

A New Approach to Teach College English Reading

—The Application of Task-based Language Teaching

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Abstract—This paper points out the deficiencies of the former reading teaching models and thus introduce a new approach, that is, apply the task-based language teaching to reading teaching. It presents a general view of this method and shows how it is applied to reading class. Finally, it puts forward some suggestions in the process of the application of this new approach.

Keywords—reading teaching, task-based language teaching

I INTRODUCTION

In college English teaching, develop the learners' reading comprehension ability is a basic content. As well as we have noticed, reading comprehension is inseparable in all kinds of standardized tests. However, our college English reading teaching is facing with a difficult situation, and the teaching result cannot satisfy the present situation. Our college English teaching has gone through several periods, such as the traditional teaching model-grammar translation teaching method, the integral schema teaching model, and the discourse-based teaching model. However, all the above three teaching models have their own deficiencies, and they cannot satisfy the requirement of the current college English reading teaching. Under the above situation, we suggest to apply the task-based language teaching into reading teaching. The application of it can encourage more and more people to pay attention to the teaching method, for, no method of teaching can be perfect, and different teaching methods stress different aspects and satisfy the requirements of different readers. Such application can also contribute to the affluence of the language teaching methods.

II THE DEFICIENCIES OF THE FORMER READING TEACHING MODELS

Although the former teaching models promote the development of reading teaching, still, they have their own deficiencies. In traditional teaching model-grammar translation teaching method, the teachers always tend to explain the passage sentence by sentence and ignore the construction of discourse. Therefore, students don't have enough time and space to extend their thought. They lack the spirit of cooperating with others. The function of grammar and native language in foreign language study is exaggerated in traditional teaching model.

The integral schema teaching model seems to be a perfect one to explain the reading process and to be utilized to teach English reading at a college level, yet it tends to

forget that reading occurs under certain circumstances with a definite purpose. So reading in this way tends to be a reading process only to acquire information and readers are easy to be satisfied with the general understanding while ignoring language points which need to be mastered.

The discourse-based teaching model believes that the reading process is an active cognition process, the purpose of which is to obtain meaning and the process of obtaining meaning depend on the meaning of the words and sentences in the co-text of the discourse. From their point of view, the introduction and explanation of the main idea and the topic sentences are the main tasks of the reading teaching, while due to some reasons, such as the limit of time, they cannot accomplish other tasks required by the discourse-based teaching.

III CHARACTERISTICS OF TASK-BASED TEACHING MODEL

Task-based Teaching aims to make foreign language learners acquire a language, extend communicating vocabulary and promote learning through transacting some tasks. Teachers design the tasks and ask the students to accomplish. The task is so important that it operates like a magnet, drawing the students working hard towards it. Only when the students feel that they are accomplishing challenging tasks, will they be motivated to do the next part of the reading. The teachers will help the students to solve certain problems. So it is student-centered and it tries to train the students' ability to study on their own. In language study, the students themselves decide whether they will learn something or not. Task-based Teaching describes rather than requires the method of doing things. It teaches students how to use their communication ability to finish tasks. It also shows students the way and method to reach goals. It also determines to explore the function of knowledge system, especially the way to study and language use.

IV THE PERFORMANCE OF TASK-BASED TEACHING MODEL

A. Pre-reading activities

In pre-reading, the teachers' aim to designing task and stimulate students' interests in reading and make them understand the requirement and purpose of reading. If students are not familiar with the reading material, teachers should introduce related background knowledge and then ask them to predict the content of the reading material. The reading is the process of predicting, selecting, confirming the content of text. And the basis of reading prediction is

"sampling", or picking up all the information the text provides which is useful to guess the meaning of the text. The teacher should guide the students to pay attention to this information, such as the title of the text, the knowledge, the picture show, the form and table, etc, author, the background which can provide clues and guidance for the students to read on. And then, the teacher should set up the concept of discourse reading, transmitting from words and sentences reading to discourse reading. The reading prediction which refers to the activation of the background knowledge and the active prediction of the content which the text provides before the reading, is the necessary preparation process to successful reading. The teacher can check whether students have been familiar with the background knowledge and make sure that they will meet no or less obstacles in their reading process by question-answer activities; and the teacher can also arrange some oral exercises to make sure that they have got the prediction of the whole text.

B. While-reading activities

In this stage, teachers should require students to understand the writing purpose of the author and have a clear idea about the structure and content of the text. The teachers will act as coordinator and instructor. Students become the main part of the reading activity. They will make comments on the text and their work will be commented by teachers finally. The teachers first ask the students to read the text independently within certain minutes. Students can use scanning, skimming, and detailed reading. The first two reading skills enable students to obtain the theme structure and the main idea of the whole passage. After detailed reading, the students have to judge the main idea of the paragraph or the text by the topic sentences or the important sentences of a paragraph. In this process, the students' reading speed can be improved. And what they learnt from the passage can enrich their background knowledge. In addition to the language points and sentence structure, they learn more form the passage. Since different students may have different understanding of the same text, it's necessary for them to exchange their ideas. Teachers can ask students to do group discussion to state their own thinking. Through the discussion, they can find some problems. These problems may never occur in their mind. In order to solve the newly appear problems, they have to work out solutions. Their thought is extended accordingly. The group discussion can also promote the understanding of the whole text. Moreover, students' spirit of cooperation is reflected. After the group discussion, the teacher can try to check the students' reading result by asking them to say something about the topic sentence of every paragraph or the main idea of the whole passage or to restate the whole passage with their own language briefly. The teacher can also raise some questions to ask the students about the detailed understanding of the whole text. The teacher should spare a few minutes for the student to ask questions and explain the answers explicitly.

C. After-reading activities

In this stage, the teachers should help students to reinforce and express the reading content. The students should use their own words to show their reading result. The teacher functions to guide the students to discuss and communicate on the text being read, and check whether the students have got the main idea of the whole text and whether they have understood the difficult or important language points. And what's more, in order to strengthen the students' linguistic expression and application ability, the students should be asked not only to sum up the main idea of the text and comment on the main idea of the text orally, but to do some writings and translations after class. The teacher can help to evaluate the task by correcting the homework of students and check their understanding of the whole text by asking students to restate the main idea of the passage or write a summary to see whether they grasp the general view of the text.

V. THE ADVANTAGES OF TASK-BASED TEACHING MODEL AND SOME SUGGESTIONS

A. Advantages of task-based teaching model

Task-based teaching presents the task to the students at the beginning, in order to complete the assignment, the students will arrange and analyze the information they have collected. Students' ability to solve the problem independently thus improved in the process. If they accomplish the task as they have set and get some obtainment, they will be encouraged to go on to the next one. Only when the students feel that they are accomplishing challenging tasks, will they be motivated to do the next part of the reading. In reading class, every student has certain responsibility and plays a certain role. They use language they have learned to communicate with others, including change information and ideas and promote emotion. They get to know how to cooperate with others in group work. Their spirit of team-work is stimulated and their communication competence is also developed through their correct pronunciation and intonation, sound grammar, considerable amounts of vocabulary and experienced world knowledge. Task-based teaching can arouse students' interest of study since its target is specific and explicit. In the process of task-accomplishing, students tend to find the value of study. They tend to see their achievement and feel the happiness of success. Meanwhile, they get to know their weakness and the desire to improve themselves is very strong. In task-based teaching, it's impossible for students to use only one strategy. They should use two or more skills and more linguistic knowledge in order to finish the task. In this way, their ability to use language is improved.

B. Suggestions for the task-based teaching model

During the application of this model, there are some problems we should pay attention to. First, the design of the task should close relate to the content of the textbook. We should take the Zone of Proximal Development of the students into consideration. If the task we designed is out of students' ability, they will have no confidence in themselves

and lose interest in solving the problem. The activity we chose should have some relation with students' life experience or social problem they are facing or going to face. Or they will reluctant to take part in the activity. Second, we should choose good reading material. The materials we used in class now have many problems. They are lack of authenticity and out of date. They don't conform to the psychology of students who likes to seek new and challenging things and also desire resonance of emotion. Therefore, it's important for teachers to choose good material. Finally, teachers should act as a coordinator and an instructor. They should transform their teaching thought fundamentally and aims to develop students' reading ability and language use ability. Besides, they should instruct students to use proper reading skills and encourage students to read independently.

VI. CONCLUSION

The task-based teaching model places emphasis on setting tasks for students. It aims to promote the students' ability of reading comprehension without ignoring the language structure and grammar points. Students' communicative competence also developed at meantime. The application of this model will benefit both students and teachers to a great extent. It will bring along favorable results though there may exist some problems which is unavoidable. We will try to find the problems and make every effort to solve them.

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