



Analysis of the Application Path of Word Block Theory in College English Reading Teaching

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Abstract

Vocabulary is the foundation of language learning, and also an important part of college English teaching. Taking word blocks as the vocabulary unit of college English teaching is in line with the basic rules of cognition and learning characteristics of students in independent colleges. It is necessary to cultivate students' awareness of word blocks and make full use of the advantages of "integrity", "stability", "high frequency", and "application" of word blocks to improve students' comprehensive English application ability. In college English reading, the word block serves as a fixed or semi-fixed language structure, with both grammar and vocabulary characteristics. In view of the weak awareness of word blocks and word block foundation of college students, the in-term applied research of word block theory was carried out. Through the design and practice of "understanding of word blocks-discrimination of word blocks-application of word blocks", the application of word block theory was clarified.

Keywords

College English; Reading Teaching; Word Block Theory

In second language acquisition, reading is not only the main way of learners' language input but also an important means to expand their language ability. Its importance is self-evident. Reading still plays a vital role in college English teaching. Taking the CET-4 and CET-6 tests as an example, reading comprehension accounts for as much as 35%. Therefore, it is very important to strengthen the teaching of college English reading and improve students' reading efficiency.

In college English teaching, it is found that the status quo of English reading of some college students is still not optimistic. With weak speed-reading ability, low reading efficiency, weak vocabulary foundation, poor capturing of text information, solid reading thinking, and weak discourse consciousness. These problems not only affect the efficiency of students' daily English learning but also make it difficult for students to overcome the Cet-4 test.

The application of word blocks in college English reading teaching, which is a language phenomenon stored in the whole unit and in a fixed form, can not only improve students' memory and discourse comprehension efficiency but also conform to the language acquisition characteristics and cognitive laws of college students. Based on the importance of "word block" in students' English understanding, this paper takes college English and language teaching as an example to explore the application of word block theory in college English reading teaching.

1. Definition of the core concepts

1.1 Word block

The development of word block theory can be traced back to the field of cognitive psychology and linguistics. In 1956,

Miller first proposed the concept of "block" (unk). In 1976, Becker's concept of word block (lexical chunks) was proposed for the first time. He believes that a word block is a lexical unit with a relatively fixed structure and a high frequency in real communication, including idioms, phrases, fixed collocation, etc., For example: Polywords (aggregate word) "so long as"; Phrasal constraints (Restricted phrase) "the more... the more..."; Sentence builders (sentence pattern) "It is reported that...", wait a minute. According to Becker's classification, word blocks can be divided into words and phrases, collocation phrases, dominant expressions, sentence frames and quotations, etc. Based on the academic research on word block, this paper defines "word block" as a multi-word unit composed of two or more words, somewhere between words and sentences. Word blocks have the characteristics of integrity and relative fixation (Xu Xi, 2024).

1.2 Word block theory

Word block theory (Lexical Chunks) was first proposed by Becker in 1975; in 1993, English linguist Michael Lewis discussed the word block teaching method in detail in *The Lexical Approach*. According to the block theory, language is not composed of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but of multi-word prefabricated blocks. In the process of language application, the generation of sentences is not to weave a single vocabulary group through grammar, but to make the output of the language become more convenient and fluent through the prefabricated language blocks. In a sentence or text, a holistic block of words has its own meaning, rather than each word. For example, "take a break" means "have a rest" and "make a difference" means "influence and difference". These high-frequency use and matches with fixed word blocks are an important part of students' English vocabulary acquisition. In the field of linguistics and psychology, word block theory is that humans organize individual words into meaningful, highly identifiable units or "blocks" when processing linguistic information in order to process and remember information more efficiently.

2. Investigation on the use of word blocks in college students' English reading

2.1 The awareness and habit status of college students' word block use

As the saying goes: thought is the guide to action. In college English reading, students' awareness and habit of using word blocks will directly affect the final result. Through in-depth investigation and research, it is found that college students have weak awareness and poor habits of using word blocks in daily English learning and reading. For example, when asking students "whether they pay attention to fixed combinations and phrases in reading", most students choose "sometimes, rarely"; when asked "whether they pay attention to accumulate word blocks", most students say "rarely". By consulting students' notes, it is found that few students have special words; in discourse reading, students rarely annotate the keyword blocks. In English, the awareness of the word application is weak. It is precisely because of this weak awareness and habit of the use of word blocks, which affects the accumulation of college students' word blocks and the final improvement of comprehensive English literacy.

2.2 Current status of college students' word block application ability

Through the investigation and research, it is found that although they have entered the university, many students still do not master the correct vocabulary accumulation method, and rote memorization is still a common way for students. At the same time, the weak foundation of students' word block is still an objective problem. In order to have a more objective understanding of students' word blocks, I propose combined with 30 points in an English test. The test results showed that the average score of this question was 14.9 points, and a large number of students scored between 11 and 15 points. The specific problems are: the overall use of word blocks is not good, and it is difficult to identify the word blocks in the sentence. As a result, the focus still stays on the deliberation of individual words, and the error rate of the final word block is very high. In addition, not being familiar with the usage of word blocks and not knowing how to distinguish the meaning of words combined with context is also one of the main factors for the high error rate of students' word blocks (Li Ting, 2022).

2.3 Current situation of English reading for college students

In order to comprehensively and fully understand the status of college students' English reading, the English teaching process and the status of students' English reading is summarized as follows:

- (1) Weak speed-reading ability. Fast reading, namely fast reading, is the basic ability that college students should master in English reading in the new era. Especially in the college English tests of CET-4 and CET-6, students' speed reading ability will directly affect the final reading comprehension effect. Through the investigation on the status of

college students' English reading, it is found that many college students still have the habit of translating word by word in English reading. The weak speed-reading ability affects the improvement of students' reading quality.

- (2) Not strong reasoning ability. Chinese English Proficiency Scale puts forward clear requirements for college students' English reading ability, including: understanding common fixed expressions, understanding discourse features with the help of word blocks and syntax; being able to guess the meaning of new words; and mastering basic reading skills. Admittedly, new words occupy a considerable proportion of college English reading. This requires students to closely combine the meaning of new words and words in the discourse reading, and improve the reading efficiency. However, many college students have weak reasoning ability in English reading, especially in the aspect of guessing the meaning of new words in context, most college students are deficient, but in the English reading comprehension module, the understanding of the connotation of the text all depends on "meng", which eventually leads to the high error rate of answering questions (Wu Mi-Qin Huiqin, 2017).

3. Action Research on the application of word block theory in College English Reading

3.1 The first stage: the stage of word block recognition and habit cultivation

Science leads students to understand word blocks and develop the habit of learning and accumulating them, which is the key to the application of word block theory to college English reading. Therefore, in the action study, the 4-week period was used to strengthen the cultivation of students' habit of understanding speech blocks

3.1.1 Conduct special classes on English "word blocks"

In order to lead students to have a more comprehensive understanding of word blocks, a special class on English "word blocks" was held. The special class lasted 45 minutes each. In the way of combining theory and case, students introduced the definition, classification, and function of word blocks to students in detail. In order to stimulate students' interest in word block learning, the special course closely combines the content of college English teaching and integrates the word block and cases that students are familiar with, which not only enables students to have a more clear and objective understanding of the word block but also helps students to establish a correct view of word block learning (Li Shuang, 2020).

3.1.2 Guide students to the scientific accumulation method of word blocks

In English learning, the premise of word blocks lies in accumulation; the premise of efficient accumulation of word blocks lies in the use of correct methods. Therefore, in the first stage of the action research, the cultivation of students' word block accumulation methods and habits is strengthened. There are two main methods: one is the accumulation of word blocks in the notation reading. In English text reading, the use of the annotation reading method, with special signs to annotate important words, and blocks, helps to attract students' attention to important words, and helps students in the English reading, reviews the process, reviews the text. Establish a special word block accumulation book, used to record the key word blocks. In the process of word block accumulation, the organic integration of theory and case should be strengthened to help students grasp the connotation and usage of word block more flexibly and improve the efficiency of word block accumulation. Through the first 4-week period of action research in the first stage, it was found that students' awareness of word blocks was significantly enhanced, and they could fully and consciously pay attention to and accumulate word blocks in the textbook and foreign language reading, which laid a foundation for the follow-up action research.

3.2 The second stage: word block discrimination and reinforcement accumulation stage

As the saying goes: the foundation is not solid, the earth is shaking. In English education, all the innovations of teaching methods and contents need to be built on a solid English foundation for students. Therefore, the period of 6 weeks in the second round of action research was used to strengthen the cultivation of students' basic knowledge of word blocks.

3.2.1 Students should independently distinguish and accumulate word blocks

In this stage of learning, students need to learn to identify and distinguish word blocks, that is, meaningful and commonly used word combinations. This includes understanding the meaning of word blocks, using them correctly, and distinguishing them in a specific context. Students need to be able to identify the fixed collocation of word blocks, understand their grammatical structure, and grasp their applicability in different contexts. This stage emphasizes the discrimination and understanding of common phrases, idioms, fixed expressions, etc., laying a foundation for daily language use. And the learning and accumulation of word blocks is a long-term process, which will run through the students' English learning. Therefore, cultivating students' habits and ability to independently discriminate and accumulate word blocks is the top priority of the second round of action research. In order to better realize the educational goal of students' "independent

discrimination", the discrimination and accumulation of students' words are strengthened from the two perspectives of "in class" and "after class" respectively.

3.2.2 Teachers' systematic explanation

In English learning, students' understanding of the connotation of word blocks comes from independent learning on the one hand, and on the other hand from teachers' systematic explanation. The organic combination of strengthening independent learning and teachers' systematic explanation will help greatly improve the efficiency of students' word block learning and build a deep learning classroom. In order to help students deeply understand the word block, the teacher adopted the following ways in the process of systematic explanation:

Take discourse reading as the carrier, and strengthen the explanation of word blocks in the textbook discourse. In the process of systematic explanation, strengthen the organic integration of theory and case, which can not only achieve the purpose of deepening the understanding but also lay a foundation for the flexible application of students' word blocks (Li Shuang, 2020).

3.3 The third stage: the application stage of the word block

The use of word block is the starting point and foothold for teachers to strengthen the teaching of word block. In this action study, an 8-week special training was carried out for the use of word blocks. In the special training, the focus of teachers' teaching lies in: on the basis of independent discrimination and accumulation of word blocks, students can flexibly combine the context and analyze the inner and inner parts of word blocks, so as to improve the quality of students' discourse reading and effectively solve the translation problem of students' lack of vocabulary in discourse reading. This way of strengthening the use of word blocks with reading materials as the entry point helps students consolidate the foundation of word blocks while strengthening the output and improving their comprehensive English literacy. In addition to strengthening the use of students' word blocks in discourse reading, students are also required to pay attention to the use of some classic word blocks in college English writing and oral communication training, such as "in other words", "persist in", "in succession", "stand up for", which are all high-frequency word blocks that students can flexibly use in English writing and oral communication. At the same time, the use of word blocks can effectively improve the quality of students' language output, so that students' language expression to a new level.

4. Analysis of the application of word block theory in college English reading

Through the one-semester applied research of word block theory, combined with the results of pre-test and post-test, based on the observation and communication of students, the application of intensive word block theory in college English reading has a significant effect. The specific performance is shown in the following aspects:

- (1) Improve students' ability to identify word blocks. Before the study of word block theory, students generally have problems with weak awareness of word block. In the discourse reading, quite a number of students cannot even identify the word block in the discourse well. Through the semester of word block reinforcement, it is found that students have developed the consciousness and habit of distinguishing and paying attention to word blocks in discourse reading. Many students can naturally use the way of annotation, mark the word blocks in the text, and use reference books to check its connotation and usage. Overall, students' word block recognition ability has been significantly improved.
- (2) Promote the improvement of students' discourse reading ability. In discourse reading, vocabulary and grammar are the key elements to determine the students' reading quality. As a fixed or semi-fixed language structure, the word block has the characteristics of vocabulary and grammar. Through a semester of action research, students not only accumulated high-frequency word blocks in in-class discourse reading but also mastered some of the word blocks in extracurricular reading. This result effectively enhances students' semantic understanding of chapters and improves students' ability to read texts.

5. Conclusion

In view of the weak awareness and foundation of college students, the application of word block theory in college English reading teaching. Through the investigation and research, it is found that college students have problems of weak awareness of word blocks, lack of ability, and low English reading literacy. In view of the above problems, the action study of "understanding word block-distinguishing word block-operation, using word block" is constructed. Combined with the results of the pre-test and the post-test, the theory of clear word block in college English teaching has remarkable results. Therefore, under the new curriculum standard, college English teachers should strengthen the use of word blocks in discourse reading, so as to continuously improve students' comprehensive English literacy.

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