

Genre Circle Activity Application Based on Middle School English Teaching Materials-Taking the Text “What Do No.5 High School Students Do in Their Free Time?” as an Example

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Abstract: Based on the incomplete phenomenon in middle English teaching materials and class activities, this paper introduces the ways to realize genre circle activity application. This paper begins from how to draw genre material from the textbook, and then hold genre circle activities from narrative, information and commentary in the form of groups. Based on the text, those activities aim at cultivating students' overall awareness from the perspective of language learning.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of balancing the instrumental and humanistic aspects of the English curriculum has been recognized in the curriculum standards, syllabus and teaching guides, but the full implementation of this concept is still waiting for time. At the teaching level, there is still incomplete phenomenon in English basic education, which is reflected in the arrangement of English teaching materials and the development of teaching activities.

2. Genre Pedagogy and Genre Circle Activities

How to change these incomplete phenomena? It is unrealistic to change English textbooks on a large scale, but the only way is to integrate the existing textbooks, use the laws implied in them, take the content as the outline, take the language category as the medium, and give equal importance to language and thinking. In order to realize the transformations, the genre circle activities based on the genre teaching method have an important pedagogical application value.

2.1 Genre Pedagogy

In the 1980s, the Sydney School in Australia, a branch of systemic functional linguistics, focused on the study of language categories. This study of language, based on the universality of language, goes beyond the traditional scope of literary studies and defines language as “a staged, goal-oriented social process” in the SFL model (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 311), that is, an interactive

negotiation process between multiple subjects that can be divided into stages and segments, but are subordinated to the same communicative goal. In 2014, Martin & Rose further emphasized the close relationship between teachers and students in the classroom: teachers should not only provide students with explicit language knowledge, but also create a suitable negotiating field for students, ultimately forming a cycle of “deconstruction-joint construction-independent construction”.

2.2 Genre Circle Activities

In the teaching process, first of all, genre circle activities can be divided into aspects of narration, information and commentary. The narrative circle includes telling stories, refining details, and recreating splendid moments; the information circle focuses on transmitting information, explaining phenomena, and introducing processes; and the commentary circle emphasizes factors such as distinguishing truth from falsehood, debating with others, and responding positively. The number of group members, the distribution of roles and the way of activities should be flexibly adjusted according to students’ English level, cognitive characteristics, interests and the teaching priorities and arrangements of each lesson.

3. Drawing Genre Material from Textbook

3.1 The Original Passage

What Do No.5 High School Students Do in Their Free Time?

Last month we asked our students about their free time activities. Our questions were about exercise, use of the Internet and watching TV. Here are the results.

We found that only fifteen percent of our students exercise every day. Forty-five percent exercise four to six times a week. Twenty percent exercise only one to three times a week. And twenty percent do not exercise at all.

We all know that many students often go online, but we were surprised that ninety percent of them use the Internet every day. The other ten percent use it at least three or four times a week. Most students use it for fun and not for homework.

The answer to our questions about watching television were also interesting. Only two percent of the students watch TV one to three times a week. Thirteen percent watch TV four to six times a week. And eighty-five percent watch TV every day! Although many students like to watch sports, game shows are the most popular.

It is good to relax by using the Internet or watching game shows, but we think the best way to relax is through exercise. It is healthy for the mind and the body. Exercise such as playing sports is fun, and you can spend time with your friends and family as you play together. And remember, “old habits die hard”. So start exercising before it’s too late!

3.2 Genre Material

The teacher will first separate the themes of the genre circles according to the content of the text, then extract the corresponding language materials from the original text, including words, phrases, sentences or sentence structures, etc., and then explain the content of the theme (see the table below), so that students can consolidate the foundation of the genre circle activities.

Table 1 - Narration Circle Material

Topic Extraction	Genre Material Extraction		Contents Note	Genre Features
	Vocabulary and Phrases	Sentence		
Students' Free Time Activities	exercise, go online, watch television, game shows, etc.	①Most students use it for fun.②Thirteen percent watch TV four to six times a week.③Although many students like to watch...	Students illustrate their own free time activities in detail.	Use wonderful and vivid language to tell the story in an infectious way. Pay attention to the characteristics of the characters; the important plot of the story; pay attention to the psychological activities of the characters; and add body language.
Some Student's Healthy habits	exercise,play sports, relax, etc.	①It is healthy for the mind and the body.② You can spend time with your friends and family.	Assume what exercise will the student do and give the reason.	
Some Students' bad habits	watch TV, use of the Internet, at all, at least, etc.	①Most students use it for fun but not for homework.②"Old habits die hard."	Imagine what those students will do on the Internet and what they watch on TV.	

Table 2 -Information Circle Material

Topic Extraction	Genre Material Extraction		Contents Note	Genre Features
	Vocabulary and Phrases	Sentence		
Survey Process on Student's Free Time Activities	ask, find, percentage, results, exercise, go online, watch television, etc.	①Our questions are about...②Thirteen percent watch TV four to six times a week.③Here are the results.	Briefly introduce the process of a survey: proposing a topic, asking the target groups, drawing conclusion.	Use structured language to convey information in an objective manner, emphasizing the use of sequential correlatives to keep expressions organized. In addition, you should pay attention to the beginning and the end to make the expression have a beginning and an end.
Frequency of Students' Different Activities	at least, at all, every day, four times a week, exercise,play sports, relax etc.	①It is healthy for the mind and the body.②Thirteen percent watch TV four to six times a week.	Find the reason why exercising is the best way for this student to relax.	
The Nature of Relaxation	the most popular,interesting, at all, surprised, etc.	①It is for fun. ②...is interesting③It is good for...	Encourage students to think about why they want to relax and what truly make them relax.	

Table 3 -Commentary Circle Material

Topic Extraction	Genre Material Extraction		Contents Note	Genre Features
	Vocabulary and	Sentence		
Comparison between Exercise and other Entertainment	the best way, healthy, exercise,play sports, relax etc.	①It is healthy for the mind and the body.②We are surprised that...	Find the good and bad side of each free time activities, and make a	Use concise and precise language to present your views, with minimal use of subjective descriptive language, and without adhering to strict sequencing. Emphasize the use of general and concise language to express opinions, identify right and wrong, and make sense.
Comment on the Survey Results	the most popular,interesting, at all, surprised, etc.	①Here are the results.②We were surprised that...③"Old habits die hard."	Inspire students to think how "we" feel about the results and how to improve the situation	

4. Carry-out of Genre Circle Activities

At this stage, the teacher first presents the information about the extracted genre circles to the class; then each group chooses one or more themes for the group's genre circle activity; then the group assigns its own role in the genre circle and cooperates in the creation of the script; after the teacher checks and finalizes the script, the group members focus on practicing their roles; then the group members present the language circle activity together; finally the teacher will assign homework according to the situation in order to reinforce the role of the language circle activity.

4.1 Narration Circle

The teacher first divides the students into groups of six to take on the roles of director, narrator, performer 1, performer 2, scene recorder and language refiner. The group members can decide on the distribution of roles according to their own interests and English proficiency. The following is part of the script and part of the classroom recording of a group of students' story circle.

[The Script Topic] Students' Different Free Time Activities

[The Script Design]

- (1) Narrator: introduce different after-school activities in our class
- (2) Scene recorder: write the title on the blackboard
- (3) Performer 1: watch TV and play computer, and describe his action in English
- (4) Scene recorder: draw a large table to fill the data from the text
- (5). Performer 2: play sports and describe his health in English
- (6) Narrator: Why is the second student healthier?
- (7) Scene recorder: Write "exercise is the best way to relax" on the blackboard
- (8) Language refiner: draw the conclusion and extend the topic

4.2 Information Circle

Based on the genre characteristics of information, the roles of informant, guide, reporter 1, reporter 2, questioner and summarizer can be designed in a group of six people. The informant introduces the topic of the discourse and the steps of the report; the guide simplifies and refines the content of the discourse through the mind map jointly created by the group, and can complete the introduction of the guide before the rapporteur's report or can gradually expand it with the rapporteur's report; the two rapporteurs cooperate to complete the transmission and explanation of the group's information; the questioner can either ask questions to the rapporteur from the audience's perspective after the rapporteur's report is completed, or can supplement and strengthen the rapporteur's report and ask questions to the audience. The summarizer will focus on repeating information in English from the text to further enhance the students' understanding and awareness of the information.

4.3 Commentary Circle

In order to combine commentary genre with its structure, to bring into students' initiative in learning, and to enable them to express their meaning creatively, the commentary circle activity can have six roles in the group: host, debater 1, debater 2, debater 1, debater 2, and judge. The following is the script of one group of students' commentary circle.

[The Script Topic] The impact of the Internet as a free time activity on teenagers

[The Script Design]

- (1) Host: introduce the popularity of the Internet and then raise the topic: what's the impact of the Internet as a free time activity on teenagers?
- (2) Debater 1: illustrate students can use Internet to broaden their horizons and they can relax themselves by playing games.
- (3) Debater 2: Going online are bad for students' health after school, the better way to relax is playing sports.
- (4) Debater 1 and Debater 2: contradict each other's opinion
- (5) Judge: summarize and decide which side wins based on the votes from the class.

4.4 Summary and Reflection on Genre Circle Activities

A. The genre circle activities are based on the content of the selected texts (according to the themes extracted by the teachers), the language (words, phrases and sentences of the text) and cultural knowledge of the unit. The two axes are the written output (script writing) and the oral output (classroom presentation), and the goal is to fully understand and master the characteristics of different language categories and their practical use.

B. Whether each group chooses one type of language circle activity together or all three types of language circles at the same time in an English classroom can be determined by the teaching time, teaching difficulties and priorities, and students' English proficiency.

C. The role of the teacher in the teaching process of “deconstruction-joint construction-independent construction”: At the beginning of the genre circle activities, the teacher should study the text carefully, first classify the language materials, and do the preliminary work for the development of the activity, and be the pioneer of the “model” ; during the activity, the teacher pays attention to the students' application of their knowledge of the text, and also encourages students to show their own opinions, and to “co-construct” each group's script. At the end of the activity, the teacher should summarize the situation of each genre circle and assign diversified assignments (such as revising each group's script, retelling the content of an excellent group's activity, summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of a group, exchanging each group's script for group evaluation, discussing the application of a language category, etc.). By assigning various kinds of assignments, teachers again deepen students' understanding of the content of this lesson in a subtle way, complete the input of language category knowledge and ability from multiple perspectives, and consolidate the learning process of students' “independent construction”.

5. Conclusion

The genre circle activity provides an alternative solution for junior high school English classes. It not only reproduces the content of the discourse, constructs the meaning of the discourse, internalizes the language knowledge and strengthens the language ability, but also integrates the language resources in the textbook, makes the teaching activities avoid the lively but disorderly operation, and to a certain extent solves the “incomplete” status quo of English teaching, and makes an effective attempt to integrate the language input and output. This is an effective attempt to address the current situation of “unstructured” English teaching and learning and to make language input and output holistic.

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