

# Case Study of Junior High School English Reading Teaching Pointing to the Development of Thinking Quality

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## Abstract

In this paper, we analyze the current situation of reading teaching in junior high schools in China in terms of students' thinking skills, and use the short text 'How to be a The text structure is explained in the middle of the reading, and logical thinking is cultivated by using a mind map to sort out the content of the text; after reading, role-playing and writing activities are carried out according to the content learned to cultivate creative thinking. Thinking.

## Keywords

Middle School English; Reading Teaching; Quality of Thinking.

## 1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for General High School (2017 Edition) (Ministry of Education, 2018) (hereinafter referred to as the Standards) suggests that English subject literacy mainly includes language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. The development of thinking quality is conducive to enhancing students' ability to analyze and solve problems. English learning is conducive to promoting the development of the following thinking skills: observation and discovery, comparison and analysis, logical thinking, conceptual construction, information memory and conversion, critical thinking, the ability to recognize the world around them, spatial and temporal judgment, rigorous thinking, and creative thinking. (Cheng, Xiaotang, 2015).

Language, as an everyday communication tool, plays a vital role in developing thinking skills and learning language. However, from the current situation of teaching reading in primary and secondary schools in China, most teachers ignore the development of students' thinking skills, and most reading activities remain in the superficial learning of language knowledge and reading skills. This situation leads to the lack of students' excavation of the deeper value of the text, thus making the reading text not play its nurturing value. The Curriculum Standard states that the overall goal of China's English curriculum is to fully implement the Party's education policy, cultivate and practice the core socialist values, and implement the fundamental task of establishing moral education for people. (Ministry of Education, 2018). It can be seen that the current situation of English reading teaching in junior high school in China runs counter to the concept proposed in the standard. How to implement the quality of cultivating students' thinking into English reading teaching is a question that every English teacher needs to think about and a task to practice. Therefore, this paper discusses how to develop students' thinking quality in junior high school English reading classroom by taking a quality lesson from the 13th Junior High School English Classroom Teaching Observation Training Course as an example.

## 2. The Current Situation of Thinking Quality Education in Junior High School English Classroom Teaching

The Curriculum Standard lists thinking quality as one of the core literacies in English, raising the cultivation of thinking quality to an unprecedented level (Cheng Xiaotang, 2018). Reading

teaching is an important way to cultivate thinking quality. However, there are still some misconceptions in the current middle school English reading teaching classroom:

First, teachers tend to ignore students' existing language foundation and language level. In practice, some teachers often set the difficulty of the tasks too high during the language output stage. In the face of the tasks set by teachers, even if students have ideas, the teaching activities are often very dull due to the lack of appropriate language support, and the actual teaching effect does not achieve the purpose of developing students' thinking.

Second, teachers lack awareness of logical thinking development. In daily teaching, teachers tend to focus on the exploration of the content of the discourse and the teaching of language knowledge points in order to cope with examinations. This kind of teaching situation leads to the teaching of the discourse stuck in the surface knowledge of the text, lacking the steps to sort out the logical structure of the text, failing to make students understand the logical clues and framework in the text from the perspective of discourse logic, resulting in students' thinking ability staying at a low level.

Third, teachers do not organically combine thinking activities with the interpretation of the text. For example, some teachers do not assign activities that help develop students' thinking skills after the lesson, but only assign some simple questions related to grammar knowledge and text content. This will lead to a lack of analysis, synthesis and judgment in the long run, resulting in students not really reading and thinking.

### **3. Analysis of Teaching Materials and Learning Situation**

This lesson is based on an article from 'Growing healthy, growing strong' in Unit 8 of the Oxford edition of English, entitled 'How to be a healthy child'. The main content of this article is to understand the content and form of the 'information sheet' of the health camp and the role of the accompanying pictures based on the text. From a linguistic point of view, the text is short, with four complex sentences that use the virtual voice to introduce four habits to maintain a healthy lifestyle. From a content perspective, the four sentences are brief but convey to students how to maintain a healthy body in their daily lives.

The reading text for this lesson is a topic that is familiar to students and is closely related to their daily lives. This indicates that students have sufficient background knowledge of the topic and can express their own opinions based on their existing background knowledge, which is conducive to deeper reading and thinking.

### **4. Reading Teaching Practices to Develop Students' Thinking Quality**

#### **4.1. Build Background Scaffolding to Activate Students' Existing Knowledge**

Pre-reading activities are the beginning of thinking activities. In the warm-up session before the formal introduction to the text, the teacher asks students a question that is closely related to their experience around the content of the discourse. This question helps the teacher to naturally introduce the subsequent content and serves to evoke known knowledge and stimulate interest.

[Teaching Clip].

The teacher asks students a question: Do you think you are healthy and strong? Then asks them to think about it and invites them to come up and share their own ideas about how to stay healthy and strong. The teacher asks the students to start from real life, mobilize their existing knowledge and actively participate in the discussion of the topic.

[Design Intent].

Pre-reading activities are the warm-up and introduction stage of the reading lesson, which are needed to stimulate students' interest in reading on their own and to initiate background

knowledge related to the reading text, thus activating students' thinking and inspiring the reading process to unfold smoothly (Huang Weiqiang, 2017). Teachers introduce thematic contexts through questions that can mobilize students' emotions and interests. Since the main content of the reading text introduces students to some advice on how to stay healthy and strong, the questions are designed to build on students' existing knowledge, allowing them to initially form their own opinions and building relevant background scaffolding for the content exploration and thinking skills that follow.

#### **4.2. Predicting the Content of the Text and Developing Students' Inferential Skills**

The title of an article plays a very important role in students' reading comprehension. The title of an article is usually a summary of the main idea of the text, a gathering point for the content of the text, and it can inspire students to think. In the process of reading comprehension, the title is an inspiring point to develop students' thinking ability. Teachers should guide students to discover the key information of the text from the title, combine students' existing knowledge with their imagination, and reasonably predict the content of the text, which is conducive to the development of students' observation and thinking ability.

[Teaching Clip].

According to the article title "How to be a healthy child", teachers ask "The title is how to be a healthy child. What can people learn in healthy camp?" Most of the students could answer the questions based on their daily life experience. Students based on the key words in the title "healthy camp" answers "People can learn to get up early and never stay up late./ People can learn to drink a lot of water."

[Design Intent].

The teacher asks questions to focus the students' attention on the key word "healthy camp". The key word in the title is usually the main content of the text. The purpose of focusing on the key words is to say that students will be able to pinpoint the main point in the title and make predictions about the content of the text with the help of their prior knowledge. It also stimulates students' interest in reading the text. Predicting the text before reading creates reading expectations in students and verifies whether their guesses are correct in the process of reading; this process of verifying whether the guesses are correct is also a thinking process. This type of teaching is conducive to the development of students' prediction skills and thus their thinking skills.

#### **4.3. Using Mind Maps to Refine Text Information**

The purpose of reading is to capture the main information of a text and to process and internalize the captured information. This requires teachers to develop students' thinking skills by helping them sort out the content of the text and construct effective information.

By using mind maps in high school English reading instruction, teachers can promote students' understanding, reprocessing, and practical application of language through the internalization and visualization of language output by combining colors, images, symbols, and words to present the central idea, context, key words, details, and other chapter factors of English reading texts (Zhang Yulian, 2018). In reading instruction, mind maps can help students sort out the details of the text through a framework with logicalization, thus helping them focus on the chapter structure and laying the foundation for the extension of the text that follows.

[Teaching Clip].

The teacher asks students to take a minute to read the article and asks them "how many suggestions are mentioned in the information sheet? and what are they?"

The teacher draws a mind map on the board based on the students' answers. (See Figure 1.) The teacher then further optimizes the mind map by asking students to combine the boxes "no

junk food" and "healthy food" into one box. (See Figure 2.) Students are then invited to give reasons for summarizing the information in this way.

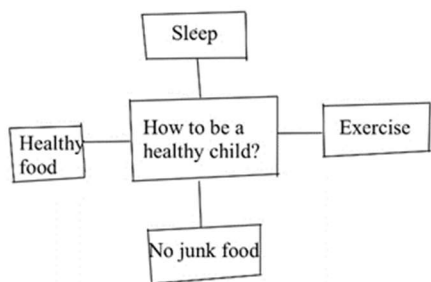


Figure 1. Students' Answers

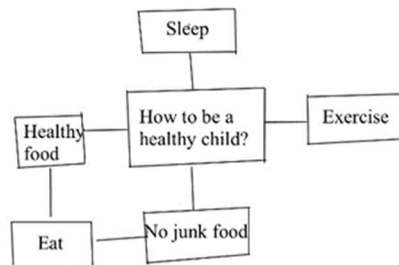


Figure 2. Reasons

[Design Intent].

A mind map is an explicit tool for thinking. The mind map is designed according to the content of the article, so that the line structure and details of the article can be understood at a glance. Mind mapping requires students to effectively combine bits and pieces of knowledge from the article. In the process of filling the mind map, students summarize the content of the article, so the completion of the mind map requires students to fully develop their own initiative. Students' higher-order thinking is effectively developed in this process. By graphically presenting the content of the article, students have a clearer understanding of the logical relationships between paragraphs of the article, so their logical thinking skills are effectively exercised.

#### 4.4. Post-reading Output to Develop Students' Creative Thinking

Innovation in thinking refers to students' ability to break away from thinking stereotypes, dare to go beyond the routine, re-frame their original knowledge, and generate new and unique ideas and practices in order to solve problems creatively during practical experience activities (Jiang Jianmei and Qin Yifeng, 2016). English as a communication tool, using language to solve practical problems is an important purpose of language learning, which is also an important manifestation of creative thinking. The expressive characteristic of creative thinking is to apply what one learns. Live and learn, that is, to be able to complete the reorganization of knowledge and experience in specific contexts to solve those real and complex problems that are valuable and meaningful (Wang Jian, 2020). To cultivate students' creative thinking in reading, teachers need to pay attention to the following three points in the teaching process: first, practical problems closely related to students' real life are presented to provide authentic contexts for students' thinking development. Second, students have a certain knowledge base, so that they can have something to say and want to say when they face the problems. Third, enough time is reserved for students to think and discuss, so that they can actively think about the problems, exchange ideas with their classmates, and creatively put forward their own ideas, thus truly transferring the knowledge in the classroom to the actual problems.

[Teaching Clip].

Before assigning the task, the teacher asked the students to refine the important sentences "What should we do if we want to stay healthy?" "We should go to bed early and get up early." The two sentences extracted the important sentences of this article "What should we do if we want to stay healthy?" and "We should... "After the discussion, the teacher asked the students to imitate the structure of the article and then make a pair work about "healthy lifestyle". After the discussion, the teacher asked the students to make a table about "healthy lifestyle", and in the process of making the table, they chose the appropriate pictures from the pictures given by

the teacher according to their own ideas. After the students finished, the teacher asked the students "What is the topic for this information sheet?" "Do you think the pictures match the topic? topic?"

[Design Intent].

Creative thinking is the thinking activity of reorganizing existing knowledge and experience, proposing new solutions or procedures, and creating new thinking outcomes (Zhang Houchong, 2002). Through the previous stage of learning, students have a certain knowledge base. The teacher scaffolds the students through dialogue exercises, prompting them to combine old and new knowledge. Then the real-life context was designed so that students could not only accurately grasp the sentence structure and text structure, but also make practical suggestions, taking into account what they had learned in the lesson and their personal life experiences. In terms of the results of the activity, the students' creative outcomes were not only at the level of content, but also at the level of linguistic logic and language form. In completing the activity, students imitated the "title-picture-suggestion" sequence of the text and used sentences from the text to express their ideas.

## 5. Conclusion

In this reading lesson, the teacher designed an in-depth reading lesson. This reading lesson teaches students new knowledge and connects them to themselves and their real lives. The activities designed by the teacher effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and allow them to express their own opinions and views. The teacher successfully scaffolds the students in the design and implementation of the lesson's activities, allowing them to effectively integrate old and new knowledge. The progression from the acquisition of information in the text, to the understanding of the structure of the text's lines, and finally to the discussion and innovation of the migration topic promotes the development of students' quality of thinking. In this lesson, the teacher first raises questions to introduce the topic context, activating students' existing knowledge; guiding students to focus on the key words in the title and predict the main content of the article, developing students' predictive thinking; using the mind map to sort out the structure and content of the article, enhancing students' generalization and summarization thinking; after reading the output, combining the content of the lesson with life reality, creatively solving practical problems in life. cultivated students' creative thinking.

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