



A Study of ECL-Based Vocational English Reading Teaching

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Abstract. Embodied-Cognitive Linguistics (ECL) signifies the development of cognitive linguistics in China. To most college students, vocabulary and grammar are formidable challenges, which makes English reading class more difficult. Most college students just learn English by rote learning. This paper made a research on vocational English reading class teaching from the aspect of embodied-cognitive linguistics. According to Embodied cognitive linguistics, English learning is experiential and cognitive. Instead of intensive memorization, students understand reading material based on their experience of information and cognitive processing of the learning materials. Hence, a highly effective English class should stimulate students' perceptual experience by multi-modal ways. English learning is a process for students to change from concrete perception to abstract meaning construction, which is also typical of embodied-cognitive linguistics. In vocational English reading class, students cognize English based on reality and experience, the teacher guides students to focus on the rationale of language use and grasp higher level of thinking. Vocational English reading class based on embodied-cognitive linguistics provides a practical reference to the development of college English teaching.

Keywords: Multi-modal, Embodied Cognitive Linguistics(ECL), vocational English reading teaching

1 Introduction

The “Outline of the Plan for Building China into a Leading Country in Education (2024–2035)” pointed out that with the emerging of digital education, information technology is integrated with teaching^[4]. English teaching in vocational college should not only make students grasp practical English language skills as a tool but also improve students' cognitive process, way of thinking and multi-literacy such as communicative competence in intelligent age. More and more scholars have realized the importance of English learners' cognitive and internalizing process. Hence, embodied-cognitive linguistics could provide more profound insights into English teaching nowadays.

2 Theoretical principles of Embodied Cognitive Linguistics (ECL)

American linguist Lakoff and philosopher Johnson, as the core founder of cognitive linguistics, are affected by embodied philosophy. They propose three basic principles of experiential philosophy in language learning: the experiential nature of the mind, the unconscious nature of cognition and the metaphorical nature of thought^[2]. Influenced by cognitive linguistics and based on Marxist-Lennist dialectical materialism and Chinese body philosophy, Chinese scholar Wang Yin puts forward embodied-cognitive linguistics (ELC)^[7]. Embodied-cognitive linguistics (ECL) is the extension of cognitive linguistics in China^[8]. It stresses the interactive experience between the mind and language^[7]. According to cognitive linguistics, the socio-cultural context and cognitive diversity are closely related with extended cultural experience. The experiential and practical nature of language is typical of ELC.

The foundation of ECL is experiential philosophy. In language learning, the experiential nature of the mind signifies that meanings are formed through experience, perception rather than abstract symbols; the unconscious nature of cognition indicates that people understand language by relying on unconscious cognitive activities and procedures, such as visual processing, auditory processing and language comprehension, etc.. The metaphorical nature of thought implies people construct abstract concepts and reasoning by using understandable and embodied experiences. Embodiment is the foundation; cognition is the mental approach; language is the externalization of both embodiment and cognition^[7].

3 Practice of Embodied-Cognitive Teaching in College English Class

3.1 The Relationships between Multi-modality and Embodied-Cognitive Teaching

Professor Zhao Xiufeng and Wu Yuxin revealing its theoretical convergence and practical complementarity with embodied cognitive linguistics^[10]. In the year of 1994, a group of linguistics known as “the New London Group” put forward the concept of multimodality which means besides language, there are many other semiotic resources as well as media such as image, audio, gesture, video, etc. Through the coordination of different media, meaning can be conveyed vividly. Mode is an abstract language semiotic symbols. According to Zhang Delu, there are five major modes: that is, linguistic mode, audio mode, visual mode, spatial mode, and gesture mode. The synergy among them is multimodal^[9]. Actually, nowadays multi-modal teaching is very popular in English class. Both teachers and students make use of different modes such as video, audio, etc. in English class. Multi-modality stresses language’s function in social environment. In an era of artificial intelligence, the teacher makes full use of different media

including language media and enhance students' more active participation in language learning. Hence multi-modality help stimulate real-world scenes and facilitate experiential interaction for students in English learning process, which is in line with the features of embodied-cognitive teaching. As embodied-cognitive linguistics focus on experiential and cognitive features of language. In a word, multi-modality plays a positive role in embodied-cognitive teaching. What's more, throughout the whole complete process of ECL-based English teaching class, students are expected to improve their multi-literacy besides language skills.

3.2 Teaching Practice based on Embodied-cognitive Linguistics

Embodied-cognitive English class focuses on students' experience and cognition of the language. Since the Ministry of Education has required multicultural exchange as one of the core competencies of English for Vocational students in the "Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education"(Version of 2021) ^[5]. One of the ultimate teaching goals for vocational English teaching is to improve students cross-cultural communication awareness and ability. Most college English coursebooks are designed in accordance with common topics in daily life, which build a platform for both students and teacher to carry out embodied cognitive teaching. A successful ECL English class should be "student centered" from before-class preview to the very end of after-class assignment. There are three related stages throughout the whole class, they are before-class preview, in-class interaction and after-class output, which is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Teaching Model based on Embodied-cognitive Linguistics

Input		output
Before-class	in-class	after-class
preview	Cognition & integration	language and non-language output
Engaging students sensory system	Enhance students experience with outside world. Interaction	Deepen the connections between learning material and outside world.
Perceptual knowledge	internalization	Rational knowledge and multi-literacy improvement

In order to illustrate ECL-based teaching procedure, we hereby take the text *While the auto waits* as an example. It is the reading section of Unit One, Book One in the coursebook New Generation English. The text is adapted from O.Henry's short story of the same name.

Before-class Preview.

Langacker insisted that Foreign language teaching should use authentic learning materials^[3]. At before-class stage and with the help of different media like video, social media, etc., the teacher presents some reading materials related to the topic of the class

and lays experience foundation for the class, which stimulate students to make a preview. For example, before this reading class, students are required to watch a movie named *O'Henry's Full House* before the class and think about the following questions:

1. What other stories written by O.Henry did you read before?
2. Read this story and find O.Henry's writing features. (unexpected ending, ordinary people-oriented, etc)
3. Words also inflect class differences and social distinctions, for example chauffeur and driver, can you tell the differences between them and what are other similar words or phrases in the story do you know?

The above questions push students to do some research on O.Henry's short stories, including *While the auto waits*. Besides unexpected ending and interesting plot make students try to understand the whole story in advance. Most students are very familiar with O.Henry's short story, such as *the Last Leaf*, *the Gift of the Magi* as they are included in primary school Chinese textbook. Students are motivated to preview the whole story, including new words and phrases. Besides, they are allowed to use Internet or other tools to preview this text like looking up the dictionary or surfing on the Internet about O.Henry's life introduction, etc. Multi-media makes English learning class more interesting. Starting from the students' interest and previous experiences will be beneficial for students' preview.

In-class Integration.

The teacher acts as a guide of the whole class. After students discuss and answer the above questions, the teacher can show students two pictures (Fig.1.) and asks students to describe them in English.

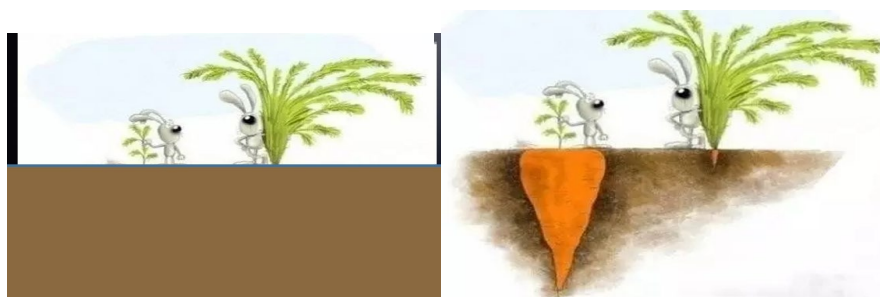


Fig. 1. Is the appearance deceiving?

http://www.360doc.com/content/17/0529/15/35804869_658228714.shtml

The above two pictures function as an incentive to students' perceptual system. Language is just a tool and one of the modes (comparing with non-language modes) as well. Students are inspired to express their understanding of the pictures. According to ECL, the teacher should try to make teaching materials more closely related to students' daily life experience. Hence, the question of "Is the appearance deceiving?" is the entry point to begin the class. The teacher gives many similar examples in daily life like "if

someone shares luxurious life on social media, does it really mean that he or she is really rich?” When students discuss such topics, they integrate their life experience with language skills, and make English productive, and thus use English to express their ideas and ways of thinking. Teachers activate students’ perceptual system through familiar experience or circumstances and create productive language learning environment of their own.

When actually comes to the text learning, students are asked to read the story in groups and complete the table in Figure.2. Then the teacher asks each group to give the answers and checks these answers in Figure. 3. With the help of both teacher and group members, each student summarizes the language points on his own and learns the whole story. New words learning is also related to the main characters and structure of the story. The understanding of the whole text is a process of internalization of English language. Moreover, it’s important that the ECL-based teaching class enhances students to improve their own knowledge system including both new language points and critical thinking. Students realize that you shouldn’t judge someone by his appearance.

Main Idea:

	The Girl	The Man
Appearance		
What is she/he saying		
What does she/he do afterwards		

Fig. 2. Structure of the text

Main Idea: Don't judge people by his appearance.		
	The Girl	The Man
Appearance	Look beautiful and rich. Be in gray; wear a veil.	 Look like an ordinary man.
What is she/he saying	I am tired of jewels, parties and expensive champagne. Artists want to paint my portrait; the chauffeur is waiting for me.	 I work in that restaurant over there.
What does she/he do afterwards	She walked past the car, across the street, then into the restaurant; she took a red-haired girl's place as a cashier.	He crossed the street and got into the white car and went to the club.

Fig. 3. Expected answers after class discussion

According to ECL, language is the product of evolution in the process of interacting with the real world^[6]. It's a cognitive processing that reflects culture, social status differences. Embodiment Cognitive Linguistics advocates students-centered mode and language teaching is based on practical language use in real life. Some new words in the text are the integration of language and culture and reflect the speaker's social status. To take the word "chauffeur" as an example. The word chauffeur is a word from French, which means "someone whose job is to drive for someone else."^[1] Obviously, driver just implies "Someone who drives a car". Hence, the sentence "My chauffeur is waiting" signifies that the girl meant to show off her superior social status in front of the man, similar words cited in the text such as "paint my portrait". All in all, an awareness of cultural contexts and social stratification, gained through real-life experiences, facilitates a deeper comprehension of specific vocabulary usage and meaning.

After-class Output.

After class assignments is the feedback of the students' language skills and information processing. Besides it reflects students' cognitive development. After-class output includes language output and non-language output.

After learning the text, students are usually required to complete some assignments about reading comprehension, the usage of the words and phrases and grammar, which can best test students' understanding or perception of the text. However, in ECL-based teaching class, students' language output is not just retelling the story or simply checking the answers of related exercises. Students can make some suggestions or give some opinions about the learning materials in relation to their life experiences and social status. For instance, after learning O.Henry's *While the Auto waits*, students can have a debate about the girl's behavior in the story. Also they are allowed to discuss the whole story or similar circumstance in real life: Is it possible for someone to show off one's life on social media out of vanity? Language is the best reflection of one's life experience and thinking mode. When English becomes a useful tool for vocational students to express their attitude towards the life or outside world, they are motivated to learn it better.

As to non-language output, a drama performance adapted from the text they have learned can better internalize the language knowledge, and with the help of various modes such as gesture, pictures, costumes, etc., the performance further enhances students' cultural connotation and improve their critical thinking abilities.

4 Conclusion

Embodied-cognitive language teaching has become a popular trend in foreign language teaching. It focuses on the experiential and cognitive nature of the language. As Wang Yin mentioned there are three layers, that is, experience layer, cognition layer and language layer. Experience or embodiment is the foundation, language is acquired through our interaction between human and reality. Through the stage of cognition, teachers guide students to find the language rules and explore the rational behind the language

and grammar. Meaning is the result of cognitive processing. Also language is the external manifestation of both reality and cognition. Grounded in experience and reality, an Embodied-Cognitive Linguistics-based (ECL-based) pedagogical approach could stimulate students' interest in English learning and highlight their abstract thinking mode. It encourages learners to utilize English as a tool to explore the intricate relationships between their own cognition and reality, thereby providing practical guidance for the reform of vocational English teaching.

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