

English Teaching Reforms under the Viewpoint of Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT In this paper, the researcher shows us the present situation of the middle school English teaching, provides the main two causes, discusses the speculations and ideas of English teaching reforms in middle school according to the theory of Receptive Aesthetics, and suggests imparting the knowledge with the scene reconstruction, teachers' positive intervention, and students' specialty development. The researcher finds it conducive to conduct the reform with the help of the theory of receptive aesthetics, so the researcher calls for the following reforms in middle school English teaching from the perspective of receptive aesthetics: giving more guidance to cultivate students' initiative in learning; strengthening the information output and consolidation exercises; guiding students to master the correct English learning methods; and implementing experiential teaching activities. The researcher hopes to provide certain reference and help for the related academic.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, English has become a key subject in elementary education in China; and middle school English discipline construction plays an important role in the development of social culture and even economical development of the country. With the trend of economical and cultural globalization, people need to master at least one foreign language so as to make better interpersonal communication, and adapt to the future career environment. Therefore, English in middle school becomes one of the most popular subjects in elementary education, and how to make the students master the knowledge of English and improve their communication ability in middle school becomes the focus of teaching reform especially for those responsible for English course content setting in the middle school (Lu 2013; Wang 2016). The so-called knowledge of English here is of English pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, style, etc. The command of language knowledge and development of language competence are mutually reinforcing. Also Luna (1995), the psychologist from the United States, points out: "no matter which discipline we choose, make sure that the students understand the basic structure which would make it easier for students to understand the subject, and help to maintain what they have learned in the memory." These capacities need to be accumulated in the learning process, and usually demand teachers' involvement and timely communication among the students, so as to guarantee that the learning follows the rational course.

The new curriculum reform, which is advocated recently in China, treats students' posi-

tion as the subject of study in class, and the roles of teachers as participator and facilitator. This idea echoes the reader-centered theory of Receptive Aesthetics, which pays special attention to the interaction between readers and the text, while English teaching prompted by the new curriculum reform advocates the multiple interactions and communications between students, teachers and text. In order to improve the English teaching so as to promote the new curriculum reforms of the high school English, the researcher, in light of the theory of Receptive Aesthetics, discusses the speculations and ideas of English teaching reforms in middle school, and suggests imparting the knowledge with the scene reconstruction, teachers' positive intervention, and students' specialty development.

Objectives

To study the present situation of the middle school English teaching and discussion the ways of reforming, to give some suggestions to enhance the teaching effect in English teaching classes.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Present Situation of the Middle School English Teaching

Since teaching is predictive as teachers' carefully prepared lessons in aspects of vocabulary, grammar, themes and discourse structure etc., when the teaching procedure centered on teaching materials will unfold as per the teaching plan in the classroom of English as a Second Lan-

guage (ESL) reading teaching; while in a student-centered ESL reading teaching classroom, students are regarded as positive thinkers and active participants, and teachers will timely adjust the teaching content and methods in line with problems occurred, so teaching activities here are generative (William and Russell 2015). “Predictive” and “generative” is a hot topic in the field of ESL teaching in the recent years, researchers are either probing into it from the perspective of teaching philosophy, from the one of teaching thought mode, and some from the perspective of nature of teaching activities, or from an angle of teaching method.

In the course of teaching, teachers should focus on the cultivation of basic theory, basic knowledge and skills training and exercise; teaching activities should reflect the real situations and teachers should pay attention to the application of the basic theory and methods of statistical analysis (Gao 2013). In regard of teaching method, teachers should review all the content learned at the end of each part, offer tips about the key points and difficult ones and assign review questions and extracurricular explorations in moderate quantity, so as to help them comprehend and consolidate what have learned in class. Based on actual implementation of the teaching activities, exercise classes for about two times are scheduled so as to detect and solve the problems in learning; In relevant part, teachers use innovative teaching methods, with the help of appropriate statistical methods, to arrange topics for students to choose from, that is, pick subjects of their own interests and, collect and sort out information on their own responsibilities (Nadya and Anat 2015).

Teachers, as the organizer of middle school English teaching and the students’ collaborators, need to associate the teaching practices with those from students’ daily lives or actual workplaces (Wen 2013); they need to design cases and help students appreciate the knowledge of English better and recognize its life enhancing and problem-solving functions, thus facilitates students to realize that English is there of them and for them, and to give students the confidence to learn it well.

As for a middle school ESL learner, it is required for him/her to master basic functional skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Apart from these, training for integrated application

capacities with English skill, which can’t be acquired overnight, cannot be neglected in school.

Since the introduction of Receptive Aesthetics into our country and its collision and fusion with the education and culture in China, it has gradually turned into a theoretical model of critical discourse typical of Chinese literary circle and has been playing a not-to-be-ignored role in the reform and innovation of middle school English teaching.

Analysis of the Causes

Insufficient Attention to English Teaching and Inputs Not in Place

For a long time, the input in education has always been one of the weak links. Insufficient investment in foreign language teaching has been more evident than the others. This is reflected in the following two aspects: (1) There aren’t enough language labs and multimedia classrooms so that students spend inadequate time being immersed and influenced in the situational language context. (2) Teachers in both quality and quantity are in serious shortage. Generally, a large part of high school English classes are taught by graduate students or recent college graduates, and the case is true especially after the expanded enrollment in recent years (Liu 2014). Young teachers need time for improvement in teaching methods, teaching standards and their own professional qualities. Schools should pay more attention to manning quotas, teaching payment, and teacher training, etc.

The Influence of Tradition and Habits

Students have become accustomed to thinking in Chinese before learning English. However, there are more differences than similarities between Chinese and English. English has been imbued with many vocabularies and idioms in its development course, of which no counterpart can be found in Chinese or even if does, alienation occurs and becomes improper to Chinese language. When speaking and writing in English, Chinese expressions will displace those belonging to English, causing jamming to speak out, write English as the natives. Therefore, the students should receive the vocabulary and idiomatic expressions ingraining and correcting exercises so as to let the subconscious mind shapes the conscious expression (Li 2013).

It is important to foster students' pronunciation and spelling abilities at the entry level: (1) it's conducive to raising students' awareness of English vocabulary learning. (2) It helps overcome the difficulty of no many learning experiences due to lack of relevant schema. (3) the student has acquired the know-how of Chinese phonetic alphabet, and by analogy, it may be used to defuse students' pressure and anxiety encountered at the beginning of learning a language not used by his/her intimate acquaintance.

English is more than a language and the learning of it extends far beyond the language itself. Francis Bacon once said, "Histories make men wise; poems witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend." This piece of quote applies to English learning practice. On the one hand, the subject of English comes in forms of history, math equations, poems, etc., and the learning of any part of it helps shape students' basic quality to be a man. On the other hand, using 'any part' of English contributes to his/her comprehensive language competence as an English learner.

Reforms in Middle School English Teaching from the Perspective of Receptive Aesthetics

Giving More Guidance to Cultivate Students' Initiative in Learning

The class time should be spent with a student-centered and teacher-guiding approach. The teacher forms and guides the teams to formulate the questions or problems, and each student is held accountable for solving the team's challenges with teacher's reviews, explanations and suggestions. As a result, the enthusiasm of the students can be fully mobilized, the students' curiosity for learning can be stimulated, and the students' participation in the whole process of classroom activity can be assured. In addition, teachers should impart classroom knowledge with the scene simulation; timely reproduce the real-life situations and lecture about oral communication theory and rules, difference between western ways of thinking, western customs and those of Chinese, so that students can have this immersive feeling for listening, watching, experiencing and retention (Grandey 2015).

Strengthening the Information Output and Consolidation Exercises

On the occasion of implementing new curriculum reform, we not only have the philosophy of 'democracy in teaching', 'teaching and learning promote and enhance each other', etc., but also we develop operational methods reflecting these ideas, and this is why we attach importance to practical research and try to sum up the corresponding teaching models. As far as the model of "multiple interactive scene" is concerned, we use the theory of multiple intelligence for reference and propose some basic formats that can be used for instructional designs, and they are based on summaries of successful experiences inspired by the theory (Su 2013). This teaching model, including three components of "multiple", "interactive" and "contextualization", is not stationary procedurally, and there is no set way to implement the related activities, thus provides plenty of leeway for creative instructional approach. On the practical level of multiple lead-ins of teaching points (Diversification of Education), we especially focus on carrying forward the excellent educational tradition in China. Having extended the types of interactive teaching, we explicitly propose the interaction between students and non-living matter. When elaborating on "interaction between human beings", we believe "interactive" means democracy in teaching and teaching is learning, but also mutual respect and mutual understandings between Chinese and other people around the world, and humans and other creatures. Meanwhile, for the teachers' status and role, we also have a clear educational vision for a teacher's responsibility: He/she must be a driver, player and facilitator in school education. In order to prevent situated instruction from students acquiring critical thinking or creative problem-solving skills, the research team specifically defines its scope, dos and don'ts, functions and implementation principle.

In short, the model of "multiple interactive scene" is the embodiment and development of the idea of "teaching with its inherent law and teaching without its constant form" long pursued in the educational circle of our country (Gündüz 2014). Only when English teachers put time and energy in task design, carefully prepare and perfect each lesson, can the students improve their English within a limited time. Only when students take the initiative to actively speak

up, put their hands on ‘teaching material’, and think of the logic, fun and senses in it, can they gradually improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, which sublimates to learning abilities, and thus meet the syllabus requirements for students’ comprehensive competence.

Guiding Students to Master the Correct English Learning Methods

One of the major reasons for the students to learn English words by rote is that they don’t know nearly enough about the corresponding relationship between pronunciation and English word form, and this insufficiency of memory word stock in turn greatly increases the difficulty of memorizing words. In order to help remember the pronunciation of English words, some students have to borrow Chinese phonetic symbols to help them with learning and remembering. This learning style leads to a serious consequence, for instance, students read the English word in multifarious ways, not only impeding correctly spelling the words, but also affecting other aspects of learning in English, such as absorbing information from speaking, reading and listening activities. Furthermore, it in turn delays the forming of learning habit and affects the students to develop comprehensive language application ability, so lack of the stamina for learning English at a higher level.

When first beginning to learn English, the result of learning by rote is satisfactory due to the relatively little content, the words figurative and short, plus students just getting exposed to learning English creating a fresh feeling and sense of interest. Without any input from emotion or feeling, memorizing is merely a cold, mechanical method of stack-up even when it works well and might be a good idea at the early stage. But learning in this way often glosses over a potential risk that student might take it for granted that learning by rote, and scraping every letter together is an established practice, efficient and advisable, which often becomes fixated and encourages habits and proclivities of repeatedly using this method or practice, which once has brought them enough success experiences (Linda 2013).

However, as they make substantive headway in English learning, this approach would prove ineffective in helping achieve continuous success. They seem to have failed to find effective ways to overcome the blows and setbacks that

are accumulating very rapidly, much faster than their management could handle, and that makes them lose interest, courage and self-confidence in an English context. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers “to afford positive intervention and inform students as soon as possible about the relationship between spelling and pronunciation of English words, and develop their ability to spell out words based on pronunciation and associate the pronunciation with its referent.”

Implementing Experiential Teaching Activities

In English phonetic system, the word is composed of letters whose pronunciation corresponds to that of the word. Therefore, the teacher needs to guide students to take full advantage of these non-erratic rules of spelling and pronunciation, and develop their English words spelling abilities, so that they get double the result and overcome the learning style of cramming.

One of the important means for developing students’ words spelling ability is to guide them to master the method of direct letter sounds (phonics), which is based on the pronunciation rules (phonemes) of English letter and letters combination (Zhai 2013). Students will find, in the process of English learning that they can read out the whole word, and correctly spell the word according to the sounds of the letters.

Generally speaking, a teacher’s awareness and appreciation of his/her students’ way of thinking as well as the problem solving method are restricted by the tendentiousness, and conditioned by the teacher’s views of intelligence and ability (some teachers argue that intelligence is innate, and cannot be changed by epigenetic modification); classroom activities design, teaching and assessment models reflect a teacher’s views of intelligence and ability and learning concepts (Wu and Hu 2013). Many teachers are convinced that as long as they straighten up their line of thinking, illustrate how they approach the acquisition of new knowledge and present the whole roads how process to the students, they are done with the learning process. This concept has proved wrong as the teacher ignores the individual differences in students.

When selecting teaching materials, we should choose those representing the mainstream cultures, but also reconciling them with interesting, appealing and engaging content. When conducting civilization, quality and aesthetic education,

the teacher should not simply explain the content to the students, rather he/she should work on the improvement of students' taste, appreciation, recognition and understanding for cultures, and encourage and create opportunities to conduct their own exploration through discovery learning, project-based learning, etc., which imposes positive significance for cultivating students' autonomous learning ability and awareness of life-long learning and ability.

The principle of propriety and phase should be fully taken into account when constructing the 'acculturation', that is, learning activities should be geared to the students' language level, cognitive abilities, physiological and psychological conditions (Kaino 2015). The teacher promote the teaching gradually in due order and lead the students proceed through the forms and externals to the properties, connotations and essence. In the initial stage of English learning, students should be enabled to have a cursory knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries and form a picture of the similarities and differences of the Chinese and foreign cultures. As for cultural knowledge of a higher level involved in the teaching, the coincidence relations should be constructed with those closely related to the students' daily lives so as to stimulate students' interest and positive thinking (Roberts 2015). In the advanced stage of English learning, the range of students' exposure to foreign cultures should be expanded to help them find their specialties and strength, improve cultural susceptibilities and discriminative abilities, and then improve cross-cultural communication abilities.

CONCLUSION

In short, an open environment is at the same time a competitive environment. A market economy is a law-governed and moral-restrained competitive economy. Foreign languages, especially English, serve not only people's exchanges and communication, but more importantly, as a vital weapon for competition. In the case of English being an international business language, mastering English will help us board and compete more effectively on the world stage.

Therefore, in order to improve the English teaching and promote the new curriculum reforms of the high school English, the researchers, according to the theory of Receptive Aesthetics,

discussed the speculations and ideas of English teaching reforms in middle school, and suggested to impart the knowledge with the scene reconstruction, teachers' positive intervention, and students' specialty development. The researchers find it conducive to conduct the reform with the help of the theory of receptive aesthetics. The researchers hope to provide certain reference and help for the related academic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the discussion and analysis above, the researcher suggests to put the receptive aesthetics theory into the practice of English classroom teaching, for the essence thought of the theory conforms to the essence of education. The researchers also suggest to carry out bold exploration and reform on the middle school English classroom teaching under the guidance of receptive aesthetics theory.

First of all, the classroom teaching should strengthen teachers' guidance and cultivate students' learning initiative. Furthermore, as the leader of the school education, teachers should devote their full time to designing teaching task so as to ensure that students have enough opportunity to speak out, write down and think in English. In addition, teachers should guide students to master the correct way to learn English as soon as possible. At last, teachers should carry out experiential teaching activities vigorously, give due consideration to students' language level, cognitive ability and the physiological and psychological condition in the course of cultural content teaching, select those interesting materials representing the mainstream culture, and create opportunity to encourage the students to learn in exploration and research type.

FOR FUTURE STUDIES

In this paper, the researcher discusses the speculations and ideas of English teaching reforms in middle school under the guidance of the theory of receptive aesthetics. The researcher also suggests to impart the knowledge with the scene reconstruction, teachers' positive intervention, and students' specialty development. The researcher finds it conducive to conduct the reform with the help of the theory of receptive aesthetics. However, how to grasp the marrow of the theory of receptive aesthetics, and

how to put the theory into practice of English classroom teaching and English teaching reforms should be further studied.

LIMITATIONS

In this paper, the researcher shows us the present situation of the middle school English teaching, and provides the main two causes. The researcher also calls for the following reforms in middle school English teaching from the perspective of receptive aesthetics: giving more guidance to cultivate students' initiative in learning; strengthening the information output and consolidation exercises; guiding students to master the correct English learning methods; and implementing experiential teaching activities. However, the paper is basically descriptive and gives an overview of the topic. It will be better if the researcher provides some critical review in this paper.

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