

Effective Situated Learning in Junior High School English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Learning situation refers to the atmosphere of teaching activities created by teachers in the course of teaching (Wang Yanrong, 2023). The creation and presentation of learning situations can help overcome the defects of pure cognitive activities and make learning a comprehensive activity including emotional experience, which has important positive significance for improving the learning effect. When creating situations in English learning, teachers should make sure the enjoyment, reality, complexity and typicality of the learning situation. Here is an example about situated learning in Junior High School English teaching.

Keywords

Situated Learning; English Teaching; Communicative Language Teaching.

1. Introduction

NECS (2020) advocates that English teaching should create real situations and use real problems to activate students' existing knowledge, and encourage students' participation in the activities of learning understanding, application practice and transfer innovation that go around the theme. Therefore, teachers should consciously create a situation and space for students to actively participate in and explore the meaning of the theme, so that students can get a positive learning experience and become the subject of meaning exploration and active knowledge builders.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Definition of Situated Learning

In its broad scene, situation is the daily life in which the individual lives, society and culture. Situation in a narrow sense can be the realistic themes, characters, events and their spatiotemporal relationships that evaluation tasks or teaching activities depend on (Brown et al., 1989).

Learning situation refers to the atmosphere of teaching activities created by teachers in the course of teaching (Wang Yanrong, 2023). A learning situation is a life event that not only relates to what students are learning, but also contains problems. In other words, the learning situation is both an event and a problem, but not the knowledge content itself. The learning situation is usually composed of elements related to the teaching content, such as scenes, characters, events, thematic meaning and students' real life, etc. These elements constitute the atmosphere of teaching activities, through which students can perceive, understand and apply the knowledge in their true feelings, and explore and discover the use of the knowledge.

2.2. The Development of Situated Learning

Learning in situation is not a new item, which has embodied in anthropology, sociology etc. for a long time. Resnick (1987) compared learning in school and learning out of school and then proposed that learning in the school situation is purposeful, planned and meaningful which put

much emphasis on working individually, knowledge acquisition, skill development and abstract reasoning. However, in real life, humans tend to use tools to solve problems, which stresses situation. Therefore, she thought leaning in school and learning out of school should be combined closely. Her idea greatly pushed situation theory research.

In 1989, Brown, Collins and Duguid published a popular paper *Situational Cognition and Learning Culture*, which systematically discussed the theory of situational cognition and learning, and proposed the situation of knowledge and the model of situational learning. They believe that knowledge is part of activities, situations and cultures, and it is in activities that knowledge is constantly used and developed.

Whitehead (2002) mentioned that What students learn in school was often fragmented, out-of-context, and it that can only be used to prepare for exams, not to solve practical problems.

Since the 1990s, the theory of situational learning has penetrated rapidly in cognitive science, artificial intelligence, psychology and other fields. A large number of practical studies have greatly enriched the research results on situational cognition and learning.

3. Features of Effective Situated Learning

3.1. Enjoyment

In order to promote the development of students' intellectual activities and attract students' attention, the key is to provide students with problems they are interested in. After teaching the knowledge content, some teachers present the relevant situations to confirm the imparted knowledge. Strictly speaking, this is not a learning situation, but an unchallenged piece of evidence that hardly stimulates students' thinking. In addition, some teachers present the situation to the students in a straightforward way, without analysis and prompt, and do not pay attention to whether the situation contains problems, which goes against the original intention of setting learning situations.

3.2. Reality

Where learning situations come from? Most of the time, people regard that learning situation is created by making appropriate changes in knowledge to concretize it into some kind of scenario. However, the author believes that the acquisition and setting of learning situations should not be restricted to the knowledge content, but should mainly be oriented to students' real life, and the resources of learning situations should be discovered and mined in the daily living environment of students. Only such a situation can effectively illustrate the value of knowledge in practical life, help students to accurately understand the connotation of knowledge, stimulate their motivation and enthusiasm for learning, and encourage them to transform knowledge into skills.

3.3. Complexity

Complexity is another fundamental characteristic of learning situations. The knowledge expressed in words and symbols in books is abstracted from concrete situations, which is relatively complex and diverse in real life, and it greatly simplifies its object. The learning situation is the real life, is a basically unsimplified event. Such events are pluralistic, open, and constantly changing, that is, complex. Abstract knowledge can be complex and difficult to understand, but it is not as varied and varied as living events. When transforming living events into learning environments, the integrity of the event should be maintained, the basic elements of the whole event should be preserved, and the event should be avoided by arbitrarily cutting the event according to the knowledge content, and some organic components or components of the event should be removed. Therefore, the questions contained in the learning situation

should be of a certain degree of difficulty, and students must go through an active, even painstaking, thinking process to achieve them.

3.4. Typicality

Teachers should choose the most typical event as the learning situation. In such situations, questions contained are most suitable for the needs of knowledge teaching. They can stimulate students' interest in intellectual exploration and produce impact effects, and can attract students' attention and arouse their emotional resonance. Obviously, this kind of situation is difficult to simulate, but it should be the vast majority of students have encountered or will encounter. In the creation of learning situations, teachers should avoid taking some events that are far away from the students' real life and are not closely related to the teaching content.

4. Example: Situated Learning in Junior High School English Teaching

The teaching material comes from PEP, Book 4, Unit 4 Why don't you talk to your parents, Section A listening and speaking. It mainly talks about family troubles for teenagers and provides some suggestions. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to (1) use the sentence patterns to talk politely; (2) use the skills to talk successfully; (3) form the habit of talking to parents; (4) predict listening information.

In warm-up stage, the teacher will set a situation(see **Figure 1**)-Tom is not happy recently, and then use a video to introduce tom's trouble, a problem with his mom.



Figure 1. A situation

The situation is close to students' real life, which can activate students' learning motivation and prior experience. Following that, the teacher will ask the class, 'do you have similar problems with your parents?' It aims to let the students combine the reality to experience the situation and become the protagonists in the situation.



Figure 2. What other problems do you have?

In pre-listening stage, the teacher will ask students what’s the best way to solve the problem. The teacher suggests that Tom and mom will have a talk next. And watch the video with two questions: Could Tom go to the party? What do you think of the talk?

In while-listening stage, after students watching the video for the first time to confirm the answers to the two questions, the teacher will introduce that Tom has powerful skills to talk. The powerful skills(see **Figure 3**) will be called ‘PFRP’ strategy.

Then students will listen the material for the second time, then complete the table and find what the ‘PFRP’ strategy is. PFRP stands for politeness, feeling, reason and promise respectively.

| 4 powerful skills: P F R P | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Politeness | Mum, <u>may</u> I talk to you for a second? |
| Feeling | I feel <u>so sad</u> these days. |
| Reason | ...because Mary is <u>my best friend</u> . She helps me a lot with <u>my study</u> |
| Promise | I promise I will <u>study for</u> the exam. I will come back home <u>early</u> with friends. |

Figure 3. Four powerful skills



Figure 4. How to talk with parents

In post-listening stage, firstly the teacher will guide students to practice the fours kills in groups. Each group will get an envelope where there will be one of the four skills.

Then, the teacher will set a new situation. Tom’s problem has been settled, but his friend Marry met new trouble. Marry doesn’t want to have after-school classes. Students will help Marry solve her problems. This situation aims to guide students to use what they have learned to solve problems.

At last, the teacher will use an interesting song to summarize and end the class.

In the whole class, students are always in the situations. Firstly, students are suffering from Tom’s troubles and help Tom solve his troubles. In the process, students learn how to talk to parents with PFRP skills. Then, teachers create another situation that Mary doesn’t want to have after-school classes, which aims to guide students to use what they have learned to solve another problem. The two situations are relevant to students’ real life and interesting, which will activate students’ learning interest and motivation.

5. Summary

Situated learning will active learning motivation, help students transfer and apply knowledge smoothly, also make students have a strong emotional resonance in learning and enhance their

emotional experience. Therefore, the creation and presentation of learning situations can help overcome the defects of pure cognitive activities and make learning a comprehensive activity including emotional experience, which has important positive significance for improving the learning effect.

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