Strategies on How to Use the Situational Approach to Improve Junior High School Students' Interest in English

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ABSTRACT: *With the rapid development of modern society, people must master English to meet the needs of society. However, the current situation of English teaching in junior high schools is not ideal. There are many deficiencies in the teaching system, and some drawbacks in the teaching methods. The curriculum structure is unreasonable and the teaching materials are incomplete. Most teachers follow the tradition, and lack innovative teaching spirit. To some extent, the effect of junior high school students' English learning is not ideal. Therefore, how to innovate classroom teaching methods and stimulate students' interest in learning English has become the focus of English teachers' work.*

KEY WORDS: *situational approach; junior high school English; learning interest*
Situational approach refers to the process of teaching by setting up a situation that is suitable for the teaching content, so that students can have an easier perception of English. It helps students acquire the most abundant English knowledge in the shortest time, and it constantly improves students' passion for learning English. The core idea of situational teaching is to provide more opportunities for students to learn and speak, so that students can bring English learning into real life.

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF SITUATIONAL APPROACH IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four basic language skills necessary for learning and using language. They are important forms of communication for students and their comprehensive ability to use language. However, at present, China's junior high school English teaching is mainly to impart knowledge. In order to make students get good grades in the examination, teachers often ignore the students' ability of learning and their emotion, and often drive students to memorize. Then according to the test type and related content of repeated intensive training, some students get high scores in the exam, and the teachers are also recognized by the leaders and parents, but this is only a short-term effect. After a long time, some students will become bored with their studies and their grades will naturally decline. Some students have strong willpower. Although they can keep good scores in the college entrance examination, they are not outstanding in the future use of English and sustainable development. In other words, this method makes students get high scores but low abilities. Teaching activities should be combined with English communication. Teachers should try to get students to use English in real situations. To do this job well and change the teaching mode, teachers must make clear the relationship between learning and use. Situational approach can make simple and boring English learning vivid and interesting, thus improving the efficiency of classroom teaching. The so-called situation refers to an environment in the social context of written language and oral communication activities. In recent years, the new curriculum reform has taken situational approach as an important teaching content. Learning a language involves listening, speaking, reading and writing. English learning is no exception. Situational learning can organically combine listening, speaking, reading and writing, so as to improve teaching quality. In junior high school English teaching, situational approach can improve students' understanding of English language more directly, and it is also a teaching method adapting to junior high school students' thinking and psychology. In situational teaching, students do not need to memorize, but learn English in a flexible and relaxed way. As time goes by, students' enthusiasm for learning English will keep growing. Situational approach can cultivate students' imagination. They can accumulate a large amount of English vocabulary, change language thinking, tap their learning potential and improve their comprehensive learning ability through dialogues and on-site simulation of different communication environments.

II. THE PRESENT SITUATION OF SITUATIONAL APPROACH IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHING

2.1 Ignorance of the Application of Situational Approach

The new English textbooks no longer focus on grammar teaching. Even each unit does not have a part to explain grammar knowledge centrally, but is scattered in the sentences of the text and relatively simple

exercises related to the text. If complex grammar knowledge is to be taught to students by situational approach, then teachers need to carefully comb knowledge before class and do a lot of preparatory work, and set up the situation and teaching process that conform to the content of the textbook. But in fact, teachers' teaching tasks are very heavy, and they can not complete such time-consuming and laborious preparations. Therefore, in order to complete the teaching task, most teachers generally use induction and deduction method. They give examples first, then analyze the words and summarize the grammatical rules, and finally consolidate the training with exercises. Even if grammar is taught in such a direct and clear way, students may not be able to grasp grammar knowledge accurately, let alone use situational approach in specific grammar teaching.

2.2 Difficulties in the Application of Situational Approach

The basic English level of students in the same class is different, so in the situational teaching, teachers should not only consider letting excellent students master knowledge as much as possible, but also let backward students keep pace with the progress, keep enthusiasm for learning English, so that they can all gain something. However, within 40 minutes, it is difficult for teachers to complete the teaching content in order to meet the needs of all students. Traditional teaching ideas make students accustomed to passive learning habits, waiting for teachers to give answers to questions. The situational approach requires a "student-centered, teacher-led" classroom model. Under the influence of traditional teaching mode, students' consciousness of actively participating in the classroom is not strong, and they lack the sense of teamwork. Some students in the group are not involved in the situation, so the situational approach which needs a team to complete often fails to reflect the results of each student' s thinking.

At present, there are about 50 students in each class at most schools. Because of the large number of classes and limited class time, teachers are eager to explain knowledge points in order to complete teaching tasks, so the implementation of situational approach is relatively single. For example, after explaining the new knowledge points, the teacher will let the students work in groups and use the sentences in the textbooks to have a free dialogue so as to deepen the students' understanding of grammar. However, the number of students who really participate in the communication is not large. The teacher only pays attention to the individual groups, and can not understand the situation of all the students. David, N (2000: 5-6) defines the communicative task as the learner understands and exercises the target language and communicates and interacts in the classroom. The main concern of the students is the meaning of the target language rather than the form. In order to save time in class, some teachers just let the students repeat the dialogues mechanically according to the textbook. They don't let the students think for themselves, or only select some excellent groups of students to perform the dialogues.

III. STRATEGIES OF USING SITUATIONAL APPROACH TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' INTEREST IN ENGLISH

3.1 Creating a Good Learning Environment

In the practice of English teaching in junior high schools, there is a lack of cooperation and communication between students because of the strong competition. In a competitive environment, there are only a few people who are successful. This kind of learning phenomenon will have serious consequences, which will easily lead to a sense of inferiority and loss of confidence and interest in English learning. This is also the focus of difficulty in improving students' English proficiency. Therefore, teachers should create a good cooperative classroom learning environment and atmosphere, stimulate students' interest in English learning. In combination with the needs of practical teaching, teachers can adopt the method such as group discussion to reduce the atmosphere of competition. For example, in the eighth grade of Unit 3 *What are you doing for vacation?*, the teacher can let students share the most happy or unforgettable holiday experience in the group, and make a plan about the next holiday. Finally each team selects the most meaningful or special one to share with the teacher in the class. Teachers strengthen the atmosphere of communication and cooperation, at the same time, strengthen the effective interaction between teachers and students, which can improve students' enthusiasm and creativity.

A good classroom lead-in is half the success of a class. Effective lead-in can not only allow students to integrate new teaching content more quickly, but also lay a good atmosphere for a class. Inspiring students' desire and enthusiasm through lively and interesting lead-in will make the next teaching tasks smoother and easier. For example, in the seventh grade of Unit 6 *Do you like bananas*?, the teacher can put an easy and joyful English song *Apple Song* before the teaching, then allow students to enjoy and sing. It can make the classroom atmosphere active and attract students' attention. Then the teacher asks the key question sentence, "Do you like apples?", and teacher can continue to ask questions "Do you like...?" to interact with students and enter the teaching. Lead-in is a key factor in determining the atmosphere of the whole class. It is necessary to use the music, stories, videos, dialogues relevant to the text to render a positive learning atmosphere .

3.2 Building a Harmonious Relationship Between Students and Teachers

In general, if a student likes a teacher, he or she naturally has a strong interest in the course. Creating a harmonious atmosphere in English classes can improve teaching results. Therefore, establishing a harmonious relationship between teachers and students will stimulate students' interest in learning English . Teachers should first lead by example and establish a kind of affable, peaceful and approachable personality. Visual scene can resonate with students' feelings, but it can also arouse students' enthusiasm for English through vivid language description. In the course of explaining the text, when you talk about some special sentences, you can raise the volume or explain many times to attract the attention of the students. At the same time, you can also grasp the appropriate humorous elements so that the students can easily accept them. In particular, if the teaching content is boring, teachers need to use special way to impress students, so that students will be more likely to accept the content. The game is the best choice to build a good relationship. When teaching the new words, teachers can play some games with students. For example, choose a student to point out the right picture on the blackboard when the teacher says the word about it, then the teacher can read the words faster and faster to increase the difficulty. The relationship between teachers and students can become closer by playing the games. Teachers can also pay attention to students' daily life and increase common topics with students. To gain the students' respect and trust, students will be willing to communicate and interact with teachers in the classroom, and will also be willing to express their doubts and ideas, which plays a vital role in effective teaching.

3.3 Finding Interesting Topics

The purpose of language learning is to improve students' language application ability in daily life. Therefore, teachers must contact students' daily life when creating a situation, so that students can be more integrated into the situation and the practice can be more practical. Students will be active and even creative in the activities and topics they are interested in. So, teachers should keep up with the times, constantly communicate with students and have a deep understanding of students, know what current affairs and news they care about, and what kind of movies and music they like, so as to accurately grasp the students' psychology and create a teaching situation that can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. Take the seventh grade of Unit 11 *What do you think of game shows* for example, some popular TV shows today can be talked about during the class. The teacher can share the favorite one first and explain the reason and then ask students "What do you think of this...?". Students will use the sentences and words on the text book to answer. Next let students to share their favorite one and tell the reason to the teacher and ask the teacher too. Students must be very positive when they have the chance to share the topics they are interested in daily life. It is also a great chance to practice their oral English. At the same time, teachers should not blindly use the dialogue scenarios given in the textbooks without thinking and innovating on their own. The topics and situations used should not be too old and boring. It is necessary to keep up with the pace of the times and closely integrate the teaching content with the daily life of the students. Teachers should make the learning process both fun and practical. Professor Bao Tianren believes that all walks of life, not only the teaching method, must have a development process of learning, inheritance and innovation.

3.4 Creating Various Teaching Situations

Like other languages, English is a tool for communication. Since language comes from life, it should be used in life. Krashen (1982: 64) has proposed that the standard for a good language teacher is to provide understandable language input. The input of language can be understood because of the help of context. For Chinese students, they do not have a natural English communication environment, so teachers should try to lead them into the language environment of life. In this way, students can understand the language, remember it, and use it better. And in such a relaxed and pleasant life situation, English learning can become a happy thing, not a heavy burden. For example, when teaching the basic language of making a phone call, teachers can create a life scene where when the phone rings, the person who answers the phone picks up the phone and hears the other person say, "Hello, may I speak to...?." So, suppose (1) the person who is answering the phone is the person who the other party is looking for, (2) the person who the other party is looking for is not in, (3) the person who the other party is looking for is busy, and so on, how should the person who answers the phone answer? The students begin a discussion in small groups. On the basis of this, the sentences about answering the phone are summarized into various types, such as (1) this is ... speaking. Who's that? (2) ... isn't here/at home right now. Could I take a message? (3) Hold on, please. Teachers can present to the students while talking and writing these sentences. Then, the students are asked to practice in groups. These are the results of their own thinking, so they will have a strong enthusiasm, and can quickly grasp the above knowledge.

Performing is an attractive way to create scenes. It can be a student's performance, a teacher's performance, or it can be done by both teachers and students. According to the content of the text, many different personal relationships and scenes can be set, such as doctors and patients, journalists and interviewees, sellers and customers, etc., to consolidate the teaching content with dialogues. On the one hand, students use the

coordination of body language and speech to express the characters and actions in the text, feel the feelings and actions of others, and make the classroom more lively. On the other hand, the language knowledge in the book is abstract and tedious for junior high school students. Actually, acting turns static things into dynamic features of life. During this process, students perform and experience by themselves, so that their memory will be more profound.

With the popularization of modern educational technology, various information technologies are increasingly used in English teaching. Teaching resources such as multimedia and audio-visual materials play an important role in the teaching process. Modern educational technology plays an important role in situational teaching. According to the teaching content, teachers should purposefully create some English learning situations that are suitable for students. When a certain topic is talked about, teachers can download some relevant pictures from the Internet, and use some corresponding eye-catching text description. Intuitive and vivid pictures can mobilize students' various senses, focus their attention and increase their learning interest. At the same time, some English video and music related to teaching contents can be played through multimedia, so that students can consciously understand and imitate in the process of watching and listening. In modern education technology, multimedia, various healthy English network communication platforms and some English learning websites are all good teaching resources for English learning. Teachers should make full use of these resources to achieve optimal teaching effects.

In a word, English teaching required by the new curriculum standard is a test for teachers and students. In the classroom, teachers should not only teach boring knowledge, but also combine knowledge with practical life and use interesting methods to make students learn English in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere. Students should not only master the basic theoretical knowledge and lay a solid theoretical foundation, but also pay attention to the practical application of English and communicate in English as much as possible. Situational approach can improve the junior high school students' English study interest, make students more active in learning, improve the learning efficiency, so as to improve the quality of English teaching. It integrates simple and boring teaching content into rich and colorful practical situations, and cultivates students' interest in learning. It is an effective way to cultivate junior high school students' comprehensive English ability. This thesis studies the theoretical connotation and practical significance of situational approach. Combined with teaching practice, it analyzes the application of situational approach in junior high school English teaching in China and sums up the existing problems and defects in its application. In order to help junior high school students to improve their interest in English learning and improve the quality of junior high school English teaching, some relevant teaching methods are given from the aspects of classroom atmosphere, teacher-student relationship and situational topics.

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