

# The Implementation of English Learning Activity Concept to English Reading Teaching in Senior High School

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## Abstract

**General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) attach great importance to the cultivation of core competencies of the English subject and advocate English learning activity concept which points out the new direction for English learning and teaching. As an essential part of English teaching, the effectiveness of reading teaching has an extremely critical impact on English language teaching. However, in recent years, the effectiveness of English reading teaching has not been significantly improved and students' reading ability and comprehensive competencies have not been effectively developed because of the outstanding problems such as lacking of real context and situation-based practical activities, only taking vocabulary and grammar learning as the main line and so on. The introduction to English learning activity concept provides new theoretical guidance and practical ways to advance English reading teaching and cultivate students' core competencies of the English subject.**

## Keywords

**English Learning Activity Concept; English Reading Teaching; Core Competencies.**

## 1. Introduction

According to General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition), teachers need to help students cultivate their core competencies, realize the internalization of knowledge and improve their ability in English practice activities. English learning activity concept combines content and activities aiming to help students promote the integration of language, thinking and culture in learning and understanding activities, application and practice activities, transformation and innovation activities. Reading is a significant means of acquiring information, enriching cognition and training thinking ability. But the current English reading teaching in senior high school has the phenomenon of fragmentation of teaching content and simplification of teaching. So teachers need to create a series of integrated, relevant and practical English learning activities to promote the cultivation of essential competencies and abilities.

## 2. The Definition of English Learning Activity Concept

The Curriculum Standards propose English learning activity concept which puts great emphasis on the development of core competencies of the English subject. And the definition of English learning activity concept in this Curriculum Standards is as follows: The English learning activity concept advocates that students learn English through a series of integrated, relevant, and practical theme-based activities where they undergo learning processes. During this process, students use their own knowledge to explore the meaning of texts of different types and solve problems. Therefore, the students make progress in learning language knowledge, developing language skills, deepening their cultural understanding, cultivating multiple thinking abilities, and forming positive values. This is an integrated development process of

strengthening cultural awareness, improving thinking capacity, and developing learning ability. English learning activity concept first specifies that English learning activities should be theme-based, and text-based, and aimed at achieving deep learning that points to the cultivation of core competencies.

### **3. Types of the English Learning Activities**

According to the characteristics of different learning stages, English learning activities can be divided into three levels and types: learning and comprehension activities, application and practice activities, transformation and creation activities.

#### **3.1. Learning and Comprehension Activities**

The first level is learning and understanding activities which mainly include perceiving and noticing, acquiring and sorting, generalizing and integrating, and other discourse-based learning activities. Teachers are supposed to assess students' existing relevant knowledge and experience, create a language application context based on the themes and set the problems to be solved. Through the activities, students could acquire language knowledge, sort out the text information, clarify the text structure and logical order, summarize the thematic meaning, and form new structured knowledge. Besides, students are expected to perceive the emotions and meanings expressed by the language and understand the cultural value orientation carried by the discourse.

#### **3.2. Application and Practice Activities**

The second level is application and practice activities which mainly involves description and interpretation, analysis and judgment, internalization and application and other in-depth discourse learning activities. In the process of these activities, students are encouraged to link existing cognitive experiences and newly formed knowledge structures to actively participate in communicative activities. Then, students gradually internalize the language and cultural knowledge they have learned in the process of deepening their understanding, applying professional skills and strategies, promoting the automation of language use, and facilitating the transformation of knowledge into competence.

#### **3.3. Transformation and Creation Activities**

The third level is transformation and creation activities which include inference and argument, criticism and evaluation, creation and imagination and other learning activities beyond the discourse. When doing these activities, students analyze the thematic ideas, explore the value orientation and appreciate the subtlety of the stylistic features and rhetorical techniques of the discourse. Besides, students judge others' ideas, express their own opinions based on new knowledge structures and creatively analyze and solve problems in unfamiliar contexts so that learning can be transferred that promotes the transformation of ability into competencies.

## **4. The Application of Drama in Education to English Teaching in Junior High School**

This paper takes PEP High School English Module 6 Unit 4 The Earth is Becoming Warmer-But does it Matter? as an example to explore how to carry out high school English reading teaching from the three levels of English learning activities, learning and comprehension activities, application and practice activities, and transformation and creation activities.

### **4.1. Teaching Material Analysis**

The text is a typical expository text that mainly talks about the reasons of accelerating global warming and different opinions about this. Many scientists believe that humans burn fossil

fuels for energy, which produces greenhouse gases dominated by carbon dioxide. It is precisely because of the presence of greenhouse gases in nature that the earth is not very cold. But massive emissions of carbon dioxide will cause the planet to generally warm. Some scientists believe that the warming of the earth will be a catastrophe which will lead to storms, droughts, famines, and the destruction of species. The passage ends with an open-ended question that students need to think: Should humans take measures against global warming? Students need to understand the facts of global warming and the positive and negative effects it can have.

#### **4.2. Students Analysis**

Students have been exposed to global warming in geography class and have learned about the causes of global warming, but lack a certain grasp of related professional terminology. Because global warming is a familiar topic and a part of daily life, it is an important topic about people living in harmony with nature, and students have a strong interest.

#### **4.3. Teaching Objectives**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

Firstly, acquire, sort out, and summarize the phenomena, causes and possible effects of global warming.

Secondly, present structured knowledge with the help of mind maps.

Thirdly, positively express their own opinions about global warming.

Fourthly, share their own experiences on low-carbon living, reducing pollution and protecting the environment.

Finally, evaluate the environmental problems in their surrounding area and make feasible suggestions for improving the environment according what they have learned.

#### **4.4. Teaching Process**

##### **4.4.1. Learning and Comprehension Activities**

Activity 1: Before reading.

Firstly, students watch the videos and talk about the following questions.

(1) What's the video about?

(2) Why does it come about?

Activity 2: While reading.

Firstly, according to the headings and quotes, students predict main content of the passage.

(1) The feature of the article.

(2) The main idea of the passage.

(3) Where is the passage probably taken from?

(4) What is mainly discussed in the passage?

Secondly, students are supposed to analyze the key information and find answers to the following questions.

(1) Who wrote the magazine article? What's the name of the magazine?

(2) What are the names of the three scientists mentioned in the article?

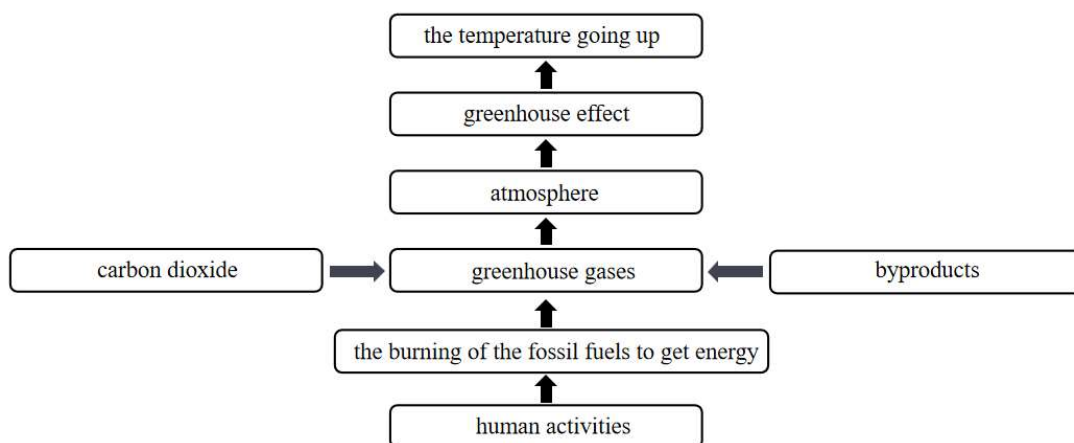
(3) Does carbon dioxide always bring harm to the earth?

(4) What do they think about global warming? Do they agree with one another?

(5) What are the two graphs about?

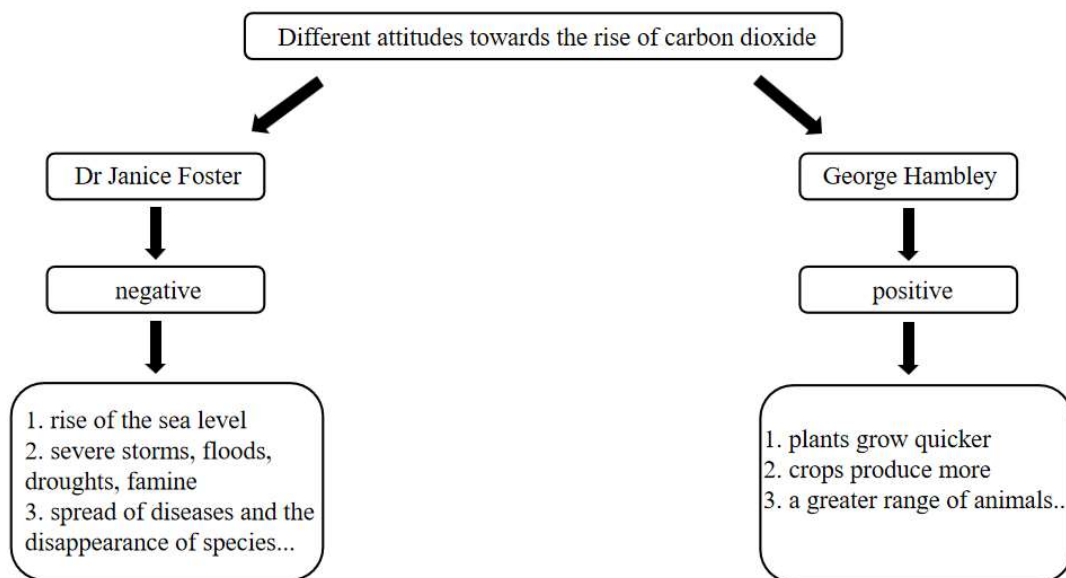
Thirdly, students apply the following two mind maps to understand the structure of the passage and answer questions.

(1) How does human activity cause the global warming?



**Figure 1.** The analysis of how human activities cause the global warming

(2) What are the attitudes of scientists towards the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?



**Figure 2.** The attitudes of different scientists towards the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere

**4.4.2. Application and Practice Activities**

Firstly, the class is divided into several groups and each group needs to discuss the following questions.

- (1) What is global warming?
- (2) What caused global warming?
- (3) How to prevent global warming?
- (4) Why should we prevent it?

Secondly, in order to answer the question “What’s the writer’s attitude towards the effects of global warming?”, teacher guides students to analyse and think about the author’s attitude towards global warming.

Thirdly, the passage ends with an open-ended question: “Does that mean we should do nothing? Or, are the risks too great?” that students need to think about. Teacher conducts group working

and each group uses what they have learned to debate "we should do nothing about global warming" or "we should do something to decrease the speed of global warming".

#### **4.4.3. Transformation and Creation Activities**

Teacher provides a real situation for students to transfer knowledge and train creativity and thinking ability. There is a piece of news from The Washington Post-It was 84 degrees near the Arctic Ocean this weekend as carbon dioxide hit its highest level in human history. Students work in groups to discuss and consider the impact of rising carbon dioxide on the Arctic Ocean. Write a letter to call on people to manage our relationship with nature.

## **5. The Significance of the Implementation of English Learning Activity Concept to English Reading Teaching in Senior High School**

### **5.1. Stress Learner-centeredness and Stimulate Learning Interest**

Students should be considered as the master of the classroom and given more opportunities to express their own ideas and take part in all the activities actively. Unlike the traditional English class in which the teacher is centered and students always passively receive what the teacher teaches, resulting in low teaching and learning efficiency, activity-based reading teaching advocates student-center class, which meets the requirements of curriculum standards. And activity-based reading teaching encourages students themselves to experience how to use language appropriately in various situations. Besides, teachers can utilize different kinds of activities that students are interested in, which enables students to develop their imagination and creativity, stimulate their interest in English learning and take the initiative to participate in class.

### **5.2. Create Reasonable Situations to Improve Students' Problem-solving Skills**

The concept of English learning activities requires teachers to create the realistic context, using progressive language practice so that students can gradually realize the internalization of language knowledge through contacting, understanding, practicing and using the language. During this process, students don't need to do a lot of drill exercise. Importantly, they feel like discussing with their group members to solve some problems related to their real life. In addition, students can improve their ability to cooperate and communicate with others through cooperative performances. At the same time, this process of allowing students to obtain learning experience through their own exploration and performance can exercise their critical thinking, cultivate their expression ability and problem-solving ability.

### **5.3. Enhance Comprehensive Development and Develop Core Competence**

Compared with traditional teaching activities, the three types of reading activities designed and carried out based on the activity-based approach, learning and understanding activities, application and practice activities, and transformation and creation activities help learners improve not only their reading performance and reading comprehension ability, but also language use ability and cultural knowledge accumulation. Besides, students can learn how to analyze and solve problems, and creatively express their personal opinions, emotions and attitudes. Finally, students' all-round development can be enhanced.

## **6. Conclusion**

Reading as a learning tool for language learners plays an irreplaceable role in the learning process. Teachers are expected to develop students' reading ability. The implementation of English learning activity concept to English reading teaching is an effective way. It can improve teaching efficiency, enhance students' English learning and application skills, integrate the development of language knowledge and language skills, continuously enhance cultural

awareness, continually improve thinking ability, and constantly improve learning ability, thus promoting effective formation of core competencies.

## Acknowledgments

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