

Exploring English Vocabulary Teaching Strategies from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization, English, as a major media tool for international communication, has become increasingly important in today's life. However, vocabulary has always been the focus of teachers' and students' attention in English teaching. Vocabulary is the cornerstone of the language system and occupies a central position in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English learning. This study addresses the challenges of the existing English vocabulary teaching by adopting three major theories of cognitive linguistics, and proposing the Layer and Teaching, Multiple Meaning Network Constructs, and Imagery Pictorial Memory Models, and verifying their effectiveness through a teaching experiments to verify their effectiveness.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive Linguistics; English Vocabulary Teaching; Categorization; Metaphor; Imagery Schema

1 Introduction

1.1 The Importance of English Vocabulary Teaching

English vocabulary, including words, phrases, idioms and so on, is the basic unit of the English language, as David A. Wilkins said in *Linguistics in Language Teaching* (1972), "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed."^[1] The Ministry of Education of China emphasizes the importance of English vocabulary learning in the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition), which clearly points out that vocabulary is an important part of linguistic knowledge, and an important foundation for the development of language skills. and an important foundation for the development of language skills. Therefore, vocabulary is particularly important and is the foundation of English teaching and learning. However, in the current traditional English vocabulary teaching, teachers usually adopt the direct teaching method, focusing on vocabulary memorization and repetitive practice, which not only leads to low learning efficiency, but also leads to the inability of students to flexibly use the words they have learned.

1.2 Analysis of the Current Situation of English Vocabulary Teaching

In the process of exploring English vocabulary teaching strategies from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, scholars note that domestic and foreign researchers have conducted in-depth discussions from multiple perspectives. Li Xing (2019) and Pu Jie (2018) have elaborated on various aspects of cognitive linguistics, such as the theory of categorization, the theory of prototypes, and the theory of conceptual metaphors^[2-3]. Ding Tao (2020) and He Gaoyan (2020) elaborated on the difference and connection between cognitive linguistics and English vocabulary teaching, and there are two main teaching methods, one of which is based on the prototypical category theory, and the other is based on the conceptual metaphor and prototypical category theory^[4-5]. Wang Huijing, Dong Jun, and Su Fang (2011), on the other hand, explored its application in English vocabulary teaching from the perspective of the experiential view in cognitive linguistics, including the establishment of vocabulary boards according to word categories and the use of word formation to teach, as well as the use of metaphorical metaphors cognitive modeling to help students deduce the marginal word meanings of more known words^[6]. Fawzi Makni (2014) suggested that the cognitive linguistic model of image schema (ISBM) into vocabulary teaching to dissolve the limitations caused by traditional teaching methods^[7].

1.3 Innovation and Exploration of Cognitive Linguistics in English Vocabulary Teaching

This study focuses on the three core areas of cognitive linguistics, namely, categorization theory, metaphor theory and pictorial theory, and explores their application and practice in English vocabulary teaching, aiming to shift the focus from traditional teaching methods and techniques to the key issue of how to optimize vocabulary teaching through the cognitive process. Through the construction of "cognitive-driven" vocabulary teaching system, the cognitive potential of students can be fully explored, and students' intrinsic learning motivation can be activated, so as to promote the development of English vocabulary teaching in the direction of being more scientific and efficient and to inject new vitality and motivation into the cause of English education, so that the efficiency of vocabulary teaching and the students'

communicative application of English can be significantly improved. The efficiency of vocabulary teaching and students' English communicative application ability will be significantly improved.

2 Pedagogical Translation of Cognitive Linguistic Theory

2.1 Vocabulary Hierarchy Teaching Guided by the Categorization Theory

The theory of categorization holds that human beings categorize things with similarities as a way to know and understand the world. Categorization is an important research of cognitive linguists, and the process of language learning is autonomous, a process in which learners actively explore the language. In English vocabulary teaching, the vocabulary hierarchy can be constructed according to the semantic categories and grammatical categories of vocabulary. Semantic category refers to the classification of vocabulary according to the meaning it expresses, such as "color", "car", "book" and so on. The grammatical category deals with the lexical and grammatical aspects of vocabulary, such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. By categorizing and organizing different types of vocabulary, it can help students better understand and memorize vocabulary.

Teachers can divide the vocabulary level into three steps: introduction of core vocabulary, expansion of marginal vocabulary and display of vocabulary level. Taking "fruit" as an example, teachers can first show apples, bananas, oranges and other fruits through pictures, objects or multimedia, and then introduce the corresponding English vocabulary words "apple", "banana" and "orange". Then the corresponding English words "apple", "banana" and "orange" can be introduced. When introducing these core vocabulary words, the pronunciation, spelling and basic meaning can be combined, so that students can initially understand and recognize these vocabulary words. On the basis of the students' mastery of the core vocabulary, the teacher will gradually expand the vocabulary to other marginal vocabulary. For example, pictures of strawberries, pineapples, grapefruits and other fruits are displayed, and students are told the corresponding English words "strawberry", "pineapple", "grapefruit". When introducing the marginal vocabulary, they can compare it with the core vocabulary and point out the similarities and differences between the two, so as to help the students to have a better understanding of these vocabulary and differentiate them. Teachers can also use mind maps and tables to visualize the vocabulary hierarchy. In the case of "fruit".

2.2 Metaphor Theory-Driven Multi-Sense Network Construction

As an important branch of cognitive linguistics, metaphor theory profoundly reveals that metaphor is not only a rhetorical device of language, but also a core cognitive mechanism for human beings to understand abstract concepts and construct knowledge systems through cross-domain mapping (from concrete to abstract domains). Abstract concepts are often understood and expressed through concrete metaphors that are closely related to bodily experience, and this mapping relationship runs through the process of language production and comprehension. In English vocabulary, a large number of words are rich in metaphors, which provide key clues and cognitive bridges for students to understand the multiple meanings of words. For example, the source domain of the word "light" is the intuitive "physical light", while the target domain covers abstract concepts such as "easy, effortless". Through this cross-domain mapping relationship, students can deeply understand the multiple meanings of "light" in different contexts and thus grasp its usage more comprehensively.

In the actual teaching process, teachers can use the following diversified strategies to help students construct polysemous word networks and improve their understanding of vocabulary polysemy. First of all, visualization tools such as mind maps can be used to present vocabulary items in the form of nodes, and the metaphorical mapping relationship between them can be clearly marked with lines. Taking "head" as an example, teachers can take "head" as the center node, which leads to "leader", "chief", "head" and other nodes of different meanings, and the path of association between them is marked out with a line. In order to make students visualize the extension and conversion between the meanings of the words, students are guided to systematically sort out the different metaphors of different metaphorical items in the vocabulary and analyze their similarities and differences in depth. For example, on the polysemous network of "head", students can find that "leader" and "chief" are both intrinsically related to the basic meaning of "head". However, in specific contexts, students can grasp the nuances of vocabulary through this comparative analysis. Finally, by analyzing the actual usage of "head" in different contexts, students will be helped to further understand the multiple meanings of the word.

2.3 Imagery Schema-Enabled Vocabulary Memory Modeling

As a core concept of cognitive linguistics, imagery schema refers to the dynamic mental structure formed by human beings through physical experience and cognitive activities, which plays a key role in organizing abstract concepts,

understanding cognitive experiences, analyzing metaphors, constructing categories, and understanding concepts. Imagery schema is characterized by dynamism and abstraction, which can profoundly influence the process of vocabulary memorization and extraction, providing theoretical support for vocabulary memorization at the level of cognitive psychology. Associating vocabulary with specific imagery schemas can make full use of the human cognitive processing mechanism to optimize the storage of vocabulary in the brain, thus enhancing the effect of vocabulary memorization and improving the accuracy and durability of memory. For example, "bridge" is closely related to the connection imagery schema and "house" is related to the container imagery schema, and this kind of association based on imagery schema can help students memorize vocabulary spelling, pronunciation and semantics more efficiently, so that vocabulary learning can be transformed from mechanical memorization to meaningful Memorization. This imagery-based association can help students memorize the spelling, pronunciation and semantics of vocabulary more efficiently, and make vocabulary learning change from mechanical memory to meaningful memory learning direction.

Teachers can instruct students to use this memory mode in their teaching practice to improve their learning effect by following several steps for vocabulary learning. First, create a situation related to schema, through pictures, objects or multimedia to make students' schema activated. Then, the imagery schema is used to encode the vocabulary information in depth and integrate it. For example, when teachers teach "bridge", they can combine the spelling (bridge), pronunciation (/brɪdʒ/) and semantics (architectural structure connecting two places) of the word "bridge" with the connective imagery schema. The close combination of multidimensional information helps students memorize the vocabulary more comprehensively and deeply, so that the sound, shape and meaning of the vocabulary form an organic whole in students' minds. Then, students are allowed to deepen their memorization of vocabulary through various forms of activities, such as vocabulary exercises and reading comprehension, so that the vocabulary is used repeatedly. For example, students can complete vocabulary fill-in-the-blank exercises, such as "The ___ over the river is very old." (Answer: bridge) or reading comprehension training, through different contexts to strengthen the memory of the word "bridge". Finally, through oral expression, writing and other output activities, students can flexibly use the vocabulary in real contexts, so as to improve their ability to use the vocabulary. For example, students can use the word "bridge" to write a short essay describing the role and significance of bridges in life, and they can also have a group discussion to share the most meaningful bridges in their mind, so as to deepen their understanding and memorization of vocabulary in the process from input to output, and to achieve a complete closed-loop to improve students' ability to use language in a comprehensive way, so as to improve students' ability to use language. The ability to utilize the language can be improved, so as to achieve the purpose of improving the students' comprehensive language application ability.

3 Conclusion

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this study constructs a "cognitively driven" vocabulary teaching system, based on the theories of categorization, metaphor and imagery schema, to address the challenges of English vocabulary teaching. Scoping takes the core prototypical vocabulary extending to the peripheral vocabulary as the anchor point, and establishes a hierarchical structure that helps to organize vocabulary in a systematic way; metaphor theory deepens the understanding of abstract meanings of vocabulary and enhances the flexibility of semantics through cross-domain mapping of multi-semantic networks; and imagery schema theory associates vocabulary with concrete experiences by strengthening memory encoding. However, facing the challenges of graphic material design and insufficient sample size, dynamic graphic visualization digital tools or longitudinal experiments for assessing the effect of prolonged memory can be explored in the future to provide theoretical support for the construction of a cognitively oriented model of English vocabulary teaching.

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