

Practice and Theoretical Exploration of Experiential Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

Unlike traditional foreign language teaching models, experiential foreign language teaching respects students' classroom subjectivity, advocates providing students with a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, guides them to discover their own shortcomings and independently think about improvement plans in the process of foreign language learning, and effectively improves their own foreign language application level. Firstly, the experiential foreign language teaching model is introduced from three aspects: generation, connotation and mechanism, as well as teaching principles; Secondly, it points out the two theoretical foundations of experiential foreign language teaching, namely Krashen's affective filter hypothesis and Kolbo's four Stage theory theory; Finally, the specific application of experiential foreign language teaching in practice is discussed, including creating a suitable learning environment, encouraging students to actively participate, helping students gain a sense of learning pleasure, and stimulating their learning motivation.

Keywords

Experiential Foreign Language Teaching; Theory; Practice

1. The concept of experiential learning

Experiential teaching originates from experiential learning. Experiential learning is the definition of the cognitive process of learning, which is a learning method for learners to acquire knowledge through personal experience. The experiential learning theory was proposed by American David Kolb in the early 1980s. Cooper uses four elements to describe the theoretical model of experiential learning: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts, and testing the meaning of concepts in new contexts. He believes that experiential learning can be described as a four stage cycle, in which specific experience is the basis of observation and reflection, and what is observed will be assimilated into new cognition or theory generated by deductive reasoning. Afterwards, these understandings or assumptions serve as guidelines for action, guiding future behavior and generating new experiences. Experiential English teaching is proposed based on the current development of foreign language teaching theory and drawing on the advantages of experiential learning. It advocates for increasing the content of classroom activities in English teaching, organizing students to participate in various types of language communication activities in the classroom, and achieving student-centered English teaching. With the continuous expansion of experiential foreign language teaching practice, researchers have begun to delve into the mechanism of experiential foreign language teaching in order to reverse the theoretical lag. At present, although there is no consensus in the education community on the concept of experiential foreign language teaching, it cannot be denied that experiential foreign language teaching has been widely applied. With the gradual passage of time and the increasing enrichment of work experience, experiential foreign language teaching has pioneered a new teaching model that

aims to help students gain positive psychological experiences, create an environment for students to learn independently, and use situational teaching, task teaching, and other basic methods to collect useful teaching resources using advanced information technology. Among them, paying attention to the various psychological changes that occur during students' learning process has become the most distinctive feature of experiential foreign language teaching. From this perspective, the experiential foreign language teaching model is highly humanistic, scientific, and contemporary. In traditional teaching models, students are treated as objects of knowledge dissemination, while the four elements of experiential foreign language teaching model revolve around the student as the main body. The first three elements directly point to students, reflecting the special laws of the psychological process of foreign language learning. 'Participation' refers to students no longer being the object of teaching, simply 'acquiring' foreign language knowledge, but actively participating in 'acquiring' foreign language communication skills as the main body of teaching (Hu Zhuanglin, 2007). Pleasure "refers to the process of foreign language acquisition, which must be achieved in a state where the learner can feel joy and joy. Resonance "refers to the state of spiritual resonance when the learner is fully immersed in learning, integrating emotions, thoughts, and concepts with the language content they are learning. Only when this state occurs is the ideal condition for the success of second language acquisition. The relationship between "participation", "pleasure", and "resonance" is not simply a linear causal relationship on the development chain. Participation is a prerequisite, but foreseeable pleasure and success can evoke active participation, and enjoying pleasure and success can further motivate people to fully participate. Joy is the precursor of resonance, and once the subject and object resonate, success is not far away; On the contrary, after experiencing success, it stimulates and strengthens the corresponding sense of pleasure and desire to participate. Although 'environment' does not directly enter the inner world of learners, it is the most prominent feature of second language acquisition that differs from other disciplines of education, and it is also a dependent condition on which foreign language teaching experience mechanisms occur. By fully utilizing modern information technology, integrating rich foreign language teaching resources, constructing a simulated language ecological environment that supports the elements of "participation", "pleasure", and "resonance", innovating teaching methods, and creating a humanistic environment conducive to communication and interactive learning, the teaching objectives set by the experiential foreign language teaching model can be achieved.

2. Research background and theoretical basis of experiential learning concept

2.1. Research background of experiential foreign language teaching

The idea of experiential teaching can be traced back to Socrates and Confucius in ancient Greece (Crosby, 1995; Cheng Qilong, 2009). But the more systematic concept of experiential education emerged in the early 20th century. In response to the traditional educational philosophy of the time, J. Dewey, a representative figure of progressive educational philosophy in the United States, proposed that people's cognitive needs for the objective world and spiritual world stem from the uncertainty and various problems they encounter when interacting with these worlds, and the way to obtain relevant knowledge is through direct contact with these worlds, that is, personal experience. Dewey believed that the human mind is a meaning making organ that constantly seeks to understand the external world. Because all true education comes from experience, school education should place students at the center of experience, while teachers play the role of collaborators and mentors (Crosby, 1995). In the middle of the 20th century, J. S. Bruner, an American psychologist and educator, proposed that students' learning, like scientists' scientific research, is a process of discovery. Traditional teaching methods

emphasize imparting knowledge to students and rote memorization of the knowledge they have learned. But for Bruner, learners are not passively accepting knowledge, but actively exploring and acquiring new knowledge, and then further analyzing and summarizing the new knowledge, transforming it into another form to adapt to new tasks or solve new problems, and gaining more knowledge on this basis. Learners also evaluate the process of knowledge transformation to check whether the knowledge or methods used are correct and suitable for the relevant task. Bruner emphasizes the intrinsic learning motivation of students, believing that only when students develop an interest in the learning content can their learning enthusiasm be fully unleashed (Qu Baokui et al., 1988). American psychologist C. R. Rogers divides learning into two types: cognitive learning and experiential learning. Learning methods can also be divided into two categories: meaningful learning and meaningless learning. Only experiential learning is meaningful learning. Experiential learning is centered on increasing students' experience, driven by their potential, and integrating learning activities, desires, interests, and needs, which can effectively promote individual development (Rogers, 1961; 1969). In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization, and international exchanges became increasingly frequent. Foreign language teaching reform faced higher requirements. Therefore, a new generation of university public English textbooks emerged, which not only emphasized the improvement of comprehensive language proficiency, but also focused on in-depth research and reflection on foreign language teaching models and methods. It is worth noting that in the context of popular higher education, there has been a significant change in the psychological tolerance and learning attitude of students. Many students believe that foreign languages are obscure and difficult to understand, leading to feelings of resistance and avoidance, ultimately forming obstacles to foreign language learning. In order to effectively prevent such negative psychological experiences from becoming a popular mentality in society, the designers of the new textbooks have begun to reflect on foreign language teaching methods, adhere to student-centered approach, pay special attention to students' foreign language learning experiences, and focus on developing new teaching resources that facilitate students' autonomous learning while emphasizing listening, speaking, and strengthening their comprehensive language application abilities. In addition, inspired by original multimedia technology, textbook designers have actively constructed a three-dimensional approach, focusing on stimulating students' resonance and pleasure through setting projects and creating scenes. The research and development of experiential foreign language course teaching resources began here. Then, inspired by the futurist Alvin Toffler, the researchers of the new textbook decided to use the word "experience" to summarize the characteristics of the new textbook, and named the textbook "College Experience English", thus establishing a new foreign language teaching direction and teaching philosophy. With the development and upgrading of over a hundred digital teaching resources, the concept of experiential foreign language teaching has been increasingly accepted and extended to other languages. Teaching practice, in turn, has promoted the development of experiential foreign language teaching. The connotation of experiential foreign language teaching has become increasingly rich, and the experiential foreign language teaching model has gradually matured.

2.2. Theoretical basis for experiential foreign language teaching

As early as 1772, Herder wrote in his book "On the Origin of Language": "Language is not a priori, but a product of perceptual activities. Therefore, the question of language origin can only be answered through empirical and inductive methods." "All ideas can only be formed through sensation, and there cannot be any independent and pre existing ideas. Language is a reflection of reason, Learning language knowledge through experiential learning not only has sufficient theoretical basis, but also has significant practical significance. Compared with the traditional "teacher centered" teaching philosophy, the experiential teaching concept has distinct characteristics of the times. This theory emphasizes the authenticity of the learning

environment and believes that the process of learning is the process of creation. This teaching philosophy is also a concrete manifestation of the constructivist teaching principles that are currently popular in Western education. Learners are no longer passive receivers of knowledge, but active builders of knowledge. The information imposed by the outside world can only become their own knowledge through the learner's active construction. Teaching is not the transmission of knowledge, but the transaction and transformation of knowledge. Teachers are not one-way knowledge transmitters, their role is to provide learners with rich learning contexts, help and guide learners to construct their own experiences, and encourage students to actively participate, practice, think, explore, and create. The emotional filtering hypothesis proposed by Krashen is an important theoretical basis for experiential teaching. Emotional theory pays particular attention to the important role that emotional factors play in learners' learning process. Krashen divides emotions into three categories: motivation, confidence, and anxiety. Lack of motivation, lack of confidence, and excessive anxiety can all become obstacles to language acquisition for learners, while clear motivation, full confidence, and low anxiety can help learners acquire a language faster and better. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to guiding students to overcome anxiety, and experiential teaching is an effective means. In experiential foreign language classrooms, teachers respect students' subjectivity and focus on creating a relaxed learning atmosphere for them. At the same time, teachers' own joyful emotions can also effectively infect students, help them overcome anxiety, truly relax, and fully immerse themselves in foreign language learning. In addition, Kolb is the main advocate of experiential learning theory, which is divided into four basic stages: experience, thinking, abstraction, and experimentation. In the experiential stage, learners need to immerse themselves in real situations to experience life and acquire knowledge during this process. Entering the thinking stage, the experimenter needs to summarize, analyze, and reflect on their own experiential activities. In the abstract stage, the experimenter needs to process the initial personal experience, transform perceptual knowledge into rational knowledge, and conceptualize it. In the experimental stage, the experimenter needs to enter a new context to test the theoretical assumptions made by the individual, and apply their knowledge and experience in other contexts.

3. Practical Application of Experiential Foreign Language Teaching

3.1. Creating a suitable learning environment

Creating a suitable learning and humanistic environment is the fundamental work for conducting experiential foreign language teaching. Overall, the key to experiential foreign language teaching lies in creating a foreign language learning environment that facilitates learners' inner experiences. To achieve this goal smoothly, teachers need to fully consider learners' learning needs and actively create a relaxed learning atmosphere for them. In addition, learners' own language learning environment also needs to possess three characteristics: (1) immediacy. Learners need to communicate and interact with the communicative object, that is, they need to quickly respond to a certain element output by the communicative object, and the communicative object also needs to provide timely feedback. Learners can obtain corresponding language activities based on the feedback. Therefore, in the process of conducting experiential foreign language teaching, teachers need to fully consider the individual needs of learners and make full use of campus educational resources to design more situational interaction modes for learners. (2) Authenticity. The so-called reality is not reality, but the need to ensure the effective combination of characters, language, and atmosphere. Teachers need to fully utilize modern science and technology to achieve this goal. (3) Cultural commonality. The so-called cultural commonality refers to various elements that can effectively connect learners' cultural context. In the context of foreign language teaching, the topics

created by teachers should reflect both the cultural connotations of the target language and the learners' mother tongue.

3.2. Encourage students to actively participate

Providing more opportunities for learners to participate in learning is the main teaching objective of experiential foreign language teaching. Specifically, participating in learning includes two forms: first, active participation; The second is passive participation. In terms of effectiveness, the former is superior to the latter. Therefore, teachers also need to respect students' subjectivity in the process of designing teaching tasks, and pay attention to guiding students to feel their own subjectivity, fully immerse themselves in foreign language learning and obtain corresponding experiences. In a suitable foreign language teaching environment, teachers need to focus on stimulating learners' foreign language learning initiative, encouraging them to actively participate in the foreign language learning process, and completing foreign language learning tasks in a relaxed learning atmosphere.

3.3. Helping students gain a sense of pleasure in learning

Experiential foreign language teaching activities focus on providing learners with a positive foreign language learning experience, thereby enabling them to gain joyful emotions and cultivate their interest in foreign language learning. In the process of foreign language learning, learners must actively exert their subjective initiative and strive to achieve their own value and obtain pleasure. In addition, teachers need to bravely overcome difficulties in designing teaching tasks and successfully turn learning challenges into learning interests.

3.4. Stimulating students' learning motivation

With the help of an ideal learning environment, experiential foreign language teaching can provide students with a pleasant learning experience and assist teachers in successfully achieving expected teaching objectives. After experiencing the joy of successful learning, students can actively evaluate their personal learning process and results, and provide more favorable conditions for entering a resonance state, which is the fundamental condition to assist students in successful learning. Therefore, teachers must carry out targeted teaching based on actual learning situations, help students achieve expected learning outcomes and experience the joy of successful learning, in order to stimulate students' learning motivation.

4. Conclusion

Experiential foreign language teaching respects students' dominant position in the classroom, advocates for students to improve their knowledge structure and improve their foreign language application abilities through experience. However, the application of experiential foreign language teaching is still in the exploratory stage, and educators still need to actively explore reform measures to continuously improve teaching effectiveness.

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