

## On the Cultivation of Students' Creative Thinking Ability in the Primary School English Teaching

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**Abstract:** *The creative thinking skill is the foundation of human civilization development and it is the most advanced level of human thinking. In the process of English teaching, developing students' creative thinking skill is crucial to students' overall development, which is also an important means to cultivate students' learning interest. And it is necessary to cultivate students' creative thinking in the teaching of English in primary schools under New Curriculum Standard. The article studies how the teacher trains students' creative thinking to guide the students to learn English in primary school English classroom teaching through the discussion of the problems of English teaching, and how to cultivate students' creative thinking, so as to offer some implication for the primary English teaching.*

**Keywords:** *Primary school students; English; Creative thinking; Teaching methods; Self-regulated*

### 1. Introduction

The creative thinking is a kind of creative activity, that is, to open up new fields of human knowledge and to create new achievements of human knowledge. The creative thinking is a high-level psychological activity based on perception, memory, thinking, association and understanding, and characterized by comprehensiveness, exploration and novelty, which requires people to work hard<sup>[1-3]</sup>. A creative thinking achievement can only be obtained through long-term exploration, hard study and even repeated setbacks, and it can only be acquired through long-term accumulation of knowledge and quality sharpening<sup>[5-8]</sup>. As for the process of creative thinking, it cannot be separated from a variety of reasoning, imagination, association, intuition and other thinking activities. The so-called creative thinking means that students are able to use the knowledge they have already mastered to analyze the practical problems they are facing, so as to find new ways to solve these problems. This is also a new era of human new thinking, and as for pupils, they should be able to use their own thinking independently, do not copy rigidly and do not follow the rules of conventional thinking to solve the problem, which belongs to the process of innovative thinking<sup>[9-10]</sup>.

The creative thinking is developed on the basis of general thinking, which is the highest form of human thinking. It is a thinking activity that solves problems in a new way, which reflects the internal and external organic relations of the essential attributes of things, and it is a kind of psychological activity that can be materialized<sup>[11-12]</sup>. The creative thinking is different from the norms of general thinking. Although it has the characteristics of general thinking, it emphasizes pioneering and breakthrough<sup>[13]</sup>. The creative thinking has distinct initiative in solving problems, which is linked with creative activities and embodies the social value of novelty and uniqueness<sup>[14]</sup>. As far as pupils are concerned, being interested in a course will encourage them to study hard and think creatively, which will not only improve their academic achievements, but also greatly improve their learning methods and learning efficiency. The creation of thinking space in the primary school English teaching is to guide teachers to set up reasonable thinking time according to the needs of teaching content and teaching objectives in the process of designing and implementing classroom teaching so as to fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and creativity in thinking and thus develop their thinking ability. However, the current overall situation of primary school English teaching is that most teachers decide everything, students mostly rely on teachers, and students' creative thinking skill has been seriously curbed. Therefore, while advocating the improvement of students' ability to learn and use English independently, it is worth discussing how to cultivate students' creative thinking ability.

### 2. Problems Hindering the Improvement of Pupils' Creative Thinking Ability in the English Teaching

It is well-known that pupils are anxious, creative and they have fresh and unique perspective of the whole world. However, at present, pupils' creative thinking ability is eroded, damaged and even killed by some teachers' rigid education. As for cultivating pupils' creative thinking ability in the English teaching, there are still some hindrances as follows.

### **2.1 Poor Comprehensive English Ability**

A large number of facts show that primary school students learn English fast and forget fast as well. Due to the differences in language and culture between English and Chinese, and the improper learning ways of words, many students spend a lot of time memorizing words after class, but the effect is not ideal. Due to the negative transfer of mother tongue, it is extremely difficult for pupils to imitate the pronunciation of words and to understand the relationship between the pronunciation, form and meaning of English words by using the rules of spelling and word formation. They find it difficult to master the methods and skills of spelling words. Most pupils' comprehensive English ability is very limited and not satisfying; therefore it is difficult to carry out the creative thinking skill training in the English class.

### **2.2 Poor Self-regulated Learning Ability**

On the one hand, because of the profound influence of traditional cramming teaching, most students are merely like a knowledge container accustomed to passively accepting knowledge without further creation in the classroom teaching. On the other hand, as pupils are not mature physiologically and psychologically, most of them are reliant on teachers and parents in the study. Therefore, at school they are very dependent on teachers and textbooks and not prone to think independently. They seldom take the initiative to increase the input of English words through reading extracurricular books, listening to radio, watching movies and TV programs, looking up dictionaries, surfing the Internet, communicating with classmates or other language acquisition, so as to improve their vocabulary application ability.

### **2.3 Neglect of English Teaching**

For most pupils, they lack an environment for learning English. In many primary schools, English is only treated as a minor subject, and only two to three lessons are taught in a class every week. They do not have much time to contact English. Besides, many English teachers teach in Chinese. Moreover, And at present, in society, especially in rural areas, there is little or no environment for communicating in English. Therefore, students have few opportunities to speak, listen and practice English. They lack a language environment for communicating in English. Over time, they lost interest in learning English, let alone develop their creative thinking skills.

### **2.4 Teaching Methods**

Pupils are creative and love new things in nature. The invariable English textbooks and tedious forms of classes can easily arouse pupils' disgust and boredom, so that they lack interest in learning English. Many primary school English teachers mainly focus on new vocabulary and sentence patterns adopting the traditional grammar teaching method, but in fact in the primary school English teaching, teachers should present new language materials clearly and naturally so that students can not only perceive and understand the use of new language materials, but also learn to communicate in English. The effect of students' perception and understanding of language materials largely depends on the teaching mode, method and design adopted by teachers in the new teaching.

### **2.5 Course Design**

Generally speaking, most primary school English teachers like to ask for output immediately letting students stand up one by one in the classroom after they teach, constantly asking questions. But students do not even absorb the knowledge and information efficiently. And teachers focus on the practice of listening and speaking in class, neglecting the cultivation of other skills like reading and writing abilities. Once students leave the classroom, nothing remains in their mind. The teaching process design does not take the law of language learning into account. Actually, activities should be designed from easy to difficult, multi-step, multi-repetition, so that students can pick up the steps and have enough time to imagine and create.

## **3. Strategies to Train Primary School Students' Creative Thinking in the English Teaching**

In view of the problems of English classroom teaching, some strategies are put forward as to improve pupils' creative thinking ability more efficiently.

### **3.1 To Create Abundant Situations Conducive to Students' Thinking in English**

Under the new curriculum, primary school English textbooks are basically in the form of dialogue, providing situations for topics, showing students some kind of language project pictures, the external environment for language

communication, and the specific situation of language occurrence. It is known that the highest level of language acquisition is to think in the target language and to switch between mother tongue and second language in all kinds of situations without hindrance. But at present, primary school English teaching focuses on the mechanical training of dialogue, neglecting the creation of situations and the necessity of cultivating students' English thinking. Therefore, students' language ability improves slowly over a long period of time. Therefore, in teaching, it is necessary to create situations to remind students how to express their English. Through task activities, students can learn by doing and perceive the language in the context. Students' expression will become authentic, and their language ability will be greatly improved, and their creative thinking ability will be enhanced as well.

### **3.2 To Innovate in the Situation of Language Practice**

According to the law of mother tongue learning, one's language ability, especially children's language ability, begins with imitation. Children are good at imitating and when students imitate the text language, they can get the pleasure of discovery and the joy of success, which is the creative awareness and thinking in children's mind. Teachers should try their best to create language practice situations for students, grasp the key sentence patterns in the text, carefully design exercises, arouse students' desire for knowledge, stimulate students' interest in learning, and let them have a good command of language. For example, when teaching Unit 3 of Book 2 of English (PEP), the teacher can tell the students a little story. On a sunny day, the animals went to play in the countryside, but when it was dark, they did not come back. The zookeeper was very anxious. He asked the children to help him find the animals. At this time, the teacher can guide the students to use the sentences of "Do you see the panda? It's black and white. Do you see the elephant? It has a long nose." to communicate and discuss in the class, in order to help administrators find small animals. In this process, students are full of interest, they can use their imagination to describe the small animals they want to find, and achieve very good results.

### **3.3 To Widen Extracurricular English Learning Space**

As it is well-known, the foreign language learning should not be merely limited to English classes, but should also be extended to life. English extracurricular activities are closely related to classroom teaching, which are consistent with the purpose of classroom teaching and make classroom teaching an indispensable auxiliary form. Developing extracurricular English learning activities can enable students to store some potential energy for learning English well and play a positive role in promoting students' creative thinking. For the arrangement of extra-curricular homework, it can be closely combined with games, creations, paintings and other forms that students like to see and hear. The training of knowledge and skills and the cultivation of non-intellectual factors and the development of intelligence can be skillfully linked with various activities, so as to make English extra-curricular homework attractive. In addition, individualized assignment can cultivate students' creative thinking. Teachers can teach students in accordance with their aptitude and set assignments according to students' different characteristics, so as to enrich the content and form.

### **3.4 To Encourage Students to Question and Express Different Opinions**

Students should learn from thinking, think from doubts, as doubts lead to exploration, so as to discover the truth. Scientific inventions and creations also begin with questioning. Therefore, encouraging students to question and express different opinions is a necessary factor to cultivate pupils' creative thinking. In the process of English teaching in primary schools, teachers should encourage students to guess boldly, dare to ask different questions and dare to express unique opinions. Teachers and students work together to create an atmosphere of daring to ask, daring to say and daring to think. Teachers should appropriately encourage and affirm students' questions and opinions, whether simple or complex, superficial and naive or beyond the teaching requirements, or even outside the teaching objectives. Especially for those students who raise enlightening, guiding and thinking questions, teachers should praise them in time and organize students to discuss their questions.

### **3.5 Innovation in Imagination**

Imagination is the source of creation. Without imagination, there can be no creation. To cultivate the originality of pupils' thinking, first of all, we should cultivate pupils' imagination. Teachers can use multimedia, physical objects, pictures, simple strokes and teachers' body language to stimulate students' rich imagination. For example, when

practicing the sentence pattern of “Do you like...? Yes, I do. (No, I don't.)”, the teacher can show a zoo with various animals in it by multimedia. Let the students imagine that they are visiting the zoo hand in hand. They ask and answer: “Do you like the little panda? Yes, I do. Do you like the big bear? No, I don't...” Or let a student act as a journalist and interview other students about what they like. At this time, the children are very happy, one after another to do small reporter, to understand the preferences of other students. Teachers should also cultivate students' imagination from various perspectives. When learning animal names, the teacher can first record the sound of small animals, so that students can imitate the sound and appearance of animals to learn. In this way, students will be very interested, some pretend to be monkeys, some pretend to be puppies. The repeated difficult words will become fluent in the students' mouth, and boring words will soon be remembered by students. Teachers should pay attention to exploring all factors that can mobilize students' innovative thinking, develop students' intellectual potential and improve students' creative thinking ability in teaching.

### **3.6 Innovation in Small Group Cooperation**

Development is the starting point and destination of teaching, which requires students to make progress on the original basis and have the joy of practice and success. Teachers can adopt the method of group cooperation in the teaching, so that students can use their brains, hands and mouth in cooperation, so as to achieve communication between students, learn from each other's strengths and make up for their weaknesses. For example, in the exercise of the sentence pattern of “Who' How old is..., the teacher can ask the students to take out the family pictures they have prepared before class, and then ask each other about their pictures in groups. Among students, you say a word, I say a word, ask and answer each other, learn from each other, and express their feelings in English. Through the group learning, it provides an opportunity for active and interesting pupils to participate in the performance independently, make the boring content more interesting to learn, and expand students' thinking and improve their innovative ability.

### **3.7 To Change Teachers' Teaching Concept**

Firstly, teachers, as organizers and leaders of creative learning, should take the initiative to forge ahead. Cultivating students' innovative spirit is also a challenge to educators themselves, because as teachers, we also need innovative spirit. Student's learning process is not only a cognitive process, but also a process of inquiry. Only by constantly exploring new ideas and methods of classroom teaching and guiding students to boldly cooperate, communicate and explore independently can teachers cultivate their pioneering talents. Secondly, in the process of teaching, it should always be clear that students are the masters of learning activities. Teachers should make classroom commanders stimulate students' interest in learning, enhance students' confidence in learning and create a relaxed and happy learning environment. Thirdly, teachers should not monopolize the whole teaching activity time, and they should combine the features of subject textbooks and students' existing knowledge reserve and ability level, effectively carry out various classroom teaching activities, and train students' effective thinking mode.

### **3.8 To Evaluate the Results of Creative Thinking**

In fact, pupils' imagination is very rich in the process of English learning, and they will also have a lot of creative achievements, so they can accumulate these achievements correctly. The evaluation of primary school English creative achievements includes not only language knowledge, language skills and comprehensive communicative competence, but also students' emotions, attitudes, values, learning strategies, cultural awareness and development potential. In addition, the forms of evaluating pupils' creative learning outcomes should be diversified, not only by teachers, but also by students' self-evaluation and cooperative evaluation. Individual test and group test can be adopted to make self-evaluation, mutual evaluation and combination.

## **4. Conclusion**

The development of pupils' creative thinking in primary English is a gradual process, rather than an overnight leap. At different ages, because of the different maturity of psychology and physiology, the study situation is different and the teaching strategy is different. The teachers can cultivate pupils' creative thinking ability from such aspects as: to create abundant situations conducive to students' thinking in English, to innovate in the situation of language practice, to widen extracurricular English learning space, to guide students conduct innovation in imagination, to encourage

students to question and express different opinions, to facilitate students to be engaged in innovation in small group cooperation, to change teachers' teaching concept, and to evaluate the results of creative thinking.

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