

Strategies for cultivating thinking quality of students in junior English reading teaching

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Abstract: *The cultivation of students' thinking quality is an important part of the cultivation of students' key competences, which reflects students' cognitive ability and thinking level in logic, criticism, innovation and other aspects. In English teaching, reading is a process of learning language knowledge, mastering language skills, cultivating cultural consciousness and developing thinking quality. Therefore, reading teaching is the most direct and effective way to cultivate students' thinking quality. Junior high school students already have some independent thinking ability, so teachers should attach importance to develop students' thinking ability in English reading teaching. This paper analyzes how to cultivate students' thinking quality in junior high school English reading teaching from three perspectives of logical, critical and innovative thinking, and puts forward some classroom teaching strategies to optimize English reading teaching, give play to the educational value of English language subject and cultivate students' English thinking.*

Keywords: *thinking quality; reading teaching; junior high school English*

1. Introduction

According to the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition), English curriculum should establish teaching and learning objectives centering on key competences, aiming to respond to the fundamental task of fostering integrity and promoting rounded development of students [1]. Among them, cultivating students' thinking quality is an important part of students' key competences English curriculum should cultivate. The curriculum standards state that the thinking quality refers to the ability and level of thinking in logical, critical and innovative aspects. The development of it can be conducive to improving students' ability to analyze and solve problems, enabling them to observe and understand the world from a cross-cultural perspective and make correct value judgments on things. The goals of thinking quality are discriminating specific phenomena in language and culture, sorting out and summarizing information, constructing new concepts, analyzing and deducing logical relations of information, and correctly evaluating various ideas, creatively expressing ideas, gaining multiple thinking and ability to think creatively [2]. In English learning, most activities are carried out based on discourses, so teaching reading is an important part of junior high school English teaching. English reading teaching activities usually include predicting, thinking, searching for information, understanding meaning and intention, discussing and so on, which are all involved in thinking. If these activities can be designed and implemented effectively, reading teaching will foster students' thinking quality [3].

Students in Junior high school are in the critical period of transition and development of thinking from concrete to abstract. In this period, they begin to learn to view things critically and try to construct knowledge in an abstract and generalized way [4]. Therefore, Junior high school is the important period to develop students' thinking consciousness. Teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of students' thinking quality in English reading teaching. However, in traditional English reading class, most teachers teach students a lot of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and get used to treating reading class as reading practice class, ignoring the cultivation of students' thinking about the quality of English reading. There are some problems existed, such as fragmentation, pattern and shallow reading teaching. This paper discusses the importance of cultivating logical thinking, critical thinking and innovative thinking in junior high school English reading classroom, in order to optimize teaching strategies, comprehensively cultivate students' thinking ability and improve their thinking quality.

2. The importance of cultivating thinking quality in Junior high school English reading class

Language and thinking are inextricably linked. Language is not only a tool of thinking, but also the means to make thinking explicit. Thinking depends on language, and language learning can promote the development of thinking. Reading is a process of interaction between thought and language. Students can develop their thinking through reading learning, and reading teaching promotes the development of students' thinking quality.

The thinking quality usually refers to the characteristics of thinking ability and its performance. The new curriculum standards define it as the ability and level of thinking in logic, criticality, innovation and other aspects. Improving students' thinking quality through English teaching can not only enhance students' ability to discover, analyze and solve problems, but also enable students to observe and understand the world from a cross-cultural perspective, so as to make correct value judgments. To be specific, thinking quality mainly has the characteristics of depth, flexibility, creativity, criticism and agility, and the adolescent period is the key period to cultivate and improve students' thought that is also the necessary quality students should have in the future. This requires junior high school English teachers to pay attention to and do a good job in the process of classroom teaching to promote students' thinking ability.

3. The essence of thinking quality

When it comes to the thinking quality in English, it mainly refers to the abilities of analyzing, processing, and extracting valuable information from the discourse by means of recognition, analysis, reasoning, judgment, classification, comparison, induction, and so on [5]. The "Curriculum Standard 2022" states that thinking quality refers to students' thinking personality characteristics, reflecting the logical and critical ability of thinking and the level of performance in aspects like creativity. Among them, the logic of thinking refers to the rules and laws of thinking, which are mainly mental activities such as concepts, judgments and reasoning; the critical nature of thinking is mainly manifested in the attitude and behaviour of learners to question and ask for evidence; the creativity of thinking is reflected in the fact that students will not stick to the rules, but dare to seek differences and innovations, dare to change, and bring forth the new [6].

In the "Curriculum Standard 2022", the objectives of thinking quality are integrated into three categories, namely observation and discrimination, induction and inference, and criticism and innovation. Each one is given specific requirements. For observation and discrimination, students should be able to find the development of texts, identify the correlation between information, and grasp the overall meaning of the text; able to identify cohesive devices in discourse, judge the logical relations between sentences and paragraphs; able to find the similarities of the same type of discourse and the structural features of different types of discourse; able to critically view things and analyze problems. For induction and inference, students should be able to extract, organize and generalize the key information, main content and ideas of the longer discourses and judge the similarities and differences and correlation of various information; able to infer the psychological and behavioral motivations of the characters based on the text, and infer the simple logical relations between the information; able to interpret the discourse from different aspects, infer the deep implication of the discourses, and make correct valuations. For criticism and innovation, students should be able to address the content or point of view of a text; able to think independently over different information, evaluate the content and the author's points of view, and give the reasons; able to adapt or create the content based on discourses or certain given conditions.

From the above, it can be concluded that the requirements for junior school student's thinking quality always aim to cultivate logic, criticality, and innovation of thought. Therefore, this paper will discuss how to develop students' thinking in terms of the three aspects.

4. Measures taken to cultivate thinking quality

The "Curriculum Standard 2022" mentioned above shows that the thinking quality is the "thinking personality characteristics" of learners, reflecting the ability and level of students' thinking in terms of logic, criticality and creativity. Therefore, this paper will focus on the path of cultivating students' quality of thinking in the above three aspects.

4.1. Cultivation of logic thinking

The cultivation of students' thinking quality is an important part of key competences, and good thinking quality is firstly manifested as excellent logical thinking ability. Junior high school students are in the critical period of transition and development from concrete thinking to abstract thinking. In this period, they begin to learn to view things critically and try to construct knowledge in an abstract and generalized way. Therefore, teachers should deeply realize that language teaching is also the teaching of thinking, pay more attention to students' thinking process, and consciously cultivate students' logical awareness.

4.1.1. Guide students to read titles and illustrations to develop predicative ability

Prediction means predicting before and during reading about what the text is likely to discuss. The title is a highly summary and extraction of the whole text, which often suggests important information such as the type, field, author's emotion, writing purpose and background of the article. It is the focus of the content and the guidance of logical thinking [7]. Illustrations are important resources in textbooks. In discourse teaching, many teachers do not pay enough attention to unit illustrations, and only use them as the decoration of discourse content, ignoring the important role of graphic information in stimulating students' thinking vitality and developing their logical thinking (2022, Huang Sufang). Especially for the first grade students, illustrations can help them gradually transition from concrete image thinking mode to abstract logical thinking mode. Therefore, teachers can ask students to use text information, such as title and subject words or non-text information, such as layout design, text format, illustration and background color to make predictions. With the guidance of teachers, students can identify effective information, constantly reflect on and revise their views, and their reasoning ability can be developed in the process of prediction--verification--reflection--revision, which is the significance of prediction activities.

4.1.2. Analyze the text structure to cultivate the ability of generalization

During discourse teaching, teachers should not only guide students to focus on discourse knowledge, but also guide them to pay attention to its discourse structure, and develop students' abstract and summary abilities in the process of cultivating their discourse awareness. In the text, teachers will find that the paragraph structure of most texts include certain logical rules, clear order and coherent content. The sentence segment of the text is generally developed around a theme, and the theme is often presented in the form of topic sentence, with other sentences in the paragraph as supporting sentences. Therefore, in the process of reading teaching, teachers should design corresponding learning tasks, activate the theme with tasks, guide students to find out the topic sentence and key sentence of a paragraph, guide students to use keywords to summarize the gist of the paragraph, and ask them to use the mind map to generate the idiom framework, so as to sort out the text structure and deepen students' understanding of the content.

4.2. Cultivation of critical thinking

Critical thinking refers to the retrospective reflection of insight, discrimination, judgment and wisdom. It is the development of thinking, that is criticizing or judging existing thoughts and marking whether their rational assessment is logical. Only with this ability can students truly achieve innovation in the process of using language and solving problems.

4.2.1. Guide learners to deeply understand the connotation of texts

In traditional teaching, teachers worry that students can't understand texts and speak something, so they will design many factual questions, so that students can find answers directly from the articles. This will lead students to read them superficially rather than deeply thinking. To solve these problems, teachers can try to design more open questions, guide students to dig deeper into the connotation of the texts, and encourage them to express their views freely. To explore the text deeply in English reading to promote students' thinking quality is to make full use of the advantages of textbooks and articles to guide students to have a diversified understanding of the contents. A lot of language knowledge is synthesized in the reading article. It is impossible to understand the final meaning of the article by analyzing it only at a single level. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the article from multiple perspectives.

4.2.2. Lead students analyze the themes of texts critically

Criticism, a quality of thinking, usually refers to individuals to carry out independent analysis,

criticism and evaluation of thinking. In the process of junior high school English reading teaching, teachers should pay attention to guiding students to think about the themes and deep connotation of the texts, encourage them to figure out the meaning of language rhetoric, reasonably question the ideas of text and then elaborate their own views, so as to better cultivate students' critical thinking.

For example, when teaching Unit 15 "We Are Trying to Save the Manatees" (Volume 2 of Grade 9), teachers can guide students to discuss environmental pollution and protection issues, and guide them to put forward their own views on the causes, hazards and measures of environmental pollution. In the process of students' discussion and expressing their opinions, teachers should not directly deny some biased opinions, but correct them and guide students to self-discover and correct. Through class discussion, students are able to elaborate their own views based on the text and present a variety of viewpoints, which help them to think deeply and learn to view problems critically, thus effectively training their critical thinking.

4.3. Cultivation of creative thinking

The teaching concept in recent education puts forward higher requirements for students' innovation ability. In this case, it is crucial to cultivate students' creative thinking. In the creative English classroom, teachers should inspire students' thinking at a high level through clear learning concepts and flexible practical teaching methods, support their further development in the right direction of thinking, improve their innovative quality, and promote the dual improvement of English learning and skills.

4.3.1. Encourage students add different endings to the texts

Creative thinking refers to based on the existing thinking mode, people use existing knowledge and material to put forward ideas and methods in a specific environment that are different from the conventional or ordinary people. After teaching a discourse, teachers can design an activity to encourage students to write their own different endings for the discourse, which needs students to conduct creatively. Besides, the part of writing in English test for college entrance examination requires students to write an ending for the given text after reading it, which is a continuation task. In this task creative thinking plays a crucial role. Therefore, it is necessary for junior high students to develop their innovative ability to get well prepared.

4.3.2. Help students construct open context

Questions are one of the most effective ways to cultivate students' thinking. Combining question orientation with cultivating students' independent thinking ability is conducive to achieving English teaching objectives in the new curriculum standards (2022, Zhu Xiaodong). At this stage, many teachers try to cultivate students' problem awareness in the teaching process, think from the perspective of students, master more accurate teaching methods, teach students according to their aptitude, truly emphasize the overall flexibility of reading class, stimulate students' educational potential, and promote the formation of a high level of thinking.

For example, when teaching "Many things can affect our feelings" (Volume 2 of Grade 8), teachers can guide students to carry out in-depth discussion on the actual meanings and functions of short sentences and words of the text in the context of the theme and use the relevant examples in this article to deepen their understanding, such as "the environment can affect our feelings and health." "The Great Wall is crowded with people. Does it affect your feelings and moods?" This requires teachers to fully construct open question situations in English reading teaching and effectively cultivate students' creativity.

5. Conclusion

Reading is a process of interaction between language and thinking. English reading is closely related to the improvement of thinking quality. It is one of key competences of English subject, which reflects its mental characteristics, namely the ability and level of thinking in logic, criticality, innovation and other aspects. The development of thinking quality is conducive to improving students' ability to analyze and solve problems, enabling them to observe and understand the world from a cross-cultural perspective, and make correct value judgments on things. Therefore, junior high school English teachers should focus on the lifelong development of students, conscientiously do a good job in teaching design, promote students' independent learning, build efficient classrooms, and constantly improve students' logical, critical and creative thinking abilities, so as to meet the requirements of

junior high school English key competence concept.

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