific teaching context, theme-based teaching takes the theme as the central axis and revolves around the teaching theme, viewing teaching as a whole composed of various parts and the teaching process as a teaching procedure composed of many interrelated stages and steps[4]. A teaching theme includes theme content, theme goal, theme form, theme method, theme evaluation and theme behavior. From the operation dimension, it includes unit-based theme teaching design, subject-based theme teaching design and learning area-based theme teaching design. Generally speaking, all activities in the classroom should be carried out with the theme as the central axis, and teachers should pay attention to the internal logic of the teaching theme and focus on authenticity, interactivity, extension and research[4]. Thematic teaching activities of English subjects always revolve around the theme, and teaching activities are the process of thinking and inquiry [5]. At the same time, theme-based teaching can also better promote students' knowledge and literacy[6].

Zhang Liping takes the listening and speaking lesson of English 7B Unit11 "How was your school trip?" (Section B 1a1c) of the PEP as an example, and discusses four aspects of optimizing listening and speaking under the unit theme, namely, studying and reading, establishing objectives, creating activities, and conducting assessments. After learning the former parts of the lesson about the general past

tense, students can fully understand how to use the past tense to talk about farm and country life, and then the listening and speaking lessons focus on the unit theme. Theme is the center of every step and detail, during and after listening, closely following the theme, identifying the theme's emotion, sublimating the theme, and also paying attention to the transfer of speaking after listening, developing listening and speaking skills, and then conducting related assessment activities[7]. In the actual teaching process, some teachers focus on test-taking education and neglect students' character, quality, conduct and other deep nurturing goals. Huang Mindan and Chen Hongyi argue that English theme-based teaching pointing to disciplinary nurturing can well solve the problem of some missing points of education in high school English teaching, and disciplinary education and theme-based teaching promote each other. In this study, we take the Unit 2 passage "Welcome, Xie Lei!" of the PEP of High School English (2020 edition), selective compulsory II as a reading lesson. Business Student Building Bridges is a case study of how to carry out thematic meaning teaching with the goal of nurturing people, fully explore the nurturing elements within the unit theme, integrate them, explore the thematic tasks according to the nurturing goals, learn knowledge and comprehend the thematic meaning in the reading activities, and finally form the correct three outlooks[5]. In response to the problem that some students lack the ability of transferring reading knowledge, teachers can also design some meaningful thematic teaching activities. Jia Yilian believes that the strategy of teaching English reading in junior high school under thematic meaning should pay attention to contextual guidance, create thematic situations, guide students to conduct cooperative inquiry, exercise students' ability to use the ground, carry out layered reading teaching, and carry out every step around the theme[6].

## 2.2. The Use of Thematic Meaning in Teaching

Grammar teaching is a difficult and key point in English teaching, and it is boring and obscure for students to listen to teachers' explanation. Ying Wu discusses how to teach grammar points based on thematic meaning, firstly, teachers should bear in mind the three-dimensional dynamic grammatical view and teach students to acquire, drill and apply grammatical knowledge relying on teaching materials and discourse. The inquiry of grammar teaching under thematic meaning can be divided into four stages: determining teaching objectives based on thematic meaning; teachers create contexts and present discourse, and students perceive and summarize grammatical forms; teachers set up meaningful drills, and students internalize grammatical knowledge through various ways; teachers design oral and communicative activities, and students use grammar to develop competence and transfer what they learn[8]. Zhou Zhinan, on the other hand, explores the teaching of English reading in junior high school with thematic meaning inquiry, where text interpretation, teaching goal orientation and teaching activities design in reading teaching are interrelated and organically integrated. The discussion is developed in three steps: teachers should carefully study the text, which carries the thematic content of the unit; integrate the curriculum content and design progressive inquiry goals; and students engage in inquiry activities in specific, authentic contexts[9]. Similarly, listening activities can also be explored based on thematic meaning. According to Shi Reidan, listening discourse is used as a carrier to explore

thematic meaning, combine language knowledge and cultural knowledge, develop students' listening skills and listening strategies, promote the development of their thinking quality, and develop their comprehensive ability. The design of listening activities also follows four principles: interpreting the listening discourse according to the thematic context; setting teaching objectives according to the thematic meaning; creating a listening context close to students' life; and integrating listening activities around the exploration of thematic meaning[10]. Wan Shu discusses English project-based learning based on thematic meaning inquiry. Project-based learning led by thematic meaning always takes thematic meaning as the central axis, and deepens students' understanding of thematic meaning in a series of teaching processes. The project is based on a series of teaching processes, in which students deepen their understanding of thematic meaning[11].

## 3. Situational Language Teaching

### 3.1. Situational Language Teaching

Contextual pedagogy is inseparable from Oral Approach, and teachers who use Oral Approach usually use meaningful, context-based activities to carry out their teaching activities.

According to Hu Huizhong, the goal of the Contextual Approach is to enable students to develop their own learning methods, and teachers build different teaching contexts according to the teaching content, through which abstract knowledge can be transformed into knowledge that students can understand and absorb[12]. Xu Hao argues that the advantage of using contextual teaching method is that it enables students to better integrate and participate in the classroom, which is also conducive to the development of students' English thinking capacity of reading. To achieve this goal, teachers should rely on the educational concept of the new curriculum standards and increase students' sense of integration and participation through contextual teaching, so that they can have a better emotional experience and thus be more able to appreciate the core message and core values that the reading text is intended to convey[13]. The core messages, core values, and core literacy that are conveyed by reading texts. Yao Longfeng takes Unit 2 Extended reading Finding a balance: My Tai Chi Experience as an example to discuss the use of task-based teaching method and contextual teaching method in high school English reading teaching, which should combine students' interests, teaching objectives and teaching contents. The contextual teaching method should combine students' interests, teaching objectives and teaching contents organically, target the creation of situations, focus on the specificity, vividness and image of the situations, relaxed and pleasant, and mutual trust between teachers and students, so that students can actively think and analyze problems and promote their divergent thinking[14].

In the specific reading teaching process, teachers can use problem situations for reading teaching, that is, teachers use articles to set up problems to guide students to understand the article in all aspects, and for some details students can also carry out in-depth analysis; use information technology and multimedia equipment to assist contextual teaching; make appropriate use of game situations, combined with English reading, to help students better understand knowledge and internalize knowledge [12]. Xu Hao explains the key points of contextual teaching method in English classroom, firstly, it is necessary to create an equal and relaxed teaching

environment for students and design how to present the teaching content according to students' characteristics; secondly, the creation of diversified contexts is conducive to students' satisfaction of learning, stimulate students' active thinking and improve their divergent thinking ability[13]. The combination of task-based and contextual teaching methods can produce different sparks. Set tasks and problems, and guide students' independent learning by creating problem situations; paying attention to the difficulty of tasks and whether the tasks are consistent with the curriculum in the design process; from in-depth interpretation of the text to designing tasks according to the context, each step and task is interlocked. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to how to design problem chains and their use, and pay attention to the close integration of context and task[14].

### 3.2. The Use of Situational Language Teaching

Project-based learning, which has become very popular recently, is to some extent based on the contextual approach. First of all, project-based learning starts from real problems and tasks, guiding students to participate in project inquiry, cooperate with others or explore on their own, and complete a series of project tasks in English, so as to achieve the purpose of learning language[15]; Yang Miao believes that project-based learning is "to let students face a real, attractive and complex problems, difficulties or challenges so as to master knowledge and skills." [16] In addition to knowledge, students must develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and cooperation and self-management skills; project-based learning is an authentic, inquiry-based, student-centered approach, which is oriented to real projects and requires learners to integrate language knowledge, content knowledge, and comprehensive skills to solve real problems[16].

Zheng Ou explores the use of project-based learning in junior high school English reading teaching from a macro perspective, taking Module 6 Around Town in the second book of Grade 7 of FLTRP as an example, and elaborates on the overall teaching strategy of the unit based on project-based learning in three stages: before, during, and after the project. At the same time, each subproject should have driving questions associated with the meaning of the topic. The lesson objectives and subprojects all point to the big project of the unit, and each unit activity in the big project should correspond to the subprojects one by one to build a scaffolding for project learning, which is also based on the context[15]. The assessment activities should also be carried out according to each subproject, and students should be guided to reflect and transfer what they learn after the project. Yang Miao, on the other hand, explores the use of project-based learning model in listening and speaking teaching, including four processes and their corresponding six stages and six main tasks, determining unit objectives, designing driving questions, developing subprojects, carrying out project-based learning, and finally conducting evaluation, all of which coincide with Zheng Ou's[16]. Li Ping and Wang Shu also discussed how to use writing strategies based on project-based teaching. Similarly, based on the authentic writing situation, project-based learning for teaching English writing is divided into six steps, taking Unit 2 Travelling around in Compulsory I of the PEP of high school as an example. People and nature are identified as the thematic situation, and the writing situation is constructed so that students can fully experience the real situation. In the writing scheme and writing model, we design sub-projects that are

closely related to the theme. After carrying out writing creation, we can carry out writing enhancement, i.e. writing evaluation, and the purpose of evaluation is to improve students' writing ability. As we can see, project-based learning has some common points, based on thematic meaning, based on real situations, creating sub-projects. Sub-projects are actually one interlocking steps, evaluation activities after project-based learning, etc. The project-based learning model is an extension of the contextual approach, creating realistic contexts for students to explore projects, which are usually difficult and therefore need to be guided by the teacher. As students go through the exploration process, the context makes a strong impression, so they are less likely to forget and better able to transfer. At the same time, the subprojects and themes are tightly linked in meaning and logical, and teaching in this way also develops students' logical thinking[17].

## 4. Conclusion

The situational language teaching under thematic meaning inspires students' learning interest and teachers guide them to explore the unknown. Students can have deep understanding of some core problems and knowledge by means of cooperating with teachers or classmates. This kind of method pays more attention to the connection between learning and life, the combination of study and authentic context, which provides students with chances to experience, cooperate with others, and internalize language. Some traditional teaching methods attach much importance to theories rather than practical skills in English so that there exists students' body of knowledge and real life disconnect. This kind of method shows the inner relationship between language learning and real life. Let students acquire language knowledge in authentic context deeply and they can find out basic threads and means to solve problems through collaborative inquiry. This method will not break away from the central theme of every unit or module and the theme is vital to teachers to design some relevant teaching activities.

This method can make students achieve this progress, from acquiring knowledge, applying to practice, to migrating and innovation, which is considered as a unique and deep learning experience. During authentic teaching process, teachers are supposed to design logic and progressive teaching objectives and exploratory activities. They should also lead students to solve problems in authentic situations and form correct value to specific theme. This method enables students develop language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability through activities.

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