

The Role and Application of Situational Teaching in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language – A Case Study of Primary Oral English Class

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Abstract: The law of language learning has a theoretical basis. Language learning is a process of active learning, not of passive acceptance. Situational teaching is the extension and development of constructivist teaching. The correct use of situational teaching can stimulate students' interest, facilitate a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, as well as promote the cultivation of other skills among students, so as to improve the teaching quality of oral Chinese teaching as a foreign language and effectively complete the teaching task. However, there are some issues that should be emphasized when using the situational teaching method, such as how to create situations effectively, the problems that teachers should pay attention to when creating situations, and the principles of creating situations.

Keywords: Situational teaching method; Chinese as a foreign language; Oral language; Application

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1. Significance of situational teaching

Situational teaching plays a role in cultivating students' sentiment during oral lessons. It provides some enlightenment for students so as to promote teaching. This method is of great significance in classroom teaching. Words, sentences, paragraphs, and articles in a language are derived from situations, and they should not be separated from situations. Situational teaching combines situations with other factors to form a large teaching background, build a vivid and picture-rich environment for students' autonomous learning, as well as emphasize the view that students are the main body of education. In regard to the traditional teaching method, foreign students can only rigidly recall the learned knowledge, but are not able to draw inferences from one instance and use them flexibly. The situational teaching method breaks through the shortcomings of the former teaching and contributes to the innovation of classroom teaching. At the same time, this method also creates a more relaxed classroom environment. Obviously, a relaxed and interesting oral lesson is more suitable in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The oral environment is an important determinant for a good practice of language.

2. Role of situational teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language

2.1. Helps stimulate students' interest

Situational teaching can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and create a relaxed as well as a lively environment for learning. In this way, every student can actively participate in classroom activities and establish a sense of classroom ownership. At the same time, it also injects a sense of vitality into the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. In view of that, lessons are no longer dead, and foreign students

would be able to maintain a certain level of interest, build their confidence, harvest a sense of achievement in the process of learning Chinese, as well as actively participate in language learning, so as to continuously improve the quality of teaching. Situational teaching acts as a bridge that connects the Chinese language with the concrete world, thus engendering a more colorful teaching process.

2.2. Conducive to the harmonious relationship between teachers and students

Classroom teaching is an open system, and teaching cannot always develop in a preset direction. Teachers and students devote themselves to teaching activities, inspire one another, find problems, generate new ideas and views through exchanges and dialogues, as well as solve problems together; these are the results of teaching. Therefore, in teaching, presupposition and generation should be taken into consideration ^[1]. In the traditional style of teaching, teachers would dominate and rigidly instill knowledge into students. This method of teaching does not benefit students in terms of mastering knowledge but rather causes them to lose interest in learning and even develop a sense of boredom. This kind of relationship between teachers and students is obviously disharmonious, which would seriously affect the quality of teaching. In order to achieve the expected effects of teaching, teachers should pay more attention to understanding the teaching contents and envisage the emotions and atmosphere that should be achieved in the teaching process in advance. Only through thorough preparations before teaching, teachers would then be able to create better situations. The existence of situational teaching can well solve this problem. When teachers apply the situational teaching method in teaching, students would automatically become the center of teaching, and this would improve their independent initiative. At the same time, it also means restoring the relationship between teachers and students to create a harmonious environment. While teachers create the situations, students immerse themselves in those situations, thus achieving the effect of blending feelings and scenes as well as expanding students' imagination through discussion and play. Students are the masters of learning. With the help of teachers, the learning effect of students can be greatly improved.

2.3. Conducive to the cultivation of other skills among students

Situational teaching enables students to easily obtain knowledge through specific practical activities. It is an effective teaching method. It provides a platform for students to participate in classrooms and gives full play to their subjective initiative. The method is conducive to the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability. While carrying out activities, students would be working as a team; thus, it is conducive to cultivating their sense of teamwork. At the same time, through the mutual communication between teaching and learning as well as other teaching methods, it is conducive to the improvement of students' thinking skills and the development of their innovation skills. This would in turn improve their cognitive levels in the Chinese language. In addition, situational teaching can also cultivate students' appreciation ability to some extent. There are various methods that can be used in situational teaching. Teachers can show real life situations through pictures, sounds, and videos. This would leave an audio-visual impact on students and encourage them to be immersed in those situations, so as to enrich their emotional experience and deepen their aesthetic consciousness.

3. Application of situational teaching in oral lessons

3.1. Specific measures for situation creation

3.1.1. Situation creation in the introduction of new courses

“No matter what, if you have a good start, you will take a step toward success.” This is the case in life, and

classroom teaching is no exception. As an important link in the teaching process, new courses require the creation of an attractive situation during the introduction period. This can fully mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, stimulate their curiosity, and drive them to learn. Positive thinking activities are based on strong interest and rich experience based on emotions.

In the teaching contents of oral Chinese as a foreign language, most of them are communicative terms that can be used while studying abroad. There are many ways to introduce situations [2]. First, passionate and powerful language can be used to attract students' attention. Through the description of language, students can create beautiful artistic conception and expand their imagination, thus making it easier to teach new courses. Teachers can raise questions prior to the introduction of the course. The curiosity from these questions would urge students to focus in looking for the answers during the lessons. Second, the concept where everyone grows up with stories should be kept in mind. Most students are attracted by interesting and novel stories. Prior to classes, teachers can create stories based on the contents of specific lessons in order to compel students to abandon their rigid mode. In addition, when speaking a communicative language, teachers can play short videos or display pictures to prompt students to discuss. For example, in the thematic lesson of "Wonderful Competition," teachers can also raise questions, such as "Do you like watching basketball games?", "Why do you like it?", "Because it is beautiful, is it not?", "The game is wonderful, so we like to watch it, don't we?". That is how teachers can lead their students to discuss on the topic.

3.1.2. Situation creation in the teaching of new words

Vocabulary is one of the basic elements of language. Sentences are composed of vocabulary. Without vocabulary, sentences cannot be formed, let alone a dialogue. Communication would then be difficult among people. When explaining vocabulary, teachers can use the objects around them to further explain to their students. When explaining specific and sensible new words, such as sun, wood, television, and other common things in life, they can be paired and connected by using cards, thus helping students to remember new words. Teachers can also encourage students to carry out dialogues in pairs using the newly learned words or use those words to complete dialogue exercises, so as to achieve the learning effect. Other than that, teachers can make expressions to help students understand words on expressions, such as sadness, joy, depression, excitement, loss, etc. When explaining abstract words, teachers need to carefully create situations so that foreign students can understand the significance and practical application of those words. For example, when explaining the word "have the heart to," teachers should first inform the students that such words are generally used in negative or antisense sentences, and then they should describe the situation in order to help students understand the term. Examples such as "Peter did something wrong, so his mother scolded and educated him. Peter was very sad so his mother was also very sad," can be provided. Teachers should express it in a way that Peter's mother did not have the heart to scold him and design a situation to help foreign students better understand the meaning of that term.

3.1.3. Situation creation in the explanation of grammar

Chinese grammar is a huge boulder in oral teaching. It is challenging for most junior foreign students. Chinese grammar is mainly realized by changing the word order and function words. Even after explanation, students would still find it difficult to fully understand it. The only way to combine grammar with language communication is through the application of situational teaching in grammar teaching. Yang Jizhou once said, "The only way to combine grammar with communication is through context. Only through context, the teaching of grammar can become vivid." Therefore, grammar teaching is not only a simple teaching of

grammar knowledge, but it also extends to examples that are in line with the rules of grammar and the contents of the texts. The teaching of grammar should not only focus on imparting grammar knowledge, but also on creating situations to help students apply what they have learned to communication. For example, in syntax, interrogative pronouns are used to ask questions, and there are four interrogative words: “what,” “where,” “which,” and “who.” Foreign students often hear such words in sentences or dialogues in their daily lives. Hence, teachers should consolidate this grammar point by asking their students to form sentences out of these words. When reading texts in classes, teachers should draw on knowledge points such as “bei” sentences, “ba” sentences, and concurrent sentences in time. Whether it is the focus of that particular lesson or not, teachers should inform the students of those knowledge points in order to deepen their impression and consolidate their memories. For foreign students, the teaching of primary oral English plays a fundamental role in the middle and advanced stages of learning ^[3].

3.2. Problems that require attention in the application of situational teaching

3.2.1. Ensure the authenticity of the created situation

It is necessary to ensure the authenticity of the created situation. For foreign students, learning Chinese helps them solve communication problems in their daily lives. As the situations created by teachers are closer to real situations, foreign students would be able to use the language more fluently in actual daily communication. Without the creation of situations, the understanding of a language would be one-sided and incomplete, resulting in the use of incorrect or inappropriate words in actual communication as well as the inability to accurately express meaning. This creates a phenomenon where although foreign students have learned the language, they are unable to use it accurately in actual communication. With the creation of situations, students would be able to use them even in their daily lives. When preparing for classes, it is very important for teachers to create situations that are close to the life of foreign students and easy to understand according to the contents of the teaching materials.

3.2.2. Ensure the interest while creating situations

Learning as an interest is the advocated learning method in today’s world. It is one of the most effective learning methods. Interest is the seasoning of the learning process. Therefore, when creating situations, teachers should pay attention to how interesting the situations are. Teachers should vigorously explore the interest implied in the phonetic situation. When imparting a certain knowledge point, teachers can combine the knowledge point with people or things that are happening around them while explaining it to the students. Combining created situations with topics which are of concern to foreign students would attract their attention and stimulate their enthusiasm to participate in discussions. This would help in changing passive learning into active learning and achieve the expected teaching effect.

3.2.3. Ensure the creativity while creating situations

In the process of language learning, learners should use limited language to create new sentences and discourse. This requires teachers to make good use of the various artistic conception expressed by the created situation, so that language learners can create language through their own cognition and imagination, such as through pictures, speaking, debate, and other methods. This would help change the rigid and mechanical imitation words used by foreign students, fully mobilize their imagination, and stimulate their creativity.

3.2.4. Ensure the pertinence of creating situations

In order to better apply the situational teaching method, teachers must make good preparations. As each foreign student has different understanding, acceptance, and practical skills, teachers need to take into account the psychological factors of each student, choose topics after analyzing and understanding the students' Chinese level and learning needs based on the majority, create conditions for individual activities, as well as provide students with opportunities for interaction and communication before creating situations^[4]. Reasonable situations should be created to achieve the expected assumption. In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers should pay attention to distinguish the communicative functions expressed in different language situations and choose contexts with different communicative functions for foreign students to practice communication. At the same time, they should also increase the pertinence and stage of oral class, and gradually deepen students' understanding as well as their memory through the created situations. However, the application of situational teaching is not only to provide opportunities for foreign students to practice oral communication, but also to carry out oral practice on the basis of situational teaching, so that foreign students can review and consolidate their language knowledge, use the knowledge learned in dialogues, learn the function and usage of words, etc.

3.2.5. Problems that teachers should pay attention to

The most basic requirements as a teacher of Chinese as a foreign language are fluent Mandarin and good psychological quality. During oral lessons, teachers should explain in Chinese and avoid using the mother tongue of foreign students. In cases whereby it is difficult to express sentences or words, they should be explained in simple and understandable ways, creating a real language environment for students, so that foreign students would be able to adapt to real life communication and have the opportunity to practice what they have learned. Having a good expression skill is also a requirement as a language teacher. Foreign students come from different countries, where their living habits and cultural customs vary. In regard to different cultures, societies, and nationalities, teachers should respect the different cultural customs, values, and beliefs. During classes, teachers should correct the language errors made by foreign students while communicating. Error correction can be divided into two types: immediate correction and delayed correction. Immediate correction refers to correcting students immediately once mistakes have been made, whereas delayed correction refers to correcting students after they had completed the dialogue. However, no matter what kind of correction method, teachers should look for the right time to do so according to each student's situation without attacking their enthusiasm. Teachers can also prompt the errors made by the students in a tactful manner and guide them to self-correct. All methods used should put students first in consideration of their feelings.

4. Conclusion

Situational teaching is particularly important in improving teaching quality. It makes classrooms more vivid, which is far from the teacher-based classroom and in line with the current education concept. Teachers can create situations that are suitable for their own lessons based on the teaching tasks, teaching objects, teaching facilities, and their own characteristics. By applying the situational teaching method in the teaching of primary oral Chinese as a foreign language, the enthusiasm of foreign students can be mobilized and their comprehensive ability, language sense, as well as daily communication skills can be cultivated. Situational teaching creates a real-life scene for students, allowing them to feel the close relationship between their lessons and lives, as well as gradually guides them to observe life and learn better.

Disclosure statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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