

The Application of Experiential Teaching Method in English Vocabulary Teaching in Junior Middle School

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Abstract: With the reform of the new curriculum, junior high school students must have better competence in lexical application because vocabulary is the most fundamental and significant part for students to learn English well. It plays a vital role in English learning to arouse much attention about facilitating students' learning ability about vocabulary in academic and industrial circles. However, various factors limited the research of the Experiential Teaching Method. Based on the background of the new curriculum reform, this paper not only attempts to analyze the application of the Experiential Teaching Method to English vocabulary teaching in junior high school but also has conducted an extensive search and collation of theories and then use theoretical method to conduct a study. In the meantime, the paper explores the design principles and application strategies of experiential teaching. It analyzes the factors that impede the implementation of experiential education from the aspects of time, space, class size, and the negative transfer of the mother tongue. Last, but not least, It summarizes the concrete measures to apply this teaching method, and it hopes that this paper will help teachers improve the effectiveness of English vocabulary teaching in junior high school.

Key words: the reform of the new curriculum; junior high school; experiential teaching method; vocabulary teaching; application strategies

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1. Introduction

English linguist D. A. Wilkins (1972) said, "Without grammar, students can convey them very little; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed," it indicated that vocabulary as the foundation of language learning plays an essential role in second language acquisition (Wang & Xiang, 2016, p. 2208). In today's vocabulary teaching, we can find that there remains a great deal of problems in the whole teaching

process, and the more common situation is that teachers seem frequently confined to the traditional teaching mode (Lei, 2020, p. 204). It is mainly completed through the following four steps. At first, teachers guide their students to read the words, and secondly, teachers explain the terms to their students. The third step is to assign students the task of memorizing vocabulary, and finally, teachers give a spelling test in class. However, to learn vocabulary is not only to

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discover its pronunciation, spelling, and meaning but, more importantly, to learn how to use it in sentences, paragraphs, and even texts that combine with contextual factors (Nie, 2001, p. 59), and it means that the ultimate goal of vocabulary learning is to use it in communication. Although the traditional vocabulary teaching method helps to cultivate students' ability to memorize spelling, it cannot develop a sustainable enthusiasm for vocabulary study, and vocabulary teaching cannot achieve the desired effect. This paper mainly combines the principle of the Experiential Teaching Method with the characteristics of English teaching in China to propose relevant teaching measures to help teachers gain inspiration from them. As an educator, we should accurately understand the aspects of the psychological development of teenagers and adopt the educational forms and measures that teenagers love to promote their all-round development (Liu, 2008, p. 142). The Experiential Teaching Method can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning English and free students from dull and monotonous lectures, so it can provide a relaxed environment where students acquire language knowledge through game playing and communicative interaction rather than mechanical learning and memorizing. Situational teaching also plays an essential role in promoting students' in-depth learning and curiosity. It will produce a long-term learning effect on students because it can provide the whole experience for students and a procedure that can help students comprehend knowledge and boost learners' vitality. Based on the study, the principles and effective measures to strengthen experiential teaching in English vocabulary teaching can be summed into several parts.

1. The Principle of Leading Students to experience Real Situations

The experiential teaching method is a way under the guidance of teachers to make students able to comprehend and construct knowledge in real experience

by creating opportunities to practice or simulate actual situations to realize a form of teaching practice that combines knowledge, emotion, mentality, and behavior (Guo, 2011, p. 18). Because learning requires students to think with their brains, observe with their own eyes, listen with their ears, express with their mouths, and operate with their hands. In other words, students should experience by themselves and feel with their souls. Therefore, knowledge acquisition is not accomplished by simple memorization and storage because it is the process that transfers from social inside to individual ability, so we must base it on students' experience and practice (Lin & Ma, 2016, p. 70).

However, due to the limited learning environment, there are evident traces of mother tongue transfer in English vocabulary learning. Still, the negative transfer of the mother tongue has an excellent impact on English vocabulary acquisition, directly affecting the accuracy of learners' output. Therefore, we need to master some scientific ways to help students overcome this difficulty; for instance, after we assigned students to complete a unit of word memorization, the students quickly forgot it the next day due to the influence of the mother tongue. Therefore, the teacher could arrange for the students to review the words of the previous day, and they can also put similar words together to help students distinguish them. Experiential teaching emphasizes students' learning in practice. Because generating meaningful learning only by associating students' real life and making students experience (Zhu, 2006, p. 88), to have learners fully undergo various sensory training in the practice of experiential teaching, teachers should design the teaching situation more reasonably. Then, what is the definition of the actual situation? Actual situation means that teachers should provide practical physical and mental experience by creating a relevant plot or environment for students; in other words, students should be provided with an environment that helps them practice the newly acquired words.

However, suitable teaching situation construction needs to give enough time and teaching space for teachers because only in sufficient time and space can teachers design a variety of teaching situations that can stimulate students' multiple sensors. All in all, in an environment without a computer, we must develop and practice artificially; however, teachers do not have enough time to arrange teaching situations even though they have enough knowledge and enthusiasm, and there is also no a complete physical environment to support experience for learners at the present even though teachers have enough time (Fang & Gu, 2000, p. 83). Even if teachers have enough time, due to the limitation of teaching space, it is impossible to support teachers in designing complete vocabulary teaching activities for learners.

The usage of information and communication technologies in teaching foreign languages has accelerated dramatically in the education system in recent years, which is why today's atmosphere requires teachers to be aware of information and communication technologies. They need to know how to assimilate it into their teaching process (SHADIEVA S S, 2021, p. 770). With the advent of the information age, the network world is more spacious, and we are no longer in a closed state, so students have more access to knowledge, and even in some areas, the amount of information they get far exceeds that of teachers. At the same time, they also have a strong desire to show their talents, so multimedia information technology can simulate the specific cases related to the words, and teachers do not need to spend too much time and space to design and construct the experience situation. Teachers can use computers or mobile phones to achieve the goal of being liberated from the complex teaching step of demonstrating technical actions, explaining action essentials, and communicating with each learner. Therefore, the new mode of teaching should utilize modern information technology, especially the Internet, to promote English teaching beyond space and time

limitations and then towards individual learning, which combines the principles of practicability, intellectual, and interestingness (Li & Yu, 2009, p. 144).

There is no doubt that in vocabulary teaching, teachers can not only deepen students' understanding of the words but also improve students' interest in learning vocabulary by using multimedia and other ways of presenting. Teachers can use various forms to explain the situations and more fully mobilize students' senses to experience; for example, teachers can stimulate students' listening and speaking abilities with video and audio. Teaching activities like role-playing and vocabulary games can mobilize the students' learning initiative, and teachers can also create a teaching platform to extend English classes beyond the classroom. Teachers are demanded to have an affinity, and the atmosphere that they make should be charming to stimulate students' interest and curiosity (Yao & Yuan, 2002, p. 12).

In traditional vocabulary teaching, teachers invariably act as “preachers” and seldom try to understand their inner feelings, so they tend to focus on the spelling and the surface meaning of words. In this situation, students don't know the intrinsic importance of the words. The literal sense of words often causes serious mistakes in expression. Meanwhile, students who are limited by specific environments have difficulty in acquiring words naturally because research manifests that a student who wants to succeed in learning a word must encounter the word at least seven times. It takes sixteen times consecutive encounters to understand the word naturally (Wang, 1998, p. 49), so teachers should pay more attention to the experience of vocabulary meaning so that students can skillfully use the words they have learned after class. The evidence suggests that a combination of teaching in individual, small group, and master class lessons is the best way of educating students as responsible, reflective, and professional learners.[13]Modern multimedia information technology can realize the transformation of the teacher-student

relationship. To a great extent, the platform's appearance solves the problem of one-to-many tutoring in class and brings us a step closer to the realization of a one-to-one teaching mode.

2. The Principle of Cultivating a Student-centered Environment

The lack of a “student-centered” education concept and teaching method is a crucial factor affecting improving teaching quality (Liu, 2012, p. 2); however, the experiential teaching method is a student-oriented mode, and the student-centered principle means that students are the center of the learning process. Whether students become the center of learning depends on their involvement in the learning process. Under the guidance of this principle, vocabulary teaching attaches importance to both the effect and the process of vocabulary memory, and its primary purpose is to enable students to take thinking and experience as a pleasure rather than a compulsion or burden. There are four ways for teachers to apply.

Firstly, Comenius pointed out that class teaching is suitable for both teachers and students because for a teacher, the more students he sees, the more interested he is in his work, and the more enthusiastic a teacher is, the more enthusiastic his students will be, and for students, “the presence of a large number of peers is not only more effective but also enjoyable because they can encourage and help each other.” (Comenius, 2006, p. 55). In China, large-class teaching has become a common phenomenon, and learners vary from 20 or 30 to 40 or 50 in a class, and some traditional styles even have 70 or 80 students. No matter how many people are in a class, there will always be only one teacher, so it isn't easy to complete experiential teaching only by one teacher. Therefore, in vocabulary teaching, there are many learners, and it is difficult for teachers to ensure that every student can master vocabulary well because some students slack off in study and seldom participate in the activities during the situation display,

so teachers can't stop to remind or criticize the absent-minded students. Oversized class leads to the reluctance of students to participate in related activities actively, so how can we effectively solve this problem? Research shows that group activities can reduce learners' anxiety in language communication activities and make them show more enthusiasm and creativity in learning (Deng, 2005, p. 20). Therefore, at the beginning of the activities, teachers should divide students into several groups in a reasonable way according to their basic competence of language and the characteristics that students perform in class. Within a category, grouping methods can be of two types: ability grouping and mix-ability grouping, so teachers should not only arrange the students with a good command of English and those with poor English performance in the same group, the outgoing students and the introverted students together. In this way, we can ensure that everyone can participate in the activities and attend the discussion actively so that a harmonious atmosphere of mutual help and learning is created. As a result, the teaching activities of the curriculum can be ensured to be carried out efficiently, and there is no denying that group cooperative learning is helpful for group members to learn from each other, deepen the communication between students, enable students to grasp English knowledge more quickly in class and enhance students' subjective initiative in English learning (Gu, 2023, p. 165). By doing this, tasks will be done faster through cooperation, and teachers should design teaching activities and steps based on the objective of developing students' ability for both independent inquiry and cooperative learning.

Secondly, middle school students are in rapid physical and psychological development, so they are young and sunny, willing to show themselves, and fond of imitation (Duan, 2013, p. 129). So teachers should take the characteristics of students' physical and mental development into account and apply experiential teaching methods to create a positive teaching

atmosphere for students; they can switch students' thinking from a potential state to an active form by raising questions, which is apt to stir students' interest and generate their curiosity to make a thorough inquiry. To fit the characteristics of the students, teachers can require students to do role play in the class, which helps students experience the British and American culture in person, and they can provide students with relevant cultural backgrounds about British and American countries and expand their knowledge after class.

Thirdly, the consciousness of innovation can effectively relieve students' learning pressure, depression, and anxiety (Harris & Phillips & Penuel, 2012, p. 769). It means that all teaching activities have to be based on students' initiative and happiness. The dominant position of students in teaching determines that teachers should encourage students to “think independently” and “evaluate themselves” to cultivate their initiative and innovation spirit. The principal requires teachers to take students' reality into account when teaching so that students can obtain the experience of how to learn vocabulary through practice. Specifically, children who are imaginative and fantasy-prone tend to have better coping skills and the ability to regulate their emotions, as well as score well on measures related to thinking, logic, and communication (Smith & Mathur, 2009, p. 52). Therefore, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' innovative ability, practical ability, and independent thinking abilities so that they can avoid the phenomenon that students' attention is easily dispersed when they are thinking. It can also improve the teaching efficiency of teachers in the classroom.

Lastly, the experimental teaching method pays attention to the autonomy, negotiation, and emotional feelings of students (Tian, 2012, p. 69). Regarding curriculum, the emphasis on immediate experience is mainly reflected in students' knowledge, direct experience, and the world they live in, which are regarded as significant curriculum resources. From

the perspective of teaching, teachers should encourage students to interpret and catch on to the content by themselves and need to make much of students' individual feelings and unique opinions so that students can turn into personalized learners during the learning process (Shen & Ren, 2010, p. 104). From the perspective of learning, the primary objective is to transform the indirect experience into the direct experience. The critical point in vocabulary learning is students can acquire that vocabulary through their self-exploration and practice in that students can create self-experience to promote the effective development of divergent thinking and cognition so that students can better grasp the application strategies of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the reform of the basic English curriculum requires primary and secondary school English teachers to change their teaching concepts from paying attention to teaching to learning and from knowledge and skills to discipline accomplishment (Du, 2021, p. 80). They should have confidence in their students and give students full autonomy in learning; in this way, students will be more active in learning and interactive experiences; thereby, passive learning will change into active learning, and the effect of experiential teaching is long-lasting in that students can experience, feel, and communicate efficiently by themselves.

3. The Principle of Designing Contents by Teachers

Therefore, homework plays a significant role in the classroom, especially in warm-up supplements and elevation, so teachers need to seize this link to enhance the student experience and increase their autonomy (Lin, 2003, p. 87), because students are the main body in the process of learning. Teachers must take into account the students' need to have more time to take part in the activities. Due to the limitation of course teaching hours, we have to arrange the time reasonably by exploring attempting during the teaching practice to make sure the knowledge grasped by students is profound,

systematic, and complete (Wu & Gao, 2010, p. 61). So before the class, students need to be familiar with the pronunciation and the meaning of the new words through preview so that teachers can set apart some time for students to experience the situation in class; after mastering the pronunciation of words, students don't need to spend time and energy on pronunciation in class.

The new curriculum proposed that not only are the students supposed to be autonomous, cooperative, and explore the activity, but also the teachers should be a designer in various learning situations (Li, 2012, p. 55). Teachers will not write the new words on the blackboard and require the students to read them and memorize the spelling after class, just as they used to be. On the contrary, experiential teaching emphasizes the situations related to the topics that students are interested in or the topics close to students' real lives, so teachers should choose meaningful content and direct students to comprehend the relationship between learning materials and their real-life to facilitate learners' self-development. In the process of teaching vocabulary, teachers can combine the influence of historical and cultural knowledge on the English language and explain some understanding of roots and affixes as well as the historical sources and cultural connotations of some words, which will help students overcome the boring aversion caused by isolated, repeated and mechanical memorizing of English words (Zhong, 2003, p. 367). Due to its practicalness and sociality, it allows students to put their knowledge into practice and understand the differences and similarities between China and other countries well. In learning, students can memorize words visually rather than abstractly through role play, so teachers can expand students' horizons by telling relevant stories about the new words. The accounts can be varied, such as myths and allusions; for example, when teachers intend to teach the words about months, they can share the related Roman fairy tales with

students. By doing this, the fairy stories about the words of the months can make students immerse themselves in western culture so that they can comprehend how the words take shape and why they are spelled in that way. To obtain the long-term effect of vocabulary learning, learners should fully play the dual role of changing context and understanding ability (Li & Wu, 2023, p. 249), so that students can have a deeper understanding of vocabulary application rather than relying on their language intuition.

To begin with, if teachers want students to learn and understand the course content accurately and efficiently, they tend to select, process, transform, organize, or interpret the textbook again, so the text is characterized by uncertainty, diversity, and variability (Liu, 2005, p. 48). To establish a positive thinking atmosphere, teachers should design a typical material that interests students so that they may aspire for further research, and it is a guiding material that can consolidate students' previous learning. The purpose is to mobilize the related existing knowledge, pave the way for further education, and create various scenarios for transferring existing knowledge and ability to the new learning process. For example, when learning new words related to directions and road signs, desks and chairs in the classroom can be rearranged to act as buildings, and on each table are the prepared cards with the names of buildings on them. The teacher first demonstrates asking for directions and presents the new words of this topic in the protest, and the new words are further combined with the created situation. After the rally, the teacher divides the students into several groups to play the relevant roles to combine the case with the actual practice. At the same time, stimulating students to recall is a good and new metacognitive way for them to be self-awareness, self-evaluation, and self-regulation in their cognitive activities, which can help learners to recognize the mental process again (Zhai & Dong, 2017, p. 55). Therefore, we can use onomatopoeia to help

students combine words with specific circumstances. The first example is the word “giggle.” We often hear laughter in our lives, so when teaching the word, the teacher can ask the students to look back upon the scene of laughing when they encounter something funny because their laughter is similar to the sound of giggling. The second example is the word “cough.” The teacher can ask students to recall the sound they made when they coughed. In this way, students will find that the word's pronunciation is similar to the sound of coughing. From then on, whenever the students see the word, they will correctly and quickly react to the specific meaning of the word through the situation.

In addition, an actual situation means more than just studying in a fixed classroom. If necessary, teaching can be implemented outside of the school so that students can learn and use the language in the actual situation. Compared with indoor instruction, the most significant difference is that the teaching atmosphere is more relaxed, open, active, and accessible so that students' pressure can be released, their nature can be liberated, and their thinking is more open (Liu, 2018, p. 23). Take, for example, the new words, which involve a lot of cooking steps and food ingredients so teachers can restore an English cooking lesson for learners. It will be a good combination of English vocabulary learning and experience, and in this process, students acquire the corresponding knowledge through their own perception and personal experience.

4. The Principle of Conducting Proper Controls

Students have rational thinking and assessment of teachers' control, and there exists a reflective defense in that if they do not accept the teacher's instructions, they will choose to negotiate with the teacher or refuse to participate in the activity (Gu, 2023, p. 165). It indicates that applying the experiential teaching method does not only rely on students' self-experience; teachers also play an important guiding role in that only with the help of

teachers can students promote their cognition to a higher level because teachers can create different experience situations for students. Then, how can we make better use of the principle of teacher guidance?

Firstly, cognitive activities are closely related to the efficiency of human behavior and the level of psychological excitement (Yin, 2016, p. 25), so we must be sure that students have a pleasant and relaxed experience. This principle is based on the characteristics of cognitive activities, so teachers are required to give high-quality teaching and have the capacity to control the pace of class. They must listen to students' statements carefully and record the performance in detail during the time set aside for the related classroom activities. Secondly, in the process of experiential teaching, students' experiences and feelings are not only emphasized, but also the individual experiences and feelings are shared among the collective members, then put the achievements into practice. Teachers could readily elicit ideas and questions but experienced challenges in helping students develop them, and this suggests a need for more specified supports, such as specific discourse strategies, to allow teachers to attend to student thinking (Wang, 2002, p. 538), so teachers should provide opportunities for students to take part in the activities and try their best to encourage students to share their own opinions with others. First of all, teachers should give a good appraisal of the new and insightful views and seize the opportunity to promote further thinking. Secondly, of all of the activities that comprise the role of a teacher, classroom discipline is one of the most significant (Lewis R., 1999, p. 155), and appropriate methods should be taken to correct the deviations and digressions from the subject. For those biased or distorted opinions, teachers should spend more time giving proper guidance. Teachers should prevent excessive class games. Fourthly, for that similar point of view, we should stop repeating the similar point of view timely and adjust the arrangement of class time flexibly.

For example, when students have a heated discussion, teachers can prolong the time; however, when students are not in high spirits, teachers can stop the discussion timely. Finally, not all students may be good at critical thinking, nor do some teachers appear to teach students' good thinking' skills (Pithers & Soden, 2000, p. 237). So teachers can encourage students to think about controversial problems from different perspectives or provide the opinions of known scholars for students as references. The above measures will significantly help to improve the efficiency and the quality of teaching and teaching vocabulary; in this way, it has the advantage of motivating students to learn language more actively and develop their divergent thinking under the progressive guidance of the teacher.

5. The Principle of Creating a Harmonious Relationship

In essence, the teaching method is a form, which is the interaction between teachers and students, so Experiential teaching emphasizes that teaching is a kind of interpersonal communication in a specific situation. On the contrary, the traditional teaching method imparts knowledge. Learners passively accept ability, and students, according to teachers' requirements, participate in the activity but do not have enough time, energy, and subjective wishes to prepare for the class and introspection after class (Cheng, 2022, p. 25). Generally speaking, teachers are the only carriers and disseminators of classroom teaching; however, this traditional teaching is a drawback of modern education. Obviously, in this teaching mode, the unequal status of teachers and students determines the disharmony in their relationship, and the interactive activities and tasks fail to be performed as expected. However, a sound connection between students and teachers is established so that the teachers' love can help students transfer their initiative and positive attitude to the class learning process (Zhang, 2015, p. 96). In this case, teachers should give up the traditional vocabulary teaching

method and actively establish the relationship between teachers and students.

At first, classroom cooperation refers to the tacit understanding between teachers and students and among students, that is, a relationship of support and collaboration established to achieve the objective of effective learning and teaching. In modern society, the relationship between people has been democratized and equalized so that students' consciousness of subjectivity has been enhanced, and they also need to be respected (Wang, 2010, p. 35), so teachers and students should trust and respect each other because only in this way can teachers enlighten students with reason and emotion. Therefore, teachers should provide personal and instructional support meant to facilitate the developing sense of student autonomy organization, which may encourage a sense of well-being and comfort with the way a classroom functions (Stefanou & Perencevich & DiCintio, 2004, p. 97), and this means they must fully understand each other to form a tacit agreement. For instance, in vocabulary teaching, some students make slow progress because they are not familiar with the methods of vocabulary learning, so they often feel a little frustrated, thinking they do not have the talent to learn English. At such moments, the encouragement of teachers plays a crucial role to students, and teachers should know about learners' hobbies, such as some music that is popular, current, or familiar to students, and then fit into the process of teaching. In another way, applying a story to help learners due to its' visual is necessary; for example, a typical example is that we can make a phrase out of several seemingly unrelated words. Secondly, in the teaching process, we should try our best to carry out some activities of mutual learning and role exchange between teachers and students, give children more opportunities to show themselves, encourage them to be innovative, and bring forth more original questions (Yuan, 2018, p. 53). For example, in vocabulary teaching, we can abandon the old mode of "I

speak, and you listen" and exchange the roles between teachers and students so that students act as teachers and teachers work as students. In this way, students can preview new vocabulary more actively and look for vocabulary learning methods on their initiative. Meanwhile, teachers need to consider the question about how to make students like themselves because only when students acknowledge teachers to attract teachers' attention will they study hard and actively cooperate with the tasks assigned by teachers (Yu, 2015, p. 77). Therefore, teachers are not only supposed to impart knowledge to students in class but also communicate with students after class and then understand students' negative feelings and shortcomings so that they can influence their students with love and concern. Teachers should listen patiently to their problems and help to solve them, and only when a relationship of friends is established can students have trust in teachers? In this way, their learning potential will be better stimulated. Teaching practice has proved that these activities not only enable students to experience success and arouse their interest and enthusiasm in learning but also make teachers feel full pressure, constantly updating their knowledge and information to meet the needs of teaching development.

6. Conclusion

Experiential teaching is a relatively new method, and the technique has become increasingly popular in vocabulary teaching, so teachers should adopt this method flexibly and design various activities attentively according to students' actual needs and interests to improve their ability to acquire vocabulary. Although there are inevitable limitations in the method, we can still take some flexible strategies to overcome these limitations because mastering vocabulary is the first step for us to learn a foreign language well. Only when we understand the meaning and usage of words can we master the words and use words properly. Experiential teaching combines the learning of linguistic knowledge

with physical and mental development, so it is necessary to adopt the experiential method in vocabulary teaching.

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