

English Thematic Meaning Exploring Class under the New English Curriculum

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Abstract

The New English Curriculum(2017 edition, 2020 revision) advocated that English teachers should pay attention to meaning of the theme in teaching and formulate overall goals of teaching units pointing to the development of core competences of English. The author discussed the connotation and importance of thematic meaning exploration in English classroom to students' English learning, and explored the implementation situation and paths in China.

Keywords

Thematic Meaning; Unit Teaching; Comprehensive Ability; Professional Quality of Teachers.

1. Introduction

The New English Curriculum (2017 edition, 2020 revision), which is called the New English Curriculum later, confirms theme as one of the six elements of English curriculum content, and points out that "unit is the basic unit that carries the meaning of the theme, and the teaching goal of a unit is an organic part of the overall goal." Teaching goal of a unit should be aimed at developing the core competences of English subject, and set learning activities around thematic contexts." Language learning plays an important role in both students' learning career and their personal ability development. Also, language is a complex symbolic system composed of words according to a certain grammar, including phonetic system, lexical system and grammatical system. However, in daily life, the language we use is not a system, but a discourse, such as a dialogue, a speech, an article, etc. Therefore, language learning can't be separated from discourse, in which theme is one of the indispensable factors. It means that theme needs to be presented by discourse. In order to achieve the complete and coherent teaching of discourses and students' learning, it is necessary to strengthen the thematic teaching of units to ensure that students acquire language in a authentic and natural environment. Students' thematic exploration of language learning under the guidance of teachers can not only affect their learning effect, but also affect their attitude towards English learning, qualities of thinking and development of learning ability.

In recent years, with the revision of English Curriculum, front-line teachers and scholars have paid more attention to thematic English teaching. However, the experiments and results of English teaching under this concept in practical teaching are disappointing. For example, most teachers don't realize enough of the concept, and they can't use it properly; meanwhile, most scholars' design for this kind of teaching is too ideal, which is difficult for teachers to apply. Based on the above reasons, the author explored the connotation of thematic meaning exploration in English classroom and its implementation paths in middle school English teaching in China.

2. English Thematic Meaning Exploring Class

2.1. The Concept of English Thematic Meaning Exploring Class

It is not a new concept to carry out English teaching based on the meaning of the theme. This concept was first proposed by pedagogical experts, which can date back to the teaching model of the theme course that arose in the United States in the 1950s. The core idea of it is that under the guidance of Constructivism Learning Theory and Multiple Intelligences Theory, the subject constructivism and subjective initiative of students can be exerted through thematic exploring activities in interdisciplinary fields, so as to achieve the goal of promoting students' all-round development [1].

2.2. Existing Situation of English Thematic Meaning Exploring Class

A few years ago, under the background of exam-oriented education, English teaching in most areas of our country was not designed according to the context advocated by the curriculum standard, but blindly carried out the indoctrination of knowledge, the practice of sentence patterns and rote memorization. Today, with the continuous progress of social civilization, our education has turned to focus on students and their learning process, and gradually implemented the teaching goals of "virtue cultivating " and "students-oriented". Therefore, many scholars have designed excellent thematic English classrooms, which provide reference for front-line teachers to change their teaching paths. At the same time, there are still some problems in the teaching design provided by English teachers and scholars. The main problems come from three aspects.

2.2.1. References Provided by Academic Circle.

Scholars' design for this kind of teaching is too ideal. After reading nearly 10 thematic English teaching designs from core journals, the author finds that the teaching designs contained in these journal papers are too idealized and difficult to be implemented in current first-line English teaching. For example, in terms of classroom teaching content and class time arrangement, scholars' design is very substantial, and classroom activities are too rich. This kind of teaching activity design is difficult to be fully implemented in the actual middle school English class arrangement, and it is difficult to lead students to achieve a complete discussion of the meaning of the unit theme.

2.2.2. Situation of Front-line Teaching

In the aspect of front-line teaching, problems are mainly reflected in three aspects-schools, teachers and students. Most schools doesn't respond well to the national education. In the study of theoretical knowledge, the training provided by schools is usually insufficient, and the quality of it needs to be improved. As a result, teachers may not understand or misunderstand and apply the teaching concept. In this way, it is difficult for students to explore the meaning of themes and develop their abilities. Also, some teachers are reluctant to accept the English teaching of thematic meaning exploration, believing that it is time-consuming and labor-intensive, and still implement the traditional single classroom mode aiming at the college entrance examination. In this way, students will gradually lose their interest and confidence in learning English, and it is difficult to apply what they have learned and develop their comprehensive ability. At the same time, some teachers lack a solid theoretical foundation, and their thematic teaching only floats on the surface without sublimating, which also makes middle school students fail to build their own values in learning. Lastly, exam-oriented education is deeply rooted in our country, and it hurts not only teachers, but also students. Students are accustomed to the teacher-dominated classroom and are only willing to passively follow the teacher's arrangement to learn English, rather than actively participate in the classroom communication activities. Even if teachers can teach correctly, students may not adapt to this way of teaching.

3. Paths to Implement English Thematic Meaning Exploring Class

To better cultivate students' English core competences, the author put forward the following tips from three aspects.

3.1. Scholars

Scholars who are proficient in theory need to give practical cases for reference for front-line teachers to learn and apply. Scholars should not only focus on the study of theoretical knowledge, but also walk into frontline classrooms, communicate with frontline teachers and students, deeply understand the actual teaching environment, and make appropriate and practical contributions to the research and application of theories.

3.2. Schools

All kinds of middle schools in China need to keep up with the pace of national curriculum and teaching reform, seriously study and understand the connotation of The New Curriculum Standard, and take it as the general direction of the development of English teaching in our school. At the same time, school leaders should do a good job in the training and research of English teachers, encourage English teachers to strengthen their study of theoretical knowledge of English teaching and provide sufficient resources for them, such as hiring outside experts and providing excellent classroom observation opportunities.

3.3. Teachers

In the specific teaching design, teachers should grasp the following points. For one thing, teachers should fully study the teaching materials before the teaching design, and design the whole teaching unit. Only after teachers have fully explored the unit content and have a deep understanding, can they adjust and adapt the content of the textbook according to the specific situation of students, and design the whole unit lesson period and lesson type arrangement so that students can understand the theme significance. For another one, teachers should set teaching objectives reasonably. When designing teaching objectives, teachers should make progress from shallow to deep. Pay attention to both the understanding of knowledge points and its application and the development of students' comprehensive ability. At the same time, pay attention to it embodied in the realization of teaching activities. In order to set up the classroom reasonably, teachers must fully understand students and teaching materials, and enable students to gradually improve their self-ability and develop their correct values in classes. Then, when designing classroom exercises and asking questions, teachers should closely follow units' themes and start from the thematic contexts and teaching objectives. Last but not the least, teachers should update forms and content of homework. Fun and real activities should be increased instead of boring exercises. For example, when learning the topic of traditional Chinese crafts, teachers can assign various types of homework, such as asking students to write an introduction about their favorite traditional Chinese crafts, verbally describing a specialty of the students' hometown and recording videos, and working in groups to make hand-written English newspapers related to the topic. This kind of activity is not only close to students' life, but also allows them to fully participate in various abilities, which is more interesting and effective than ordinary homework!

4. Conclusion

With the continuous development of social civilization and the continuous progress of English teaching, English classes based on thematic meaning exploration has become a general trend. No matter as schools, English teachers or scholars in English teaching, they have the obligation and responsibility to shoulder the heavy responsibility of English teaching in the new era. It is necessary to continuously improve teachers' professional quality, deeply explore how to carry

out thematic teaching and practice it repeatedly, so as to make English teaching in China a characteristic English teaching in line with Chinese local culture.

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