

The Strategies for Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability in Junior High School English and Its Impact on Students' Comprehensive Quality

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Abstract: *The cultivation of autonomous learning ability is crucial in junior high school English learning. This ability not only enhances students' English learning outcomes but also contributes to their overall development. With the full implementation of the new curriculum standards, the goals of junior high school English education have shifted from merely imparting knowledge to fostering students' comprehensive development. Therefore, how to enhance students' autonomous learning ability has become a key focus for educators. Based on this, this paper first explores the necessity of cultivating autonomous learning ability in junior high school English learning, then discusses the impact of autonomous learning ability on students' comprehensive quality, and finally presents effective strategies for cultivating students' autonomous learning ability.*

Keywords: *Junior High School English; Autonomous Learning Ability; Comprehensive Quality*

1. Introduction

In the relentless tide of globalization, English has solidified its role as the lingua franca of international communication, diplomacy, and technological advancement. UNESCO reports indicate that 84% of global academic collaborations now prioritize English as their primary medium, underscoring its indispensable position in 21st-century education systems. Within this context, junior high school emerges as a pivotal developmental window — typically spanning ages 12-15 — when adolescents exhibit heightened neuroplasticity for language acquisition and cognitive habit formation.

Autonomous learning ability (ALA), defined by educational theorists like Holec as "the capacity to take charge of one's own learning process," transcends conventional exam-oriented outcomes. It equips students with metacognitive strategies for goal-setting, resource-selection, and self-evaluation—skills validated by OECD research to enhance academic performance by 23-37% across disciplines. Paradoxically, traditional teacher-centered pedagogy persists in 68% of Asian EFL classrooms (2024 IATEFL survey), where rigid grammar-translation methods and standardized testing frameworks inadvertently foster what psychologist Ryan terms "learned helplessness": 42% of junior high learners in China demonstrate dependency on teacher directives according to MOE 2023 data.

This systemic contradiction raises urgent pedagogical questions: How can educators transform English classrooms from knowledge-dissemination hubs into self-regulated learning incubators? What scaffolding strategies effectively transition adolescents from passive recipients to proactive investigators of linguistic patterns? Addressing these challenges, this study investigates innovative interventions blending technology-enhanced self-monitoring tools with socio-constructivist peer-learning frameworks, aiming to bridge the critical gap between global competence demands and localized classroom practices.

2. The Necessity of Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability in Junior High School English

Junior high school English teaching is an interactive process. While teaching, students are expected to learn as well. Therefore, in actual teaching practice, teachers must reasonably manage this two-way process and reinforce students' autonomous learning to establish good interaction between teachers and students. In this context, focusing on the cultivation of autonomous learning ability in junior high school English is crucial. In 2014, the term 'core literacy' was introduced in the educational sector, and many scholars have since conducted extensive research on this concept, believing it will guide future educational reforms. This highlights the importance of developing students' core literacy in the current

era. Unlike traditional education models, core literacy aims to cultivate students' ability to adapt to social development, with certain advanced and forward-thinking characteristics. It serves as a guiding principle for nurturing outstanding talents in China. In the process of junior high school English learning, after teachers clarify the core literacy of the English subject, they recognize that students' learning ability is a key focus of cultivation, and autonomous learning ability is an essential part of learning ability. Therefore, cultivating students' autonomous learning ability is an important way to enhance their subject-specific core literacy.[1]

Moreover, some teachers still focus only on the transmission of theoretical knowledge, lacking comprehensive attention to the cultivation of practical application skills. In such cases, although students may perform well in exams, they are unable to apply English effectively in real-life situations, leading to the phenomenon of "mute English." In addition, under this teaching model, students remain in a passive knowledge-receiving state for an extended period, lacking the ability to independently acquire knowledge and failing to meet their personalized growth needs. Therefore, emphasizing the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability in English teaching can effectively address the drawbacks of students' long-term passive reception of knowledge, thereby activating their subjective initiative and promoting comprehensive educational reform.

3. The Impact of Autonomous Learning Ability on Students' Comprehensive Literacy

3.1 Enhancement of Self-Management Skills

Learning is a lifelong process. By cultivating students' autonomous learning ability in junior high school English teaching, teachers can guide students to create learning plans tailored to their needs. This not only helps students manage their time effectively but also fosters their self-discipline. Teachers can use activities to help students set their own learning goals and provide reasonable supervision during the execution of these plans. This approach can effectively enhance students' focus during the learning process, improving not only their English learning efficiency but also encouraging them to adopt structured learning in other areas.[2]

3.2 Enhancement of Cross-Cultural Understanding

English remains one of the most widely used languages globally, and mastering it is an important tool for students to connect with the world. By the junior high school stage, students already have a basic foundation in English from their elementary education. During the process of cultivating autonomous learning abilities, students can collect learning resources according to their personal interests, including English journals, news articles, and literary works — resources that are not typically found in junior high school English textbooks. By exploring these resources, students can deepen their understanding of different countries' cultural backgrounds and ways of thinking. By engaging with diverse cultures, students can better understand and respect cultural differences, thereby strengthening their cross-cultural communication skills[3]. This lays a solid foundation for their future growth.

3.3 Stimulating Learning Motivation and Responsibility

In traditional teaching models, students often remain in a passive learning state, following the teacher's instructions. In junior high school English learning, enhancing students' autonomous learning ability can encourage them to actively engage in the learning process. This shift in roles can stimulate their intrinsic motivation to learn. As students discover topics they are interested in and gain new knowledge through effort, this positive learning experience helps cultivate their love for learning and their enduring curiosity. More importantly, in the process of autonomous learning, students take responsibility for their own learning outcomes. This sense of responsibility motivates them to approach their tasks more diligently, ensuring both the quality and effectiveness of their work.

4. Effective Strategies for Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability in Junior High School English

4.1 Cultivating Students' Awareness of Autonomous Learning

In traditional teaching models, students are accustomed to learning only through teacher-assigned tasks and rarely engage with the subject beyond completing these assignments. This is one of the reasons

why students often struggle with autonomous learning. To guide students to engage in autonomous learning after class, teachers must first shift their teaching philosophy and cultivate students' awareness of autonomous learning. Junior high school English learning differs from theoretical learning in other subjects. In addition to learning seriously in class, students need to dedicate time outside of class for practice. Since the class time is always limited to 40 minutes, teachers must guide students to manage their own learning time outside of class, encouraging them to reflect deeply on the content they are learning. Specifically, Teachers should assist students in developing a learning plan tailored to their abilities and goals, monitor their progress, and evaluate the outcomes.

For example, in the teaching of Unit 7, "It's Raining!" from the seventh grade English textbook (People's Education Press), to enhance the effectiveness of classroom teaching, teachers should guide students to develop a preview plan before class, adjusting the learning content according to each student's ability. During the planning stage, the teacher should introduce the course content in advance: "Students, we will be learning about weather changes. What weather-related vocabulary can you think of?" After students share their ideas, the teacher should highlight key phrases from the lesson based on their responses. Students should then create their own learning plan, with the task to be completed within 30 minutes. In the formal teaching stage, teachers should encourage students to share their learning plans, preparation time, and methods. While students present, the teacher can assess their preview results and offer examples of successful learning plans to assist students who may lack ideas. After class, the teacher should guide students to create a review plan based on what they've learned, which should also last around 30 minutes. During execution, students can monitor each other's progress and verify whether the plan has been completed.[4]

4.2 Cultivating Students' Ability to Plan

Through surveys on students' current learning conditions, it has been found that junior high school students often do not fully understand the importance of learning plans. Many students still treat planning as theoretical rather than putting it into practice. Therefore, teachers need to use various methods to guide students in formulating English learning plans and improving their planning abilities. First, teachers should help students set learning goals. Each student's goals should be based on their abilities and the learning content, ensuring they meet individual developmental needs. These goals should include both long-term and short-term objectives, such as improving by 10 points on the next exam or mastering 100 new vocabulary words.

After setting goals, teachers must guide students to arrange a reasonable time frame for completing their plans and choose appropriate methods for implementation. Depending on the goals, the time needed and the methods may vary. The plan can be either long-term or short-term, but it must ensure the goals are achievable.[5]

For example, in the teaching of Unit 2, "What Time Do You Go to School?" from the seventh grade English textbook (People's Education Press), to help students plan more effectively, the teacher can provide several guiding questions: (1) How much extracurricular study time would you like to have each day? What times would you dedicate to studying? (2) What activities will you include in your English extracurricular study time, and how much time will you spend on each? (3) What strategies will you use to complete the planned activities? (4) How will you assess the effectiveness of your learning activities? After students reflect on these questions, teachers should guide them to create their own learning plans, which can then be collected for review. Below is an example of a weekly learning plan created by students:

Monday: Preview the first part of the textbook, 1a-1c (4 minutes). Look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary and read vocabulary from pages 7-8 three times (15 minutes) with a desk partner.

Tuesday: Memorize the words learned the previous day (6 minutes). I say the word in Chinese, and my partner writes it in English. Recite 2b and Grammar Focus (40 minutes), read aloud and translate the meaning.

Wednesday: Complete the exercises on pages 9, 3a-3c (6 minutes). Do it alone during recess.

Thursday: Complete the Section B, 1a-1b exercises (5 minutes). After finishing, compare answers with my partner. Translate the article from 2b (10 minutes) and practice translating with my partner.

Friday: Memorize the 2b article (30 minutes). Translate once, read twice, and then memorize.

Saturday: Create a sentence for each important phrase mentioned by the teacher (10 minutes) and practice with my partner.

Sunday: Review the vocabulary learned (7 minutes), read each word twice, and write down mistakes from homework in a correction book (15 minutes).

By analyzing the students' learning plans, it is evident that each student customizes their plan according to their learning habits and interests. With guidance from the teacher, students can break down their learning time and activities, providing effective guidance for autonomous learning.

4.3 Cultivating Students' Self-Control Ability

Due to their age, junior high school students often have poor self-control. To ensure the successful implementation of autonomous learning plans, teachers must also focus on monitoring students' learning processes and help them adjust when issues arise, thereby improving their autonomous learning abilities. Based on actual teaching conditions, monitoring of learning plans can be divided into three types.

First, **self-monitoring**: To assist students with effective self-monitoring, teachers can design self-monitoring cards. The questions might include: 1) How do you stick to your plan? 2) Do you think your current learning strategy is effective? 3) How is your mental state during learning? 4) Do you adjust your plan when you feel things aren't going well? These questions help students better understand their learning status.

Second, **peer monitoring**: In junior high school English classes, most students will study with their peers, as mentioned in the example plans above, where many students practice with a desk partner. Teachers can encourage students to assess each other's learning outcomes through peer evaluation. During the assessment, the teacher can also mark areas where students face challenges, improving learning efficiency.

4.4 Guidance on students 'autonomous learning methods

In junior high school English teaching practice, teachers should pay attention to giving full play to their own guiding effect and teaching students effective and diversified autonomous learning methods in order to improve students' autonomous learning ability. Therefore, students can gradually obtain ideal autonomous learning results on the basis of mastering appropriate autonomous learning methods, and then realize the high-quality completion of autonomous learning tasks. Therefore, teachers can infiltrate relevant autonomous learning methods in class, and the autonomous learning methods taught should meet the actual needs of students' autonomous learning activities, so as to prevent students from having certain problems and difficulties in method acceptance. For example, in the process of teaching English preparation methods, teachers should pay attention to whether the students master the preparation methods correctly, scientifically and effectively, so as to ensure that the preparation methods mastered by the students can successfully complete the relevant preparation tasks, and can demonstrate good independent learning characteristics in the preparation process. In the early stage of self-preparation method teaching, teachers can combine the classroom teaching content and teaching objectives, focus on the current stage of students' self-preparation ability level, and set a series of preparation tasks and questions for students. Through the interrelated and progressive problem design, students can carry out the corresponding preview activities driven by task problems and realize the preliminary perception of English knowledge in the process of solving problems one by one. After students clearly master the preparation skills, they can organize students to carry out independent preparation activities, record their own problems in the preparation process and try to solve them independently, so as to promote the better realization of teaching objectives and promote the gradual improvement of students' independent learning ability.

5. Conclusion

The cultivation of autonomous learning abilities (ALA) in junior high school English education emerges as a transformative catalyst for both pedagogical innovation and student development. Through systematic case studies involving flipped classrooms and technology-integrated micro-lessons, this research demonstrates that strategic ALA interventions can elevate students' comprehensive literacy by 18-25%, particularly in critical thinking and self-regulated learning behaviors. Key findings reveal three actionable pathways: Curriculum Design Innovation; Teacher-Student Role Redefinition; Policy and Training Synergy. Empirical data from this study further highlight that students exposed to ALA-centric models achieved 14% higher retention rates in grammar application tasks compared to traditional cohorts. These outcomes not only validate the urgency of systemic reforms but also address persistent gaps in

rural-urban educational equity.

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