

Understanding, Thinking and Exploring: Cultural Teaching of Vocabularies under the New English Curriculum Standard

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Abstract

English vocabulary plays an important role in English language learning, and the methods of vocabulary acquisition also have a profound impact on its effect. Under the guidance of the New Curriculum Standard, the cultivation of cultural awareness is also an important part of the core literacy of English subjects, so it will be an inevitable trend of English vocabulary learning to apply the study of cultural awareness to vocabulary acquisition. In actual vocabulary teaching, to truly grasp the core essence of cultural awareness, teachers should recognize the shortcomings of cultural teaching and vocabulary teaching, and under the guidance of the core literacy of English subjects, combine vocabulary teaching with the transmission of cultural knowledge, aiming at exploring the English cultural connotation behind vocabulary, promoting the effective implementation of vocabulary and cultural teaching, and providing some reference suggestions for vocabulary cultural teaching.

Keywords— Core literacy, Vocabulary teaching, Cultural awareness, Cultural teaching, new curriculum standard.

I. INTRODUCTION

English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as "New Curriculum Standards") points out that the specific goal of English curriculum for senior high schools is to cultivate and develop students' core qualities such as language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability after receiving senior high school English education (Ministry of Education, 2018: p4). With the development of globalization and cultural diversity, the links between countries are getting closer and closer, and cultural exchanges are becoming more and more prominent, which requires the cultivation of students' corresponding cultural literacy and communicative competence (Kang, 2010). Cultural consciousness can reflect the value orientation,

reflect the connotation of subject core literacy, and play an important role in cultivating students' world outlook, outlook on life and values. English and culture are closely intertwined, so it is difficult to teach language knowledge if the cultural background of language is not recognized (Baker 2011). The teaching process should not only pass on the textbook knowledge to students intact, but should combine the students' existing cultural knowledge and background, and make a profound exploration of knowledge, so that students can truly understand its internal cultural connotation (Zhang & Qian, 2015). As an important part of English teaching, vocabulary teaching should also adopt the teaching mode of combining with culture, and excavate its cultural connotation from behind vocabulary. Wilkins once said, "Without grammar, there is little expression; Without vocabulary, the expression is

zero ",which shows the importance of vocabulary in language knowledge. For vocabulary teaching, teachers should really infiltrate students' English cultural knowledge and cultivate students' cultural awareness in the process of vocabulary teaching. Only in this way can we have a comprehensive and profound understanding of semantics and the cultural context in vocabulary on the basis of mastering word forms (Li, 2017: 105). However, in the actual teaching process, there are often some problems, such as insufficient awareness of cultural knowledge transmission and insufficient attention to effective vocabulary teaching skills. Teachers often can't skillfully maximize the validity of both, so that they deviate from the direction of subject core literacy. Therefore, this paper links culture with vocabulary, and explores vocabulary teaching methods from the perspective of cultivating cultural awareness.

II. FACTORS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCABULARY AND CULTURE TEACHING

2.1 Lack of awareness of the importance of vocabulary teaching

The reason why language is the most important communication tool lies in its systematicness and regularity. Without grammar, we can't provide readers with the changes of word types and the rules of word formation and sentence formation. Without grammar, communication and teaching activities will be restricted (Dai, 2006). Just like this, teachers pay more attention to the teaching of grammar knowledge in the actual teaching process, and often ignore the effective influence of vocabulary itself. This kind of teachers often simply teach the pronunciation and meaning of vocabulary, and then turn to the teaching of grammar knowledge. On the other hand, teachers often highlight the importance of grammar knowledge in this process, for example, emphasizing grammar knowledge such as word-type conversion, attributive clauses and object clauses, and pointing out that grammar knowledge is the most important thing in understanding the article. Only in this way can we better grasp the general idea of sentences, which is exactly the test-taking skills that teachers teach students. Therefore, students spend

relatively little time and energy on vocabulary and lack of interest, and they simply don't understand the true meaning of vocabulary, let alone the cultural connotation behind vocabulary.

2.2 The limitation of vocabulary teaching methods

The cultivation of teachers' cultural awareness is closely related to teaching methods, so the methods of vocabulary teaching will also have an impact on students' cultural knowledge and cultural awareness contained in vocabulary. Influenced by conventional teaching methods, teachers often break away from the real context and the forced input of vocabulary in the actual vocabulary teaching process, which is mainly reflected in two aspects.

In the first aspect, teachers mainly adopt the teaching method of "pronunciation, form and meaning" in the process of vocabulary teaching, which leads students to adopt mechanical memory methods such as rote memorization, which often makes students' vocabulary learning tend to be fragmented and one-sided. Teachers impart knowledge to students unidirectionally, and students passively accept it, which is not conducive to really internalizing vocabulary in their hearts (Yao, 2018). At the same time, this vocabulary teaching method is not conducive to cultivating students' interest in English vocabulary learning and even English learning, and even makes students feel resentful. Although it is helpful to the improvement of students' grades in the short term, it is not conducive to the development and improvement of students' long-term physical and mental and learning ability. It can be seen that this is contrary to the learning philosophy advocated by the New Curriculum Standard.

Secondly, some teachers are also aware of the possible problems in the mechanical vocabulary teaching mentioned above, and will use pronunciation memorizing skills. For example, teachers teach students to memorize the word "blush", and let students pronounce it in combination with Chinese: if they don't shit, their faces will be flushed, then this word seems to have been memorized, which means blushing. However, it violates the original meaning of the word "blush". The original meaning of the word "Blush" is shy and blushing, which is different from the original meaning of the above homophonic memory method. Therefore, in the end,

students will not learn pronunciation well, and the meaning will not be remembered, or it will be incorrect or inaccurate if they remember it. This method seems interesting, but it can't fundamentally solve the problem of students' vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, blindly adopting unreasonable pronunciation memorizing methods is not conducive to students' correct vocabulary acquisition.

However, with the deepening of vocabulary teaching, different from the above two teaching methods which are out of context and forced to input vocabulary, some scholars put forward relatively flexible vocabulary teaching methods, arguing that in the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers should pay attention to vocabulary collocation and other aspects of teaching, such as breaking the students' traditional mindset of "in the direction of" phrases and exploring the meaning of "from the direction of" in sentence context (Hu, 2021). On the one hand, teaching vocabulary in phrases doesn't encourage students to acquire vocabulary in isolation; on the other hand, it breaks the consistent collocation, not only matches the common collocation, but also explores an unusual vocabulary collocation through context support, and flexibly binds vocabulary and collocation together, so that students can break the fixed thinking. The interest and effect of students' vocabulary acquisition are self-evident. However, using reference books to find collocation still has limitations, which is time-consuming and labor-intensive, and inefficient. If teachers can help show the parts of speech and their contexts by means of corpus, it will be more helpful to achieve a more convincing effect. Moreover, although the vocabulary teaching method advocated by this scholar is assisted by context, it still fails to break away from the boring mastery of function words, and it is also inevitably linked with boring memory, which requires repeated memorization. Moreover, excessive vocabulary collocation phrases are beyond the students' acceptable range, which may also be counterproductive.

2.3 Teachers' understanding of cultural teaching itself is not enough

Teachers' lack of understanding of cultural teaching will affect the transmission of students' cultural knowledge in the teaching process. There are two main situations. First, because the examination does not directly examine the content of cultural knowledge, teachers tend to neglect the

mastery of students' cultural knowledge, so teachers do not deliberately pass on cultural knowledge to students; Secondly, although many teachers are aware of the importance of cultural teaching, they are unable to convey professional English cultural knowledge to students due to their own mastery of cultural knowledge, lack of deep understanding of cultural awareness and inaccurate direction (Zhang, 2019). Take the first activity in the Listening and Speaking section of Unit 5 Languages Around the World (2019) (Figure 1) as an example to illustrate this phenomenon.

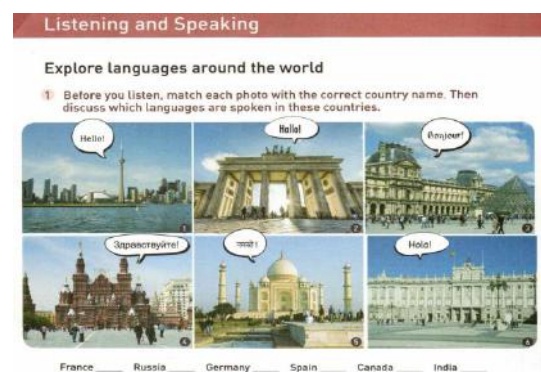


Fig.1. Listening and Speaking Activity 1

This activity shows the buildings and greeting ways in different countries, and requires students to identify different countries through different buildings, so as to judge and locate the language of the corresponding countries. Because different countries have different cultural factors, they will be involved in rich cultural knowledge. In this process, teachers can not only guide students to understand the listening content, but also expand some related cultural knowledge backgrounds (such as the architectural styles of different countries such as Thailand and Spain). At the same time, they can guide students to compare the similarities and differences between their own cultures and the hidden historical and geographical factors behind them, and gradually cultivate their cultural awareness, which also puts forward higher requirements for teachers' own cultural literacy. Due to the lack of their own reserved cultural knowledge, teachers are often not enough to pass on this knowledge to students. Therefore, even if English teachers refer to the relevant requirements of cultural knowledge in the New Curriculum Standard, they don't know how to practice in order to

really infiltrate the cultural knowledge involved in the discourse into the process of English teaching.

For teachers, knowledge teachers with obvious cultural factors can't effectively transmit cultural knowledge to students, and they pay less attention to students' cultural knowledge in the process of vocabulary teaching, which is obviously unfavorable to the cultural teaching of vocabulary and the cultivation of cultural literacy. For senior high school students, due to the influence of traditional ideas and teachers' teaching methods, the ultimate goal of learning English in senior high school is to take an exam and get high marks in the college entrance examination. So it is easy to learn a language superficially for utilitarian purposes, let alone explore the humanistic feelings behind the language.

III. TEACHING MODE OF COMBINING VOCABULARY AND CULTURE

According to the new curriculum standard, students are required to master 2000-2100 words. Selectivity requires students to master 3000-3200 words in total; The elective course of improving class requires students to master 4,000-4,200 words (Ministry of Education, 2018: 21-22). So many words should be "how to teach" by teachers and "how to learn" by students in order to really internalize the words in their hearts. Here, we will talk about the language and culture problems we mentioned earlier that are easily overlooked. The following will take the vocabulary required by the New Curriculum Standard as an example, and explain how to carry out the cultural teaching of vocabulary by classifying the vocabulary from Greek and Roman mythology and the vocabulary from social life.

3.1 Examples of vocabulary from ancient Greek mythology

The ancient Greek culture laid the foundation for the culture of English-speaking countries, and at the same time had a profound influence on the English language itself. Ancient Greek mythology is an important source of English vocabulary, and its influence on English vocabulary should not be underestimated. If you can know the Greek and Roman mythology behind it and understand its cultural significance, you can really learn English vocabulary and culture (Wang, 1995).

3.1.1 The word "just"

When teaching this word, teachers can point out that Justitia, the goddess of justice in Roman mythology, holds a scale in one hand, which represents fairness and justice, and a sword in the other hand, which represents punishing injustice. Then this goddess is a symbol of fairness and justice, so "just" is taken from Justitia, meaning "fair". As an adverb, "just" can mean "just right", which means that both are equal. For example: "This is just what I like." In fact, the deep consciousness is to express "This is no different from what I like, it's exactly the same as what I want." Then the memory of such words means "fairness"(Table 1).

Table 1. "just" words

词汇	词性及含义
justly	adv. 正当地
justify	v. 证明...正当
justice	n. 正义; 公平
justification	n. 正当理由
injustice	n. 不公正; 不公平
unjustified	adj. 不公正的

3.1.2 The word "commercial"

The original meaning of this word is "commercial", and its origin is also related to myth. Mercury, the messenger of the gods in Roman mythology, has a vigorous pace, can quickly reach all places and master and spread information quickly. He is famous for his quickness, so he is also called the "God of Commerce". Mercury's "Merc" is related to "commerce", which is why "commercial" means "commercial". In addition, teachers can also extend "merchant (merchant), mercury (lively; Mercury) "and other words. This series of words are all related to "business".

English vocabulary is closely related to the culture of ancient Greece and Rome. In the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers can effectively attract students' interest and guide them to learn the cultural knowledge hidden behind English vocabulary.

3.2 Examples of vocabulary from society

English vocabulary can reflect the development of social

life. Teachers teach English vocabulary by passing on the knowledge of social life in English-speaking countries to students, which is helpful for students to connect vocabulary with human life, make vocabulary go deep into the scene, and acquire vocabulary in the depiction of real scenes. The following vocabulary "downtown" is taken as an example to illustrate how teachers carry out the cultural teaching of such words.

Teachers can divide it into "down" and "town", meaning "the town below". It can be found that "up" and "down" mean "north" and "south" on the map. In the 1830s, the urban areas of New York in the United States were mainly concentrated in the south of Manhattan Island, and a large number of migrant workers flowed into this place. As a result of the large population gathering, the economy in the south became more and more prosperous, and the downtown was formed, which is also called "Downtown" in English. Then the "up" in the corresponding "uptown" means "north". People have to go home to rest after working in the south city center, so it means "residential area". In this process, teachers not only teach vocabulary, but also convey the culture behind vocabulary. According to this, teachers can also extend. In South Korea, the dividing line is the Han River, and the south is relatively prosperous, which is the reason for the popular Korean song "Gangnam style" a few years ago. Combined with China, after the reform and opening up, more and more people go to the south to pursue their own development opportunities. Therefore, compared with the north, the economy in the south is developing rapidly and more prosperous. Then, in this process, students not only learn the meanings of these words, but also learn the cultural knowledge of different countries under the guidance of teachers. While understanding the national cultural knowledge, they can further associate the cultures of different countries, and truly endow vocabulary with the power of "culture".

Therefore, through the input of English cultural knowledge behind vocabulary, and returning to the initial intention of vocabulary teaching, students really get the "input" of cultural awareness. Cultural teaching of vocabulary is more conducive to students' perception and grasp of cultural knowledge contained in vocabulary. More importantly, students can really learn the stories and

cultures in Greek and Roman mythology and the cultures contained in social life, which is conducive to students' understanding of the cultures of English-speaking countries and the development of society, and to students' more active comparison and comprehension of different cultures, and to cultivate their own cultural literacy in a subtle way. Then it is the blending with the cultural awareness and knowledge in English core literacy.

IV. THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PAYING ATTENTION TO CULTURAL TEACHING OF VOCABULARY

4.1 Promoting the meaningful mastery of vocabulary

Vocabulary is a unit that can express meaning. If we really understand the origin of vocabulary, we can better understand the background of vocabulary in our own culture. Only by knowing the cultural knowledge and cultural context of English can we truly and profoundly understand semantics, awaken students' cognition and understanding of the culture contained in English, and promote vocabulary to be truly internalized in the heart (Li, 2017: 105). With the continuous development of society, English vocabulary is constantly moving, changing and developing. Learning vocabulary and learning vocabulary well is the law of learning it, and learning the culture contained in vocabulary is the process of exploring its law. Through the cultural teaching of vocabulary, students can be guided to explore this rule, give full play to their initiative, arouse their desire for vocabulary learning, and stimulate their enthusiasm to the maximum extent, so that students can learn vocabulary more actively and fall in love with vocabulary.

4.2 Promoting the effective cultivation of cultural awareness.

Vocabulary itself has rich cultural connotations. Vocabulary teaching through culture can enable students to learn English culture imperceptibly in the process of vocabulary learning, and understand the similarities and differences of different cultures, thus helping students identify with the excellent culture of the Chinese nation, cultivate people with civilized literacy and social responsibility who have national identity and national feelings, and maintain cultural confidence in the excellent

Chinese culture, and effectively achieve the goal of subject core literacy (Ministry of Education, 2018: 4-5). This is exactly the same as the training goal in the New Curriculum Standard.

V. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of the new curriculum standard, this paper explores the teaching mode of combining cultural knowledge with vocabulary teaching, and provides suggestions for English vocabulary teaching and the cultivation of students' cultural awareness. As an English teacher, we should implement the goal of cultural literacy in the New Curriculum Standard, return to the original intention of vocabulary, constantly explore the cultural knowledge and cultural background behind vocabulary, and guide students to feel culture in vocabulary teaching, so as to improve students' interest in learning English vocabulary, improve their cultural literacy and language ability, improve their ability to understand different cultures, improve their cultural literacy, better understand English culture from vocabulary learning, and enhance their understanding of foreign excellent cultures.

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