

Original Paper

A Study on the Teaching Effects of Contextual Elements in English Reading Teaching for Secondary Vocational Schools

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Abstract

Contextual elements are an important part of English reading teaching, directly influencing the cultivation of students' comprehension of texts and their language application abilities. Based on the vocational English textbooks published by Higher Education Press, this article combines contextual theory with the reality of vocational English teaching to analyze the practical difficulties in the application of contextual elements in current vocational English reading teaching. It explores the teaching effects of contextual elements in resolving vocabulary obstacles, constructing text logic, and fostering cross-cultural competence. Moreover, it proposes practical strategies such as mining teaching resources, building multimodal contexts, and designing stratified context-based tasks, aiming to fully leverage the teaching value of contextual elements, enhance the quality of vocational English reading teaching, and achieve the goal of cultivating core subject literacy.

Keywords

Secondary Vocational English, Reading Teaching, Context Elements, Teaching Effect

1. The Core Teaching Effects of Contextual Elements in English Reading Teaching for Secondary Vocational Schools

Based on the compilation characteristics of textbooks and the teaching objectives of English reading in secondary vocational schools, the integration of contextual elements into English reading teaching can promote the coordinated development of students' reading and pragmatic abilities, which is specifically reflected in the following four aspects:

1.1 Eliminating the Barriers of Lexical Polysemy and Improving the Accuracy of Word Meaning Comprehension

Vocabulary is the foundation of English reading. Secondary vocational students generally suffer from insufficient vocabulary and poor grasp of lexical polysemy, which has become the main obstacle to

reading. The discourses in the textbooks published by Higher Education Press are mainly themed, with vocabulary presented in specific linguistic contexts. Contextual elements can provide a clear semantic orientation for vocabulary and eliminate the barriers of lexical polysemy. For example, the word “check” in the textbooks means to inspect in the theme of Daily Life, while it means to check in in the vocational theme of Hotel Service. Students can accurately understand the meaning of vocabulary in a specific context by combining the situational context of the discourse with the linguistic context of the context. In addition, context enables students to master the collocation rules and usage scenarios of vocabulary, enhancing the flexibility of vocabulary application.

1.2 Constructing a Discourse Logical Framework and Promoting Students’ Holistic Interpretation of Discourses

The discourses in the textbooks of Higher Education Press are of moderate difficulty and lay more emphasis on logical cohesion of discourses. Contextual elements can help students identify the cohesive devices of discourses, sort out the structural and logical relationships of discourses, and realize the transformation from step-by-step reading to holistic interpretation. For instance, when explaining the themed discourses in the textbooks, teachers can guide students to analyze the general-specific structure and logical sequence of discourses by combining the linguistic context of connectives, so as to quickly grasp the core viewpoints of the discourses. The integration of contextual elements can cultivate students’ discourse analysis ability, enabling them to quickly master the scientific reading strategies of “finding topic sentences, sorting out logical lines and clarifying the main idea of the article”, thus improving reading efficiency.

1.3 Infiltrating Cultural Context Knowledge and Cultivating Students’ Cross-cultural Communicative Competence

Higher Education Press has incorporated the cultivation of cross-cultural literacy into teaching objectives and integrated rich cultural context knowledge into the cultural comprehension section. Cultural context elements in non-linguistic context can help students understand the deep cultural connotation of English discourses, eliminate cultural barriers and foster students’ awareness of cross-cultural communication. For example, when explaining the themed discourse of Festivals, teachers can guide students to compare the celebration methods and cultural implications of Chinese and Western festivals by combining the cultural context resources of the textbooks, so that students can understand the cultural connotation of festivals in the discourses. The integration of contextual elements enables students to learn to interpret discourses from the cultural perspective of foreign countries, cultivate their cultural tolerance, and implement the compilation philosophy of moral education and value guidance in the textbooks.

1.4 Connecting with the Context of Vocational Scenarios and Stimulating Students’ Motivation for Reading Learning

The core objective of English teaching in secondary vocational schools is to serve students’ future vocational development. The vocational modules in the English textbooks of Higher Education Press

and the vocational elements in the context provide a vocational scenario context for reading teaching. Contextual elements closely link English reading with students' future vocational development, enabling students to perceive the practical value of English reading and stimulate their intrinsic reading motivation. For example, when students of different majors read the discourses related to their majors in the textbooks, they can understand professional English vocabulary and expressions by combining the context of vocational scenarios, master English communication skills in vocational scenarios and enhance their vocational competitiveness. The integration of the context of vocational scenarios promotes the transformation of English reading from abstract knowledge learning to specific vocational ability cultivation, enhancing students' initiative in reading. In addition, the integration of contextual elements can enrich the forms of English reading teaching, reduce the reading difficulty for secondary vocational students, enhance their learning confidence, and enable every student to participate in reading teaching.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation of the Application of Contextual Elements in English Reading Teaching for Secondary Vocational Schools

Combined with the teaching practice of the textbooks of Higher Education Press, there are still many problems in the application of contextual elements in English reading teaching for secondary vocational schools at present, which are specifically reflected in the following three aspects:

2.1 Rigid Teaching Modes, Emphasizing Form over Context

Most teachers still adopt the traditional teaching modes of vocabulary explanation, grammar analysis, sentence-by-sentence translation and exercise practice. In reading teaching, they focus more on the imparting of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, ignoring the core role of contextual elements. When explaining the discourses in the textbooks, teachers focus on explaining new words and grammar points, and lack the awareness of guiding students to independently guess word meanings by combining the contextual context and understand the discourse meaning by combining the situational context. As a result, many students form the reading habit of word-for-word translation and fail to grasp the overall logic of the discourses.

2.2 Inadequate Development and Superficial Utilization of Textbook Context Resources

The textbooks of Higher Education Press contain abundant linguistic and non-linguistic context resources, but teachers fail to make full use of these resources in actual teaching. Most teachers only analyze the explicit situational context for students when explaining discourses. For example, when explaining the discourse on the theme of shopping, they only mention the dialogue scenario of shopping to students, without in-depth exploration of the cultural and vocational contexts behind the discourse. In addition, teachers have a low utilization rate of the digital context resources of the textbooks, still focusing on paper-based text teaching, and failing to give full play to the teaching value of multimodal contexts.

2.3 Students' Weak Ability in Context Interpretation and Lack of Scientific Reading Strategies

Secondary vocational students generally have a weak English foundation, limited vocabulary, unconsolidated grammar knowledge and lack systematic context interpretation strategies. In the process of reading, most students look up new words in the dictionary when they encounter them, instead of guessing their meanings by combining the linguistic context of the context; when facing complex discourses, they cannot sort out the logic of discourses by analyzing the linguistic context such as connectives and topic sentences; they often interpret English discourses with Chinese thinking, leading to deviations in understanding. In addition, most students' reading motivation is only to cope with exams, lacking the awareness of actively interpreting discourses by combining context, and failing to connect reading with practical application.

3. Practical Strategies for Exerting the Teaching Effects of Contextual Elements in English Reading Teaching for Secondary Vocational Schools

Combined with the compilation characteristics of the English textbooks of Higher Education Press, as well as the teaching effects and existing challenges of contextual elements, practical strategies are proposed from three aspects: excavation of textbook resources, innovation of teaching forms and design of teaching tasks, which are specifically reflected in the following three aspects:

3.1 In-depth Excavation of Implicit Context Resources in Textbooks to Realize the Integrated Teaching of Context and Discourse

The context resources in the textbooks of Higher Education Press include not only explicit situational context, but also implicit linguistic, cultural and vocational contexts. Teachers need to base themselves on the textbooks to conduct in-depth excavation of context and realize the integrated teaching of context and discourse. First, analyze the context system of unit themes, take unit themes as the core, integrate the context resources of the reading and writing section, cultural comprehension section and language practice section, and build a complete context framework of linguistic, situational, cultural and vocational contexts. Second, explore the detailed context of textbook discourses, such as sentence structures, punctuation marks and emotional words in the context, guide students to independently interpret the author's emotional attitude and writing purpose by combining the detailed context, and realize the in-depth understanding of the discourses. Third, integrate the basic modules and vocational modules in the textbooks, combine basic language knowledge with the context of vocational scenarios, and enable students to apply basic language knowledge in vocational contexts so as to achieve the goal of applying what they have learned.

3.2 Constructing Multimodal Context by Combining the Digital and Intelligent Resources of Textbooks to Enrich the Presentation Forms of Context

The English textbooks of Higher Education Press have constructed a teaching system combining knowledge texts and digital resources. Teachers need to make full use of the digital resources of the textbooks, transform textual resources into multimodal contexts of vision, hearing and kinesthesia,

reduce students' reading difficulty and enhance the interest of English reading. First, use the supporting audio and video resources of the textbooks to create auditory context, let students listen to the recordings of discourses, and understand the emotional context and connotation of discourses by combining auditory information such as pronunciation and intonation. Second, use the animation and picture resources of the textbooks to create visual context, enable students to intuitively perceive the situational context of discourses and understand the dialogue content of discourses. Third, use the interactive exercises in the textbooks to create a virtual practical context, let students conduct simulated workplace English dialogues on the platform, and transform the context knowledge learned from reading into practical pragmatic ability. The construction of multimodal context is consistent with the cognitive characteristics of secondary vocational students, making English reading more vivid and intuitive.

3.3 Designing Hierarchical Context Reading Tasks to Adapt to the Cognitive Differences of Secondary Vocational Students

The textbooks of Higher Education Press adopt a spiral syllabus design with the difficulty of discourses progressing step by step. Teachers need to design hierarchical context reading tasks by combining the difficulty gradient of the textbooks and the differences in English foundation of secondary vocational students, so that students with different foundations can make progress in context interpretation. The tasks can be divided into three levels: basic, improved and extended.

Basic-level tasks are for students with a relatively weak English foundation, focusing on the interpretation of linguistic context. For example, asking students to guess new words by combining the context, find the connectives of discourses, and cultivate their basic context interpretation ability.

Improved-level tasks are for students with an intermediate English foundation, focusing on the connection between situational context and discourse logic. For example, asking students to sort out the logical structure of discourses, retell the content of discourses by combining the situational context, and cultivate their discourse analysis ability.

Extended-level tasks are for students with a good English foundation, focusing on the application of cultural and vocational contexts. For example, asking students to compare the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, adapt discourses according to vocational scenarios, and cultivate their language application ability.

The design of hierarchical tasks is consistent with the characteristics of the textbooks of Higher Education Press, enabling every student to make progress on the original basis and improving the effectiveness of English reading.

4. Conclusions and Expectations

Contextual elements are an important part of English reading teaching for secondary vocational schools, and their teaching effects are reflected in many aspects such as eliminating lexical barriers, constructing discourse logic, cultivating cross-cultural competence and stimulating vocational reading

motivation. They are highly consistent with the compilation philosophy of the English textbooks of Higher Education Press. Giving full play to the advantages of textbook context resources and deeply integrating contextual elements into all links of reading teaching can effectively solve the current problems in English reading teaching for secondary vocational schools, such as rigid teaching modes that emphasize form over context, inadequate development and superficial utilization of textbook context resources, and students' weak ability in context interpretation with a lack of scientific reading strategies. It can also promote the transformation of students from understanding the literal meaning to comprehending the connotation and mastering practical application, so as to realize the coordinated development of English reading ability and language application ability.

In the future, schools can carry out long-term teaching experiments by combining specific majors of secondary vocational schools with different modules of textbooks, further optimize the teaching strategies of contextual elements, make context teaching more in line with the professional characteristics and vocational development needs of secondary vocational students, and give full play to the teaching effects of contextual elements in English reading teaching for secondary vocational schools.

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