Research on the Teaching of English Reading from the Perspective of Schema Theory

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Abstract: Schema theory objectively reveals the process of reading, explains the law of reading scientifically, and provides a new theoretical basis and teaching practice basis for English teachers. Based on the author's learning and teaching experience, this paper first analyzed the role of schema theory in English reading teaching, and then summarized the obstacles in students' English reading comprehension from the perspective of schema theory. Finally, the work put forward the steps to apply schema theory in English reading teaching.

1. Introduction

Schema theory originated in Gestalt psychology, and Bartlett is the main representative. He pointed out that: Schema is the reflection of past experience and the positive organization of past experience. Rumelhalt, an American educationist, has made an important contribution to the improvement of this theory [1]. He believes that schema is the unit of knowledge accumulated together, a building block of cognition, which involves events and objects of any kind. It is a summary of the sum and classification of all knowledge in a person's memory. Schema theory holds that all knowledge is formed into small units, which are called schemata. What is contained in these units, in addition to the knowledge itself, is also about how this knowledge is applied [2]. The connotation of schema theory is that when people understand new information correctly, they need to associate it with the background knowledge such as known concepts, past experiences and so on.

2. The Role of Schema Theory in English Reading Teaching

2.1 Help Students form Correct Understanding on Article.

Schema is the key to comprehensive understanding of the information of the article. In fact, the process of understanding is the process in which the reader chooses the appropriate schema to explain and correctly understand the article. With the help of schema, the reader can extract relevant information from past experiences, decode it in memory, and correctly understand the article by combining the relevant words, sentences, grammar and other language information. Generally speaking, the more schemata readers have, the better their reading comprehension is. As Rumelhalt pointed out, schemata have the function of interpreting and understanding events, things, or situations. If the reader has the relevant schema which can explain the content described in a article, they can correctly understand the content of the article.

2.2 Improve the Accuracy for Article Prediction.

Schema is also a tool to correctly predict new information. From the perspective of schema theory, prediction always occurs along with the reading process. It is a very special activity in the process of reading. When the appropriate schema is confirmed, the reader will predict the text reasonably on the basis of the previous experience or the acquired background knowledge. In other words, schemata can provide relevant knowledge for predicting the next content of the text. As long as readers have the language knowledge and content schema related to the text, it is possible for them to predict the text effectively. With the accumulation of readers' schemata, they can constantly

correct and reconstruct their own schemata in the process of prediction.

2.3 Be Conducive to Improving Readers' Memory.

The individual's schema not only affects self-learning, but also has an impact on memory. Rumelhalt pointed out that memory is as object-oriented as it is to be understood. In reading comprehension, the reader tends to actively seek the information they are interested in rather than to passively wait for the presence of such information [3]. The required information can be extracted from the schema by an active search. In general, in the course of memory, the schema first provides an occasion for the details of the brain search memory, so that the memory searching process can complete the look-up from the general information to the specific information. The schema then provides the editing criteria for the output of the information to help remember to select or discard some of the information.

2.4 Promote the Attention and Concentration of Readers.

Anderson believes that schemata can provide a basis for finding and determining the main points of a article. It is generally believed that some readers with high reading ability will use their schemata knowledge to quickly find out the main points of the article and identify them as knowledge points that require high concentration in the process of reading [4]. In other words, readers' schemata have selective functions to help them distinguish between important and secondary information in the reading process. With the help of schemata, it is easy for readers to grasp what information is important and useful to them. In this way, they can ignore secondary information in reading in order to focus on these key messages.

3. The Obstacles in Students' English Reading Comprehension from the Perspective of Schema Theory

3.1 The Lack of linguistic Schema.

The linguistic schema is the basis for students to read and comprehend, and it is the premise and prerequisite of reading and comprehending. Since students do not have the linguistic knowledge schema related to reading materials, such as vocabulary, grammar and idiom, and there is no schema to explain the sentence structure, the meaning of key words and so on, therefore, the so-called language barrier is formed. Vocabulary is a major obstacle leading to students' reading difficulty [5]. Science, technical and professional vocabularies are widely used in nautical English reading, in addition to a large number of derivations and abbreviations. If there are too many new words, the keywords are new words, or a word has different meanings, it will affect students' correct understanding of the contents.

3.2 The Lack of Content Schema.

Content schema refers to the readers' familiarity with the subject of the reading material, or the relevant background and context information in the mind. The background information and context knowledge helps to understand or explain the main purpose and the main idea of the article [6]. When readers have a good understanding of the main purpose and the main idea of the reading material, they can have a better understanding of the language knowledge and thus a better understanding of the reading material. The lack of content schema refers to the lack of appropriate relevant background information in the mind or the lack of relevant information in the existing knowledge structure. Under such a premise, students cannot understand or understand the content involved in the reading material, so that the students can not understand or have the difficulty to understand the contents involved in the reading material, which can affect the understanding of the overall contents. For a long time, it has been believed that pronunciation, grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary are the main factors that directly affect and determine the ability of reading and comprehending, however, the factors that affect the ability of reading and comprehending are far more than these for professional English [7].

4. The Application Steps of Schema Theory in English Reading Teaching

4.1 Strengthening the Language Foundation of Students.

The language is quite colorful. People who grow up in different cultures have different ideas, values and codes of conduct. Based on schema theory, the more readers possess the language, contents and rhetorical results of the reading materials, the deeper their understanding extent will be. Therefore, in order to activate the relevant schema, college students with English as the second language must have language ability to a certain extent. For foreign languages, they must have as much language knowledge as possible. Therefore, in daily teaching, teachers should require students to lay the foundation of vocabulary and grammar, accumulate the knowledge of language schema continuously, enlarge the quantity of words, firmly grasp grammar and enhance analytical ability.

4.2 Expanding the Background Knowledge of Students.

A large number of studies have shown that if students only learn associative meaning, social meaning and application rules of certain words or language phenomena, but lack the necessary cultural background knowledge, they can not understand the reading materials correctly. However, due to the influence of traditional language teaching methods, students pay more attention to the basic knowledge of language than to the knowledge of social and cultural background. The lack of cultural background knowledge always contributes to the obstacles of reading. Different language countries have different cultural customs [9]. The understanding of linguistic meaning depends a large extent on the understanding of cultural traditions and customs. The differences between the Chinese and the Western cultures often lead to the understanding difficulties to students. They can not understand the article correctly and sometimes misinterpret it since many customs lack relevant background knowledge, therefore, they cannot infer, judge and predict the problem in the reading comprehension articles. For example, in the proverb "Everyone must bear his own cross", the word "cross" refers to the cross carried by Jesus in his martyrdom, which refers to the burden and suffering of life endured by everyone. If students do not understand this background knowledge, it is difficult for them to understand the meaning of the sentence. In the process of reading teaching, it can be seen that students are able to understand the reading materials more comprehensively when possessing the background knowledge related to reading materials; However, they will encounter difficulties in the process of reading if they do not have the background knowledge. Therefore, the lack of content schema often leads to the failure of understanding, which requires teachers to teach the students some cultural background knowledge when teaching the text paragraphs. Studying the background knowledge can stimulate the students' ability of thinking and imagining. Students' interest in learning can be mobilized if students understand the background culture, which is helpful for teachers to use the teaching materials and expand the students' knowledge.

4.3 Activating and Improving Students' Previous Experience.

For many students, reading is still a passive process. They only absorb information passively and often feel it boring. Reading teachers are supposed to help students activate existing schema by discussing, asking questions and setting questions before reading in order to cultivate students' reading interest and improve reading efficiency [10]. Since students have already collected and grasped the information which is same as the author' views, they will be very positive in reading and have a good reading effect. Then, teachers explain the text again, especially the points where students missed. In this way, it improves and enriches the schema knowledge in students' brains. Asking questions before reading is an effective way to arouse students' reading interest and improve their reading efficiency by activating the existing schema in their brains and by comparing and analyzing the existing schema.

5. Summary

Schema theory shows the laws of people's pre-knowledge structure affecting people's

post-knowledge structure, which brings new ideas and methods for reading and teaching, and provides theoretical basis for popular language learning and improvement of language comprehension. Foreign language learning is a positive thinking activity. Students can use schema knowledge to actively decode the language and text materials they have learned, so as to obtain important information. Therefore, in college English teaching, teachers should combine the teaching content and background knowledge as far as possible, make full use of the existing knowledge structure of students, try to help students activate existing schemata, establish new schemata, and maximize the students' subjective initiative in order to improve students' reading comprehension ability.

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