The Application of Scaffolding Instruction to Vocabulary Teaching in Primary School

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Abstract: Vocabulary is the foundation of English learning, and owing an amount of vocabulary at a certain extent is a necessity in improving primary students' ability in listening, speaking, reading and writing. With the innovation of educational concept and reform of new curriculum, many new teaching approaches are emerged and applied in English class, and scaffolding instruction has showed its strong applicability in this specific teaching area. This article gives an introduction to its theoretical basis, Zone of Proximal Development theory and Constructivist theory, and considers about its steps and features, putting students in the central role at class. With the adoption of literature research method, this paper proposes some applicable strategies of teaching vocabulary based on scaffolding instruction.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching, scaffolding instruction, primary school, students

Introduction

Scaffolding teaching is "the systematic sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks, and teacher and peer support to optimize learning." [1] (Dickson & Chard & Simmons, 1993, p.12). "The goal of scaffolding is to support students until they can apply the new skills and strategies independently." [2](Martha J, 2001) Lin Heng and Lin Juan (2015) explored the scaffold's functions in motivating students to learn through the physic class "static friction".[3] Ma Yunxiu (2015) observed the class that combine scaffolding instruction with chemical class, through the observations on the class, they got an overview of the use of scaffold and analyzed some problems emerged in the teaching process, then found the reasons and solutions. [4] Wei Yi (2019) reconstructed the five stages of scaffolding instruction in terms of the characteristics of geography concept teaching, taking the teaching method as the orientation to optimize concept teaching in geography. Also, there are studies about English.[5]Hou Quping (2018) applied scaffolding instruction into vocabulary teaching of college, aims to find ways to improve the teaching efficiency.[6] Ding Tao (2020) studied the problems in vocabulary teaching in college English, proposed solutions based on information technology.[7]The studies are not only about vocabulary but reading and writing. Lv Jin and Yang Min (2020) take undergraduates as research subjects, and guide students to learn by building scaffolds.[8] For the high school, Li Danmei and Fu Yao(2017) started with the perspective of teacher, discussed the role of teachers in providing scaffolds in two aspects of questioning and feedback.[9]

"The research object of vocabulary teaching involves all stages of education. Among them, college students occupy a large number that far surpassing primary and junior middle schools. Although vocabulary teaching in elementary and junior middle schools is the most popular, it is far less than that in universities due to factors such as curriculum standards, teaching focus, scientific research tasks and so on".[10] (Huang Leping & Shu Yue, 2020)

"It is almost impossible to understand an oral discussion or a written text in a language without having acquired some basic vocabulary." [11](Chen Wencun & Yan Ping, p.85) As shown in the English Curricular Standards in the Phase of Compulsory Education (2011), students should achieve second level by the end of sixth grade and they need to learn 600-700 words.[12]This paper focuses on vocabulary teaching in primary school stage and aims to find effective ways to teach vocabulary effectively based on scaffolding instruction.

1. Theoretical basis of scaffolding instruction

1.1 "Zone of Proximal Development" theory

The theory considers that students have two levels of development. Present level and possible level. The definition of this theory is that "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."[13] (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). "Only the "scaffolding" built according to students' "Recent Development Zone"(ZPD), it is the most effective for students' development". [14](Gai Shuhua, 2010) Also, it is the optimal area for

teaching and developing. "The stimulation to advances in the proximate development zone will provide certainty efficient and consistent development." (Traian Moldovana* & Sorina Moldovana, 2012) [15]

1.2 Constructivist theory

Constructivist is a branch of cognitive psychology, which is proposed by Piaget in 1960s. Constructivist is a theory related to knowledge and learning which puts its emphasis on learners' autonomy. This theory regards learning as a process in which learners generate output and construct their understandings based on their original knowledge or experience. This process is active, and it argues that learners do not accept information passively; in contrast, they vigorously construct the meaning of knowledge.

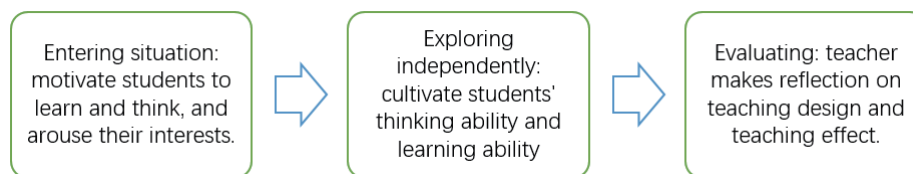# 2. Using Scaffolding instruction to construct teaching mode

2.1 The steps and features of scaffolding instruction

It has five steps and they are building scaffolds, entering situation, exploring independently, cooperative learning, evaluating effects

It has two features and the first one is temporary means that scaffold is provided from external firstly and then reduced gradually. The other one is that the scaffold should be offered in the range of proximal development zone. This means that teachers' evaluation should be ahead of the students' next possible level to build appropriate scaffold.

2.2 The design of teaching model

Given on the teaching needs, teachers can use a variety of scaffolding types and use it flexibly. [16](Yang Yulin & Pei Qing & Bai Ying, 2021) This paper takes the feature of vocabulary, formed the teaching mode of vocabulary as follows.

Entering situation: motivate students to learn and think, and arouse their interests. → Exploring independently: cultivate students' thinking ability and learning ability → Evaluating: teacher makes reflection on teaching design and teaching effect.

4. The applicable strategies of scaffolding instruction

4.1 Using hyponymys to build scaffolds

"Hyponymys refer to the sense relation between a more general, more inclusive words and a more specific word."[17] (Dai Weidong & He Zhaoxiong, p.69). Take the textbook published by People Educational Press for example, the word list is arranged by theme which gives teachers the chance to harness hyponymy to build scaffold. The teaching of the word "pencil" can be designed in this way: teacher writes the hint on the blackboard such as it is a thing you used in school. Mounir(2017) "The teacher may provide useful analogies or metaphors to bring complex ideas closer to the students' world experience." [18] Then with the help of the clue students can engage the class actively, and the teaching likes a game which creates an atmosphere of relax.

Cai Qunyu(2019) "The vocabulary in primary school all arranged revolve around the same theme, which is conducive to retrieve words from memorization and organize students to discuss." [19] Provided that they are going to review the word in unit1, it is better to provide a word-net to students. The figure looks as follows:

school things
? | book | pencil | ?
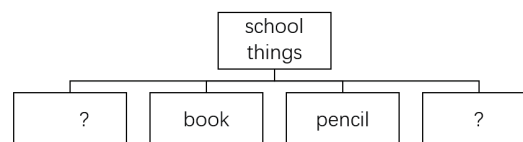
4.2 Using multimedia to build scaffolds

"Since contextualization is concerned, students work with manipulative, pictures, two-minute videos, and other objects or sources of information to construct meaning."[20](Mounir, 2017) Most of the words in primary school can be taught directly with real objects; however, some words are not easy to be taught with real object. Multimedia has become a teaching

method widely used by teachers.[21] (Ren Jiaoping, 2019) In English teaching, we can carefully select some video materials related to teaching tasks. At the same time, film clips, MT and other video materials that students are interested in will be used as teaching supports to arouse students' learning motivation.[22] (Wu Dongmei & Wu Jingjing, 2015)

5. Conclusion

Scaffolding teaching requires teachers to consider about students' recent development zone all the time. This is good for teacher to observe students' condition and take corresponding measures to help them. In the class, student is the master of class which manifest the concept of learner-centered, also students tend to behave actively and occupy the role of "explorer". Due to the lack of practical actions and the limits of words, this article has room for improvement.

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