

# *A Study on the Problems and Countermeasures of High School English Vocabulary Teaching under the Concept of Constructivism*

**Wang Huanhuan**

*Ethnic Middle School, Pengshui County, Chongqing, China*

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**Abstract:** With the launch of the new round of college entrance examination reform, English teaching needs to adapt to the development needs of the new era. Under the policy guidance of promoting the "new curriculum" in the country, English vocabulary teaching needs to focus on students' acceptance level, vocabulary interest teaching cultivation. Only by stimulating and cultivating students' learning interest can we grasp the key points of English vocabulary, pay attention to the use, sentence construction, and communication of vocabulary, and reflect the teaching role of integrating knowledge and action. It is necessary to conduct research on English vocabulary teaching in order to truly improve students' English proficiency. Based on the constructivist concept, this article will analyze the problems of high school English vocabulary teaching and propose targeted countermeasures and suggestions.

## **1. Introduction**

The constructivist concept is a theory about knowledge and learning, which believes that knowledge is not passively received from the external world, but actively constructed and reshaped through the interaction between individuals and the environment. Constructivism emphasizes the subjectivity of learners in the learning process, believing that learners should actively participate in the process of knowledge construction, form their own understanding and interpretation through practice, exploration, and reflection. In high school English vocabulary teaching, constructivism emphasizes that teachers are no longer the transmitters of knowledge, but rather the guides and assistants of student learning. Teachers need to pay attention to the learning needs and interests of students, design teaching activities that are in line with their actual situation, and stimulate their learning motivation and interest. Teachers can use various teaching activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, to enable students to learn and use English vocabulary in practice<sup>[1]</sup>. Through exploration and experimentation, they can form their own understanding and memory, guide students to reflect on their learning process and results, self-evaluate their learning effectiveness, and adjust learning strategies to improve learning efficiency. It can be said that constructivism emphasizes the initiative and innovation of students, emphasizes their practice and reflection, and has important guiding significance for improving the effectiveness of high school English vocabulary teaching.

However, in current practical teaching, many high school English teachers adopt traditional exam oriented education methods, with teachers as the main focus of teaching. Students passively learn vocabulary, resulting in a lack of improvement in English vocabulary learning ability. In this context, we need to combine constructivist concepts and conduct research and innovation in high school English vocabulary teaching under the guidance of constructivist theory. Based on this, this article will focus on the standardization of high school English vocabulary teaching in accordance with the Curriculum Standards and the new college entrance examination reform, draw on domestic and foreign research results, and conduct research around this topic.

## **2. Analysis of the Problems in English Vocabulary Teaching**

### **2.1 Students' aversion to preconceptions**

Firstly, from the perspective of cultural differences, learning English is not the Chinese language in China. For young students who have just entered high school, most of them are unable to learn English in their daily lives and social activities. They only have access to textbooks and teacher guidance in the classroom, and have very little time and interest in engaging in English vocabulary training and foreign language learning during the rest of the time<sup>[2]</sup>.

In addition, from the perspective of teaching characteristics, compared to Chinese language teaching and learning, English vocabulary includes various sentence types such as subject, object, compound words, etc., which is more complex in learning Chinese Pinyin and strokes. Based on these issues, teachers need to adopt more teaching techniques in the teaching and learning process to provide students with learning inspiration and guidance. In such a situation, due to the subjective thinking of most students being "preconceived", it is inevitable that students will find it difficult to learn English and the English curriculum will be very rigid and uninteresting, leading to a rejection mentality.

### **2.2 Teaching and learning differences between vocabulary reading and practical application understanding**

Due to the influence of traditional teaching methods, most English teachers often place too much emphasis on students' grades in the process of English teaching. For example, focusing only on accelerating curriculum teaching while neglecting students' learning interests and personal needs. This makes English teachers overly focus on the teaching form of classroom blackboard writing, while students have to rely on rote memorization to read and record vocabulary. However, there are fewer teacher-student questioning, answering, and interactive communication methods in the classroom.

In addition, some English teachers often neglect to extend classroom teaching to extracurricular activities such as leisure life, socializing, and extracurricular activities, so that students can better absorb and understand the essence of Western culture and truly apply what they have learned. Therefore, it is easy for students to have inadequate vocabulary memory, understanding, application, and comprehension of English words, and not pay attention to the primary and secondary focus of learning, ultimately affecting the overall level of English learning.

### **2.3 Lack of teaching mode for stimulating thinking and cultivating interests**

In the actual teaching process, some schools do not consider English courses as an important teaching subject due to financial and conditional limitations. Including the introduction of advanced audio-visual equipment, learning classrooms, and teaching materials to help teachers improve their

English teaching level, it is also difficult for high school students to improve their learning performance and interest in English courses and vocabulary in a relatively short period of time.

### **3. Analysis of the Factors Influencing English Vocabulary Learning**

#### **3.1 The method of teaching vocabulary by teachers is single**

Teachers play an extremely important leading role in teaching activities. How teachers teach directly affects how students learn to a certain extent. So the teaching methods of teachers are particularly important. For a long time in the past, due to the influence of China's politics, economy, culture, and other aspects, the education level in our country was generally low. The teaching methods of teachers are also very traditional and singular. The same applies to vocabulary teaching.

Firstly, in the past, English teaching placed more emphasis on grammar teaching, while vocabulary teaching was relatively neglected<sup>[3]</sup>.

Secondly, past vocabulary teaching has mostly focused on the superficial level of word pronunciation, spelling, and Chinese meaning. Students have not truly understood the deeper meanings of words, let alone learned to flexibly apply them to practical needs. When the teacher is teaching the words popular and fake. The teacher is likely to only teach popular, which means "popular"; Famous means "famous". Students may seem to have mastered the meanings of two words, but they don't know what their differences are and how to apply them in practical contexts. So, teaching vocabulary should not only focus on surface meanings, but also teach students to grasp deeper meanings. "Popular" highlights "popularity", meaning that many people like this person/thing; Famous highlights "fame", meaning that many people know about this person/thing, but it may not necessarily be popular.

Finally, there are obvious traces of exam oriented education in vocabulary teaching. The teaching in China is largely influenced by the "college entrance examination", believing that teaching only serves the college entrance examination, and that high scores for students are the way. So as long as the overall score is good, it doesn't matter if the student is very weak in a certain aspect, such as vocabulary.

However, in reality, language skills include skills in listening, speaking, reading, reading, and writing (Ministry of Education, 2018). Only by practicing listening, speaking, reading, writing, and reading can one complete the teaching of a vocabulary.

#### **3.2 Students have outdated methods of learning vocabulary**

Vocabulary is the cornerstone of learning a language. Only by laying a solid foundation can tall buildings be built, so learning vocabulary is an essential part of learning English well. However, for students in our country, especially those from remote and backward rural areas, learning and memorizing vocabulary is extremely difficult for them.

Students usually use the "dumbest" method of memorizing words. For example, the "repetition method" refers to students memorizing words by repeating them many times, such as "abandon, abandon, abandon..." or writing the word on a draft paper, filling several pages, in order to cope with the teacher's dictation task. But in reality, the efficiency of this way of memorizing words is very low, and often it is even ineffective. Another example is "translation method", which means that students try to memorize words by translating the text word by word and sentence by sentence. This method requires a lot of time and has very low efficiency, while also to some extent eroding the memory of students. If students use this "rote memorization" method for a long time, not only will it fail to teach them vocabulary, resulting in low learning efficiency and no sense of achievement, but it will also weaken their awareness of self-directed learning and eventually

develop a dislike for learning.

### **3.3 Lack of context in teaching vocabulary to teachers and students**

The best way to learn a language is to immerse oneself in the environment in which it is used. Just as we want to learn English, one of the best ways is to directly go to English speaking countries like the UK and the US for exposure and education. However, such opportunities are extremely rare, and very few students have the opportunity to study in British and American countries. Most of our English learning takes place in the classroom environment on campus. In this environment, except for English teachers who have relatively professional English knowledge, other teachers and students lack corresponding professional knowledge. This environment is not very helpful for students' language learning. Students can only rely on 40 minutes of each class and their own efforts after class to learn English. However, the curriculum tasks for middle school students are relatively large, especially for some students who have not kept up with the teacher's pace from the beginning. As time goes by and they become increasingly backward, many students choose to give up directly. Therefore, the lack of context is also a major challenge for our students' English learning.

## **4. Strategies for Teaching High School English Vocabulary under the Concept of Constructivism**

### **4.1 Building a diversified model for vocabulary teaching**

In the context of the new era, the specific requirement for education is to improve the comprehensive literacy of students, so the subject status of students must be highlighted. In the specific English vocabulary teaching mode, teachers should combine the teaching content of the new curriculum standard, and carry out diversified vocabulary teaching with students as the center to stimulate their learning interest. In addition, there is a close relationship between vocabulary teaching, reading, and listening and writing, including the need for dictation in vocabulary learning, which reflects their common characteristics<sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, the purpose of vocabulary teaching is to enable students to master the connotation of vocabulary, while being able to proficiently use it, and then achieve specific improvement in reading and writing levels. So in vocabulary teaching, teachers can use a teaching model that integrates multiple vocabulary memory methods to specifically develop students' observation, organization, and expression abilities, enabling them to improve their ability to independently learn English vocabulary. For example, when students learn the word "night", they can imagine related words such as black, black cat, black coffee, etc. This way, students can master the corresponding vocabulary memory, and related vocabulary can also be mastered and understood, which is conducive to strengthening their learning of vocabulary.

### **4.2 Emphasize the diversification of the teaching process**

For traditional English vocabulary teaching, the basic model is for teachers to prepare lessons in advance and then let students go step by step according to their own ideas. On the surface, this kind of classroom teaching is relatively complete, but in practical practice, it will hinder students' thinking development and also have a certain impact on their independent thinking ability. However, vocabulary teaching is different from the learning content of other sections in English teaching, so specific teaching plans need to be designed and teaching cannot be carried out arbitrarily. This is because vocabulary teaching is conducted separately, which is relatively large in vocabulary size and involves a wide range. Therefore, teachers should combine the characteristics of vocabulary and then carry out diversified teaching processes. That is to say, in the process of vocabulary

teaching, it cannot be a single mode, and attention must be paid to developing towards diversified modes in order to achieve specific improvement in vocabulary teaching level. In the process of vocabulary teaching, it is necessary to promote the development of students' thinking ability and independent thinking ability, which has profound significance for their future development. The specific diversified teaching process involves developing corresponding memory teaching methods based on the characteristics of vocabulary, such as constructing basic vocabulary, removing homophones, and transforming affixes into compound words. For example, teaching based on the roots of new words can be combined with memory teaching methods to enhance students' understanding and mastery of vocabulary, thereby improving the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching.

### 4.3 Achieving Diversification of Textbooks

For this part of the content, the main reason is that the vocabulary content in the textbook is limited, so only basic vocabulary can be learned. At the same time, students need to master the basic content of vocabulary in order to apply it. With the continuous development of English and the demand of students for English, the vocabulary in current textbooks cannot meet the learning needs of students. This requires teachers to extend classroom teaching accordingly, supplement corresponding extracurricular words, expand the vocabulary of English words, and increase vocabulary. This can achieve diversification of English textbooks and promote the development of English vocabulary teaching. At the same time, regarding the characteristics of English, as it is a language subject, there is a commonality with the teaching mode of Chinese language in vocabulary learning. That is to pay attention to the improvement and accumulation of vocabulary, so as to provide specific prerequisite guarantees for learning other sections of English, promote the improvement of students' reading and writing abilities, and achieve comprehensive cultivation of their English proficiency and literacy. In addition, for the diversification of teaching materials, teachers can also recommend students to read relevant books or master specific English vocabulary books, in order to further expand students' vocabulary channels, increase their vocabulary, and achieve corresponding English proficiency improvement.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, it is necessary to actively innovate English teaching methods in order to improve students' English vocabulary. For high school English students, how to effectively master more English vocabulary is the key, which is an effective method to improve their English learning ability. For teachers, it is inevitable to apply vocabulary teaching to high school English teaching, which is not only a requirement of the development of the new curriculum standards, but also a demand for students.

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