

The application of scaffolding teaching in oral English teaching under the theory of constructivism

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Abstract: Oral English plays a key role in international communication between different countries. However, in practical teaching, teachers do not pay enough attention to oral English, do not create appropriate context for students to practice oral English and do not give students timely feedback. The scaffolding teaching produced by the application of constructivism theory in teaching can improve students' English. The combination of scaffolding teaching and oral English teaching can promote the achievement of students' core quality. This paper summarizes scholars' research on scaffolding teaching in oral English teaching under the theory of constructivism, summarizes the research status of constructivism, scaffolding teaching and oral English teaching at home and abroad.

Key words: constructivism; scaffolding teaching; oral English teaching

1 Introduction

English, as a universal language, plays a crucial role in international communication, and the increasing global exchanges demand higher proficiency from learners. However, traditional teaching methods, focused on rote learning and examinations, often fail to engage students in practical language use, especially in oral communication. This study aims to address the gap in oral English teaching by advocating for a shift from traditional methods to constructivist approaches, particularly scaffolding teaching. Scaffolding, based on constructivism, encourages active inquiry, group cooperation, and communication, fostering an engaging and contextual learning environment.

2 An overview of constructivism, scaffolding teaching and oral English teaching

According to constructivism, teachers should construct a context for students where students can communicate with their group members. Social constructivism is a further development of constructivism [1]. Social constructivism claimed that students should interact based on the zone of proximal development and scaffolding teaching. The former is determined by a child's ability to solve problems independently. The latter is determined by a child's ability to solve problems under the guidance of someone more capable than himself.

3 Relevant studies at home and abroad

3.1 The relevant studies of constructivism at home

He Kekang pointed out the influence of combining constructivism theory with modern educational technology on teaching reform from the teaching level [2]. He proposed the integration of constructivist teaching theory and English

teaching innovation. Yuan Fei proposed the use of the six elements of constructivist learning design in English teaching. Constructivist learning design involves developing situations, organizing groups, building bridges, asking questions, arranging exhibitions and inviting reflections [3].

3.2 The relevant studies of scaffolding teaching at home

Scaffolding teaching is the application of constructivism in teaching. The scaffolding teaching is based on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory. Bruner first proposed scaffolding teaching. Bruner believed that teachers should set up scaffolding for students and set up teaching situations to help students accept new knowledge more easily. The scaffolding refers to teacher's help. When using scaffolding teaching, teachers should first understand the current learning level of students. Zhang lining claimed that Scaffolding teaching includes five processes: scaffolding building, entering the situation, independent exploration, collaborative learning and effect evaluation [4].

3.3 The relevant studies of constructivism abroad

Constructivism has exerted great influences on the worldwide educational reforms and practices in the past three decades, which can be seen in a variety of instructional practices and published curricula [5]. Prawat studied how teachers behave in teaching and what kind of attitudes and beliefs will have a positive effect on learning according to constructivism theory.

3.4 The relevant studies of scaffolding teaching abroad

Many foreign scholars have conducted research on scaffolding teaching. Hammond has introduced in detail how scaffolding teaching can improve students' language ability. He has done a lot of scaffolding teaching to help students explore knowledge. Valencia defined scaffolding teaching as a teaching model that can support learners to self construct knowledge.

3.5 The relevant studies of oral English teaching at home

Li Ying claimed that although teachers recognized the importance of oral English, they only emphasized students' pronunciation and regarded it as a way to learn words and passages. The method used by the teacher is outdated. Students practice oral English by reading words and sentences. Teachers seldom combine constructivism with oral English teaching. Teachers are not familiar with the level of students' oral English and do not give students opportunities to practice oral English in communication. Students lack the confidence in communicating with others in English. Yu Hanjing studied the theoretical model of oral fluency development and did quantitative and qualitative research on oral English.

4 Summary and comment based on the previous research and gap-finding

4.1 Entering the situation

In oral English teaching, teachers can create context by introducing the cultural background of the unit to students. Teachers can also ask students to preview the culture background of the unit before class to get familiar with the context. They should help students understand that different voice and tenses should be used in different contexts. Teachers can also inspire students by leaving them open questions. On the context of multimedia situational teaching, teachers can motivate students' learning enthusiasm and create a positive learning atmosphere.

4.2 Scaffolding building

Teachers can set up cultural scaffolding for students before class so that students can enter the situation of this unit. In class, teachers can build vocabulary scaffolding for students, such as providing students with some key words needed for organizing oral expressions. Teachers can also help students understand more words by adding prefixes or suffixes based on the words they have already learned. There are also sentence scaffolding, but this is different from the traditional teacher-infused analysis of sentence structure, which allows students to discuss and analyze the structure of the article.

4.3 Independent exploration.

The teacher provides preview material before class and raises one or two simple thinking questions to stimulate students' thinking. In class, the teacher guides the students to discuss the article in groups based on the structure of the text. Everyone shares their understanding of the article and forms a more consistent group view through discussion, which not only exercises the students' learning ability, but also improves the class participation. After class, teachers will assign homework of different difficulty according to the results of class discussion to consolidate the learning results, which is a further independent exploration.

4.4 Cooperative learning

The interaction of students in oral English learning is particularly important. Especially when teachers withdraw their scaffold, students need to help each other and give full play to the advantages of cooperative learning. When setting up a group, teachers should take into account students' learning level, personality characteristics and so on to give full play to the collective power. There are usually groups of four to six students in a group. The overall level of students in each group should be similar. Students in a group should work together and take their own responsibilities.

4.5 Effect evaluation

The teacher's evaluation should be in detail, which can let students know how to improve their oral level. The evaluations of other groups can help them learn from each other. Students have the most oral communication in the group, so group members are familiar with each other's oral proficiency and can provide appropriate evaluations.

5 Conclusion

Under the guidance of constructivism theory, teachers can understand the zone of proximal development of students, grasp the teaching objectives, take students as the center, and give full play to the initiative and enthusiasm of students' oral expression by building scaffolding, which can solve the current problems in oral English teaching. Scaffolding teaching, as an application of constructivism in teaching, plays an important role in oral English teaching. It can fully embody the subject status of students and students' oral English can be effectively improved. Looking forward to the future, teachers need to deeply understand and effectively apply the scaffolding teaching theory, continuously optimize the teaching mode, accurately connect with the needs of students, and provide customized teaching support to promote students to achieve better learning results.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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