

An Exploration of High School English Reading Teaching from the Perspective of Critical Thinking

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Abstract

Critical thinking is an important symbol of intelligent talents, which is conducive to cognitive ability. It is also called the cornerstone and promoter of rational society. Basic education should be to cultivate critical thinking ability as the primary goal. Through the exploration of English reading teaching in high schools, this research explores how to strengthen students' critical thinking in reading. That is, to propose effective practice strategies from the teacher level, curriculum level, etc.

Keywords

Critical Thinking; Reading; High School.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, critical thinking has become an important part of the modern Western education system. Most of the standardized tests in the United States (such as GRE, SAT, etc.) are set to test critical thinking of students. Critical thinking has also received more and more attention in China, and the "21st Century Core Literacy 5C Model Research Report" released by the China Education Innovation Institute of Beijing Normal University proposed the "21st Century Core Literacy 5C Model", which includes critical thinking (critical thinking). China's "National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline" pointed out that education should cultivate a large number of innovative talents and explore ways to cultivate innovative talents. Critical thinking is an important prerequisite and foundation for cultivating innovative talents (Dong Yu, 2017; Blake & Masschelein, 2003), on the one hand, critical thinking helps to break through fixed ways of thinking and promote the construction of new perspectives; Critical thinking, on the other hand, examines the processes and outcomes of thinking, guaranteeing the validity of conclusions or solutions.

In the actual teaching of English reading, many teachers usually follow the steps that firstly reading to obtain the main meaning of the discourse, and then carefully read and understand the details of the discourse, and finally explain the language points. The focus is usually on language knowledge, that is, the general meaning of the discourse; key grammar; etc. However, the views, concepts and values conveyed by the discourse do not deeply think, judge and evaluate the content of the discourse. In the long run, students will not think independently and will not or be able to express their own opinions. Mei Deming and Wang Qiang (2018) believe that courses without thinking participation are superficial or superficial learning, and this superficial learning is also the problem facing and solving in deepening curriculum reform. Therefore, in order to cultivate students' critical thinking, it is necessary to seriously think from the perspective of text interpretation, constantly examine the text, and question the meaning, logic, language, culture and other aspects of the discourse. Through comparison, analysis, evaluation and comprehensive judgment, we design rich activities to activate students' thinking in teaching activities and cultivate students' ability to analyze and solve problems from multiple angles.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a way of thinking that many countries, especially developed countries in the West, have paid more and more attention to since the 70s of the 20th centuries. In 1998, the world's first conference on higher education was held in Paris. The declaration stated that it was necessary to "cultivate students' critical and independent attitude" and "cultivate students' ability to think critically and analyze problems". There are different models and classifications of research on thinking ability at home and abroad. On the basis of the research of foreign scholars, Wen Qiufang (2008) proposed a hierarchical model of thinking, emphasizing meta-thinking ability and critical thinking ability, optimizing and improving cognitive skills, cognitive standards and emotional traits respectively, and emphasizing three core cognitive skills, namely analysis, reasoning and evaluation skills.

At present, China is paying more and more attention to cultivating critical thinking ability in higher education, and there are three main training methods. The first is to set up a special critical thinking course. In the specially set course, students can understand critical thinking in a limited time. They can look at things in life dialectical in various activities. The second is to develop critical thinking skills in regular subject teaching. Especially in language courses, this type of activity should be set up. In English subjects, critical thinking is more valued. Language and thinking are inextricably linked, so developing critical thinking skills in high school English classes is feasible and operational. The third is to use implicit educational methods, that is, to create an implicit environment in schools conducive to the development of critical thinking. This approach is slower to achieve, but the impact on students is longer-lasting, and some can last a lifetime.

2.2. Critical Reading

Critical reading refers to guiding students to analyze the phenomena or problems in English reading materials from different angles, directions and levels, and to be able to analyze the deep meaning behind the text content. In other words, critical reading is the reading of the same reading material from different perspectives. In the process of critical reading, students should use their own judgment and logical ability to think, and explore new ideas and ideas based on their accumulated experience and knowledge. Critical reading is first and foremost a consciousness, to have a skeptical attitude in judging, validating, and approving information. For example, is the formulation in the text, correct? If it is incorrect, it is necessary to obtain the correct formulation through in-depth and reasonable argument and analysis.

3. Problems

Regarding the problem of English learners' lack of thinking in the reading process, domestic experts and scholars have analyzed and synthesized many reasons, which are mainly divided into the following two aspects:

First of all, from the aspect of teacher teaching, secondary English teachers pay too much attention to the language form in the reading discourse, emphasizing the vocabulary and expressions in the discourse to the learner. The test method of reading the text of learners is usually through multiple-choice questions, which are mostly the understanding of the details and the inference of the main idea in the article, and there is relatively little in-depth excavation of the text of the article. Therefore, learners are deeply influenced and guided by it, who placing excessive emphasis on superficial forms of language and ignoring deep thinking and deep evaluation and innovation of opinions. Teachers often emphasize the training of language knowledge and skills in the teaching process, and pay attention to mechanical training and memory in the teaching process, while ignoring the development of learners' thinking ability

and innovation ability. At the same time, there are problems in high school English teaching in China, such as large class teaching, large numbers of people, and few opportunities for individual students, which resulting in insufficient time and conditions for in-depth exchanges and discussions between teachers and students.

Secondly, from the perspective of learners, many learners have certain misunderstandings about the foreign language teaching goals. In addition, the narrow knowledge of learners is also one of the main reasons why their thinking is not broad. Most learners spend a lot of time memorizing words and practicing grammar, and rarely dabble in books and literature in other professions and fields outside of textbooks. As a result, their thinking is very limited, which is more difficult to have critical ability and innovative awareness. Another reason that cannot be ignored is that there are relatively few English reading chapters on critical thinking in China. Most English reading textbooks focus on daily life and language skills training. The content involving controversial topics and social hot issues cannot keep pace with the times. The content of the textbooks is still based on campus life and common topics. The same topics from middle school to university are constantly repeated, resulting in students' lack of interest and unwilling to do in-depth thinking and exploration, so their thinking ability cannot be tempered accordingly.

4. Solutions

4.1. Improving the Awareness

First of all, teachers should improve the ability of teaching critically. In addition to enhancing subject expertise, pedagogy or technology-based knowledge, teachers need to have knowledge of classroom situations, i.e., practical knowledge. They need learn to study rationally, master critical criticism, understand that real criticism is developed and formed in practice. The students need to grasp the development of critical thinking focuses on their own practice. The educational practice of critical thinking should be developed in any section of English learning, and critical thinking in English should be constructed inside and outside the English classroom, and even in different learning fields such as family and society. It can focus on the critical thinking development activities of the classroom space, and effectively develop students' critical thinking and cultivate critical thinking skills through educational practice activities such as critical writing, reading and debate. It is of great significance to cultivate students' critical thinking, and it is the key to cultivating high-quality talents required by the information society. For a long time, the hegemony of teachers' classroom discourse in reading teaching has been the biggest obstacle to the development of students' critical reading ability. This hegemony of classroom discourse by teachers exists mainly in two forms. First, teachers monopolize the right to speak in the classroom, do not give students a little opportunity and right to question, and the teaching process is almost a "one-man show" for teachers alone. Second, students' right to speak in the classroom is in name only. The teacher does not give students the real right to speak in the classroom, but only symbolically asks questions, guides students to answer according to the teacher's own presets, and gradually introduces students' thinking into a cage that has long been set without any freedom of thought and imagination.

4.2. Reforming the English Curriculum

The second is to reform the English curriculum and strengthen the interdisciplinarity of the curriculum. Teachers need to clarify the curriculum objectives for cultivating students' critical thinking, and add special courses to cultivate students' critical thinking. In the teaching process, classroom discussion links should be set up. What's more, problems should be listed according to the teaching content and article materials of each lesson. So that students can think independently and learn cooperatively. And they can use brainstorming to express their

understanding and opinions, so that they can discover the possibility of multi-angle understanding of the text and open up ideas for students' individual critical understanding of the text. The root of critical reading is a consciousness that always reminds students to make inner refutations of texts. When there is no objection to the text, the teacher can also put forward some plausible but logically problematic points for students to criticize and refute, and can also say reasonable points for students to prove.

4.3. Setting up Special Courses

The third is to set up a special critical thinking course for critical thinking training. The cultivation of critical thinking is organically combined with subject teaching. Students' critical thinking is developed through hidden courses such as lectures, salons and club activities. Various critical thinking training methods are skillfully used. The school can establish a belief in the use of critical thinking, set up critical thinking courses, grasp the understanding of certain problems, which will cultivate students' critical thinking skills. On the other hand, school can also carry out various forms of extracurricular and extracurricular activities, create a learning environment with a sense of risk, and cultivate collaborative learning habits.

4.4. Building a New Thinking Culture

Finally, it is necessary to build a new classroom teaching culture and create a thinking culture in learning. Teachers need to change teaching ideas; adjusting curriculum and delivery focus; The modern educational technology can be used to reform and construct new teaching models. The evaluation system needs to be reformed for English learning and appropriate teaching methods and activities need to be selected. What's more, teachers need to transform the traditional role and guide students to learn independently through different activities, and enhance the enthusiasm and fun of English learning through role play and free debate.

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