A Study on Senior English Reading Teaching Design Based on Thematic Meaning Inquiry

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Abstract: English reading teaching is one of the ways to cultivate students' advanced thinking ability. Thematic meaning inquiry plays an important role in English reading teaching. In this study, teachers of various grades from four high schools in Linyi City, Shandong Province are chosen to be the research objects, and a questionnaire survey is adopted to understand the implementation status of senior English reading teaching based on thematic meaning. It finds that most high school English teachers are vague about the high school English teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry. In view of this, the paper provides English teachers with suggestions for designing English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, with a view to improve English teachers' awareness of thematic meaning inquiry.

1. Introduction

English is a bridge of communication, hence, English education is of great significance in our country. Cheng Xiaotang (2018) proposed that language cannot be separated from discourse, discourse from content, and content from theme and context^[1]. From this, the status of thematic meaning teaching in English teaching can be seen and the research of English teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry is needed. However, Professor Wang Qiang (2017) pointed out the existing problem: Due to the lack of attention to the quality of thinking in China's original curriculum objectives, many teachers only understand English learning strategies but know little about the cultivation of thinking^[2]. Under such circumstance, English reading teaching in our country must be perfected. The formation of high school students' English ability must be achieved step by step.

In order to further achieve the popularity of high school English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, the paper takes 4 high schools in Linyi City as an example to explore the popularity of English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, and accordingly provides design suggestions to English teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Thematic Meaning Inquiry

A theme is the central idea of the content. Hang Yujie (2021) pointed out that in high school

English education, theme is the central content of each unit. Theme provides the subject scope or context for language learning, and students' exploration of thematic meaning should be the most important content of students' language learning^[3]. Wang Chunhui (2019) explained that thematic meaning inquiry is the central issue of discourse, which provides context for language application^[4]. Cheng Xiaotang (2018) elaborated on the necessity of thematic teaching inquiry of English subject^[1]. He emphasized that the context created by teachers must be closely related to thematic meaning so as to fully dig the cultural awareness and knowledge connotation carried by the subject of the unit. It can be seen that thematic meaning inquiry plays an important role in language. In this paper, the idea of thematic meaning inquiry created by Wang Chunhui is seen as the standard concept.

2.2 Senior English Reading Teaching Based on Thematic Meaning Inquiry

Wang Qiang (2018) pointed out that the purpose of language learning is not to memorize knowledge and practice skills, but to better understand and express meaning^[5]. Therefore, language learning activities should be designed around the understanding and expression of meaning. Cheng Xiaotang (2018) pointed out that the classroom based on thematic meaning inquiry is to design the objectives, contents and activities around a certain theme^[1]. Gao Yuanyuan (2021) pointed out that teachers should choose reading materials based on unit themes of certain textbooks according to students' development, life experience, cognitive level, language learning rules and other factors so that students can carry out extended reading around the theme and enhance their emotional experience in the reading process^[6]. In this way, students' language learning ability, critical and creative thinking ability and communicative interaction ability can be improved. Therefore, it can be understood that the reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry is to understand and design the whole unit and the whole textbook from a macro perspective, guiding students to think from a macro perspective, learn knowledge and experience good values.

2.3 Related Research Based on Thematic Meaning Inquiry

2.3.1 Studies Abroad

The concept of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry was first developed from the "thematic teaching" that emerged in the United States in the 1950s. In 1955, Hanna, et al. (1955) ^[7] argued that thematic teaching is a purposeful learning experience focused on the understanding of a subject of social significance. The research of thematic unit is not limited to a certain subject, but integrates the knowledge of various subjects, summarizes and refines them one by one, which is helpful to broaden the breadth of students' learning knowledge.

In 1988, Gamberg, R., et al (1988) proposed that thematic teaching is a student-centered teaching mode that emphasizes operating through broad thematic inquiry rather than sticking to one subject area^[8]. Jiang, X., et al. (2007) pointed out that it is one of the effective strategies to improve students' reading ability to cultivate students' discourse awareness around thematic meaning in English teaching^[9]. What's more, through the results of the experimental group and the control group in a primary school in Turkey, Nalan, K., et al. (2007) found that teaching based on thematic meaning could promote the English learning of adolescent students by choosing units that are more closely related to the theme and giving students the opportunity to choose the theme by themselves^[10]. Through a case study with primary school students as samples, Asri, A., et al. (2017) found that teaching based on thematic meaning had a positive impact on students' listening skills by selecting themes which were related to their lives^[11].

In addition, Kovalik, S., et al. (1994) and his team developed "integrated theme teaching model"

through combining learning methods, teaching strategies and curriculum development^[12]. Taking teaching based on thematic meaning as an assessment tool, Gretchen, L. A., et al. (2005) found that tests based on thematic meaning could play a role in reducing students' stress^[13].

2.3.2 Studies at Home

The idea of high school English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry is developed from thematic teaching. Wang Shixian(1994) elaborated the three original models of CBI (Content-Based Instruction), one of which is thematic mode. He pointed out that thematic mode is to organize teaching around a certain or several themes^[14]. Dou Guimei (2004) gave the definition of thematic teaching. She pointed out that thematic teaching should re-understand classroom teaching comprehensively and construct classroom teaching as a whole from the level of life with the concept of dynamic generation^[15]. In 2004, Hu Xiaoyan studied and explained the theoretical basis and steps of English thematic teaching model^[16]. She divided the thematic teaching model into two steps. The first step was to establish the cognitive structure of a certain theme according to the model of theme-topic-detail. The second step is the extension and deepening of the theme. In addition, personal attitude, personal evaluation, personal experience is also an important part of the deepening of the theme. In 2012, Li Zuxiang interpreted the basic connotation of "thematic teaching" is a kind of activity guided by constructivism learning theory and multiple intelligences theory, developing students' subject constructivism and subjective initiative through thematic research activities to realize students' all-round development^[17].

With the promulgation of the National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017) [18], domestic scholars pay more and more attention to the teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry. On the theoretical level, Cheng Xiaotang (2018) proposed the basic idea of theme-based teaching: Teachers should carry out teaching around the theme in the real situation, and design teaching objectives and specific teaching requirements according to the theme to help students achieve cognitive and non-cognitive learning objectives [1]. On the practical level, Dong Jinbiao (2019) pointed out that teachers should create real situations related to themes based on the text to help students deeply explore thematic meaning [19]. Zhang Linlin (2019) pointed out that reading teaching should explore the thematic meaning on the basis of discourse meaning [20]. It should also create opportunities for teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction, making students' ideas collide in the exchange and deepening the understanding of the theme.

To sum up, previous studies focused on the study of core concepts based on thematic meaning inquiry. It can be seen that this teaching mode is of great help to English teaching. Therefore, based on previous studies, the paper investigates the implementation of this teaching method and understand the current popularity of the teaching method through data analysis. In the end, the paper provides some suggestions for teachers to improve their teaching design.

3. Research into Senior English Reading Teaching Based on Thematic Meaning Inquiry

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used a questionnaire to research on the following five aspects (Table 1) based on thematic meaning inquiry. It contains 19 multiple choice questions. English teachers from four high schools in Linyi City were selected as the survey objects. One school in Lanshan District, one school in Hedong District and two schools in Lanling County were randomly selected to issue questionnaires. Teachers from each grade in each school were randomly selected to issue questionnaires, a total of 50 questionnaires were distributed and 50 were recovered. Among the 50 questionnaires collected, 48 were valid, with an effective rate of 96%.

3.2 Dimensions of the Questionnaire

Table 1: The Questionnaire

First-order dimension	Second-order dimension	Question
		number
the understanding of English	Understanding	1
reading teaching based on	Design philosophy	2
thematic meaning inquiry	Characteristics	3
	Design of teaching objectives	4
teaching based on thematic	Design of teaching content	5,19
meaning inquiry	Design of teaching activities	6,18
	Design of teaching evaluation	7
the application of English	The application on daily teaching	8
reading teaching based on	The application stage of the school	9
thematic meaning inquiry	Difficulties encountered in the process of	10
	application	
the understanding of the	The advantages over other teaching	11
influence of English reading	methods	
teaching based on thematic	The influence on teaching level	12
meaning inquiry on teaching	The influence on teaching outcomes	13
the understanding of the		14
importance of English	ability	
reading teaching based on		15
thematic meaning inquiry on	awareness	
students' development	The cultivation of students' thinking	16
	ability	
	The cultivation of students' learning	17
	ability	

3.3 Results and Discussion

Teachers' Understanding of Senior English Reading Teaching

Question 1: Do you know the model of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry?

Table 2: Results of question 1

Option	Very much	Quite	A little	No idea
Proportion	4.17%	2.08%	75%	18.75%

According to the above survey data, only 4.17% of teachers have a deep understanding of the English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, 2.08% have a clear understanding of it, and 75% have some understanding of it. Still, some teachers are not clear about it, which indicates that teachers have insufficient cognition of this kind of teaching mode.

Question 2: Do you know the design principle of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry?

Table 3: Results of question 2

Option	Very much	Quite	A little	No idea
Proportion	4.17%	2.08%	62.5%	31.25%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers are very familiar with the design principles of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, 2.08% are familiar with it, 62.5% are somewhat familiar with it, and 31.25% are still unclear about the design principles of this teaching mode

Question 3: Do you know the characteristics of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry?

Table 4: Results of question 3

Option	Very much	Quite	A little	No idea
Proportion	4.17%	2.08%	79.17%	14.58%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers are very familiar with the characteristics of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, 2.08% are familiar with it, 79.17% are somewhat familiar with it, and 14.58% are not clear about the characteristics of this kind of teaching.

According to the above three results of questions 1, 2 and 3 (Tables 2, 3 and 4), it can be seen that teachers lack the overall understanding of the reading teaching model based on thematic meaning. Although many have heard of it, only a small proportion have a good understanding of it.

Teachers' Design of Senior English Reading Teaching

Question 4: Do you design your teaching objectives according to the thematic meaning?

Table 5: Results of question 4

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	4.17%	4.17%	91.67%	0%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers usually design according to the theme when making teaching objectives; 4.17% of teachers often design according to the theme; 91.67% of teachers occasionally design according to the theme. It can be seen from the above data that teachers rarely add the thematic meaning inquiry in the practical operation.

Question 5: Do you take the thematic meaning into consideration when choosing your teaching content?

Table 6: Results of question 5

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	4.17%	6.25%	89.58%	0%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers always consider the thematic meaning of content when selecting teaching content, 6.25% of teachers often do so, and 89.58% of teachers occasionally do so. It can be seen from the above data that most teachers ignore the thematic meaning when analyzing text content.

Question 6: Do you take the thematic meaning into account when designing your teaching activities?

Table 7: Results of question 6

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	2.08%	18.75%	79.17%	0%

According to the survey data, 2.08% of teachers always take the theme meaning into account when designing teaching activities, 18.75% of teachers often do so, 79.17% occasionally. Therefore, it can be seen that teachers seldom take the theme meaning as the focus of teaching when designing teaching activities.

Question 7: Do you use thematic meaning inquiry as one of the evaluation criteria when

conducting your teaching evaluation?

Table 8: Results of question 7

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	0%	14.58%	85.42%	0%

According to the survey data, 14.58% of teachers take the exploration of thematic meaning as one of the evaluation criteria in teaching evaluation, and 85.42% of teachers occasionally do so. It can be seen from the above data that thematic significance is rarely taken into account when teachers conduct teaching evaluation.

Question 18: Do you lead students to review thematic meaning during your lecture?

Table 9: Results of question 18

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	6.25%	2.08%	91.67%	0%

According to the survey data, 6.25% of teachers always lead students to review the unit theme when teaching the text, 2.08% of teachers often do so, and 91.67% of teachers occasionally do so. It can be seen from the above data that most teachers ignore the connection with the unit theme when they explain the text.

Question 19: Do you relate the content of the article to the thematic meaning of the unit when sublimating your emotions?

Table 10: Results of question 19

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	2.08%	6.25%	91.67%	0%

According to the survey data, 2.08% of the teachers always link the content of the article to the unit theme when sublimating the emotion, 6.25% of the teachers often do so, and 91.67% of the teachers occasionally do so. As can be seen from the above data, most teachers separate the article emotion from the unit theme when sublimating emotion.

To sum up, it can be seen from the survey questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 19 (Tables 5, 6,7, 8, 9 and 10) that teachers have great shortcomings in the specific design and implementation of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry. Moreover, according to the statistics of age, most young teachers are willing to try to design this kind of teaching model, while most teachers with longer teaching experience still teach according to the original teaching model.

Teachers' Application of Senior English Reading Teaching

Question 8: Do you use reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry in your daily teaching?

Table 11: Results of question 8

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	0%	6.25%	93.75%	0%

According to the survey data, 6.25% of teachers often use the reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry in daily teaching, and 93.75% of teachers occasionally use this teaching model.

Table 12: Results of question 9

Option	Very support	Quite support	A little support	Not support
Proportion	4.17%	10.42%	64.58%	20.83%

Question 9: Does your school support the reading teaching model based on thematic meaning

inquiry?

According to the survey data, 4.17% of schools strongly support the reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry, 10.42% of schools support it, 64.58% of schools somewhat support it, and 20.83% of schools do not support it. From the above data, it can be seen that the degree of support for this kind of teaching model in the school where the teacher belongs also affects the implementation of this kind of teaching model.

Question 10: Do you have any difficulties in implementing reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry?

Table 13: Results of question 10

Option	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Proportion	4.17%	2.08%	93.75%	0%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers always encounter difficulties when implementing the teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry, 2.08% of teachers often do, and 93.75% of teachers occasionally do. As can be seen from the above data, when implementing the teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry, most teachers can master the application method, but some teachers still have difficulties in applying this teaching model.

As can be seen from the results of the survey questions 8, 9 and 10 (Tables 11, 12 and 13), schools where the teacher works have little support for this teaching model, and teachers rarely choose this model in practical application.

Teachers' Understanding of the Influence of Senior English Reading Teaching

Question 11: Do you feel that the reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry has an advantage over other teaching models?

Table 14: Results of question 11

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	6.25%	89.58%	4.17%	0%

According to the survey data, 6.25% of teachers strongly agree that the reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry has advantages compared with the teaching model commonly used, 89.58% of teachers basically agree, and 4.17% of teachers disapprove.

Question 12: Do you think that starting from the thematic meaning when preparing lessons can improve teachers' teaching abilities?

Table 15: Results of question 12

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	6.25%	87.5%	6.25%	0%

According to the survey data, 6.25% of teachers strongly agree that lesson preparation should start with the theme meaning, which can promote the improvement of teachers' teaching level, 87.5% of teachers basically agree, and 6.25% of teachers disapprove.

Question 13: Do you think that the use of reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' English academic performance?

Table 16: Results of question 13

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	8.33%	77.08%	12.5%	2.08%

According to the survey data, 8.33% of teachers strongly agree that the English reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' English scores, 77.08% of teachers basically agree, and 12.5% of teachers disapprove.

According to the results of the survey questions 11, 12 and 13 (Tables 14, 15 and 16), teachers have a good understanding of the advantages of reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry and its influence on teaching.

Teachers' Understanding of the Importance of Senior English Reading Teaching

Question 14: Do you think that the use of English reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' language skills?

Table 17: Results of question 14

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	8.33%	77.08%	12.5%	2.08%

According to the survey data, 8.33% of teachers strongly agree that the reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' language ability, 77.08% of teachers basically agree, and 12.5% of teachers disapprove.

Question 15: Do you think that the use of English reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' cultural awareness?

Table 18: Results of question 15

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	2.08%	83.33%	10.42%	4.17%

According to the survey data, 2.08% of teachers strongly agree that the reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' cultural awareness, 83.33% of teachers basically agree, and 10.42% of teachers disapprove.

Question 16: Do you think that the use of English reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' thinking quality?

Table 19: Results of question 16

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	4.17%	79.17%	2.08%	14.58%

According to the survey data, 4.17% of teachers strongly agree that the English reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' thinking quality, 79.17% of teachers basically agree, and 2.08% of teachers disapprove.

Question 17: Do you think that the use of English reading teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' learning abilities?

Table 20: Results of question 17

Option	Very support	Quite support	Not support	No idea
Proportion	6.25%	70.83%	10.42%	12.5%

According to the survey data, 6.25% of teachers strongly agree that reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry can improve students' learning ability, 70.83% of teachers basically agree, and 10.42% of teachers disapprove.

According to the results of survey questions 14, 15, 16 and 17 (Tables 17, 18, 19 and 20), teachers have a good understanding of the importance of reading teaching mode based on thematic meaning inquiry on students' development.

From the analysis of the above survey data, it can be seen that teachers have a good understanding of the advantages of the teaching model based on thematic meaning inquiry, but few teachers actually apply it in the classroom, which indicates that teachers have the awareness of carrying out this kind of teaching model, but have little understanding of implementation methods, principles and steps.

4. Suggestions for Senior English Reading Teaching Design Based on Thematic Meaning Inquiry

4.1 Influencing Factors to be Considered

Some factors will affect the rationality and effectiveness of the design as well as the implementation of the design. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the factors that affect this teaching mode before designing.

Teaching Principles

As a guiding document for high school English teaching, the *National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School* defines the nature of the high school English curriculum, the basic idea, the core quality of the subject, the curriculum objectives, the curriculum structure, the curriculum content and the implementation suggestions. Therefore, every school and every teacher should base on the standards for teaching.

Teaching Materials

The content of teaching materials influences the design of teaching plans. When teachers teach, the basis is the content of the textbook. They should design the teaching plan according to the content of the textbook and the existing knowledge level of students. All the content in the textbook is effective and clear. The pictures of the textbook can show the teaching content to students in a simple and direct way and the reading text also contains the knowledge, skills and emotional values that students need to master.

Teachers' Teaching Level

Teachers' teaching level is one of the important factors affecting the teaching design of reading based on thematic meaning inquiry.

Teachers should first understand relevant knowledge of reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, such as objectives, design features, design principles and design methods. Teachers should be able to grasp the content of the textbook as a whole. When analyzing each part, they should not only grasp the details, but also look at the textbook from a macro perspective. They should connect related knowledge or skills, and the unit theme with the emotion and attitude of each part so as to form an integral teaching that is interconnected and inseparable.

Students' Current Knowledge Level and Experience

Students are the main part of teaching. Teachers should fully consider the existing knowledge level and experience of students when carrying out classroom design. They should evaluate the current knowledge level of students and design the classroom content according to the evaluation results. At the same time, they should pay attention to the differences in students' personalities, using different rewards and punishment measures according to different characteristics. When assigning homework, different assignments should be set accordingly so that students with different abilities can choose to explore the potential of students to the maximum extent.

4.2 Design Steps to Follow

In order to ensure the teaching design conforming to the teaching law, teachers should carry out the teaching design according to the following steps:

Establishing Teaching Objectives

The teaching objectives of the class should be consistent with the overall objectives of the unit. When establishing the teaching objectives, the content of the article and the whole content of the unit should be fully considered. The goals should include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability.

Mastering Teaching Materials

As the basis of teaching design, teaching materials should be emphasized. When analyzing the content of the textbook, it is necessary to divide the textbook into four aspects: language ability, cultural awareness, quality of thinking and learning ability, according to the core quality of the subject in the *National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School*. The content of each section should be specific, but it should be integrated when teaching it.

Setting Key and Difficult Points

The key point is the concentrated area for students to learn. This part of the area should not only contain the knowledge points for students to learn, but also include the cultivation of students' various abilities. The difficult point is difficult for students to understand, teachers should use a variety of teaching methods and teaching media for students to understand and master. The key points should be for all students, while the difficult points should be for students with relatively high English ability.

Designing Teaching Activities

The design of teaching activities is a key step to classroom success. Teaching activities should be based on and beyond the text. Activities should include knowledge, skills, emotional attitude and so on. For the learning of knowledge and skills, teachers can guide students to extract the pragmatic skills contained in the text through the text content and apply them to life expression beyond the text. For the experience of emotional attitude, teachers should guide students to independently explore the emotional attitude expressed in the article to approach the author's emotion, and resonate with it. Teachers should also properly guide students to associate the emotion of the article with the emotion of the unit theme.

Choosing Proper Evaluation Criterion

No matter what kind of evaluation method is used, teachers should design the content and method of evaluation by referring to the *National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School*. The subject of evaluation should not only include students, teachers should also be included. For students, on the one hand, evaluation should be a test of students' knowledge level, the result of which can motivate students to learn to some extent; on the other hand, it should pay more attention to students' knowledge, skills, emotional attitude and other aspects so that students can flexibly apply what they have learned in the future study. To better promote their own teaching ability, teachers should also pay attention to the quality of class and students' performance, and collect students' feedback after class.

5. Conclusion

At present, there is a lack of systematic guidance for senior English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, and this model has not been widely implemented. Senior high school English teachers still teach according to the original exam-oriented education mode in daily teaching. Reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry can help pay more attention to students and let students develop physically and mentally.

According to the requirements of the *National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School*, the paper studies on English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry. After sorting out and analyzing relevant literature on reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, the researcher combined with the questionnaire survey of high school teachers to analyze the current situation of high school English teaching. On this basis, the significance and influencing factors of this teaching mode are analyzed, and the design steps and methods are put forward.

Due to the lack of researchers' ability, in the process of designing English reading teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry, there are still some difficulties. At the same time, this is only a preliminary attempt in high school English reading teaching for a junior researcher. It is hoped that

more educational researchers can devote themselves to this field in the future.

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