

Research on the Application and Innovation of College English Grammar Teaching under the Context Theory

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Abstract: As the top priority of college English teaching, grammar teaching is closely related to the improvement of students' language ability. The context theory requires teachers to guide students to flexibly apply and master grammar in specific contexts, which is the key to ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of language understanding and expression. Against this backdrop, this paper will first briefly expound on the advantages of applying the context theory to college English grammar teaching. Secondly, it will explore the basic principles of college English grammar teaching under the context theory. Finally, it will conduct an in-depth study on the effective strategies for the innovation of college English grammar teaching under the context theory, aiming to better cultivate students' language sense and improve their pragmatic ability. Meanwhile, it provides useful references for the innovation of college English grammar teaching.

Keywords: Context theory; College English; Grammar teaching; Application and innovation

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1. Introduction

With the popularization of the context theory in English education at the junior high and senior high school levels, its importance has been increasingly recognized. Meanwhile, the positive role of the context theory in language teaching has become more and more prominent. Regarding college English grammar teaching, traditional teaching methods focus on explaining written rules and urging students to conduct mechanical drills, fundamentally ignoring the key factor of spoken English context. This may lead to less-than-ideal learning outcomes for students. The most striking manifestation is that they are unable to flexibly apply the learned grammar rules to real-life situations, facing numerous obstacles in both language input and output. For this reason, actively conducting research on the application and innovation of college English grammar teaching under the context theory is of great practical significance.

2. Advantages of applying context theory to college English grammar teaching

2.1. Conducive to consolidating the theoretical foundation of grammar teaching

Firstly, the context theory broadens the traditional approach to English grammar teaching. It enables grammar teaching to effectively break through the limitations of traditional rule indoctrination and structured explanations, instead guiding students to understand and apply grammar in real-life contexts. In this way, it can help students proficiently use grammar for expression under various conditions and improve their language application abilities ^[1]. Secondly, the context theory helps teachers build a more systematic and comprehensive theoretical framework for grammar teaching, closely linking grammar teaching with practical application, thereby further enhancing the pertinence and effectiveness of grammar teaching.

2.2. Conducive to reducing the difficulty of English grammar learning

English is not the mother tongue of Chinese college students. Therefore, some students may develop a sense of rejection during the learning process, which directly affects their English learning outcomes and may also reduce their interest in English learning. Accurately grasping the characteristics of English learning, helping students effectively overcome the conflicts between English and their mother tongue, and teaching students to use grammar correctly are particularly crucial for college English teaching. The context theory has significant dynamic characteristics. Creating a dynamic language environment for students that can adapt to different grammatical structures, tones, and vocabularies helps students firmly master a wide variety of grammatical knowledge. In the actual teaching process, teachers' flexible application of the context theory is conducive to enlivening the classroom atmosphere and enriching students' practical application experiences, to achieve the goal of combining education with entertainment ^[2,3]. It is worth mentioning that the context theory helps students closely integrate dull and difficult to understand grammatical knowledge with practical language use, forming knowledge transfer invisibly. As a result, it reduces the difficulty of students' learning of grammatical knowledge, stimulates their learning interest, and maintains their enthusiasm for learning English grammar.

2.3. Conducive to improving the efficiency of English grammar teaching

First, the context theory advocates guiding students to practice grammatical knowledge in a real communication environment, which plays a positive role in cultivating students' language output ability. Precisely because of this, students can naturally master fixed grammatical structures, thereby significantly improving learning efficiency. Second, the context theory requires teachers to carefully design a variety of activities for students in combination with specific teaching contents, such as role-playing, situational dialogues, task-based communication, etc. While enhancing in-depth communication and interaction among students and between teachers and students, it helps students feel and internalize grammatical knowledge, thereby further enhancing the fun of grammar classes and improving students' sense of participation.

3. Basic principles of college English grammar teaching under the context theory

3.1. Authenticity

Generally, context consists of linguistic context and non-linguistic context, and the two complement each other. Chinese college students have little knowledge of the development of English and its cultural background. Without the correct guidance of teachers, they are likely to have misunderstandings, leading to a series of problems such as subjective speculation and far-fetched interpretations ^[4]. Based on this, college English

grammar teaching under the context theory should follow the principle of authenticity. In other words, the context created by teachers for students should not be divorced from real-life situations and should also conform to common sense. Only in this way can it provide strong support and guarantee for students to apply and master grammatical knowledge in real contexts.

3.2. Communicativeness

Context and communication are complementary to each other, supporting each other and being indispensable. Some students may show phenomena such as weariness and resistance during the learning process. The fundamental reason lies in that teachers do not closely link communication with real contexts, making it difficult for students to deeply understand the important role of grammar in actual communication, thus affecting the teaching effect ^[5]. The context theory requires that teachers pay attention to cultivating students' communicative ability in the actual grammar teaching process. By arranging real-situation dialogue exercises or group discussions and other activities for students, they can deeply perceive the meaning and function of grammar, rather than simply correcting grammatical errors.

3.3. Subjectivity

The principle of subjectivity requires that teachers should always place students at the core of teaching, enhance their sense of classroom participation, and fully mobilize their enthusiasm and initiative in learning. Teachers should guide students to carry out pre-class preview in advance and encourage them to actively complete preview tasks. On this basis, teachers can use pre-class introductions, in-class context analysis and other methods to guide students to independently explore and summarize the meaning of grammar, so as to achieve the goal of in-depth learning. Moreover, teachers can actively invite students to participate in the design and management of classroom activities, so as to cultivate and improve students' autonomous learning ability, significantly enhance their level of grammatical knowledge, and lay a solid foundation for the all-round development of students' comprehensive language ability ^[6].

4. Effective strategies for the innovation of college English grammar teaching under the context theory

4.1. Updating traditional English grammar teaching mindsets

Traditional English grammar teaching mainly relies on rote memorization. During the teaching process, students are always in a passive position of receiving knowledge, which may lead to their inability to flexibly apply grammatical knowledge in actual communication, directly affecting the teaching effect. Contemporary college students tend to prefer interactive and contextualized learning methods. This requires teachers to promptly update traditional grammar teaching mindsets, break through the barriers of hierarchical teaching structures, and encourage them to actively explore innovative teaching methods guided by the context theory, to improve the quality of college English grammar teaching and lay a solid foundation for students' future engagement in primary education. For example, based on the analysis of students' learning situations, teachers found that there are certain differences among students in terms of understanding and mastering grammatical knowledge. This means that in the actual teaching process, a one-size-fits-all teaching method does not match the students' learning situations. Teachers should adopt differentiated or stratified teaching methods to meet the personalized learning needs of students at different levels and with different English foundations ^[7,8]. Specifically, for students

with weak foundations, teachers should design simple situational dialogues to gradually boost their confidence in learning and strengthen their grammatical foundations. For students with better foundations, teachers can design more complex contextual tasks to enhance their comprehensive English abilities. In addition, teachers should focus on creating student-centered classrooms. During the actual teaching process, they should enhance their awareness of context, flexibly use various strategies to cultivate students' good English thinking, and improve their language sense. Taking the teaching of "the structure and usage of adjectives" as an example, teachers can enhance students' overall control of grammatical points through simulating real-context activities and guide them to establish a proactive learning attitude^[9]. For instance, in the pre-class writing practice, teachers can encourage students to recall the knowledge related to adjectives they have learned before and ask them to write a few sentences about "their favorite people or things," aiming to test their mastery of adjectives. This approach, on the one hand, helps students consolidate previously learned knowledge promptly. On the other hand, by creating real-life contexts for them, it enables students to understand the close relationship between context and grammar, thus achieving twice the result with half the effort in teaching.

4.2. Creating contexts by closely connecting with real life

Some college students, influenced by various factors such as their growth environment, language habits, and life experiences, still face practical problems like confusion in distinguishing tenses and inability to grasp them accurately, even if they have mastered English grammar. Take a simple example: verbs in both Chinese and English need to express time, but there are obvious differences between the two in this regard. Chinese usually indicates the time of an action by using additional words such as "过" (past), "正在" (present continuous), "会" (future), or relying on contextual clues. In contrast, English typically uses verb tenses to express time, and this difference becomes more pronounced when there is a lack of real and reasonable contextual support. If the context is not closely linked to students' personal learning experiences, life backgrounds, plans, etc., the improvement of students' pragmatic competence may be hindered, which in turn affects their learning and communication effects^[10]. For instance, when expressing a past perfect action, Chinese usually says "我来这里之前已经学过三年英语。" (Before I came here, I had already studied English for three years.) In English, to express the same meaning, the past perfect tense is required: "I had learned English for three years before I came here." Another example: when talking about experiences from a certain point in time to the present, Chinese is more direct: "迄今为止我在高中已学了三年英语了。" (So far, I have studied English for three years in this senior high school.) In English, the present perfect tense is needed: "I have learned English for three years in this senior high school." In addition, teachers can provide examples in advance, such as: "In front of our school teaching building lies a large playground. On the left stands a big tree. Behind us is our dormitory. On our left is the school library." Next, assign tasks to students, asking them to describe their surrounding environment by imitating the grammatical forms in the examples. This not only helps students understand and master the inverted structure led by prepositional phrases but also allows them to deeply experience the application of grammar in real contexts^[11]. Of course, teachers can also encourage students to stand on the podium and introduce their hometown or campus environment in English, which not only exercises their pragmatic ability but also helps students firmly master and flexibly use grammatical knowledge, comprehensively improving their language ability.

4.3. Focusing on guiding interest in the application of context theory

Against the backdrop of the new era, how to fully arouse students' interest in learning English grammar and ignite their enthusiasm has become an important issue faced by educators. Traditional teaching methods often tend to focus

on theoretical indoctrination, which appears boring and monotonous to students. This may be counterproductive for the teaching of abstract English grammar. The application of context theory advocates putting the stimulation of students' learning interest in the first place. Teachers should carry out grammar teaching by introducing elements closely related to contemporary college students into the grammar classroom. In this way, it can not only achieve the goal of stimulating students' interest but also guide them to apply the knowledge they have learned in real contexts, so as to achieve the teaching purpose of learning for application. For example, through conversations with college students, the author learned that they have a special fondness for talk shows. Therefore, when teaching grammar knowledge related to verbs and conjunctions, the author downloaded talk show performance videos of well-known domestic and foreign actors in advance as teaching materials to attract students' attention and make them pay attention to the grammar knowledge related to this lesson in the videos. First, the author played the talk show video of Taylor Tomlinson with Chinese and English subtitles for the students, asking them to find out the phrases containing typical usages of verbs and conjunctions while watching the video. Then, the author analyzed and explained the phrases found by the students, aiming to help them master the rules of grammar application^[12,13]. Secondly, the author continued to play the performance videos of excellent domestic talk show actors and required students to try to translate the video content after class to further consolidate the grammar knowledge they had learned^[14]. Such teaching methods are not only conducive to igniting students' enthusiasm for learning grammar knowledge and creating a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere for them, but also can give full play to the positive role of context theory in college English grammar teaching, comprehensively improve the quality of college English grammar teaching, and achieve satisfactory teaching effects.

4.4. Flexibly using modern educational tools

With the increasing integration of the Internet and education, a series of novel modern educational tools have emerged, which have invisibly broadened teaching channels and injected new vitality into college English grammar teaching. Under the guidance of the context theory, micro-courses, massive open online courses (MOOCs), modern educational platforms, etc. have become effective carriers for grammar teaching, new favorites of teachers, and key factors affecting the effectiveness of grammar teaching. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, micro-courses are highly flexible. Teachers can rely on Internet platforms to flexibly infiltrate the context theory into grammar teaching, construct systematic and comprehensive English context expression modules for students, enliven the classroom atmosphere, and enable students to learn relatively dull and abstract grammar knowledge in a relaxed atmosphere, thereby improving their learning quality. Taking the grammar teaching of "eight tenses" as an example, teachers can use video editing software such as Premiere Pro (PR) and CapCut to create micro-courses. The micro-courses mainly present the content of the same character describing the same thing at different ages using different grammatical tenses. The aim is to immerse students in real-life contexts through vivid micro-videos, help them master the essence of tense changes, improve their grammar learning efficiency, fully mobilize their learning initiative, and give full play to the unique advantages of micro-courses in grammar teaching^[15].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the application and innovation of the context theory in college English grammar teaching are not only conducive to significantly improving the efficiency of grammar teaching and effectively stimulating students' learning interest, but more importantly, they can create effective contexts for students to understand

and apply grammatical knowledge. In the future, college English educators should actively explore the specific application strategies of the context theory in the teaching of other English modules besides grammar, so as to achieve an overall improvement in teaching effectiveness.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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