

Thoughts and Practice on the Research of English Reading-circle Teaching Design Based on the Development of Thinking Quality

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Abstract: The cultivation of core - literacy goals is a new requirement of the new curriculum standard, and language and thinking are inseparable. Centering on the theme of English reading - circle teaching design based on the cultivation of thinking quality, this project has conducted three - year classroom practical research through two sets of national - standard and provincial - standard textbooks, explored the strategies and methods of teaching practice in English reading classes in secondary vocational schools, and formed a resource library and case collection of English reading - circle teaching, providing a certain path for cultivating students' thinking quality.

Keywords: Thinking Quality; Reading Circles; Teaching Designs; English in Secondary Vocational Schools

1. Problem Statement

Since the concept of "core competencies" was put forward by the Ministry of Education in 2014, the revision of the curriculum standards for secondary vocational schools (2022 edition) has focused on subject core competencies. Among them, the core competencies of English include workplace language communication, perception of thinking differences, cross-cultural understanding, and autonomous learning. The core competencies of English are the qualities and abilities that students should possess through English learning. Currently, there is a lack of in-depth understanding of texts and cultivation of students' thinking qualities in English reading teaching. For vocational school students without the pressure of the college entrance examination, the first to third grades are crucial periods, and English teachers should explore teaching methods to enhance thinking qualities. Language is both a tool for communication and a tool for thinking. Thinking needs the assistance of language, and language learning can promote the development of

thinking. [1] Through the action research of "Reading Circles" in this study, it aims to test the feasibility and effectiveness of cultivating thinking qualities in English reading classes in secondary vocational schools and provide a basis for popularizing this teaching model. Based on theory and practice, this study introduces "Reading Circles", a new form of classroom organization, aiming to innovate English reading teaching and cultivate students' thinking qualities.

2. Research Value

2.1 Theoretical Value

Filling the Gaps: The research found that there is a lack of an effective "Reading Circles" model in vocational school English classrooms. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the application effects and enriching the interaction in secondary vocational English classrooms.

Achieving Perfection: Although there have been numerous studies on English reading classrooms, there is a lack of a unified and effective model. This study focuses on the combination of thinking quality cultivation and "Reading Circles", puts forward strategies and suggestions, forms a Reading Circles teaching model based on the development of thinking qualities, and conducts practical tests.

2.2 Practical Value

The new curriculum standards advocate cultivating students' core competencies, but teachers have different levels of understanding and application of the "Reading Circles" theory. This study summarizes the experience of teacher-student interaction based on thinking qualities, providing practical references for front-line teachers. **Precise Targeting:** Daniels pointed out that reading circles can enable students to freely choose literary works in a short period of time and conduct beneficial discussions and exchanges.[2]

The "Reading Circles" model is introduced into

English classrooms in secondary vocational schools for a three-year action research. [3] Combining the advantages of traditional reading teaching, it clarifies the goals of the curriculum standards and promotes the development of students' thinking qualities.

Current Problems in Reading Classes: Students have different reading abilities, and teachers' teaching methods are single. Although the "Reading Circles" model is popular abroad, its application in China is limited. Secondary vocational students are facing the pressure of further education and need to continuously improve their English reading abilities. [4] The American "Reading Circles" model has reference value for solving the problems in English reading teaching in secondary vocational schools, conforms to the construction concept of English subject core competencies, promotes collaborative learning, improves reading abilities, and shapes thinking qualities.

3. Research Status

Before researching this topic, we retrieved relevant literature on thinking qualities and Reading Circles. It was found that there are more studies on English reading classrooms in primary and secondary schools, but fewer studies on the instructional design of English reading classrooms in secondary vocational schools. [5] Foreign studies show that the theory of Reading Circles originated abroad and has been continuously developed, emphasizing the combination of social constructivism theory and Reading Circles to promote students' knowledge construction and thinking development. Foreign studies also involve learners of different ages and English proficiency levels. In primary school English reading teaching, basic thinking abilities are mainly cultivated, while in college English or adult English education, more attention is paid to complex text reading and in-depth expansion of thinking. [6] Domestic studies focus on integrating the cultivation of thinking qualities into English reading teaching, exploring how role division can stimulate students' thinking, and interpreting the potential of Reading Circles activities in enhancing students' higher-order thinking based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Practical cases show that the Reading Circles model can enliven the classroom atmosphere and improve the logical and critical thinking of students. However, there are also problems in practice,

such as unbalanced student participation due to insufficient teacher guidance. Therefore, based on the theoretical research results and teaching experience, we have proposed a teaching design template of English Reading Circles based on the development of thinking qualities. The Reading Circles model originated in the United States in 1982, was later applied to EFL classrooms in 2006, to Chinese language classrooms in 2006, and to English classrooms in 2008. [7] However, there are fewer action studies on this model in English reading classrooms in secondary vocational schools.

4. Expected Goals

This study surveyed the reading levels of secondary vocational students and implemented three rounds of "Reading Circles" teaching action research in two classes. Through the analysis of questionnaire data, test scores, and interview data, the impact of the "Reading Circles" mode on the thinking qualities of vocational school students was studied, and its application in English reading classrooms and the cultivation of analytical, reasoning, critical, and creative thinking abilities were explored. At the beginning of the research, the research team determined the research content and direction and selected students from grades 1 to 3 of secondary vocational schools to participate. In the preparation stage, reading materials suitable for the students' level were selected, and the students were grouped according to their abilities and characteristics. The roles and responsibilities in the Reading Circles were clearly defined to stimulate students' multi-dimensional thinking. The implementation stage includes initial reading, personal understanding, and group discussion, encouraging students to listen to and question each other and jointly understand the text in depth. The in-depth exploration stage guides students to explore implicit problems in the text and expand their thinking. The evaluation stage conducts self-evaluation and mutual evaluation, and the teacher evaluates students and groups from multiple dimensions and provides directions for improvement.[8] In the feedback and expansion stage, teachers and students adjust the teaching design and reading methods according to the evaluation results and encourage students to transfer their thinking abilities to other learning activities.

5. Research Process

Stage One: Basic Preparation (First School Year)

Establishing the Theoretical Basis: Conducting in-depth analysis of the characteristics of thinking qualities and English reading, and constructing a theoretical framework. Through literature review, summarizing the research results of the cultivation of thinking qualities and English reading teaching. Determining the indicators for measuring thinking qualities, such as critical thinking and creative thinking. [9] Understanding the current situation of students' reading through surveys, designing a template for English Circle Reading activities, and establishing a resource library of reading materials.

Stage Two: Mid-Term Goals (Second School Year)

Practice and Improvement: Implementing English Circle Reading teaching in classes, observing students' performance, collecting data, and optimizing the teaching design. Perfecting the Evaluation System: Formulating teacher evaluation scales, student self-evaluation scales, and mutual evaluation guidelines, conducting periodic evaluations, and adjusting the evaluation system.

Stage Three: Long-Term Goals (Second School Year)

Popularizing the Mature Model: Forming a complete English Circle Reading teaching model applicable to students of different levels and ages. Studying the improvement of students' thinking qualities and English reading abilities, implementing the "Reading Circles" teaching process, including pre-class, in-class, and post-class reading, group cooperation, and completing reading tasks.

6. Strategies and Contents

Strategies include situation creation, problem-driven, collaborative learning, and mind mapping. Situation creation uses multimedia resources such as videos, audios, and pictures to stimulate students' interests and visual thinking. The problem-driven strategy designs different-level questions to promote students' in-depth thinking and logical and critical thinking. [10] Collaborative learning clearly defines roles and responsibilities, and through division of labor and cooperation, cultivates team collaboration and multi-angle thinking. The mind mapping strategy guides

students to draw mind maps to help sort out ideas and improve logical thinking abilities.

Contents: Selecting English texts of different genres and themes, and choosing materials of appropriate difficulty according to students' levels and age characteristics. Reading activity designs include initial reading, intensive reading, group discussion, and expansion activities, aiming to cultivate rapid reading, overall understanding, detail analysis, and innovative thinking abilities. The research results show how these strategies and activities help students better understand the text content.

7. Research Results

The report delved into the design of English Circle Reading based on the cultivation of thinking qualities, demonstrating its theoretical basis and practical effectiveness. Through data and case analysis, the validity of the research was verified. The research includes sub-reports in different stages and dimensions, such as the research on the development of thinking qualities and English reading needs of students of different ages, and the analysis of the application effects of different thinking quality cultivation strategies in teaching, providing a basis for the refinement of the research. At the same time, an English Circle Reading material resource library was constructed, collecting and sorting various English reading materials and marking the applicable grades and thinking cultivation points, facilitating teachers' selection of teaching materials. In addition, an English Circle Reading teaching case resource library was established, sorting out excellent teaching cases to show how to cultivate students' specific thinking qualities in teaching.

From the student's perspective, students are guided to decode, understand, reflect, express, and apply reading texts through group cooperation and division of labor, cultivating good reading habits and stimulating reading interests. Students participate in reading-related competitions, and the improvement of thinking qualities is shown through the data of thinking ability tests, reflecting the positive impact of the research. For students with different English levels, different Reading Circle roles are designed, such as summarizer, vocabulary master, cultural connector, and text interpreter, to adapt to their English levels and promote the development of their thinking qualities.

In the research of this subject, we have found

that English reading teaching should not only teach students the methods of learning English, but also attach great importance to the cultivation of students' learning abilities, cultural awareness and comprehensive ability to communicate in English. For example, in English reading teaching, through the teaching activities of the "Reading Circles" teaching method, we have not only made students feel the importance of language learning, but also enabled them to experience the sense of achievement in learning English knowledge during their secondary vocational school studies; it can not only help students consolidate their basic knowledge, but also stimulate their learning interests; it can not only arouse students' learning potentials, but also let them feel the joy of learning English. In this way, our English reading teaching is no longer a subject that simply imparts knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, we have also found that through the practice and application of the "Reading Circles" teaching method, it has not only improved students' understanding and recognition of the cultural background knowledge of the English language, but also effectively promoted the formation and development of students' core competencies in English.

During the learning process, we not only focus on imparting language knowledge to students, but also pay more attention to cultivating their learning interests. Our research has found that students' interests in English learning will have a direct impact on their learning abilities. Therefore, during the teaching process, our research group has fully utilized the "Reading Circles" teaching model. While cultivating students' interests in English learning, we have also cultivated their confidence and courage in English learning. During the teaching process, we have also attached great importance to cultivating students' cooperative team spirit. The "Reading Circles" teaching method emphasizes the importance of students helping each other in the classroom, making the classroom atmosphere lively. So we have found that if students can be made to learn to cooperate and communicate in teaching, their learning interests will be effectively enhanced.

In addition, we have also found that through the comparative analysis of the old and new English textbooks, the problems existing in English reading teaching can be clearly seen. Therefore, during the teaching process, we can put forward

some targeted solutions to these problems. For example, for problems such as the too-fast pace of the classroom and the relatively poor English foundation of students that occur in English reading teaching, they can be solved by means of teacher guidance, adjustment of the classroom pace, etc. During this process, the members of our research group have learned how to solve these problems well.

8. Research Conclusions and Reflections

The members of the research team have improved their theoretical and professional abilities through learning and reflection, combining research with teaching practice to solve practical problems. Through the "Reading Circles" teaching method, they not only increased students' interest in English learning and cultural awareness but also promoted students' comprehensive application ability of English. The research team focused on cultivating students' cooperation ability and team spirit, comparing and analyzing textbooks to find and solve problems in teaching. The research also explored the path and method of English reading teaching design, constructing an English Reading Circle resource library and case collection, effectively improving students' thinking qualities.

Through the research on the subject, the paths and methods for the instructional design of English "Reading Circles" have been explored. In classroom teaching, teachers should create a context related to the theme, establish connections between specific themes and students' learning, life, and future career development, and encourage students to utilize the language skills they have mastered to conduct meaning exploration and cultivate the ability to perceive differences in thinking through problem-solving and other means, thereby improving students' identification abilities and promoting cross-cultural understanding and communication. When designing activities for exploring the meaning of the theme, teachers should focus on stimulating students' learning interests, helping them construct and perfect new knowledge structures, deepening their understanding of the theme content, and establishing correct world outlooks, life outlooks, and values.

Through the research on the subject, a case study of English reading classes has been explored, which consists of three major modules. The

basic module is the compulsory basic content for students of all majors, aiming to organize teaching by discipline and build the common foundation of English disciplinary core competencies. The vocational module is the restricted elective learning content for students of all majors, aiming to serve students' professional English learning and their future career development. It organizes teaching by theme and is an important part of building English disciplinary core competencies. The expansion module is any elective content arranged to meet students' continuous learning and individual development needs. Each school can independently determine the teaching content and the teaching time of the expansion module according to local resources, school characteristics, teachers' specialties, professional requirements, and the actual situation of students. Professional modules are only offered after the completion of the basic module.

Based on the division of the new textbook course modules, through the research on the subject, a resource library and a case collection of English Reading Circles have been formed. Reading Circle activities are of great help in improving the quality of students' thinking, with remarkable effects, which are specifically manifested as follows: they are helpful for low-level students to improve in terms of sorting and generalizing; they are helpful for medium-level students to improve their analysis and inference levels; they are helpful for high-level and medium-level students to improve their judgment levels. The cultivation of students' thinking in classroom teaching should not be directly targeted at critical thinking or creative thinking. Teachers should first consider cultivating students' logical thinking based on common sense of life. For example, teachers focus on the explicit test points in reading comprehension, such as detailed understanding and word meaning understanding, and this part can be undertaken by word masters.

Students can more and more skillfully find the information needed within the target range, summarize the main idea of the text, analyze the author's viewpoints and positions, and compare and analyze different viewpoints. Therefore, in vocational high school English teaching, teachers should guide students to organize and carry out "Reading Circles" activities after class to enhance students' thinking qualities.

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