

A Study on the Course Design of CCQs in Vocabulary Teaching in Higher Vocational English Teaching

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Abstract: *This paper aims to explore the application of Concept Checking Questions (CCQs) in English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges. The teaching strategy of CCQs sets the real context and questions for students, promotes students' in-depth understanding and memory of vocabulary, and improves the efficiency and quality of vocabulary teaching. This study provides a new and effective strategy for English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges through a detailed analysis of its research background, theoretical basis, advantages of teaching methods, specific course design and future development direction.*

Keywords: CCQs strategy, Vocational English teaching, Vocabulary teaching, Course design.

1. Research Background

English teaching in higher vocational colleges aims at cultivating application-oriented talents and emphasizes students' practical ability to use English (Ren Juan, 2021), especially their vocabulary ability (Pan Sha, 2015). However, current English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges faces many challenges, such as students' uneven vocabulary levels, low student participation (Wang Yanmei, 2021), time-consuming, laborious and ineffective vocabulary teaching, and lack of real context (Pan Sha, 2015). As the cornerstone of language learning and the basis for improving the overall English level, vocabulary is of great importance. Therefore, exploring effective vocabulary teaching strategies to improve students' vocabulary level has become an important topic in vocational English teaching.

In recent years, one technique that has been recently proposed and utilized by language teachers and learners, and which has been reported to have an impact on learners' learning performance, is the concept checking question (CCQ) (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007; Florkowska, 2018). CCQs teaching strategies have gradually attracted attention, and their application in English vocabulary teaching has shown significant advantages (Renafati, 2009). Consequently, the present study aims to examine the impact of CCQs implementation on the vocabulary of Chinese EFL learners in higher vocational college.

2. Definition and Characteristics of CCQs Teaching Methods

Concept Checking Questions (CCQs) is a teaching strategy that checks learners' understanding of the core concepts of the content by designing questions. This method in multiple fields, especially in language teaching has been widely applied. CCQs first appeared in the Presentation Practice Production (Anderson, 1982) method which was promoted by the CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) trainers. Graham (2008) believes that conceptual examination can ensure students' understanding of target language and improve their awareness of target language

problems. According to Peiyun Zhang and Lin Wang (2017), the CCQs refers to the technique used by teachers to check whether students have understood the concepts being taught.

The teaching method of CCQs is problem-based, and a series of targeted questions are designed to guide students' thinking, discussion and feedback, so as to detect and deepen students' understanding of the concepts they have learned. The characteristics of this method lies in its pertinence and effectiveness of the design problem, can help students to consolidate the knowledge in the interaction (Kargar & Divsar, 2019), improve learning effect (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007).

To sum up, CCQs teaching method is an effective teaching strategy, which can help students deeply understand the concepts and improve the learning effect. In real teaching class, teachers should use this method flexibly according to the teaching content and the characteristics of students, and pay attention to the combination of other teaching methods.

3. Research Status of CCQs in Vocabulary Teaching

The research on vocabulary learning strategies began in the 1970s, and researchers gradually realized the importance of learning strategies for language learning. In particular, students in higher vocational college will encounter words related to their major in their work, so strengthening the learning of professional vocabulary in teaching can help improve students' vocational ability (Deng, 2011). The English level of vocational college students lies between middle school and university, and has its unique group characteristics and learning needs. In order to improve the ability of English listening, speaking, reading and writing, it is necessary to master more English vocabulary. As a result, vocabulary teaching plays an increasingly important role in English teaching in vocational colleges (Su Lin, 2015). However, in view of relatively few researches on English vocabulary learning strategies for vocational students, the development for higher vocational students' vocabulary teaching strategies is particularly important.

CCQs is an important and effective vocabulary teaching method in EFL/ESL (English as Foreign Language/English as Second Language) teaching. CCQs are questions that teachers use to assess learners' real understanding, thus allowing them to identify those who may be struggling with the material and determine whether additional practice is necessary (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand 2022). They are used to highlight the essence of the meaning of the target language taught during a lesson and verbally check students' understanding of new vocabulary in class (Florkowska, 2018). In Nugraha's (2017) investigation, he confirmed the positive impact of CCQs on cadets' vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension improvement. Moreover, according to the study of Pour et al., results of independent samples t-tests suggest that the CCQs class demonstrated significantly better performance in terms of lexis and grammar improvement when compared to the control class (Pour et al., 2024). In the same way, the study revealed that using of CCQs strategy has had a great effect on the students' performance in reading comprehension (Hadi et al., 2020). In conclusion, in vocabulary teaching, CCQs can help students understand and apply vocabulary in real contexts (Lilia, 2022), and improve the efficiency and quality of vocabulary learning.

4. Theoretical Basis

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the psychological process and cognitive mechanism of language learning, and language understanding and expression depend on cognitive processes, including attention, memory, reasoning and concept formation. Especially with the use of multiple evaluation feedback methods, to fully understand the students' learning situation, teachers can find problems and adjust the teaching strategies of students, so as to improve the effect of vocabulary teaching (Chen Jiao, 2024). The changes of English vocabulary from the perspective of cognitive semantics, especially the dynamic development of semantic categories of many words with the improvement of human cognition (Li Yan, 2024), the phenomenon of more abstract meanings with the increase of meanings in the categories (Li Yan, 2024). In order to ensure students to accurately and deeply understand the prototypical meanings, it requires teachers to accurately explain the prototypical meanings of words. (Zhao Liang, 2017). In vocabulary teaching, CCQs teaching method checks students' understanding of vocabulary by designing questions, and stimulates students to accurately remember words from multi-dimensional perspectives, which coincides with the theoretical viewpoints of cognitive linguistics.

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the importance of context in language understanding. In the teaching of vocabulary, cognitive linguistics holds that the meaning of a word is not only determined by its form, but also closely related to its use in a specific context (Geng Na, 2022). Cognitive semantics also believes that "semantics is the center of grammar", and studies have always focused on the relationship between language, meaning and experience (Li Yan, 2024). Therefore, English language is not an isolated fact, but depends on the language environment and even specific communicative occasions to form sentences and discourse, so that the meaning of words can be concretized and accurately conveyed in vocabulary teaching. Teachers guide students to

understand vocabulary by setting the real context, let students experience the meaning of vocabulary in life, and better grasp the usage and meaning of vocabulary. The CCQs teaching method guides students to think about the application of vocabulary in a specific context by designing problems close to real life situations, so as to deepen their understanding of vocabulary.

Context is one of the important concepts in vocabulary teaching. B. Malinowski, an anthropologist, first proposed context. The concept of context was further developed by Firth, who believed that context includes linguistic context and non-linguistic context, and that both textual context and social situation behind language can be included in the context category (Firth, 1957). Halliday (1964) divided language environment into "cultural context" and "situational context" on the basis of Firth. The former refers to the social and cultural environment in which the speaker lives, while the latter refers to the specific situation in which the language occurs (Chen Ling, 2024). Context emphasizes that language is always used in a certain communicative environment, and it is difficult to determine the true connotation of language without context. It emphasizes that the meaning of words is formed in the specific context, and different contexts will affect the meaning and usage of words. Teaching vocabulary is an important part of foreign language teaching, and its effect directly affects students' language comprehension ability and communicative ability. With the application of context theory in foreign language teaching gradually thorough, vocabulary also ushered in the new change. Among them, the CCQs teaching method has attracted much attention because it can effectively combine the context theory and improve the effect of vocabulary teaching.

Therefore, under the perspective of cognitive linguistics and context theory, CCQs teaching strategy can be used in vocabulary teaching to improve students' multiple cognitive system of vocabulary understanding, so that students can learn and use vocabulary in the process of solving practical problems or completing specific tasks, which is helpful to help students better understand the deep meaning and usage of vocabulary.

5. Advantages of CCQs Teaching Method in Vocabulary Teaching

5.1 Stimulate Learning Initiative

The CCQs teaching method encourages students to actively participate in learning and think positively through the form of questioning. This teaching method is consistent with the view of cognitive linguistics on learning initiative. According to cognitive linguistics, learning is an active cognitive process in which learners construct a knowledge system through active exploration and thinking. Implementing CCQs in English classes may enhance learners' motivation to learn (Pour et al., 2024), and prompts students understanding to new words.

5.2 Detect and Correct Misunderstandings in a Timely Manner

The CCQs teaching method helps teachers to detect students' misunderstandings and conceptual errors in a timely manner and correct them in a targeted manner through the form of questions and answers. This helps to prevent students from using vocabulary incorrectly in subsequent learning and forming wrong learning habits. The CCQs teaching method helps students establish the correct vocabulary conceptual framework through timely feedback and correction. Concept-checking questions is a technique that language teachers employ to provide feedback. As suggested by Workman (2008). "concept checking involves checking for understanding of difficult aspects of the target structure in terms of function and meaning" (pp. 6-7). The use of this technique indicates to teachers that learners have comprehended the material thoroughly.

5.3 Provide Real Context

CCQs teaching method usually combines with specific context to set real context to guide students to understand vocabulary, which can help students better grasp the pragmatic characteristics of vocabulary. By setting the real context, the CCQs teaching method gradually guides the vocabulary to be explained, so that students can feel the usage and significance of the vocabulary in the actual situation. For example, when teaching the word "vandalize" a teacher can start by describing a real scene. As in "Yesterday when I went on a walk at the nearby park, I saw two children were shaking a phone box and the other children stood aside laughing". Then, students are gradually guided to think about whether the behavior in this scenario is "vandalize", and their understanding is further confirmed through CCQs questions. This teaching method helps students better understand the specific meanings and usages of words in different contexts.

5.4 Strengthen Vocabulary Memory and Application

According to context theory, the memory and application of words cannot be separated from the specific context. The CCQs teaching method strengthens the memory and application of vocabulary by providing real context, allowing students to learn and use vocabulary in context. For example, when explaining the difference between "worthy" and "worth", teachers can set specific contexts, such as "Germany is well worth living in" and "Germany is worthy of being lived in". Through CCQs questions, students are guided to think about the specific usage and differences of these two words in context. This teaching method is helpful for students to grasp the usage of vocabulary accurately and improve the ability of vocabulary application.

5.5 Cultivate Critical Thinking

The CCQs teaching method often requires students to choose and judge when asking questions, which helps to develop students' critical thinking. Cognitive linguistics believes that language is not only a tool to express thoughts, but also an important factor to shape the way of thinking. Through the CCQs teaching method, students need to think and judge in the process of answering questions, which helps to develop their critical thinking skills and analytical skills.

5.6 Promote the Interaction between Teachers and

Students

While contextual theory emphasizes the communicative nature of language, the CCQs teaching method promotes effective interaction between teachers and students by designing questions. In the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers constantly raise CCQs questions, guide students to think and answer them, so as to deepen students' understanding and memory of vocabulary. This kind of interaction not only improves students' participation, but also enables students to deepen their cognition of vocabulary in thinking, avoiding the disadvantages of passive acceptance of knowledge in traditional vocabulary teaching.

6. CCQs English Vocabulary Teaching Design

6.1 Analysis of Learning Situation of Higher Vocational College Students

In the teaching design of English teaching, it is necessary to analyze the learning situation of vocational students first. According to the English level, learning characteristics and professional background of vocational college students, the appropriate CCQs are designed to effectively create vocabulary learning scenarios.

Weak English foundation and performance. The English foundation of most vocational college students is relatively poor, which is reflected in the lack of vocabulary and weak grammar foundation. A survey shows that more than 95% of students have an English vocabulary of less than 1000 (high school students should have 4000 words), and the basic knowledge of English grammar is not firm, difficult to deal with complex sentence structure and grammar rules. The ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing is generally weak, and it is difficult to effectively communicate and use English. Learning ability is uneven. The English learning ability of students in the class varies greatly. A few students can keep up with the teaching progress, but most students have learning difficulties and are difficult to complete the learning task.

Learning attitude and motivation are not strong. Some students lack interest and motivation in English learning, their learning attitude is not correct, and there is a feeling of weariness. They tend to regard English learning as a burden and lack initiative and enthusiasm. The survey shows that only a few students have a positive attitude towards English learning, and most of them think that English learning will not help their future career development, so they lack motivation to learn. Students are not clear about their future career planning and lack of long-term learning goals, resulting in insufficient learning motivation. At the same time, due to their poor English foundation, they are prone to setbacks and difficulties in the learning process, which further weakens their learning motivation.

Poor learning habits and methods. Most students do not develop good English learning habits, such as not reviewing before class, not taking notes in class, and not reviewing in time after class. These bad habits lead to low learning efficiency and difficult to achieve good learning results. In the process of English learning, students lack scientific and

effective learning methods, and often memorize words and grammar rules by rote, ignoring the cultivation of practical language application ability. This way of learning is not only inefficient, but also easy to make students bored.

Therefore, we should pay attention to the accumulation and application of vocabulary and grammar in English classes for vocational students. Using CCQs to teach English vocabulary can solve the problem of students' weak English foundation, effectively make students remember as many important words as possible in class, and consolidate after class can effectively improve students' basic English level. Moreover, the teaching practice of CCQs is student-centered teaching mode and teaching method. At the same time, it also strengthens the monitoring and evaluation of students' learning process and timely feedback of students' learning situation, which is more conducive to teachers' adjustment of teaching strategies.

6.2 Discuss the Design Principles of CCQs.

Targeted. CCQs should be designed directly for the essential meaning of words or grammatical structures, ensuring that the questions accurately reflect the learner's understanding. The learning focus should be designed according to the difficult and confusing points in learning to help learners clarify fuzzy concepts and consolidate learning results.

Levels. The design of questions raised in class should follow the principle from easy to difficult, from easy to deep, and gradually guide learners to understand the vocabulary or grammar structure. Questions of different difficulty should be designed for learners of different levels to ensure that each learner can be promoted at the level suitable for himself.

Situational. By integrating CCQs into a specific context, learners can understand and use vocabulary or grammatical structures in a real language environment. By designing situational problems close to real life, learners can improve their language application ability and communication ability.

6.3 Application of CCQs in Specific Vocabulary Teaching

This instructional design takes the words pleased to meet you in Unit 1 of the third edition of New Beacon Vocational English as an example. This unit requires students to master 10 vocabulary words, which are: avenue, extension, nationality, originally, politician, profile, accounts, administrator, electronics, speciality, Take the first three words in this article for example.

6.3.1 Instructional design of the "Avenue"

Step 1: is to create the situation and describe the situation. "Students, today we are going to learn a word that is closely related to our daily life and the layout of the city. Imagine walking through a bustling city, flanked by tall buildings and shops of all kinds, with a wide road at your feet leading you in different directions. This road of possibility is called "avenue" in English. So, let's explore more of this word! Now, close your eyes and imagine that you are standing in the heart of a cosmopolitan city. You have before you a wide, bright avenue -- this is our Avenue. Along the road, there are not only high-end shopping malls and five-star hotels, but also

tree-lined parks and artistic cultural centers. This avenue is not only the main road of traffic, but also the gathering place of the city's cultural and commercial activities. Every time you step onto this avenue, you feel the energy and possibilities of the city."

Step 2: Concept Checking Questions: 1. "Who can explain in their own words what kind of road 'avenue' usually refers to?" "If there is a famous 'avenue' in your city, what might it look like? Please describe it." "Why do major cities have iconic 'avenues'? What do they mean for the development of the city?"

Step 3: Give examples. "New York's Fifth Avenue is a world-famous 'avenue' known for high-end shopping, luxury hotels and a wealth of cultural activities. Imagine strolling down this avenue, surrounded by flagship stores of various international brands and occasionally bumping into celebrities." Or "In addition to well-known 'avenues' like Fifth avenue, there are many similar roads in our daily lives." For example, the main road near the school has become a 'avenue' frequented by students because of the restaurants, bookstores and banks on both sides. Whenever you need to buy something or find a place to study, this 'avenue' becomes your first choice."

Step 4: Interactive practice. Have students try to make a sentence with "avenue" As in "The new shopping avenue has attracted a lot of tourists." or "The government is planning to build a green avenue along the river."

Step 5: Group discussion. Groups allow students to discuss whether there is a similar "avenue" in their city or hometown and share its characteristics and meaning to themselves.

6.3.2 Instructional design of the "extension"

Step 1: Create the situation and describe the situation. A teacher can introduce the word "extension" by referring to a situation that is close to a student's daily life. For example, "Class, have you ever stayed up late at night preparing for an assignment due the next day, but suddenly realized that you had misremembered the due date and were a few hours away from handing it in, what would you most like?" (Pause, leading students to think) "Yes, that's right! You might want your teacher to give you a bit of an extension -- that's the word we're looking at today -- 'extension'."

Step 2: Concept Checking Questions. 1) "Suppose you are taking part in an English speaking competition. You are supposed to prepare for it for two weeks, but due to sudden family reasons, you have a week to focus on it. At this point, you ask the instructor for an extra week to perfect your speech and practice, and the instructor agrees, "giving you an 'extension' of preparation time. What is 'extension' in this context?" (Guide students to answer: Additional time or extension of term). Example: "I was given an extension to prepare for my speech, so now I have three weeks to prepare." 2) "Xiao Zhang is a vocational college student and is doing an internship in an enterprise. His project was supposed to be completed by the end of the month, but due to the increasing complexity of the project, he asked his supervisor to extend the deadline for completion by one week. After consideration,

the supervisor approved his request and gave him an 'extension' of the completion of the project. Why does Xiao Zhang need 'extension'? How does this affect his internship?" (Guide students to understand the practical application of extension in work and its importance to task completion). Example: "In order to ensure the quality of the project, I asked my supervisor for an extension so that I could have more time to check the details and optimize."

Step 3: Show examples. "He's been granted an extension of the contract for another year." "It is also required an extension to your visa."

Step 4: Interactive practice. Ask students to make sentences with "extension", for example, "Can you think of making sentences with 'extension' in your studies and work?"

Step 5: Group discussion. In groups, ask students to discuss the following two questions: 1) Under what circumstances do you think it is reasonable to request an extension? 2) If you were a teacher or supervisor, based on what factors would you consider whether to grant an extension? At the end of the discussion, invite a few students to share their ideas.

6.3.3 Instructional design of the "nationality"

Step 1: Create the situation and describe the situation. The teacher can start with a simple and universal question that triggers the student's interest and thinking. "Students, when we fill out a form or introduce ourselves, we often come across a question: What is your nationality? What is this question asking us? It's about who each of us is and where we belong. Today, we will study this important word -- 'nationality'."

Step 2: Concept Checking Questions. 1) "Imagine that you, as a representative of your school, are selected to participate in an international student exchange program. At the welcome dinner, you need to introduce yourself to friends from all over the world. In addition to your name, age and interests, you also need to tell them your nationality so that people can better understand your cultural background. In this context, why is it important to know each other's nationality?" (Guide students to think about the role of nationality in promoting cross-cultural communication). Example: "Hello everyone, my name is Li Ming and I'm from China. My nationality is Chinese." 2) "Let's say you've just returned to school from a memorable trip to Europe. Your classmates are very interested in your travel experience and come round to ask about it. You excitedly share what you have seen and heard, and specifically mention how the nationality of people in different countries has affected their lifestyle and customs. What interesting cultural differences related to nationality did you discover during your travels?" (Students are encouraged to share their personal insights and deepen their understanding of nationality). Example: "In France, I met many people of French nationality who were very passionate about their food and wine. This really showed me how nationality can shape a country's culture."

Step 3: Show examples. "Asked his nationality, he said British." "The Yi nationality is distributed mainly over Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou provinces."

Step 4: Interactive practice. Ask students, "Can you name the nationality of several different countries?" (Students are encouraged to list, such as American, British, Japanese, etc.).

Step 5: Group discussion. In small groups, discuss the following two questions: What do you think is the relationship and difference between nationality and race, nation, or culture? (Guide students to think deeply about the complexity and multi-dimensionality of nationality). In today's ever-deepening globalization, has the importance of nationality changed? Why? Guide students to explore the significance and value of nationality in modern society.

7. Steps Can be Followed in the Application of CCQs in Vocabulary Teaching

1) Make clear the teaching objectives. Teachers need to make clear the vocabulary teaching objectives of this lesson and determine the vocabulary to be mastered and its core concepts.

2) Setting context: The teacher sets a real context related to the vocabulary to stimulate students' learning interest and attention.

3) Introduce vocabulary, naturally introduce the vocabulary to be learned in the context, and guide students to think about the meaning and usage of vocabulary through questions

4) Present vocabulary. Teachers can present vocabulary through pictures, objects, videos and other ways, and at the same time give the basic meaning and usage examples of vocabulary.

5) Designed CCQs questions, designed a series of CCQs questions according to teaching objectives and vocabulary characteristics. These questions can include general questions, special questions, choice questions, etc., to check students' understanding of vocabulary at different levels.

6) Question and discussion: In class, teachers timely raise CCQs questions, and guide students to discuss and answer. Encourage students to express their opinions and questions, and promote classroom interaction.

7) Feedback and correction: According to students' answers, the teacher will give timely feedback and correction. For students with inaccurate or questionable understanding, teachers should provide individual guidance or redesign the problem to deepen their understanding.

8) Consolidation and expansion: After questions and discussions, teachers can consolidate students' mastery of vocabulary through exercises, games and other ways, and appropriately expand vocabulary usage and context.

8. Future Development Direction

1) Combination of diversified teaching methods. In the future, CCQs teaching strategies can be combined with other vocabulary teaching methods, such as lexical block teaching method, associative memory method, word formation method, etc., to form a diversified vocabulary teaching system. This

can not only improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning, but also cultivate students' comprehensive language application ability.

2) Integration of technologies. With the development of information technology, multimedia teaching methods have been widely used in vocabulary teaching. In the future, CCQs teaching strategy can be combined with multimedia teaching means, and multimedia resources such as pictures and videos can be used to build a more vivid and real context, so as to further improve the effect of vocabulary teaching.

3) Improvement of the evaluation system. Establishing a scientific evaluation system is the key to ensure the effective implementation of CCQs teaching strategy. In the future, the evaluation system of vocabulary teaching can be further improved, and students' vocabulary application ability and learning engagement can be included in the evaluation scope, so as to fully reflect students' vocabulary learning effectiveness.

9. Conclusion

This study focuses on the curriculum design of CCQs teaching strategy in English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges, aiming to explore how CCQs can effectively promote the efficiency and depth of students' vocabulary learning through the combination of theoretical analysis and teaching practice. In the research process, the definition and classification of CCQs and its role in language learning are firstly sorted out, and the potential value of CCQs in English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges is clarified. Then, based on the English level and learning characteristics of vocational college students, we designed a vocabulary teaching course including CCQs. The course design pays attention to the authenticity of the situation and the inspiration of the problem, and strives to guide the students to think actively and participate actively through CCQs, so as to realize the effective acquisition and use of vocabulary.

This study provides useful enlightenment for English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges. First of all, teachers should fully recognize the important role of CCQs in vocabulary teaching and actively integrate it into daily teaching. Secondly, teachers should pay attention to the design and selection of questions to ensure that the questions are inspiring and targeted, and can guide students to think deeply. In addition, teachers should pay attention to students' individual differences and learning needs, adjust teaching strategies flexibly, and realize personalized teaching.

The study of CCQs teaching strategy in the curriculum design of English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges has important practical significance and application value. The introduction of CCQs teaching strategy can help students understand and use vocabulary in the real context, and improve the efficiency and quality of vocabulary learning. In the future, it is necessary to further strengthen the theoretical research and practical application of CCQs teaching strategies to promote the innovation and development of English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges. In short, CCQs teaching strategy in higher vocational English

vocabulary teaching curriculum design research has important practical significance and theoretical value. We believe that in the future teaching practice, CCQs will play a more important role in providing strong support for vocational college students' English vocabulary learning.

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