

## How to Develop Students' Communication Ability by Establishing Cultural Context in English Reading Classes

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**Keywords:** Reading Classes, Cultural Context, Communication Ability

**Abstract:** Language Learning is Closely Related to Cultural Context Learning. through an Analysis of a Case Study, This Article Attempts to Explore How to Develop Students' Communication Skills by Establishing Cultural Context in English Reading Classes.

### 1. Introduction

Language learning is closely related to cultural context learning. Kramsch once said that teaching a language is teaching how to form the context of the language. That means making it an independent learning event and social contact with a scene, the roles of the participants, the purpose of the activity, the topic, the tone of the voice, the rules of communication, and the type of task.<sup>[1]</sup> However, the context of the course is not just a situational context. It should extended to cultural context.

According to Lakoff & Johnson, in the process of communication, a native speaker is not only speaking in his own unique voice, but also through this voice telling the established knowledge of his community and society, the metaphors that the community adheres to and the category they used to express their experience<sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, native speakers can easily understand each other. However, it is more difficult for non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers because there is no common cultural context between them.

Similarly, in foreign language teaching classroom, teaching activities involve not only the context of a particular teaching task, but also the cultural context embedded in this teaching activity. Cultural awareness should be seen as an important part of improving communication skills, and the improvement of communication skills can make the communicator's language and manners more appropriate.

### 2. A Case Study

Whether it is extensive reading or intensive reading, reading is essential for English learners. However, the current English reading class in China is still teacher centered, and students are still passive receivers. Students often complain that they can not interact with each other English reading classes, which makes it boring and won't happen in oral and listening classes. In fact, how to improve students' communication skills in English reading classes has always been a headache for Chinese English teachers. Let's take an example to see how to develop students' communication skills by establishing cultural context in English reading classes. This passage is selected from the sixth paragraph of *The End of Fame* in Unit 1 of the book *New Horizon College English 4* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press):

*One drop of fame will likely contaminate the entire well of a man's soul, and so an artist who remains true to himself or herself is particularly amazing. You would be hard-pressed to underline many names of those who have not compromised and still succeeded in the fame game. An example, the famous Irish writer Oscar Wilde, known for his uncompromising behavior, both social and sexual, to which the public objected, paid heavily for remaining true to himself. The mother of a young man Oscar was intimate with accused him at a banquet in front of his friends and fans of sexually influencing her son. Extremely angered by her remarks, he sued the young man's mother, asserting that she had damaged his "good" name. He should hired a better attorney,*

*though. The judge did not second Wilde's call to have the woman pay for damaging his name, and instead fined Wilde. He ended up in jail after refusing to pay, and even worse, was permanently expelled from the wider circle of public favor. When things were at their worst, he found that no one was willing to risk his or her name in his defense. His price for remaining true to himself was to be left alone when he needed his fans the most.* <sup>(3)</sup>

The theme of this argumentative article has been given in the first paragraph: the pursuit of fame may lead to its own destruction. The following parts of the text revolve around this theme. The sixth paragraph takes Oscar Wilde as an example to show that celebrities are very difficult to be themselves. In addition to explaining the basic words and sentence structure, the teacher should also supplement the cultural background knowledge involved in this paragraph when teaching this paragraph, which will help students to have a deeper understanding of the article. Teachers can give the task to students and let them have full preparation before class. The students can supplement the cultural background information of this article from the following two aspects:

First of all, they should talk about Oscar Wilde's life. He (1854-1900) is an Irish playwright, novelist and poet. He is known for his ingenuity and gorgeous costumes and one of the most successful playwrights in London during the Victorian period<sup>[4]</sup>. His works include *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Happy Prince*, *An Ideal Husband* and *De Profundis*. As a result of the famous trial mentioned in the text (in 1895), he was put into jail for two years because of homosexual acts<sup>[5]</sup>.

Secondly, Oscar Wilde lived in the Victorian period. At this time, in Britain asceticism was extremely popular, but people had indulgent life in private. It can be said that this is both a time of decency and an era of freedom; both a time of tradition and an era of disobedience; both a time of dignity and an era of hypocrisy<sup>[6]</sup>. Oscar Wilde's homosexual behavior was regarded heretical and immoral, and not accepted by the society at that time, compared with the public's universal acceptance in today's society.

Finally, the teacher can explain this paragraph more specifically based on the students' supplements. At the same time, students can be divided into groups to discuss the theme of this paragraph, the life of Oscar Wilde and the British society in Victoria era, which can stimulate their reading interest and improve their language communication skills.

### 3. Conclusion

By using this kind of interactive teaching, we can get some methods of teaching English reading lessons and make our English reading classes more interesting and attractive.

Firstly, reading lessons are no longer passive acceptance for students. In the past, reading classes were always teacher-centered and students accepted them passively. As a result, they only had a superficial understanding of the materials they read, and soon forgot them. Teachers should turn passive reading lessons into such positive interactions.

Secondly, students should always be indulged into the materials they read. If students are not able to do this, their interests will not be stimulated and they will not be able to benefit from the materials they read. Only in this way, they can enjoy what they read.

Additionally, teachers should encourage students to respond not only to the language of the materials they are reading but also to the content of the materials. Of course, the language, paragraphs, and sentence patterns of the texts are also important. But the meaning of the text and the information it conveys are more important, and teachers should give students the opportunity to respond to this and let them talk about their opinions of the theme of the text. Students' feelings and opinions can arouse their interests about the topic and language of the text.

Besides, teachers must link teaching tasks with topics. Once teachers have decided what materials students will read, they should choose the right reading tasks: what questions to ask, how to participate, and what kind of problems to solve. The most interesting materials are often commonplace, but what the teachers need to do is to use their imaginative and challenging tasks to make the reading more exciting.

Finally, good teachers will make full use of reading materials. Any reading materials consist of words, sentences, and viewpoints. It doesn't make any sense to just let the students read and then do something else. Good teachers will combine reading materials with interesting classroom activities, discuss topics presented in the materials, and analyze their language.

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