Research Article

Application of New Media Technology in Vocabulary Learning of College English Curriculum

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Abstract

Concerning the issues that the teaching time of College English (CE) curriculum has been compressed and the education resources in universities get more and more strain, this paper proposes to apply the new media technology in the CE vocabulary learning. The new media technology can achieve the interaction with learning subjects and involvement in the learning process with the mass language materials and database. It features the instantaneity, facticity and strong practicability. On this basis, this paper makes a thorough analysis on the application of new media technology in CE vocabulary learning. It turns out that the intervention of new media technology can strengthen the students' interests in learning CE vocabulary curriculum, and make available English teaching resources more diverse, flexible and speedy, so as to reduce the learning cost, improve the CE teaching quality and level, and enhance students' learning effect in English vocabulary, thus providing a good clue for the society to cultivate a multi-functional compound talents.

Keywords

New Media Technology • CE • Vocabulary • Applied Study

Today, English is one of the compulsory courses in universities. CET 4 and 6 must also be passed by students in non-English majors. In addition, English will be also required in the National Entrance Examinations for Postgraduates (NEEP) and study abroad. But for now, the instruction of CE curriculum has been compressed into less and less time, and with the sharp increase in the number of college students, the teaching resources in universities get more and more strain. The exam-oriented education part in the holistic education produces a greater adverse impact on the English learning in universities. All of the above will throw students into the dilemma of the CE vocabulary learning that took time but seems ineffective. How to effectively improve the CE vocabulary learning efficiency and stimulate the interest of college students in learning English vocabulary has become one of challenges that Chinese society faces today. (Zhang, 2014) With the development of information network technology, new media technologies continue to spring up. The so-called new media is represented by digital and network technologies, as a new form that achieves the information dissemination via Local Area Networks, wireless networks, and various communication equipment, for example, the most typical digital newspapers, mobile microblog, WeChat, and digital TV and networks. New media is becoming a new interest of students thanks to its immediacy, interaction and diversity, and constantly enhance its advantages in CE vocabulary learning area.

Features of New Media Era

The modern information society has fundamentally changed the media era, especially the booming network information technology has ushered the modern media into a new era of coexistence of paper and electronic modes. A new media with network as the core tends to be overwhelming. It has come into the people's vision. Now, the information technologies have infiltrated into all fields of our daily life. The new media mainly refers to a dissemination form that provides users with the information and services "using digital technology via the computer networks, wireless communication networks, satellites, and other terminals such as computers, mobile phones, and digital televisions". As a newly developed hot media, new media has also stimulated the new development of electronic media based on the electronic networks. Boosted by portable electronic media such as smart phones and the thriving network services, China's media has ushered in a new era. (Pearson *et al.*, 1997)

In the new media era, people's lives are greatly changing, so that a fundamental change has taken place in the modes of information communication and propagation between the media and the audience. The paperless reading is representative of the new media. The booming of digital electronic reading media attributes to the dramatic development of Internet technology. As a representative of fastest receiving information and the latest ideas, a group of youths who most readily accept new things are becoming the largest body of advocates for paperless reading, and also one of the important audiences for new media. E-reading behaviors mostly belong to the representative act of the youthful students. (Kieburg & Schulz, 2011) So far, almost all students in Chinese universities have smart phones, and the students who own laptops are even countless. There are more reading media, such as tablets, Kindle, etc. Electronic readers become more and more prevalent. China's mobile reading contact rate constantly increases. See Fig. 1 for details.
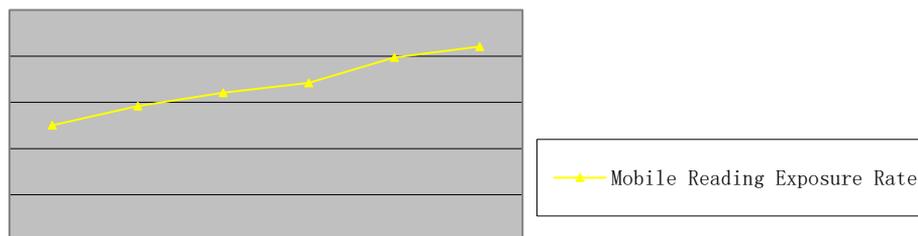
Figure 1. China Mobile Reading Exposure Rate for 2012-2017 (Unit: %).

The daily information materials, and entertainments are available for students mostly based on networks and electronic devices. According to relevant statistics, the owning rate of students' smartphones has reached 100%. (Leung, 1998)

Compared with traditional media, new media has incomparable advantages. It is characterized by the immediacy, interaction and diversity. Via the new media, more and more readers can realize the instant information transmission. Based on high interactivity and involvement, readers can publish the reading feeling and opinions on a broader platform to let more readers see this information and make comments. This exchange is conducive to enhancing the friendship between readers. In addition, readers can also look through other readers' comments and discussions in the new media. (Jarvis, 2010) With the support of new media technology, students can no longer learn English independently, but interact with multiple people in parallel. The E-reading advantages provide students with more companions when learning English vocabulary to more frequently interact with each other. The electronic platform provided by the new media has a huge mass of information and materials, which can make learning and reading subjects take less time to carry out fragmented reading and improve reading efficiency, in favor of students for learning English vocabulary.

Dilemma for students' English vocabulary learning

As the new media advances at an ever increasing pace, electronic media is also constantly interposing the development of printed media, both in terms of images and influence, weeding the paper-based texts out of people's horizons and flood into people's daily life in an electronic form. Especially for students in universities, the new media provides them with more choices to read and learn English. However unfortunately, it also indirectly weakens the students' thinking power in the regard, and further makes them ignore contemplating the language. A large number of students are too eager to read the illustrated information about new media, and indulge in the online and electronic mobile phones, which makes them difficult to concentrate on English vocabulary learning to develop a long-form reading, affecting the English vocabulary learning efficiency. (Wei, 2009).

Vocabulary underlies language learning process. As linguist Carolyn Wilkins said: we cannot believe that grammar is more important than vocabulary. In fact, if there is no grammar, only limited information can be

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delivered. However, if there is no vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. As a language, English learning also needs to follow a general law. Language builds on the vocabulary. As the most basic unit of language, vocabulary is the basis and premise of English learning. Up until now, the English teaching mode in Chinese universities are still relatively rigid, the teaching content is obsolete, lacks strong system framework, and even more, the teaching methods are relatively dull. Students' interests in learning can not be aroused. (Vaast, Davidson & Mattson, 2013). The above are the staggering problems in the English vocabulary learning of students in universities. As specific to the CE curriculum learning, the vocabulary, as a discipline that focuses on cultivating students' learning flexibility and application skills, and also an important part, runs through the whole English learning process. If there is no large vocabulary as the foundation, the specific contents of language, I.E. listening, speaking, reading and writing, will be affected, and worse, the language expression and application will be spoiled. In the English teaching process in universities, the students often complain that English words are difficult to read, difficult to remember, difficult to write, and easy to forget, consume more time and energy but not effective. Most of the students lack fluency in English. Although they can express in English, most of them just knock the words together. It is impossible for them to express themselves fluently and smoothly. Although some students have better ideas, they cannot clearly express these due to their lack of basic vocabulary. These will directly affect the composition of the sentences. Although some students have accumulated good sentence structures, because of the lack of vocabulary, they can not express the sentence meanings very well. All of the above problems must be resolved for smoothness of current Chinese CE vocabulary learning.

Important significance of CE vocabulary learning in the background of new media

Against the background of the new media era, the new media technology, if fully used, can effectively address the problems such as time consumption and low efficiency in CE vocabulary learning. As the cornerstone of language, vocabulary holds unequivocal significance, so that vocabulary learning is an indispensable part of English curriculum and a sound basics for learning English well.

With new media technology, students can break limitations of time, space, and geographical factors when learning English vocabulary. Due to the virtualization and powerful advantages of new media, students can escape away from the space and time constraints in learning process. Based on the interaction and diversity of new media, new media can make a full coverage on vast student population, and will be also widely used in the usual English learning thanks to its rational positioning and concise features, as well as its features such as immediacy and strong communicability. It can also effectively intrigue students' interest in learning English vocabulary, enhance their learning motivation, guide students to learn knowledge to lay the foundation for further language expression through learning vocabulary, thereby greatly improving students' comprehensive quality. (Goodwin, 1997)

New media technology can also facilitate the spatial transformation of students' English vocabulary learning mode. With the rise of the Internet, electronic media and reading mode has gradually become a choice. As portable terminals grow in popularity, more and more students carry out random vocabulary learning on the

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Internet and receive a huge mass of vocabulary information. This learning randomness breaks through the learning mode in a specific place and time period. The new media technology makes the CE vocabulary learning more free and more flexible, and has gradually become a new choice for students to learn English.

New media technology can expand the depth and breadth of students' English vocabulary learning. It has a huge pool for information and resources, which broadens the horizons of students. The so-called learning resources may be defined as explicit and potential conditions available by learners in various ways or the types of available information, people, materials, equipment and technologies. (Hackman & Johnson, 1981) The new media technology integrates the English learning curriculum on more and more online learning platforms, and learning resources have emerged, and been highly shared via the network. It greatly facilitates students' English vocabulary learning, and effectively reaches the breadth and depth of English learning process.

Application Analysis of New Media Technology in Students' English Vocabulary Learning

In the new media era, the application of various new technologies provides diversified option for students to learn English vocabulary. Portable electronic devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, Kindle, etc., increasingly enrich their reading modes. New media reading features mass information and fast updating, providing a broad perspective for students in vocabulary learning process. Vocabulary underlies the texts. New media technology can facilitate the latest vocabulary acquisition, and realize information acquisition with instant online search. It is more effective than the traditional mode. Moreover, the students' English vocabulary learning efficiency can be improved by means of diverse contents such as words, sounds and pictures, inducive to eliminate the dilemma encountered in English vocabulary learning process. For this purpose, the following application analysis will be conducted using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) as an example.

Synonym learning

There are many types of synonyms in English. In general, a word has a dozen of meanings, and even dozens of synonyms. When using the English vocabulary, students should have a profound understanding of synonyms. The inadequacy and problems of students' learning the English vocabulary are mostly reflected in this way that students lack of mastery of English synonyms, this is also one of the important reasons why the improvement of students' English proficiency is limited. For example, in terms of specific English writing, the *important* is a vocabulary that students use more frequently. Because of high frequency in use, it has been abused and even recognized as a "disgusting vocabulary". The occurrence of this case is attributed to the lack of vocabulary of students. That is to say, they can only be expressed in one vocabulary for one meaning. With the help of new media technology, we can use CACA as a means to effectively address the problem of lack of vocabulary of students. (Wang, 2008) Students open COCA on the Internet, where synonyms can be searched quickly. For example, you can enter *important* in the SERACH STRING bar, then a lot of synonyms will be hit on the screen.

Several are chosen here, such as key, main, critical, vital, etc. In this way, students can acquire the vocabulary more conveniently in learning practice, and in a shorter time, as specific to these *important* vocabulary learning, so that students can have a richer option for the expression of "important".

Discrimination of synonyms

It is because of the synonym that language gets richer, but on the other hand, this also contributes to the difficulty in learning language for learners. When learning English vocabulary, the synonyms will have a big difference in the collocation, genre feature and emotional color. Here, the author uses *legal* and *legitimate* as examples to analyze and expound the function of the COCA in English vocabulary learning. (Zhang, 2014) On the COCA platform, retrieve the *legitimate*, then there are adjunct nouns, *authority, reason, claims, rights, states*, etc. Similarly, we can also find that nouns behind the *legal* are *system, section, defence, issues, battle*, etc. Through careful analysis, the author can see that there are only a few words such as *rights, issues*, etc. that can be added behind adjectives. Therefore, both terms can be used to express "legal, legally recognized".

Understand how to use a vocabulary in different contexts

If a vocabulary does not apply to the right context, then it is certain that it is misused in a certain context. The misuse of context is a common phenomenon, regardless of what the vocabulary means, however it is often neglected in the CE vocabulary learning. For this purpose, the author selects a commonly used vocabulary *significant* as an example to illustrate this phenomenon. On the new media COCA platform, it is clear that the platform can help students to understand the advantages of vocabulary context color. When we use the CHART function in the Website, it is found that, according to relevant statistics, the *significant* appears frequently in academic articles, and the occurrence frequency of this word reaches 491.46 in every million words, while 69.54 in the spoken language, 87.32 in the magazine, 81.43 in the newspaper, and 14.44 in the novels, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Frequency of Occurrences Per Million Words

Context Type	Rate of Recurrence
academic journal	491.46
Speaking	69.54
magazine	87.32
newspaper	81.43
Fiction	14.44

Such data shows that the word *significant* still has a more formal contextual feature, and is rarely used in spoken or fiction. As an important reference, this conclusion is conducive to promoting students to correctly use the vocabulary.

Conclusion

The new media's diverse reading options and massive resources greatly facilitate students in CE vocabulary learning, effectively improve their learning efficiency and arouse their interest in learning English and mastering the English vocabulary. Students can also achieve two-way communication during reading and learning processes. From the analysis of the application of new media technology, we can see that this technology has special advantages in learning the CE curriculum, that is, it is conducive to cultivating readers' independent and critical thinking capacities. Students may also enhance self-awareness and improve overall quality through extensive reading.

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