



Research Journal of Education

ISSN(e): 2413-0540, ISSN(p): 2413-8886

Vol. 3, No. 9, pp: 102-105, 2017

URL: <http://arpgweb.com/?ic=journal&journal=15&info=aims>

English Teaching Strategies with Situational Teaching Method for Preschool Education Majors in China's Secondary Vocational School

Weixuan Shi*

Professor in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Baoding, Hebei, China

Hongyan Zhang

Graduate Student in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Baoding, Hebei, China

Abstract: In recent years, preschool education in China is facing great chances, but there are some challenges as well. There is a lack of qualified preschool English teachers, and many graduates majoring in preschool education in secondary vocational school fail to meet the requirements of [English Curriculum for Secondary Vocational School \(2009\)](#). In order to solve the problems, more and more English teachers are exploring new teaching methods, among which situational teaching method is widely accepted. This method has been used in English teaching in Chinese primary and middle schools. However, little attention has been paid to situational teaching method in English class in secondary vocational school. Therefore, the paper aims to explore strategies in situational teaching method in English class for preschool education majors in secondary vocational school.

Keywords: Teaching strategies; Situational teaching method; Preschool education majors; Secondary vocational school.

1. Introduction

Preschool education in secondary vocational school is of great significance in cultivating kindergarten teachers. Most preschool education majors begin their study in secondary vocational school after graduating from junior high school. The paper analyzes the characteristics of preschool education majors and advocates corresponding teaching strategies. In secondary vocational school, besides the basic knowledge taught in senior high school, these students also obtain knowledge about kindergarten teaching. According to the [English Curriculum for Secondary Vocational School \(2009\)](#), based on the English of nine years' compulsory teaching, the courses of English in vocational secondary school should help students to reach the specific goals of learning English. Firstly, students should obtain the required English knowledge and skills and develop their ability of using English for their future work. Secondly, students should develop their interests and confidence in English learning. They should find their own learning strategies and improve their independent learning ability of English. Finally, students should understand the cultural differences of the East and the West, and develop positive emotions, attitude and value toward the world. However, English level of preschool English majors is generally not high enough to meet the requirements. To better cultivate preschool education majors, situational teaching method should be properly used in English class.

Situational teaching method was firstly developed in British in the 1930s. Since then, many scholars have studied its advantages in acquiring language. Pittman and his colleagues have developed an influential set of teaching materials based on the situational approach. [Pittman \(1963\)](#) believes that the principal classroom activity in English structure teaching would be the oral practice in proper situations. [Brown et al. \(1989\)](#) propose that when applying knowledge in the authentic situations, it can produce real meanings and that the best way to acquire knowledge is to put it in the appropriate situation.

In the 1970s, situational teaching method was introduced to China. Chinese scholars have done the research on its applicability and significance for preschool education majors. In Song Xueren's study of plights and countermeasures of English teaching for preschool education majors in secondary vocational school ([Xueren, 2014](#)), he believes that teachers can make the English teaching more impressive by creating situations based on students' characteristics and English levels. He points out that teachers should adopt situational teaching method to make students better understand the English knowledge they have acquired. [Lin \(2014\)](#) proposes that applying situational teaching method in preschool majors' English class can improve their English proficiency and English learning efficiency, intensify their English learning motivation and provide English teaching experience in their future work. Based on the previous studies, the paper will introduce characteristics of preschool education majors in secondary vocational school and propose teaching strategies based on their characteristics.

2. Characteristics of Preschool Education Majors in Secondary Vocational School

2.1. Interest in English Learning

The famous Chinese saying goes that interest is the best teacher. Interest always plays an important role in learning.

As has been proposed by [Dongmei and Jingjing \(2015\)](#), secondary vocational school students would learn what they are interested in whatever teachers teach. In vocational secondary school, many students are not interested in English because of their poor English grades or the thoughts that they will seldom use English in daily life. So teachers should take measures to stimulate more students' interest in learning English. In general, teachers' rewards such as praise or small gifts can just arouse students' extrinsic motivation and motivate them to learn English for a limited period. Therefore, teachers should adopt proper teaching strategies to develop students' intrinsic motivation and interest in English learning.

2.2. Cognitive Level

The average age of students in secondary vocational school in China is from 16 to 19. They are considered "in between" childhood and adulthood, who are at the age of transition, self-consciousness, and confusion. They look forward to being independent and come to the society without the guidance of anybody, which actually is the representation of their immaturity.

The term cognition is used in some different fields. In psychology, it refers to the mental process of an individual, which has close relation with language acquisition. The cognitive level of secondary school students described by [Brown \(2001\)](#) is that students of secondary school are increasingly becoming adult-like in their ability to make occasional diversions from the nature of "here and then" in communicative contexts, but the potential attention spans may easily be shortened when there are some diversions present in their life. The students in secondary vocational school begin to show some of the cognitive properties of adults, but the cognitive level of them is not far above that of children.

2.3. The Dual Role

One of the most distinguishable characteristics of preschool education majors in secondary vocational school is students' dual role. In secondary vocational school, students are learning what they will teach in their future work. The purpose they learn English is not only to communicate with others in English, but also to save knowledge for their future teaching when they become real preschool teachers. Therefore, the preschool education majors should master the methods of learning what has been taught and the skills of teaching what they have learned as well. In this sense, it is more difficult for them to master English than the students of other majors in secondary vocational school, even the high school students.

The dual role requires teachers to focus on students' knowledge of English, as well as English teaching skills. As the role model of preschool education majors, English teachers should be more serious in their selection of teaching methods during the whole teaching process.

2.4. Sex and Personalities

Another distinctive characteristic for preschool education majors in secondary vocational school is the sex. The proportion of male students and female students in preschool education is not balanced. According to [Zhiguo \(2006\)](#), there is a lack of male preschool teachers worldwide. In America, male preschool teachers are 10% of all the preschool teachers, which takes the biggest percentage in the world. In the study of [Luqing et al. \(2014\)](#), they point out that male preschool teachers in China is no more than 8 over 10,000. The data can show that most students majoring in preschool education are still girl students over years of development of preschool education. Sometimes, girl students are relatively shy and less bold in expressing themselves. However, progress in English is more easily made with a great deal of oral practice. Therefore, in English teaching, teachers should encourage preschool education majors to use English in different situations.

Besides, influenced by the one-child policy, most of the girl students are the only child in their family, who is the apple of their parents' eye. They are brought up in a comfortable circumstance and will easily be selfish and impatient especially when they acquire the knowledge about how to teach younger children. It may be one of the answers for the cases of child abuse in kindergartens. Therefore, teachers should have more patience when teaching them.

3. Results and Discussions

Based on the above analysis of characteristics of preschool education majors in China's secondary vocational school, strategies on the application of situational teaching method in English class are put forward.

3.1. Playing Games

Preschool education majors are still teenagers who are interested in games. Based on their characteristics of age and interest, playing games is recommended in English class. Games can not only make their attention span longer,

but make them feel more interested in English. In games, it should be noted that the games that can be played in class must be closely related to the target knowledge and they should be interesting and challengeable for vocational secondary school students. Such games as a competition about who can spell more English words correctly in class will not be welcomed by students. Teachers should play interesting games with students. For example, when teaching and reviewing English expressions, teachers can play the traditional English game “Simon Says”, the rule of which is that after teachers saying “Simon says”, students must follow the teachers’ instruction; while if teachers do not say “Simon says”, students should not follow the instruction. The game of executing certain instructions after listening to teachers’ instructions can both test students’ grasp of knowledge and practice their listening.

Furthermore, body language, which includes postures, gestures, and facial expressions is of great importance in the games. For example, when a student does not understand what the teacher is saying on the rule of the game, he can guess the meaning through teacher’s body language. Therefore, teachers can use body language in class, through which students can feel easier to understand and participate in the games. Under such relaxed atmosphere, more students will be interested in English.

3.2. Adopting Visual Aids

Using visual aids is one of the most common and simple methods of situational teaching method. The traditional visual aids include real objects, models, and pictures and so on. The application of visual aids can arouse students’ learning interests and help students to have a clear understanding of the subjects or concepts without transferring knowledge from Chinese to English, which reduces the time of acquiring knowledge. More importantly, the direct presentation can make students have direct access to English knowledge and it is helpful for them to form English way of thinking. For example, when teaching the expression “the Great Wall” in the basic module of English to vocational school students, teachers can show some pictures of the Great Wall to the students, saying “the Great Wall”. Then nobody will be confused with what the Great Wall is.

With the development of modern science and technology, visual aids can also be shown with multimedia. The use of multimedia can not only arouse students’ interests in a relaxed atmosphere, but also enhance students’ cross-cultural awareness. For example, when teaching the expressions about sending and receiving gifts, teachers can firstly show a video about Christmas to students, which includes the scenes of exchanging gifts. Students will notice that when receiving gifts, foreigners always open the gift immediately, saying: “Thank you for your present”; while Chinese people would like to say that it is not necessary for you to do so. Then teachers can further explain the cultural differences between China and western countries for students to better understand the knowledge they are learning.

Teachers should notice that although visual aids can be helpful to enhance presentation, the effect of teaching is not decided by the visual aids. It depends more on the teachers’ usage. So teachers should combine the visual aids with their further explanation, so that students can acquire knowledge easily and correctly.

3.3. Organizing Role-Play

Ur (1996) points out that role play is students’ imagination, which includes all the activities they do in the certain situation out of the classroom, and the play of others’ role with proper language according to situations. Role play can be seen as a kind of activity in which students play a role of others through imagination and creativity to act out the teaching materials in certain scenes. For preschool education majors, their dual role requires that the students should learn to change their role between students and teachers. Therefore, role-play is a practical method for them to alter among different roles. For example, when teaching English expressions of seeing a doctor, some students can act as teachers in English class, some act as sick kindergarteners and others act as doctors and nurses. Then, they can practice expressions of sickness, comforting and treating the disease in English. Through role-play, preschool education majors will know what they should say in English when they or their future students feel thick. They will also be more familiar with how to look after kindergarteners in their future work.

3.4. Creating Authentic Life-related Situations

Language situation is the environment where language is used. The environment contains the natural environment and the social environment. The aim of English teaching in secondary vocational school is to make students learn and practice English in proper situations and cultivate students’ comprehensive ability to use language.

Some students feel it difficult to use the knowledge learned in class and they can not speak English fluently in their real life. That will be true if teachers just create meaningless situations which will seldom or even never occur in real life. For example, the situation is that in the school, the headmaster makes you to describe the positions of the buildings for him. It is no doubt that such situation is boring and useless which is of little value. On the contrary, teachers should create authentic situations which are closely related to the students’ real life to make students confident enough to speak English naturally. For example, when students learn the lesson “Shopping”, before class, teachers can make students draw some pictures about the different district of the shopping centers, which is easy for the preschool education majors. In class, teachers can put the pictures in the classroom according to the district and take the classroom as a real shopping center. Then the students can learn English expression and play a role in the situation of shopping. In this way, students can learn some useful expressions which may be applied in their future life.

When students can express themselves in common life-related situations, teachers can create some situations in which students must solve problems. For example, teachers can create a situation of parents meeting, in which students can act as teachers and learn how to communicate with parents. In authentic life-related situation, students can learn English skills as well as problem-solving techniques.

4. Conclusion

Situational teaching method has been widely used in primary and middle schools, and it can also be applied in secondary vocational school for English teaching.

Although the advantages of situational teaching method are obvious, teachers should notice that to apply situational teaching method properly needs more than just mastery of the method. Teachers should take students' characteristics into consideration. If students are not interested in the situations or the situations are too strange for them, teachers should stop to adopt other teaching methods. In English class, teachers should combine situational teaching method with other teaching methods. The monotonous and unchangeable method used in class will certainly increase the degree of students' fatigue in class.

In conclusion, if applied appropriately, situational teaching method in English class will surely benefit both preschool education majors and teachers in secondary vocational school.

Reference

- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press: Beijing.
- Brown, J. S. Collins, A. and Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and culture of learning. *Educational Research*, 18(1): 32-42.
- Dongmei, W. and Jingjing, W. (2015). Research on scaffolding teaching and its application of in secondary vocational english teachin. *Chinese Vocational and Technical Education*, 23(11): 74-82.
- English Curriculum for Secondary Vocational School (2009). Higher Education Press: Beijing.
- Lin, W. (2014). On the application of english situational teaching method in pre - school education. *Read and Write Periodical*, 11(07): 250-51.
- Luqing, W., Linbo, H. and Shenglin, H. (2014). Early childhood education calls for male teachers - an analysis of the present situation and countermeasures of male teachers. *Occupation*, 21(18): 68-70.
- Pittman, G. (1963). *Teaching structural English*. Jacaranda: Brisbane.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Xueren, S. (2014). English teaching plights and countermeasures of preschool education majors in secondary vocational schools. *Overseas English*, 15(10): 57-59.
- Zhiguo, X. (2006). On male preschool teachers. *Studies in Preschool Education*, 20(5): 55-57.