

# Study on the Impact of English Situational Teaching on Junior High School Students' Language Ability and Self-efficacy

-- Case study of Taiyuan Experimental Middle School

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**Abstract:** Under the background of "double reduction" and the orientation of core literacy, English teaching urgently needs to transform from exam-oriented to ability-oriented. This paper takes Taiyuan Experimental Middle School, a key public school in Shanxi Province, as a case study to explore the actual impact of English situational teaching on language acquisition and self-efficacy of junior high school students. Based on constructivism and self-efficacy theory, the study adopts multiple research methods such as "teaching intervention + questionnaire survey + classroom observation + interview" to conduct a 16-week teaching experiment on 104 seventh-grade students. This study assumes that situational teaching can significantly improve language ability and affect students' self-efficacy by improving learning confidence. The results show that situational teaching significantly improves students' language application ability in real contexts, and effectively enhances their learning confidence, ability to overcome anxiety and language persistence. The article proposes a "school-based situational teaching model" based on real scene simulation, which has a strong reference significance for the current reform of middle school English classroom teaching.

**Keywords:** English Situational Teaching, Self-efficacy, Language Ability, Constructivism, Task-Based Learning, Case Study, Junior High School Students.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and Problem

As a core course in the basic education stage, English has long been restricted by traditional teaching models such as "exam-oriented" and "grammar translation method", ignoring the communicative function of language. Especially in some provincial middle schools, the problem of students "can read but not speak, can write but not use" is prominent. Taiyuan Experimental Middle School, as a high-quality demonstration middle school in Shanxi Province, has continued to explore English classroom reforms with situational teaching as the core in recent years, trying to stimulate students' language application ability through simulating real-life contexts and task-driven teaching, and create a meaningful language learning atmosphere.[1-3]

### 1.2. Research Significance

**Theoretical significance:** This study is based on constructivism and self-efficacy theory, supplementing the research dimension of the impact of English situational teaching on students' psychological motivation;

**Practical significance:** Through the case study of Taiyuan Experimental Middle School, this paper provides a school-based reform path for English teaching in prefecture-level middle schools and enhances the operability of situational teaching.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

Analyze the mechanism of the impact of English situational teaching on students' language ability; To explore its specific performance in improving students' English learning self-

efficacy; Construct a replicable teaching model with Taiyuan Experimental Middle School as the pilot.

## 2. Theory and Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Basis of Situational Teaching Method

#### 2.1.1. Constructivist Learning Theory Perspective

Constructivism emphasizes that learning is a process in which students actively construct knowledge and meaning based on their existing experience. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" theory advocates that individuals complete cognitive development through social interaction in a region slightly higher than their own abilities, with the support of teachers and peers. English situational teaching is the specific embodiment of constructivism in language teaching. It enables students to continuously realize language expression and meaning construction in the "Zone of Proximal Development" by simulating real contexts and setting communicative tasks.

Especially in junior high school, students' abstract thinking and social awareness are developing day by day, and their needs for contextual cognition and language communication are increasing. Situational teaching not only allows students to "learn language", but also allows them to "learn with language". It abandons the mechanical memorization and unrealistic grammar exercises in traditional indoctrination teaching, and emphasizes the organic connection between language and culture, context, and tasks. Research (Jonassen, 1999) also pointed out that contextualized learning tasks can effectively improve learning motivation and knowledge transfer ability.

### 2.1.2. Self-efficacy Theory Support

The self-efficacy theory proposed by Bandura (1997) is the core of the situational teaching psychological support system. He pointed out that self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in completing a specific task, which directly affects learners' goal setting, emotional regulation, learning investment and persistence. In English learning, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist in completing tasks, try to express themselves, and actively participate in interactions; while low self-efficacy is often accompanied by language anxiety, avoidance of expression, resistance to output and other phenomena.

Situational teaching affects students' self-efficacy construction through four paths:

**Direct experience :** Students continuously gain successful experience in simulated shopping, asking for directions, giving speeches, etc.

**Vicarious experience :** By observing others' successful expressions, you can strengthen your belief that "I can do it, too";

**Verbal persuasion :** teachers actively encourage and provide feedback during the task;

**Emotional regulation :** The task situation is interesting, which can reduce language anxiety and increase classroom pleasure.

There is a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and learning achievement (Schunk & Pajares, 2002), and effective situational teaching is a virtuous cycle of "enhancing sense of efficacy - promoting language use - consolidating confidence in expression."

## 2.2. The Connotation and Structure of English Situational Teaching

Situational Language Teaching originated in the UK in the 1950s and was proposed by linguists such as Harold Palmer. It emphasizes guiding language use through situation, focusing on the practice of oral language and sentence patterns and the use of language functions. The modern concept of situational teaching combines task-based teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT), emphasizing the trinity of "language + task + communication". The core features include: 1. Contextual authenticity : language use must be close to real life scenes; 2. Task orientation : learning activities are designed around communicative tasks with clear goals; 3. Emotional infectiousness : the teaching process is interactive and playful, which mobilizes learning enthusiasm; 4. Feedback operability : learning results are concrete and visible, such as completing an English resume, tour guide explanation, etc. Richards & Rodgers (2014) divided situational teaching into "structural teaching model" and "pragmatic task model". The former focuses on language structure input, while the latter emphasizes communicative purpose and pragmatic strategies. The latter is more suitable for the current implementation direction of situational teaching in junior high schools.

### 2.3. Current Research Status at Home and Abroad

#### 2.3.1. International Research Progress

There are many empirical studies on situational teaching in the world. Ellis (2015) pointed out in his book *Second Language Acquisition* that situational teaching can enhance learners' comprehensive abilities in pragmatics, vocabulary, intonation, etc. Skehan (1998) proposed that tasks should

include a three-layer structure of grammatical focus, semantic understanding and interactive expression, and activate students' cognitive processing through different task types. Larsen-Freeman (2019) further proposed the concept of "dynamic context", arguing that teaching should evolve with the learners' development level.[4]

In East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, situational teaching has been integrated with classroom assessment and online resources to form a teaching ecology. For example, the "Communicative English Promotion Strategy" proposed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology encourages schools to build an "immersive" language environment and set up English corners and situational practice areas. Korean scholars Park & Lee (2020) pointed out through empirical research in multiple schools that situational tasks can significantly improve the comprehensive ability of middle school students in speaking, listening and writing, and have a long-term impact on learning motivation.

#### 2.3.2. Current Status of Domestic Research

Domestic research on situational teaching began after 2000, focusing on classroom practice and teaching cases. Wang Qiang (2003) pointed out that situational teaching is an important carrier for realizing the concept of "task-based teaching". Zhu Xiaoming (2011) emphasized the need to closely link English teaching with students' real lives and to build a learning environment with the help of scenarios inside and outside the school. In recent years, with the promotion of the concept of "core literacy", the scope of situational teaching research has expanded to areas such as interdisciplinary integration and comprehensive practical activity design.[5]

However, current research generally has the following problems: **Insufficient theoretical support :** Most studies focus on teaching design but ignore the systematic construction of its theoretical framework; **Lack of empirical verification :** Teaching effectiveness is mostly evaluated subjectively, lacking quantitative data support; **Regional sample limitations :** most studies focus on economically developed regions, with a lack of attention paid to middle schools in the central and western regions; **Ignoring psychological variables :** There is little research on variables such as learners' self-efficacy, learning anxiety, and motivation.

It is in this context that this study, using Taiyuan Experimental Middle School as a platform, uses teaching intervention experiments to fill the theoretical and empirical gaps in current situational teaching research, taking into account both classroom effectiveness and learning psychological mechanisms.

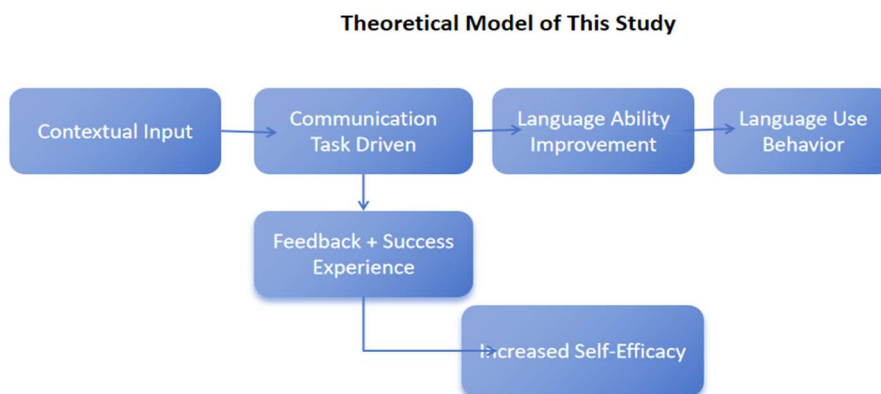
## 2.4. Theoretical Model and Innovation of this Study

This study constructed a three-layer linkage model of "English situational teaching-language acquisition-self-efficacy":

The innovations of this study are mainly reflected in: **theoretical integration :** combining constructivism, situational learning theory and self-efficacy theory to build a theoretical closed loop; **unique research objects :** taking key middle schools in Shanxi Province as samples, filling the gap in the research on English teaching reform in the central and western regions; **clear and operational paths :** breaking down situational tasks into specific teaching scripts, which is conducive to teachers' practice and school-based resource

development; focusing on psychological mechanisms : not only observing "how to learn", but also exploring "why to

learn and why to dare to learn".[6]



**Figure 1.** Theoretical mechanism model of English situational teaching based on language acquisition and self-efficacy enhancement.

### 3. Study Design

Basic information of Taiyuan Experimental Middle School  
 Taiyuan Experimental Middle School is a key middle school in Shanxi Province. It is located in Xinghualing District and has two departments: junior high school and senior high school. It has a strong faculty and its English teaching and research group has won provincial and municipal teaching achievement awards many times. The school pays attention to curriculum reform and actively explores the "project-based" and "task-based" classroom models under the promotion of the new curriculum standards, which provides a good foundation for the development of this study.

#### 3.1. Research Subjects

The study selected two parallel classes of seventh graders in Taiyuan Experimental Middle School (a total of 104

students) as the research subjects. One class served as the experimental group (52 people) and implemented the English situational teaching reform; the other class served as the control group (52 people) and maintained the original traditional teaching method.

#### 3.2. Teaching Intervention Design

##### 3.2.1. Teaching Intervention Cycle and Goals

Period : Fall semester of 2024, 16 consecutive weeks, 2 classes per week, 32 class hours in total;

Objectives: To improve students' English listening and speaking skills in a real context; to strengthen their willingness to produce language through task-oriented learning; to stimulate students' confidence in learning English and their ability to regulate emotions.[7]

##### 3.2.2. Unit Task Design and Implementation Process

**Table 1.** Unit Task Design and Implementation Procecs

unit	Teaching Topics	Scenario Setting	Mission Objectives	Specific activity design
Unit 3	Buying Things at the Market	Simulate the "Liuxiang Morning Market"	Learn to ask for prices, make payments, and express purchase intentions	Design a shopping list in groups Role play "vendor and customer" Live dialogue using real props
Unit 5	Asking the Way	Simulation of "tourists finding their way in Jinci"	Learn to ask for directions and guidance	Students work in pairs to complete the "find scenic spots" task Conduct a simulated tour in English
Unit 7	Holiday Plan	Design of "One-day Tour in Shanxi"	Use the future tense to express plans	Students look up information about scenic spots around Taiyuan Each group chooses a scenic spot and designs a travel itinerary Presentation with PPT + explanation in English

Examples of teaching highlights : In the "Liuxiang Shopping" class, the teacher prepared props such as model stalls, small-denomination "foreign currency" banknotes, food boxes with English labels, etc. in advance to simulate the real market transaction process .

##### 3.2.3. Teaching Intervention Content (Integrating the Characteristics of the School)

**Table 2.** Teaching intervention content

Unit Theme	Scenario Settings	Fusion of regional characteristics
Shopping at the market	Simulation of the early morning market scene in Liuxiang, Taiyuan	Use Shanxi specialty words such as "knife-cut noodles" and "aged vinegar"
Find attractions	Simulate the scene of tourists finding their way in Jinci Temple	Introducing local cultural terms such as "Jinci" and "Shuangta Temple"
Holiday travel plans	Design a one-day tour route in Shanxi	Guide students to use English to describe "Pingyao Ancient City" and "Yungang Grottoes"

The students were in high spirits, there were frequent English conversations on the spot, and the classroom

interaction rate was significantly higher than before.

### 3.2.4. Data Sources and Research Methods

**Questionnaire** : English learning self-efficacy scale, covering dimensions such as belief, persistence, anxiety regulation, and goal setting;

**Test** : English proficiency pre-test and post-test, focusing on oral expression and contextual comprehension skills;

**Observation** : Classroom video + teacher observation records, analysis of language production frequency and participation;

**Interviews** : teachers (3) + student representatives (8), to obtain perception and attitude feedback.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1. Language Proficiency Test Results (Pre- and Post-test Comparison)

The school's unified listening and speaking ability test was used to conduct pre-test and post-test on students. The test content included situational questions and answers, information conversion, simple dialogue expression, etc. The results are as follows:

**Table 3.** Comparison of language test ability before and after

project	Average score of pre-test of experimental class	The average score of the post-test of the experimental class	Pre-test of control class	Post-class test
Oral Expression	59.8	81.4	60.2	68.9
Listening Comprehension	65.2	80.1	64.7	70.8
Situational dialogue output	53.6	76.7	55.1	63

Analysis : The students in the experimental class have significantly improved their pragmatic strategies, response speed, and sentence pattern accuracy in real communication tasks. In particular, they have shown a strong willingness to express themselves and confidence in English in situational simulations.[8]

### 4.2. Results of the Self-efficacy Scale

A self-compiled Likert five-point scale was used, which was divided into four dimensions: "learning beliefs", "task persistence", "anxiety regulation" and "language emotions". The statistics are as follows:

**Table 4.** Results of the Self-efficacy Scale

Dimensions	Pre-test of experimental class	Post-test of experimental class	Improved value	p-value (t-test)
Learning Beliefs	3.1	4.15	1.05	p < 0.01
Mission persistence	3.22	4.28	1.06	p < 0.01
Anxiety Regulation	2.96	3.89	0.93	p < 0.05
Overall performance	3.09	4.1	1.01	p < 0.01

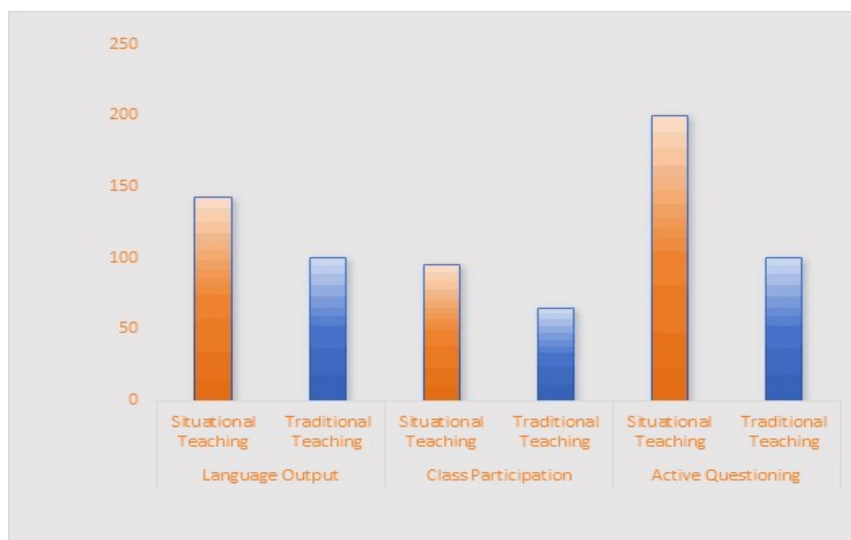
Student interview feedback : "I used to be afraid to speak in English class, but now I dare to speak up." "The group role-playing arranged by the teacher is very interesting, and I can remember a lot of sentences." "When I was a tour guide at Jin Temple, I found that I could speak a lot of English!"

### 4.3. Teaching Observation and Classroom Recording

**Observation tools** : Based on the Flanders Interaction

Analysis, statistics are collected based on indicators such as language output frequency, participation time, and teacher-student interaction;

**Findings** : In situational teaching classrooms, students' average language output time increased by 43% compared to traditional classrooms; more than 95% of students participated in classroom tasks, and the proportion of active questions doubled; teachers' feedback in the context was more targeted and encouraging



**Figure 2.** Comparison of traditional teaching and situational teaching

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Practical Advantages of English situational Teaching in Taiyuan Experimental Middle School

The school has a strong foundation in teacher training, and teachers have a strong awareness of teaching reform; it has rich geographical and cultural resources, which facilitates the creation of localized teaching scenarios; the teaching management level supports interdisciplinary integration, such as collaborative design tasks for English, geography, and history courses.[9]

### 5.2. Real Dilemma in Promotion

Under the pressure of course schedule, it is difficult to allocate time for situational teaching; there is a lack of a systematic task evaluation system; and teachers still have bottlenecks in their ability to create situational scripts.

## 6. Suggestions and Inspiration

### 6.1. Teaching Design Suggestions: Constructing an Integrated Path of "English + Local Culture"

In order to enhance students' contextual authenticity and cultural connectivity in the process of English learning, teaching design should actively integrate local cultural elements from the content level and construct an integrated teaching path of "English + local culture". On the one hand, the traditional dialects, festival customs, historical allusions and folk art resources unique to Shanxi can be transformed into the contextual background of communication tasks, so that students can naturally contact and understand local culture in the process of completing tasks; on the other hand, attention should be paid to the situational authenticity of tasks, such as designing "Introducing Pingyao Ancient City in English" and "Simulating Shanxi New Year Customs Guide" and other language practice activities with life relevance to stimulate students' expression motivation and cultural identity. At the same time, it is advocated that students participate in cultural data collection, role-playing and display explanation as the main body to further enhance the initiative and transferability of learning.

### 6.2. Teacher Support Mechanism: Develop "School-based Situational Teaching Resource Package"

High-quality situational teaching not only depends on the teacher's creation ability, but also requires systematic teaching resources and support mechanisms as a guarantee. It is recommended that schools promote the development and sharing of "school-based situational teaching resource packages", including: first, organize teaching and research teams to develop situational task scripts and materials around themes such as "common campus scenes, community communication tasks, and landmark cultural tours", and combine students' actual conditions to create localized and practical teaching modules; second, organize and classify typical teaching cases, task scripts, and available language materials to form a "modular course package" so that different teachers can flexibly select and adjust them according to their

needs; third, establish a teacher co-creation mechanism to encourage English teachers to collaborate with interdisciplinary teachers such as geography, history, and art to develop task-based courses, realize resource integration and subject integration, and enhance the vitality of the overall teaching ecology.

### 6.3. Resource Development and Evaluation System: Establish a Multi-evaluation Mechanism based on Situation

At the teaching evaluation level, a multi-dimensional evaluation system with "process-task-output" as the main line should be established to comprehensively reflect students' language performance, emotional regulation, and learning motivation in situational teaching. First, in terms of formative evaluation, a task execution observation scale can be set up, combined with teachers' classroom records, students' learning files and reflection diaries, to dynamically track students' language use and behavioral changes; secondly, a peer evaluation mechanism can be implemented, and peer evaluation forms can be designed for dimensions such as expression content, communication strategies, and teamwork to stimulate students' sense of cooperation and reflective ability; thirdly, teachers should provide diagnostic feedback in the teaching process, combine oral prompts with written comments, and give timely and specific guidance to students' language expression, strategy application and emotional reactions in the tasks, so as to enhance the guidance, motivation and development of the evaluation.[10]

## 7. Summary

Under the background of "double reduction" and the guidance of core literacy, English teaching urgently needs to transform from exam-oriented to ability-oriented. This paper takes Taiyuan Experimental Middle School, a key public school in Shanxi Province, as a case study to explore the actual impact of English situational teaching on language acquisition and self-efficacy of junior high school students. Based on constructivism and self-efficacy theory, the study adopted multiple research methods such as "teaching intervention + questionnaire survey + classroom observation + interview" to conduct a 16-week teaching experiment on 104 seventh-grade students. The results show that situational teaching significantly improves students' language application ability in real contexts, and effectively enhances their learning confidence, ability to overcome anxiety and language persistence. The article proposes a "school-based situational teaching model" based on real scene simulation, which has a strong reference significance for the current reform of English classroom teaching in middle schools.

This study uses Taiyuan Experimental Middle School as an empirical platform to verify the positive role of English situational teaching in improving junior high school students' language ability and self-efficacy. Situational teaching not only optimizes the teaching process, but also promotes students'

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