

A Case Study of Senior High School English Reading Teaching Practice based on Thematic Meaning Exploration

Hongyu Zhao, Li Li

College of English, Jilin International Studies University, Jilin ChangChun 130000

Abstract: The "2017 Edition of the English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High Schools" advocates the concept of English teaching based on thematic meaning exploration. The teaching of high school English reading based on the exploration of theme meaning is one of the ways to develop students' subject abilities and implement English subject core competence. Based on the theoretical basis of theme-based teaching, this article discusses the connotation and problems of high school English reading teaching based on theme meaning exploration, and combines specific teaching practices to analyze the implementation process of theme meaning exploration in guiding high school English reading teaching.

Keywords: Theme significance; Theme-based teaching; High School English Teaching

I. Introduction

The "Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School English (2017 Edition)" (the "Curriculum Standards") regards "thematic context" as one of the main contents of the English curriculum, pointing out that English teaching must be guided by English learning activity concepts such as "understanding", "application", "transfer", and "innovation", and under the guidance of "thematic context", cultivate students' core English subject competence. The Curriculum Standards list three major thematic contexts: human and self, human and society, human and nature. The English classroom teaching based on "thematic significance" advocated by the curriculum standards requires "topic centered" and the integration of "topic" into teaching content and activities. That is, teachers should conduct English teaching in a real context and set specific teaching objectives and activities based on the theme. Therefore, in English reading teaching, teachers' exploration of the thematic significance based on text is an important guarantee for implementing the core competencies of the English subject.

II. The Connotation of High School English Reading Teaching Based on Theme Meaning Exploration

Teachers carry out English teaching based on thematic meaning, that is, teachers guide students to construct thematic meaning under a certain theme, apply the theme as the guide and discourse as the basis through a series of learning and understanding, applying and practicing, transferring and creating activities. Compared with traditional high school English teaching, high school English teaching based on thematic meaning inquiry has many advantages: in terms of teaching methods, it can improve the interest of students' language learning. Influenced by traditional reading teaching methods, many teachers focus their classroom teaching on explaining language knowledge. However, language is not a direct object of learning, but rather a medium or tool for students to explore the topic content they have learned (Zhang Yang, 2014). Compared with traditional reading teaching, high school English reading teaching based on thematic meaning exploration can enhance the fun of reading learning. In terms of teaching design, reading teaching based on thematic meaning exploration is beneficial for enhancing the authenticity of language learning, inspiring students' thinking, and enabling them to effectively acquire language through vivid and interesting activities.

Currently, there still remains problems in high school English reading teaching where teachers carry out thematic meaning exploration: firstly, there is a lack of depth in thematic meaning exploration. It is not difficult to find that some teachers sometimes only superficially explore the meaning of the theme in order to catch up with the teaching progress when carrying out teaching; Secondly, influenced by traditional reading teaching methods, many teachers overemphasize the language knowledge and skills in the article, while neglecting the content and thematic meaning of the article itself; Finally, in teaching activities based on thematic meaning exploration, students' classroom participation is insufficient. Students do not explore the theme meaning through their own activities. Teachers directly inform them to students. Teachers lack guidance in exploring the theme meaning for students, and students only passively accept it.

From this, it can be seen that there are still many problems in the current high school English reading teaching. Faced with these problems, teachers need to transform traditional teaching methods, create thematic context, and improve students' autonomous and cooperative learning abilities through reforms in reading methods, thereby enhancing students' interest in English learning and cultivating their core English subject competence.

III. Teaching Practice Analysis of High School English Reading Activities Based on Theme Meaning

This article will take the example of "Living Legends" in Unit 3 of the first compulsory volume of "English" published by the People's Education Press, to explore how to conduct high school English reading teaching based on thematic meaning exploration.

3.1 Based on text interpretation, clarify the theme significance

1. The theme of the discourse

The theme of this section is "Choose your favorite athlete, a sports activity that belongs to people and society." The text provides the context of the activity, where a magazine invites readers to write and choose their own "Living Legends of Sports". On the basis of

understanding the discourse information, students are required to summarize the selection criteria, recommend their favorite sports stars, and provide reasons for the recommendation. This activity aims to cultivate students' thinking qualities of rational thinking and objective evaluation.

2.The intention, emotional attitude, or value orientation of the discourse author

The text selects two important athletes: Lang Ping and Michael Jordan, not only describing their remarkable achievements in sports, but also emphasizing the importance of perseverance. Students should not only admire those sports stars, but also learn from those "role models" to understand the true essence of being a person in life.

3.The stylistic features and content structure of discourse

From a genre perspective, this text belongs to a magazine article, with obvious title features, structural features, and language features. Article titles usually use special forms to attract readers' attention or serve as a "finishing touch", such as alliteration, rhyme, repetition, metaphor, and so on, The title 'Living Legends' uses alliteration, while the title 'Air Jordan' uses metaphorical rhetoric. The text is well structured and consists of a title, summary, or lead paragraph, and body. The main text is then divided into two sub-headings that describe the two sports stars. The illustrations and supplementary information in the last paragraph are also a general feature of magazine articles.

The first discourse adopts the writing method of giving examples and presenting facts, and uses the parallelism structure "As a player... As a coach,... As a person,..." at the beginning to comprehensively summarize the achievements and influence of the characters, enhancing their appeal. The second discourse uses some vivid language descriptions, such as "time seen to stand still". In addition, direct quotes were used to enhance the reader's sense of firsthand experience. The selected materials for the article are Lang Ping and Michael Jordan. These two not only achieved brilliant results in sports, but also possessed dazzling personality charm. Lang Ping is an excellent athlete and also an excellent coach. The article focuses on her teamwork and indomitable spirit when facing difficulties. Jordan, the "Flying Man", is an evergreen tree in the American basketball industry. The article focuses on his fearlessness, perseverance, and enthusiasm for social welfare. Students should not only admire those sports stars, but also learn their excellent qualities and personalities. These are the main themes and meanings of these two paragraphs.

From a thinking perspective, the author highlighted the criteria for selecting sports legends in the leading paragraph: masters in their sports, set good examples for others. The description of the two characters in the main text revolves around this standard and has a strong logical relationship. Students need to analyze and make judgments on textual information, clarifying the author's ideas.

3.2 Design teaching objectives oriented by the meaning of the topic

Teachers should design teaching objectives and specific teaching requirements around the theme of the text. The teaching objectives of this lesson are:

- 1.Obtain factual information about Lang Ping and Jordan in the text.
- 2.Analyze the stylistic characteristics of magazine articles and cultivate reading strategies.
- 3.Compare and summarize the excellent qualities of legendary figures.
- 4.Develop critical thinking and form a conceptual understanding of "legend" from personal understanding. By writing about one's favorite athlete, applying the knowledge learned to solve problems in life and transferring themes.

3.3 Design teaching activities closely based on the theme and attach importance to integrated learning

1.Context Introduction, Establishing Theme Meaning (Pre-reading)

Activity 1 Talk about athletes students admire most

Students talk about their favorite athletes with their peers and share them in class. Then the teacher plays a video of the world's top ten famous athletes and asks the following question: Do you know these world famous sports athletes? Can they be called legends?

By asking questions, students are guided to have a preliminary understanding of the meaning of the theme "legend". Then, they refer to the meaning of "legend" in a dictionary, and engage in discussions based on the theme. This stimulates students' learning enthusiasm, curiosity as well as their interest in learning, and makes sufficient preparations for entering the text.

Activity 2 Make some predictions

Teachers and students share the meaning of legend, while students complete the following tasks and make predictions: Who could be called legends? What makes them legends? Then the teacher shows the meaning of "legend"; A legend can be a very old and popular story that may or may not be true; A legend refers to a very famous person who is extremely good at what he or she does and is admired by many people.

Students can improve their English output ability by discussing their favorite athletes. Secondly, by guiding students to independently review the relevant definitions of "legend", they can have a preliminary understanding of the meaning of the theme of "legend". Teachers combine multimodal discourse teaching to guide students to think whether only famous athletes can be called legendary figures? Who can become legendary figures? What qualities do they possess that make them legendary figures? The chain of questions can guide students to actively obtain relevant information, naturally leading to the thematic significance of the article, and thus laying a good foundation for text reading.

2.Deeply read the discourse and explore the thematic meaning (While-reading)

This reading article is based on the theme of "Talking about Favorite Athletes". Combining this theme, students not only need to understand the content of the text, but also need to understand the genre, main idea, and structure of the text to improve their thinking quality. The teaching design of while-reading is as follows:

Activity 1 Read for the gene&gift&structure

Students should first read the entire text quickly and then answer the following questions: What does the text mainly talk about? What is the genre of the passage? According to the writer, what is a living legend?

Teachers' questions can guide students to focus on a specific meaning (Duffy&Roehler, 1993, Ge Bingfang, 2015). With the help of the above questions, students can understand the main idea of the article, namely the stories of two "legendary figures" Lang Ping and Jordan. At the same time, students know that the text belongs to a magazine article, and then understand its obvious title, structural, and language features. Then, they can sort out the structure of the article. "Legendary figures" have two conditions: masters&set good examples.

Activity 2 Read for details

Firstly, on the basis of understanding the text information, the author asks students to carefully read the relevant details of the text, extract the framework of the text, and obtain key information focused on the master and good examples in the problem. Teachers guide students to independently construct mind maps. Examples of students' mind maps are shown in figure 1 and figure 2.

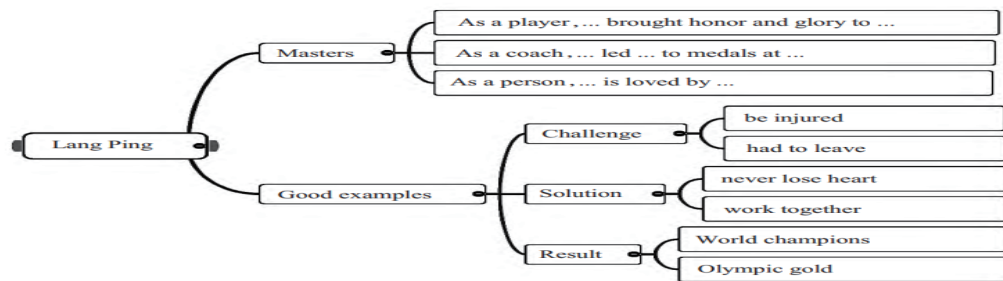


Figure 1 Lang Ping

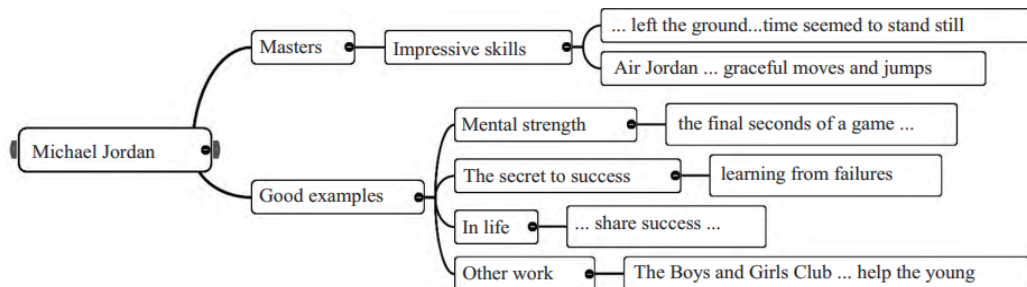


Figure 2 Michael Jordan

Secondly, students collaborate with peers to provide their own definition of "legendary figure", and choose another "legendary figure" in their minds and discuss the reasons. When discussing, students can refer to the relevant phrases and sentence patterns shown in Figure 3.

From my point of view, a legend is someone who... and I consider ___ a legend. For one thing, ... for another, ...
 ... have great qualities, like a strong will, determination and kindness etc.
 ... influence others in a positive way/ set good examples for others
 ... be helpful to the development of human beings.
 ...

Figure 3 The Definition of Living Legend

Finally, students will engage in group activities to discuss how to learn from these "legendary figures" and how to become "legendary figures" in their own lives.

Under the guidance of exploring the theme meaning, teachers carry out a series of learning and understanding, applying and practicing, transferring and creating activities to enhance students' core English subject competency, deepen their understanding of the theme meaning, internalize relevant knowledge, and achieve a deep understanding of discourse.

3 Extracurricular Practice, Expanding Theme (Post-reading)

Activity 1 Read for further understanding

The author first plays two videos of Lang Ping and Jordan, and raises the following question: Why can Lang Ping and Michael succeed and become legends? What do they have in common? Students engage in peer discussions. Subsequently, based on the discussion among students, the author presented a viewpoint: They are considered as "living talents" not because of their amazing sports skills, more importantly because of their great qualities.

Activity 2 Read for writing

Based on the results of peer discussions, students choose another 'legend' for writing. Students should refer to the structure, rhetoric,

cohesive devices, and examples of the learned discourse as much as possible.

The method of learning text writing is beneficial for students to internalize the learned discourse structure and apply it to their own writing. In addition, open-ended writing around the theme and meaning of the text can inspire students to engage in discussions around the learned content and express themselves by using newly acquired language knowledge. This type of open-ended writing is beneficial for students to unleash their thinking and express their opinions more freely. By testing students' understanding of the theme and meaning of the text in written form, as well as their mastery of language knowledge, it can also attract students' attention to the structural characteristics of the text.

IV. Conclusion

Exploring thematic meaning based teaching in senior high school English reading teaching means that teachers design teaching activities around students' learning and understanding of thematic meaning. Through a series of interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and themed teaching activities, students are guided to understand the theme meaning, learn the language expression and discourse structure of the theme meaning, understand the relationship between the various parts of information that express the theme meaning, explore the deep meaning behind the text, and correctly understand the theme, value, and meaning of the article. This is a brand new English reading teaching model and a new attempt, which will help improve students' reading ability. In short, high school English reading teaching based on thematic significance exploration has a positive effect on cultivating students' professional skills, improving the core competence of English subjects, and improving the quality of thinking; It has great help in updating teachers' educational concepts, improving educational methods, and enhancing teaching abilities. In high school English reading teaching, in order to make English reading classes more efficient, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research on the text based on thematic significance and explore it in depth.

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