International Journal of Social Science, Education and Humanities
ISSN Print: 3104-4239
ISSN Online: 3104-4247
CD ISSN: 3104-4255
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJSSEH.9042

Construction of English Teaching Situations Based on the Concept of "Education Is Life"

Qianhui Zhang
China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, China

How to cite this paper: Zhang, Q. (2026). Construction of English teaching situations based on the concept of "Education is life". International Journal of Social Science, Education and Humanities, 2(3), 48–54. ISSN Print: 3104-4239, ISSN Online: 3104-4247.
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJSSEH.9042
Published: 2026-06-25

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Erytis Publishing Limited.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
CC BY 4.0

Abstract

This paper thoroughly analyzes the connotation of Dewey's concept of "Education Is Life". It points out that the concept emphasizes that education should focus on students' internal development and real-life experience, and advocates that education should not be confined to the transmission of book knowledge, but closely connected with students' real life. On this basis, this paper discusses the value and significance of creating life-oriented situations in English teaching, including stimulating learning interest and motivation, promoting knowledge comprehension and memorization, and cultivating language application ability. Furthermore, this paper puts forward the principles and strategies for constructing English teaching situations guided by the concept of "Education Is Life", namely the principles of authenticity, fun and inspiration. Taking the text Time for a Change from Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2 of Senior High English published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press as an example, it elaborates specific strategies such as exploring life-related materials in textbooks, applying multimedia resources and organizing diverse classroom activities.

Keywords

Education Is Life; English Teaching; Situation Creation

1. An Analysis of the Connotation of the Concept "Education Is Life"

Against the backdrop of accelerated industrialization and urbanization in the United States from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, amid society's urgent demand for new types of talents, John Dewey put forward the core concept of "Education Is Life" in his work *Democracy and Education*. He clearly stated that "Education is not a matter of forcing external things upon children or young people to absorb, but of enabling the innate capacities of humanity to grow". This viewpoint profoundly reveals the essence of education, stressing that education ought to focus on students' internal development and their lived real-life experiences.

1.1. Manifestations of "Education Is Life": Close Integration with Daily Life

Dewey argued that education should be closely aligned with students' real lives rather than confined to textbooks. He explicitly stated, "School must represent present life — life as real and vital to the child." In his view, schools ought to mirror authentic and dynamic contemporary life, with games, social interactions and other activities serving as vital components. Engaging in such practices allows students to gain firsthand experiences and sharpen their problem-solving skills. In English teaching, this concept requires integrating the English language into daily routines and making it an integral part of interpersonal communication. Exchanges within life-like scenarios reinforce language processing and facilitate language acquisition. Accordingly, teachers should fully take students' growth backgrounds into consideration and construct effective life-oriented teaching situations in daily classroom interactions. In this way, lessons can correspond to students' practical life needs and strike a chord with them.

1.2. School as the Epitome of Society: Alignment with Students' Daily Lives

Dewey maintained that schools should not be institutions isolated from children's lives; instead, they ought to integrate into and form an organic part of children's existence, keeping consistent with their real-life experiences. The core implication is that schools need to reflect and conform to the realistic lives of children. Accordingly, when designing school curricula and teaching methodologies, educators shall take children's interests and personal experiences as the benchmark, so that educational activities can better conform to the natural laws governing children's growth.

In terms of English teaching, this principle demands that English teachers pay close attention to students' interests and life experiences during curriculum planning. In this way, English learning can break free from the tedious model of merely memorizing textbook knowledge, and transform into an engaging learning experience closely linked to students' daily routines.

1.3. Simplifying and Purifying Social Life: The Social Attribute of School Life

Dewey maintained that school life ought to correspond to social life, and schools should serve as a simplified and purified version of societal life. He explicitly stated: "The school, as an institution, should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form." By organizing practical activities that simulate real social scenarios, students are able to take on diverse roles, experience the rules of social operation and modes of interpersonal communication, and thereby cultivate their sense of social responsibility and civic awareness. In English teaching, this philosophy requires educators to design simulation-based practical activities in light

of teaching content, such as campus English banks and English shops. Within these scenarios, students assume various roles and experience social norms and interpersonal interactions conducted entirely in English. Such activities not only foster students' sense of social responsibility and civic consciousness, but also advance their practical English proficiency and intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

In summary, the proposition of "Education Is Life" offers teachers a fresh pedagogical perspective. It advocates integrating teaching procedures with real-life contexts and prioritizing students' acquisition of firsthand experience and the improvement of practical capabilities. This theory exerts a profound and guiding influence on contemporary educational practice, encouraging educators to reflect on and renovate conventional teaching approaches so as to construct a curriculum system better aligned with students' developmental characteristics.

2. The Value and Significance of Life-Oriented Situational Construction in English Teaching

2.1. Stimulating Learning Interest and Motivation

Adopting situational construction strategies in English teaching and linking classroom content closely to students' daily lives can effectively arouse students' enthusiasm for English learning and their intrinsic motivation. Through elaborately designed classroom arrangements, teachers build authentic or simulated life scenarios, such as campus activities, warm family moments and social interactions, so as to create an intuitive, relaxed and pleasant learning environment for students.

Such environments can not only alleviate students' inherent anxiety about English learning, but also enable them to connect fragmented linguistic knowledge points with concrete and vivid life examples, greatly enhancing the practicality and fun of English learning. This integrated strategy adopts the method of education through entertainment to further inspire students' desire to acquire new knowledge and their spirit of exploration, satisfying their strong curiosity about the unknown world.

In addition, life-oriented situational creation allows students to play different roles, which improves their participation and sense of immersion. Compared with the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode, this innovative educational method that attaches importance to practical experience and students' active participation is more dynamic and appealing. It also exerts a remarkable effect on sustaining students' positive initiative and willingness for lifelong learning.

2.2. Facilitating Knowledge Comprehension and Retention

Well-designed situational construction in English classrooms can significantly strengthen students' mastery and comprehension of English knowledge. For instance, constructing life-relevant scenarios including simulated campus activities

and cross-cultural communication can effectively activate students' prior knowledge. In authentic linguistic contexts, students can intuitively perceive the meanings and practical applications of language, deepen their understanding of linguistic structures and knowledge, and accomplish a natural transition from abstract concepts to concrete language use.

Such contextualized and life-based learning experiences not only improve the comprehensibility of knowledge but also remarkably boost students' memory efficiency. Furthermore, problem-oriented scenarios adopted in class, such as project research, task-based practice and role-play, motivate students to explore, employ and reflect on language proactively. Within this learning model, students deal with authentic or simulated real-life problems, which promotes in-depth processing of acquired knowledge. Meanwhile, they receive immediate feedback and make adjustments through hands-on operations and interpersonal communication, reinforcing memory traces. This approach enables students to consolidate English knowledge stored in long-term memory while solving practical problem.

2.3. Cultivating Students' Language Competence

The situational construction teaching approach emphasizes students' active participation and hands-on practice in class, encouraging them to communicate in English within authentic or near-authentic contexts. When interacting in simulated settings, students can practise grammar and vocabulary application, and learn to select appropriate linguistic forms to adapt to diverse social situations. This approach helps students grasp the functions of specific linguistic knowledge in real communication, thereby improving their interactive and communicative competence.

Furthermore, situational creation generally requires students to apply English creatively to tackle practical problems in given contexts, inspiring them to break through traditional thinking patterns and utilize acquired knowledge to cope with various real-life challenges. For example, in role-play activities, students need to resolve conflicts or accomplish set goals via English. Such tasks not only polish their linguistic skills but also cultivate their creative thinking and problem-solving capacities.

3. Strategies for Constructing English Teaching Situations Based on the Concept of "Education Is Life" — A Case Study of Time for a Change (Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2, Senior High English, FLTRP)

3.1. Exploring Life-Oriented Materials in Textbooks

As the primary basis for teaching, English textbooks contain abundant life-related resources. Teachers should thoroughly tap into these materials and transform them into vivid teaching situations. This practice brings textbook content closer to students' daily lives, enhances the pertinence and effectiveness of teaching, and

further guides students to communicate with others, express personal viewpoints and strengthen their problem-solving abilities.

For instance, when teaching the text *Time for a Change* from Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2 of FLTRP Senior High English, teachers may prepare real objects related to the Spring Festival before class for the lead-in session, such as Spring Festival couplets, Fu character stickers, red envelopes and Chinese knot decorations. These items can be displayed in class with brief explanations of their symbolic meanings and practical functions during the Spring Festival.

These physical objects are tangible supplies accessible to students in real life and also serve as material carriers of Spring Festival culture. By integrating textbook knowledge with students' real-life experiences, teachers can enliven and enrich textbook content while boosting teaching pertinence and efficiency. As a result, students will naturally engage in classroom learning within a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

3.2. Creating Situations with Multimedia Resources

Boasting intuition, visualization and vividness, multimedia resources can effectively construct authentic or near-authentic life scenarios for students, thereby boosting the appeal and emotional impact of teaching and arousing students' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers may adopt diverse multimedia resources including pictures, audios, videos and animations to design vivid situations and capture students' full attention.

For example, during the while-reading session of the text Time for a Change (Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2, Senior High English, FLTRP), teachers can play videos to contrast two types of dining venues. By reconstructing the dining atmosphere in real-life contexts, teachers guide students to reflect on whether shifting Spring Festival dinner venues will alter the festive vibe.

To begin with, a video featuring a traditional family preparing and enjoying the New Year's Eve dinner at home can be played. It covers scenes of the whole family making dumplings, preparing dishes, setting the dining table, chatting and laughing around the table, and exchanging toasts and best wishes, echoing the childhood family dinner depicted in Liu Yonghui's letter in the textbook. Afterwards, another video showing a Spring Festival family feast held in a restaurant can be presented, displaying the restaurant's surroundings, cuisines, services and family interactions.

Teachers then guide students to compare the two videos and identify disparities between the two dining modes in terms of atmosphere, food preparation and family participation. Videos as a multimedia tool to reconstruct real-life scenarios feature powerful expressive force, instantly immersing students in concrete and vivid real-life settings. While watching the videos, students gain both visual perception and emotional resonance. Such all-round sensory experiences greatly expand the dimensions of learning, enliven classroom interaction, enhance teaching

attractiveness and appeal, and cultivate students' thinking abilities imperceptibly.

3.3. Constructing Situations through Organizing Classroom Activities

Well-designed classroom activities constitute a core link in creating English teaching situations and can greatly enrich students' learning experiences. By planning diversified classroom activities, teachers can build highly interactive life-based contexts, where students communicate and collaborate in English throughout participation. This process strengthens their practical linguistic competence and fosters their spirit of teamwork. For instance, in the post-reading session of the text Time for a Change (Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2, Senior High English, FLTRP), teachers can organize a classroom activity titled "Drawing Up a Family New Year's Eve Dinner Plan" to create a strongly life-oriented classroom context, prompting students to conduct in-depth reflection on whether changes in Spring Festival dining venues will affect the festive atmosphere. First comes situation setup: it is assumed that each student is responsible for arranging their family's New Year's Eve dinner this year, and they can choose to hold the dinner at home or reserve seats in a restaurant. Next are activity procedures: students first think independently about their preferred way of holding the New Year's Eve dinner and draft a preliminary plan with brief English notes covering dish selection, participant arrangement and activity schedule. Then proceeds group discussion: group members share their respective plans and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each choice just like family members negotiating the New Year's Eve dinner arrangements, and each group selects one dining mode after comprehensive consideration based on the discussion results to work out a detailed dinner plan involving menu design that incorporates traditional Spring Festival foods mentioned in the text such as dumplings and fish, seating layout which mirrors interactions and kinship among family members, as well as recreational activities including small games for staying up late on New Year's Eve and watching the Spring Festival Gala; in the final part, each group picks a representative to present their dinner plan to the whole class, and other groups are allowed to raise questions or offer suggestions. Through the classroom activity of formulating a family New Year's Eve dinner plan, teachers not only construct a vivid life-oriented classroom situation but also subtly integrate discussions about traditional Chinese culture, offering students a platform to communicate in English for practical purposes and making English language learning and cultural understanding reinforce and complement one another.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the construction of English teaching situations guided by the concept of "Education Is Life" can effectively stimulate students' learning interest and intrinsic motivation, facilitate their in-depth understanding and long-term retention of knowledge, and remarkably improve their language application ability and

intercultural communicative competence. By tapping life-oriented elements in textbooks, utilizing multimedia resources and elaborately organizing classroom activities, teachers can build authentic and enlightening teaching contexts that allow students to engage naturally in English learning within a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, thus realizing the all-round improvement of their linguistic proficiency and comprehensive literacy. Looking ahead, educators should continue to explore this educational philosophy and constantly optimize relevant strategies to contribute to cultivating talents with international vision and intercultural communication capabilities.

References

[1] Dewey, J. Democracy and Education[M]. Trans. Xue Xuan. Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2014.

[2] Fu X. Strategies for Cultivating Junior High School Students' English Language Competence under the Background of Core Literacy[J]. New Curriculum Guidance, 2020(S2):70-71.

[3] Hu C M. Application Strategies of Situational Teaching in Junior High School English Teaching[J]. Campus English, 2024(14):151-153.

[4] Jiang H M. A Probe into the Application of Situational Teaching in Senior High English Classrooms[J]. Road to Success, 2021(19):90-91.

[5] Li P P. Practical Exploration of Life-Oriented Teaching in Junior High School English[J]. Secondary School Curriculum Tutoring (Teacher Education), 2020(17):31.

[6] Mao X Q. Construction and Implementation of Life-Oriented Junior High English Classrooms under the New Curriculum Standard[J]. New Education, 2024(05):56-58.

[7] Ran J. Creating Effective Situations to Boost English Grammar Teaching[J]. Campus English, 2023(14):157-159.

[8] Yang H Y. Analysis on the Application of Situational Teaching Method in Junior High School English Teaching[J]. Secondary School Curriculum Tutoring, 2022(09):117-119.

[9] Zhang S H, Shi P. Research on Junior High English Reading Teaching Strategies Guided by Core Literacy[J]. Basic Education Forum, 2024(13):62-64.

[10] Zhang Y. Research on Situational Teaching Strategies in Junior High English Classrooms under the New Curriculum Reform[J]. New Campus, 2024(10):64-65.