



A Study on Cultivation Strategies of Critical Thinking in Junior Middle English Reading Class

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the importance of critical thinking to junior middle school English reading ability. This paper probes into the cultivation of critical thinking in English reading ability from the perspective of teachers and students, and discusses the problems based on the questionnaire survey.

1. Introduction

Critical thinking has been studied extensively all over the world. Meanwhile, English reading ability is increasingly playing a vital role in the contemporary society. In class, however, students and teachers are more concerned with understanding the shallow meaning of the reading material than with thinking critically about the deeper meaning of the text and making original ideas. Therefore, this paper will explore the methods of training junior middle school students' critical thinking from the perspective of English reading. According to the questionnaire survey, this paper will focus on the application of critical thinking in English classroom to help students improve their reading ability. Taking Zhoushan junior middle school students as an example, the research can help teachers understand the prob-

lems in English reading class and raises students' critical thinking according to the related suggestions^[1].

2. Background

2.1 Theoretical Background

The Compulsory English Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition) require that by the end of junior middle school, students should have achieved the goal of "being able to deduce and understand the meaning of new words from context and word-formation". The formation of critical thinking can help students to set up independent and active thinking. Students are able to think rationally and reflectively, depending on the purpose of the activity, to decide what to believe or do (Ennis 1962). Secondly, teachers should guide students to judge the authenticity, accuracy and value of the knowledge they have learned

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(R.D.Liu 2000), so as to enhance students' innovation ability and cultivate special talents^[2].

2.2 Policy Background

Under the background of the implementation of the new curriculum reform policy of the State, the student-centered teaching mode has been gradually attached importance to, and the reform and upgrading of the teacher-centered traditional teaching mode (S.L.Qu 2019) has made the classroom pay more attention to the practical application of the knowledge learned. Students also change their roles from listeners to questioners, and form active learning attitude. The education of middle school students requires the cultivation of talents with creative ability and intercultural communication ability. The ability of innovation is closely related to critical thinking. Nowadays, the demand for innovative talents in China and even in the world urges the innovation of our students' thinking mode. Students are required not to copy knowledge, but to obtain objective cognition through their own practice and to creatively use what they have learned to find new ways to solve problems^[3].

2.3 Problems in English Class

Students trained by traditional teaching mode are examination-oriented elites. Although they have a lot of problem-solving skills, they still can't analyze logically, judge and solve problems independently. Nowadays, there are two problems in the development of critical thinking of junior middle school students: conformity and reticence.

2.3.1 Conformity

Conformity means that students tend to give up thinking and follow the opinions and answers of others in the face of problems that are above their own level. For example, many teachers ask questions in class: "Which one is the answer, A or B?" If the majority of students have not known the answer, one student chose an option, then most students will basically stop thinking, and get the same answer. If the answer is correct, the teacher chooses not to do in-depth explanation, students are likely to not master this knowledge. Therefore, "conformity" is a problem that teachers should pay attention to in the process of teaching.

2.3.2 Reticence

Reticence indicates that students are afraid to express themselves. There are many reasons for this problem, such as: teachers are too strict, the gap between teachers and students is too big to make students afraid to express their opinions, fear of being criticized; or students have inferiority complex, that the wrong answer to the question will be laughed at by students. This problem seriously hinders the development of students' critical thinking, blocks students from constructing positive behavior patterns, and makes them lack of logic of thinking and speech.

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3. Research Design and Findings

3.1 Research Objects

The subjects of this study are the junior middle school students and the front-line teachers of Dinghai No. 5 Middle School and Zhoushan No. 6 Middle School. The thought of senior grade students has a certain grade of development; therefore, the questionnaire respondents mostly are grade-three students.

3.2 Research Methods

The author sent questionnaires to the respondents for random sample collection. The content of the questionnaires includes basic information of respondents, teachers' understanding and cultivation methods of critical thinking. Meanwhile, interview the front-line teachers, attend the reading class and understand the teaching ideas.

3.3 Research Results

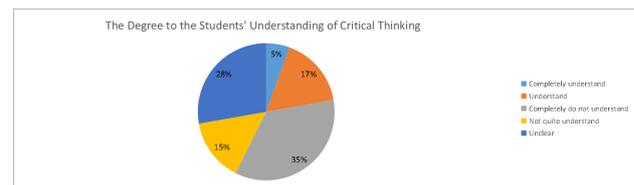


Figure 1

According to questionnaires, 35% of students completely do no critical thinking, 28% have no idea whether they have been taught this, 17% understand it and 15% know it a little, only 5% completely understand it.

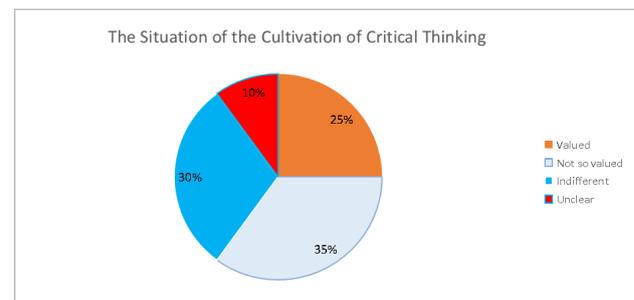


Figure 2

25% of teachers attach importance to the cultivation of critical thinking, 30% give general attention, and 30% and 10% of teachers take "indifferent" and "unclear" attitudes,

respectively.

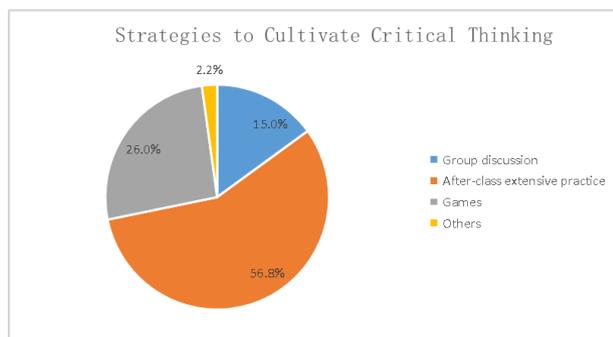


Figure 3

56.8% of the students reflect and deepen their understanding of the text through extended reading practice after class; 26% of the students think positively and participate in group discussions; 15% have participated in games set by teachers, and believe that games can deepen the acknowledgement knowledge of the text and promote understanding.

4. Problems

4.1 Cannot Use Guessing Strategy

English words have the phenomenon of polysemy, which is one of the test points of propositioners. Students often encounter this type of question in English reading practice and examination. However, many students can't grasp the main idea of the passage accurately and guess according to the context, so the accuracy rate is low. In addition, the inability to correctly judge the genre of the article and the inability to identify the author's mood also exist.

4.2 Lack of Activity in Class

Based on classroom observation and teachers' interviews, the author finds that students in English reading class are not very active, especially when the questions need to be combined with the students' own experiences. Some students said they did not know how to organize the language in English. Others said they had no personal thoughts about the question.

5. Problem Analysis

Through the analysis of the data, we can find that there are many reasons for the high error rate of solving problems in English reading. The reasons are as follows:

5.1 Teachers Emphasize More on Reading Skills than Text Understanding

Most of the students think that the answers to the reading

comprehension questions are not deep enough, and they take a passive attitude towards the teaching methods adopted by the teachers. By attending the class, the author finds that teachers tend to teach students how to find the answer quickly when they are teaching a certain genre. Teachers' analysis of articles usually stops at the understanding of shallow information. Taking an article from Unit 6, Grade 9 (Go for it) as example, the teacher asks the students to read the passage quickly and summarize the main idea of the passage. In the next step, students are required to find out the closest answer to the main idea of the passage. Finally, students need to master the key words, phrases and sentence patterns. Because the junior middle school reading comprehension topic sets relatively simple, after the student finds the corresponding topic answer, the explanation to the reading part basically comes to an end. All the process is flatter, and students pay more attention to the new words and grammar of the article. Besides, junior middle school teachers and students are faced with such problems as tight teaching schedule, high pressure to enter a higher school, and so on. Even if some teachers understand that the development of critical thinking is crucial to help students develop the ability of independent thinking ability, they can not combine critical thinking with the teaching process effectively and flexibly. Therefore, critical thinking can not be trained and developed.

5.2 Thinking Development of Students Influences Perspective of Solving Problems

In the 1930s, American educator B. S. Bloom (1956) proposed the Bloom Classification, which divides cognitive and thinking abilities into six levels according to the degree of difficulty, namely, theoretical cognition, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. From the questionnaire survey, it can be concluded that most students are afraid or unwilling to question the authoritative answers, and seldom discuss the root of the problems with teachers. Not willing to think is not conducive to students to build their own way of thinking and system, fragmented reading easy to make students to set the question answer understanding, search incomplete. Many examples in real classroom can prove that the reasons for students' inability to correctly judge the choices given can be divided into three types: first, taking out of context, that is, students see sentences with similar meanings in the text, and immediately judge the matching with the choices, thus making mistakes; second, over-understanding, that is, students will over-emphasize their own understanding on the basis of the existing meanings of the sentences, which is the embodi-

ment of their inability to understand the author's feelings and their lack of reasoning and judgment ability; third, the lack of predictability. This type of question usually appears in the last question, and students need to predict the meaning of words or the development of the next step of the text according to the existing information. However, it is difficult for students to deduce and predict this type of question without grasping the meaning of the full text and the deep information of the text. Thus, students in the day-to-day training, they can not jump out of the inherent framework of thinking, the lack of deep, independent thinking and the ability to question.

5.3 The Contents of the Textbook Exist Irrationality

Junior middle school students have been using the textbook (Go for It) for many years. It is not difficult to find that this textbook helps improve students' overall level. But in terms of reading materials, it is often used as a means of consolidating the knowledge learned in each chapter and expanding the number of words and phrases. The matching questions are shallow and the focus is on grammar. In addition, many students think that some topics are too old to stimulate.

6. Suggestions

This paper discusses how to cultivate critical thinking in the process of reading under the background of curriculum reform. In view of the above data analysis and problems found, the author puts forward the following suggestions to help teachers and students improve English reading ability and performance, and cultivate critical thinking.

6.1 For Teachers

6.1.1 Understand the Requirement of the Course and Set up Questions Reasonably

One of the goals of English teaching in junior middle schools' states that students should be able to exchange information and express their opinions on various topics of daily life. Thus, simple knowledge indoctrination is not enough to help students form independent thinking. Therefore, teachers can set up corresponding teaching tasks to guide students understand the content of the text and build up a complete thinking system according to the different requirements of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. To the teaching content is various, the class hour sets tensely, teachers should screen the teaching methods according to the subject of the teaching content, so as to effectively cultivate students' critical thinking.

6.1.2 Shorten the Distance between Teachers and Students, Activate the Classroom Atmosphere

Students in the classroom keep silence due to teachers and students feel too much distance or classroom atmosphere caused by tension. Therefore, teachers should review whether their teaching procedures are too tight or lead to lack of sufficient time for students to think. At the same time, teachers should also use activities to shorten the distance, so that students understand that it is a good phenomenon to question authority reasonably. For example, in some classrooms, the teacher intentionally makes wrong answers to guide the students to make corrections and praises those who correct them. These activities not only stimulate students' ability and interest in independent thinking, but also make the classroom full of vitality.

6.2 For Students

6.2.1 Participate in Social Activities to Stimulate Interest in Learning

China is in line with the world, talent as an indispensable bridge. And thinking agile, resourceful is a qualified talent should equip. Encourage students to participate in volunteer activities or simulation scenarios. When they participate in activities, they will have the opportunity to meet people of different ages, different countries and different values. How to get along with these people at the same time adhere to, express their own views and ideas, students need to timely use their own critical thinking of the problem analysis, to make appropriate answers.

6.2.2 Broaden the Horizon and Connect with Social Events

When teachers introduce hot topics into classroom teaching, students should actively discuss, explore and predict the essence, causes and consequences of this social phenomenon, spontaneously create a relaxed and good thinking environment, create a good atmosphere of learning, and receive the changes of the world with a sensitive sense organ.

7. Conclusion

The training of critical thinking in English reading teaching in junior middle schools needs the cooperation of teachers and students, which is not only due to the teaching process, but also the need of developing innovative talents in China. However, because of various factors, some students have not formed a way of thinking and learning, which leads to the emergence of mechanized learning in English subjects. This hinders the development

of students' learning abilities. From the research results, it can be concluded that the students can not understand the meaning of the words without the dictionary, can not correctly judge the genre of the article, and can not recognize the writer's emotion and writing tone. Based on these problems, this paper puts forward suggestions from both teachers and students, teachers need to enhance their own quality, familiar with the teaching materials, shorten the distance between teachers and students; students need to actively participate in classroom activities, improve learning interest. The basic education curriculum reform is the request which our country opens day by day brings. Although more and more people begin to realize the shortcomings of our English teaching and actively seek to change, but in the practical aspects of further study. In

short, with the continuous progress of society, students should have the habit of independent thinking, good at asking questions, dare to question, and strive to become innovative talents.

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