

Problems and Countermeasures in Reading and Writing Teaching - from the Perspective of Judges' Comments

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Abstract: Reading and writing teaching plays a significant role in the primary English classroom. By virtue of the teaching ability structure framework in the "Development of Excellent Teachers' Teaching Ability" as the coding basis and content analysis as method, this paper extracts judges' comments in 16 reading and writing classes of the 6th-10th National Primary School English Classroom Teaching Observation Training as the research object and transcribes the discourse to establish a research corpus in a bid to locate the main problems existing in primary school English reading and writing teaching and figure out the countermeasures. The data analysis of the corpus indicates that some problems exist in the teaching design of primary school English reading and writing teaching, such as opaque analysis of teaching materials, imbalance of teaching content and poor design of teaching activities in the teaching implementation. Improving countermeasures include: make full use of textbooks to carry out discourse study, build language and thinking scaffolding, design activities under the concept of deep learning and so on.

Keywords: Judges' comments; reading and writing teaching; content analysis method

1. Introduction

By 2023, the National Primary School English Classroom Teaching Observation Training (hereinafter referred to as the observation class) has been held for 10 sessions, which has had a wide impact in the field of primary school English teaching. Excellent teachers nationwide presented a 35-minute classroom teaching with no restrictions on content or topic. The observation class not only intuitively demonstrated the current situation of primary school English teaching in China and the teaching abilities of primary school English teachers, but also reflected the current cutting-edge teaching design concepts and implementation paths, thus serving as an enlightenment to the innovation of primary school English teaching methods and content as well as the enhancement of teaching ability of the national English teachers.

One of the highlights of the observation class was the judges' comments. Eminent teaching researchers and senior professors from prestigious universities serve as judges. After each class, one to three judges will comment for 10-15 minutes, focusing on the outstanding performance of the teacher in the teaching process and the problems existing in the teaching design and implementation. The experts have rich experience and profound knowledge in foreign language teaching and research, and have proposed some opinions and suggestions for the current primary school English teaching^[1]. Therefore, this article selects the judges' comments from 16 reading and writing classes in the 6th to 10th observation classes, transcribes them into texts, constructs a corpus, and through text analysis, deconstructs the existing problems in primary school English reading and writing teaching from the perspective of the commentators, with a view to providing constructive strategies for reading and writing teaching.

2. Literature review

The *Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Educational System and Mechanisms* states that the party and the country attach great significance to education and insist on placing education in a

strategic position of priority development, which emphasizes the need to innovate the talent training mechanism. Namely, the teaching staff is the decisive factor in talent training; training high-quality talents must have high-level teachers^[2]. Therefore, research on teachers' professional abilities has advanced rapidly in recent years, especially in the formulation of frameworks. Scholar Wu Yan proposed that the professional quality framework of outstanding English teachers in colleges and universities in my country consists of four dimensions: foreign language subject teaching ability, foreign language teachers' professional outlook and professional ethics, foreign language teaching concepts, and foreign language teacher learning and development concepts^[3]. Based on the background of "national standards", Zhong Weihe and Wang Weiwei constructed a professional competency framework for English teachers including three levels: "professional skills", "professional knowledge" and "professional quality", as shown in Figure 1 below^[4]. Sun Youzhong in 2018 proposed the "Competency Framework for Foreign Language Major Teachers" in colleges and universities, including professional ethics, teaching ability, research ability and subject knowledge. In 2021, the Lunar Educator Development Center of the China Education Innovation Institute of Beijing Normal University jointly released the teaching ability structural framework in "The Development of Excellent Teacher Teaching Ability" based on three different teaching methods: "learning design", "teaching implementation" and "evaluation and improvement"^[5]. The scenario proposes corresponding first- and second-level abilities for teachers, as shown in Figure 2 below. Considering the effectiveness and the fit with this study, this article will draw on the Composition of Professional Abilities of English teachers proposed by Zhong Weihe and Wang Weiwei and the Lunar Exploration Educator Development Center of the China Education Innovation Institute of Beijing Normal University's Teaching Ability Structural Framework to deconstruct and analyze the main problems existing in primary school English teachers' reading and writing teaching, and explores countermeasures.

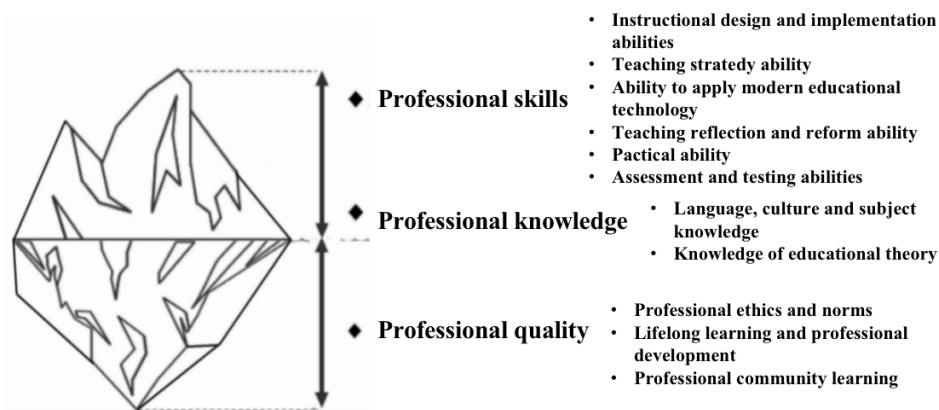


Figure 1: The composition of professional abilities of English teachers in my country under the background of "national standards"

Teaching Scene	Level Capability	Secondary Capability
Learning Design	Learning Towards Core Literacy	1.1 Develop a curriculum that fosters core competencies
		1.2 Definition of learning objectives
		1.3 Analysis of learning process
		1.4 Choosing a teaching strategy
		1.5 Allocation of learning resources
Teaching Implementation	Building a Learning-centered classroom	2.1 Creating a learning environment
		2.2 Guiding inquiry learning
		2.3 collaborative learning
		2.4 Support for self-directed learning
		2.5 Facilitating migration applications
Evaluation and Improvement	Using evaluation for learning and teaching	3.1 Design evaluation program
		3.2 Enhanced process evaluation
		3.3 Improvement of summative evaluation
		3.4 Rethinking and improving teaching based on evaluation

Figure 2: Teaching Ability Structural Framework of "Excellent Teachers' Teaching Ability Development"

3. Research design

This study extracts the judges' comments from a total of 16 reading and writing classes in the 6th to 10th National Primary School English Classroom Teaching Observation Training as the research object, uses content analysis as the research method, and attempts to explore the answers to the following two questions.

3.1 Research questions

(1) What problems did the judges point out in the design and implementation of primary school English reading and writing classes?

(2) What strategies did the judges' comments indicate for the design and implementation of primary school English reading and writing classes?

3.2 Research object

This study selected reading and writing classes in the 6th to 10th primary school observation classes, a total of 16 classes, and 31 judges' comments. In order to ensure the objectivity and authenticity of the data, this study assigned each judge a number. In addition, presenting the title of each reading and writing lesson helps teachers understand the teaching content and teaching background, so as to extract expert opinions more efficiently, reflect on their own classrooms, and develop professional skills. The various groups of expert judges (indicated by code names, L=Lesson) who participated in the reading and writing course reviews in each session and the specific teaching content of the reading and writing course are demonstrated in Figure 3.

Rank	Comments of the judges	Teaching content
6th	L1A; L1B; L1C	Ben's noisy day
7th	L2A; L2B	Let's enjoy our weekend!
	L3A; L3B	A visit to the UN
8th	L4A; L4B	Little duck's shadow
	L5A; L5B	Ways to go school
	L6A; L6B	When is Easter?
9th	L7A	What can you do?
	L8A; L8B	Good health to you
	L9A; L9B	Meet Robin
	L10A	Last Weekend, Comments
10th	L11A; L11B	Meet my family
	L12A; L12B	My home
	L13A; L13B	I want to go to Shanghai
	L14A; L14B	Hobbies and jobs
	L15A; L15B	What can you do?
	L16A; L916B	A fight

Figure 3: Attending judges and teaching content of reading and writing courses

3.3 Research method

This study adopted content analysis method. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, content analysis converts non-quantitative documents into quantitative information, thereby systematically and objectively describing and analyzing the content. This is a scientific method that conducts in-depth analysis of the content of the research object and sees the essence through the phenomenon^[6]. This study converts the non-quantitative judges' comments into a quantitative coding form, and then conducts a detailed analysis of the content of the judges' comments around each dimension. Through specific words, it provides a profound analysis of the existing problems and countermeasures in primary school English reading and writing teaching.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

First of all, taking into account the effectiveness and representativeness, this study intercepted the judges' comments from the 16 reading and writing observation lessons in the past five sessions, transcribed them into text materials, totaling 38,796 words, established a corpus, and selected words that could be used as samples.

Secondly, the words in the corpus are classified using a three-level coding system. The first-level core categories and second-level related categories are formed with reference to the composition of the professional abilities of English teachers in my country (Figure 1) in the context of “National Standards” and the teaching ability structural framework (Figure 2) in the “Development of Excellent Teachers’ Teaching Abilities”, then select and define the smallest elements in the content analysis as the third-level representation characteristics, thereby establishing a quantification system according to the frequency of words, and preparing a data table based on the statistical frequency to form the coding scheme of this study, as exhibited in Figure 4.

Finally, it will focus on each dimension, analyze the opinions put forward by the judges under that dimension, and summarize the problems and countermeasures in reading and writing teaching.

First-level core category	Second-level relational category	Third-level representation characteristics	
Teaching design	Teaching materials	text utilization (1.12%) text integration (5.62%) discourse study (8.99%)	15.73%
	Teaching subjects	student analysis (8.99%)	8.99%
Teaching implementation	Teaching activities	activity content (20.22%) activity authenticity (1.12%) activity sequence (3.37%) activity quantity (2.25%)	26.97%
	Teaching contents	key and difficult points (4.49%) core competencies (8.99%) language scaffold (14.61%) unit as a whole (4.49%)	32.59%
	Teaching tools	multimedia (2.25%) blackboard design (3.37%)	5.62%
	Class organization	time allocation (3.37%) teacher-student interaction (6.74%)	10.11%

Note: The proportion of third-level representation characters = frequency of third-level coding/total number of third-level coding included in the first-level coding/*100(rounded to two decimal places)

Figure 4: Coding results and frequency of judges’ comments

4. Results and discussion

The data and analysis of the corpus manifest that primary school English teachers have relatively concentrated problems in reading and writing teaching, which are mainly reflected in the following three aspects: opaque analysis of teaching materials in terms of teaching design; imbalance of teaching content and poor design of teaching activities in terms of teaching implementation. The specific presentation and analysis of the main issues are as follows.

4.1 Problems and countermeasures in teaching design

Figure 5 below indicates that instructional design includes two related categories: “teaching materials” and “teaching objects”. Teaching materials were mentioned most frequently by the judges, followed by teaching objects. By analyzing the corpus, this study summarizes the problem exposed in teaching design as: opaque analysis of teaching materials.

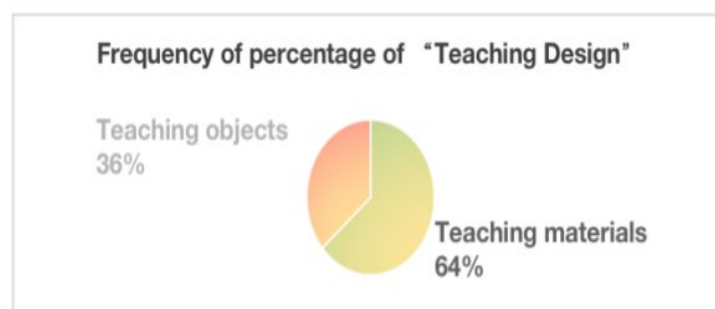


Figure 5: Frequency percentage of “Teaching Design”

4.1.1 Teaching materials

Regarding teaching materials, the judges successively mentioned three issues: “text utilization”, “text integration” and “discourse study”. The relevant frequency percentages are shown in Figure 6.

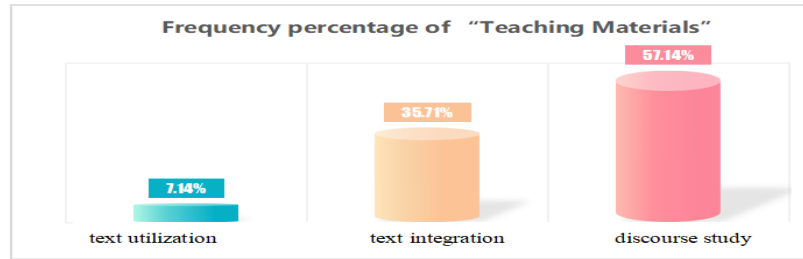


Figure 6: Frequency percentage of “Teaching Materials”

The figure above clearly demonstrates that under the category of teaching materials, judges attach great importance to discourse study. For example, the teacher failed to explore the theme in depth. Judge L9B said, “In the textbook, Wu saw Robin for the first time, so he wrote Robin, but it does not mean that the topic that students should master is writing Robin. Students can write the first meeting with you, such as your appearance, personality characteristics or teaching style. This topic may be more in line with the reality that students can produce, rather than an imagination.” Discourse endows language learning with themes, situations, and content. Besides, with its unique internal logical structure, stylistic features, and language forms, discourse organizes and presents information to serve the expression of theme meaning^[7]. Therefore, when designing teaching, teachers must study the text in depth to grasp the meaning of the theme. Another example is that the teacher failed to design a clear main line. Judge L6B mentioned that “The main line should be clearer in the overall design so that it can be organically integrated with the unit.” This shows that based on the analysis and understanding of the text content, teachers should clarify the views and details of the text, and sort out the knowledge structure and framework based on the theme, so as to design reasonable and coherent teaching activities to help students grasp the logical relationship between information.

In addition, 5 judges all mentioned the issue of text integration. For instance, teachers do not make full use of teaching materials. Judge L2A found that “the teacher spent the first ten minutes of the entire class interacting with students without touching the teaching materials, so the text was meaningless”. Another vivid illustration is that teacher’s adaptation of the teaching material was inappropriate. Judge L7A asked the teacher, “Is it a good idea to replace the main character’s name?” Therefore, it is not difficult to find that many teachers neglect to delve deeply into the themes and main lines of the teaching materials during the course preparation process, and their ability to deeply study the text needs to be boosted. Meanwhile, quite a few teachers failed to make full use of teaching materials, and instead looked for extracurricular resources at the expense of nearby resources. However, their ability to integrate texts needs to be improved.

In response to these issues, the judges also put forward some suggestions. Judge L7A maintained that “If we are processing teaching materials based on the concept of core literacy, we need to answer four questions: ‘What does the text explain?’; ‘How does the text play a role?’; ‘What does the text express?’; and ‘What does the text inspire you to do?’” Judge L3B summarized it more concisely: “The four major principles for processing textbook texts are ‘based on the text, expanding the text, transcending the text, and returning to the text’. In the meantime, we must grasp three terms: corpus, context, and language use. Therefore, based on the text, we can expand appropriately, so that students can learn things in a more complete way.”

Teaching materials are an important resource and carrier for teachers to implement teaching^[8]. Meanwhile, the “Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards” also points out that teachers should use discourse study as a logical starting point to carry out effective teaching design. To carry out text study, teachers must analyze the theme, content, stylistic structure, language characteristics, author’s point of view and so forth of the text^[9]. Therefore, in the teaching design process, teachers should first flexibly and fully utilize the original resources provided to promote students’ understanding and application of the text. Additionally, teachers should appropriately integrate the stylistic structure or content of teaching materials based on students’ cognitive level and actual teaching needs, thus helping students absorb texts and use language smoothly and effectively. Ultimately, teachers ought to dig deeper into the themes, see through the emotional education and author’s views contained in the text, and create opportunities for students to use language in real contexts, so that the depth and breadth

of learning can be unified in the teaching materials. The development enables students to enter the teaching materials, but also improves their pragmatic ability when they get out of the teaching materials.

4.2 Problems and countermeasures in teaching implementation

As displayed in Figure 7 below, the teaching implementation category encompasses four categories: “teaching activities”, “teaching content”, “teaching tools” and “class organization”. The judges’ comments from high to low frequency are “teaching content”, “teaching activities”, “class organization” and “teaching tools”. By analyzing the corpus, this article summarizes the problems exposed by teachers in the implementation of teaching as follows: imbalance of teaching content and poor design of teaching activities.

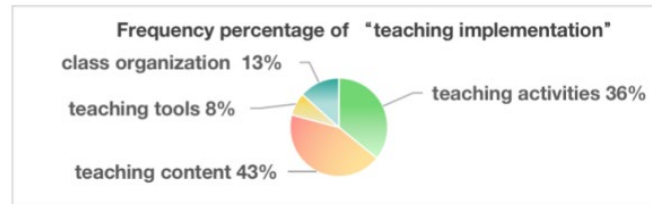


Figure 7: Frequency percentage of “Teaching Implementation”

4.2.1 Teaching content

Regarding the teaching content, the judges made detailed comments from diverse perspectives, chiefly including four perspectives in Figure 8 below.

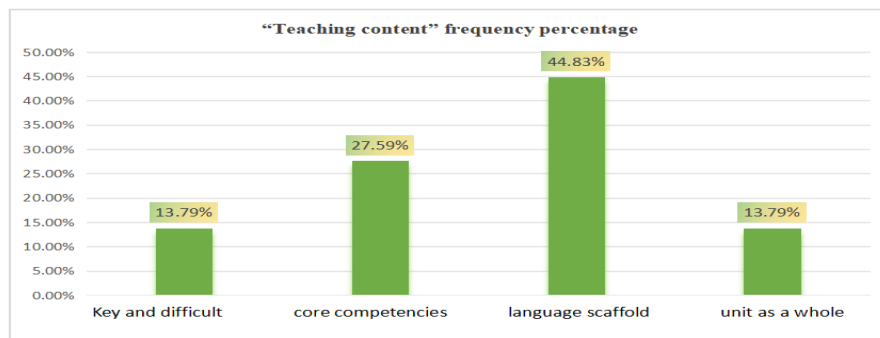


Figure 8: “Teaching content” frequency percentage

As can be witnessed from the figure above, in the teaching content, the judges focused on language scaffolding. Nearly 10 judges mentioned this issue such as the unbalanced ratio of “reading” and “writing”, the lack of rich input content, and the excessive difficulty of output tasks. Due to factors such as age and cognitive level, primary school students need sufficient language scaffolding from teachers before outputting when performing writing tasks. However, in most literacy classes, teachers do not conduct satisfactorily in this regard and fail to provide students with adequate literacy scaffolding, resulting in poor output. For instance, judge L12A pointed out that “this is a reading and writing class, but the reading input can be richer from various aspects, including listening, reading, watching, etc., so that students can have abundant writing output.” This means that the information students obtain before writing is not sufficient and the ways are not multifarious enough. Therefore, teachers need to build richer language scaffolds for students and increase the proportion of reading in teaching content, so that students can have more exciting and accurate expressions in output. Meanwhile, judge L11A also paid heed to the difficulty of the writing task, “We should first make sure that the third grade relies on imitating mainly. Small texts are our examples. In the third grade, do not pursue high-level innovation.” This shows that when teachers design writing tasks, they must consider students’ zone of proximal development^[10]. Moreover, three judges pointed out that the teacher’s proportion of teaching content was inappropriate, that is, in the reading and writing class, listening and speaking accounted for too much and the writing link was missing. In the long run, students will lack in-depth thinking about the text, and “writing” will gradually become an obstacle to students’ English learning.

In response to these problems, judge L14B made corresponding suggestions that a vital ability in the literacy section is to obtain information through reading. At this time, corresponding tasks must be designed. But the tasks we set cannot all be simple. These supports are not enough for reading and answering. Therefore, teachers can learn the reading and writing sections in textbooks, transfer and imitate the good designs in textbooks of different grades. In other words, teachers should conduct in-depth interpretation and analysis when designing reading and writing teaching content and integrate teaching resources combined with students' actual needs to help students learn and create in a well-rounded manner.

The "Curriculum Standards" suggest that teachers should guide students to internalize the learned language and cultural knowledge in applied practical activities, deepen their understanding and preliminary application, adhere to the combination of learning and application, and promote the transformation of knowledge into abilities^[9]. Reading and writing are the main ways of language input and output, and they are closely related and promote each other^[11]. Therefore, English teachers must give full play to the role of reading and writing classes in helping students understand, consolidate, and internalize knowledge, activate existing schema, and educate students in the subject. In response to the problem of lack of reading and writing scaffolds, teachers should build language scaffolds and thinking scaffolds for students before asking them to "write". Appropriate language scaffolding can enable students to have content to write when outputting. It is through the use of new languages in practice that students can internalize this knowledge and transfer it. Hence, it's indispensable that teachers should help students develop a deep understanding and thinking about a topic before they create a meaningful and profound work.

4.2.2 Teaching activities

Under the category of teaching implementation, "teaching activities" ranks second, which has received widespread attention from the judges. Regarding teaching activities, the judges commented from varied perspectives, mainly including four: "activity content", "activity authenticity", "activity sequence" and "activity quantity". The relevant frequency percentages are shown in Figure 9.

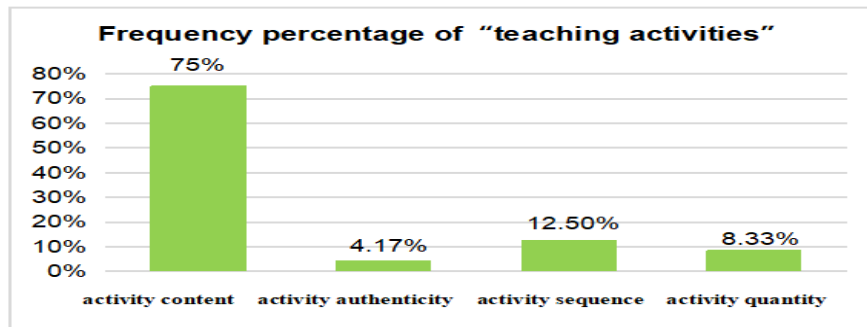


Figure 9: Frequency percentage of "teaching activities"

In terms of activity content, teachers mainly have the problem that the designed content lacks meaning and depth. That is, some of the questions set by teachers are too superficial. When preparing lessons, they fail to design a progressive question chain from shallow to deep. Moreover, there is a lack of flexibility and adaptability in the process of teaching implementation. If things go on like this, it will switch to a bane to students' deep learning. Deep learning refers to a meaningful learning process in which students actively participate, experience success, and burgeon soundly around challenging learning topics under the guidance of teachers^[12]. Therefore, when teachers design questions, they should integrate information with the question chain as the core, so as to help students connect scattered knowledge and form a structure to achieve deep learning in the classroom.

In addition to the content of the activities, the judges also provided some reference opinions on the authenticity, the order and the number of activities. Regarding the authenticity of the activity, judge L7A mentioned that "The designed activities must be close to reality. For example, if the teacher receives an email, can we use this email in reading class? As the email is relatively private, this activity is not very good." In terms of the order of activities, judge L7A expressed his opinion, "The teacher designed two representative activities in the process of interpreting the text, namely circling key words and underlining phrasal verbs, which are relatively mechanical grammar training, so try to do it after the meaning has taken precedence." In terms of the number of activities, judge L1A pointed out that "Some activities can be deleted. Ranging from reading, games, discussions to writing, if all activities

must be completed within 35 minutes, students will not have time to reflect at all.” Compared with middle school and college English teaching, primary school English teaching targets younger students, and their information reception and learning habits are different. In view of this, teachers need to continuously promote the optimized design of primary school English teaching activities based on the actual needs^[13]. Therefore, when teachers design teaching activities, they need to learn to think from others’ perspective, pay attention to students’ experiences and feelings, highlight students’ dominant position in the classroom, and carry out teaching activities with practical significance to complete teaching goals with high quality.

Judge L8A put forward corresponding valuable suggestions. “It is better to shift from improving students’ ability to answer test questions to problem-solving ability, and achieve teaching that generates and solves problems.” This is the direction that teachers should strive for under the concept of deep learning. By designing challenging and meaningful question chains, following the inherent laws of students’ cognition, and fully connecting students with their actual lives, students can discover, think, and solve problems through interaction, so that their thinking can develop more broadly.

The “Curriculum Standards” emphasize that language learning is a meaningful thematic inquiry activity, and advocates that it should reflect the learning process with students as the main body, and be interconnected and progressive through learning and understanding, application practice, transfer and innovation, etc., and integrate language, culture, practical activities integrating thinking^[9]. Deep learning refers to students’ meaningful and active learning. Its core feature is higher-order thinking and focuses on cultivating people. It is palpable to find that the “Course Standards” coincide with the concept of deep learning^[14]. Thus, teachers can guide students’ thinking from low-level to high-level through question chain and activity chain to achieve deep learning. In the question chain, teachers are supposed to combine the real context and raise hierarchical questions, from “finding problems” to “solving problems”, and promote students’ thinking through generative questions. The content of such activities is more meaningful and authentic; in the activity chain, teachers need to design clear-cut and appropriate teaching activities, so that the activities are interlocking, step-by-step, and gradually deepened, and ensure that each activity has a clear direction and goal.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzes the comments made by judges on reading and writing classes in five primary school observation classes from 6th to 10th, and the following enlightenment is obtained.

Teachers have problems such as opaque analysis of teaching materials, imbalance of teaching content and poor design of teaching activities in the teaching implementation in primary school English reading and writing teaching. In order to solve the above conspicuous problems, the judges suggested that teachers should make full use of textbooks to carry out discourse study, build language and thinking scaffolding, and design activities under the concept of deep learning.

Discourse is an important foundation and resource for English teaching, and it is crucial for teachers to understand and apply it. Hence, when teachers design reading and writing teaching, they must first study the text in depth, explore the theme, sort out the main line, and make use of the text. In the teaching implementation process, as reading input lays the foundation for language support and thinking improvement for students’ writing output, teachers should strengthen students’ reading and writing skills by building language and thinking scaffolds based on students’ zone of proximal development. In addition, deep learning theory injects new ideas for teachers to tackle the problem of superficiality and fragmentation in English teaching. Teachers can design question chains and activity chains based on the concept of deep learning to promote students’ critical thinking during the learning process, thereby achieving the goal of cultivating students’ core competencies in the English subject.

The classroom is the main battlefield for teaching exploration and practice. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of the issues mentioned by the judges in the past five primary school observation classes, hoping to have some enlightenment on enhancing English teachers’ teaching abilities as well as reading and writing teaching classes. It is expected that more scholars who love English education will delve deep into the classroom, point out existing problems and propose suggestions from a professional perspective, thereby rendering reference for more front-line teachers and boosting the quality of English teaching constantly.

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