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Study on Teaching Strategies of Continuation Task Based on the Development of English Key Competencies

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ABSTRACT

As a new type of English writing task in the college entrance examination in recent years, the Continuation Task, a combination of reading and writing, is not only limited to testing students' literacy ability, but also testing students' comprehensive ability to learn and use language. The adjustment direction of examination content pays more attention to students' comprehensive ability of students' creative expression ability and emotional output ability rather than only language knowledge which refers to phonetics, vocabulary, phrases, syntax, etc. And this is consistent with the cultivation of English key competencies which include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. This paper mainly explores how to better carry out the classroom teaching of high school English reading and writing based on the key competencies under the background of the new college entrance examination.

Key Words: *Teaching Strategies; Key Competencies; Continuation Task*

1. English Key Competencies

The New English Curriculum Standard (2020) points out that the cultivation of key competencies is the specific goal of senior English course, which is the manifestation of the idea of people-oriented. And senior English course realizes the educational value through the specific language learning process. English key competencies consist of language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Language ability is the foundation, cultural awareness is the value orientation, thinking quality is the mental characteristics, and learning ability is the condition of development.

To sum up, teachers should actively explore how to transform language knowledge into students' language application ability in teaching to help students correctly understand and express meaning, intention, emotion and attitude, striving to practice the activity view, and implementing the goal of cultivating students' key competencies.

2. The Continuation Task

2.1 Introduction

The continuation task is a new type of question in the new English college entrance examination. It provides students with an incomplete article about 350 words. Students are required to analyze the language characteristics, structure and writing style of the given article, and to continue writing the article in a logical and methodical way. The content of the continuation task should be complete in plot and structure in order to effectively connect with the given text.

2.2 The Theoretical Basis

2.2.1 The Synergy Theory

Pickering and Garrod (2004) pointed out that synergy originates from the communication and interaction between speakers and it is the key factor for the smooth progress of interpersonal dialogue between speakers. Both parties cooperate and adapt to each other in the process of dialogue in order to understand each other's meaning and avoid the embarrassment of misunderstanding. What's more, Bock (1986) said that the mechanism of language level collaboration is structural priming which refers to the tendency of learners to recall and repeat the language structures that they or others have used or contacted with in the process of language output or input. Chuming Wang (2015) emphasized that the essence of synergy effect is the leveling effect, which is based on the reading material as the model and enhances learners' language use ability. It originates from the significant gap or asymmetry between learners' understanding and output. Since the asymmetry between understanding and productivity is eternal, the leveling effect brought about by interaction is the most fundamental driving force and effective way to learn a language. It can be said that language is learned in the process of promoting the interaction between understanding and output.

Based on these, teachers should guide students to learn the linguistic features, writing techniques and style of given materials, imitating and creating articles that are consistent with the original text no matter in content or form.

2.2.2 The Input Hypothesis

Language output is based on language input. Krashen (1988) pointed that the input material should be understandable, relevant and interesting. In addition, the input material should conform to the "i+1" principle, in other words, the input material should be sufficient.

Based on this, in the classroom teaching, teachers should lead students to analyze reading materials before continuing to write articles. For students, reading materials should not only be understandable, interesting and related to student's lifeexperience. More importantly, the input must be sufficient amount and be used by students in practice.

3. The Significance of the Continuation Task

1) It can improve students' language application ability.

Continuation task can effectively combine reading and writing teaching together, requiring students to follow the requirement of the synergy theory to continue writing in an orderly and logical way based on their understanding and analysis of language features, plot development, organization structure, and writing style of the article. In this process, students can not only use the reading strategies and language knowledge they have learned, but also have the opportunity to express their own views or ideas, applying what they have learned into practice to improve their comprehensive language application ability.

2) It is helpful to cultivate students' thinking quality.

Traditional writing exercise confines the content of students' writing in the form of presenting concrete points, which is too rigid to limit students' imagination and creativity. However, Continuation task breaks this limitation and guides students to continue writing after detailed understanding of the reading material. Only after the students extract the exact content from the given reading material and grasp the story plot, language features and emotional tone of the article, can they write consistent content with the article. Therefore, with this, the classroom teaching is required to provide students with more opportunities to sort out the logic and rules of the article so that students have chance for imagination space to develop divergent thinking and thinking ability.

3) It's contributive to promote students' comprehensive English ability.

Continuation task reverses the separation of traditional model of reading and writing, learning and application. Through synchronous thinking and practice, reading and writing, it can not only test the writing ability, but also tests the reading analysis ability. Undoubtedly, the higher requirement for students' English reading comprehension ability and writing is conducive to improving the comprehensive English ability of senior high school students.

To sum up, continuation task teaching activities play a positive role in the cultivation of senior high school students' key competence of English subject. Teachers need to actively explore effective teaching methods to carry out the teaching activities of continuation task, so as to promote the effect of students' English learning and improve their comprehensive learning ability. In order to implement the key competence of the new curriculum standards and the requirements of the new college entrance examination, it has become an inevitable requirement of English classroom teaching to strengthen the teaching of continuation task.

4. The Current Teaching Status of Continuation Task under the Background of Key Competence

In 2021, the new National Volume 1 of the College Entrance Examination has integrated continuation task into the examination for the first time. Its higher requirement for English level has brought serious challenges not only to students but also to teachers. Especially for those students who do not have a large amount of reading to accumulate enough vocabularies, the rapidly increasing difficulty of the exam will undoubtedly discourage students' enthusiasm for English learning. And it's very necessary for teachers to actively carry out the continuation task teaching activities after fully understanding its connotation. Generally speaking, there are generally three problems in the process of students' continuation task. One is that the purpose of students' daily reading practice is low. The form of reading is preferred than the content. Therefore, it is difficult for them to grasp the theme of the original text in a short time after reading so that it may be impossible for them to write something that is consistency with the given material. The second one is that teachers usually pay more attention to the explanation of the language knowledge points of reading materials rather than the analysis of the writing style and the logic of the article, which leads to the low level of students' reading and writing. The last one is that the task of reading and writing is usually separated. Owing to the time limitation of class, teacher usually just focus on the accomplishment of teaching content in the textbook, ignoring the use of reading materials to practice students' writing ability.

5. Analysis of Teaching Strategies Based on the Cultivation of English Key Competencies

Guming Fan (2021) said that the learning of English courses in high school shows a very obvious polarization phenomenon, students with a good English foundation learn better and better, while students with poor learning perform worse. At the same time, students are facing the pressure of the college entrance examination, they are tired, and excessive study burden will hit their self-confidence. Therefore, in order for students to find the status of English learning, teachers need to implement more targeted strategies to promote students' enthusiasm for English learning.

1) Expand reading materials and accumulate language knowledge to cultivate language ability.

Writing belongs to the area of language output. However, the output of language is based on language input. Therefore, the reason for why so many students are struggling to express their ideas in appropriate language during the process of continuation task largely may be the lack of language knowledge. To help students overcome this obstacle, teachers should guide students to focus on the accumulation of language knowledge in their daily teaching. However, reading is almost the most important way for students to quickly and massively accumulate language knowledge in context. Therefore, when teaching reading materials, teachers should encourage students to figure out and accumulate perfect or excellent expressions to expand their language knowledge and improve their writing level by imitating these expressions.

2) Use key words to sort out the context, and clarify the theme.

Jia Lin (2022) said that literally, the continuation task requires students to read firstly to clarify the text and then to write. Grasping the gist is the foundation of writing. Students' inquiry into the thematic meaning of the reading material affects students' understanding of the whole discourse and effectiveness of language learning. One of the major difficulties in continuation task is the accurate extraction of information from the material and the exact grasp of plot and emotional tone of the story. And only on this basis can students continue writing an article that is logically coherent with the original text. For this, in teaching, teachers can lead students to analyze the thesis statement, topic sentence and even the key words. And in general, the first paragraph, the last paragraph or the first sentence of each paragraph will hint the theme. Of course, the recurring words usually also revolve around the theme. At the same time, teachers can also teach students the corresponding genre knowledge. For example, the most frequent continuation task is the narrative continuation. As for this, students at least should grasp the six elements of narration, namely time, place, character, cause, process and result of event. In general, narration consists of a complete structure of the beginning, development and end, especially the process of plot development. Only when students understand this knowledge can they know how to analyze the text, sort out the context, and clarify the theme to write a coherent and logic article. Of course, due to the limitations of students' existing knowledge, students cannot perceive reading material quickly and cannot find a breakthrough in writing. Therefore, in the process of daily reading teaching, teachers should guide students to gradually analyze reading material. For example, for narrative continuation task, the teacher can guide students to identify the six elements of the original narrative material through question chain.

3) Construct scenarios related to real life to divergent thinking, and cultivate thinking quality.

Deming Mei and Qiang Wang (2018) pointed that the English curriculum of senior high school includes three thematic contexts: man and self, man and society, and man and nature. The continuation task also involves these three aspects. It's worth noting that the thematic context not only regulates the learning scope of language knowledge and cultural knowledge, but also provides meaning context for language learning, penetrating emotions, attitudes and values. Therefore, in the classroom teaching of continuation task, teachers should create a context closely related to the thematic meaning, fully explore the cultural knowledge carried by the specific theme and the keypoints to develop students' thinking quality, and establish a close relationship between specific themes and students' lives to encourage students to learn and use language, especially through the discussion of different points of view to improve students' ability to identify and criticize. At the same time, teachers should pay attention to stimulate students' interest in participating in activities based on thematic context. Therefore, students can construct new knowledge structures based on existing knowledge and experience, and enrich their thinking methods to cultivate their thinking quality.

4) Practical exercises of continuation task to enhance learning effect.

Students' writing outcome is an important criterion for testing the effectiveness of continuation task teaching. For this, the teaching of continuation task should not be limited to the analytical understanding of the text. Teachers should also provide students with writing opportunities based on reading materials to practice writing skill. According to the writing task of the college entrance examination in recent years, most are the continuation of narrative stories. What's more, the content in the textbook that can be used to practice is limited so that teachers should also recommend some extra interesting or suitable English reading materials for students, especially some stories with a narrative nature to systematically organize continuation task exercises. The result is that students can actively participate in practical exercises to enhance learning effects.

5) Positive feedback and personalized guidance to cultivate learning ability.

Yu Shi (2020) emphasized that teachers need to combine teaching and assessment, focusing on the dynamic development of student's intelligence, and enhancing the interaction between students and materials, students and students, teacher and students to active students' potential. Therefore, after students complete their writing product, teachers should read carefully to understand the problems of students, and give timely and positive feedback to guide students and cultivate their learning ability. This feedback can be written, in other words, the teacher can outline the problematic use as well as excellent use of words, phrases or sentence patterns. At the same time, teacher can also give a certain evaluation of the logical structure of the text and the development of the plot. Of course, the feedback can also be oral, such as a face-to-face conversation, pointing out shortcomings and affirming the merits to cultivate students' interest and confidence in English learning. This feedback provides students chance to adjust their learning and master learning methods with the development of learning ability under the guidance and help of teachers.

6. Conclusion

All in all, to implement the requirement of keycompetencies of new English curriculum standards and new college entrance examination, enhancing the teaching of continuation task is extremely necessary. The teachers not only need to enhance the awareness of teaching writing, but also actively organize continuation task activities based on the understanding of the connotation and theory, and the teaching strategies of continuation task to help students adapt the requirement of new college entrance examination and develop English key competence such as language knowledge, thinking quality, cultural awareness and learning ability.

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