

English Vocabulary Teaching in Senior High School from the Perspective of the Activity-based Approach

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How to cite this paper: Huang, Z. Y. (2026). English Vocabulary Teaching in Senior High School from the Perspective of the Activity-based Approach. *Educational and Humanities*, 2(2), 75-80. ISSN Print: 3104-4352; ISSN Online: 3104-4360. <https://doi.org/10.63313/EH.9043>

Published: 2026-02-26

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Abstract

In English learning, vocabulary is the foundation, and the development of students' vocabulary acquisition ability plays an important role in English teaching. However, the current senior high school English vocabulary teaching is stereotyped in design and superficial in practice, and fails to truly achieve the teaching goal of improving students' vocabulary learning and application ability, which is contrary to the educational concept proposed in the English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School (2017 edition 1). The Activity-based Approach advocates that teachers should design comprehensive, related and practical teaching activities, so that students can internalize what they have learned in a series of learning processes integrating language, culture and thinking, enhance their learning and application ability and cultivate high-level thinking. Therefore, this paper explores the principles of vocabulary teaching and the design of vocabulary teaching activities from the perspective of Activity-based Approach.

Keywords

Activity-based Approach; Vocabulary Teaching; Vocabulary Acquisition Ability

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is an essential element of language. Only with vocabulary can language have soul and express practical meaning. Of course, English teaching is inseparable from vocabulary teaching. Small vocabulary and fuzzy meaning will greatly affect students' understanding and expression of language. Lingist Wilkins once said, no grammar, little expression, but no vocabulary, zero expression. Many scholars believe that the amount of vocabulary determines the strength of listening comprehension ability. Students encounter challenges in listening and speaking, and they are inadequate in reading and writing. The reason is that their vocabulary does

not meet the requirements. It can be seen that vocabulary teaching is an important part of English teaching, which is closely related to the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading and writing ability, and affects the improvement of English language knowledge and skills.

In traditional teaching, teachers are often the leader of the classroom, emphasizing the repeated memory of vocabulary, such as copying, writing, etc. Students need to spend a lot of time on mechanical memory, easy to feel boring, difficult to maintain long-term interest in learning. In addition, teaching vocabulary knowledge is mainly through explanation and writing on the board, so students are in a passive position of acceptance and lack of opportunities for active participation and thinking. Secondly, the learning effect is limited, and the use of vocabulary is ignored. Traditional teaching often pays too much attention to the memorization and understanding of vocabulary, and ignores the practical use of vocabulary. Students may remember the spelling and meaning of the vocabulary, but it is difficult to use it flexibly in the actual language use. Vocabulary teaching is separated from the specific context, and students lack a real language environment when learning vocabulary, and it is difficult to understand the specific usage and meaning of vocabulary in different contexts. In the face of the above problems, the Activity-based Approach to English learning provides new guidance and aids for English vocabulary teaching.

2. Key concepts

2.1. Activity-based Approach

The English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High Schools (2017 edition) advocates the Activity-based Approach. The Activity-based Approach refers to the "students in the theme meaning, through learning understanding, application practice, transfer innovation and a series of reflect the comprehensive, relevance and practical characteristics of English learning activities, make the students based on the existing knowledge, relying on different types of discourse, in the process of analysis and problem solving, promote their own language knowledge learning, language skills development, cultural connotation understanding, multiple thinking development, value orientation judgment and learning strategy use" (Ministry of Education, 2018). The Activity-based Approach emphasizes the three levels of learning understanding, application practice, transfer and innovation, including internal and external activities. The two work together to promote students' language knowledge and skills, and achieve the purpose of improving students' thinking quality, cultivating cultural awareness and continuously strengthening their learning ability.

2.2. Vocabulary Acquisition Ability

Vocabulary acquisition or vocabulary knowledge acquisition is a continuum of

different levels, not a simple dichotomy process of "learned" or "unlearned", "knowing" or "not knowing" (Laufer, 1997). Richard (1976) believes that simply understanding the meaning of vocabulary does not reflect the ability of vocabulary acquisition. It should also include the ability to understand the business of the target words, their syntactic function and their use in a variety of scenarios. In addition, linguist Wallace (2000) also commented on the concept of "vocabulary acquisition". He believed that students who really master a word need to recognize its pronunciation, be able to recall it according to association and memory, understand the original meaning and business of words in different situations and use it correctly in different occasions. Thus, "vocabulary acquisition ability" refers to the ability of students to correctly grasp the meaning of vocabulary in different contexts and to use vocabulary accurately and fluently in different occasions.

3. The principles of Teaching Vocabulary from the perspective of the Activity-based Approach

3.1. Students-Center Principle

First of all, teachers should understand the students' cultural background, previous language knowledge level, and the vocabulary they have mastered, consider the students' personal interests and learning needs, and choose related vocabulary topics. If students are interested in science and technology, they can develop vocabulary teaching around the latest technology products or concepts. Different students may have different learning styles, such as visual type, auditory type or hands-on type. Teachers should design diverse activities to accommodate students with different learning styles. Secondly, students' interest should be stimulated. Through situational teaching, vocabulary teaching should be placed in real or simulated situations, so that students can naturally learn and use new vocabulary in the situation. Vocabulary games or competitions can also be designed, such as vocabulary solitaire, spelling competition, etc., to stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation and competition consciousness, and promote students' active participation.

3.2. Task-driven principle

Task-driven principles in the design of vocabulary teaching activities emphasize promoting students' understanding and use of vocabulary by completing specific tasks. The task design should have authenticity, coherence and level.

To clarify the task objectives, before the task begins, the teacher should clearly explain the objectives and requirements of the task to the students, and let the students make clear the task content that they need to complete. In the process of students completing tasks, teachers should provide necessary language input and learning resources, such as vocabulary cards, context examples, etc., to help students overcome difficulties. Organize students to cooperate in groups and

complete the tasks together. In the process of cooperation, students can communicate and discuss with each other and solve problems together, so as to deepen their understanding and memory of vocabulary. After the task is completed, teachers should not only evaluate the results of the students completing the task, but also pay attention to the students' performance in the completion of the task, such as the accuracy of vocabulary use and the fluency of language expression.

3.3. Communication and Interaction Principle

This principle emphasizes promoting students' understanding and use of vocabulary through practical language communication. We should create a real communication situation, and design the communicative activities closely related to students' daily life, such as simulated shopping, ordering food, asking for directions and other scenes, so that students can use the new vocabulary in the simulated context. Organize students to have group discussions, communicate around a topic or problem, and encourage students to use new vocabulary in the discussion. Let the students teach each other the new vocabulary, or set questions to each other for vocabulary exercises, which can increase the interaction and cooperation between the students.

Students can also cooperate to complete a project related to vocabulary, such as making vocabulary posters, writing vocabulary stories, etc., to communicate the language and use the vocabulary in the process of cooperation.

4. Vocabulary activities from the perspective of the Activity-based Approach

4.1. Learning and Understanding Activities

- Picture or display: the teacher shows the pictures related to the vocabulary, and lets the students perceive the meaning of the vocabulary by observing the pictures. For example, when teaching animal-related words, show pictures of different animals and ask the students to speak the corresponding English words. Or play the video clips related to the vocabulary theme, and ask the students to understand the vocabulary through the visual information. For example, playing a video about food in different countries lets students learn words related to food.
- Physical touch: For some specific nouns, the teacher can prepare the corresponding physical objects, and let the students feel the vocabulary through the touch. For example, when teaching vocabulary related to stationery, let the students touch pencils, erasers and other physical objects to deepen their understanding and memory of vocabulary.
- Action experience: For some verbs or adjectives, teachers can help students perceive the meaning of words through body movements. For example, when teaching the verb "run", the teacher can make running movements and let the

students understand the vocabulary by observing the movements.

- Fill in the blanks: provide some blank sentences, let the students choose the appropriate vocabulary according to the context. For example, "The weather is very ____ day, so we can go hiking." Students need to choose "sunny", "clear" and other words according to the meaning of the sentence.

4.2. Application and Practice Activities

- Writing exercises: design a variety of writing tasks, such as diary writing, letter writing, writing stories, writing essays, etc., ask students to use the vocabulary learned in writing. For example, after teaching words related to environmental protection, ask students to write a short essay on how to protect the environment.
- Oral English expression: Organize oral English activities, such as speech, debate, situational dialogue, etc., to encourage students to use the learned vocabulary in oral English expression. For example, hold a speech contest about "My Dreams" where students can use words related to their dreams.
- Role playing: Let the students play different roles, have dialogue or performance, and integrate the vocabulary into the language of the role. For example, when teaching words related to shopping, students can play the role of customers and waiters and have a shopping conversation.

4.3. Transfer and Innovation Activities

- Vocabulary expansion exercise: Provide some vocabulary, and allow students to generate other words or phrases related to it through association and expansion. For example, "read a book", "library", "author" and so on.
- Make posters or boards: let the students make posters or boards around a certain vocabulary theme, such as "environmental protection", "healthy eating", etc. In the production process, students need to find and use the words related to the topic, and show these words in the form of pictures and pictures.
- Writing stories or plays: Students are encouraged to write and perform based on the vocabulary learned. For example, after learning an animal-related vocabulary, students can write a story about an animal adventure and perform it in English.
- English corner: encourage students to participate in English corner activities, communicate with others in English, and use the vocabulary to talk. For example, when discussing "My Hometown" in the English corner, students can use words related to their hometown, such as "scenery", "culture", "local food", etc.

5. Conclusion

Vocabulary is an important content of English teaching. Teachers need to be committed to integrating the course content according to the learning situation, using the active teaching method, put forward the goal of literacy, and setting

situational activities, so as to realize the unity of vocabulary classroom. The concept of English learning activities is a major innovation in English teaching, which provides more teaching ideas and methods for the majority of educators. It is expected to effectively improve students' core quality of subjects in the classroom and cultivate all-round talents for the society.

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