

# Applying Schema Theories to English Reading in Application-oriented Talent Training Mode

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**Abstract**—English reading is an important basic course for English majors. It is designed to help students to improve their English level and broaden their knowledge through a lot of reading. However, at present, the teaching mode of English reading course in Chifeng University is far from to achieve the requirements of the applied talent training goal. In teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching means, assessment methods and teacher construction, there are certain hysteresis phenomena. This paper mainly discusses using modern schema theories to realize the reform of English reading course so as to contribute strength to training applied talents.

**Key words**—English education, Application-oriented talent training mode, English reading, Schema theories

## I. INTRODUCTION

English reading is an important basic course for English majors. It aims to help students improve their English level and expand their knowledge through extensive reading[1]. However, the teaching mode of English reading course in our college is far from the requirements of application-oriented talent training target. There are some lag phenomena in teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching means, assessment methods and teacher construction[2]. This paper focuses on the use of modern schema theories to realize the reform of English reading course and to cultivate applied talents to contribute their own strength[3].

The schema theory proposed by the psychologist Kant is a cognitive model hypothesis that was introduced into China in the late 1980s to explore human cognitive activities. With the development of it in the reading theory, it has gradually formed a modern schema reading theory, has produced profound influence on the foreign language reading teaching and it has made a significant contribution to university English reading teaching in China[4]. It has even influenced and participated in the overall framework of university English reading teaching.

## II. SCHEMATA AND SCHEMA READING THEORIES

A schema theory is the psychological process that explains human cognition. A schema is a memory storage structure in a brain, which is a cognitive function of the mind. The activities and experiences people experience will be stored in a brain in a hierarchical form as knowledge and experience in memory. Psychologists divide schema theories into three categories, i.e., language schemata, content schemata and form schemata. According to schema theories, the knowledge structure of a human brain, that is, the schema, will determine present cognition activities. Human beings need to be cognizance of the objective world through the pictorial representation of the mind. Modern schema theories define the reading process as the process of interaction between text information and schemata. Its essence is interactive. Reading comprehension is two-way. On the one hand, it's from local to overall information processing (from parsing words to sentence construction and then extending to paragraph and discourse analyses). On the other hand, it is outside-to-in process. If effective and efficient reading process is realized, two aspects should be combined to achieve a two-pronged effect.

## III. CLASSES OF SCHEMATA

According to schema theories, there are three schemata in the memory system. They are language schemata, content schemata and structure schemata.

## IV. LANGUAGE SCHEMATA

Language schemata refer to language knowledge and skills. An author uses words to record meaningful languages to form an article. Students get the meaning of the article by reading given material. If you want to understand the meaning of an article, you must be skilled in using the word system. For example, native language learners can naturally form the original language learning system. As foreign language learners, we should master certain language patterns and rules[5]. Even if an article is difficult to understand, we can use rules and techniques to correctly understand readers' more difficult reading. So, how many language structure skills students master, they can see how much difficulty an article has.

## V. CONTENT SCHEMATA

Content schemata are the degree that a reader master the content and gist of an article. When a reader knows the material well, he is highly relevant to content schemata. With content class schemata, the reader can easily understand the article. A mathematician cannot read a literary work, not because he cannot understand it, but because he does not master right or high content class skills[6]. According to schema theory experts, appropriate preview before reading is designed to stimulate

content class schemata in readers' brain memory, which will help them understand the main content of the article. Content class schemata can promote reading comprehension, but they can also be a negative factor[7].

## VI. STRUCTURE SCHEMATA

Structure class schemata are also called form class schemata or discourse class schemata. It refers to people's understanding and mastery of rhetorical knowledge of an article. Different kinds of articles have different structures and styles. For example, people have a good understanding of the genre and structure of the article, so they can grasp and understand the content of reading both macroscopically and microscopically.

## VII. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THREE SCHEMATA

With these three schemata, you can read efficiently. Among the three, language class schemata are the basic part of the three schemata. Its function is to extract the meaning of languages and then explain and integrate them. When readers are familiar with the corresponding language class schemata, they can fully understand the connotation of words and sentences in the reading material[8]. In the meantime they can use the information to allocate higher hierarchy schema class resources so as to achieve the depth of understanding of an article. But if we only have one or two schemata, it is difficult to understand the content of an article.

Readers' understanding of an article is the result of schema integrated action. The three schemata form an increasing structure and influence each other. Any schema increase will help improve readers' overall reading comprehension, and vice versa[9].

### **The Advantages of Schema Theories**

## VIII. SCHEMA THEORIES ARE A SCIENTIFIC COGNITIVE THEORY

Linguists think that a reader should analyze and interpret language textual information by using schemata in the mind, which means that schema theories are a scientific cognitive theory. In English reading teaching, students should be guided to learn and master schema theory methods which are suitable for themselves and practical.

## IX. SCHEMA THEORIES ARE A MULTIDIMENSIONAL COGNITIVE THEORY

When reading an article, there will be many problems and factors, such as vocabulary and discourse analyses. When cultivating students' reading ability, teachers need to help them master and construct advanced comprehensive language schemata. Students truly master correct and complex language decoding skills, teachers should focus on students' English language skill training and development and help students to establish a high quality language schemata so as to improve their language decoding ability. In this way, students can easily get useful and efficient information. To increase students' knowledge accumulation, broaden students' knowledge and help them to establish effective structure schemata, teachers must help students to master schema theories as a whole so that students can deal with various complex problems in actual combat.

## X. SCHEMA THEORIES ARE A COMPLEX COGNITIVE THEORY

Schema theories are a multidimensional language decoding process. In this process, both sides need to be read simultaneously. To achieve a higher level of reading experience, readers must master reading methods. In the process of cultivating readers' reading ability, they should go hand in hand, not just one of the three[10]. It is suggested that teachers need both holistic training and project training in daily English reading teaching.

## XI. THE DISADVANTAGES OF SCHEMA THEORIES

Since the introduction of schema theories in China in the 1920s, the course design of foreign language teaching and the preparation of teaching materials and many aspects in China have infiltrated the guidance of schema theories. Articles about schema theories are more and more in teaching papers in colleges and universities in China. In the design of English reading course, the training of students' cultural background knowledge and the supplementary of foreign cultural background knowledge should be strengthened, which highlights important roles and central ideas of schema theories. However, there are some problems which are too blind to worship the theory of foreign experience, which is not in line with China's national conditions. The impact of languages has a deeper impact on college students, especially in their primary stages, compared to contents and learning environments. Students' learning background in our country is not native language learning or second language learning, so students' schema class structure and language teaching environment with the English language learning environment has essential difference. A language is much more restrictive than the other two. Chinese students' language environment is more than that of the first language environment. Students can understand the superficial meaning of an article in English reading class and can not read the meaning of the article and can not use real reading skills. At the same time, in domestic study of schema theories, people pay too much attention to learning supplements of Beijing cultural aspects. It is, in fact, a lazy phenomenon of knowledge structure research. People are not down to earth to crack a hard nut. The behavior cannot be tolerated in academia. Domestic schema experts put too much emphasis on high schema theory study ignoring China's domestic situation and students' basic quality. Because domestic students are foreign language learners, we can not completely copy foreign teaching experience, focusing on high schema theory study and ignoring low-level basic schema theory training. For example, in domestic college English class, teachers only talk about Beijing cultural knowledge, religious knowledge, foreign fairy tales, western culture atmosphere, which puts more emphasis on humanity environment than basic skills of

linguistic theories. Do not take the teaching of vocabulary and language structure into account. Do not take linguistics, lexicology and phonetics into account, especially in some ordinary universities instead of key universities. This type of teaching lazy phenomena is the disadvantages of weak faculty, leading to the negligence of language skills to students in teaching. Students can not realize the pure foreign language system in their native Chinese learning environment and in limited studying periods of. This is just a dream. Admittedly, in language class schemata, cultural background and humanity knowledge supplement are also an essential part, but we can't put the cart before the horse and we can't take it lightly. We can't ignore language teaching. We can't give up the training of students' basic skills, that is language skills. When we put too much emphasis on content class schemata and culture class schemata, for the real bone - language class schemata, we are bound to make students' English language learning become the situation that foundation is not firm and it is bone loss.

There are three basic root reasons for heavy weight in English reading teaching. Firstly, schema theories focus too much on language class schemata. There are more than three reading schemata, which are a hierarchical system. Language class schemata are a cornerstone. Content class schemata and structure class schemata are a more advanced level, but the use of advanced schemata is based on low-level schemata. So when people only attach importance to the role of senior schemata and ignores the role of junior schemata, it will distort the real connotation of modern schema reading. Secondly, schema theories excessively abandon traditional teaching. It should not be overdone to improve traditional teaching so as to avoid drawing the lily. Traditional language classes emphasize the construction of article structure, such as words, idioms, sentences, paragraphs and discourse. Now popular view by academics is from the overall to the local and from the general idea of an article to linking words. People pursuit advanced schema theories and ignore low-level basic theories, but in fact two kinds of different difficult theories are that none is dispensable and they interpenetrate to each other. Low-level language schemata pay attention to details, not conducive to the macroscopic grasp of the main content. People should combine two into one and learn from others' strong points to offset one's weakness. Thirdly, schema theories excessively advocate foreign experience. In English language learning, we should also follow the road of Chinese characteristics and go through the process of learning from foreign countries. Foreign linguists don't pay much attention to low-level schema theories because their cultural backgrounds and native language levels ignore difficult problems directly. Native language learners have a natural language learning and teaching environment, so their English learning quality is much higher than that of foreign language learners. Students in English-speaking countries have a natural learning system and decoding method, so they can ignore low-level reading obstacles and study more advanced language research direction directly. Language, rhetoric and reading are stumbling blocks for students in English-speaking countries. Students' second language learning is very different from the first language learning because the target language is different so that they have difficulty understanding. Many language learners with high quality goal learning environment and the real etymology, driving power and the demand of the real language communication, etc., they don't need to aim at class language learning and their levels can also strengthen automatically. In the language learning environment, the emphasis on knowledge content will not affect language learning. In the course of teaching, teachers need to make sure that students can really get through articles and put the understanding of articles into every word and sentence. This is the real purpose of schema theories. Chinese university students in English reading class only have shallow surface understanding of the surface meaning of an article and they do not understand the connotation of the article, so we need a thorough reflection on domestic teaching mode and teachers' teaching level. Not because of the lag of teaching system and teachers' level, harm students' growth and learning. All of these are worthy of reflection and improvement.

### XIII. CONCLUSION

Reading schema theories is a complicated theory. It requires students to understand the central idea of the original text according to complex schemata and refine the main idea. College English reading teaching using schema theories should conform to China's education situation, thoroughly solve Chinese college students' problems in English reading and really improve students' language level so as to cultivate applied English talents to meet social needs.

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