

An Analysis of the Effective Strategies of Introducing the Situational Method to Spoken English Teaching in Junior Middle School¹

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Abstract: Modern education theory emphasizes that teachers should consciously create cognitive situations and atmosphere for students in the course of education. Besides, teachers are supposed to reasonably organize and guide students' learning activities, and lead students to immerse themselves in learning situations, so that students can master knowledge and skills naturally. Practice has proved that the situational method, a modern educational idea, not only boasts distinctive characteristics of the times, but also has guiding significance for education and teaching. Since language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication, spoken English teaching has always been important in the junior middle school English education curriculum. However, the current spoken English education situation in China is far from meeting the requirements. Junior middle school students lack interest and initiative in spoken English learning. In that case, it is appropriate and feasible to introduce the situational method into the spoken English education for the purpose of stimulating students' motivation in spoken English learning and improving their spoken English.

Keywords: The Situational Method; Junior Middle School English; Spoken English Teaching

In English Curriculum Standards for compulsory Education (2017-year Edition) issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the importance of spoken English communication skills has been further explained. Junior middle school is considered to be a vital period to improve teenagers' spoken English. Speaking, as one of the four basic skills of English learning, is the main goal of English education in schools. However, in recent years, the level of spoken English education in Chinese middle schools has remained relatively backward, and its development has been severely hindered by examination-oriented education. Junior middle school English teaching has always focused on the middle school entrance examination which attaches great importance to the development of students' ability in reading, grammar and writing. However, the importance of spoken English teaching has been undermined. In order to change the backwardness of spoken English teaching, English teachers must gradually introduce new teaching concepts and methods into teaching. Among them, the situational method is in line with students' cognitive characteristics and law of somatopsychic development. In this way, the application of the situational method can activate spoken English classroom atmosphere of junior middle school, and mobilize students' enthusiasm for spoken English learning. The development of oral communication skills of junior high school students can also be enhanced, which is conducive to ensuring the quality of oral teaching.

1. Introduction to the Situational Method

Situational teaching method, also known as oral teaching method, refers to the teaching mode in which the teacher purposefully introduces and creates vivid and specific situations with a certain emotional color and image as the theme in the classroom teaching process, so as to cause learners to have corresponding attitudes and feelings, and then help learners master the teaching materials, so that the psychological functions of learners can be played normally. This method is especially suit-

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able for students of all grades to deal with some difficult research problems, so that learners can get psychological feelings in the scene of life, thereby generating a strong desire to learn and their interest in learning being mobilized. In this way, the dull problems are easier to be accepted and mastered by learners.

2. Spoken English Teaching Strategies for the Introduction of the Situational Method to Middle School Spoken English Teaching

2.1 Transform Teaching Concepts and Introduce Situations in a Scientific Way

In China, English education is mainly confronted with the contradiction between the environment in which Chinese is frequently spoken and English learning^[1]. In the traditional educational concept, junior middle school English teachers do not emphasize students' oral communication ability. As the leader of classroom teaching, teachers completely dominate teaching contents and teaching mode. They teach only according to the syllabus. Besides, they ask students to strengthen English learning through rote memorization. In class, English teachers still adopt traditional Chinese teaching mode, which results in boring English classes. In addition, "mute English" is widely applied to junior middle school English teaching. Therefore, it's required that teachers change their teaching concepts and traditional teaching methods. English teachers should nurture a relaxing classroom atmosphere for students according to their personality characteristics, so as to make them feel the charm of English^[2].

English teachers should use the target language during teaching process to create a spoken English classroom atmosphere, which is also a prerequisite to conduct spoken English teaching. Meanwhile, teachers should fully take the laws of students' physical and mental development into consideration. Appropriate language during teaching should be employed according to students' development level. Teachers are required to observe their psychological reflections. They should constantly adjust the speech speed and communication methods through their reactions in the classroom. In this way, students are able to immerse themselves in English environment with full attention. The habit of speaking English in different situations can be gradually developed.

2.2 Make Good Use of Multimedia Technology for Communication Activities

With the wide application of multimedia technology to the junior middle spoken English teaching class, English teachers can make use of abundant and dynamic teaching courseware to create a teaching situation combining texts, pictures and videos for students. Abstract knowledge can be presented in various forms, both visually and graphically. It's easier for students to understand abstract knowledge and students' understanding of knowledge can be deepened.

For instance, when teaching section A of Unit 1 Where did you go on vacation, a passage in the PEP edition of Chinese textbooks for the eighth grade's students, the picture in 1a can be displayed in the courseware, and students are asked to form a group in two to have a dialogue according to the situation shown in the picture. In this process, students express themselves in English according to the picture through their own imagination, which making the original stiff book knowledge creative reproduction. It not only promotes the development of students' imagination and creativity, but also deepens their thinking and understanding of knowledge, ensuring the effectiveness of oral learning.

Besides, junior middle school students are prone to accept new things. They are interested in learning English through applications. Therefore, English teachers can adopt some relevant English learning apps to provide a good auxiliary spoken English teaching platform, such as Fun Dubbing, which is an English learning app for oral English learning. The biggest difference between Dubbing and other learning apps is that it adopts the form of dubbing^[3]. Middle school English teachers should select appropriate audio from the massive materials of Fun Dubbing according to the teaching needs so as to guide them through various exercises of follow-reading, simulation and dubbing. This learning method can not only arouse students interest in oral learning as well as enthusiasm for spoken English learning, but also can improve their pronunciation and intonation. The purpose of situational teaching will be achieved with the improvement of their spoken English.

2.3 Use Realia to Create Situations Flexibly

In the junior middle school spoken English teaching, teachers should flexibly create situations suitable for students' development and teaching needs based on the English learning progress and learning ability of the whole class^[4]. Due to the imbalance of individual development, the cognitive ability of junior middle school students differs from each other. English teachers need to guide students scientifically in the classroom teaching process to promote the further development of students' English logical thinking. Use realia for teaching, create situations and carry out activities. Using realia is an effective way to impart knowledge in the classroom since realia is intuitional and can help students better understand the classroom content. The ab-

stract knowledge can become concrete, visual through this method, which is conducive to the formation of perceptual knowledge and a clear concept. What's more, spoken English teaching can become more vivid and interesting.

For example, when teaching Unit 8 How do you make a banana milk shake, a passage in the PEP edition of Chinese textbooks for the eighth grade's students, teachers bring a variety of fruits and juicer to the classroom. First play the teaching courseware to show the procedure of making banana milkshakes, and then let students use the juicer and fruits to make banana milk shakes according to the steps. During the process, students are required to introduce the whole making process in English. The use of realia to creates situations close to students' lives, so that students can learn in a relaxing and pleasant environment, thus regarding spoken English learning as a pleasure. Their motivation and interest in spoken English can be enhanced accordingly, and the effect of classroom teaching can be guaranteed.

2.4 Carry out Game Teaching and Make Language Situations Interesting

Games are an effective way to boost vitality in the classroom^[5]. Junior middle school students still consider themselves primary school students. They are unable to adapt to the role of middle school students. Since students can learn through playing games, games should become a crucial part for teachers to apply the situational method to spoken English teaching.

For example, when teaching Unit 6 An old man tried to move the mountains, a passage in the PEP edition of Chinese textbooks for the eighth grade's students, teachers can divide students into several groups. They are allowed to freely choose their favorite fables or legends to arrange short plays, and then the short plays should be presented in the form of group performance. The lines should be expressed in English. Through such teaching form, teachers can give full play to students' interest in spoken English learning, thus promoting the improvement of students' oral ability in real situations.

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