

Iceberg Theory in Teaching of Vocational English Reading

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Abstract: Reading comprehension, a quite challenging part in vocational English teaching, strongly requires to be improved. Iceberg theory, a literature and art theory proposed by Hemingway, can also be referenced in vocational English reading teaching to inspire student's potential. Therefore, student's foundation of English grammar and vocabulary can be further firm to cultivate their ability of reading English text independently, which lays an important foundation for perfecting student's comprehensive English ability.

1 INTRODUCTION

English reading is of great importance in vocational English teaching because comprehensive basis of English application can only be formed with certain reading amount. The iceberg theory, proposed by Austrian psychologist Freud and American writer Hemingway in last century, has certain reference value to reading courses. Iceberg theory analyzes people's mental activities, thinking people's mental world has the characteristic of hierarchy (Fang Fang, 2010). However, the application of iceberg theory in vocational English teaching still needs to be explored and thought.

2 ICEBERG THEORY AND ITS TEACHING APPLICATION

Although iceberg theory was developed on the basis of Freud's theory, it was officially proposed by Hemingway. In his work, Hemingway used iceberg as his metaphor, thinking writers should only describe upper part of iceberg while the part under the sea should be supplied by readers through the guidance of text. Hemingway thought iceberg was grand exactly for its connotation (Li Jingna, Wang Yao, 2008). Therefore, abstract things like emotion and thought, occupying only seven-eighths of literary text, requires readers to understand by themselves.

Therefore, iceberg theory is an introductory art in education. Traditional teaching mode emphasizes students learn with teacher's teaching speed and

content, which is a unidirectional communication in essence. However, this unidirectional communication actually becomes a passive infusion, making students lack positivity and receive knowledge passively.

Iceberg theory solves the problem of heavy teaching content with less teaching time in higher vocational colleges. Besides, iceberg theory can help students apply English knowledge and expand their knowledge range under teacher's guidance in vocational English teaching (Yuan Pinghua, 2010). Therefore, the dominant position of students in higher vocational colleges can be highlighted, eventually carrying out English course smoothly.

3 CURRENT PROBLEMS IN VOCATIONAL ENGLISH READING TEACHING

Higher vocational education aims at cultivating excellent practical talents with personal ability which can be put into market. Vocational English teaching should also mainly centre on this aspect, because English reading, a basic course in cultivating practical ability, can improve student's language practice ability. Student's reading ability about relevant English materials plays a decisive role in their English application ability. In particular, their English reading ability determines their ability on getting information from English materials. Moreover, excellent English reading ability is an important foundation of English self-study ability. Therefore, perfecting vocational English reading

teaching attaches great importance to student's English ability.

However, current vocational English reading teaching meets certain dilemma. Although abundant English reading is an ideal way to form English ability, there are problems in current vocational English reading teaching, especially in course content and teaching mode. Besides, communication and exchange between teachers and students are insufficient. The concluded real situations are as follows.

3.1 Lack of teacher's systematicness and attraction in reading theory

Vocational English reading teaching, same as other teaching activities, should regard students as centre of education and study. According to average situation of higher vocational students, most of students lack good English reading foundation while their English ability and cultural foundation require improvement. Students from higher vocational college lose points in reading in many English tests. Therefore, teachers are positive to explore reading teaching method in daily teaching. Currently, many teachers lack systematic and scientific method in exploring English reading teaching, meeting plenty of problems in daily teaching. Thus teachers will lose enthusiasm in exploring English reading teaching method gradually as time passes. English reading teaching without theoretical direction is a blind practice, which unable to attract higher vocational students.

3.2 More lecturing of English teachers than student's participation

Many English teachers face objective challenges in daily reading teaching, for example, less vocabulary and weak English grammar and knowledge of higher vocational students. According to this situation, many teachers require higher vocational students to answer relevant questions after reading an English article independently. However, it has many difficulties, especially in feasibility. Teachers sometimes exceed their authorities for teaching progress, making students lack enough time to think and find answers. On the other hand, some students do not have an overall understanding to English text specifically. Teachers translate the text sentence by sentence in teaching, thus students do not get the chance to read and comprehend. Therefore, students lose progress of participation and understanding of language, making it hard for them to form English

reading ability. In this way, many higher vocational teachers spend lots of time lecturing the text and its minor details without concluding reading skills and language rule. Once a complete English article is cut apart, students will not be attracted. Moreover, they will feel the knowledge of language complicated and lose thinking initiative gradually, thus relying on teachers' lecturing and receiving knowledge passively.

3.3 Single teaching method in lecturing on reading knowledge

Most of higher vocational students are weak at English. Therefore teachers should prepare some relevant questions for students to warm up, guiding them to preview and consolidate relevant words in teaching. However, in most of higher vocational English courses, teachers mainly use question-answer mode in which students answer questions relying on teacher's prepared answers instead of their own thinking. In such a progress, students learn vocational English knowledge passively. Thus their learning initiative and divergent thinking ability cannot be stimulated. Current themes of vocational English reading are abundant, which cannot receive ideal effect through single teaching method.

3.4 English reading progress relying on multimedia equipment overly

Many vocational English reading courses focus on students exploring relevant knowledge positively while relying on outside scientific technology overly. For example, many higher vocational colleges use multimedia tools in English class widely with the development of electronic computer technology. Although multimedia tools help teachers expand course content and improve teaching efficiency, it makes teachers simplify their thinking. Some questions require students to explore by using their thinking ability, however multimedia tools make relevant answers appear intuitively. In this way, student's abstract thinking ability, especially for literal image and inspiration, cannot get exercised.

4 THINKING OF VOCATIONAL ENGLISH READING TEACHING BASED ON ICEBERG THEORY

Considering iceberg theory, teachers cannot replace students to think, which is completely exceed their duties. Instead, teachers should encourage students to think and make breakthroughs with their thinking ability. Such a method is actually connected with Hemingway's iceberg theory. Student's ability of seeking knowledge is like iceberg. Teachers impart student knowledge which is the upper part of iceberg while help the bottom of iceberg develop gradually. However, student's initiative cannot be replaced and their dynamic role should be fully played.

4.1 Creating relevant study environment to attract students

Current English teaching cannot proceed without student's learning experience. Moreover, it should centre on student's learning interest, making them practice and experience language positively. Therefore, student's initiative of English skill application can be promoted in communication. Students should play a dynamic role, because as iceberg theory says, people's knowledge is like mountains hidden under the sea, which cannot be taught by teachers forcibly. Besides, this knowledge should be transformed into a positive study environment, making students explore by themselves. Therefore, it is important for teachers to set such a study environment, making students play their initiative and creativity in this simulated environment. Student's using of English is the process of upper iceberg transforming into the bottom one. Teachers should help students imitate conversations and explore text environment in English reading class, making students present their talents and form specific English ability eventually.

4.2 Constructing mutual-help study group to provide mutual communication

Teachers can start from Sukhomlinskii's theory which aims at avoiding students from aesthetic fatigue on study, making them high-spirited. To develop iceberg, iceberg theory requires students to study and master relevant theory while keep themselves inspired. Higher vocational teachers can let students from study groups by their own in

reading classes, making students from mature English application skills through communicate and cooperate in language experiment. Besides, students can learn from each other. For example, in a reading group, some students have a solid foundation of English grammar while some master certain vocabulary, thus they can learn from each other under teacher's guidance. In this way, students can find the joy of learning language, thus finding knowledge under the sea initiatively. This independent research is of great significance to student's positivity. This mutual communication, especially between teachers and students, can help teachers learn student's mastery of basic knowledge more accurately. Therefore, it lays an important foundation of vocational English teaching, which is also an important condition of student's development.

5 CONCLUSIONS

China has been in WTO for over ten years. Therefore, talents in new period should better master and apply English in daily business and communication to meet the requirement of time and market. Currently, many higher vocational colleges have English class and make it a compulsory cultural basic course, aiming at firming student's English foundation and improving comprehensive ability on their former basis. As the guidance, Iceberg theory can improve not only students' English language ability and level, but also their comprehensive humanistic quality, thus laying a firm foundation in a further direction.

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