Studies on English Reading Teaching Methods on College Students

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Abstract: College students will face more and more English textbooks and papers in their studies and research, so reading quickly and efficiently is an ability that college students should have. However, for most students, it is a challenge for them. Because the traditional reading teaching methods, based on English scores, do not truly improve their reading ability, even students with better English scores cannot understand the text content correctly. Therefore, this paper will introduce three reading methods that are different from the traditional one: the Problem-based learning (PBL) teaching method, the Narrative teaching method, and the Genre-based teaching method. The purpose is to change the teaching mode of the one-way output of core English knowledge by the teacher, take the students as the teaching centre, and improve reading ability as the teaching goal. Teachers will guide the students to master English knowledge in cooperative learning and to improve their reading ability with novel teaching methods.

Keywords: English reading teaching methods, TBL teaching method, Narrative teaching method, Genre-based teaching method.

1.   Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that reading is one of the most crucial aspects of language learning and that it is a necessary skill for all learners to have. An increasing number of university textbooks, academic papers, and materials are also written in English, which presents an additional reading challenge for non-native English readers. Comprehending large amounts of academic texts quickly, efficiently, and effectively is a critical skill that not all students at a higher education level possess. Therefore, English reading ability is very important for college students. However, in the teaching process, there is a serious imbalance between teaching and learning roles. Teachers' one-way output of core English knowledge weakens the students' subjective position, resulting in a lack of awareness of independent learning. Students' English reading training is still aimed at test-taking, which makes students' reading ability improve very little.

Therefore, in order to properly assist students in reading effectively, teachers must adopt a variety of reading-teaching approaches in the classroom. This paper will introduce the Problem-based learning (PBL) teaching method, the Narrative teaching method, and the Genre-based teaching method. The above three teaching methods are student-centered, and teachers only play guiding roles, aiming to help students develop a consciousness of independent inquiry, become more interested in English reading, and enhance their reading skills in English.

This paper focuses on the following questions: (1) How do the above three instructional methods help students learn to read effectively? (2) What does the study suggest for future reading teaching? The discussion of reading teaching methods in this paper will help teachers learn from effective teaching strategies and overcome traditional teaching methods' limitations so as to form a teaching style with personal characteristics. At the same time, it will change the situation of students passively accepting English knowledge so that English learning can be combined with practical application and cultivate students' ability to use foreign languages. Let students not only learn the book knowledge but also be able to apply it flexibly, and the development of students' comprehensive ability of listening, speaking, and writing will be promoted.

This paper will introduce three aspects from the introduction teaching methods, factors affecting reading, and the application of teaching methods to provide effective teaching approaches for English reading teaching in the future.

2. Teaching Methods

This part mainly introduces the PBL teaching method, Narrative teaching method, and Genre-based teaching method, including theoretical basis, characteristics, and genres.

2.1. PBL Teaching Method

The PBL puts students in realistic, challenging circumstances and has them solve problems through individual research and group discussion in order to fully comprehend the material being studied and develop their capacity for autonomous problem-solving and learning [1].

2.1.1. Theoretical Basis

One is constructivism. This theory is the basis of the PBL teaching method, which emphasizes that learning knowledge does not only depend on the teacher's teaching but more on the students' independent construction of their knowledge system and the rational use of learning methods to effectively grasp and absorb knowledge, so as to achieve efficient learning. The PBL tutoring process helps build the system of knowledge because students are instructed through the process of learning and problem-solving. Students apply their previous knowledge when they start discussing an issue, which helps them prepare to learn [2].

The second is cooperative learning theory, which is the core component of the PBL approach. Cooperative learning makes each member of the group take on different roles and missions, which requires students to rely on each other and work together to accomplish teacher-assigned tasks, thereby enhancing learning efficiency and quality [3].

Third, the situated learning theory is an important theoretical support for the PBL approach. It emphasizes providing a practical situation, allowing students to place themselves in a specific situation, guiding students to discover problems, form problems, and solve problems with the help of various materials in the situation, contextualizing knowledge, and allowing students to apply their acquired knowledge and skills to real-world situations, so as to achieve meaningful learning.

2.1.2. Characteristics

The first feature is problem-centered. Teachers build problem situations, and students take the initiative to discover and solve problems. Problems should be set following several principles. First is authenticity; the setting of the problem is related to the actual life of the students so that students can effectively master the knowledge. Second, hierarchical, from easy to complex, based on the student's difficulty, based on the student's zone of proximal development. The third is the difference,

and the problems should be adapted to students at different levels to stimulate their enthusiasm and enthusiasm for learning. As for students' flexible thinking, the problem must be intricate, open-ended, and poorly organized. It must also be realistic and relevant to students' experiences to enhance intrinsic motivation. An effective question provides feedback for students to assess the effectiveness of their logic, knowledge, and learning techniques. These questions should also facilitate assumption and argumentation [2].

The second is student-centeredness, which emphasizes the student's subjective position, and teachers only play a guiding role. Teachers are not regarded as the primary sources of knowledge but as the promoters of collaborative learning. Teachers help guide the learning process through open-ended questions. As students become more familiar with the PBL, the facilitator gradually downplays their scaffolding. At the same time, supervising the process of each group to ensure the involvement of all students and motivate them to develop their ideas and provide feedback on those of their classmates [2].

The third is collaborative learning. Students are able to improve their critical thinking by working in groups as a mode of communicating with each other, expressing their opinions to others, and accepting some of the best ideas from others. Collaborative learning raises students' sense of learning motivation, and it is regarded as a positive teaching method that can motivate students in the university environment [4].

2.2. Narrative Teaching Method

Xiong Muqing and Deng Da define the narrative teaching method as a way of thinking or a concept related to teaching languages. It advocates using narrative ways in teaching foreign languages and designing and presenting teaching materials in the form of narrative. It creates a real-world situation so that students can fully commit to the learning environment, exerting their mental abilities, such as language, emotion, imagination, creativity and so on, and acquire language in this kind of life-like or artistic cognitive activities [5].

2.2.1. Theoretical Basis

The theoretical basis of the Narrative approach is based on the following five aspects. The first is the theory of human thinking, which holds that human beings are accustomed to experiencing life to summarize experiences through stories and finally fabricating possible worlds. The second is the cognitive psychological theory, which holds that human life will be the process of storytelling; the reality of human events and thinking can be expressed through stories. The third is the cognitive linguistics theory, which believes that in the process of learning a language, people first learn narrative methods. Narrative discourse is more conducive to cognition, so it is more conducive to learning foreign language knowledge. Fourth is the narrative theory, which holds that people are innate storytellers and that stories provide people's experiences coherence and continuity. Fifth is the theory of foreign language teaching, which consists of two elements. One is the value of teaching literature to develop students' sense of language. The other one is that narrative is a form that can be applied to any level of language and teaching. When learning knowledge, learners should first learn the corresponding narrative form, which is conducive to the mastery of language [6].

2.2.2. Characteristics

The Narrative teaching method absorbs other successful teaching methods and has certain similarities with other language teaching methods, but it also has its own unique characteristics. First of all, the Narrative method focuses on not only cultivating students' capacity for practical application but also developing their cognitive abilities. In other words, learners can not only get language training from

the narrative teaching method but also improve their intellectual and cognitive abilities in an all-round way [7].

Second, it can create a more authentic context rather than a false communicative situation. Teachers guide students to be the creators or participants, entering a real-world or a hypothetical one. They engage in cognitive activities in an immersive way to fully and coordinately utilize their mental abilities, such as language, emotion, memory, imagination, and creativity, and acquire language in this kind of living or artistic cognitive activities [5].

Thirdly, the approach aims to cultivate students' imagination and creativity and plays a positive part in language transfer. Presenting the content of the textbook in a narrative way and storytelling the boring knowledge can stimulate students' interest in learning. In order to accomplish the goal of language acquisition, students must completely employ their imagination during the adaption process to create a realistic setting.

2.3. Genre-based Teaching Method

The Genre-based teaching method consciously incorporates genre and genre analysis theory into classroom instruction and conducts teaching activities around the schematic structure of discourse [8].

2.3.1. Theoretical Basis

The Genre-based teaching method has two theoretical foundations.

First, it contains text analysis and discourse analysis. The main purpose of studying discourse's language use strategies and communicative goals is to study the language's language use strategies. Text analysis is the analysis of the discourse at two levels. One is the superficial analysis of vocabulary and sentence patterns, and the other is the normative analysis of language to understand the language styles of different discourse genres. Discourse analysis is a micro-analysis of the style and language usage habits of the discourse. The aim is to improve students' learning with the help of discourses' usage and communicative purposes.

The second is schema theory, proposed by the German psychologist Bartlett in 1932. He believed that schema is a kind of knowledge structure existing in the human brain, which can promote the processing and storage of information. When acquiring new information, learners should connect the new thing with the existing schema, understand the new information and absorb the new information to enrich their knowledge base [9].

2.3.2. Three Schools of Genre-based Teaching Method

In foreign countries, genre and genre analysis theory have been applied to language teaching practice, and ESP (English for Special Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) schools, new rhetoric schools, and Australian schools have emerged.

ESP and EAP

The purpose of this school is to help non-native English speakers efficiently improve their reading and writing ability in professional and academic discourse. In their opinion, the discourse of ESP, whether it be written or spoken, belongs to a particular communicative event with a specific purpose and reader. Because of this, it has specific genre traits in terms of social function, stylistic style, and discourse structure [10].

New Rhetoric School

Instead of emphasizing the genres' structure, the New Rhetoric School focuses on the analysis of the social behavior and purpose of text from the perspective of the social situation that the genre forms. In other words, the New Rhetoric School advocates the Genre-based approach, which aims to

help college students and new employee in a certain career understand discourses' social functions and particular genre [10].

Australian School

This school helps students construct some genre schemas that are common in their lives so that they can skillfully use the genre structures they have learned in communication. It is based on different genres of discourse by means of exploring the cultural and situational context of discourse, with vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric knowledge as the core to cultivate students' generic competence. It aims to instruct students to understand the different language features, structures, and social communication purposes of different discourse genres through teachers' explicit instructions. It makes students realize that discourse is not only a linguistic construct but also a meaning construct [11].

2.4. Factors Affecting Reading Ability

There are many factors that affect college students' reading, but this paper only discusses four factors from the perspective of text.

First of all, in terms of vocabulary, two aspects affect reading. One is the limitation of students' vocabulary. The new words that they did not know will affect their understanding of the text. The other is that a word has different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, simply knowing the ordinary meaning of words will cause ambiguity when understanding the text, leading to misunderstandings.

Secondly, the meaning of the same word is very different due to the cultural differences between China and the West. For example, in Chinese culture, the dog is given a negative meaning, which generally has demeaning implications. However, Western culture is often associated with positive feelings such as loyalty and friendship. If students do not understand the historical and cultural background of the West, they may misunderstand the writer's intentions.

The third is language expression. As native Chinese speakers, we use colloquial forms to express certain things or emotions in daily communication. Similarly, there will be such a language form in English which is difficult for non-native English speakers to understand. For example, the phrase 'get under one's skin,' literally translated, means 'something under someone 's skin.' Readers who do not understand the English idiomatic expression will be confused. The meaning of this phrase is 'irritate someone,' which makes it more difficult for readers to understand the article.

The fourth is syntactic differences. The way that Chinese and English sentences are constructed has a huge influence on college students learning the language. For example, Chinese pay more attention to the logical order of time, while English pay more attention to the form of main and subordinate sentences, which also creates more difficulties for college students when translating from English to Chinese or vice versa [12]. For example, the sentence 'He sent us an open letter, hoping to get our support.'. 'hoping to get our support' is the reason for this sentence, which is placed at the end of the sentence in the form of an accompanying adverbial. However, in Chinese, the reason is generally placed first.

2.5. Application of Teaching Method

2.5.1. PBL Teaching Process

First of all, teachers introduce questions and tell students the questions they have designed to clarify the class tasks. The second part requires students to read related materials. Students can use various resources after class, such as consulting relevant books or collecting relevant information on the Internet, to find the answer to the question. The third part is the group discussion. The members state their viewpoints and understanding of the problem, respectively, which promotes the understanding

of knowledge in the communication. This is beneficial to form knowledge construction. Finally, teachers need to evaluate students' performance and summarize the teaching content, which is conducive to students' construction of cognitive structure and understanding of knowledge [3].

2.5.2. Narrative Teaching Process

The first thing to do is to adapt language materials, which means adapting texts or other language materials. Students can tell the background story of the text, rewrite non-narrative texts, such as news reports or interviews, and recompile the original story's character relationship, plot and ending according to their own comprehension. Extending the characters and plots of the original story can also be applied to the classroom. The second step is to set the context. Creating the context with narrative sentences or narrative paragraphs. Teachers teach words and grammar knowledge and deal with long and difficult sentences to help students eliminate reading obstacles. The third part is the narrative tasks, which require students to narrate some language materials by self-directed or cooperative learning. For example, students are required to adapt texts or paragraphs, retell a familiar story, or improve an incomplete story, including their own experiences or real events, to conduct virtual or actual interviews or reports [13].

2.5.3. Genre-based Teaching Process

The first step is the creation of context. Teachers need to give students an overview of the article's background, including its social background and communicative goals, which is beneficial for understanding the content. Second, case analysis. Teachers need to guide students in thinking about and analyzing the structure of the article, aiming to enable students to master different stylistic structures. In this process, the teacher focuses on the analysis of the text, including the social purpose, genre structure, function, and traits of language, such as tense, voice, and language expression. Third, contact the relevant discourse. At this stage, teachers need to guide students in comparing the text they have learned with other texts and distinguishing their context and language characteristics. Finally, evaluation and testing. This process mainly evaluates the students' reading comprehension, which is useful for teachers to know the learning effects [11].

3. Conclusion

After discussing the three teaching methods, I found that the PBL teaching method and narrative teaching method both involve the creation of situations that are different from each other. The PBL teaching method is student-centered and problem-centered to create situations, which requires students to construct their own knowledge system and rationally use learning methods to solve problems. The narrative approach presents the text content in the form of narration. In the situation constructed by narration, students use their psychological abilities, such as language, emotion, imagination, and creation, and teachers guide students to acquire language. The teaching objectives of the two are also different. The PBL approach focuses on cultivating students' ability to learn independently and cooperatively so as to improve critical thinking and form their own values. The Narrative teaching method pays attention not only to cultivating students' ability of language application but also to developing their comprehensive cognitive ability.

It also has some enlightenment for future reading teaching. First, the PBL teaching method can be combined with traditional teaching methods to develop students' capacities to actively communicate and solve problems in group communication. Teachers should change their teaching roles from knowledge explainers to learning collaborators and improve their professional level to guide students to explore. Second, the narrative teaching method provides teachers with a new teaching mode. Teachers and students are participants and creators. They adapt language materials and set up real

context so that students can learn language in the form of narratives, improve students' cognitive level, and then improve their ability to use language. The third is that teachers should be based on the teaching materials when employing the genre-based teaching method, skillfully use the genre analysis method in teaching, teach students the traits and reading skills of different genres, assist students in mastering the social functions of various genres, and improve their reading ability with the help of discourse communication purposes.

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