Reception Theory and Reading Teaching of College English

Cui Rong and Qiong Sun

ABSTRACT

The reception theory considers only the reading process would complete the meaning of the work. The meaning is the production of interaction between the work and the reader, so reading is a process in which the readers take part actively. The reception theory emphasizes the main role of the readers, and college English reading teaching should also emphasize the study motivation of students. The class should be student-centered. This paper clarifies that we should transform the class form by the revelation of the reception theory through designing a specific text.¹

INTRODUCTION

As the most important part of college English teaching, reading teaching has always been the focus of attention and thinking. With the continuous development of college English teaching reform, it has made remarkable achievements in reading teaching theoretically and practically. However, centering on language points and exam during teaching process is still a serious problem that cannot be ignored in college English reading teaching. It is necessary to change the situation to improve students' English language proficiency essentially.

CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH READING TEACHING

College English reading is a practical subject of cultivating practical ability, therefore we couldn’t take the college English reading as a subject of pure linguistics

¹Cui Rong, Foreign Languages College of Shenyang University, Shenyang, Liaoning, China, 110041.
and cannot treat it as pure theoretical subject in accordance with old patterns. We should start with the perspective of theory and put it into practice. The improvement of English language skills cannot be separated from students’ practice, especially English reading. Applying properly what ones have learned is the only way that can make language become a tool for communication [1]. The generation of textual meaning means the success of language communication, and from this perspective, it may have great significance to make ingenious use of the key concepts in reception aesthetics “calling structure” and “horizons of expectations” to improve students’ communication ability of English language.

Since many teachers still follow the old pattern of explaining the meaning of new words and sentences in English class, teachers dominate the main teaching process by chattering. On one hand, the role of the teachers has been virtually unlimited exaggerated in this kind of pattern, on the other hand, the students’ opportunities of participating in reading have been deprived greatly. As a result, the students’ enthusiasm waned dramatically, and the initiative, creativity and confidence of language use have been affected. During the process of reading teaching, teachers should highlight the creative function of readers by using those texts of college English textbook and be aware that students are masters of the classroom. Addition to this, teachers should pay attention to the students’ function of creating the meaning of text and aesthetic value as well as guide the students to mobilize their aesthetic ability, their imagination and creativity to construct, learning and taste the meaning of English.

RECEPTION THEORY AND STUDENT-CENTERED READING TEACHING OF COLLEGE ENGLISH

In the 1960s, Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, the representative of the school of constancy, put forward the “reception theory”, and it broke the limit of traditional research on writer and works and introduced the factor of readers. This theory not only introduced the study of readers, but also promoted the position of the readers during the receiving process and clarified deeply the use of the readers. It put forward the reader-centered theory and made a new illustration on reading, and the reception theory considered that only in the reading process would come the meaning of the work [2]. The meaning is the production of interaction between the work and the reader, so reading is a process in which the readers take part positively. This theory connects the literature and social reality and changes the reading concept of people so it caught the attention of the education circle and education theory put forward the student-centered theory.

Acceptive theory holds that what the author has written doesn’t matter, but what the reader finds in the process of reading matters. It considers that the author’s writing just provides indeterminate text, only concretizing by readers could the works be completed. Thus, the work is not accomplished by the author alone, but created by the author and the reader. That is, the author writes the indeterminate text,
and then the reader will concretize the text. In such type of relationship, the receptive aesthetics explicitly states that the reader is the main part as well as the process of concretizing. The reader is primary and the indeterminate text is secondary [3]. The text doesn’t exist unless becoming the object of the reader, and the reader is not only the initial explorer of the creative motivation, but also the final practitioner of the creation. Text was initially written and endowed with meaning by the author, but the text interpretations by readers from generations to generations constitute a long chain of accepting which continuously generates effects and would be enriched with the passage of time. The historical significance of a work is to be determined in this process, and its aesthetic value is confirmed in this process [4]. Literary work is not a free objective which appears before all readers of different eras with the same face. It is like music which only relying on playing of the readers could become a beautiful melody. Therefore, the reader’s reading is creative and the reader which is an active factor is the only and final object to be faced by the works and also the decisive force for the popularity of the works. In the relationship between the author, the work and the reader, the reader is not merely a passive part, or merely a reaction, but rather an active component. The historical life of a work is inconceivable without the active participation of the recipient.

In order to arouse people’s understanding and imagination authors add some appropriate uncertainty and whiteness to their works and leave a wide space for people’s imagination and understanding. This theory is consistent with the student-centered teaching theory which is emphasized at present. In college English reading teaching, the teaching material is the text, the students are the readers, and the teaching activity is to make the readers concretize the text. Based on student-centered teaching theory teachers are required to consider the students’ position and their cognitive levels in the process of creating external learning conditions. The teachers’ teaching activities can not only affect the internal cognitive process of students’ learning and arouse students’ consciousness of learning, but also inspire the student to carry on the creation in deep level. In addition, it can also help students to search for blanks in their knowledge systems, improve and mobilize their existing cognitive structures, and further improve their understanding of the texts. If the reader-centered theory of reception theory is to realize the value of the work, then the student-centered theory of reading teaching activities is to realize reading ability and thinking ability.

**APPLYING RECEPTION THEORY TO READING TEACHING OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

The emphasizes the main role of the readers, and college English reading teaching should also emphasize the study motivation of students. In the reading teaching process, the teacher just likes a program host and there is the interactive communication relationship between teachers and students. Actually, cultivating the reading ability of the students in reading teaching couldn’t achieve in one day, and
the speed, skill and the efficiency influence the quality of reading. Therefore, teachers should provide all various conveniences to serve for the students’ study.

According to the reception theory we could highlight the importance of the students through changing the forms of teaching. We could take the “Five Famous Symbols of American Culture”, one text of New Horizon College English, for instance. This text includes historical knowledge and American culture. Mostly, the traditional teaching method is explaining the words, sentences and grammar by teachers and translating the passage by teachers or students. The class is over, so does the interest of the students. We can’t help thinking about how we can make the lesson more vivid and let the students experience and enjoy a kind of beauty. We could try the following teaching design. We could divide the whole teaching process into five teaching steps: clarifying the new words and sentences, reading the passage, introducing the five famous symbols of American Culture, making comments on the introduction and writing short passage by imagining cultural symbols of China. According to the teacher’s requirement, the first two steps should be finished before class by the students themselves and the third and fourth step could be solved during class, and the writing steps could be set after class. The introduction in this process could be introduced by “historic learner”, “guide” or “photographer” and the students could act as such kind of people. The Statue of Liberty is one of the five famous symbols of American culture and it is world-famous. As a landmark structure in America, the Statue of Liberty is the splendid scenery which no one should miss, so we could encourage the student to introduce the delicate statue to other students as a historic learner or a guide and show the beauty of the Statue of Liberty through choosing different points to the students as a photographer. The teacher should require the students to explain vividly, visually, practically and interestingly. During the introduction, the students could change the order of the paragraphs according to their need. They can either interlude some stories or background information. As long as not deviating the passage and not going counter to the original meaning the students could explain as vividly as possible. And then come to the evaluation step. In this step, we could let other students make some comments on those students who make the introduction. Addition to this, the teacher could give some help to students appropriately. As regards to the writing step, the students could finish after class and communicate with the teacher.

The principle of this kind of teaching design embodies the idea of student-center and emphasizes the important status of the readers. The students design the commentary themselves, make the models themselves and show their own talent. Reading and reception have their own independent value, and the reader’s subjectivity and initiative not only influence the final realization of the meaning of the work, but also finally complete its value evaluation through the individual reading. In this way, the change of the class teaching form makes the class more vivid and more colorful.
CONCLUSIONS

Reception aesthetics regards reading activity as aesthetic activity, analyzes the aesthetic object, aesthetic subject and its interaction and the perceptual characteristic of beauty from the aspects of Reader’s function, text meaning and aesthetic experience [5]. Language is the most important culture of human beings as well as an object of aesthetics. The beauty of English language has been vividly embodied in the English textbooks which have colorful contents and a wide range of subjects. The reception theory gives us a very important revelation, that is, being a teacher, we should give the class back to the students and let the students be the master in class. During teaching process, we should think much of the students’ creativity and give them a space for their independent thinking. After all, those who know the truth are not equal to those who love it, and those who love it are not equal to those who delight in it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is supported by Shenyang Federation of Social Science Circles project “College English Teaching from the Perspective of Cultural Self-Confidence” (No. SYSK2018-18-25).

REFERENCES