

The Teaching Design of Senior High English Reading Class Based on Cultivation of Thinking Quality

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ABSTRACT. In order to achieve the teaching goal of improving thinking quality in senior high school English reading class, based on the theoretical basis of the key competences of the English subject, the author analyzes the unfavorable factors existing in the current reading class, and clarifies the importance of thinking quality in the reading class. The cultivation of thinking quality is not only limited to the change in teaching activities, but also to cultivate students' thinking skills from the three dimensions of "logical, critical and innovative". The teaching design is based on the teaching material, creates a communicative context, and uses interlocking activities to guide students' innovative thinking. What's more, it effectively internalizes and outputs the knowledge, and further optimizes the teaching effect.

KEYWORDS: Senior high school, Thinking quality, English reading class, Teaching design

1. Introduction

On the basis of the "General High School Curriculum Standards (2017 edition revised in 2020)", (hereinafter referred to as the curriculum standard "2020"), the key competences of English subjects are composed of four elements: linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability^[1]. Among them, "thinking quality" refers to the abilities from three dimensions of "logical, critical and innovative", which students acquire through the study of English subjects, in order to better analyze and solve problems, thereby forming correct values. The "New Curriculum Standard" clearly points out the goal of thinking quality, which can be summarized in a few keywords: "logical relationship, plural thinking, innovative thinking", which shows that the cultivation of thinking quality promotes the individual development of students and is the core link which enhances the overall ability of students .

2. Thinking Quality and Reading Teaching

Reading class is essential to English teaching and plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating students' key competences. With its detailed content and rich background, English reading class reflects the unity of the instrumental and humanistic features of the English curriculum, helping students to acquire information and guiding students to dig deeper. However, there are still many unfavorable factors for the cultivation of thinking quality in the current senior high English reading classroom. First of all, "Superficial". In reading teaching, teachers still stay at the superficial level to search for and understand information, ignoring the meaning of language based on the context, and the practicality is not strong, that is, the separation of "reading" and "thinking". Secondly, "Stylized". The immobilization of the teaching process makes it impossible to explore the connotation of the text deeply. Teachers dominate the teaching process, but students rely too much on teachers and teaching materials, and do not have their own innovative thinking part. Thirdly, "Fragmentary". Since the design of the reading class is not based on the cognitive development process of students, they cannot build their own framework for the knowledge they have learned. The independent vocabulary and grammar taught by the teacher are out of the authentic context. These are like pieces of bits, which are not conducive to the transfer and application of knowledge, that is, the separation of "thinking" and "action". In short, in the current reading class, "reading, thinking, and action" is separated, the input knowledge has not been effectively internalized and outputted. In addition, the "superficial, Stylized, and Fragmentary" class limits the development of the reading abilities of students and ignores the improvement of thinking quality.

Anderson and Krathwohl further modified Bloom's cognitive development model into "memorize, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create"^[2]. This model is not only a process of cognitive development, but also a deepening process of thinking. People usually classify "memorize, understand, apply" as low-level

thinking, and “analyze, evaluate and create” as high-level thinking. Therefore, in teaching design, teachers can cultivate students' thinking ability at a higher level according to the cognitive development process of students. Teachers should focus more on designing deeper problems to develop students' higher-order thinking, rather than limited in shallow problems. The cultivation of students' thinking ability starts with the understanding of information at the surface level, and is expanded in the continuously in-depth teaching activities. In the “*New Curriculum Standard*”, it can be seen that the cultivation of thinking quality is realized by a series of activities: observation and comparison, analysis and inference, induction and construction, judgment and innovation, etc.^[3]. Therefore, when designing, the teacher first guides students to understand the text information from the overall reading material. After the students analyze the information, teachers guide students to think deeply and put forward their own unique viewpoints in the form of a question chain for certain details. Guided by the theme, centering on the context, relying on the text, from the shallower to the deeper, from the easy to the difficult, this teaching design not only allows students to overcome the fear of difficulty, but also stimulate students' interest in learning and make them more willing to explore deeper.

3. Teaching Practice

Taking Part 2 Reading and Thinking *A day in the Clouds* in Unit2 *Wildlife Protection*, from the Unit 2 of The Senior High School English Book 2 published in 2019 as an example to elaborate on how to cultivate students' thinking quality based on the discourse.

3.1 Teaching Analysis

4. The Analysis of Teaching Content

Before class, teachers should closely follow the concept of English learning activities and explore the content, intentions and methods of this reading material from the three dimensions of “what, why, and how”^[4]. When reading the article, the teacher should answer the following questions in depth to interpret the text, and be fully prepared for the teaching design.

Q1: What is the theme and content?

According to the “*New Curriculum Standard*”, this unit belongs to the theme of “human being and environment, human being and animals, plants”, which is the sub-theme of “people and nature”. In this article named *A day in the clouds*, the author talked about what “I” saw, what “I” heard, and what “I” thought in Tibet. The author saw the stunning and beautiful scenery of Tibet, and learned the reason why the Tibetan antelope is endangered and the effective measures to protect the Tibetan antelope from the introduction of the guide Zhaxi. In the end, the author fell into meditation on how we must change our lifestyles to better live in harmony with nature.

Q2: Why do the author use this theme?

This reading material not only allows readers to understand Tibet's scenery and the changes in the living environment of Tibetan antelopes over the past decades, but more importantly, it allows readers to understand the deep meaning of “We're not trying to save the animals. Actually, we're trying to save ourselves.”, so as to raise students' awareness of protecting the wild environment and stimulate students' desire to protect the earth.

Q3: How does the article unfold?

This article is developed in the form of travel journal, using the general present tense and first-person perspective to make readers feel more substantiated when reading. In the first paragraph, the author points out that the reason for going to Tibet is to observe Tibetan antelopes, and then describe how the number of Tibetan antelopes drops sharply under the “threat” of humans, and afterwards how they are removed from the endangered species list under human protection. Finally, it is introduced to think about what human beings should do to not become a “threat”. The situation of the Tibetan antelope in the article is in a clear contrast, which proves that the measures taken by the government and volunteers are effective and affirms the behavior of wildlife protection. Using several turning points and the author's emotional changes, it reflects the urgency and continuity of protecting wild animals, and appeals to readers to “change our way of life” from the perspective of the author.

5. The Analysis of Students

This lesson is selected from book 2 that is taught to students in the first grade. At this stage, students have mastered the basic reading skills. At the same time, they can independently understand and acquire information after reading the entire article. The difficulty of vocabulary in this reading material is in line with the student's level, but for the cognitive level, the student still lacks the ability of in-depth thinking and innovative thinking, and the ability of higher-order thinking is weak. Therefore, the cultivation of thinking ability is very necessary.

5.1 Teaching Objectives

Based on the analysis of the teaching content and students, the teaching goal is designed as follows: through the study of this lesson, students could be able to: firstly, understand the specific meaning of key words according to the context, and grasp the relationship among paragraphs. Secondly, get the changes of Tibetan antelope's situation, analyze the reasons, and build an information diagram based on their own understanding. Thirdly, based on the information diagram, compare the changes in human behavior, and explain their own views. Fourthly, innovatively think about how to "exist in harmony with nature".

5.2 Teaching Process

This article is based on the PWP model for teaching design. In accordance with the in-depth understanding of reading materials, the teacher closely follows the three dimensions of "logical, critical and innovative", and promote the cultivation of students' higher-level thinking from outward appearance to inner essence.

6. Pre-Reading

Step 1: Introducing topic, creating context

The teacher first plays a video about the survival status of wild animals, so that students could brainstorm on the topic of "wild animals", and then plays a public service advertisement about "When the buying stops, the killing can too.", which is familiar to students. After that, the teacher asks students "What human behavior threatens the survival of wild animals?"

Importing by video can enable students to be immersed in the classroom quickly and create effective teaching context. Through brainstorming and questioning to activate their existing knowledge about wildlife protection, the teacher uses simple questions to inspire students' desire to express and paves the way for later reading activities.

Step 2: Predicting title, Providing picture

The title is the eye of the article. The teacher shows the title "*A day in the clouds*" to the students and asks them to guess the meaning of "in the clouds". When students make guesses at random, the pictures of Tibetan antelope in the text are given as hints to guide students to guess the general content and structure of the article.

Students are willing to participate in such guessing activities, which fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of students and plays an important role in exploring the connotation of the title. During the guessing process, students guess that it might be a day on the plane, or guess that it might be a day on the high mountain. When they see the Tibetan antelope, the students guess that the article might be a day traveling in Tibet, and then guess that the article might progress in chronological order based on "a day", which might be "in the morning--in the afternoon-- in the evening". In the process of guessing, students observe details and perform logical prediction to develop their thinking.

7. While-Reading

Step 3: Relying on the text, Extracting the outline

Through the guessing activities in pre-reading, the teacher allows students to read through the whole text to verify whether their guesses are correct. In the reading process, students search for the central sentences and divide the structure of the article in the light of the teacher's question. During the verification, the students find that the author uses the structure of the travel journal, which does not fully follow the predicted time structure. When reading, the teacher can guide students to guess the meaning of "remind" and "harmony" based on the context, and then supplements the students' answers in English. In this part, several questions could be raised by teacher: 1. What's the writing type of the reading material? 2. What's the main idea of the reading material? 3.

Could you divide this reading material based on your understanding? 4. Could you use one word or phrase to summarize the key idea of each paragraph?

In this part, students can master basic reading strategies, and furthermore cultivate their ability to abstract and generalize. After dividing the structure of the whole text, students are asked to refine and summarize the content of each paragraph with words or phrases, such as: scenery, Tibet antelopes, guide, bad times, protection, recovered, thought, which prepares students for constructing information diagrams.

Step 4: Reading intensively, Clarifying the relationship

Students read the whole text again and answer three questions “What does the author see? What does the author hear? What does the author think?”. According to the main content of each paragraph, they are supposed to clarify the relationship between paragraphs and try to draw an information diagram. After students have answered the questions, the teacher can raise the following questions: 1. What are the changes in the number and living environment of Tibetan antelopes? What caused this change? 2. Can you help Zhaxi continue to add more information about what other human behaviors threaten the survival of the Tibetan antelope? 3. How do the author’s feeling change between the fourth and sixth paragraphs?

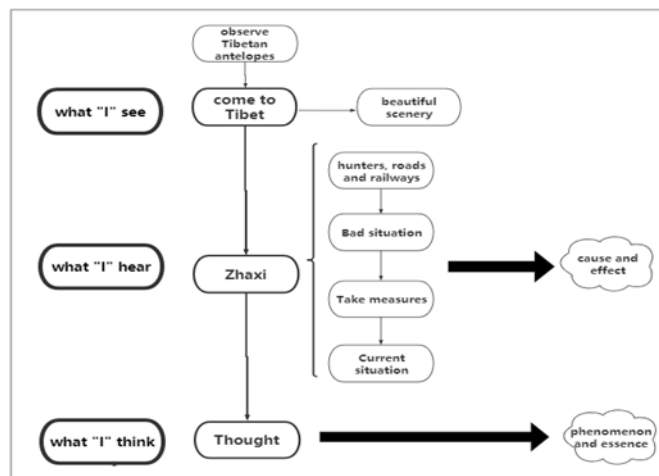


Fig.1 Information Diagram

When drawing information diagrams, students promote the development of logical thinking in accordance with their own analysis and understanding on the text. The fourth to sixth paragraphs in the text are interrelated, clearly organized, which is cause and effect. In the last paragraph, based on the current situation of Tibetan antelopes described in the previous text, it goes deep into the survival of human beings and nature. This is the relationship between phenomenon and essence^[5]. Students should think deeply about the changes in the author’s feeling, such as worried, comfort and concerned, instead of simply concentrating on the surface of the article. When students read the whole text, students could master the extraction of keywords and details, such as in order to, however, and other logical connection words to enhance students' sensitivity in logical thinking.

Step 5: Expanding thinking, Think critically and innovatively

After reading the whole article, students are guided to answer the following questions “What's your favorite sentence in the passage? Please show your reasons”. Then, the teacher encourages students to share their understandings on “We’re not trying to save the animals. Actually, we’re trying to save ourselves”. Based on their answers to this question, the teacher guides students to discover that there always seems to be a “contradiction” between human beings and nature, so the students are invited to participate in a classroom debate competition, with the topic “Human being’s development or the survival of wild animals, which one is more important?” While debating, teachers should not interrupt students' thinking, encourage students to express their ideas bravely, and affirm students' creativity. This debate focused on the “contradictions” that humans have faced for a long time. Although the current lifestyle indeed has brought happiness and convenience to humans in a short period of time, it has brought a huge threat to the survival of wild animals. Therefore, at the end of the debate competition, the students conclude that human beings must learn to change their lifestyles and live in harmony with nature to achieve a “win-win” state.

In this activity, under the set context, based on the given text, students can innovate their own ideas very well.

When there are disagreements, students can bravely put forward critical opinions, stick to their own ideas, and dare to challenge authority. Not passively accepting information, but the students proactively think, comprehensively analyze and demonstrate^[6]. At the same time, the input knowledge in the text can be effectively outputted in the debate, which can help students improve their oral expression skills and deepen the internalization of knowledge.

8. Post-Reading

Step 6: Reviewing the whole text

In this part, the teacher points out the characteristics of travel journal. Then under the guidance of the teacher, students review the content of this lesson based on their own information diagram, and after that, they need to summarize the main idea of the text. The next step is to evaluate the viewpoint of “save ourselves” and ask whether it conforms to the central idea of the full text.

In this activity, students organize the content of the article again to further understand the changes and reasons. Reading the article based on their own comprehension can deepen their reflection about the content and help them cultivate higher-level thinking.

Step 7: Assignment

While reading, it's obvious to find that the text uses a lot of passive voice and present progressive adverbial structure, so teachers can guide students to write after reading. Students need to write a composition about how humans can live in harmony with nature about 100 words. This requires the usages of vital words and grammatical structures in the text.

Output in the form of written expression can help students think creatively again, which not only enables the internalization and transfer of knowledge in this lesson, but also deepens students' awareness of wildlife protection and effectively promote the formation of students' correct values.

8.1 Teaching Reflection

In this reading class, it pays much attention to the three dimensions of thinking quality, that is, “logical, critical and innovative”. Students analyze the logical relationship among the paragraphs on the basis of reading the full text, and then use the details in the text to make an information diagram. According to the connected information as the obvious main line, the teacher designs a series of activities and question chains, from outward appearance to inner essence, to guide students to think deeply. In these activities, teachers play a guiding and auxiliary role, and all activities involved are linked together, in which students' participation and completion are high^[7]. Flexible use of reading strategies is also an important part of teaching, including locating keywords and paying attention to the author's emotional changes. This can enhance students' self-confidence in reading, as well as cultivate the development of students' thinking quality when reading. Throughout the entire teaching process, it is not difficult to observe that according to the form of “input-internalization-output”, using a variety of teaching aids, this reading class is based on discourse and beyond discourse, aiming to help students develop higher-level thinking.

9. Summary

Thinking quality plays a pivotal role in the development of students' key competences, and simultaneously reading classes also play an essential role in cultivating thinking quality. To abide by the concept of activity theory of learning, teachers should create a communicative context based on their own in-depth analysis of the text, and carry out interlocking teaching activities for students. The design of teaching activities should gradually deepen from low-level thinking to high-level thinking, with the purpose of promoting students' analytical ability, assessing ability and innovative ability^[8]. Integrating teaching strategies, the teaching design guides students to combine learning and thinking, unite input and output, and realize the cultivation of thinking quality, so as to promote the development of students' key competences.

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