

A Reflection and Implication of Postmodern Curriculum on Contemporary English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Postmodernism, as a cultural trend and thought, has a great impact on traditional English teaching concepts. Postmodernism advocates that English teaching should create a good atmosphere of self-organization of teaching, conduct teaching in equal interaction between teachers and students, pay attention to students' experience and establish a diversified and humanistic evaluation system. Through analyzing the status quo and challenges of English education and introducing William Doll's curriculum theory, this article aims to give implication to our teaching practices. Doll's "4 Rs" theory are richness, recursion, relation, and rigorousness, which shed light on current teaching and the relationship between teacher and students and play an important role in the middle school English teaching evaluation.

Keywords

Postmodernism; 4R Theory; English teaching.

1. Introduction

Post-modernism education is a term that characterized by indeterminacy and unpredictability. A postmodern curriculum theory is a theory that criticizes and reflects on various traditional curriculum theories. It emphasizes that curriculum is constructive and non-linear, formative rather than predetermined, and considers curriculum as a "complete culture" of dynamic interaction among teachers, children, teaching materials and environment, as well as a dynamically balanced "ecosystem" (Oliver,1999). The course is to be metaphorical and interpretive, and the meaning of the course is constructed through interaction between teachers and students. No one owe the truths but everyone has right to be understood so it remains dynamic and uncertainty. However, in current English teaching situation, everything is stipulated. The following phenomenon deserve sparking discussion:

First, not only teachers are burnout of performing the classes but the students are "controlled" to follow the monotonous linear pattern. Both of them are not to blame, but what's the root cause that hinder their mind from flowing? It is plausible to resort to the guiding ideology and trace back to the superstructure thoughts. It is occasional that modernism-setting always seek the certainty and the best way to chase the so-called goal. All the process are set to a regular pattern with standard procedure which can projected in as large aspect as the school's teaching schedule and also as tiny as how to lead in a new class (Papastephanou,2014). Students' individual differences are neglected and their appeal are treated nonchalantly, even worse, they don't realize that they almost lose the awareness to against the pattern and become institutionalized. But how can all the stuffs be well-ordered like the product in the machine (Jin, Yu, 2004). It's antisocial and anti-science. We are calling for a new paradigm to remedy this kind of issue.

Second, mechanical training cause damage to a creative mind. That's why our students become tame and prudent and always toe the line. Though they get high score in exam, something much more important are being abandoned. They are injured in the way that they are unaware. In my

own experience, when be accustomed to mechanical thinking, it would be difficult to embrace diversity and divergent thinking. Memory is not the ending of the journal, but memory is only a origin. In the modernism classroom, teacher tend to present students the materials, paraphrase them and then asking students to finish matched exercises, without thinking critically. Those who cannot stand this pattern become bad students and lose interest in learning, worse still, they even express that they are not able to think.

Third, English teaching is a systematical process including language competence, thinking quality, culture awareness and learning competence. Not a single one can be omitted. As a quasi-teacher, it is supposed that we be equipped with the scientific theories and be qualified to design a good lesson plan and conduct a lesson while permeating the above element in order that being resonated with student's thinking.

The mind changes will inevitably lead to education revolution, though the changes in thinking always are greeted with suspicion. We at least walk out the first step to practice the new paradigm within our tiny class, then inspire our colleague, further our superiors and so on. Every attempt counts.

How to overcome the existing education dilemma remains a challenge, in this case, new theory of curriculum are calling for attention. Dole, the representative of postmodern curriculum theory in The United States put forward the famous "4R" teaching theory in the field of education. It mainly criticized the modern stipulated teaching mode and method. Based on the principle of chaos, it creatively applied Dewey's empiricism and Piaget's biological world view and proposed the famous "4R" theory in the educational circle. It is the model of "richness", "recursion", "relation" and "rigor" of post-modern curriculum education. (Doll,1993)

2. Richness

Richness refers to the multiplicity and possibilities of a course in terms of consciousness or interpretation. The traditional teaching mode only attaches importance to the basic knowledge in text books and places the knowledge learned by students at a basic level. However, Doll believes that the modern curriculum teaching concept should leave an uncertain zone, thus making the curriculum become challenging and dissipative. Doll also believes that when teaching a certain subject for students, teachers should relate their own characteristics and related professional vocabulary so that they can fully explain the subject in their own way. The effective way to richness explanation is through continuous reasoning, deduction, proof and classroom games.

3. Recursion

Recursion refer to the modern circular operation model, but different from the stable and changeable repeated operation. Since recursion is equivalent to cyclic operation, which can be understood as the starting point is its end point, and the end point is the starting point of the next in a round operation. For this reason, the author believes that each unit and section of the course is not isolated, but a whole that needs to be linked through constant reflection. In the return of the curriculum, conversation becomes the necessary path to success.

4. Relation

Marxist philosophy tells us that everything in the world is universally connected. Well, the same is true for course knowledge. The concept of relevance plays an important role in improving the learning efficiency of post-modern curriculum knowledge. The main way is to strengthen the communication and interaction between teachers and students, through which culture be directly sublimated from the original local or regional to the global. The relavant in the course,

mainly including the connection between the knowledge within the course (such as the links between units, the links between sections) and the links between courses.

Therefore, in the actual teaching process, teachers should cultivate the ability to learn with the connection method.

5. Rigorousness

It can be said that rigor is the most important and critical of the four criteria. Its role is to prevent transformational courses from falling into "sentimentalist solipsism" and "creeping relativism". The rigor here cannot be equated with academic logicity, scientific observation and mathematical accuracy, but a new concept of redemarcation, which is the synthesis of interpretation and uncertainty.

Teacher is not to accumulate amass of materials to perform the topic, but turn the subject into a way that trigger provoking thought and try to make learners think out of the box(Romer,2009). Being unrest and disturbance, teachers are urged to stepped out of the comfort zone and thus a stage of imbalance is generated.

First, texts are to be used, not to be followed. In traditional class, teaching materials are highly narrowed and only refer to textbook. Teachers are under the guideline of syllabus and it seems that to paraphrase the textbook with an aim of passing the exam is the general goal of instruction. However, under the influence of post-modernism, it is supposed that the teachers play a role as an instructor, guiding learners' behaviors and inspiring their ability in expressing, observing and thinking. In this way, the one who was stuck merely to the content of textbook is not the good teacher we want. Many teachers used to write lesson plans according to this kind of limited material which are far from broadening learners' horizon still less opening their mind. Heuristic theories are requested to move the instruction forward.

Second, the role of teacher is not to transmit established knowledge, but to cause "disequilibrium" in learners' mind. Being satisfied with existing knowledge cannot generate advance but when disturbance in mind is aroused can cognition be upgraded. Current teaching mode tend to focus on how to comprehend the "fixed" knowledge and remember them so that the examination will be easier. In this way, learners for want of the critical thinking and zone for expansion. When learners notice his inadequacy and the gap between his current level and the level he wants to achieve, he will trigger his process of thinking.

Third, it is advocated that class be conducted holistically but not be implemented piecemeal. In current teaching pattern, English classes are divided in to mainly two types: classes about knowledge and class about skills. For example, the class about knowledge includes pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar class; the class about skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing class. We are truly aware of the importance of each component. Without grammar, little can be done, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed; And grammar is considered as important as skeleton of the human body. Being a language, English cannot be acquired comprehensively in separated way. We are forced to obey this pattern largely due to the Teaching Qualification Examination, which have a rigid classification of the class type for assessment at great length.

The last but not least, the belief that people habitually consistent are not necessarily truth. We are supposed to have a courage to break the routines. Some standstill belief be stuck in people's mind and they are the very one who are stubborn and cannot receive the novel thought because of the inertia of thinking. Their mind are close, failing to realize that the overlap between the truth and the belief may be poorly justified.

The 4R theory can shed light on current English education in the following ways:

6. Enlightenment for Teachers

In teaching instructions, a student-centered teaching mode is calling for attention. Teachers are encouraged to collect relevant teaching materials in advance and assign tasks to students as well as different teaching modules according to the specific teaching content. Teachers are also encouraged to share knowledge, transferring the teaching mode from the “spoon-feeding” teaching into heuristic teaching and “interacting-centered” of the teaching form. Teachers are to be considered as the designer of classroom activities and the encourager of students. For students with different levels, teachers should set different assignments in order to fully mobilize their enthusiasm, and give priority to cultivating students' ability to internalize language.

Teachers had better put forward various learning tasks according to their current level, and let students make full use of the library, online resources, to achieve independent searching, thinking, analyzing, discussing the problem. Helping students establish self-confidence, especially for introverted, shy or low-proficiency students is of great importance, for it gives more encouragement and praise to fully arouse the enthusiasm of students to learn English. Stimulate students' interest in learning, cultivate their awareness of participation, and form a student-centered teaching facilitate a benign relationship between teachers and students. English learning should be a process for students to express themselves, develop interpersonal communication, have a better understanding of friendship, and guide students to express and exchange their real opinions in English.

7. Enlightenment for Students

Postmodern educators believe that knowledge is not immutable, and teaching is not a process of acquiring knowledge but the process in which students constantly internalize knowledge by using their metacognition with the help of teachers. Students are advocated to take the initiative to participate in classrooms activities, improve their self-motivation, cooperate with other students in terms of the activities assigned by the teacher, and actively communicate with the teacher when they encounter problems.

8. Enlightenment to the Teaching Process

The teaching process mainly involves teaching method, teaching content and teaching evaluation. For this reason, three aspects of post-modernism to do with the teaching process of enlightenment will be illustrated mainly in the following ways:

Teaching method: whether the teaching method is appropriate or not will seriously affect the realization of teaching objectives. Therefore, the classroom should not only include teachers' collective teaching, but students can also acquire their information related to the related content through various platforms such as multimedia and Internet in order to strengthen the discussion between teachers and students, and promote students' participation in the classroom.

Teaching content: the teaching materials should be selected according to different students and different level of the content of the textbook. Teaching materials are not just part of the teaching content, which reminds us that teachers should provide students with some cultural, social and native knowledge and culture of western countries.

Teaching evaluation: teaching evaluation is an important bridge during the teaching process. Evaluation as a feedback means should be procedural and dynamic. Teachers can learn students' learning situation, adjust teaching content or progress, and carry out continuous test and evaluation to promote students' progress through the spiraling cycle of teaching-evaluation-re-teaching-re-evaluation.

Although people have different opinions about postmodernism, the theory of learning has indeed exerted extensive and profound positive influence on our current English teaching theory, and it is hoped that it can also play a certain guiding and practical significance to our teaching, and still great effort need to be exerted to put this kind of belief into practice, and in future career.

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