

Research on Effective Ways of English Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools under the Background of Core Competencies

Dan Zhao*

Teaching and Research Institute of Foreign Languages, Bohai University, Jinzhou, 121013, China
79740898@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Core literacy refers to the correct values, essential qualities, and key abilities that meet the lifelong and social development needs of students. It is a comprehensive expression of students' knowledge, skills, emotions, attitudes, values, and other requirements. English teaching has gone through a transformation from emphasizing only instrumental aspects, to emphasizing the comprehensive language application ability that combines instrumental and humanistic aspects, and finally to emphasizing the cultivation of core competencies in the English subject. The core competencies of English subject in primary and secondary schools mainly include four aspects: language ability, thinking quality, cultural character, and learning ability. Among them, language ability is the core competency of English subject, thinking quality reflects the mental characteristics of English subject core competencies, cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of English subject core competencies, and learning ability constitutes the development conditions of English subject core competencies. This article proposes effective paths around these four aspects.

Keywords: Core Competencies; Primary and Secondary Schools; English Teaching; Subject Teaching; Effective Ways

1. Introduction

Core competencies are essential qualities and key abilities that individuals gradually develop in the process of education to adapt to their lifelong development and social development. Core literacy is a product nurtured by the development of the times and education, with absoluteness and relativity, manifested in some common and eternal values and qualities of human literacy; Relativity manifests in different periods and regions, and people's understanding of core competencies may have certain deviations. Core literacy needs to be adjusted appropriately according to the changes of the times to adapt to social requirements. At the time level, core literacy has gained new development with the changes of society, with a more complete framework and structure, helping more people adapt to society; At the spatial level, specific situational knowledge, abilities, and attitudes can be utilized to handle and solve problems. Core competencies are the foundation for developing other competencies and the key to developing other abilities. Core literacy is a composite ability that is a collection of knowledge, abilities, and attitudes.

Core literacy is the basic ability and awareness to adapt to the needs of the digital information age, knowledge economy, and globalization trends, using existing knowledge and skills to solve complex problems and unpredictable situations, and integrating knowledge, skills, and awareness to form talent and wisdom. Ultimately, Huawei has the quality of migration and reconstruction, which is the basic literacy of citizens in the new century. The core literacy of a subject is a concentrated manifestation of its educational value, which is the correct values, essential qualities, and key abilities gradually formed by students through subject learning. As a language, English has both instrumental and humanistic qualities. However, in exam oriented education, English teaching often emphasizes the teaching of abilities such as "listening, speaking, reading, and writing", emphasizing instrumental qualities while neglecting the cultivation of students' humanistic literacy. This leads to narrow learning horizons and weak cultural awareness among students, thus failing to achieve an organic unity of instrumental and humanistic qualities. English teaching has gone through a transformation from emphasizing only instrumental aspects, to emphasizing the comprehensive language application ability that combines instrumental and humanistic aspects, and finally to emphasizing the cultivation of core competencies in

the English subject. Through this transformation, we aim to promote a change in the direction of English education, change knowledge learning that is disconnected from context, integrate knowledge learning and skill development into themes, contexts, discourse, and pragmatics, promote cultural understanding and the formation of thinking qualities, and guide students to learn autonomous learning; To achieve deep language learning and integrate educational goals into the teaching content and process.

2. From Quality Education to Core Competencies

Quality education is an educational model centered on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, focusing on cultivating students' abilities in humanities, science, art, physical and mental health, and social responsibility, in order to help them better adapt to the needs of society. Quality education not only focuses on students' knowledge and exam taking abilities, but also on their comprehensive qualities, cultivating their innovative, practical, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Over the years, with the gradual penetration of quality education into people's hearts, the education industry has developed rapidly, and has achieved fruitful results in curriculum construction, teaching innovation, exam evaluation, and teacher training. However, with the development of quality education to this day, there are still many confusions in both theory and practice, stemming from people's continuous reflection on education. The concept of "core literacy cultivation" has gradually entered people's vision.

From an educational perspective, there is consistency between quality education and core literacy cultivation. The latter is a refinement of the former's connotation and a deepening of the development achievements of quality education in the new era; From the perspective of the development process of education, quality education is an improvement on the drawbacks of exam oriented education and promotes the transformation of educational models; The cultivation of core competencies is based on quality education, further implementing the fundamental goal of cultivating morality and talents, clarifying the requirements of the country and society for talent cultivation, and promoting the fundamental transformation of the education model. There is a certain difference between quality education and core literacy cultivation: "quality" has the meaning of innate endowment, emphasizing more on active learning and acquired cultivation of individuals; The connotation of quality education continues to enrich, but there is still no systematic and authoritative system formed. However, many research results have laid a solid foundation for core competencies; The use of 'literacy' is more easily endowed with new connotations, which is conducive to the promotion of relevant policies.

Quality education attaches great importance to the cultivation of people's ideological and moral qualities, abilities, personality development, physical health, and mental health education. It is an educational model aimed at improving the various qualities of the educated. Core literacy is an intermediate link that connects macro educational concepts, training objectives, and specific educational and teaching practices. It is an important measure to implement the fundamental task of cultivating morality and talent, and also to adapt to the trend of global education reform and development, and enhance international competitiveness. Transforming core competencies from quality education is an upgrade of educational concepts and an inevitable requirement under new forms. Therefore, inheriting the beneficial experience accumulated in the research and practice of quality education, while also overcoming the shortcomings of quality education research and practice, highlighting the new pursuit of core literacy cultivation for students' physical and mental development.

3. Composition of Core Competencies in English Subject in Primary and Secondary Schools

English core literacy mainly refers to the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills, emotions, concepts, and qualities related to the English subject through English course teaching and students' own practice and cognitive activities, possessing essential qualities and key abilities that meet the needs of lifelong development and social development. The core competencies of English subject in primary and secondary schools mainly include four aspects: language ability, thinking quality, cultural character, and learning ability[1]. The four aspects interact, support and work together, and the learning ability and emotional attitude run through the entire process of English teaching. Language ability protects the quality of thinking and cultural knowledge, while these three aspects can to some extent promote the formation and improvement of learning ability and emotional attitude, ultimately playing a crucial role in the formation of core competencies in the English subject. The core literacy of the English subject not only follows the Party's educational policy, reflects the fundamental task of cultivating moral character in education, but also reflects the uniqueness of the English subject[2].

3.1 Linguistic Competence

Language ability refers to the ability to understand and express meaning in social contexts through methods such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language ability is the foundation of the core literacy of the English subject, with a wide range of contents, including language knowledge, language skills, language understanding, and language expression. Language ability is a prerequisite for achieving cross-cultural communication. Language users must constantly learn foreign language knowledge and lay a solid foundation in language in order to continuously improve themselves, strengthen the mastery and learning of language skills, continuously improve language ability, and lay a solid foundation in language application. Only by mastering basic language skills and knowledge can they use English language for cross-cultural communication with ease. The transformation from language proficiency to language literacy means the organic integration of language proficiency development and disciplinary education goals, providing a clear direction and destination for language proficiency development.

3.2 Thinking Quality

Thinking quality refers to the individual characteristics of a person's thinking, which can reflect the level and characteristics of a person's logical, critical, and creative thinking. Thinking quality refers to the ability to think and analyze, including activities such as analysis, reasoning, judgment, rational expression, and using English for diverse thinking. There are significant differences between English thinking patterns and Chinese thinking patterns, manifested in grammar, semantics, discourse, and pragmatics. In the process of English learning, the differences in thinking patterns between English and Chinese increase the difficulty for students to quickly master English language knowledge. However, the differences, connections, transformations, and complementarities between the two language thinking modes also provide learners with space for thinking and imagination. This cross regional and cross-cultural language communication behavior also provides students with the opportunity to open up an international perspective, which helps cultivate students' open worldview.

3.3 Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the recognition of excellent cultures. Cultural awareness is a breakthrough in language ability and thinking quality in the core competencies of the English subject. In the new curriculum system characterized by core competencies, the cultivation of emotional attitudes should belong to the category of cultural awareness. Due to the learning of cultural knowledge and the analysis of cultural behavior, students will inevitably develop corresponding cultural value judgments, cultural emotional experiences, and the establishment of cultural attitudes[3]. Therefore, in the process of English subject education, contacting and understanding the culture of English speaking countries, enriching students' cultural knowledge, increasing students' emotional experience, correcting students' cultural attitudes, forming students' correct value judgments, internalizing students' cultural character, and optimizing students' cultural behavior are important contents of cultivating students' cultural awareness. Cultural awareness should encompass cultural knowledge, skills, emotions, and behaviors.

3.4 Learning Ability

Learning ability refers to the awareness and ability of learners to effectively apply various learning methods and techniques to improve learning efficiency. For students, learning ability refers to mastering scientific learning methods through the guidance of teachers, which is commonly referred to as "learning ability"; From a psychological perspective, learning ability refers to the abilities exhibited in many basic activities, including observation ability, memory ability, abstract generalization ability, attention and comprehension ability, etc. In the connotation of the core literacy of the English subject, learning ability refers to the catalyst of other literacy, which is that students actively develop and tap into their learning potential through observation, experience, exploration, and other learning methods. At the same time, they utilize various media and information resources to extract knowledge. In this rapidly changing information age, establishing awareness of lifelong learning and cultivating the ability to learn independently is crucial for improving personal qualities and abilities, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development[4].

4. Effective Approaches to English Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools under the Background of Core Literacy

The core literacy of English subject in primary and secondary schools consists of four aspects: language ability, thinking quality, cultural character, and learning ability. Therefore, under the background of core literacy, the effective approach to teaching English subject in primary and secondary schools is to focus on cultivating the language ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness, and learning ability of primary and secondary school students.

4.1 Teaching English as a Discipline to Cultivate Students' Language Abilities

The English subject must guide students to enhance their cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability in the process of developing their English language abilities, so as to gradually form the necessary qualities and key abilities that new people in the new era must possess and become fully developed individuals. Basic language knowledge is an important component of students' language abilities, and it is also a fundamental component. The basic knowledge of language mainly includes two aspects: morphology and syntax. Lexicology refers to the usage of vocabulary, and only by clarifying the usage of vocabulary can it be used correctly in practical applications. Syntax refers to the method of constructing a sentence, whether it is a simple sentence or a complex sentence. Only by clarifying syntax can ideas be expressed in the correct language way in application. Teachers use courseware to showcase English teaching content and provide in-depth explanations to students, setting up more visual problems and situations, so as to maximize students' language skills[5]. In the teaching process, teachers should help students overcome psychological barriers, cultivate the habit of speaking boldly, treat the classroom as a place for listening and speaking abilities, learn to express the same idea using different sentence structures, and make the classroom closer to real communication situations. Due to cultural differences in different countries, the language forms and social meanings used vary. Therefore, students not only need to learn to express their thoughts in English, but also to correctly grasp the occasions, objects of conversation, and the customs and habits of the other country.

4.2 Cultivating Students' Thinking Quality in English Teaching

The quality of thinking reflects the mental characteristics of the core literacy of the English subject. Cultivating thinking qualities helps to enhance students' analytical and problem-solving abilities, enabling them to observe and understand the world from a cross-cultural perspective, and make correct value judgments about things. Any English teaching activity is a cognitive activity based on thinking. Learning English and developing thinking qualities can mutually promote each other, and the process of learning and using English can promote the development of thinking qualities. Language and the development of thinking are inseparable, and all thinking is basically based on language. Learning English can further enhance language proficiency and promote the development of thinking. Conversely, the development of thinking can further promote language learning. Teachers should constantly guide students in teaching, combine the conditions of learners and learning environment, make good use of digital and intelligent teaching resources, organically integrate teaching content, and gradually design thinking activities, in order to stimulate students' deep thinking, broaden their scope of thinking, and cultivate their thinking quality[6]. Integrating the cultivation of thinking quality into the design of English teaching activities does not have a fixed pattern, but the following basic principles should be followed: leaving sufficient thinking space for students; Combining students' own knowledge and practical life; It is conducive to encouraging students to actively think, diversify their thinking, and boldly question; Breaking through low-level thinking activities and gradually moving towards higher levels; Combining language learning activities, explore the relationship between language form, meaning, and logic.

4.3 Teaching English as a Discipline to Cultivate Students' Cultural Awareness

Cultivating cultural awareness is an inevitable requirement for the core literacy of the English subject. It plays an important role in enhancing cultural confidence, establishing the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, improving cultural understanding and judgment, and becoming an international talent with high civilization literacy and strong sense of social responsibility[7]. The specific training path is as follows [8]: Firstly, establish teaching objectives and pay attention to cultural awareness. The goal of English teaching is to unify language learning, cross-cultural awareness training and guiding students to form a sound personality. Through English

course learning, students can acquire cultural knowledge, understand cultural connotation, compare cultural similarities and differences, absorb cultural essence, respect differences and form correct values. The second is to use classroom teaching to permeate cultural awareness. In English classroom teaching, teachers should subtly penetrate cultural awareness, create more contexts for students, explore cultural connotations in vocabulary teaching, understand cultural similarities and differences in dialogue teaching, and broaden cultural perspectives in reading teaching. Thirdly, relying on the content of the textbook to cultivate cultural awareness. Teachers should fully tap into the cultural and educational factors inherent in textbooks, play the educational role of ideological connotations, enable students to receive good cultural influence, and stimulate a sense of national pride and identity. Fourthly, utilizing extracurricular activities to enhance cultural awareness. It plays an important role in organizing students to participate in English speech competitions, English song competitions, theatrical performances, and other activities to enhance their language practice skills, compare cultural differences between China and the West, form cultural positions, and generate a sense of cultural identity.

4.4 Teaching English as a Discipline to Cultivate Students' Learning Abilities

Learning ability is the ability to learn new knowledge, the ability to explore the unknown, and also a willingness and interest. Learning ability is a development condition for the core competencies of the English subject[9]. The learning ability in the core competencies of the English subject covers three dimensions: firstly, the use of learning strategies, including the use of goal awareness, effective planning, method selection, monitoring, reflection, adjustment, and evaluation in metacognitive strategies; Secondly, resource management, expanding English learning channels, and obtaining information through multiple channels; Thirdly, students' learning motivation and interest awaken the internal motivation of English learning and stimulate their autonomous learning ability. The process and acquired plasticity of learning ability not only provide teachers with operational space, but also become an unshirkable responsibility of teachers. Teachers should utilize applied grammar teaching activities to cultivate students' metacognitive learning strategies, and improve their planning, reflection, and self-evaluation abilities; It is important to utilize communicative collaborative tasks to cultivate students' resource management abilities, combining resource management abilities with metacognitive strategies, and cultivating students' self-management, planning, and monitoring abilities; And teachers should utilize creative language activities to cultivate students' motivation regulation strategies, including self reward, environmental control, goal arousal, and interest enhancement, in order to maintain students' interest in English learning[10]. Through these strategies, students are encouraged to actively use English learning methods, increase English learning resources, and improve English learning efficiency.

5. Conclusions

The core competencies of the English subject are the essential qualities, key abilities, and values that students develop through English learning and are able to adapt to their lifelong personal and social development needs. Language ability is the foundation of the English subject and also the core literacy of the English subject. The improvement of language ability contains the enhancement of cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability, which helps students expand their international perspective and thinking mode, and carry out cross-cultural communication. The quality of thinking reflects the mental characteristics of the core literacy of the English subject. Cultivating this quality of thinking helps improve students' ability to analyze and solve problems, observe and understand the world from a cross-cultural perspective, and make correct value judgments about things. Cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of the core literacy of the English subject. Cultivating cultural awareness helps students enhance national identity and patriotism, strengthen cultural confidence, establish a sense of community with a shared future for mankind, learn to behave and act, and grow into people with civilized literacy and a sense of social responsibility. Learning ability constitutes the development condition of the core literacy of the English subject, and cultivating learning ability helps students to manage themselves well in English learning, cultivate good learning habits, and improve English learning efficiency.

Acknowledgements

This work is supported by 2021 joint project of teaching reform in primary and secondary schools

in Bohai university (No. 2021ZXXJG15): Research on Effective Ways of English Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools under the Background of Core Competencies.

References

- [1] W. X. Zhang, Y. C. Li. *The cultivation and evaluation of English subjects core competencies: An analysis of cultural awareness*[J]. *Foreign Language Testing and Teaching*, 2023(01): 1-8+28.
- [2] J. Wang, H. Y. Cui. *Research on Students' English Subject Core Competencies Before and After the Implementation of General Senior High School Curriculum Standards English: A Case Study of Freshmen of English Majors from Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology*[J]. *China Educational Technology*, 2023(09): 117-122.
- [3] C. W. Zhang. *Cultural awareness of English subject Core Accomplishment: its essence and practice approach*[J]. *Basic education curriculum*, 2019(Z1): 49-53.
- [4] T. Z. Li. *How to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability in junior middle School English teaching*[J]. *Anhui education and research*, 2023(20): 40-42.
- [5] J. J. Ma. *The Role of English Language Literature on the Cultivation of Students' Language Ability*[J]. *Journal of Jiamusi Vocational Institute*, 2018(02): 329-330.
- [6] Y. L. Zhang. *Exploring the Cultivation of English Thinking Quality for Middle School Students in the Background of Smart Classroom*[J]. *English Square*, 2022(22): 124-128.
- [7] H. T. Peng. *Cultivating Students' Cultural Awareness in Basic English Education*[J]. *Education Modernization*, 2019,6(A2): 252-255.
- [8] J. Zhang. *Strategies for Cultivating Students' Cultural Awareness in Junior High School*. *English Teaching*[J]. *Journal of Dalian Education University*, 2020, 36(01): 25-26.
- [9] J. Wang. *The practical significance of learning ability literacy in rebuilding teacher-student relationships in the core competencies of English subject*[J]. *Overseas English*, 2018(12): 78-79.
- [10] X. T. Ji. *On Developing Students' Ability of Learning: One of Key Competencies in English as a Foreign Language*[J]. *Journal of Tianjin Normal University (Elementary Education Edition)*, 2017, 18(04): 42-45.