

English Reading Instructional Design in Senior High School based on the Activity-based Learning Approach

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Abstract

This paper makes an in-depth analysis of the concept of Activity-based Learning Approach in the New English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition). Taking the English reading teaching of Little White Lies, from foreign language teaching and research press, Book three, Unit One, as an example, this paper explains how to design English learning activities at different levels such as learning understanding, application practice, transfer and innovation in the teaching of literary reading. The aim is to provide an example of the English reading teaching design in senior high schools.

Keywords

Activity-based Learning Approach; English Reading Teaching; Senior High School.

1. Introduction

As the main type of English teaching, English reading course is the main way to develop students' thinking quality and enhance students' core key competence. However, the English reading teaching conducted by the front-line teachers remains lots of problems. Zhang Xianchen (2019)[1] claims that English reading teaching has received a certain degree of attention for a long time, but there are still some problems in the actual teaching, such as fragmentation of text information, low level of activity thinking, fragmentation of text structure, rigidity of teaching mode, and utilitarianism of keeping up with test question types. What's worse, these problems mentioned above seriously restrict the improvement of the efficiency and quality of English reading teaching in China. Fortunately, English Activity-based Learning Approach can effectively solve the problems of text fragmentation in English reading teaching and teaching to the test in China. Meanwhile, designing English reading teaching in senior high schools based on English Activity-based Learning Approach is of great significance in cultivating students' English reading ability and English key competence.

2. The Definitions of Activity-based Learning Approach

The New Curriculum Standard for Senior High School (2020 edition) [2] pointed out that the concept of the activity-based learning approach refers to a series of English learning activities that embody comprehensiveness, relevance and practicality under the guidance of thematic meaning, such as learning, understanding, application practice, transfer and innovation, so that students can analyze and solve problems based on their existing knowledge and different types of discourse. Meanwhile, it can promote their own language knowledge, language skills, cultural understanding, multiple thinking, value orientation judgment and the application of learning strategy.

Zahoor (2017) [3] points out that learning activities are “any pedagogical method that engages students in the learning process” in the classroom, and that students are not passive recipients of knowledge but should actively participate in experiential learning.

Zahoor (2019) [4] pointed out that learning activity is a pedagogical process in which learners actively participate in knowledge creation, in which learners are actively involved in all learning activities, as learners are not spectators but subjects of learning activities.

3. The Significance of Applying Activity-based Learning Approach in English reading Teaching in Senior High Schools

3.1. Put the Students in the Center of Learning

Sheng Yanping(2017)[5] claims that traditional English reading teaching is usually teacher-centered and mechanically explains the basic knowledge, which is not conducive to improving the overall development of students' reading ability and key competence. However, Activity-based Learning Approach requires teachers to prioritize the needs of learners and put the students in the center of learning, which is conducive to improving students English key competence. Thus, it's necessary to adopt the Activity-based Learning Approach in English reading teaching to design the teaching activities and goals based on the needs of students.

3.2. From Fragmented Learning to Integration

Activity view emphasizes the integrated learning of curriculum content, which can realize the integration of relevant teaching content, language knowledge and skills, cultural background, learning situation and other contents. This will help improve the integrity and comprehensiveness of English teaching and avoid the fragmentation of language knowledge.

4. Teaching Design

This paper takes a reading class as an example to analyze the reading teaching design based on the activity-based learning approach. The teaching materials, Little White Lies, is chosen from foreign language teaching and research press, Book three, Unit One.

4.1. Learning and Understanding Activities

The learning and understanding activities mainly include the learning activities based on the text, such as perception and attention, acquisition and sorting, generalization and integration. For example, teachers create situations around the theme, activate students' existing knowledge and experience, pave the way for necessary language and cultural background knowledge, and lead to problems to be solved.(Ministry of Education, 2020)[6].

4.1.1. Perception and Attention

The teacher asks students to look at the picture on page ten and describe this picture.

(Justification: To make students get the first impression of the picture.)

Then, the teacher asks students to think about what you would say if you were the student B on this picture and invite as many students to share their answers as possible.

(Justification: To make students relate themselves to the passage that we are going to learn later and prepare them emotionally for the passage.)

Finally, the teacher asks students to work in groups to discuss the reasons of different answers to the second question.

(Justification: To lead in the topic of this passage-White Lies.)

4.1.2. Acquisition and Sorting

Firstly, the teacher asks students to read the first two paragraphs to find out the meaning of White Lies. Secondly, the teacher asks students to read paragraph three and four to find out the examples mentioned.

(Justification: To make students acquire and sort the key information of this passage by themselves.)

(1) Applied practice activities

Applied practice activities mainly include in-depth discourse learning activities such as description and interpretation, analysis and judgment, internalization and application. In other words, on the basis of learning and understanding activities, teachers guide students to carry out communication activities such as description, interpretation, analysis and judgment around the theme and the new knowledge structure formed, so as to gradually realize the internalization of language knowledge and cultural knowledge. Help students turn knowledge into ability (Ministry of Education, 2020).

1) Description and interpretation

The teacher asks students to think about the following two questions:

① What would you do if you were in the similar situations mentioned in paragraph three and four?

② How would you feel if you were told a white lie?

(Justification: To make students relate the passage to their own feelings and describe their own thoughts)

2) Analysis and judgment

The teacher asks students to think about the meaning of the last sentence in the fourth paragraph.

(Justification: To make students think deeply about whether it's good to tell white lies.)

(2) Transfer and innovation activities

Transfer and innovation activities mainly include reasoning and demonstration, criticism and evaluation, imagination and creation and other learning activities beyond the text, that is, teachers guide students to reason and demonstrate the value orientation behind the text or the author's attitude, appreciate the stylistic features and rhetorical devices of the text, explore the correlation with the meaning of the theme, and criticize and evaluate the author's point of view (Ministry of Education, 2018).

1) Reasoning, demonstration and criticism

The teacher asks students to read paragraph one to paragraph four to find out the author's attitude towards white lies and explain the reasons. The teacher invite as many students as possible to share their answers and reasons and compare students' answers. Then, the teacher asks students to work in pairs to read the rest parts to find out the author's attitude again.

(Justification: To develop students' ability of reasoning and demonstrating the author's attitude based on the passage.)

2) Imagination and creation

The teacher asks students the following two questions. Firstly, after reading this passage, what would you say if you were student B? Secondly, imagine the feelings of student A after he has listened to your answers.

((Justification: To develop students' ability of imagination and creation based on the won daily life and the passage they have learned.)

5. Conclusion

Applying Activity-based Learning Approach to English reading can put students in the center of learning and facilitate students' English learning from fragmented to integration. Thus, it's necessary for teachers to design English reading teaching in senior high schools based on English Activity-based Learning Approach. Meanwhile, when carrying out English reading

teaching, teachers should design teaching activities according to the three dimensions of Activity-based Learning Approach, application practice and transfer innovation, so as to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and promote the improvement of English reading teaching quality.

References

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