

Original Paper

Teaching Design of Senior High School English Writing Based on Pragmatics Theory

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Abstract

This paper first overviews the pragmatic theory and mainly introduces Grice's Conversational Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle. Then, the application situations of the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle in English teaching at home and abroad are reviewed. Finally, through analyzing the relevance of the Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle and English writing teaching in senior high school, taking Unit 1 "Teenage Life", the first volume of compulsory English for senior high school in the People's Education Press (2019 edition), as an example, this paper presents a reading and writing teaching design that integrates pragmatics theory with English writing teaching in senior high school.

Keywords

Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle, Senior High School, Writing Teaching

1. Introduction

The Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975) (henceforth abbreviated to CP) and Politeness Principle (Leech, 1983) (henceforth abbreviated to PP) in pragmatics are two essential pragmatic principles for developing language competence. They play an important guiding role in the teaching of English writing, which is helpful for students to express their views appropriately and improve their English writing level.

Under the guidance of pragmatics theory, the English writing class for communicative purposes can start from students' real-life scenes, and let students be motivated by solving practical communication

problems to complete the writing, making writing more practical.

The purpose of this paper is to verify the guiding role of pragmatics in English writing teaching in senior high school from the practical level on the basis of previous theoretical studies on pragmatics and English teaching. This paper takes the teaching of Unit 1 Teenage Life, the first volume of compulsory English for senior high school in the People's Education Press (2019 edition), as an example, and integrates pragmatics teaching into the writing teaching of senior high school to design teaching, so as to explore the integration of pragmatics and writing teaching.

2. An Overview of Relevant Theories in Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a discipline that studies the use of language signs in practical communication. Its research subject is specific discourse in specific situations and the meaning produced by language in use. The main theories of pragmatics include: Austin's Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), Searle's Direct or Indirect Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969), Grice's Conversational Implicative Theory (Grice, 1975), Sperber's and Wilson's Relevance Theory (Sperber, Wilson, 1986), etc.

The core of pragmatics is the principle of pragmatics. From Grice's CP to Leech's PP, from Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory to domestic scholar Qian Guanlian's Goal-intention Principle, it can be said that different people have different opinions. However, no matter in the same or different cultural background of verbal communication, CP and PP have always been two pragmatic principles that both sides of conversation must abide by, and they complement each other in daily communication. This part will introduce these two pragmatic principles in detail.

2.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle

CP was first proposed by H. Paul Grice, an American philosopher of language in his speech of "Logic and Conversation" at Harvard University in 1967. Grice believes that only by cooperating with each other can communication go on smoothly and achieve the purpose of communication.

Grice's CP consists of four maxims:

- (1) The Maxim of Quantity: refers to that both sides should provide the information needed for the current purpose of conversation in the course of conversation. That is, the amount of information in the conversation must not be too small, neither sufficient nor superfluous.
- (2) The Maxim of Quality: refers to that don't say what you know is false or lacking sufficient evidence, but saying true and accurate words, that is, requiring authenticity and availability of the information being communicated.
- (3) The Maxim of Relation: refers to that the speaking content should be related to the current topic, that is, requiring the relevance of the information being communicated.
- (4) The Maxim of Manner: refers to that the speech should be clear, simple, concise and orderly, avoiding ambiguity and vagueness, that is, requiring conciseness and clearness of the information being communicated.

2.2 Leech's Politeness Principle

Based on Goffman's Face Concept (Goffman, 1959) and P. Brown and S. Levinson's Face Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978), and in order to explain the indirectness of the two sides in communication which cannot be explained by the CP, in 1983, Leech, a famous British scholar, first proposed "The Politeness Principle" in his book "Principles of Pragmatics". He emphasized the important role of politeness in language communication. To some extent, PP is put forward to explain some phenomena that the CP fails to explain. It is based on Grice's CP and is a supplement and development of CP.

Leech's PP is embodied in the following six maxims:

- (1) The Maxim of Tact, that is, let others suffer less and benefit more.
- (2) The Maxim of Generosity, that is, benefit yourself less and suffer yourself more.
- (3) The Maxim of Approbation/Flattery, that is, praise others as much as possible and criticize others as little as possible.
- (4) The Maxim of Modesty, that is, praise yourself as little as possible and degrade yourself as much as possible.
- (5) The Maxim of Agreement, that is, minimize the differences between self and others and maximize the agreement between self and others.
- (6) The Maxim of Sympathy, that is, minimize the antipathy between self and others and increase the sympathy between self and others.

3. Literature Review

To have a more comprehensive understanding of the application situations of CP and PP in English teaching, a total of 64 relevant literature have been retrieved on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI, from January 1, 2000 to January 1, 2023) based on the theme of "Cooperative Principle+Politeness Principle+English Teaching". A total of 45 relevant literature have been screened out through accurate retrieval based on the main themes of "Politeness Principle", "Cooperative Principle", and "English Teaching". Among them, 37 were journal papers, 7 were master's papers, and 1 was international conference paper. This part mainly reviews the application of CP and PP in English teaching at home and abroad.

3.1 Previous Studies at Home

Some scholars have studied the application of CP and PP in English teaching. For example, according to Gillian Brown and George Yule's distinction of "transactional and interactional use of language", Ding Jianmin (2000) discusses the importance and application of CP and PP in the English official document writing teaching. Su Mingming (2016) took a senior high school English reading teaching as an example to deeply analyze the question-answering phenomenon in English reading class from the perspective of CP and PP. Ju Ping (2022) explored the application of CP and PP in English teaching through the analysis of these two pragmatic principles.

Some scholars have studied the implications of CP and PP for English teaching. For example, based on

pragmatic theories such as CP and PP, Liu Li (2009) discusses the generation mechanism of English humor, which has certain implications for college English teaching. Sun Xiaomei and Jiang Ningning (2011) expounded on the application of these two pragmatic principles in college English teaching and their implications for English teaching.

In addition, Zhu Weihong (2009) discussed the application of these two pragmatic principles in business English teaching in higher vocational colleges and their implications for business English teaching, aiming to make students become successful cross-cultural communicators. Anna (2020) analyzed the application of these two pragmatic principles in college public English classes based on multiple aspects, with a view to better improving the effect of English classroom teaching and enhancing students' English communicative and pragmatic competence.

3.2 Previous Studies Abroad

Foreign research on CP and PP mainly focuses on theoretical research. For example, the three conversational principles proposed by Levinson in 1987 are the core of the new Grice Theory of Conversational Implicature, including the principle of quantity, the principle of information, and the principle of manner. Compared with CP, Levinson's three conversational principles are greatly enhanced in their formalization and explanatory power. In 1973, Rabin Lakoff, an early scholar who studied PP, tries to combine PP with CP in the paper "The Logic of Politeness, or Minding Your P's and Q's" and puts forward "pragmatic competence rules", namely, "be clear" (equivalent to "the maxim of manner" in Grice's CP) and "be polite".

3.3 Comments

Since the discipline status of pragmatics was recognized internationally in the 1970s, CP and PP within the scope of pragmatics research have not been concerned for a long time in China. In the future, the research of CP and PP will develop towards a dynamic, applied, and diversified pattern.

To sum up, in previous studies, Chinese scholars studied the application of CP and PP in English teaching from different perspectives, with fruitful results. But behind these achievements, there are also some areas that need to improve. For example, at the present stage, the research and application of CP and PP mainly focus on college English teaching, and the research content is mainly English listening and speaking teaching. There is little research on English writing teaching in senior high school. Therefore, this paper integrates pragmatics teaching into English teaching, integrates CP and PP into senior high school English writing teaching, and designs classroom teaching cases of pragmatics in senior high school English writing teaching, aiming at enriching the application of pragmatics in senior high school writing teaching.

4. The Relevance of Relevant Theories of Pragmatics and English Writing Teaching in Senior High School

Senior high school English writing needs not only language knowledge to complete but also rich pragmatic knowledge to perfect. Proper and polite use of language is more important than the form of

language.

The process of English writing is to follow CP and its four maxims. The application of CP and its four maxims in English writing teaching can give full play to the importance of English writing teaching in improving students' language output and communication level. The six maxims of PP can be applied to the theoretical teaching, error correction, and evaluation of English writing teaching, which can promote students' learning and improve teachers' teaching effect.

In CP, the maxim of quantity applied to senior high school English writing teaching can effectively avoid students' English composition of insufficient information, wordy content, repetition, off-topic and other problems. The maxim of quality applied to senior high school English writing teaching can enhance the persuasiveness of the article and make the readers feel that there is evidence and reason to follow. The maxim of relation applied to senior high school English writing teaching can make the topic of the article prominent and well-organized. The maxim of manner applied to senior high school English writing teaching can enhance the article's organization. For example, in English writing, the conjunctions such as first (ly), second (ly), and finally are used.

In PP, the maxim of tact applied to senior high school English writing teaching requires students to express themselves correctly and appropriately, which can show the level of students' comprehensive literacy. The maxim of generosity applied to senior high school English writing teaching can make students view problems from the perspective of readers and express themselves more politely. The maxim of approbation applied to senior high school English writing teaching requires that "before expressing different opinions, we often express apology, or agree to some extent, and then express disagreement". The maxim of modesty applied to senior high school English writing teaching can close the distance between readers and authors. The maxim of agreement applied to senior high school English writing teaching requires that "when expressing opinions, we can first partially agree with the other side's views, weaken the degree of disagreement with the other, and then put forward encouraging suggestions, so as to be more conducive to the other's acceptance". The maxim of sympathy applied to senior high school English writing teaching, requires that "resonate with readers and make readers feel close".

5. A Teaching Design of the Integration of Pragmatics Theory and English Writing Teaching in Senior High School

This part selects the "Reading for Writing" part of Unit 1 Teenage Life, the first volume of compulsory English for senior high school in the People's Education Press (2019 edition), and specifically introduces the teaching design cases (2 periods, 90 minutes) of integrating pragmatics theories into senior high school English writing teaching.

5.1 Text Analysis

(1) What:

The theme of this activity is "writing a letter of advice". The reading text is a letter of advice from

Susan Luo, an adviser for teenagers, to a teenager who is worried about his friend's addiction to computer games and the Internet. This is a formal letter, including five parts: date, greeting, body, close, and signature.

(2) Why:

It is hoped that students can understand the format and content of letters, learn how to write a letter of advice, how to recognize their own problems and find out the corresponding solutions, so as to learn to live a healthy and active life.

(3) How:

The body is divided into two paragraphs. The first paragraph shows that the writer has already known the problem of the sender and understood the anxiety of the sender. The second paragraph proposes some suggestions to solve the problem based on the disadvantages of Internet addiction. The language of this letter of advice is characterized by the use of several different ways to express suggestions.

5.2 Learner Analysis

The learners are freshmen in senior high school. The theme of this unit is "Teenage life". As a part of the teenage group, the content of this unit is closely related to them and can stimulate their interest and enthusiasm in learning.

They have been trained to have a certain English ability in junior high school. They can extract and process simple information from English articles, express their own opinions easily, and give advice to others with simple phrases and sentences. However, they are unable to organize ideas and form sentences in English writing, and their ability to express their views and give suggestions in English coherently still needs to be further improved.

5.3 Teaching Objectives

After learning this lesson, students are able to:

- ① get the main idea of the text by scanning and obtain the specific information by scanning.
- ② master the structure and language features of the letter of advice.
- ③ imitate to write a letter of advice.
- ④ understand the problems that Chinese and foreign teenagers may face in their studies, life, extracurricular activities, and growth.
- ⑤ develop a good attitude, and face difficulties and setbacks in study and life correctly.

5.4 Teaching Important and Difficult Points

(1) Teaching focuses:

- ① master the general structure of the letter of advice;
- ② learn how to write a coherent, well-structured advice letter.

(Measures: The teacher leads students to analyze the discourse step by step).

(2) Teaching difficulties:

- ① master the language features of the letter of advice, and correctly integrate pragmatic principles into the writing of advice letter;

②write a letter of advice independently.

(Measures: The teacher asks students to practice using the skills they've learned).

5.5 Teaching Procedures

5.5.1 Lead-in

Task 1: Greeting

The teacher greets students.

(Justification: To draw students' attention to the lesson.)

Task 2: Free talk

The teacher asks students to talk about the problems or challenges they come across after they entered senior high school. Students answer the question after thinking. Then lead in the topic today.

(Justification: To activate students' background knowledge related to the topic of this lesson.)

5.5.2 Pre-writing

Task 1: Fast reading

The teacher asks students to skim the text on page 18 and complete the following exercises.

①How many parts does a letter of advice include?

②Read and match.

Part 1 A. I know what the problem is.

Part 2 B. I understand how you feel.

Part 3 C. This is my advice and reason(s).

Part 4 D. I think my advice will help.

Students read the text quickly, answer the first question and complete the second exercise. After that, the teacher checks the answers with the class.

(Justification: To train students' skimming ability and help them understand the structure of the letter of advice.)

Task 2: Careful reading

The teacher asks students to scan the text and answer the following questions.

Q1: What is Worried Friend's problem?

Q2: What is Ms Luo's advice?

Q3: Do you think Ms Luo's advice is useful? Why or why not?

Q4: What other kinds of advice would you give?

Q5: What expressions does Ms Luo use to make suggestions?

Students read the text carefully and complete the exercises independently. After that, the teacher checks the answers with the class.

(Justification: To train students' scanning ability and help them understand the text more comprehensively.)

Task 3: Summary

The teacher and students summarize the writing structure of the letter of advice together and complete

the structure diagram below.

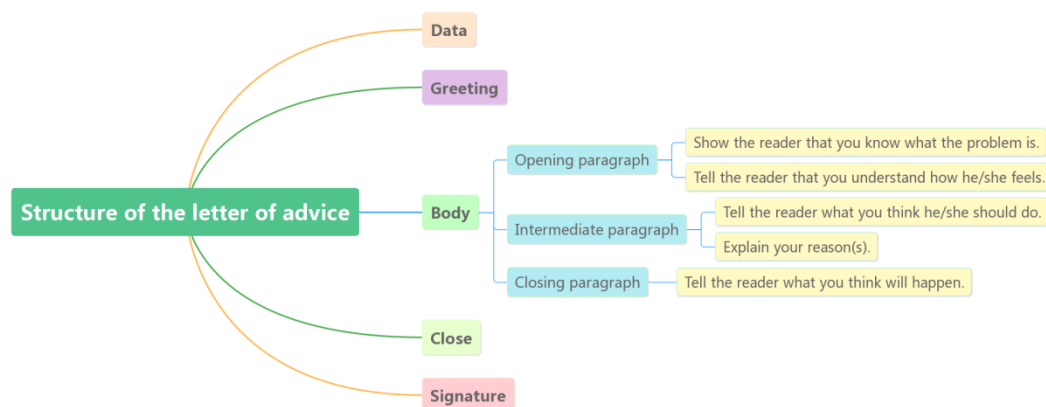


Figure 1. Structure of the Letter of Advice

(Justification: To help students make clear the format and composition of the letter of advice to prepare them for the following writing.)

5.5.3 While-writing

Task 1: Brainstorming

The teacher asks students to work in groups of four and discuss the three situations in Exercise 3 on page 19 of the book. Choose one of the teenagers to summarize his/her problem and give possible suggestions and reasons.

(Justification: To stimulate students' innovative ideas on a topic and help them to be fully prepared for writing both in language and content.)

Task 2: Deep learning

The teacher introduces CP and PP of pragmatics, including their meaning, main content, function, and so on, and explains their application in writing through model essays and a large number of examples, so that students can realize their importance in writing and learn to correctly apply them in writing.

Students complete the structure chart below according to the teacher's explanation.

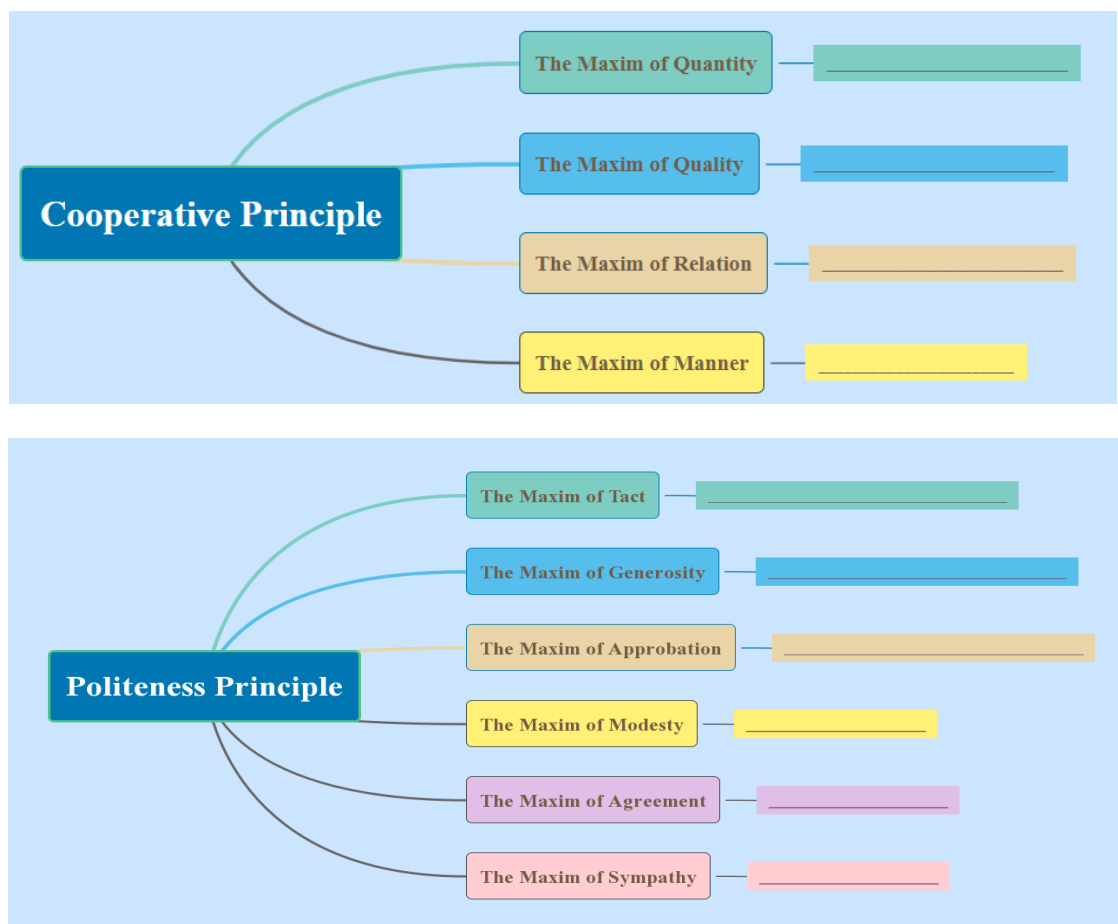


Figure 2. The Maxims of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle

(Justification: To integrate pragmatic knowledge into writing teaching, so that students can understand some pragmatic knowledge and apply it into practice to improve the appropriateness, standardization, and politeness of their language expression.)

Task 3: Writing a draft

On the basis of group discussion and pragmatic learning, students write a letter of advice independently according to the outline of Step 2 in Exercise 3 on page 19 of the book. The teacher walks around the classroom, ready to provide guidance and answer questions for students.

(Justification: To make students apply the knowledge learned in this lesson to practical writing.)

5.5.4 Post-writing

Task 1: Evaluating

The teacher asks students to exchange drafts with their peers and guided them to evaluate according to the requirements of Step 3 in Exercise 3 on page 19.

(Justification: To enable students to understand the evaluation criteria and strengthen the communication and interaction between students.)

Task 2: Polishing and sharing

The teacher asks students to polish their draft according to the evaluation comments and share it with their partner.

(Justification: To improve the quality of writing and help students learn from each other and make progress together.)

5.5.5 Summary and Homework

(1) Summary

Students are invited to make a brief summary of what they have learned today and then the teacher highlights the important points.

(Justification: To give students a clear idea of this class.)

(2) Homework

① Summarize the relevant words and sentence patterns in the letter of advice that conform to CP and PP of pragmatics.

② Choose one of the questions on page 75 of the book, and write a letter of advice, expressing your opinion.

(Justification: To help students better understand the application of pragmatic knowledge in writing and consolidate the knowledge learned in this lesson.)

5.6 Case Explanation

Based on text analysis and learner analysis, this case designs five progressive and interrelated teaching objectives. To achieve the Teaching Objectives better, to stress the important points, and break through the difficult points, this case also puts forward the corresponding measures to the teaching important and difficult points respectively.

The teaching procedures adopt the teaching mode of PWP. Pre-writing is mainly based on reading, which is the teaching task of the first period. The teacher leads students to summarize the writing structure of the letter of advice to prepare them for the following writing. While-writing and Post-writing focus on writing, which is the teaching task of the second period. The teacher integrates the explanation of pragmatic knowledge into writing teaching, and guides students to follow CP and PP in the writing process. Students apply the specific maxims of CP and PP in English writing, and use these maxims as evaluation criteria for self-assessment and peer evaluation. This is conducive to creating opportunities for students to self-reflect and self-regulate before the teacher gives feedback. The final homework includes both tasks to consolidate what has been learned and tasks to expand.

6. Conclusion

Grice's CP and Leech's PP can be used to guide the teaching of English writing in senior high school. The implementation of these two pragmatic principles in the whole process of English writing teaching is conducive to promoting the appropriateness of students' writing expression.

It is hoped that this paper can provide a new example of the combination of theory and practice in senior high school English writing teaching, inspire more research in this field, and promote the future

development of senior high school English writing teaching towards a new direction.

Found

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