

Research on the Art of Elicitation Teaching in College English Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This paper expounds on the significant importance of the art of elicitation for the classroom teaching of college English and the cultivation of talents. By integrating the specific implementation of heuristic teaching with diverse innovative pedagogical approaches in college English classrooms, it endeavors to substantially enhance learning efficiency and foster the development of innovative talents.

KEYWORDS

The art of elicitation teaching; College English teaching; talent cultivation

Throughout the annals of history, across diverse cultures and civilizations, the philosophy and practical applications of the art of elicitation teaching have consistently commanded the attention of educators spanning multiple epochs.

The Chinese concept of "elicitation" in teaching finds its roots in the *Shuer* chapter of *The Analects of Confucius*. Confucius, one of China's most revered philosophers, articulated a nuanced understanding of heuristic teaching. When teaching students, one should not enlighten their thinking until they are eager to understand but cannot, and should not guide their expression until they want to speak but are unable to. If, after presenting a certain principle to inspire them, they are unable to automatically infer and comprehend the related principles in three other aspects, one should stop teaching them. The classic work on teaching theory, *Xueji* (Record of Learning), contains incisive discussions on the art of instructional inspiration. It proposes that excellent teachers always focus on inspiring and guiding students, enabling them to understand the truth. Teachers should guide and encourage students instead of restricting and forcing them, and inspire students rather than replacing them in reaching conclusions. It also advocates a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, where students can learn happily and think independently, which is known as being good at inspiring and guiding (Sun Juru, Chen Chunrong, 2006).

Internationally, the significance of inspiration in education has been recognized by luminaries in the field. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher-educator, employed dialogic and dialectical methods—using conversations and Socratic questioning—to enhance learning efficacy, empowering students to construct knowledge actively. Friedrich Adolph Wilhelm Diesterweg, a renowned German educational reformer, encapsulated the essence of teaching when he stated, "The art of education does not lie in imparting knowledge, but in awakening, motivating, and inspiring" (Shen longming, 2001). Diesterweg advocated for developmental teaching strategies, including inductive, analytical, regressive, and heuristic approaches, which prioritize stimulating students' intrinsic motivation. These methods aim to unlock learners' intellectual potential, enabling them to engage in inquiry, critical thinking, and self-discovery—a testament to the enduring relevance of the art of inspiration in educational practice.

1 Fundamental Criteria for the Art of Elicitation Teaching in College English Classrooms

In the dynamic landscape of college English education, a pivotal question emerges: how can educators effectively harness the art of inspiration within the classroom setting? What strategies can be employed to yield optimal teaching outcomes? And, more importantly, how can teachers nurture students' capacity for active thinking and the development of critical thinking skills? To address these queries comprehensively, it is imperative to first delve into the foundational theoretical tenets that underpin the art of inspirational classroom instruction.

1.1 Heuristic Thinking Should Become the Mainstream of the Art of Elicitation Teaching in College English Classrooms

The British educator Edward de Bono once remarked, "Education is about teaching people how to think." (Sun Juru, Chen Chunrong, 2006) Gu Mingyuan, a renowned Chinese educator, also stated that "the essence of education lies in cultivating thinking, and the classroom is the optimal place for developing thinking abilities." From these perspectives, it is evident that stimulating students' thinking should serve as the central theme and core of teachers' art of inspiring instruction.

1.1.1 Instill Thinking Methodologies

As the ancient proverb goes, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This timeless wisdom underscores the importance of equipping students with the right tools for learning, rather than simply providing them with ready-made answers. In college English classroom instruction, educators should resist the temptation to focus solely on disseminating fragmented bits of knowledge. Instead, they must prioritize the cultivation of cognitive strategies and analytical approaches, recognizing that these are the keys to unlocking students' intellectual potential. Effective inspiration in teaching hinges on students' mastery of scientific thinking frameworks and comprehension techniques. Only when learners internalize these methodologies can educators' efforts to stimulate critical thinking yield sustainable results. In the context of English language acquisition, whether students are engaged in reading comprehension, listening exercises, writing tasks, or translation work, a diverse range of cognitive strategies come into play. For instance, in reading, techniques such as skimming, scanning, and inferential thinking enable students to process information more efficiently; in writing, structuring arguments logically and organizing thoughts coherently are essential skills. Once these methods are mastered by students, it will significantly improve their learning efficiency, enhance the scientific nature of their thinking, enable students to more effectively understand, consolidate, and apply the knowledge they have learned, and improve their initiative and creativity in learning.

1.1.2 Fostering Robust Thinking Qualities in Students

Individuals proficient in critical thinking are characterized by well - developed thinking qualities. In the educational process, teachers should proactively guide students to engage in self - motivated exploration and learning. By nurturing traits such as independence, breadth, depth, quick - wittedness, flexibility, and critical acumen in students' thinking, educators can facilitate the maturation of their cognitive processes. Equally important is the enhancement of students' language proficiency. Language acts as the very medium through which thoughts are formed and communicated. Linguistic thinking empowers students to deliberate independently, articulate their ideas with clarity, and comprehend diverse perspectives. Without a rich vocabulary and strong language skills, even the most vivid mental imagery remains trapped, much like dumplings in a sealed teapot, unable to be effectively expressed. Thus, to elevate thinking capabilities and cultivate refined thinking qualities, the cultivation of language proficiency is indispensable.

1.1.3 It is necessary to achieve the goal of developing students' thinking abilities

Teachers should stimulate students' thinking so that all types of their thinking abilities can be developed as they should be, with a particular focus on taking the development of students' creative thinking abilities as the core. Creative thinking is a form of thinking that actively and uniquely discovers new things, puts forward new insights, and solves new problems. The cultivation and development of students' creative thinking abilities will help them make greater creations in the future.

As a discipline for cultivating students' language abilities, College English requires teachers to pay earnest attention to heuristic teaching in daily classes. In this way, during the continuous process of English learning, students' social cognitive abilities can be enhanced, their awareness of cross-cultural communication and multi-disciplinary knowledge can be cultivated, their language and humanistic qualities can be improved, their analytical, critical thinking, and innovative abilities can be strengthened, their language application abilities can be enhanced, and their abilities to think and solve problems can be improved.

1.2 Effective Means of Heuristic Thinking through Problematic Teaching

Create problem scenarios to activate students' interest in thinking. Questions mark the beginning of human thinking activities, and doubts are the first step to trigger thinking. Practice has proven that doubts, contradictions, and problems are the starting points for stimulating thinking. When students' curiosity for knowledge shifts from a latent state to an active one, it can effectively mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of students' thinking, serving as the key to unlocking students' thinking functions.

Teachers should set problem situations to stimulate students' enthusiasm for actively exploring problems, enabling students to think actively with curiosity and pleasure, and to explore and reason. Given the important role of teachers' questions in classroom interaction, teachers can adopt the perspective and methods of systemic functional linguistics to accurately and specifically describe the language features of question interaction at the three levels of grammar, semantics, and context.

This is conducive to improving the rationality and efficiency of teachers' language expressions when asking questions, and helps to activate students' interest in thinking during language learning.

1.3 Teachers Need to Grasp the Key Points of Heuristic Thinking in Classroom Teaching

Whether English teachers can effectively implement the inspiration of thinking in college English classrooms depends on whether they truly master and flexibly apply the "touchstone" of inspiring thinking. Firstly, to inspire thinking, teachers need to accurately grasp the teaching opportunities and touch students' hearts at the best breakthrough points to spark the wisdom of students. At the same time, the depth of the inspiring questions should be moderate, the speed should be appropriate, the scope should be suitable, and the quantity should be proper. Appropriately inspiring students to think actively can raise students' thinking to the level of the "zone of proximal development". Secondly, it is necessary to respect the individual differences of students. Before entering universities, although students have endured ten years of hard study, each student's personality traits, knowledge structure, and thinking types are different. This determines that the key and difficult points, as well as the methods of inspiring thinking, must be tailored to each student. Pursuing this individuality is the key measure to closely combine classroom teaching with teaching according to students' aptitudes and enhance its pertinence. Meanwhile, teachers should follow students' cognitive laws and proceed step by step. The development of students' thinking usually progresses from the concrete to the abstract, from the individual to the general, and from the simple to the complex. In heuristic teaching, teachers should guide students in accordance with this order to make students' classroom thinking activities rhythmic and logical. Thirdly, pay attention to strengthening students' feedback information. When using various channels and means to inspire students' thinking, teachers should pay attention to receiving feedback information from students and make timely corresponding control and adjustment to achieve the best results in the art of inspiring thinking. For example, promptly capture students' accurate feedback information, make timely and accurate evaluations, strengthen students' thinking operations, and mobilize the enthusiasm of students' classroom thinking. When teachers praise and approve, students' thinking activity patterns are positively reinforced, which will directly affect the continuation or change of students' thinking patterns, enabling the art of inspiring thinking to effectively penetrate into the depths of students' hearts.

1.4 Cultivate Students to Become the Subjects of Classroom Thinking Activities

Students' classroom thinking activities are related to the cultivation of their abilities to think independently and study autonomously, and are directly related to the cultivation of innovative talents. Teachers need to enable students to directly experience the joy of classroom thinking labor, thereby cultivating students' interest in thinking. In the thinking process, the suspense of doubts, rigorous logical reasoning, the curiosity to explore the unknown, and the sudden enlightenment can all allow students to enjoy the happiness of participating in creation and the emotional experience of pleasure and excitement. This undoubtedly provides students with the driving force for progress, prompting students to think more and ask more "whys", and improving their comprehensive abilities in the process of questioning and exploration. Teachers can make use of a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of students' thinking process, master the basic laws of thinking movement, help students smoothly carry out thinking training, and experience the joy of learning. By exploring college English teaching methods, such as communicative teaching methods, task-based teaching methods, flipped classrooms, etc., teachers can truly enable students to become the subjects of classroom thinking activities, and give students more initiative in thinking and opportunities to independently discover and solve problems. Students are at the center of classroom teaching and are the masters of classroom thinking activities, while teachers are more often the organizers, managers, encouragers, participants, evaluators, analyzers of students' needs, and providers of suggestions in the classroom. Fundamentally speaking, if students' right to think independently is deprived, the so-called "inspiring thinking" by teachers will lose its significance.

2 The Combination of Innovative Teaching Methods and Elicitation Teaching in College English Classrooms

Many pioneering teachers have either created or successfully practiced various arts of inspiring thinking in teaching practice. These arts explain profound theories in simple terms, have a unique style, simplify complex content, and are vivid and interesting. They can suddenly enlighten students and make their learning more efficient.

2.1 The Inspirational Art of the Brainstorming Method

The brainstorming method (Brain Storming, BS method), also known as the intellectual stimulation method or free-thinking method (Wang Guoping, Yan Li, 2006), is a method of stimulating thinking first proposed by American creative scientist A.F. Osborne in 1939 and officially published in 1953. This method stimulates the creativity and critical spirit of group decision-making. When applied to the teaching of vocabulary, reading, and speaking in college English, it can

inspire students' thinking and improve the quality of teaching. For example, in English vocabulary learning, classification methods such as synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms, and words of the same theme can be adopted. Students with different knowledge backgrounds and majors are encouraged to participate. In groups of five to ten people, they conduct brainstorming, list relevant words, and learn them. This gets rid of the single rote memorization method of vocabulary learning, greatly improves students' vocabulary learning efficiency, and achieves twice the result with half the effort. In English reading, discussions on the theme of the article often use brainstorming. Students are required to make associations, pool their wisdom, express their opinions fully, give full play to their language expression ability, and at the same time, be good at summarizing, analyzing, and judging, and exploring the main idea of the article, the author's intention, and the social significance and value influence (Zhao Shuyan, Zhang Yanxia, 2008). Similarly, in oral English teaching, students are required to conduct brainstorming on relevant topics before oral practice, try to list words, phrases, collocations, or sentence patterns that co-occur in the same semantic field under the same theme, providing rich language materials that may be used in oral practice. Just as many hands make light work, every participant can draw on the experience of others and be inspired. They can not only learn knowledge efficiently but also enjoy the fun of learning.

2.2 The Inspirational Art in Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is an expression of radiating thinking. It uses various graphic techniques to structure related knowledge through association and connection, achieving efficient acquisition, storage, and extraction of knowledge. As an inspiring teaching tool, mind mapping can be directly applied to vocabulary teaching, reading comprehension analysis, and writing idea generation in college English classrooms (Wu Yanping, 2022). It can be used for the learning and organization of various knowledge and becomes a powerful learning tool to inspire students' thinking. At the same time, the various presentation methods of classroom teaching content can effectively stimulate students' learning interest and improve their learning ability. Mind mapping has a very significant effect on reading teaching in college English classrooms. Teachers use questions to inspire students to pay attention to the semantic and logical connections between sentences and paragraphs in the text, so as to have a more intuitive and comprehensive grasp of the article, quickly clarify the main idea of the article, the writing intention, and the deep meaning. According to the logical connections between the contents on the mind map, teachers put forward various questions to inspire students' thinking, stimulate students' reading interest, and promote active reading. At the same time, teachers effectively put forward questions and present vocabulary. Through the internal connections between questions, they help students build a complete vocabulary circle, achieve vocabulary accumulation, present the entire vocabulary circle in the form of a mind map, and conduct article analysis. Teachers use mind mapping to inspire students, enabling them to quickly skim through the full text, grasp the general idea of the article, simplify complex content, help students understand the content of the article more deeply, and conduct sufficient associations around the theme, think divergently, and systematically classify and store knowledge related to the theme. In addition, in college English writing teaching, teachers can use mind mapping as an outline to mobilize students' relevant knowledge, open up their thinking, inspire students' divergent thinking, help students comprehensively use fragmented knowledge, improve their thinking ability, language organization ability, and creativity, solidify the structure of writing, and promote communication and sharing between teachers and students as well as among students, giving full play to students' subjective initiative.

2.3 The Inspirational Art in the Project-based Learning Teaching Model

As a student-centered and problem-oriented teaching method, project-based teaching constructs an environment for students. Students form their own teams and need to solve an open-ended problem in this environment. The learning process does not focus on students solving a problem through a certain established plan but emphasizes the skills demonstrated and the abilities cultivated by students in the process of trying to solve the problem. This process endows learners with the ability to deal with unknown challenges and reflects students' comprehensive abilities (Wang Jianfeng, Shen Yuedi, Sun Heping, 2012). When the concept of project-based teaching is applied to college English classroom teaching, teaching content is designed as projects. Teachers first need to have a clear understanding of the teaching syllabus, teaching objectives, teaching content, and the themes of each unit. In the link of project topic selection, they act as instructors for students. Teachers can use various means such as case background inspiration, analogy inspiration, intuitive demonstration, question guidance, and graphic inspiration to ensure that students' project topics meet the requirements of the course and have research value and practical significance. They can reasonably guide students to understand the internal relationships and logical structures among projects, sub-projects, and various tasks. For example, in college English classroom teaching, the common theme of three related texts in a certain unit can be taken as a thematic learning project. Teachers can introduce the author's background or tell anecdotes of celebrities to inspire students to understand the author's life and thoughts. They can use pictures and video materials related to the theme to inspire students, guide students to organize and summarize relevant thematic materials and information, discuss,

negotiate, and explore questions, improve their understanding and application abilities, and develop innovative ideas.

3 Conclusion

Today, with the development of Internet information, students no longer obtain knowledge only through the single channel of teachers' lectures. The responsibility of teachers is not only to impart knowledge and answer questions but, more importantly, to stimulate students' learning initiative, internal drive, and creativity and awaken their enthusiasm for learning. Teachers are the organizers, designers, and inspirers of classroom teaching and the collaborators of students' learning. The art of teaching inspiration enables teachers to fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning, follow the objective laws of teaching, and with superb skills, timely and skillfully inspire and guide students' learning activities, helping them learn to think with their brains and express themselves in language. They can develop vividly, happily, and easily. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to integrate the art of inspiration into classroom teaching. It is directly related to whether teaching effects can be achieved efficiently and whether students with high qualities and innovative spirits can be truly cultivated.

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