The Application of Schema Theory in Listening and Speaking Teaching of Tourism English in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: With the advent of the post-epidemic era, China's tourism industry has increased significantly. So there is a need for a large number of people who are proficient in travel English. However, the training of tourism professionals in China is somewhat backward. This paper analyzes the problems existing in the listening and speaking teaching of Tourism English in higher vocational colleges, and applies the schema theory to the listening and speaking teaching of Tourism English in higher vocational colleges, this paper analyzes the application of schema theory in listening and speaking teaching of Tourism English in higher vocational colleges from three aspects: linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema.

1. Schema Theory and English Listening and Speaking

1.1 Schema Theory

As early as 1781, Immanuel Kant wrote in his Critique of Pure Reason that New concepts become meaningful only when they are related to what people already know[1]. It attracted the attention of many scholars who began to study the schema. American artificial intelligence expert Rumelhart developed schema into a complete theory. In his opinion, the schema is the sum of all people's general knowledge, the abstraction of the typical features and relations of a certain category of things in the brain, and a knowledge structure containing general information about objective environments and events[2]. After the theoretical framework and foundation have been formed, the schema theory has been continuously enriched and developed by scholars and applied to language teaching at the same time, so its importance in acquiring knowledge is increasingly apparent. The schema consists of three parts: linguistic schema, content schema, and formal schema. Linguistic schema refers to the degree of mastery over words. Content schema refers to the degree of mastery over the content of an article. Formal schema refers to the degree of mastery over the understanding and output.

1.2 Schema Theory and English Listening

The process of English listening is the process of language input. First of all, learners need to

receive language information. Language Schema is responsible for activating the memory of related words and phrases in the brain, combining word stress, intonation, and rhythm to understand the meaning of language. Content schema is responsible for activating pre-existing background knowledge in the brain related to listening topics, as well as background knowledge in cross-cultural communication, such as customs and human feelings. Learners predict the development of content by guessing the meaning of words. The formal schema is responsible for activating the knowledge of the text structure that originally existed in the brain, judging and associating the text structure of listening materials, putting forward hypotheses, and perfecting hypotheses through analysis and reasoning, to assist the completion of listening comprehension. See Figure 1 clearly. The more the listener knows about the various background knowledge related to the listening material, the larger the vocabulary, and the stronger the ability to analyze, the better the listener can understand the listening material, which can affect learners' overall understanding.
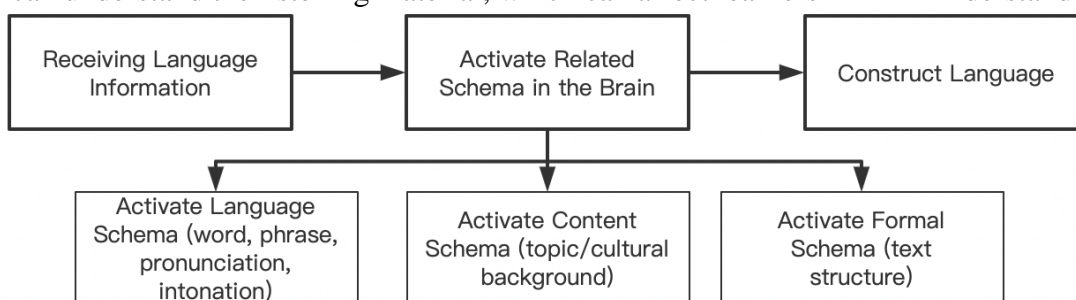

Figure 1: The process of English listening

1.3 Schema Theory and English Speaking

English speaking is the process of language output. Learners acquire input information before speaking activities, such as by listening or watching relevant background knowledge to learn the expression. Then the schema of the known information and the input information is activated. After the comprehension and absorption of the information, the learner makes a response and develops several oral activities, which is language output. At this time, the spoken language will be updated again to establish a new schema that prepares for the next listening. See Figure 2 clearly. We can conclude that listening in English must exist in speaking, and it is helpful to output new and more complete information schema than before. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to isolate listening and speaking in English teaching, and what needs to be studied is how to use schema theory to carry out listening and speaking integrated teaching.
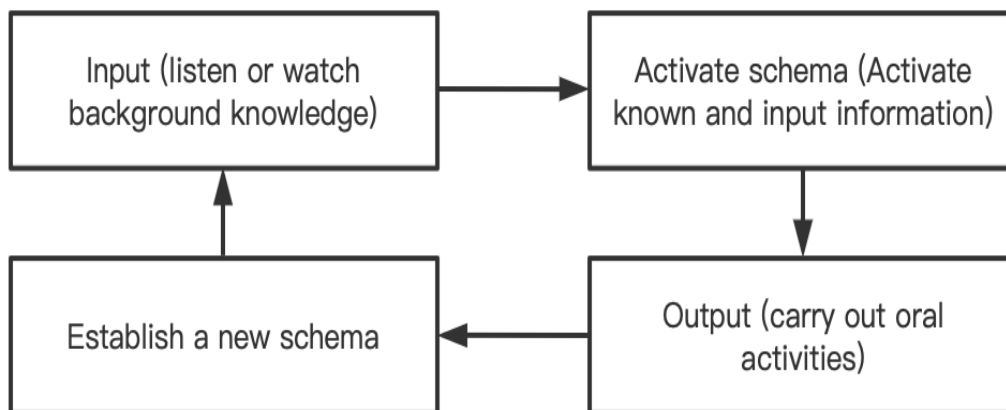

Figure 2: The process of English speaking

2. The Existing Problems in the Teaching of Listening and Speaking of Tourism English in Higher Vocational Colleges

2.1. Outdated Teaching Model

Tourism English has always been defined as a language discipline, but it is more social skills because the core of it is to improve the student's language skills on international occasions, especially in cross-border travel. Therefore, the development of listening and speaking skills plays an important role in the tourism English curriculum. But in fact, most of the higher vocational colleges in China follow the old ways and adopt more traditional teaching methods, attaching too much importance to English knowledge and theoretical teaching[3]. Some teachers follow the traditional mode of knowledge imparting: teaching various usages of words and phrases, analyzing sentences, translating sentences or texts, doing exercises, etc. As a result, many students listening and speaking skills have not been well developed.

2.2 Limited Teaching resources

Most schools in the country put the teaching contents of listening and speaking in the same book. In many cases, students listen and speak mechanically against the knowledge in the book. These contents do not fully meet the needs of students, it is also difficult to make a breakthrough in improving students' listening and speaking skills. The local related schools found that teachers teaching, only simply use slides, and do not fully use multimedia's advantages. Such as audio, video, and animation, can be used to create a relaxed and enjoyable class. Some teachers are stuck in their own teaching methods. They reject new teaching methods and are unwilling to improve. Students do not develop their practice resources after studying the books, not to mention the rapid improvement of their language skills, and expansion of their horizons.

2.3 Poor foundations of Students

Compared with college students, higher vocational students have a poor foundation in English. This is mainly reflected in a small vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation of a word (recognize the word but do not recognize the word while listening), a delayed response to hearing (mainly because of listening too little), a lack of listening skills, a lack of confidence in speaking and not being able to speak (all they could think of is Chinese, and they struggled to translate it into English), these are the main reasons for their hearing difficulties. Is precise because of these difficulties, students' English learning interests are not strong and their self-confidence is not high. In particular, listening and speaking, they did not go all out to complete the listening and speaking exercise tasks, some students have psychological resistance. In addition, Tourism English is different from high school and Secondary vocational school in style, syntax, vocabulary, and other aspects of daily English learning, the input of cultural background knowledge is also very important. If the students lack foreign cultural knowledge, then in the study of listening response is slow, and oral expression ability is relatively inadequate.

2.4 Lack of Language Environment

Language learning cannot be separated from the language environment. It is well known that there is a lack of a real language environment and sufficient language input in Chinese schools. Most of the oral and listening classes in higher vocational colleges are limited to such a mode: teachers use listening audio and students repeat imitation. When learning the dialogue and the text,

ask the students to read or recite them in different roles. After the text is finished, ask the students to act out the content. It cannot be denied that although this has, to a certain extent, fostered the students' oral and listening skills, the student's language accuracy and fluency are far from enough, once in a foreign language situation or face-to-face conversation with foreigners, students often feel speechless, or can only say a few simple sentences on the back of the book, unable to communicate accuracy and fluency[4]. From daily life to school, Chinese students are always surrounded by Chinese sounds and characters. They lack a real foreign language environment and cannot naturally absorb foreign language lessons.

3. The Application of Schema Theory in Listening and Speaking Teaching of Tourism English in Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1. The Application of Language Schema

3.1.1 Tamping the foundation

The first aspect of applying language schema to the teaching of listening and speaking in Tourism English is to foster a solid foundation. Guide students to accumulate a certain amount of tourism English vocabulary, and spoken English pronunciation. For instance, when learning the form of tourism, teachers can guide students to memorize Road Trips, Group Trips, Backpacking, and Package tours together, to promote students to establish the language schema of tourism English listening so that they can understand listening materials more quickly and accurately. In addition, teachers should give students some autonomy in class and encourage them to express themselves. The actual practice lets the student in the expression English process will have in the brain the background schema active mobilization to come out. Teachers' timely feedback can correct students' wrong schema, and students can gradually form their own new language schema.

3.1.2 Making it Fun

In the classroom, teachers should take the initiative to create scenes and colorful classroom teaching activities. For example, teachers make use of multimedia technology to carry out classroom teaching activities as much as possible, presenting content to students in various forms such as text, graphics, drawings, sound, video, and animation, to create a picture-and-text, vivid, relaxed and harmonious classroom situation[5], to stimulate the students' thinking schema of the theme content and make them exert their language ability in the real schema so that expand their vision and increase their language sense. Cooperative learning is also the key to making English learning lively and interesting. The teacher divides the students into different study groups according to different traveling situations, each group plays different roles and performs different learning tasks[6]. While the students demonstrated in class, the other groups commented. Cooperation not only allows students to learn from each other but also mobilizes each classmate to participate in the classroom teaching activity positively, increases the study interest, and coruscates the classroom vigor.

3.2 The Application of Content Schema

3.2.1 Expanding Teaching Resources

Teachers need to go beyond textbooks and use the internet to meet the needs of their students. In the classroom, teachers can make full use of video, animation, audio, and editing. The various listening and speaking key content will be edited in the same video in different styles so that the

English listening and speaking class is more diverse. After class, teachers can recommend relevant apps for students to listen and speak according to their own interests, which regularly activate background schema, and gradually form positive language schema to improve students' listening and speaking ability. In addition, teachers can recommend some professional books and magazines for students to read. They can also recommend good articles and periodicals to students through We Chat public accounts. Students can learn from these articles, and build effective content schematics in the brain to link up with future listening and speaking topics in the classroom. The more background knowledge teachers help students to build, the more they can predict new information and prompt it to decode quickly, forming new knowledge reserves, and finally promoting the overall development of the student's knowledge level.

3.2.2 Teaching in Simulated Real Situations

In the listening and speaking class of Tourism English in higher vocational colleges, teachers must try to create various vivid and interesting simulated scenes of travel agencies, tour group reception, and so on, which induces students to actively participate in the construction of content schema and makes them happy to participate in various scenarios of language. This will not only enable students to learn the whole set of tourism service English but also greatly enhance their listening and speaking actual communicative competence. Such as tourists buying souvenirs in shops, tour guides guiding the tourist attractions of service, tourists check-in hotel procedures, tourists telephone travel information, and so on. Students in the classroom, through a variety of practical work roles, learn to use English in the work of tourism. In this way, we can accumulate different language materials, set up content situation schema on different occasions, and finally cultivate and develop students' language ability, communicative ability, and application ability.

3.3 The Application of Formal Schema

3.3.1. Innovative Teaching materials

At present, the Tourism English course in higher vocational colleges is facing the difficulties of being out of touch with reality, which is far from the professional requirements of the college. Teachers can find some of the more common conversations based on their professional background, and then use that as a basis to develop a conversation curriculum. In addition, teachers can make full use of video materials as learning materials. Before the class, the teacher can give the students some written materials, such as the outline of the film, the student's vocabulary, exercises, and so on. In class, let students watch videos together. Then discuss in groups and give each child as much time as possible to speak. The teaching content close to the life theme can enable the students to construct the existing schema in the brain positively and predict the listening material more quickly and accurately. In this process, the listening content is decoded quickly, the oral expression is carried on effectively, and the new content schema is formed. The process of new schema formation is the process of improving English listening and speaking levels and English comprehensive application ability.

3.3.2. Update the Teaching Models

The atmosphere of listening and speaking class tourism English should be harmonious and relaxed. First of all, teachers in the classroom provide students with teaching materials that must be authentic, but also close to the student's daily life. Secondly, teachers should add relevant cultural, and background information before listening to help students remove cultural barriers for subsequent listening comprehension activities. Thirdly, the teacher should guide the students to

think and express more in oral expression. For example, let students play freely on a topic, which expands students' oral expression ability. Finally, the teacher gives students the opportunity to practice outside of school. For instance, taking students to the hotel reception desk for oral practice, each student practicing on the spot, all these will force students to spend a certain amount of time memorizing hotel English vocabulary after class, be familiar with the procedure of each department of the hotel, the formal schema is very helpful to students' memory and understanding.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, teachers should teach students according to their learning characteristics in the teaching process of tourism English listening and speaking in higher vocational colleges. This way applies schema theory to listening and speaking teaching, which optimizes the teaching methods and contents of Tourism English from three aspects: language schema, content schema, and formal schema, so as to effectively improve the teaching quality. Only when the students master the tourism knowledge in a relaxed and happy atmosphere, can they improve their English listening ability and communication ability in the tourism industry. The effective training of tourism English talents can not only adapt to the development of China's social economy but also make the higher vocational students of tourism have stronger employment competitiveness.

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