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The Application of Constructivist Learning Theory to English Reading Teaching of Senior High School

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Abstract: With the vigorous implementation of education reform and the widespread implementation of quality education, the role of constructivist learning theory in English teaching, especially English reading teaching, has become increasingly prominent. This paper first learns about the current situation of high school English reading through investigation and research, and the overall low interest and learning motivation of students in English reading, and the low effectiveness of teachers' English reading teaching concepts and methods, and then puts forward the application strategies and methods of constructivist learning theory in high school English reading teaching: stimulating students' reading motivation through heuristic teaching, creating students' reading meaning background through contextual teaching, cultivating students' reading collaboration spirit through cooperative learning, and improving students' reading construction ability through inquiry learning.

Keywords: Constructivist Learning Theory; English Reading Instruction; High School.

1. Introduction

Learning any language requires a lot of reading, and English is one of the most widely spoken languages worldwide, with many important documents, research, news reports, etc., published in English. Reading in English gives people access to a wider range of information and understanding of events and dynamics around the world, so it is important to learn and master English reading. By reading the relevant content of the General High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020), we can learn that the new English curriculum standards include four core literacies: language skills, cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills, learning ability, and developmental thinking. It can be seen that the cultivation of the four core literacies is inseparable from the learning and mastery of English reading. Reading English is important for personal development, academic research, professional development, and cultural exchange, helping us to understand the world more comprehensively, improving our language skills, and intercultural literacy. The purpose of English reading instruction is to cultivate students' language learning ability and comprehensive application ability. Therefore, we can see that most of the questions in the annual English high school examination paper need to be completed through reading, and the level of reading ability directly affects the total score of English subjects. Reading is the core of English teaching, and it is an important guarantee for the implementation of core literacy (Zheng Yao, 2021). In order to continuously improve the quality of high school English reading teaching and achieve fruitful results in reading teaching, teachers can introduce and apply constructivist learning theory in high school English reading teaching to promote the steady improvement of reading teaching quality.

This paper explores how constructivist learning theory can be applied in high school English reading teaching, which provides a theoretical reference for promoting the development of high school English reading education, and has important guiding significance for exploring the correct teaching methods and learning methods. At present, the teaching of English reading in high school is developing day by day, and the use of scientific education methods is helpful to promote the development of students' reading ability, improve students' comprehensive language use ability, and cultivate high-quality talents to meet the needs of social development.

2. The Current State of High School English Reading Teaching

2.1. Research Methodology

In this paper, interviews and questionnaires were used. The interview and questionnaire survey were conducted in December 2022 in the second year of high school in Fushun County No. 2 Middle School. Through the questionnaire survey, it was found that 56% of students think that English reading classes are important, while only 10% of students enjoy English reading classes. In addition, through the interview method, we learned about students' attitudes towards English reading and some teaching methods and strategies that teachers often use in teaching English reading.

2.2. Current Status of High School English Reading

2.2.1. Students have Low Motivation to Read and Few Resources

First of all, students have low motivation and low interest in English reading classes. Through questionnaires and interviews with high school students, we learned that most students are concerned about the learning of English reading. From the perspective of the college entrance examination, English reading accounts for a relatively large proportion of the score in the entire English test, and more time is spent on reading, but more time does not equal greater interest. Most students are busy practicing their reading to cope with the requirements of the college entrance exam. However, students are often hindered in reading problems, with low reading efficiency, insufficient learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, and lack of interest in English reading (Xie Hongxia, 2011).

Second, students have a narrow horizon of reading. Due to the academic pressure of high school students, most of the

reading materials of students come from textbooks. Although reading textbook articles can increase students' reading volume and improve their reading level to a certain extent, it cannot really stimulate students' interest in reading and meet their reading needs. Student reading is limited to what is in the textbook, making it difficult for students to truly understand more authentic English expressions and foreign cultures, resulting in a single input that creates a narrow reading horizon. As a result, students often feel confused when they encounter reading material outside of textbooks.

2.2.2. Teachers' Teaching Philosophy and Methods are Lacking

Firstly, teachers ignore the psychological needs of students. Under the conditions of exam-oriented education, the biggest motivation for students to learn English is to take the college entrance examination and get good results. The college entrance examination is an external condition, which can be said to be an external motivation. From this point of view, students' English reading and English learning is a passive process, resulting in low motivation to read learning. However, most teachers tend to ignore this point, and the reading materials given to students are often boring and boring, ignoring the psychological needs of students, thus reducing students' motivation for English reading and learning. Through interviews, it was found that students' reading motivation would affect the effect of reading, thereby hindering the development of students' reading ability.

Secondly, teachers ignore students' subjectivity. Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the student's subjective position in teaching. Although many teachers have responded to the teaching reform and hoped to achieve a student-centered classroom, it is often difficult to implement it in actual teaching (He Qian, 2013). Therefore, the teacher is still a mechanical indoctrination of knowledge, the student is a passive recipient, and the status quo of the teacher's main position has not changed. There is little interaction, cooperation, and communication between teachers and students, and the classroom efficiency is also low.

Thirdly, in the process of teaching, teachers sometimes ignore the differences between students. Every student has different basic knowledge, and their level of understanding and acceptance of knowledge is also different. Through the interview method, it was found that this phenomenon is common in the teaching process. Teachers often believe that it is crucial to teach at a pace and with a given task. However, this perception makes it difficult for teachers to squeeze in more time for students to think deeply in the short 40-minute classroom time. Therefore, students' ability to independently discover and solve problems has not been fully exercised and cultivated, but has developed the habit of passive learning. They are more inclined to get ready-made answers directly than to explore and discover them through their own deep thinking.

3. The Application of Constructivist Learning Theory in High School English Reading

3.1. Stimulate Students' Motivation to Read through Heuristic Teaching

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes student-centered teaching (Chen Qi & Zhang Jianwei, 1998). Therefore, in the process of teaching high school English reading, teachers should start from the actual situation of students, establish connections inside and outside the classroom, create a good reading atmosphere, and find suitable resources for students' reading (Wang Du, 2016). Teachers should strengthen students' reading guidance and stimulate students' interest in reading, so as to stimulate students' enthusiasm for reading. Therefore, teachers should take students as the main body of reading teaching, carry out enlightening teaching, explore students' interest in reading, autonomy in learning, and encourage and guide students to carry out extracurricular reading.

The operation steps of the heuristic teaching mode are as follows: first, the teacher presents questions or materials to let students understand the learning content and background, helps students connect with previous life knowledge and experience, stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning, and inspires students to think. Second, to educate the rules, this step is to ensure that the students are purposeful in the learning process. Third, focus on the learning experience of students and let students become the main body of activities. Fourth, guide students to summarize and reflect. Finally, students are guided to integrate and integrate, so that students can truly apply what they have learned. However, teachers need to pay attention to the following points in inspired teaching: First, the teacher's teaching content should be reasonable. The content should help students connect with reality and drive students to think positively. Second, teachers should not "inspire" for the sake of "inspiring". Pay attention to the rationality of instructional design. Finally, teachers should pay attention to providing appropriate help and feedback to students in the process of inspiring teaching.

3.2. Create a Contextual Context for the Meaning of Reading through Contextual Teaching

The constructivist view of learning refers to the contextuality of learning, emphasizing that learning knowledge and skills need to be carried out in context, and knowledge cannot exist without context (Dede, 1995). Therefore, in English, it is necessary to use the situational teaching model in English teaching. The situational teaching mode has the following main characteristics: First, the teaching case is situationalized. Contextualization means that the objects of discussion and learning in teaching come from real life. Second, the teaching content should be systematic and coherent (Chen Zehang, Wang Qiang, Qian Xiaofang, 2019). In situational teaching, teachers should pay attention to the fact that problems and cases are connected according to some internal or external connection. Third, contextualization of the teaching environment. With the development of digital information, teachers should make full use of multimedia and online teaching in the teaching process. Teachers use PPT, videos, and audios to play slides during the teaching process, so that students' senses and sights can be combined. This kind of situational is more realistic, and the students' participation and experience are better. Finally, the adaptability of situational teaching. When the object and context of teaching change, the content and method of teaching should change with it.

Teachers should take care to prevent some students from becoming too involved in specific learning situations so that they will not be able to withdraw from them. Therefore, teachers should guide students to step out of the context and apply what they have learned in a more flexible way. At the

same time, teachers should also avoid scenarios for the sake of situations in the teaching process, and the purpose of situational teaching is mainly to guide students and help students to construct and recognize themselves. Situational teaching not only improves students' interest in English reading, but also connects the theoretical learning of English knowledge with real-life situational activities, so as to achieve the combination of reading teaching and the concept of cultivating students' core English subject literacy in the new curriculum.

3.3. Cultivate the Spirit of Reading Collaboration through Cooperative Learning

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning, and through group cooperation, students' interest in learning can be stimulated and the opportunities for formative learning can be increased (Chen Qi, 1997). Students' understanding of new knowledge is generated through interaction between teachers and students, between students and students, between teaching activities and media means. Co-teaching activities can activate the classroom atmosphere and integrate students into the classroom. In the process of reading, teachers should guide students to cooperate with others to actively explore and learn background knowledge. Cooperative learning is a popular style of learning in modern teaching today. Cooperative learning not only promotes the formation of good relationships between students, but also promotes communication between teachers and students, and establishes harmonious and beneficial relationships.

Teachers should pay attention to the following points in cooperative learning: First, teachers should assign different tasks according to the situation of different students. Second, students have group discussions with tasks. After a positive discussion, the teacher summarized and evaluated it. Cooperative learning is a two-way interactive process, and cooperative learning is also the main way to teach effectively. Teachers play a guiding role in cooperative learning and discussion, and the main tasks are completed by students. In this process, teachers should supervise students to work hard and not be lazy, and provide students with corresponding learning materials to stimulate students' potential and positive thinking ability, and cultivate students' ability to judge, cooperate and communicate, reflect and evaluate.

3.4. Enhance Reading Construction Skills through Inquiry-based Learning

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes that teaching should lead students to think, and teachers do not provide answers directly. Students should actively explore, construct and understand knowledge. Teachers should design questions that revolve around the theme of the classroom and are relevant to real-world situations (Wang, 2016). At the same time, open-ended question setting should be exploratory and develop students' core thinking and problem-solving skills, which is conducive to the teacher's ability to fully hand over the classroom to students. Through carefully designed questions before class, students are guided to engage in collaborative inquiry learning, stimulate students' desire to learn new knowledge, and cultivate students' creative thinking. In the teaching of high school English reading, teachers should activate students' existing relevant background knowledge, supplement necessary new background knowledge, stimulate students' thinking, and cultivate students' independent learning and problem-solving skills (Yang Lierui, 2018). Teachers give full play to students' learning autonomy, guide students to actively discover problems, collect and analyze relevant information and materials, conduct meaningful research, and realize the constructive transformation of the meaning of reading learning materials.

Through this meaningful inquiry, teaching can be more resonant with students' lives, learning experiences, and social practices. At the same time, teachers should encourage students to boldly raise their hands to express their ideas and encourage them to express their ideas and understanding in the form of questions in their own words. Teachers should purposefully and consciously engage students in discussions and debates about the connotation and extension of what they have learned, so as to develop students' ability to analyze and solve problems creatively. Through meaningful inquiry activities, students are helped to realize the meaning construction of knowledge in reading.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to explore the application of constructivist learning theory in the teaching of English reading in practice. Through questionnaire surveys and interviews with high school students and teachers, it was found that there were problems in student learning and teacher teaching in the traditional English teaching mode. Therefore, this paper applies the constructivist learning theory to the teaching of high school English reading, and proposes four corresponding application methods. In reading lessons in a constructivist learning environment, students are always actively involved in the reading learning process under the guidance of the teacher, and students actively discuss and think in the learning process. It not only gives full play to the main role of students, but also cultivates students' language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Through teacher-student cooperation, teamwork and communication, we create collaborative competition, cooperative learning, and vivid teaching scenarios, realize mutual benefit in teaching, create a good classroom atmosphere, and improve the quality of classroom teaching. Constructivist learning theory has important guiding role and significance for the current teaching of English reading. However, while constructivism contributes to the current teaching of English reading, there are some problems that are still in the process of being improved. In order to continuously absorb reasonable elements and better promote the teaching of high school English reading.

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