

Influence of Behaviorism to English Vocabulary Teaching

Wu Xuelian

China West Normal University
Nanchong, Sichuan province,
China
E-mail: 493221411@qq.com

Abstract:

Behaviorism is one of the significant psychology theories in psychology history. It has many influences on many areas. In terms of English vocabulary teaching, it owns a vital place. Based on my teaching experience, I found most of the students have difficulty in vocabulary and behaviorism is a brilliant way to teach vocabulary. So in the following passage, it will take a wide range of words to talk about the advantage and disadvantage of the influence of the behaviorism to English vocabulary teaching. Then, finger out some useful ways to avoid and do with the disadvantages. In the last place, give an example of how to teach vocabulary effectively with behaviorism. In the passage, examples will often be used. This passage aims to help students and teachers deal with their difficulty—vocabulary. Therefore, it is suitable for students and English teachers to read. If they can gain great from this passage that will be my pleasure.

Keywords: behaviorism; vocabulary; advantage; disadvantage

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

After college graduation, I spent a year teaching English in a training school. Most of the students who came to there were not good at English. Their performance were usually below the average line (90 points). In terms of this phenomenon, I did a research. I talked to them one by one, asking them questions, like, what's the most difficult part in English, why don't you like English and so forth. To my surprise, almost all of the students gave my the same answer—it's too difficult to remember the vocabulary. Some of the students said they always repeated the process—remember, forget, remember, forget. Because of this bad circle, they gave up. As we all

know, vocabulary is the base of reading, writing, listening, etc. Without the basic knowledge, it's impossible for them to gain good grades.

In fact, repetition is a good way to learn vocabulary. In psychology area, behaviorism is consistent with this idea. The basic theory of behaviorism is stimulus, response and reinforcement. Therefore, this passage would like to talk about the relationship between behaviorism and vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Basis

On the one hand, a postgraduate student, Zhong Yinfang (2009), from Fujian Normal University noted that many people criticize the behaviorism, praise the constructivism. However, after her research on these two psychology theories, she points out that although constructivism's principle reading teaching is useful for students to understand the meaning of the whole passage, infer the meaning, master the style of the passage and understand the whole construction, it's not as good as behaviorism in the vocabulary and grammar. In contrast, behaviorism's principle reading teaching can facilitate students' vocabulary and grammar.

On the other hand, Chen Jinxiu (2013), a middle school teacher of Xiamen, released a passage in English Education. First, she proposed that English vocabulary teaching is important and difficult. Her passage mainly said that no matter the behaviorism, cognitivism or the humanism all owns shortages. Then she put forward eight ways to meet the need of the vocabulary-learning-difficult students.

3. Problem Solutions

3.1 Advantage and Disadvantage of behaviorism in vocabulary teaching

In the first place, in terms of the advantage, through the process of stimulus, response and reinforcement, the right behavior can be strengthened and the incorrect behavior will be corrected in time by the teacher. During the teaching process, teacher teaches the pronunciation of a word first and then based on the pronunciation, teaches them how to write the word. Next, put the word in a sentence and ask students guess what's the meaning of the word. After that, teacher tells students what's the meaning of the words. Repeat the word's pronunciation and meaning, and then ask them use the word to make some sentences or translate some Chinese sentences into English. Through this process, most of the students have a memory of the word. However, human always forget things. If students want to remember the word, they must review them from time to time. In a word, the advantage is that the process is very easy. Most of the teacher can handle the process and if the students follow the teachers carefully, they can learn and remember the words easily.

In the second place, in terms of the disadvantage, this kind of process is quite bored to the teacher and students. Behaviorists focus on outwardly observable behavior like structural linguists. They pay little attention to students' inside process. In fact, most of the students don't like dull atmosphere class. As teachers, they'd better invent some good teaching method to teach the

students. Under the behaviorism principle theory, teachers can use different kinds of method to teach the students. As we all know, invisible truancy is an common phenomenon, if teachers care little students' thought. Above all, teachers should care students' interest and thought. Not just do mechanical exercise.

All in all, these are the advantage and disadvantage.

3.2 Ways to do with the Disadvantages

There are many useful ways to deal with the disadvantages. For example, students can read aloud the words and its spell for many times; make up a song's lyrics; find out Chinese homophonic and so on.

In terms of the most obvious disadvantage, put the students as the center in the learning process. Focus on students' interests, their learning ability and their current performance. Under the behaviorism principle, use different kinds of ways to teach the words. Attract their attention and interest.

Another way is to stress the meaning of the word. Tell students the English meaning of the word and explain them. Meanwhile, use some explanation strategies to teach the words, such as, a picture, a video, etc. Last but not least, give suitable and scientific assessment.

3.3 An example of effective vocabulary teaching

First, the teacher has a knowledge of the students' interest and learning ability. Then use different method to teach words in different lessons. This does not mean the teacher must have hundreds of ways. It means the teacher uses the picture to present the new words this class. The next time he uses it maybe two or more lessons later. The teacher presents the new words, for example, car, plane, train, subway. He uses four cards and teach them one by one at least four times. And then teach them the pronunciation rules, in order to make it easier for them to remember the words' letters and its pronunciation. Next, show the pictures at random to the students and ask them to read out them. When they are familiar with the words. The teacher can give them a task to make up sentences and translate some Chinese sentences into English. Finally, after the class, students have a homework —write a composition which should include all the new words they have learnt today.

I think the best way for students to learn the words is to know what the word is and how the word is from. Then know its pronunciation and spell and how to use it. Create sufficient word exposure to the students.

4. Conclusion

Behaviorism is a vital psychology theory in psychology history. It can be applied to many areas, including pedagogical area. When it is applied in English teaching, in fact, it is really useful. However, unavoidably, this psychology has short comes. Therefore, there are advantages and disadvantages of the behaviorism in English vocabulary teaching. So under the behaviorism

principle, how to teach the words effectively is of great importance. In the passage, I mentioned some general ways, such as, make up song's lyrics, read aloud and so on. Meanwhile, I also give an example of how to teach the word in my own way. I propose a way by reading many articles. Connect the behaviorism and the content I have read, I write out the concrete way. There must be many shortages of my passage, I'd like to you read this and inform me. Then I can correct. What I have done is to figure out a way to deal with students' difficulties, help them learn easier and happier.

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