

# Innovative Design and Practical Exploration of Junior Middle School English Unit Teaching Under the Guidance of New Curriculum Standards

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## Abstract

This paper aims to explore the innovative design and practice of junior middle school English unit teaching under the background of new curriculum standards. Under the guidance of the new curriculum standards, the establishment of unit teaching objectives should be guided by core literacy, focusing on cultivating students' ability and quality of doing things in English, and improving their language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability in the process of problem solving. When designing the unit teaching content, we should take the big concepts as the core, refine and focus on these big concepts according to the teaching objectives, and build the logical structure and timing structure of the teaching content around them, so as to effectively promote students' understanding of the big concepts. When arranging the unit teaching process, English practice should be taken as the path, and practical English teaching process should be built through project-oriented, task-based and activity-based design methods, so that students can achieve comprehensive improvement of core literacy in the complete English practice process.

## Keywords

"New curriculum Standards"; Junior high school English; Unit teaching; "Big concepts"; Innovative design; Practical exploration.

## 1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the "New curriculum Standards") pay attention to the structuring of curriculum content and promote the implementation of integrated unit teaching. Through large unit teaching, teachers can integrate scattered language knowledge points and skill training into topics or tasks with inherent logical links, so that students can not only master language knowledge and skills, but also improve comprehensive literacy such as cross-cultural awareness and critical thinking in the process of completing real or simulated language tasks.

### 1.1. Establish Teaching Objectives Based on The Development Needs of Students' Core Literacy

The core literacy system is a comprehensive and in-depth framework, which mainly refers to the essential qualities and key abilities that students should have to adapt to lifelong development and social development. Therefore, core literacy not only focuses on students' language knowledge and skills, but also emphasizes the development of their learning ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness and emotional attitude <sup>[1]</sup>, which explains the educational value of English courses in a relatively comprehensive way and serves as the basic basis for the design and development of English teachers' teaching activities. Further, "Language ability is the basic element of core literacy, cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of core

literacy, thinking quality reflects the mental characteristics of core literacy, and learning ability is the key element of the development of core literacy." The four aspects of core literacy penetrate each other, integrate and interact, and develop together." [2] This paragraph explains that there is a close logical relationship and internal connection between the four aspects of English core literacy, which are interdependent, mutually promoting, integrated, interactive and coordinated development, and together constitute the core literacy system of English subjects, which means teachers should pay attention to the balanced development of these four aspects during their teaching practice to improve students' comprehensive English literacy.

In daily teaching activities, teachers should deeply understand and grasp the essence and characteristics of core literacy, and treat the four parts of core literacy as a interrelated whole. The foundation of junior high school English curriculum is to cultivate students' language ability, which is manifested by listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, the cultivation of students' language ability should be infiltrated into every stage of English teaching practice.

In daily teaching activities, teachers should set specific goals to improve students' language ability, including listening comprehension, oral expression, reading literacy, writing skills and so on. In terms of cultural awareness, goals such as deepening the understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, cultivating cross-cultural communication skills, and cultivating the attitude of respect and tolerance of multi-cultures can be formulated to enhance students' global vision and cultural sensitivity. When making teaching objectives, teachers should make different designs according to the differences of students' current level, learning needs and development stage. Teachers should consider the age and ability differences of students and set appropriate difficulty and progressive degree to ensure the pertinence and effectiveness of teaching activities.

At the same time, the individual differences and interest inclinations of students should be fully considered, and diverse teaching strategies should be adopted to stimulate the intrinsic learning motivation and exploration enthusiasm of students. In addition, the teaching goals should adhere to the principles of specificity, clarity, and operability, so that both teachers and students can clearly grasp the teaching expectations and evaluation standards. This not only helps to smoothly advance the teaching process, but also provides a clear benchmark for the subsequent evaluation of learning outcomes. At the same time, more attention should be paid to emphasizing the evaluable nature of teaching goals, which prompts teachers to collect student learning feedback in a timely and accurate manner, and then flexibly adjust teaching strategies to optimize teaching effects and achieve dynamic management and continuous improvement of teaching goals. Therefore, "establishing unit teaching objectives based on core competencies is aimed at the complete process of core competency development, considering what students do and how they do it within a 'learning unit' to cultivate their character and ability to do things or solve real-life complex problems in English." [3]

## **2. With Big Concepts as The Core, Unit Deep Teaching Is Constructed to Drive Knowledge Exploration and Learning**

To achieve the unit teaching objectives, teachers should carefully construct a closely aligned unit teaching content system, and emphasize using big concepts as guidance to integrate core literacy development throughout the entire course. Through systematic curriculum design, students are ensured not only to master language knowledge and skills but also to significantly enhance their thinking ability, cultural awareness, learning ability, and other core literacy aspects during the learning process.

## 2.1. A new idea of unit teaching content design based on big concept

Unit teaching based on big concepts is no longer a simple accumulation of knowledge points, but a profound summary of the essence of the subject. In junior high school English teaching, big concepts can cover all aspects of the subject's core literacy, such as "health and lifestyle", "environmental protection and sustainable development" and other unit topics. Teaching design around these big concepts can promote the integration and application of what students have learned, and stimulate their initiative and creativity in learning, which can not only deepens students' understanding of the nature of the subject, but also broadens their macro vision.

The underlying logic behind instructional design is that students gradually construct and reinforce core literacy through profound comprehension and practical application of what they have learned. Within this process, text selection and organization directly impact the form and efficiency of learning activities while collectively shaping core literacy development. Therefore, teachers should adopt reverse thinking by starting from desired core literacy goals, planning learning activities accordingly in a reverse manner, followed by selecting appropriate textual materials to ensure that teaching activities align closely with cultivating core literacy skills. Serving as the main thread throughout instructional content delivery, big concepts permeate the entire teaching process guiding its directionality and depth. Designing teaching content based on the formation logic inherent in big concepts serves as both a cornerstone for constructing an effective classroom environment as well as a fundamental approach to ensuring that instruction prioritizes fostering core literacy.

The core logic of instructional design is that students gradually build and strengthen their core qualities through in-depth understanding and application of what they have learned. In this process, the selection and organization of text directly affect the form and efficiency of learning activities, and jointly affect the shaping of core literacy. Therefore, teachers should adopt reverse thinking, start from the expected core literacy goals, reverse plan learning activities, and then select the text content to ensure that teaching activities and texts closely serve the cultivation of core literacy. As the main line of teaching content, big concept runs through the whole teaching process and guides the direction and depth of teaching activities. Designing teaching content according to the formation logic of big concepts is the cornerstone of building an efficient classroom, and also the fundamental path to ensure that teaching focuses on the cultivation of core literacy.

## 2.2. A new approach of designing unit teaching content based on big concepts

The teaching content design based on big concepts can be carried out in the following four steps: Firstly, the teachers can deeply understand the central idea of the unit theme, combine the core quality, and extract the core concepts that can reflect the characteristics of English subjects, be close to students' life, and run through the whole unit teaching. More over, by taking the big concept as the core, teachers can carry on the in-depth analysis and excavation to the "new curriculum standard", textbooks and other educational resources. In this process, the primary task of teachers is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the teaching content from multiple dimensions, and reveal the value and significance of the core theme, text or discourse for students to construct a big concept. Further more, teachers can build a flexible, efficient and effective content logical structure from the formation logic of the big concept. Starting from the big concept, we think backward about the learning outcomes that students should achieve, and then design learning activities and tasks that promote students' deep understanding of the big concept around the expected outcomes. According to the students' learning feedback and teaching effect evaluation results, timely adjust the teaching content and methods to better serve and optimize the big concept. Lastly, the sequential structure of the teaching content must strictly follow its internal logical order. This sequence clarifies the presentation order of each

knowledge point and teaching activity, so that students can gradually contact, understand and apply the teaching content in accordance with the established path, so as to solidly construct the big concept, and form and improve the core quality in the process.

### **3. Design of Large-Unit Teaching Process Based on English Practice**

#### **3.1. The Core Essence of English Practice**

Core quality is the comprehensive ability that students gradually build in the process of deeply participating in English learning and practice, which covers the ability of effective communication, deep thinking and flexible problem solving. Serving as the cornerstone of this process, English practice provides students with a vast stage where they frequently apply English to tackle real-life issues. Not only does this strengthen their linguistic skills, but it also deepens their cultural understanding, sharpens their critical thinking, and fosters their autonomous learning capabilities. In turn, the continuous enhancement of English core competencies acts as a catalyst, further igniting students' potential, enabling them to excel even more in English practice, and thereby achieving a virtuous cycle of personal growth.

The "New Curriculum Standards" emphasize the need to "guide students in completing authentic tasks and solving practical problems in real-life situations by adopting a learning approach that integrates language, content, and thinking." [4] In junior high school English classrooms, English practice integrates language learning into students' daily lives by simulating real-life scenarios, enabling students to experience the practical application of language through practice. The essence of English practice lies in constructing an immersive language environment where students can naturally refine their language skills through all-round interactions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This process transcends mere vocabulary memorization and grammar learning, profoundly shaping students' linguistic sensitivity, precise expression, and fluent communication abilities, empowering them to confidently and accurately use English in any context.

In addition, students can deeply explore the cultural context, historical accumulation and social landscape of English-speaking countries through English practice, and enhance their understanding and respect for diverse cultures. This cultivation of cross-cultural awareness not only enriches students' spiritual world, but also lays a solid foundation for them to communicate confidently and coexist harmoniously in the global arena in the future. In the practice of solving problems, English practice attaches importance to the exercise of critical and creative thinking. This not only promotes students' in-depth understanding and innovative application in the field of English learning, but also provides them with strong intellectual support for their future study and work in various fields.

Finally, English practice is also committed to cultivating students' autonomous learning ability. By guiding students to independently set learning goals, plan learning paths, monitor learning progress and reflect on learning success, we can promote students' self-cognition, self-management and self-improvement. This kind of independent learning ability will benefit students for life.

#### **3.2. Large-Unit Instructional Design Method Based on English Practice**

The traditional English teaching framework focuses on instilling grammar knowledge and accumulating vocabulary, and to some extent ignores the essence of English as a communication tool - that is, using English to solve practical problems in real contexts. The teaching mode is student-centered and includes project-oriented, task-based and activity-based. By constructing vivid learning scenes close to life, students can master English in practical activities. Project-based learning encourages students to conduct in-depth research around specific topics or issues, such as "Language as a communication tool to promote

personal planning and dream realization", which not only requires students to have a solid language foundation, but also tests students' teamwork, critical thinking and innovation skills. In order to complete the task, students need to actively explore and communicate, so as to continuously grow in English practice. Task-based teaching can guide students into language learning by setting clear and progressive tasks, such as "group discussion", "knowledge combing", "group report", "scenario simulation", etc. In the process of completing learning tasks, students constantly improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. Project-based, task-based and activity-based unit teaching based on English practice can not only improve students' English language ability, but also cultivate their comprehensive quality and cross-cultural communication ability.

#### 4. Conclusion

The focus of compulsory education curriculum reform focuses on the deep implementation and implementation of "new curriculum standards", which is a challenging and full of opportunities for primary and secondary school teachers. For junior high school English teachers, this challenge is more prominent, calling on teachers to take the core concept of "new curriculum standards" as a beacon, and carry out in-depth excavation, accurate interpretation and creative transformation of current textbooks. Under the broad vision of "new curriculum standard", teachers should re-examine and deeply understand the content of teaching materials, and closely connect it with the training goal of core literacy. On this basis, according to the internal logic and law of the development of students' core literacy, the teaching activities are carefully planned to ensure that each class can become a solid ladder to promote students' all-round development. Every link of teaching design should be closely focused on the cultivation of core qualities, so that while students master language knowledge, their comprehensive qualities such as thinking ability, independent learning ability, cross-cultural awareness and positive emotional attitude can be significantly improved. Make continuous efforts to let the advanced concept of "new curriculum standard" take root and sprout in the classroom, blooming gorgeous flowers.

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