

Application of Reading Strategy Training to Senior High School English Reading Teaching

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Abstract: *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017) specifies that the English curriculum in senior high school has an important educational function, which aims to develop students' English core competence, including linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, and implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue. Among them, reading teaching plays a very important role in high school English learning, but many students have poor English reading ability. Many studies at home and abroad have shown that reading strategy training is an effective measure to improve students' reading ability. Therefore, how to infiltrate reading strategy training into teaching is particularly crucial. This paper will first elaborates on the relevant theories and studies of reading strategy training. Then, analysis its application in senior high school English reading teaching, looking forward to strengthening teachers' understanding of reading strategy training. And then, teachers can apply it to practical teaching, so that students can develop good reading habits, master effective reading strategies, improve reading efficiency and ability, and promote the development of English core competence and English language application competence.*

Keywords: *Senior English; English reading; Reading Strategy Training*

1. Introduction

*General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017) specifies that the English curriculum in senior high school has an important educational function, which aims to develop students' English core competence, including linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, and implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue. Learning ability, as one of the key factors of English core competence, helps students actively use and adjust English learning strategies, develop good learning habits, and obtain learning resources from multiple channels, so as to carry out learning independently and efficiently. Also, learning strategy, an important part of learning ability, is stressed in *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017)* more than one time. In senior high school English learning, reading teaching plays a very important role. At present, reading teaching is no longer just a tool for teaching vocabulary, phrases and grammatical structures, but also carries the important task of cultivating students' thinking quality, promoting students' self-directed and efficient learning, etc.*

Nevertheless, many students have poor English reading ability, mainly manifesting in low reading efficiency, poor reading comprehension and so on, which are unfavorable to reading teaching. In this background, many scholars have carried out relevant studies with a view to improving students' English reading ability. Many studies at home and abroad have shown that reading strategy training is an effective measure to improve students' reading ability. Feng Qing (2017) also pointed out that students are in a difficult position in reading learning, which is due to their serious lack of awareness of using English reading strategies. Therefore, teachers need to infiltrate reading strategy training into teaching and improve students' reading ability imperceptibly.

Above all, this paper will elaborate on the relevant theories and studies of reading strategy training, and analysis its application in senior high school English reading teaching, aiming to strengthen the front-line teachers' understanding of reading strategy training, and apply it to practical teaching, so that students can develop good reading habits, master effective reading strategies, improve reading efficiency and ability, and promote the development of English core competence and English language application competence.

2. Literature review

2.1. Reading strategy

For reading strategy, it is necessary to elaborate on its definition and classification so that teachers can grasp reading strategy and its scope more widely and comprehensively and apply them to teaching.

2.1.1. Definition of reading strategy

As for the definition of reading strategy, different scholars have different opinions. In this paper, there are some characteristic ones.

Langer (1982) believed that reading strategy was a kind of static and passive means and skills used by readers, which showed the methods used by readers for understanding.

Block (1986) defined reading strategy as “how readers conceived a task, what clues they noticed in the text, how to understand what they read and what to do when they can't understand.” According to his view, reading strategy was a conscious dynamic process in which the reader and the text interact with each other.^[3]

Wallace (1992) believed that reading strategy is the flexible reading methods used by readers, and changes with the type of text, context and reading purpose.

Wen Qiufang (1996) pointed out that reading strategies were behaviors and methods adopted to improve learning efficiency according to learner's own understanding.

Johnson (1998) believed that reading strategy was a process in which readers took reading measures. And in this process, readers overcame dyslexia by regulating their reading behavior.

Aarnoutse and Schellings (2003) believed that reading strategy was the cognitive activity of the reader in order to fully understand the article and predict, confirm or solve the problems that may occur in the process. In other words, reading strategy was a cognitive behavior readers take in order to achieve certain reading purpose when reading.

It's true that the definition of reading strategy is varied. And in this paper, reading strategy is the methods or skills readers use in order to improve reading ability.

2.1.2. Classification of reading strategy

To study reading strategies, it is necessary to study classification of it. Different scholars have different opinions about the classification of reading strategies. In this paper, there are some representative classifications.

Hosenfeld (1977) pointed out that successful reader usually use the following nine strategies: thinking and predicting the meaning of the text in reading; guessing the meaning of words in context; annotating the new vocabulary; using the information in the diagram to help understanding; using the title as inference; referring to the annotation in the text; identifying the same source word; explaining the unfamiliar word through common sense; skipping.^[4]

Saring (1987) put forward four kind of different reading strategies. Skillful strategies include skimming, skipping, browsing, writing key words, writing main idea, marking and using Glossary. Classification and simplification strategies include substitution, interpretation, euphemism and synonym. Cohesion discovery strategies include predicting the following with content schema and form schema, identifying opinions and behaviors of characters in the text, identifying the key points in the text and summarizing. Monitoring strategies include realizing the changes of plan and completing tasks, putting down something incomprehensible, adjusting reading speed, correcting mistakes and self-evaluation.

O' Malley and Chamot (1990) divided reading strategies into three different categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socioaffective strategies. “Metacognitive” is a term used in information-processing theory to indicate an “executive” function, strategies that involve planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production and comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Cognitive strategies are more limited to specify learning tasks and involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself, such as note taking, recombination, imagery, transfer, contextualization and so on. Socioaffective strategies have to do with social-mediating activity and transacting with others, such as cooperation and communication with others, self-motivated and so on.^[6]

Block (1986) divided reading strategy into two categories: general strategies and local strategies. General strategies include predicting content, identifying structure, comprehensive information, questioning information, interpreting articles, evaluating behaviors or processes, using common sense to deal with problems, monitoring understanding, correcting behaviors and responding to articles. Local strategies include interpreting, rereading, questioning sentence and word meaning and solving vocabulary problems.^[3]

Cohen (1990) divided reading strategies into three categories: auxiliary strategies (auxiliary reading strategies can promote readers to find arguments or basic concepts, and clarify the functions of various parts of the text); prediction strategies (the reader uses his or her own knowledge and experience or the clues provided by the text to predict the plot, the results or the conclusions that will appear later) and monitoring strategies (monitoring strategies is conscious self-correction strategies, such as planning, self-evaluation, confirmation of wrong understanding, and monitoring process of reading).

Oxford (1990) proposed learning strategies which contained some reading strategies. Cognitive strategies included: prediction, summary, interpretation, analysis, use of contextual hints and so on. Metacognitive strategies included: self-monitoring, correcting errors, etc. Emotional strategies included: self-encouragement, anxiety reduction, etc. Social strategies included: questioning, reading with others, asking for corrections, giving feedback and so on.^[8]

Urquhart and Weir (1998) divided reading strategies into metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies include pre-reading strategies (pre-reading, prediction), in-reading strategies (self-questioning, self-monitoring), and post-reading strategies (self-evaluation, self-response). Cognitive strategies include speed reading strategies (skimming, searching, and checking) and close reading strategies (distinguishing theme and details, pragmatic inference, propositional inference, transfer, free translation, clearing ambiguity, inferring meaning of words, and identifying pronouns).^[10]

Anderson (1991) summarized 24 kinds of reading strategies, and divided them into three categories: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies and compensatory strategies. Specifically, cognitive strategies included prediction, guessing, understanding the general idea, increasing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge and so on; Metacognitive strategies included setting reading goals, listing vocabulary to prepare for following reading, cooperating with peers, practicing more, concentrating, etc. Compensatory strategies included relying on background knowledge to improve reading comprehension, and helping memory through various methods.^[1]

Dong Mingqiang (2009) divided reading strategies into three categories. Pre-reading strategies include cooperative reading, advanced organizer and question-driven. While reading strategies include skimming, skipping intensive reading, etc. Post-reading strategies include mutual reading, self-selected reading and writing reading logs.

2.2. Studies on reading strategy training abroad and at home

2.2.1. Studies on reading strategy training abroad

Since the introduction of reading strategy training, scholars abroad and at home have carried out many studies. Below, this paper will elaborate on the representative studies on reading strategy training abroad and at home.

1970s, Tom Good put forward the definition of strategy training, and studied the differences between “good” and “bad” language learners, which showed that good language learners can use more learning strategies.

Hosenfeld (1977) carried out a survey among 40 teenage readers, which applied the audio-visual thinking method and found that the successful readers and unsuccessful readers have distinctive features.^[4]

Pearson and Dole (1987) proposed a five-step strategy training method for foreign language learning: (1) the teacher explains a kind of learning strategy and demonstrates it; (2) the teacher guides students to practice this strategy; (3) the teacher helps students review and consolidate this strategy; (4) students use this strategy independently; (5) students apply the strategy they have learned to new learning tasks.^[9]

Auerbach and Paxton (1997) adopt reading strategy training among students by integrating it into reading class. The results show that students with reading strategy training have more effective reading and reading interests.^[2]

2.2.2. Studies on reading strategy training at home

Huang Xiaohua and his tutor (1985) published the paper named Learning Strategies for Oral Communication, marking the beginning of research on reading strategy training in China. After the 1990s, more scholars and teachers in China began to conduct more studies on reading strategy training.

Professor Wen Qiufang (1995) conducted a comparative study about the differences in learning methods between successful and unsuccessful English learners. This study found out that successful English learners pay more attention to reading speed and overall understanding of the article when reading, and adopt a variety of reading strategies to improve reading efficiency and reading comprehension.

Lu Zhongshe and Tu Yuancheng (1998) conducted a comparative study on the use of English reading strategies among non-English majors at Tsinghua University. The results showed that students with strong English reading ability can consciously use reading strategies correctly, while students with poor English ability can not consciously use reading strategies.

Liu (2002) compares the relation between the frequency of the strategy use and its reading scores, finding out that successful language learners can make fully use of reading strategies and their reading score are higher, while the unsuccessful language learners can't be aware of using adequate reading strategies, so that their reading scores are much lower.

Meng Yue (2004) conducted an empirical study on college English reading strategy training with students in 2001 from two English classes in Shenyang Sport University as the research objects. The research results showed that the teaching with strategy training has effectively improved students' overall reading comprehension level and reading speed, and greatly enhanced students' abilities to understand the main content of the article, conduct comprehensive reasoning and speculate on the meaning of words.

Zheng Hanwen (2009) conducted a study on the reading strategy training of non-English majors in Zhanjiang Normal University. The study results showed that Non-English majors are unfamiliar with reading strategies, with weak awareness and low frequency of use. So it is necessary to carry out special training. Then, students generally agree with strategy training, which proves that strategy training can be widely carried out in college English teaching. However, in order to achieve obvious results in strategy training, it is necessary to develop a teaching model combining thematic and infiltrate training on the basis of explicit training methods.

2.3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of reading strategy training mainly includes the input hypothesis, information processing theory, and the schema theory.

2.3.1. The input hypothesis

The input hypothesis put forward by Krashen in the late 1970s is the core part of the second language acquisition theory. According to it, an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that acquirer understand (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure a bit beyond his or her current level of competence. And if an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$. Krashen claims that human acquire language in only one way--by understanding messages or by receiving "comprehensible input". That is to say, language acquisition depends on trying to comprehend what other people are saying. He argues that language input should have four requirements: comprehension, interesting and relevant, not grammatically sequenced and $i+1$.^[5]

Input is mainly carried out by listening and reading. In China, it is more dependent on reading to expand students' input and promote the development of students' English competence. Therefore, reading strategy training is very necessary.

2.3.2. Information processing theory

Information processing theory is the basic theory of cognitive psychology. It compares the human brain with the computer, regards the human brain as an information processing system similar to the computer, considers that the human cognitive process is the process of information processing, and tries to establish a computer model of psychological activities.

The process of reading is the process of students' information processing on the reading text. Therefore, when teaching reading, teachers can design activities based on information processing theory to stimulate students' motivation to read and promote students to master reading strategies.

2.3.3. Schema theory

Schema theory is a theory used by cognitive psychologists to explain and understand psychological processes. It is first put forward by German philosopher and psychologist Kant in 1781. He believes that there were some pure concepts in human brain, and schema is the link between concepts and perceived objects. Later, D.E. Rumelhart (1980) and P. L. Carrell (1983) improve the theory and apply it to foreign language teaching, using it to explain the foreign language learners' psychological process of learning and reading comprehension.

According to the schema theory, reading comprehension is the process of interaction between the knowledge structure system in the reader's mind and the information provided by the text. When the reader connects and matches the schema in memory (such as background knowledge or abstract knowledge framework) with the information provided by the text, he or she can understand the content of the text. In this process, the language and text information can activate the schema in the reader's memory, thus achieving the successful reading. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the background knowledge related to reading materials in reading teaching.

3. Application of reading strategy training

The application of reading strategy training is as follows:

3.1. Using background knowledge, stimulating students' reading interests

From the teaching practice, it can often be seen that using pictures which are close to students' real life, students' interests can be quickly aroused and they can actively take part in the following activities. The reason is that these pictures can activate the relevant background knowledge in students' minds, thus arousing students' interests in reading. Therefore, in the subsequent teaching, teachers should pay attention to these kind of activities which can activate the background knowledge related to the text and students' life to stimulate their interests in reading.

3.2. Providing relevant clues, guessing the topic of text

From the teaching practice, it can often be seen that in the warm-up, teachers will guide students to guess the topic of text by providing some clues, for example, title of the text, pictures or key words. Through these kind of activities, students can easily guess the topic of text. This proves that teachers have already effectively infiltrated the reading strategy of guessing into teaching activities, thus not only helping students grasp the main idea of the text before reading it carefully, but also stimulating students' reading interests. Therefore, in the subsequent reading, students will unconsciously use this strategy--guessing to improve reading efficiency.

3.3. Using skimming and scanning strategies, obtaining the main idea and detailed information of text

From the teaching practice, it can often be seen that before starting to analyze the text carefully, teachers will ask students to skim the text quickly and match the main idea of each paragraph, then guide them to summarize the structure of the text. Also, it is also common that teachers will distribute tasks such as True or False, filling blanks, answering questions, etc. before carefully read and analyse each paragraph. Through these kind of activities, students can quickly grasp the genre, main idea, structure and detailed information of the text. This proves that teachers have already effectively infiltrated the reading strategies of skimming and scanning into teaching activities. Therefore, in the subsequent reading, students will use skimming and scanning imperceptibly. They will learn how to skim ahead of intensive reading and skip the details of the text, so as to quickly grasp the main idea and structure of the text and improve reading efficiency. Also, they will learn how to scan the text to acquire important detailed information and improve reading accuracy.

3.4. Interpreting text comprehensively, cultivating students' thinking quality

From the teaching practice, it can often be seen that teachers guide students to read text intensively and summarize the points of view and supporting details in the form of charts, so that students' understanding of the content of the text can be deepened. In addition, teachers also guide students to correct mistakes, which make them learn to have a questioning spirit. There's no doubt that this can help

cultivate students' thinking quality. And in the subsequent reading, students will pay attention to the comprehensive interpretation of the text to strengthen reading comprehension and develop the habit of questioning.

3.5. Strengthening self-reflection, promoting self-directed learning

From the teaching practice, it can often be seen that teachers assign a self-assessment form to ask students do a self-reflection. In addition, teachers often design some homework which need students to rethink their points of view and supporting reasons/details carefully, and write something to express their opinions on the topic. It is no doubt that these activities and homework can help students to strengthen self-reflection and promote self-directed learning. Therefore, in the subsequent reading, students will also imperceptibly reflect and learn independently.

4. Summary

In current English teaching, reading is both a key and difficult point. It is not only a tool for students to learn basic language knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, but also an important carrier to improve students' thinking quality and promote students' core competence. However, from the teaching practice, it can be seen that many students' reading ability is poor, and the fundamental reason lies in their lack of awareness of using reading strategies. Therefore, teachers should actively and comprehensively learn definition and classification of reading strategies, important studies on reading strategy training at home and abroad, and the theoretical framework related to reading strategy training, such as the input hypothesis, information processing theory, the schema theory, etc. In addition, teachers should also observe other excellent teachers' classes and refer to how they use reading strategy training. Only in this way can teachers infiltrate reading strategy training into their own teaching activities, and promote students to grasp reading strategies imperceptibly, so that improve their reading ability and develop their English core competence.

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