

APPLYING SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IN CHINA

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Date: February 10, 2024

Suggested content descriptor keywords:

Situational Language Teaching

Chinese Primary Schools

APPLYING SITUATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IN CHINA

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

English Education

By

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2024

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dewey said: the purpose of education is to enable people to continue to educate themselves. Two years have gone by in a hurry, but they have left behind memories of eternal splendor.

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Madelon Kohler-Busch, for her professional knowledge, rigorous and serious teacher, who took time out of her busy teaching schedule to give me careful guidance, and helped me a lot with my thesis in all aspects, which enabled me to get in touch with a broader world. Professor's profound knowledge, broad vision and gentle person, so that I not only gained knowledge, but also gained a wise life tutor, and let me benefit for life! I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor! At the same time, I would also like to thank every teacher I met during my postgraduate studies, which have become the most valuable wealth in my life.

Thank you to my family for giving me unconditional trust and respect, so that I can better understand love and cherish. It is the right guidance that gives me the courage. In a world full of thorns, only your love is an unsolvable proposition.

I would also like to thank myself for always persevering, always brave. It is those days and nights of hard work, countless moments of self-healing and self-perseverance that have made me grow into the strong, optimistic, calm and stable person I am now. The road ahead is long but also brilliant, I wish to keep the heart of passionate concern, always strive to move upward.

Writing here will still be some unreal feeling, once I should not have thought, in ten years today, will write the final chapter of my master's thesis. Along the way, I have felt the world and myself at the same time. I hope that in the future, I can continue to use the most sincere blood to ignite the ideals that have been deeply buried by the world.

## **Abstract**

### **Applying Situational Language Teaching in Elementary Schools in China**

**Dong Chen**

Nowadays, world activities exceed the limit of national borders, showing the development trend of multipolarity of international pattern and economic globalization. Under the influence of this era wave, the task of cultivating applied language talents is gradually clear. The cultivation of English proficiency is a very important area at the primary level, and it is also difficult for teachers to achieve the teaching objectives in the classroom through mere lectures. As teachers, if they want to cultivate students' excellent English thinking ability and adaptability, they must take their English communicative ability as the main goal. In this case, teachers should provide students with as many opportunities as possible through appropriate teaching methods, so that they can practice English and communicate with each other as much as possible in the classroom in order to improve their English thinking ability and practical application ability. Therefore, this paper will focus on the method of Situated Teaching to improve the effectiveness of English teaching by creating more opportunities for practice in the primary classroom, so as to cultivate students' English thinking and practical ability. The study includes the principles of using the scenario teaching method, the preparation before class, the analysis of teaching objectives and the methods to improve its efficiency. Thus, situational teaching can be made more applicable, reliable and effective in oral English teaching.

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## Chapter I Introduction

English is a language widely used in economic, political, scientific, technological and cultural activities in today's world, and it is an important communication tool for international exchanges and cooperation, as well as one of the carriers for spreading the achievements of human civilization. English also plays a pivotal role in China in different ways and to different degrees, allowing China to go to the world, letting the world understand China, and also playing an important role in building a community of human destiny.

Today's world is characterized by rapid technological progress, profound changes in the environment in which young people grow up, and new challenges in the cultivation of talents. Therefore, the English curriculum for compulsory education must keep pace with the times, follow the laws of education and teaching, implement the fundamental task of establishing moral character, develop quality education, focus on the core qualities of Chinese students' development, and cultivate students' correct values, necessary character, and key abilities for future development. The Compulsory Education Curriculum Program and Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) was introduced in April 2022. This version of the new standards was officially implemented in September of the same year, marking a major change in compulsory education.

It is stated therein that learning and using English helps students to understand different cultures, compare cultural similarities and differences, learn the essence of cultures, gradually develop the awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication and exchange, learn to look at the world objectively and rationally, build up an international vision, cultivate a sense of national sentiment and cultural self-confidence, and form a correct outlook on the world, life and values, so as to lay the foundation for students' lifelong learning and adaptation to the development of society in the future. (Compulsory Education Curriculum Program and Curriculum Standards

(2022 Edition), 2022, P1). The important message conveyed by the new curriculum standard is that it has shifted from examining students' written competence to examining their oral communication competence more often. This is an enhancement of students' comprehensive learning ability and quality. Students are required to improve their English learning ability, utilization ability and oral communication ability in the use of language to avoid learning mute English. That is to say, under the system of exam-oriented education, we pursue grades one-sidedly, neglect oral teaching, take grades as the only criterion for judging the degree of students' learning, emphasize and repeat the knowledge points that are easy to be examined in the examination, and let go of the oral communication ability that is difficult to be examined, that is to say, "we only pay attention to the results of the examination paper, and think that a high score in the examination means that we are good at English, while we are not good at communicating information or communicating when we really need English in daily life". But when it comes to exchanging information or communicating in English, they can't say anything at all".

In order to realize the new concept of English language teaching and to meet the needs of real communication, teachers should uphold the learning concept of learning through experience, applying in practice, and innovating through transfer, and advocate that students should participate in language learning and application activities around real scenarios and real problems, and use their known knowledge in a cyclic and progressive manner. In the process of communicating with others in English, students internalize the language and cultural knowledge they have learned, deepen their understanding of the language and try to use it, contact their personal reality and use the language knowledge they have learned to solve real-life problems, express their own ideas, improve their own language skills, and gradually form a correct attitude towards learning and a new perspective. Therefore, situational teaching has become an important

teaching strategy in the English classroom.

Although the application of scenario teaching in the classroom has become common, there are still many problems to be solved. In this paper, we will study how to improve the efficiency of scenario teaching as a teaching strategy from the aspects of the design of scenarios, the application principles of scenario teaching, and the creation of language scaffolding in scenario teaching.

### **Statement of the Problem**

- Under the current "Double Reduction" policy in China, the proportion of English courses is gradually decreasing, but the demand for students' oral skills is gradually increasing. As a teaching strategy that can efficiently improve students' oral communication skills, what are the principles of use that situational teaching must follow?
- Since students of different speaking levels vary greatly, what are the different types of situations that teachers can set up to help students of different speaking levels when using situational teaching as a teaching strategy?
- Since English is a second language, students have a negative attitude towards oral communication activities due to various concerns. The use of scenario-based teaching in the classroom can stimulate students' interest and provide them with opportunities to communicate in a second language. How can we maximize the effectiveness of teaching and learning?

### **Definition of Terms**

**Situational Teaching:** A teaching method that stimulates students' interest and develops their practical and problem-solving abilities by simulating real situations in the teaching process. (Guberina, 1954).



**Double Reduction:** In the field of education in China, it refers to the need to effectively reduce the excessive burden of homework and off-campus training for students at the compulsory education level. (*Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework on Students at the Compulsory Education Stage and the Burden of Out-of-School Training*, 2021)

**TPR teaching method:** It is a language teaching method that uses movement and bodily response as the main teaching tool, and aims to help learners establish a connection with language through imitation and movement, and to promote the development of natural, fluent language expression. (James J Asher, 1966)

### **Purpose of the Study**

Since the 1960s, English has been China's first foreign language, and since 1983, in particular, English has been treated on an equal footing with language and mathematics in the college entrance examination. The importance attached to English teaching in China can be seen, but the first goal is to "adapt to the exam" and "get high scores", with little attention paid to the students' real oral communication skills. As China's new curriculum has just been implemented, it is difficult for teachers, parents and students to adapt to the major changes that have taken place. The most important thing in elementary school English today is not the understanding and mastery of knowledge points, but the cultivation and improvement of language skills. Teachers need to stimulate students' enthusiasm for English exploration by situationalized teaching methods that put students in diversified scenarios and make them feel the different application scenarios and connotations of English knowledge. The main goal of this study is to focus on the specific ways and principles of applying situational teaching methods in elementary school English classrooms. At the same time, it makes readers realize that situational teaching is not only to stimulate students' interest and provide them with opportunities for oral communication,

but also to pursue the cultivation of English language learning ability, the experience of interpersonal emotions, and the in-depth understanding of different cultures on this basis.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study analyzes the practical issues such as the application principles and scaffolding of scenario teaching from the perspective of frontline teachers, and also analyzes the ultimate purpose and its importance behind scenario teaching, which is not only a simple teaching strategy but also an indispensable way of capacity development. As the Czech educator Comenius wrote, "All knowledge begins with the senses." (Great Teaching Theory, P152). This undoubtedly provides a direction for teaching design according to children's cognitive laws - intuitive scenes can make abstract knowledge concrete, visualization, and help students form perceptual knowledge. Situation creation is a sensory impact in the form of distinct and concrete, and then on the basis of perception to achieve understanding and epiphany of backward thinking. The core of the teaching method of situational teaching is to stimulate students' emotion and interest, so that they can use the language naturally, rather than the purposeful appraisal test. In the teaching process, if teachers want students to have a rich emotional experience, they need to introduce emotionally colorful and imaginative scenarios, which must be vivid and imaginative, so that they can help students understand the teaching materials and develop their mental functions and language skills.

This study focuses on the need for teachers to have a high standpoint and a high starting point, focusing on guiding students to obtain direct perceptual understanding through hands-on practice, so as to improve their language ability, and ultimately enhance their own cultural heritage, and to be able to use their knowledge of English to gain a deep understanding of the differences between different cultures. Teachers need to realize that in addition to the inculcation

of knowledge, it is more important to participate in practical activities. Teachers need to help students build practical platforms and experience real-life teaching situations.

### **Methodology**

I chose a library research seminar paper, and the first step in the program was to study the new curriculum standards in depth. Because the curriculum standards are the national blueprint for parenting, they are the direct basis for curriculum reform. If we want to change the traditional way of teaching and implement the parenting requirements of the standards, the prerequisite is to study the standards in depth, so that teachers' teaching concepts can be really revolutionized. In this part, in addition to reading articles to obtain relevant information, you can also take measures such as observing the classroom of master teachers and listening to expert interpretation. Curriculum standards are the cornerstone of teachers' teaching, the starting point and landing point of students' learning, and they need to be read over and over again to ensure a deep and accurate understanding of the text. Expert interpretation is based on the analysis of the core reforms, a deeper understanding of the connotation of the standard. Through expert interpretation, we can draw a detailed plan for students, so that they clearly know their own learning goals and what they should pay attention to in the learning process. Famous teachers' cases are an effective way to link abstract theories to real life. Through the successful cases of famous teachers, teachers can understand and apply knowledge more concretely and design efficient classroom sessions.

The second step is to study the reports made by front-line teachers on situational teaching. In this regard, the actual situation of current teaching and problems can be collected, which makes the study more scientific and instructive.

The third step is to study the guiding literature of the experts. Problems encountered either in the course of one's own teaching or in the course of observation can be solved to varying degrees through the guidance of experts. Education experts have a higher position, they analyze the current policy changes from a higher perspective, as a starting point for the guidance of front-line teachers. At the same time, experts have a more comprehensive understanding of the overall learning situation of students, which can make this study more broad and universal.

## Chapter II Review of Literature

The use of situational teaching in the primary English classroom is a teaching mode in which the subjectivity of the students can be fully reflected, and because the students have the opportunity to apply the practice, their English skills can also be fully trained. It helps to strengthen students' English foundation and improve their English literacy, which is fully in line with the connotation of the "Double Reduction" policy, helps students to complete the absorption of most of the knowledge content in the classroom, and helps to realize the requirements of quality education. Therefore, teachers should actively explore the application of situational experiential teaching mode in primary school English teaching to provide students with a richer teaching experience, so as to effectively promote the improvement of students' English proficiency (Yang, 2024).

### *Definition of Situational Language Teaching*

Situational teaching originated from Harold Palmer's method of teaching speaking and was advocated by A.S. Hornby, a famous British scholar, to replace the traditional teaching method through this more efficient way of teaching. From the 1930s to the 1960s, the situational teaching method gained wide attention and popularity in Britain, and two of the representative figures were G. Gouhrnein and P. Guberina. After 1970, the situated approach was introduced to China and gained wide attention and application.

According to Hornby (1981), "situational teaching refers to the process of teaching and learning in which the teacher purposefully creates some vivid teaching scenarios so as to help students acquire knowledge and develop skills".

With the in-depth study of situational teaching method in China, Yu Yao (2003) also put forward her own viewpoint on this teaching method. Her definition of contextual pedagogy is

mainly derived from Forsyth's linguistic theory that "language seeks meaning according to the background and context of speech". According to her, "situated pedagogy is the teacher's endeavor to create a variety of authentic and natural teaching situations based on the content and the syllabus, in which students are immersed and experience the language knowledge while teaching it. She also pointed out that students, in the language situations created by the teacher, express their views and opinions in similar language through imitation, communicate emotionally with other students through classroom activities, and master language structures".

### *Principles for the use of Situational Language Teaching*

*Streamline English* (Bernard Hartley & Peter Viney, 1978), reflected the classic principles of Situational Language Teaching. Since this time, many distinguished applied linguists have laid the foundations for a principled approach to language teaching methodology.

#### ➤ **Principle of Contextual Authenticity**

Brumfit (1984), in his book *The Functional-Notional Approach: From Theory to Practice*, puts forward the criterion of communicative language teaching "encouraging learners to use the language they have learnt in authentic communicative situations". The importance of this lies in the practical use of the language learnt by the learners. Therefore, when using scenario-based teaching, the first principle is that the setting of the scenario should be as close to real life as possible, so as to ensure that the students can learn and master the knowledge in real life application. False and far-from-life scenarios will not only increase students' learning pressure, but also affect their learning efficiency and interest. Only in real communication can learners better understand and master the language they have learnt.

#### ➤ **Principle of Emotional Experientiality**

The affective filtering hypothesis was proposed by Dulay and Burt in 1977. Its emergence is a profound indication of the influence of affective factors on foreign language learning. They defined "Affective Filter" as "an internal processing system that subconsciously prevents learners from absorbing language through emotional factors." In 1982, S.D. Krashen, a famous American linguist, developed this hypothesis on this basis. Just as the core of situational teaching is to awaken the students' inner desire for English learning. Scenario-based teaching methods are intuitive and vivid, and can awaken students' emotional experience. In the classroom, the teacher creates practical scenarios to enhance the atmosphere of the classroom, thus stimulating all the senses of the students. In this situation, students will have a sense of being in the classroom and unconsciously participate in classroom activities. Scenario teaching not only focuses on the transmission of knowledge, but also on the emotional experience of students. Through the simulation of real situations, so that students in the emotional resonance, deepen the understanding and memory of knowledge.

➤ **Principle of Inputting the Language Environment**

Stephen D. Krashen (1985), a famous American language educator, put forward the "input hypothesis" in his theory of second language acquisition. He believes that language acquisition is based on comprehensible linguistic input, that language needs to be understood with the help of context, and that a person can only acquire correct linguistic competence when he receives input in the true sense of the word. According to this theory, Stephen Krashen emphasizes the importance of the external language environment in second language acquisition. In the process of language learning, teachers purposefully create vivid teaching scenarios that can help learners gain knowledge and thus train their skills.

### *Application and selection of different types of situations in situational teaching*

#### ➤ **Creating problem scenarios to mobilize thinking skills**

Problem scenarios are challenging and probing scenarios created in teaching and learning to stimulate students' interest and curiosity, and to promote thinking and enquiry. This is similar to the educational model of "learning by doing" proposed by the American educator John Dewey. In 1979, Prabhu, an Indian educator, applied task design to language teaching practice, and in 1983 he formally put forward the concept of "task-driven teaching" and explicitly listed task design as a major teaching activity in the syllabus. The creation of problem scenarios is of great significance in the overall teaching of primary English units based on real-life scenarios, which can improve students' motivation and initiative in learning, and cultivate their innovative thinking and problem-solving ability.

The creation of problem scenarios in authentic scenario-based primary English teaching is closely related to the overall teaching of the unit. Firstly, the creation of problem scenarios needs to be in line with the content and objectives of the unit as a whole in order to promote students' thinking and exploration. Secondly, the creation of problem scenarios needs to be combined with the actual situation and needs of students in order to improve students' learning. Finally, the creation of problem scenarios needs to be consistent with the assessment of the unit as a whole, in order to comprehensively assess students' learning outcomes. Teachers should create problem scenarios that are hierarchical, relevant and appropriate.

#### ➤ **Creating life scenarios to appreciate the use of knowledge**

Life scenarios refer to teaching in which students are able to learn and master knowledge in an immersive way by simulating or recreating real-life scenarios. Students are taught experientially in life situations - a concept put forward by American social psychologist and educator David Kolb. The creation of life situations can make primary school English classroom



teaching more vivid and interesting, help students better understand what they have learnt, and provide students with more opportunities for language practice. For the creation of life scenarios, teachers should firstly explore the elements of life and gradually enrich the teaching content, so that students can have a deeper understanding of the application of what they have learnt in real life and improve their practical language application skills. Finally, they should combine with life practice to cultivate students' application ability.

When creating life scenarios, teachers should pay attention to effectiveness and ensure that the life scenarios created are closely related to the teaching objectives and can really help students understand and master what they have learnt. At the same time, respect for the individual differences of students, according to the actual situation of different students to create different life scenarios, to ensure that each student can get a good learning experience. At the same time, teachers should flexibly adjust the content and form of activities according to the actual situation.

➤ **Creating game scenarios and focusing on knowledge building**

Game scenario refers to the creation of an attractive and interesting learning environment through games in teaching, so that students can learn and master knowledge through games. The game teaching method, also known as "game-oriented teaching method", was firstly proposed by Schwedes, Aufshnaite and Helanko in 1984, which is to teach in the form of games, in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere, so that the students can actively participate, enjoy participation, and easily understand the boring and difficult contents in the classroom in the process of "playing". In the process of "playing", students can easily understand the boring and difficult knowledge in the classroom, and apply the knowledge in practice through the mastery of knowledge. Game scenarios can stimulate students' interest in learning, concretize and visualize abstract

knowledge, allow students to master and apply what they have learnt in the game, and improve their language practice ability.

When designing game scenarios, teachers should base their design on the teaching content and students' learning abilities. The game design should be closely centered on the teaching objectives, to ensure that students can learn and master what they have learnt in the game. The difficulty of the game should be moderate, not only to ensure that the game is interesting, but also to avoid too difficult to cause students to lose interest. The form of the game should be diversified, to avoid a single form of the game so that students feel bored. The development of the game should be planned to ensure the smooth progress of the game and achieve the desired teaching effect.

➤ **Creating collaborative scenarios for knowledge exploration**

Cooperative learning is a special form of teaching which emphasizes interaction and cooperation between students and teachers in order to complete teaching tasks and achieve teaching goals. This teaching method was proposed by American educational psychologist David Koonts in 1986, who believed that co-operative learning could make students understand and master knowledge better and improve their learning effect. In English teaching, the use of co-operative scenarios helps to improve students' language application, teamwork and problem-solving skills. At the same time, co-operative situations can cultivate students' independent learning ability and lifelong learning consciousness. Teachers are the organizers, guides and supervisors of cooperative scenarios, and need to design suitable cooperative tasks, provide necessary resources and support, and guide students to actively participate in cooperative activities. Students are the subjects and participants of the cooperative scenarios, and should actively participate in the cooperative activities and complete the tasks together with their peers.

In the process of co-operation, students need to give play to their own advantages and strengths, and learn from and help each other with their peers. At the same time, students need to reflect on and summarize their learning outcomes.

Cooperative scenarios need to be created according to the teaching content, and teachers should divide the groups reasonably according to the students' interests, abilities and needs, and ensure that each group contains students of different levels. Teachers need to clarify the objectives of the co-operative tasks, so that students clearly understand their own learning tasks and requirements. Timely guidance and supervision of the students' cooperative learning process, to ensure the effectiveness of students' cooperative learning.

### *Effective Improvement of Situational Language Teaching Efficiency*

Sukhomlinskii (1977) said: "It is the teacher's greatest fault not to get students to participate actively." That is to say, only by fully mobilizing the enthusiasm of students to participate, enhancing students' awareness of participation, and improving students' participation in the classroom, can students pay close attention to the teaching content, make students interested in caring about practical problems, actively explore problems, and truly improve the teaching effect.

Improving students' participation in class is the guarantee of improving teaching quality. Teachers need to change their teaching concepts, get rid of the original ideological constraints and release students' potential. And create a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere and learning situation to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, optimize the classroom structure, give students enough time and space to ensure that students really participate in classroom teaching. The participation of students is an important condition for the interaction between teachers and students and the improvement of teaching efficiency.

Sun (2011) points out that "optimising the teaching process is the key to improving the efficiency of primary classroom teaching." Before teaching new knowledge, teachers should analyze and investigate students' life experience and learning experience, choose life examples that are close to the content of the lesson to be taught, and put students in the situation of the problem, so as to enhance students' acceptance of knowledge. In other words, teachers in the classroom should strive to teach "life", the textbook problems reduced to common life, can understand and accept the problem. In this way, students' understanding of knowledge will be more profound and concrete.

### *Summary*

With the deepening of globalization, the importance of English, as an international common language, is becoming more and more prominent. In China, English education is highly valued, especially at the primary school level. However, English teaching in primary schools focuses too much on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary and neglects the application of the language in practical situations. In recent years, with the promotion of the new curriculum reform, English teaching has begun to focus on cultivating students' comprehensive language use ability. The teaching method based on real situations has emerged, which emphasises the teaching of language knowledge in real contexts so that students can better understand and use English. This teaching method can not only stimulate students' interest in learning, but also improve their language use ability.

### **Chapter III Conclusions and Recommendations**

Comenius wrote in *The Great Teaching Theory*: "All knowledge begins with the senses."

An important method of situational education is to arouse students' interest and focus their attention through concrete objects. Through the display of multimedia, graphic, text, sound and image stimulation, the theoretical knowledge and real image scenarios together, that is: the combination of shape, sound, emotion, increasing the amount of teaching information transfer, students in the actual situation, to achieve the purpose of starting the emotion and activation of thinking.

Scenario teaching method, also called audio-visual teaching method, is a teaching method that combines visual and auditory senses. This method is centered on scenarios and makes full use of teaching aids such as gestures, pictures, slides, multimedia and courseware to create scenarios and cultivate the listening and speaking skills of students. Simply speaking, situational teaching method is that in the English classroom, the teacher intentionally takes some measures to create certain emotional and special environment for the students.

To sum up, authentic scenarios are of great significance to the overall teaching of English units in primary schools. By simulating real-life scenarios and activities, students can better understand and apply their English knowledge and improve their English learning effect and practical application ability. At the same time, teaching based on real-life scenarios can also stimulate students' interest in learning and promote their intercultural communication skills and awareness. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the creation of authentic scenarios in teaching, and provide students with more opportunities for language practice through the creation of problematic scenarios, life scenarios, game scenarios and cooperative scenarios, so as to promote the innovative reform of English teaching in primary schools.

"Situation" is gradually showing its importance and effectiveness in today's teaching. Through exploring, observing, learning and summarizing in the situation, students are gradually developing their abilities. By using the effective resources in the situation, students can draw inferences about other cases from one instance and apply the knowledge they have learned in real life situations. This is a process of re-creation. At the same time, it is also a process of transforming knowledge into skills.

Effective language communication is a process of cultivating human beings towards socialization, which in turn contributes to learning. Many students are reluctant to express themselves, because of stage fright, lack of self-confidence, performance anxiety and other obstacles, let alone use their second language. But in schools, teachers can help students through teaching methods, create relatively real scenes for students through situational teaching, help students overcome their fears and express themselves gradually with rich classroom activities, so as to cultivate their oral communication ability and communicate effectively with others.

Language learning needs a lot of input and a variety of curriculum resources. For English learning, it needs to be provided resources that are close to students, life according to the needs. Teachers should creatively use and develop the English learning resources in real life, and actively expand the channels for students to learn and use English. Under the guidance of the concept of quality education and advanced curriculum, teachers should focus on the establishment of an English curriculum system based on students' development. Foreign language education should be firmly combined with the current situation of English education and English level in China. The primary goal is to develop students' communicative competence. Modern classroom has changed from "imparting knowledge" to "cultivating ability". Therefore,

teachers should change their own thinking, actively change and constantly innovate. The new teaching mode guides students to form effective learning strategies and cultivates students' strong cultural awareness.

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