Content Reconstruction of High School Whole Book Reading Instructions Based on Big Ideas—Taking the Reading Instruction of Dream of the Red Chamber as an Example

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***Abstract:** At present, in the practice of whole book reading teaching in high school, the selection of teaching content is still a matter of concern, which is arbitrary or deliberate. Therefore, the introduction of the Big Ideas to determine the content of whole book reading teaching in a scientific way has its practical motivation and bilateral value for teaching and learning. In the instructions of whole book reading in high school language, the extraction of big ideas requires initial definition and subsequent validation. The initial definition follows the top-down path, including "applying disciplinary thinking" and "relying on learning task groups"; the subsequent validation follows the bottom-up path, including "Make a reference to bibliographic genres" and "Analysing students' learning responses". As a key reading book in high school, Dream of the Red Chamber is an example to present the reading teaching content based on the reconstruction of big ideas with certain reference value.*

***Keywords:** Big Ideas, Whole Book Reading, Teaching and Learning Content, Reaching Instructions of Dream of the Red Chamber*

1. Introduction

Whole book reading has a long history in Chinese language education. As early as 1923, Ye Shengtao put forward the idea of "making the whole book the main body and the single short chapter the auxiliary" from the perspective of language curriculum construction. This is an early reference to "reading the whole book" in China. Later, Gu Huangchu, on the basis of Ye Shengtao, reintroduced the idea of "reading the whole book", but it did not receive due attention. With the advent of the 21st century, the concept of "reading the whole book" and related theories have received more and more attention. The introduction of whole book reading into the language curriculum is an inevitable choice for the construction of the language curriculum because, at present, students are reading more and more through digital media, which makes the characteristics of fragmented reading more obvious. The unique advantage of the whole book is that it can provide a relatively complete cultural field, promote the gradual improvement of the cognitive process, facilitate the comprehensive use of reading strategies, and carry the progressive development of comprehensive skills [1].

"Whole book reading and discussion" appears as the first group of learning clusters in the "curriculum content" part of the *Language Curriculum Standards for General High Schools (2017 edition revised in 2020)*. Since the emergence of learning task clusters means that this is the third major transformation of language curriculum content organization after "disciplinaryization" and "modularization" [2], then it marks that the instruction of whole book reading has entered the field of language curriculum. The value of reading whole books in the language curriculum has been widely recognized, as has the value of teaching. Although the theoretical research and practical exploration of whole book reading teaching have been very rich, there is still the problem that the selection of teaching content is either too arbitrary or too deliberate in teaching practice [3]. It is therefore crucial to define the content of whole book reading instruction in a scientific manner to ensure that students can "learn something" from the perspective of the language discipline. Since, whole book reading can be an independent and content-rich unit of study. In this change, big ideas can be the fulcrum for re-configuring the content of teaching and learning, enhancing the certainty of the language discipline

[4].

2. The Value of Reconstructing the Content of Whole Book Reading Instructions Based on the Big Ideas: A Bilateral Review of Teaching and Learning

The *Language Curriculum Standards for General High Schools (2017 edition revised in 2020)* states that it is necessary to "attach importance to structuring the course content by taking the major concepts of the discipline as the core, and contextualization the course content by taking the theme as the lead, so as to promote the implementation of the core literacy of the discipline" [5]. Introducing big ideas into whole book reading instructions and reconstructing the content of whole book reading instructions based on big ideas has bilateral value for students' learning behaviour and teachers' teaching behaviour.

2.1 The Value for Teaching

Organizing the content of whole book reading instruction through big ideas has positive implications for teachers. The concept of "core literacy in the language discipline" is put forward in the Language Curriculum Standards, which requires students to fully develop in the four aspects of language, thinking, aesthetics and culture. This requirement is a new test for the design of language classroom teaching: based on the core literacy of the language subject, teachers need to integrate the teaching effects of four aspects of language learning in one lesson. Therefore, the design of language classroom needs to be more efficient. Reading instruction, as an important tool for developing students' core language literacy, has taken on an even more arduous task. The idea of reverse instructional design is important in literacy-oriented instructional design, and the extraction of big ideas, as the key to conducting reverse instructional design, is indispensable in the reverse design of whole book reading instruction [6].

Given these characteristics, the big ideas offer new perspectives on the organization of the classroom. Big ideas can help teaching in multiple ways; they can clarify whether and why pieces of content should be taught, help target known barriers to learning and hence improve both lesson and unit planning. Meanwhile, unit studies is usually organized with the help of big ideas, and whole book reading is similar to unit studies. So there is a certain feasibility and reasonableness of introducing big ideas into the instruction of whole book reading [7].

2.2 The Value for Learning

From the perspective of the learning viewpoint, the big ideas avoid the separation of knowledge learning and students' ability development through the transfer and application of high access pathways, and facilitate the shift of learning from knowledge acquisition to the continuous construction of meaning by individuals. This is exactly what the curriculum standards advocate as the goal of literacy-orientated learning. The key to designing instruction and learning activities in the language classroom is to use certain fixed grips as clues to guide students' learning, and this is especially true for whole book reading instructions. In the instruction of whole book reading, the use of reverse design thinking through the organization of content by means of big ideas allows learning activities to focus on typical and efficient language learning activities.

3. Ideas for Re-Configuring the Content of Whole Book Reading Instructions Based on Big Ideas: Initial Definition and Subsequent Validation

Many scholars have summarized and expanded the ways of extracting big ideas, for example, Cui Yunhuo and Shao Chaoyou believe that big ideas should be found by relying on the curriculum standards, asking students questions, and using induction, etc [8]. Liu Hui believes that the extraction of big ideas should be divided into two kinds of paths, bottom-up paths, including the value of life, the goal of knowledge and ability, the learning difficulties, and the evaluation criteria, and top-down paths, including the way of the curriculum standards, the analysis of the teaching materials, the expert's thinking, and the conceptual derivation [9]. According to Li Weidong, big ideas should be extracted with reference to "applying disciplinary thinking", "relying on learning task clusters and text styles" and "Analyzing students' learning responses" [4]. On the basis of summarizing a large amount of relevant literature and synthesising the methods of big ideas extraction proposed by many scholars, this

study argues that the extraction of big ideas in whole book reading instructions should be divided into two stages: initial definition and subsequent validation.

In view of the fact that the extraction of big ideas should be based on a combination of top-down and bottom-up thinking [4], the process of reconstructing the content of the whole book based on big ideas should be divided into two steps: top-down initial definition and bottom-up subsequent validation. The initial definition should ensure the scientific and efficient extraction of the big ideas, and "applying disciplinary thinking" and "relying on learning task groups" as the top-down extraction path can ensure that the extracted big ideas are within the scope of language disciplines. Therefore, "applying a disciplinary mindset" and "relying on learning task clusters" are important references for the initial validation. Subsequent validation focuses on the refinement and personalization of the big ideas extracted in the previous process, and the bottom-up pathways of "relying on bibliographic genres" and "Analyzing students' learning responses" are suitable sieves for subsequent validation.

3.1 Initial Definition: Use of Disciplinary Thinking and Reliance on Learning Task Clusters

The big ideas of the language disciplines should be extracted from the perspective of knowledge of the Chinese proper [10]. "Disciplinary thinking" relates to the position of the Chinese discipline, and "applying disciplinary thinking" in the process of extracting the big ideas is one of the guarantees that the big ideas will not deviate from the disciplinary track. According to some experts, the big ideas of the Chinese language subject are the understanding of the conceptual relationships between "content and form" and "language and thought" [11]. Alternatively, the essence of the Chinese language subject can be understood as the "unity of intersexuality and practicality", which is determined by the nature of the language subject and the requirements of the standard concept [12]. As "disciplinary thinking" is abstract and difficult to grasp for most teachers, "relying on learning task clusters" is a good way to grasp big ideas. Focusing on the high-frequency nouns and verbs in the learning task groups is an effective way to extract the big ideas based on the learning task clusters.

Taking the task group of "Whole Book Reading and Discussing" in the *Language Curriculum Standards for General High Schools (2017 edition revised in 2020)* as an example, the task cluster describes students' learning behaviors with high-frequency verbs such as "reading", "sharing", "experiencing", "communicating", and so on. "Sharing", "experiencing", "communicating" and other high-frequency verbs are used to describe students' learning behaviors. It can be seen that the two types of practical language activities, "reading and appreciation" and "expression and communication", are equally important in the learning activities of reading a whole book. In this task cluster, "reading methods", "reading experience", "reading habits" and "appreciation" are high-frequency terms, which are also important for extracting big ideas.

3.2 Subsequent Validation: Make a Reference to Bibliographic Genres and Based on Students' Learning Responses

3.2.1 Make a Reference to Bibliographic Genres

As "bibliographic genre" is more valuable than "article genre" in the instructions of whole book reading than in individual reading instructions, this study replaces "reference article genre" with "reference bibliographic genre", which has been suggested in many articles.

Although the Curriculum Standards provide some guidance on the reading lists involved in the "Whole Book Reading and Discussing" cluster of learning tasks, it is important to note that the reading lists listed in the annexes to the curriculum standards are also important references for whole book reading instructions.

According to the bibliographies listed in the "whole book reading and discussing" learning task cluster and appendices of the curriculum standard, the bibliographies can be divided into the following types in the instruction of whole book reading in high school: holistic bibliographies, anthology bibliographies, and authored bibliographies.

Dream of Red Chamber belongs to the holistic bibliographies, the teacher can introduce the whole book through the fragments, help students to read through the whole book to perceive the whole book, based on which they can read deeply with the programmer, themes and problems for the second time. In the process of deep reading, students need to evaluate their own reading, which can be qualitative or quantitative. After the deep reading, the teacher can guide the students to join small groups to discuss the details according to the specific topics, and to add and correct each other's views. Eventually, group

member's summaries the discussion process and results and share them with the class.

The above reading process consists of four processes, namely, "reading through", "deep reading", "discussion" and "Summarizing". The reading process of the above holistic type of bibliography can provide a reference for the extraction of big ideas. At the same time, the big ideas related to specific bibliographies need to focus on their individuality.

3.2.2 Based on Students' Learning Responses

Students' learning responses are important because the big ideas extracted by other paths are relatively static, whereas students' learning responses are the result of dynamic constructs. Therefore, referring to students' learning responses can prevent the misuse and abuse of big ideas [13]. Here, students' learning responses are not only about students' doubts, but also about the 'boundaries' of what is acceptable to students, so as to avoid taking the use of big ideas to extremes.

4. Extraction of Big Ideas in the Instruction of reading Dream of the Red Chamber

Using the above ideas of extracting big ideas, the following teaching contents can be extracted in the instructions of reading the whole book of *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

(1) Dream of the Red Chamber; as a novel, has main and subplots of the story, it is important to learn to make sense of the plot and structure of the story.

(2) Dream of the Red Chamber, as a novel, displays vivid characters and narrates a rich character story, it is important to learn to analyze the characters in it.

(3) Dream of the Red Chamber builds a world within a specific social context, and it is important to learn to appreciate the rich social and cultural characteristics presented in the story, and have one's own attitudes and opinions about the world in the story and to learn to accept differences in the views of different readers.

(4) Recognizing in their reading that the understanding of text needs to be contextualized in the context of the text, the sociocultural context and other situations.

(5) The language of Dream of the Red Chamber belongs to the ancient vernacular of the late feudalism. Reading and understanding the ancient vernacular and recognizing that the characteristics of the text change with the times and the needs of the people are an important part of learning.

(6) Recognizing that literature is not just a copy of the real world; learning to understand the author's perceptions and reflections on society and the world.

(7) Learning to enrich spiritual experience and enhance comprehension and expression through the reading of full-length novels.

(8) Cultivating reading interest, develops good reading habits, acquire reading skills and improve reading ability in the process of reading full-length novels.

(9) Mastering methods to understand and appreciate text as you read Dream of the Red Chamber.

(10) In the process of reading Dream of the Red Chamber, learning to organize and express their own opinions and are willing to share their views with others.

The above image shows ten pieces of teaching contents designed according to the big ideas. These teaching contents of *Dream of the Red Chamber* reading construction still need to be tested in actual teaching, and most importantly, timely adjustments need to be made according to students' learning abilities and learning responses.

5. Conclusion

Whole book reading is a challenge for high school language teaching, and the introduction of the Big Ideas can make its design more scientific. The initial definition and subsequent validation of the big ideas can increase the reliability, and this process is not a quick fix; it needs to be repeated in order to make appropriate adjustments in teaching.

Acknowledgement

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