

# The Application of Schema Theory in the Teaching of Reading in Senior High School

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## Abstract

Reading is an important part of English teaching. Traditional English teaching has always on the basis of teaching new words, grammar and long and difficult sentences, however, it is necessary for us to carry out the reform and innovation of English teaching in order to change the ineffective way of English teaching. In this paper, three schema forms of schema theory are introduced into high school English reading teaching activities. It is hoped that schema theory can help students overcome difficulties in learning, improve the quality and speed of reading, stimulate their interest in learning, change the way from passive learning to active learning, and find a way in using schema to better help senior high school students improve their reading abilities.

## Keywords

Schema Theory; Reading Comprehension; English Teaching.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is a key and difficult point in high school English teaching and learning, which has been widely valued by teachers and students. Throughout high school English teaching of reading comprehension, the dominant approach is still the traditional way of teaching named "chalk and talk", which tends to impart knowledge such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentences to students in the processes of teaching reading and neglecting the background knowledge closely related to the reading materials existed in students' minds, which does not meet the requirements of the new curriculum standards and is not so effective. As a result, some students may even lose interests in English and reading any English materials. However, schema theory can connect the existing knowledge in students' minds with the knowledge they have just learned, and establish, activate, and reuse it to truly improve their English reading proficiency. Therefore, the schema theory is an important theory in non-native English reading, and this paper attempts to use schema theory as a starting point to explore effective ways to improve senior high students' English reading comprehension level.

## 2. Theoretical Basis

### 2.1. Studies on Schema Theory

#### 2.1.1. Definition

The concept of schema was first proposed by the philosopher Kant in 1781. Later Bartlett(1932) pointed out in his book "Memory" that a schema refers to a positive organization of past reflections or experiences, which can have an impact on the reactions of any well adapted individual. Rumelhart further developed the schema and described schema theory as basically a theory of how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind and used. hen Cook(1997) believes that schema are typical examples of representations in the mind. Schema refers to the way and reflection that the brain stores the past experience and the known knowledge. What is more, it is a process that the stored information and the new information interact with each

other. Each component of schema forms a slot. When the slot of schema is added by the specific information, schema is formed. The stored knowledge in English learners' mind is of great importance to absorb new knowledge.

### **2.1.2. Classification of Schemata**

Schemata are created through experience with the world, and the person's culture, which includes the interactions with people, objects and events within that culture (Dr Heather Winskel, 2006). Schemata mainly has three forms: 1) Linguistic schema: The so-called linguistic schema refers to the basic language knowledge that learners already possess, such as vocabulary, phonetics, syntax and grammar (Carrell, 1987). The English curriculum standard clearly states that students should master basic language knowledge such as grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, topics, and functions in their learning. 2) Content schema: The so-called content schema refers to the content of the text, it also refers to the degree to which readers understand the content of the text and its related knowledge in reading. Due to the direct impact of content schema on readers' understanding of the text to a certain extent, content schema is the core of reading. 3) Formal schema: The so-called formal schema refers to the knowledge of the structural layout of different types of reading texts in the human brain, among which the structural layout can also be referred to as the genre of the article.

## **2.2. Studies on English Reading Teaching**

English reading teaching is the interaction of various teaching resources, and it is a collection of comprehensive presentation and application of language. The most important part of reading is the students, and the content of reading includes texts, pictures and the information gap generated between texts and pictures. The way of reading is the input and output of language, the teaching methods used by English teachers to guide students in reading instruction will directly affect the overall quality of English teaching. In other words, teachers should under the guidance of Scientific theory, practically cultivate students' reading ability.

## **3. Existing Problems in the Process of Reading Comprehension**

The current situation of teaching reading is that teaching mode is relatively single in which based on activities like questions and answers, prediction, fast reading, careful reading, discussion etc. Chen Pingxia (2021) pointed out that the topics and questions are often lack of depth and still focus on teaching difficult words, phrases and long and difficult sentence. Some teachers take the text as materials to explain the grammar of words and sentences, but ignore the multi-modal teaching methods and discourse. Students fully understand an text literally, but they can not really understand the idea of the text and the author's writing intention resulting in a lower level of thinking quality and reading ability.

## **4. Strategies of Applying Schema Theory in Senior High School**

### **4.1. Activate Schema**

Guide students to activate their prior knowledge and establish connections with new reading materials before the lesson. For example, stimulate students' background knowledge by asking questions or conducting group discussions on the topic. According to Rash (1984), utilize various media forms such as images, videos, or real objects to help students construct mental images related to the reading materials, facilitating a better understanding of the content.

### **4.2. Construct Schema**

Li Qian (2016) believed that teachers should gradually guide students to continuously construct and adjust their own schemata during the reading process. For example, before students read an article, provide them with an outline or a key vocabulary list to help them build a basic

reading framework. Encourage students to summarize and condense the key information in the article to aid in their schema construction.

### 4.3. Consolidate Schema

Provide exercises and tasks to help students consolidate and expand their schema. For example, require students to use their acquired knowledge to explain, analyze, or answer questions related to the reading materials. Organize group or class discussions to allow students to share and compare their understanding and schema construction of the reading materials. Wei Jinyun (2018) also thought that provide feedback and guidance is a good way to help students continuously refine and adjust their schema during the reading process.

## 5. Conclusion

Schema theory is progressive in explaining the reading process. Wang Qiang (2017) emphasizes the positive role of readers in the reading process and the interaction between readers and reading materials, which has a great impact on English reading teaching and the improvement of English reading ability. Therefore, in the process of reading teaching, teachers should make full use of schema theory and make reasonable use of the three types of schemata in schema theory for reading teaching. This will be beneficial for students to cultivate good reading awareness and form a good cognitive structure, thereby improving reading effectiveness.

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