Study on How to Carry out Effective Lead-in Activities in the English Reading Class of Senior High School

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Abstract. The proper lead-in activity is an essential part in English reading class of senior high school. However, a large number of English teachers can’t make full use of the lead-in activity. Therefore, there exist many problems in English reading class. Based on many years’ teaching experience, the author aims to probe into the importance of lead-in activities, and come up with some suggestions on the principles and ways of carrying out lead-in activities in English reading class.

Keywords: reading teaching, current situation, principles of lead-in.

1. Introduction

The reading teaching is an important part of English teaching in senior high school. Among the most commonly-used English teaching materials used in Shandong province, each module has five units, which includes one intensive reading and one extensive reading. Both of them are closely related to the topic of this unit. The topics are diverse, varying from biography to environment protection. Because the passages are usually very long and even contain some complicated words, it is very hard for students to fully focus on what they are learning. Therefore, while carrying out reading teaching, English teachers need to design an attractive and reasonable lead-in activity. Though lead-in activities only take up no more than five minutes, it is the beginning of each class and can decide the teaching effects. If a proper lead-in activity is developed, the students are sure to be attracted by the class and therefore develop a strong interest in the class. On the contrary, if there is no lead-in activity, it will be difficult for students to get involved in the reading class positively. On the whole, the lead-in activity plays a vital role in reading class [1].

2. The Current Situation of English Reading Teaching in Senior High School

With the issue of New English Curriculum Standards, most of English teachers have realized the important and positive effects that lead-in activities have on the reading class, however, because of a lack of systematic guidance, they don’t know how to design and carry out this activity properly. The author made a survey about the current situation of lead-in activities. The survey was carried out in High School Attached to Shandong Normal University. The interviewed students and teachers were all from Grade One and Grade Two. From the investigation, the author found many problems. For example, some of the lead-in activities are not related to the topic; some are lack of variety; some don’t have a clear intention and so on. Some teachers and students even hold a wrong belief that it is a waste of time to carry out lead-in activities in class.

3. The Importance of Lead-in Activity

Firstly, a well-designed lead-in activity can quickly arouse students’ interest and help them be fully prepared for the class. Even for students in high school, it is not easy to focus on the class instantly as soon as the class begins. If the teacher begins the class directly without any lead-in, he can’t get the expected teaching result. However, an interesting lead-in activity can shift students’ attention to the class quickly, hence guarantee the smooth conduction of the class [2].
Secondly, a well-designed lead-in activity can strengthen students’ interest in study and stimulate their learning motivation. Interest is the best teacher. The lead-in activity in reading class generally have various forms such as vivid picture, interesting video and lively discussion. Through these activities, the teacher can provide students with an authentic circumstance and motivate students’ interest in the topic, which eventually will make students keep an active and positive learning state.

Thirdly, a well-designed lead-in activity can inspire students to think positively and improve their ability of thinking. Positive and active thinking is the key to successful teaching. In lead-in activities, the teacher may arouse students’ thirst for knowledge by the way of questioning and discussing. If the students are curious about a certain question and eager to think about it, he has developed a strong thirst for the knowledge. In such a case, if the teacher gives students illumination, the teaching effect will be beyond our expectation. And students’ minds can be extremely active.

Fourthly, a well-designed lead-in activity can improve students’ ability to use English comprehensively. The lead-in activities encourage students to take an active part in, which is also a good opportunity for students to improve their ability of using English comprehensively. The teacher may use different activities to encourage students to use what they have learnt to join in the activity. Therefore, it can not only add pleasure to learning, but also creates an opportunity for students to fully express themselves in English. Moreover, students’ spoken English will be improved accordingly [3].

4. The Principles of Designing Lead-in Activities

While designing lead-in activities, the English teacher may as well take the following principles into consideration. Firstly, the lead-in activity should be student-centered. New English Curriculum Standards puts emphasis on the belief that the teaching must be student-centered. Therefore, students’ learning should be the beginning and ending of teaching, which is intended to bring students’ initiative into play. That is to say, while designing lead-in activities, the English teacher must take students’ personal factors into consideration, such as students’ personal experience, interests, learning competence and attitudes. If the teacher can’t take these factors into account, it is impossible for him to attain satisfying teaching effects. Secondly, a proper lead-in activity should be aimed at the topic. Lead-in activities serve the teaching objects, and aim to catch students’ attention and interest in a short period. So, lead-in activities should be aimed at the key points. Thirdly, the lead-in activity should be effective and compact. As the beginning of each class, the lead-in activity serves as the warming-up of the class. Therefore, this activity should be limited into five to ten minutes, and can’t take up too much time. Fourthly, a proper lead-in activity should be interesting, diverse and contemporary. Interest is the best teacher. It is necessary that the lead-in activity should be interesting, so the students’ learning interest and eagerness for knowledge can be stimulated. Besides, the form of lead-in activity should be diverse. At last, the design of activity should be closely related to students’ life, which requires the English teacher to be familiar with students’ interests, personal characteristics and inner world. Only in this way will students be open to the teacher and the knowledge [4].

5. The Most Commonly-used Methods of Leading-in

To start with, the English teacher may use interesting pictures related to the topic to carry out the lead-in activity. The network provides abundant pictures, the teacher may carry out the lead-in activity by the vivid ways of description and questioning. This method is sure to arouse students’ interest and expand their knowledge horizon. Besides, multimedia audio visual method is also widely-used in reading class. This is one of the most attractive methods. It is suggested that the teacher should use English songs and movies to arouse student’s interest. Here to be sure, teachers need to constantly update their repository for students to grasp the content of the latest and to achieve the ideal effect. What’s more, role play is also very popular with students. In the teaching, teachers can guide students to do the role play through body language, which will help students master the relevant knowledge. This method is direct and simulative, and can help students form the habit and ability of thinking in
English. Also, it can make students get a full and accurate understanding of the teaching content. Finally, it is sure to improve students’ learning. At last, the teacher may use background knowledge to carry out the lead-in activity. The teacher should collect relevant background knowledge through various channels in advance, then lead students to the authentic context by the way of background introduction and author introduction. This method cannot only make preparations for the following teaching process but also expand students’ knowledge horizon, and help students get in touch with more relevant information.

6. Conclusion

   All in all, as the catalyst of classroom, the function and importance of lead-in activity can’t be ignored. While designing lead-in activities, the English teacher should combine the characters of the teaching material with students’ actual situation. A proper and effective lead-in activity should be students-centered, clearly-aimed, interesting and diverse. It is supposed to attract students’ attention at the very beginning of a class, which is a prerequisite to guarantee the quality of classroom teaching.

References