An Empirical Study on Situational Teaching in College Business English

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With the development of the society in the era, great importance has been attached to English education, especially College Business English education. Under the guidance of the new teaching ideas, new teaching thoughts and new teaching strategies, though Business English teachers start to adopt all kinds of teaching methods to inspire students' interest and improve teaching effect, the current situation of College Business English education in our country is not optimistic. The outstanding problem lies in that the teaching process emphasizes the diffusion of learning, ignores penetration of emotion, and lacks environment of using Business English. There is no denying that the current teaching models will cause negative effect on students' Business English learning. Yet English situational teaching is precisely an ideal teaching method to solve the current situation.

Keywords: Business English teaching, situational teaching, causes and suggestions

Introduction

With the development of the society and globalization process of the economy, English is becoming more and more important in our work and life. Emphasis is placed on English education by the society, especially College Business English education. Nevertheless, the current situation of English education in our country is not satisfactory. The obvious problem lies in that English teaching attaches great importance to knowledge teaching and training of concept and reasoning. It is lack of emotional infiltration and accumulation and affluent language environment, which in consequence causes certain negative effects. From teachers' perspective, strongly influenced by traditional teaching methods, they mostly teach vocabularies and grammar in a mechanical way, totally ignoring the cultivation of students' abilities of listening and speaking. As a result, this English teaching method will make a considerable number of students unable to communicate flexibly with learned language and lose their interests in learning English.

Scholars have done many researches on English situational teaching. In western countries, in the early 1980s, Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (1999) wrote a book *The School of Language and Teaching*. The authors had summarized the characteristics of the Situational Teaching Method for the first time. To avoid confusion, they adopted Situational Language Teaching (SLT). Since then, SLT becomes the pronoun of Situational Teaching Method. Situational Teaching Method is the origin of English teaching. In 2001, Nunan presents the TBL (Task-Based Language Teaching). It emphasizes that during the process of language

teaching, the task should be completed in situations. For example, Brown and Yule claim in the book *Teaching the Spoken Language* that listening teaching cannot do without the creation of situation. Listening plays the most important role in the oral communication of people's daily life (2000, p. 5). And Stern also puts emphasis on the significance of situations. He wrote in his book called *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* that we cannot carry out language teaching without facing the social factors related to language and affecting language (1999, p. 191). In addition, Chen from Jiangxi Normal University mentions in her work "English Situational Teaching Under the New Curriculum" that it is quite essential to create relevant situations for English teaching in College Business English education because of some reasons such as requirements of the New Curriculum and the aim of current English teaching (2008, p. 32). The New Curriculum points out: In College Education, the aim is based on students' development in language knowledge, language skills, learning strategies, emotional attitude, and cultural awareness and cultivates students' comprehensive ability to use language (1999, p. 8). Besides, she also introduces some principles of creating situations in an English class such as principle of subjectivity, the principle of mutual infiltration of cognition and emotion, and the principle of hierarchy and difference (1999, pp. 38-40). And Sun also mentioned four measures of creating situations, namely, authentic situations, visual aids, body language, and games (2015, p. 200). Besides, Song from Shenyang Normal University introduces four principles of creating effective situations for English teaching, namely, principle of straightness, principle of practice, principle of novelty, and principle of closeness to life (2011, pp. 28-30). In a word, all the researches that have been done do not pay much attention to the study of English situational teaching from a perspective of certain areas. As a matter of fact, teachers in different areas behave differently and the implementation of English situational teaching is also not the same.

An Overview of English Situational Teaching

The concept of situation teaching was firstly proposed by Brown, Collin, and Duguid in the essay "Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning" in 1989. In their points of view, knowledge is meaningful only when it is applied to practice. It cannot be separated from the context and the best way to learn is learning in the context (1989, pp. 32-34). The definition of situational teaching varies from person to person. Situational teaching is to create situations in which real matters and questions are involved. During the process of exploring matters and dealing with questions, students understand knowledge and construct meanings by themselves (Zhang, 2000, p. 477). Wei holds his opinion that situational teaching is designed according to the needs of teaching. On the basis of texts, teachers create concrete situations to arouse students' active learning so as to achieve the best teaching effect (1996, p. 25). Situational teaching is a teaching method which is aimed at helping students understand teaching content quickly and accurately and promoting their all-round development of psychological function (Xu, 2000, p. 5).

In general, situational teaching is a special teaching method, whose core is situation. It is not a method about repeated and tedious teaching but aims at creating different situations that are relevant to teaching contents and close to students' daily life, which will help students understand teaching contents easily and correctly, inspire their interests and motivation, and improve teaching efficiency. The features of situational teaching lie that it integrates language, actions, and situations and it is intuitive, scientific, and interesting. However, there is distinction between situational teaching and introduction of situations during teaching. Situations in situational teaching are logical and sequential that are designed by teachers to promote students'

overall development in knowledge, emotion, and will. And introduction of situations in teaching is merely to help students have a better understanding of texts and teaching contents.

English situational teaching is based on the theory of situational teaching. It refers to create concrete and vivid situations in English teaching to achieve the goal of language use. And situations created in English teaching are close to students and real life and relevant to students' ages. It aims at creating chance as much as possible for students to use English in authentic situations. Therefore, students will be inspired to express their ideas and emotions in English and communicate with others in English too. Thus, students are able to understand and use language appropriately and their overall development in emotion and knowledge is promoted gradually.

Situations created in English situational teaching are close to students' real life, that is to say, authentic and vivid. In an English lesson full of situations, students' learning interests are greatly motivated and they are more willing to express their own thoughts and emotions and communicate with others in English. Therefore, students' language potential is going to fully embodied and developed. The traditional English teaching method ignores the creation of abundant situations in English teaching, which unavoidably causes tedious teaching and makes students lose interest and divert attention from English learning. What distinguishes traditional English teaching and English situational teaching lies that the latter gets students to study English happily and accordingly enjoy English learning by means of creating a variety of authentic situations. Since students are willing to participate in English learning, teachers are likely to inspire their learning initiative. As a result, students will cultivate lasting interest of learning English and English teaching is going to be improved a great deal. English situational teaching creates concrete and vivid situations according to relevant teaching demands and the actual needs of students, which fully reflects cognitive factors and emotional factors in teaching. From emotion, situational teaching stimulates students' emotions and promotes students' cognitive activities and some knowledge seems not quite abstract and boring. From knowledge, as students have a better understanding of learning contents owing to situational teaching, their cognitive time is shortened and their speed of understanding is accelerated. In situational teaching, cognition and emotion are carried out together, achieving the optimization of English teaching.

Firstly, situational teaching is conducive to stimulate students' learning interest and learning motivation. As far as junior middle students are concerned, most of them do not have clear motivation to study and pleasure of a lesson is probably the dynamic that attracts them to enjoy the class. If they view an English lesson as boring and tedious, it is likely that they will not devote themselves to study and gradually lose interests in this class. On the contrary, if an English lesson is full of different interesting activities, students are willing to join in these activities and begin to learn English under the guidance of teachers. And English situational teaching is precisely a special method that can attract students' eyes and get them to actively be involved in English learning. It emphasizes the students-centered conception and advocates free and equal relationship between students and teachers and it thinks highly of the utilization of all sorts of vivid language, beautiful music, wonderful videos, and interesting activities to teach English. In English situational teaching, students will find how beautiful and joyful the English class is. As a consequence, their learning interests and motivation are stimulated and their initiative is improved.

Then, English situational teaching is beneficial to cultivate students' awareness of cooperation. It advocates teaching method like interactive teaching model. During English situational teaching, teachers often create situations such as talking, competing, role-play, survey, and game. If students want to finish the above

tasks, they have to work in a group. Each of them in a group has his own task that is arranged on the basis of his ability and personality and every member is expected to spare no efforts to complete his own task carefully and take his own responsibility. In this process of cooperative work, students unavoidably help and encourage each other; thus, they cultivate their awareness of cooperation and right awareness of competition and consolidate friendship between classmates. Taking role-play as an instance, those whose English abilities are brilliant are expected to help those who are poor in English when they are preparing for role-play. And only when members in a group cooperate with each other can they successfully and vividly show the scene presented in the text.

Design of the Research Concerning With English Situational Teaching

Research Questions

The study of English situational teaching carried out in College Business English education is aimed at discussing the following questions:

(1) What's the current situation of English situational teaching in College Business English?

(2) What are the problems of situational teaching in College Business English education?

(3) What are the countermeasures of dealing with the problems in College Business English education?

Research Subjects

The participants in this research are students and English teachers in College Business English education in Guangzhou. A total of 120 students are chosen randomly to do the questionnaire who are in Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9. Besides, three English teachers in College Business English education are invited as interviewees for the purpose of understanding current English situational teaching better.

Research Methods

Questionnaire is used among students so as to investigate current implementation of situational teaching in College Business English education and find out students' thoughts and emotions about English situational teaching in their actual English learning. There are totally 15 items included in the questionnaire, 13 of which are single selections and the rest are multiple selections. The main content of the questionnaire consists of the current situation of English teaching, students' attitude towards English situational teaching, their opinions about the effect of English situational teaching, and the types of teaching situations created in English teaching.

Interviews are designed to investigate thoughts and emotions of English teachers about English situational teaching in College Business English education. And teachers can provide valuable information according to their own teaching experience. The interview time is around 30 minutes for each teacher and six questions are mentioned in the interview.

Data Analysis

A total of 120 questionnaires were given out among students in College Business English education in Bozhou University. In collecting data of these questionnaires, three questionnaires are identified as invalid or not fully answered, so the number of questionnaire that can be adopted is 117. So the efficiency of the questionnaire is 97.5%. The data collected from questionnaires are analyzed with the help of Microsoft Excel. And the data are analysed from three aspects which include the current situation of English teaching, students'

emotion and attitude towards situational teaching and its effect, and actual implementation of situational teaching in College Business English education in Bozhou University.

General Situation of Current English Teaching in Three Dimensions

The first part of the questionnaire is to find out the current situation of English teaching in Taoyuan College Business English education from the following three dimensions: students' interest towards current English teaching, current models of English teaching in three grades, and students' emotion toward models of current English teaching.

Table 1

Students' Interest Towards Current English Teaching

Grade	With great interest	With interest	Indifference	With no interest	With no interest greatly
Freshman	22.5%	40%	27.5%	5%	5%
Sophomore	20%	47.5%	20%	7.5%	5%
Junior	10.81%	18.92%	35.14%	29.73%	5.41%

Table 2

Current Models of English Teaching in Three Grades

Grade	Mainly pure knowledge teaching, with low interest	Knowledge and situations are combined, with moderate interest	Situational teaching are stressed, with high interest
Freshman	12.5%	52.5%	35.5%
Sophomore	22.5%	52.5%	25%
Junior	45.92%	43.24%	10.81%

Table 3

Students' Emotion Towards Models of Current English Teaching

Grade	With great interest	With interest	Indifference	With no interest	With no interest greatly
Freshman	20%	37.5%	25%	10%	7.5%
Sophomore	12.5%	40%	30%	10%	7.5%
Junior	10.81%	21.62%	35.14%	27.03%	5.41%

The above three tables vividly show that students' attitude and emotion towards current English teaching and its teaching models are quite different. In Grade 7 and Grade 8, the percent of applying the model of combining knowledge and situations is both 52.5 and the percentage of stressing situational teaching lies in the second. And the number of teachers who tend to teach knowledge purely is the least. Therefore, the majority of students in Grade 7 and Grade 8 are interested in current English models and enjoy current English learning. When it comes to Grade 9, due to a heavy pressure load, situational teaching is not emphasized. The percentage of applying the method of mainly pure knowledge teaching is 45.92 which is the highest. Yet the percent of stressing situational teaching is only 10.81. In consequence, most students in Grade 9 consider current English teaching as just so or even dull which cannot arouse their interest a great deal.

The second part of the questionnaire is to investigate students' perspective about situational teaching from the following three dimensions: students' emotion towards situational teaching, types of situations students like most, and their attitude to the effect of situational teaching.

Table 4

Students' Favor Towards Situational Teaching

Items	Number	Percentage
With great favor	26	22.22%
With favor	62	52.99%
Indifference	22	19.66%
With no favor	5	3.42%
With no favor greatly	2	1.71%

Table 5

Students' Interest Towards Situational Teaching

Items	Number	Percentage
With great interest	26	22.22%
With interest	62	52.99%
Indifference	22	18.8%
With no interest	5	4.27%
With no interest greatly	2	1.71%

Table 6

Necessity of Conducting Situational Teaching

Items	Number	Percentage
With great necessity	36	30.77%
With necessity	56	47.86%
Indifference	18	15.38%
With no necessity	5	4.27%
With no necessity greatly	2	1.71%

The result of Table 4 shows: 62 students in three grades deem situational teaching interesting and 26 of them think it is quite interesting. Only five of them are not interested in it. Hence, 62 students like situational teaching and only five of them do not like it. When asked whether it is necessary to carry out situational teaching in English teaching, the majority of students consider it quite essential to implement situational teaching and the percentage is up to 47.86. And 36 students think highly of the necessity of conducting situational teaching. Only five of them think it is not necessary. In the process of analyzing data, it can be seen that 56 students are willing to participate in situational teaching and the number of their classmates who like to take part in it is 61. Only four students are not willing to engage in it.

In general, situational teaching is very popular among students in all three grades. Most of them believe that situational teaching is interesting and both they and their classmates are willing to participate in this teaching method. As students are concerned, situational teaching is quite necessary in actual English teaching.

Table 7

Types of Situations Students Like Most

Items	Number	Percentage
Activity situation	75	64.1%
Visual aids	28	23.93%
Multimedia teaching	74	63.25%
Authentic situations	63	53.85%
Body language	26	22.22%

Table 7 shows that activity situation and multimedia teaching are relatively popular among students. The percentage of activity situation is 64.1 and multimedia teaching accounts for 63.25 percent. Authentic situations rank third among the five types and the percentage is 53.85%. Visual aids and body language are less favored by students and their percentages are both below 30 percent. Hence, in actual English teaching, teachers should pay much attention to types of situations that students like most in order to improve students' learning effect and teaching effect as well.

Table 8

Students' Attitude to the Effect of Situational Teaching

Items Number	Stimulate learning interest	Inspire learning motivation	Improve learning effect
Yes	76	66	63
Indifference	34	38	42
No	7	13	12

From Table 8, in students' opinions, the effect of situational teaching is positive and optimistic.

76 students think that situational teaching can stimulate their learning interest and 66 students believe it can inspire their learning motivation. The number of students who hold it can improve their learning effect is up to 63. Only seven students do not think situational teaching will stimulate their interest and 13 of them do not believe it will inspire their learning motivation. And the number of students who do not hold it will improve their learning effect is only 12. Thus, the figures vividly display that situational teaching plays a significant role in English learning. By inspiring students' motivation and interest, students act actively in English teaching and consequently improve their learning effect.

Actual Implementation of Situational Teaching

The last part is designed to explore actual implementation of situational teaching in College Business English education in Bozhou University. It consists of two aspects which are frequency of applying situational teaching and types of situations created by English teachers in College Business English education in Bozhou University.

Table 9

Frequency of Applying Situational Teaching in Actual Teaching

Items	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Often	32.5%	30%	18.92%
Sometimes	52.5%	55%	59.46%
Never	15%	15%	21.62%

The Table 9 displays: The percentages of sometimes applying situational teaching in actual teaching in three grades are 52.5, 55, and 59.46, which accounts for the highest rate among the above three items. In Grade 7 and Grade 8, the percentages of often implementing situational teaching are 32.5 and 30. The percentage is only 18.92 in Grade 9 yet. For the percentage of never carrying out situational teaching, that of Grade 9 is higher than Grade 7 and Grade 8. Therefore, the figures indicate that most teachers in all three grades just sometimes apply situational teaching in actual teaching. Only a third of teachers in Grade 7 and Grade 8 often apply situational teaching and one fifth of teachers in Grade 9 almost ignore the importance of situational teaching.

Table 10

Types of Situations in Actual Teaching

Items	Number	Percentage
Activity situation	34	29.06%
Visual aids	43	36.75%
Multimedia teaching	76	64.96%
Authentic situations	52	44.44%
Body language	21	17.95%

Table 10 displays that: Multimedia teaching is the most popular type among teachers and the percentage of using it is up to 64.96. The following are authentic situations and visual aids, the percentages of which are 44.44 and 36.75. Activity situations and body language are less popular and their percentages are just 29.06 and 17.95.

Main Problems in English Situational Teaching in College Business English Education

On the basis of the results of questionnaire among students and teachers' interviews in College Business English education in Bozhou University, three main problems still exist when teachers carry out situational teaching in actual English teaching. First of all, situational teaching is not taken seriously by teachers in their actual English teaching. Just the result of questionnaire shows, the frequency of often conducting situational teaching is low and teachers just sometimes carry out situational teaching. Then, teachers' purpose of carrying out situational teaching, to some extent, is unclear. In their view, the purpose of situational teaching is aimed at stimulating students' interest, making class atmosphere easy and teaching contents easy to understand. Yet the real goal of situational teaching is to serve teaching aims and get emotional experience. Finally, teachers tend to create situations in the same way in English teaching. They are not well aware of the importance of considering whether the type of situation is appropriate or not.

When it comes to teachers' awareness of situational teaching, of course, under the guidance of New Curriculum, they are all well aware of the significance of situational teaching and try their best to meet the requirements of New Curriculum. However, in actual teaching, though teachers have the awareness, they do not think highly of situational teaching. Just as teachers said in the interview, under the pressure of examination and enrollment rate and too much teaching contents, they do not have much time to select situation materials and work out appropriate situations. Besides, it takes much time to prepare for situational teaching and it is hard to create situations that meet every student's need since they have their own characteristics and features. What's more, as far as students are concerned, they have a heavy load from entering a key senior high school. They need a lot of time to study not only in class but after class, thus causing conflict with situational teaching.

For the purpose of implementing situational teaching, teachers tend to have the idea that situational teaching plays an active role in inspiring students' interest and learning motivation. They are aware of the formalization of situational teaching while they do not have a good understanding of the real function of situational teaching which includes serving teaching aims and emotional education etc. What's more, situations created in English teaching are not various. Teachers are used to utilizing one type of situation frequently, which sometimes leads to negative effects. For example, if the situation designed is not close to students' real life and does not take students' features into account, situational teaching makes no difference. These two problems may be explained that teachers lack professional knowledge and training of situational teaching. Just

as they mentioned in the interview, they still need to learn method of situational teaching in order to have a comprehensive and deep understanding of it. In actual teaching, they may just imitate other teachers' situational teaching and do not get the core of conducting situational teaching in English teaching.

Through analysis of research results both questionnaires and interviews, some suggestions are put forward in the light of problems existing in actual situational teaching in College Business English education in Bozhou University .

To begin with, teachers are supposed to attach great importance to implementation of situational teaching in their actual teaching. In other words, they should not only have the awareness of situational teaching but increase frequency of applying it. Despite the fact that preparing for situational teaching costs more time than pure knowledge teaching, it is still worth carrying out situational teaching. It is likely that students benefit more in review or grammar lessons in which situational teaching method is applied. They are going to understand abstract knowledge easily and consolidate what they have learned quickly. In consequence, learning effect is greatly improved and therefore students' grades also become better. Next, teachers' professional knowledge and skills of situational teaching should be enhanced. When teachers create situations before a class, it is better for them to consider different types of situations carefully and then choose the best one or combine two types according to actual teaching needs. And it can be also a wise way for teachers to take students' characteristics and features into account. In addition, teachers' purpose of situational teaching should be more well-directed. Although stimulating students' interest and making class atmosphere easy are surely the purpose of situational teaching, yet they are not the most significant aspect teachers need to pursue. The core of situational teaching is to serve teaching aims, carry out emotional education and cooperative learning, etc. If teachers only pay attention to the formalization of situational teaching, they cannot get the real effect of situational teaching. Finally, as far as students are concerned, when situational teaching is conducted in an English class, on one hand, they should participate in it positively and actively. On the other hand, they are expected to devote themselves to the following learning quickly under the guidance of their teachers.

The research is conducted to investigate current situation of situational teaching in College Business English education in Bozhou University. It is obvious that the present study is not perfect due to the limitations of the author's ability and practical difficulties. There are surely some problems in this study. Firstly, thanks to some objective factors, the research area is confined to one College Business English education, namely, College Business English education in Bozhou University. Thus the research outcome may lack representativeness if it is applied to other schools. If more schools are chosen to be researched, the problems existing in actual teaching and related suggestions will be more reliable accurate. Then, participants of the research are small. Only 120 students are chosen to do the questionnaire and three English teachers are interviewed. Besides, the questionnaire is just among students and does not about teachers' information about situational teaching, which makes the results less reliable. Finally, there are limitations in the design of questionnaire in which some questions are not very rigorous and logical. In addition, the suggestions the author puts forward are not proved by experiment and these suggestions need proving in further research.

Conclusion

By arranging and analyzing survey data, we get a better idea of current situation of situational teaching in College Business English education in Bozhou University. The result of questionnaire vividly displays that students consider situational teaching interesting and it is necessary to carry out it in actual English teaching. In

their opinions, situational teaching stimulates their learning desire, makes them actively take part in learning, and improves their learning effect. Among different types of situations, multimedia teaching and activity situation are the most popular types. Nevertheless, some problems still exist in actual teaching. For example, though teachers are aware of the importance of situational teaching, they just sometimes conduct it. And they tend to create situations in the same way which probably causes some negative effect. Apart from these, their purpose of implementing situational teaching is not well-directed. Their aim is just to arouse students' interest and improve their motivation and they do not realize the core of situational teaching like serving for teaching aims and emotional education. Thus, in order to improve current situation, teachers are expected to really take situational teaching seriously and apply it more often which absolutely makes a big difference in English teaching. What's more, teachers' knowledge and skills of situational teaching is supposed to be enhanced. For example, when teachers create situations, the situation should be designed according to the teaching content and students' characteristics.

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