

Exploring Teaching Strategies for Cultivating Thinking Disposition in High School English Reading Instruction

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Abstract: The "English Curriculum Standards for General High Schools (2017 Edition)" takes core competencies as the basic guiding goal of curriculum design, which means a key change in basic education—shifting from a knowledge-focused model to a competency-oriented one. As an important part of English core competencies, thinking disposition plays an irreplaceable role in developing students' cognitive abilities, building their knowledge systems, and helping them apply what they have learned in real scenarios. Reading teaching is the main way for students to acquire language and develop their thinking, so it provides a good platform for cultivating students' thinking disposition. Guided by the requirements of the curriculum standards and based on the actual situation of current high school English reading teaching, this paper explores practical ways to integrate the cultivation of thinking disposition into reading classes, so as to comprehensively improve students' logical thinking, critical thinking and innovative thinking abilities.

Keywords: Core Competencies; English Teaching; Curriculum Standards; Reading teaching; Thinking cultivation

1. Introduction

With the steady progress of education modernization, cultivating students' core competencies has become the top priority in senior high school English teaching. The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) clearly identifies thinking disposition as a core part of English core competencies, stressing that English learning should be used as a vehicle to develop students' logical, critical and innovative thinking abilities.

As a major way for students to obtain language

input and construct meaning, reading not only helps improve their language proficiency, but also provides an important context for nurturing their thinking disposition.

However, there is a widespread problem in current senior high school English reading teaching: the focus on language forms often overshadows the cultivation of students' cognitive abilities. In actual classroom teaching, teachers tend to lay excessive emphasis on vocabulary and grammar explanation, while paying insufficient attention to exploring the deep structure of texts, the author's real intention and the implicit cultural background.

As a result, students' thinking activities are mostly limited to simple information extraction, which seriously hinders the development of their higher-order cognitive abilities and their ability to interpret texts in a meaningful way. Under the guidance of the competency-oriented concept proposed in the new curriculum standards, integrating thinking disposition cultivation into reading teaching has become an urgent task in the reform of senior high school English teaching. Therefore, this study attempts to explore practical teaching strategies for cultivating students' thinking disposition in senior high school English reading classes, which are based on both relevant theories and actual classroom practices. The ultimate goal is to promote the transformation of reading teaching from simple knowledge transmission to cognitive ability improvement.

2. Literature Review

According to English Curriculum Standards for General High Schools (2017 Edition), thinking quality refers to learners' ability and level shown in logical, critical and innovative thinking; it helps students improve their skills of analyzing and solving problems, view and understand the world from cross-cultural perspectives, and form proper value judgments. Wang [1] mentioned that thinking quality, also called intellectual

quality, basically means personal features owned by individual thinking, and various differences shown in thinking activities together make up thinking quality.

Hu [2] pointed out that from the perspective of thinking content, thinking quality forms a three-dimensional structural system starting with logical thinking, moving through critical thinking and ending with innovative thinking; logical thinking skills cover analysis and synthesis, comparison and classification, induction and deduction, as well as abstraction and generalization, critical thinking skills include judgment and reasoning, questioning and problem-solving, seeking similarities while keeping differences, evaluation and prediction, and innovative thinking skills involve vertical and horizontal thinking, association and imagination, metaphor and synaesthesia, along with creative imitation. In their interpretation of the curriculum standards, Mei and Wang [3] explained the three parts of thinking quality, logical thinking mainly includes mental activities such as forming concepts, making judgments and reasoning; critical thinking shows as attitudes and behaviors of questioning and checking information; innovative thinking means taking new viewpoints, breaking fixed thinking modes, getting rid of old rules and daring to create new ideas.

Yang [4] stated that developing thinking quality helps improve students' core literacy in English, and reading acts as one key way to boost students' thinking growth. Yu [5] pointed out that as a vital part of teaching, reading teaching plays an important role in improving students' core literacy in English subjects. Zou and Chen [6] found that most existing studies discuss textbook functions in developing thinking quality from theoretical and policy sides, while few researches pay attention to how teachers use textbooks in real teaching practice to cultivate students' thinking quality.

By looking through previous studies, the cultivation of thinking quality should be rooted in real English teaching practice, especially in reading activities where teachers guide students from basic text understanding to deep thinking; teachers should take reading texts as teaching materials, design layered and open-ended question chains, build a classroom environment for students to think, question and express their ideas, help students develop thinking quality along with language learning and meaning

exploration, and make students move from simply understanding texts to combining reading with thinking

3. Challenges in Cultivating Thinking Disposition in High School English Reading Instruction

3.1 Shift in the Focus of Reading Instruction

Gong [7] pointed that many teachers and students still hold the view that English classes should focus on vocabulary and grammar practice, and text reading in textbooks is merely for learning vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, English teaching pays insufficient attention to and fails to effectively cultivate students' thinking ability.

Many teachers take language knowledge explanation as the main part of reading teaching, and they turn classroom activities into repeated training of words, grammar and sentence structures; most lessons follow a simple process, they teach new vocabulary first, then translate sentences and paragraphs, and assign practice tasks in the end. When they deal with reading texts, teachers usually use the same way, they explain key words one by one, analyze difficult sentences, and sort out the main idea of each paragraph; students are asked to memorize separate language points in this process, and teachers seldom guide them to sort out logical reasoning or find out the hidden meaning of writers. This teaching way limits students to simple information collection in reading activities, and students hardly get chances to understand real meanings behind texts; as time passes, reading becomes a passive process of recognizing words, and students can hardly improve their abilities in logical analysis and critical thinking.

3.2 Simplified Reading Teaching Methods

Wang and Qin [8] point out that exam-oriented education still prevails nowadays, which seriously hinders the cultivation of students' innovative abilities. Most teachers adopt cramming teaching methods, focusing on knowledge explanation and memorization rather than encouraging students to explore and create, thus suppressing students' innovative awareness and capabilities. Some teachers and students rely too heavily on doing exercises and learning

problem-solving skills, and they take higher exam scores as their main learning goal; teachers still arrange lessons around exam requirements, while students regard English learning as nothing more than memorizing vocabulary and finishing exercises. Reading classes are often turned into pure skill training for tests, and teachers follow the fixed steps of reading questions, finding matching content and checking answers in class, ignoring analysis of text themes and personal viewpoints; this problem is especially obvious in literary reading materials, if teachers only explain factual detail questions without organizing discussions about characters' inner thoughts or main themes, students can hardly develop their ability to reason and create new ideas. Long-term lecture-style teaching also makes students receive knowledge in a passive way, leaving them few chances to raise questions on their own or work together to explore problems; the real value of English learning is not only reflected in test results, but also lies in forming complete English-thinking habits and overall learning abilities.

3.3 Unbalanced Reading Evaluation System

Current reading assessment mainly depends on standard tests, and it only checks low-level thinking skills such as finding details, understanding word meanings and grasping main ideas; highlevel abilities including analysis, judgment and creation are rarely measured in these tests. Even when reasoning questions are included, their answers are usually fixed or limited, which stops students from understanding texts from different viewpoints. The test-driven evaluation direction also affects daily teaching in return, teachers focus classroom content on exam-related knowledge to meet testing requirements, and they cut down or give up thinking training activities that cannot be assessed in written tests, such as class debates, deep text analysis and group research tasks. There is also a lack of ongoing evaluation during the learning process, students' thinking behaviors cannot receive long-term observation and feedback, and their thinking quality fails to get steady guidance.

3.4 Lack of Cultural Awareness Cultivation

Language carries culture, and people's thinking forms in a certain cultural background; however, in reading teaching, cultural knowledge is

usually only added briefly, and it is not combined with thinking training. When teachers deal with texts with cultural connotations, they usually focus on analyzing language forms, and they rarely guide students to understand the history, social concepts and value systems behind these texts. For example, when texts involve Western individualism or social contracts, if teachers do not compare them with Chinese culture, students will find it hard to understand these differences; their thinking will be limited easily, and they will lack cross-cultural understanding and dialectical thinking ability. The lack of cultural awareness makes students unable to think critically in a global context, and it also affects their ability to communicate across different cultures. The difficulties in cultivating students' thinking quality in senior high school English reading teaching are caused by many factors together, including teaching concepts, teaching methods, evaluation ways and cultural integration. To get rid of these difficulties, teachers need to redefine teaching goals clearly, create new teaching methods, reform evaluation ways, and deepen thinking training through cultural comparison; they should put the cultivation of thinking quality into every link of reading teaching.

4. Implementation Strategies for Cultivating Thinking Quality in Senior High School English Reading Teaching

4.1 Deeply Integrate Reading Teaching Content

4.1.1 Optimize teaching objectives

Bai [9] pointed that when teachers design teaching objectives, they should go beyond simply letting students master language knowledge, and they need to add thinking quality cultivation into the objective system; when preparing lessons, teachers should not only cover the knowledge points of the unit and chapter, but also help students understand the deep meaning of the article, and connect the text content with real life according to students' daily life experience.

Teachers should study The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) carefully, and make clear the requirements for thinking quality, including analysis and understanding, reasoning and judgment, and criticism and innovation; the goal of reading teaching should change from

“obtaining information” to “constructing thinking”.

Take the “Friendship” unit in People's Education Press Volume 1 as an example: on the basis of making sure students can describe interpersonal relationships and master emotional words, teachers should also set thinking objectives; they should guide students to analyze the emotional clues and potential conflicts in characters' dialogues, infer the view of friendship that the author conveys through the plot and judge whether it is reasonable, and put forward their own understanding according to their own experience or the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures. By setting clear objectives, reading classes can combine language learning with thinking training, and avoid only focusing on the analysis of words and sentences.

4.1.2 Diversify teaching methods

Teachers need to move away from the old lecture-based reading style, and they can use various methods like question chains to guide students to improve their thinking skills; take the reading lesson of “Wildlife Protection” in Compulsory Book Two as an example, teachers can design step-by-step question chains.

For factual understanding, teachers can ask about relevant causes and results; for analytical thinking, teachers can guide students to think about different people's attitudes toward this problem and hidden value ideas behind it; for evaluation and creative thinking, teachers can let students talk about the practical effects of existing measures and come up with new suggestions.

These question chains need clear logic to inspire students' thinking, and they allow students to search for answers beyond text content and give explanations from different sides; task chains should keep inner connections among different parts, each step should have clear goals for thinking practice, and teachers need to offer necessary help such as thinking tools, learning materials or judging standards.

Teachers should set tasks with proper difficulty levels, and they can help all students carry out deep thinking with proper support; through these task-based activities, students can develop skills in analysis, summary, evaluation and creation when solving problems, and they can change from receiving information passively to building personal understanding actively. This teaching mode makes reading lessons a real way to

improve students' overall thinking quality.

4.1.3 Transfer teaching situations

According to constructivism learning theory, learning should be closely combined with practical activities in real situations; this requires teachers to pay more attention to creating transfer and innovation task situations in senior high school English reading classes. Wang [10] pointed out that a good task situation should provide students with real language information that is close to their daily life, and this kind of real design can not only arouse students' existing knowledge and experience, but also promote their thinking development and the use of reading skills by solving practical problems.

Take the reading text “The night the earth didn't sleep” in Unit 4 of People's Education Press Compulsory Book One as an example, teachers can create a transfer situation around the theme of “Tangshan Earthquake”; first, teachers guide students to hold group discussions on “common natural disasters and their response measures”, then let students share emergency plans through speeches, action demonstrations and other forms. This situation design extends the disaster story in the text to the issue of safety protection in real life, and when students analyze the causes of disasters and formulate response strategies, they not only learn more knowledge across different subjects, but also go through the thinking process of “integrating information, reasoning logically and expressing creatively”. In this way, students can transfer their ability from understanding the text to applying it in practice, and their logical and innovative thinking can be improved effectively.

4.2 Establish a Multi-dimensional Reading Evaluation System

4.2.1 Diversify evaluation participants

Schools should abandon the single-teacher evaluation model, and build a three-in-one assessment system including self-assessment from students, peer feedback and teacher-led guidance evaluation; student self-evaluation helps learners improve self-awareness, letting them spot and reflect on problems during reading practice, and make improvements under teachers' guidance. Teachers need to offer practical guidance methods, discuss assessment standards with students, and help them master self-evaluation skills to better adjust their learning plans over time; peer evaluation can be

carried out during class discussions or project presentations, which helps students develop critical thinking abilities. Teachers work as both planners and supporters in the whole evaluation process, they offer targeted advice to students through class observation, task checking and learning portfolio analysis, shifting the purpose of assessment from simply scoring to guiding students' long-term progress

4.2.2 Dynamic evaluation standards

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, teachers can divide reading thinking evaluation standards into three parts: understanding level, analysis level and creation level; teachers should adopt a new dynamic evaluation model, and assess students in many ways by different stages. For example, teachers can divide the semester into several periods, and carry out an assessment once a month; the assessment content includes class performance, after-class homework, reading amount and exam results. In English reading classes, teachers can observe how students develop each part of thinking quality, and give targeted evaluation; after class, teachers can comprehensively assess students' learning progress through their reading quantity, homework completion quality and exam scores. This kind of process evaluation can timely reflect teaching effects, help students clearly know their own thinking quality development, and provide a basis for teaching improvement.

4.2.3 Diversified evaluation content

Teachers need to use different new evaluation ways to get rid of the limits of traditional paper tests, and they can record how students think when they read English; the new English curriculum standards clearly say that teaching evaluation can include classroom assessment, homework check, unit tests and final exams. For example, teachers can make a form for English reading class evaluation, check students' performance in class from different aspects of thinking quality, and make sure they can assess students' progress completely. Traditional evaluation mainly focuses on final assessment, so teachers should change their focus to pay more attention to process evaluation; through regular phased tests, teachers can find students' progress in time and encourage them, which can make students more confident and help them do better in English reading classes. With this kind of dynamic and non-stop evaluation method, teachers can not only follow students' learning

progress, but also give useful feedback in the whole learning process, helping students improve their thinking quality.

5. Conclusion

Core literacy has become an important part of basic education reform in China, and it is also a key point to carry out quality-oriented education; thinking quality is a necessary part of core literacy and even more important. Under the new curriculum reform, senior high school English teaching has higher requirements, and this brings great challenges to English teachers. This paper refers to the national curriculum standards for senior high school English, and it talks about practical ways for high school teachers to help students improve their thinking quality. In daily classes, teachers first need to carefully analyze teaching materials, combine them with students' current thinking level, and find key points in texts that can help students think better; on this basis, teachers can make proper teaching plans, use different classroom activities, connect themes from different units, pay attention to thinking training in every teaching step, and encourage students to think on their own. The improvement of thinking quality takes a long time, and teachers and students need to work together to finally help students develop their overall core literacy.

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