

The Design of High School English Reading Teaching from the Perspective of English Learning Activities

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Abstract: Localization in education theory is the current trend of English education research in China, and the concept of English learning, as a local concept researched in Chinese foreign language disciplines, has important guiding significance for English teaching. This paper explains the connotation of the concept of English learning activities and its significance for high school English reading teaching. Taking the reading teaching of Unit 3 Living Legends, a compulsory subject in high school of the Renjiao edition, as an example, the paper discusses how to carry out English learning activities in high school English classrooms, so as to cultivate the students' comprehensive English ability and English core literacy.

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior Secondary Schools (2017 Edition) advocates the practice of “the English learning activity concept of combining learning and thinking with creation”, and proposes that “English teaching advocates that students activate what they know and participate in a series of interrelated language learning activities, such as learning and understanding, application practice, transfer and innovation, which are directed to the exploration of the meaning of the theme, based on the real situation and the real problem. It is proposed that “English teaching advocates that students activate what they know around real situations and real problems, and participate in a series of interrelated language learning activities that point to the exploration of the meaning of the theme, application practice, transfer and innovation.”^[3] The concept of English learning activities is that students rely on themes and discourse in the process of English learning, and through English learning activities that can reflect the characteristics of comprehensiveness, relevance and practicability, they can continuously improve their comprehensive language use ability when analyzing and solving problems based on their existing knowledge. In high school English reading teaching, teachers should design teaching under the guidance of the concept of English learning activities, and use different levels of activities to help students realize comprehensive development and cultivate the core qualities of the English subject. However, “reading classroom teaching in practice is characterized by fragmentation and test-taking, and the implementation of the English learning activity view in regular reading teaching still faces obstacles and lacks effective ways and strategies”.^[1]

2. An overview of English Reading Teaching in High Schools under the View of English Learning Activities

Reading has an important position in English learning, which can help students to increase their knowledge, improve their comprehension and develop the quality of thinking. Therefore, English reading teaching is particularly important. At present, most high school English reading teaching mainly aims at improving students' performance, taking vocabulary and grammar knowledge as the teaching focus, and not deep enough in interpreting the text, with a certain fragmented and superficial tendency in the teaching design, ignoring the students' subjective position, which is not conducive to cultivating students' English core literacy.^[5] While the English learning activity view advocates a student-centered approach, focuses on guiding students to participate in independent and cooperative learning, integrates students' active participation in learning activities into the whole process of teaching, and promotes their acquisition of knowledge, transformation of abilities and generation of literacy.^[4] Therefore, it is beneficial for high school English teachers to optimize their reading teaching design under the guidance of the English Learning Activity View, so as to change the passive acceptance of students' learning mode in the reading class. At the same time, it can improve the teachers' patterned and shallow teaching mode, so that students can experience the process of discovering problems, constructing knowledge, applying knowledge and solving problems. It can also improve the pattern and shallow teaching method of teachers, so that students can experience the process learning of "discovering problems, constructing knowledge, applying knowledge and solving problems", and promote the implementation of core literacy.^[2]

3. The Practice of English Reading Teaching Design in High Schools from the Perspective of English Learning Activity Views

This paper takes the teaching of Unit 3 Living Legends in the compulsory first module of the Humanistic Version of high school as an example, and discusses how high school English teachers can design the teaching of the reading class under the guidance of the English Learning Activity Concept. And this paper analyzes the teaching design mainly from the three dimensions of discourse reading, teaching goal setting and teaching activity design. The aim is to provide reference significance and reflections for the teachers to practice the use of the English Learning Activity Concept in the teaching of high school English.

3.1 Studying the reading discourse to identify the theme of the discourse

To carry out discourse study, teachers should analyze the theme, content, structure, language features, author's point of view, etc. At the same time, theme is important. Teachers should clarify the meaning of the theme and refine the structured knowledge of the discourse. After that, it is necessary to establish the connection between the features of the genre and language and the meaning of the theme, and analyze the meaning conveyed by the discourse from multiple levels and perspectives. Cultural connotations and humanistic values under the text should be dug out, and the main line of teaching is grasped

[What] The material belongs to the theme: People and community. The topic of this module revolves around sports and fitness. It, from a magazine, includes two biography of two athletes, Lang Ping and Michael Jordan, as "living legends". The former shows Lang ping's good qualities and achievements. The latter shows impressive skills and mental strengths. The two texts include some useful words and expressions. The sentences in the texts include some rhetorical techniques, like parallelism and hyperbole.

[Why] The article is from a magazine, which includes its own structure and linguistic features.

Students should read more kinds of texts to identify the difference. Sports spirit is the topic of the texts. Since students in senior high school are still teenagers. Most of students face may some difficulties, but they don't deal with these difficulties. Introducing two outstanding athletes contributes to the establishment of positive moral value among teenagers. And their success can encourage students to work hard for self-achievement.

[How] The article of the material “living legends” includes 5 parts: title, leading paragraph, body, illustration and supplementary information. And the body consists of two subtitles and two texts. The text of Lang Ping consists of four parts: introduction, challenges, solutions and results. And the text of Michael Jordan mainly consists of two parts: impressive skills and mental strength. The language in the texts is generally simple, which can help students read the text smoothly. Most of them are related to sportsmanship. Students can use them when talking about their own living legend.

3.2 Developing teaching objectives based on authentic learning situations

Teachers should formulate teaching objectives based on students' real learning situation and follow the three levels of English learning activities to set reasonable teaching objectives, so that students can improve their thinking logically, critically and creatively in the activities of learning and understanding, application and practice, and transfer and innovation. Therefore, this paper first analyzes the learning situation as follows.

Student Analysis

The students are in the first year of high school, and their English language proficiency is at an upper intermediate level, and the students have a high level of enthusiasm and enthusiasm for learning English, and are willing to express their ideas. However, there is still a lot of room for development in students' English ability and thinking level. Students are at a more mature stage of mind, and this stage is a critical period for students to shape their personal values and outlook on life, so showing students excellent examples can not only resonate with students, but also learn the right mindset and ways to deal with life's difficulties. In addition, students had less understanding of the layout and stylistic structure of sports magazines. In terms of textual content, students' understanding of Lang Ping and Jordan was superficial, especially with regard to their personal experiences and the qualities they carried behind their heroic deeds.

Learning Comprehension Category Objectives

(1) Students are able to understand the structure of a sports magazine, and understand and extract information about Lang Ping.

(2) Students are able to summarize the good character of Lang Ping as a “legend” according to the knowledge scaffolding and the content of the text, and summarize the reasons for the author's choice of the two athletes and the common points between them.

(3) Through group work, in accordance with Lang Ping's teaching process, students are able to teach Jordan's text, including: the main idea of the article, the text, the structure, the key information and the excellent quality. (Application Practice Objective)

(4) Students are able to connect with the new interview situation, choose the “legend” in your own mind and apply what you have learned to the interview. (Migration and Innovation Objective)

3.3 Closely following the thematic context and design teaching activities

When designing teaching activities, teachers should explore the meaning of the theme as the main line, take the theme discourse as the basis, follow the concept of the English learning activity view, and keep in line with their teaching objectives. Specifically, the teaching activities designed by teachers should mainly include learning and understanding activities, application and practice activities and transfer and innovation activities. Learning comprehension activities mainly include

discourse-based learning activities such as perceiving and noticing, acquiring and sorting, generalizing and integrating; application practice activities mainly include in-depth discourse-based learning activities such as describing and interpreting, analyzing and judging, and internalizing and applying; and transferring and innovating activities mainly include beyond-discourse-based learning activities such as inference and argumentation, criticism and evaluation, and imagination and creation. This paper mainly focuses on the design of teaching activities from the three dimensions of learning and understanding, application and practice, and transfer and innovation.

(1) Design of Learning Comprehension Activities

In this paper, the design of learning comprehension activities is mainly carried out from the following three dimensions, respectively, when teachers are designing teaching activities, they should explore the meaning of the theme as the main line, take the theme discourse as the basis, follow the concept of the English learning activity view, and keep the consistency with their teaching objectives. Specifically, the teaching activities designed by teachers should mainly include learning comprehension activities, application practice activities and transfer innovation activities. Learning comprehension activities mainly include discourse-based learning activities such as perceiving and noticing, acquiring and sorting, generalizing and integrating; application practice activities mainly include in-depth discourse-based learning activities such as describing and interpreting, analyzing and judging, and internalizing and applying; and transferring and innovating activities mainly include beyond-discourse-based learning activities such as inference and argumentation, criticism and evaluation, and imagination and creation. This paper mainly focuses on the design of teaching activities from the three dimensions of learning comprehension, application and practice, and transfer and innovation.

[Perception and Attention]The teacher creates an interview scenario in which students, as interviewees, are asked to recommend a Living Legend. This activity serves as an introduction and creates an authentic situation for the students to carry out the activity.

[Access and grooming]The teacher introduces the text topic “living legends”, obtains the relevant key contents of Lang Ping’s text through reading and skimming skills, and summarizes Lang Ping’s good qualities according to the key information.

[Generalization and integration]After extracting key information about Lang Ping, students summarize and analyze her character as an athlete and learn how to express their reasons for recommendation.

(2) Utilizing practice-based activity design

In this paper, the design of activities for the applied practice category is based on the following three dimensions: description and interpretation, analysis and judgment, and internalization and application.

[Description and Interpretation]Teachers guide students to analyze the content of this article, such as pictures, headlines, etc., to grasp the structure and format of sports magazines and to analyze and teach the content of Lang Ping’s text.

[Internalization and application]The second part of the text specifically introduces Jordan’s personal experience and athletic qualities of the text, this paper requires students to group the form of group cooperation for the discourse of the sub-interpretation, and the group to carry out a detailed division of labor, to ensure that the degree of student participation.

[Analysis and judgment]Students are organized around the following two questions. This activity guides students to think on their own, and after studying the Lang Ping text, check whether students can understand the focus of reading the text. Students truly become the center of learning, and no longer passive learning, waiting to instill knowledge of the object.

Engage in deep level thinking:

Q1: What are the common points between Lang Ping and Michael Jordan.

Q2: Why does the author choose these two athletes?

(3) Design of activities in the category of transfer of innovations

In this paper, the design of activities for the transfer of innovation category is based on the following three dimensions: reasoning and argumentation, critique and evaluation, and imagination and creativity.

[Reasoning and Argumentation]Students nominate a “legends” athlete around the theme of “living legends,” a process that requires group work and critical thinking.

[Criticism and evaluation]Students evaluate their group’s choice of “legends” based on key information gained from reading the text and form a rationale for their recommendation based on the core expression of the text.

[Imagination and creativity]During the interview process, students are interviewed and the interview outline will be randomized on the topic of “Legends”, which requires a lot of knowledge and creativity of the student’s imagination.

4. Conclusion

At this stage, the role of English teachers this is constantly changing, English teachers are both practitioners of teaching and researchers of education. As a local concept in China, the English learning activity view is highly applicable to English teaching in China. English activity learning concept belongs to the theoretical level, and English teaching belongs to the practice, how to apply the theory to practice, and further improve the theory through practice, in which English teachers and teaching design case study play an important role. There are many types of English courses, and the English Activity-based View of Learning has different teaching design focuses for different types of classes. Therefore, frontline teachers should make use of their own teaching case studies to improve their teaching design ability and further enhance their teaching ability.

This paper explores the applicability of the activity view of English learning based on the Living Legends discourse. Teachers should explore the content of the discourse in depth in the preparation stage and set teaching objectives based on the learning situation. It is necessary to design various forms of activities focusing on thematic inquiry and relying on the discourse. In this way, students can learn new knowledge and new skills, cultivate critical thinking, and promote the improvement of their comprehensive ability and the transition from language to thinking in English.

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