

Original Paper

The Application of Reading Circles Model in English Reading Teaching in Senior Middle School

Wang Ting-ting¹

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing 401331, China

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Abstract

There are various input methods for language learning, among which reading is the most important one. English reading class in High school aims to cultivate students' comprehensive literacy by guiding them to think independently and actively participate in reading activities. The new curriculum standard proposes that English reading teaching in high school should focus on strengthening the cultivation of English subject competence. Thus, the effect of the reading circle model on students' English reading is consistent with the educational purposes required by the core literacy of the English subject. Therefore, the article tries to explore the effect of reading circle on improving secondary school students' English reading ability.

Keywords

reading circle model, new curriculum standard, English reading teaching in senior high school, English reading reading ability

1. Introduction

Reading teaching, as the focus of high school English teaching, can help students improve their ability to acquire information, analyze information and solve problems, and it is one of the important ways to improve students' English core literacy. However, the traditional reading class is centered on the teacher's lecture, and students passively accept the teacher's analysis of the text. Such a teaching method lacks the training of deeper development of students' thinking, the expansion and extension of reading content, and the interaction between teachers and students. Different from the traditional mode, the teaching mode of "reading circle" divides students into several reading groups, in which members act as different reading roles, and participate in the communication and discussion within and between groups after completing the corresponding reading tasks. This kind of reading mode can make students gradually develop good reading habits, which plays a very important role in the cultivation of students'

learning autonomy and thinking ability, and thus improves students' language ability (Burns, 1998, pp. 124-129).

2. Reading Circles

Reading circles was named literature circles first and it was first conducted in 1982 by a teacher called Karen Smith who worked in an elementary school. However, the concept of literature circles has achieved concern owing to the publication of Harvard Daniels' book named *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-centered Classroom*. Harvey Daniels defined literature circles as a student-led reading discussion groups in which members within each group read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group-assigned portion of the text (either in or outside of class), members make notes to help them contribute to the upcoming discussion, and everyone come to the group with ideas to share. After each reading group completes a round of reading, group members share the best parts of their reading with each other to improve their reading skills. After a round, teachers and students work together to select more reading materials and moved into a new cycle. Based on this model, the teacher will let the group members carry out independent learning in the form of cooperation and free discussion, reading and sharing. Each person in the group has his or her own responsibilities and tasks (Daniels, 2006). Generally speaking, there are several regular roles in the reading circle teaching mode: "discussion leader", "summarizer", "culture collector", "connector", "word master", and "passage person". Of course, these roles are not fixed, teachers can be based on specific teaching objectives of the role of appropriate additions and deletions.

3. Strategies for Implementing the Reading Circle

3.1 Selection of Reading Material

When teachers organize reading circle teaching activities, the first thing they have to do is to choose appropriate reading materials, and the choice of reading materials will have a great impact on the quality of students' reading. Teachers should pay attention to several aspects when selecting reading materials, for example, whether the content of the materials selected can attract students' interest or whether the difficulty level of the reading materials is moderate and so on. Then, before choosing a reading text, teachers can conduct a reading interest survey through discussion or questionnaires. There are many articles suitable for reading circle teaching in the senior high school English textbook of Ren Jiao version, and this paper mainly takes "what's in a name?" in Unit 4 of the compulsory second book of high school freshman English as an example to guide the students to carry out the teaching of reading circle model. The main content of this article is British history, which aims to help students understand the two main benefits of studying British history and recognize the importance of knowing the history of a country. Students should pay attention to the cultural knowledge of the target language while sorting out information and learning the language, develop their horizons, deepen their

understanding of their own culture and enhance their national pride while learning about British history.

3.2 Grouping

Different from the previous study group, reading circle has not specific requirements for the students' personal English level, but emphasizes the students' choice of reading materials to form different reading groups. The best group member is from 4 to 6. If there are too many group members, it will easily affect the effect of group discussion, and students will find it difficult to summarize too many opinions and points of view. On the contrary, if there are too few group members, it will reduce the students' motivation to participate in the reading activities, and will not lead the group members to read and discuss together (Kang, Lim & Murdoch, 2023). In addition, the reading ability of each member of the group varies greatly, and the formation of reading groups is convenient for helping students to cooperate with each other, which can cultivate students' sense of cooperation and ability.

3.3 Role-playing

The most critical step after grouping is to determine the roles of students, and role training ensures the smooth progress of reading circle teaching. According to the teaching goal of "what's in a name?", students can be divided into the following roles: 1) Discussion leader: the leader will lead the group to carry out independent reading according to the specific content requirements of the reading text of the unit, and actively encourage the members of the group to be able to continue to reflect on the reading process, raise questions worth discussing. The leader should summarize the questions raised by the members and analyze and discuss them in the group. In this form, the student group takes the initiative of the classroom under the leadership of the discussion leader, which is of great help to stimulate students' interest in reading. 2) Cultural Collector: They are mainly responsible for sorting out the content of the text and finding out the cultural elements behind the text. For the text of this unit, cultural Collector should actively use the Internet and other related resources to find out the history and cultural customs of London, and present the information in pictures, videos and words, so as to let the members of the group understand the history of the United Kingdom and the importance of a country's history. Through these steps, students can learn about the history of Britain during the activities, develop their reading ability and skills comprehensively, and at the same time compare the Chinese and British cultures, so that they can deepen their understanding of Chinese history when they understand the history of Britain. 3) Word master: In the process of reading, a large part of students' reading difficulties comes from unrecognized vocabulary, so the role of the word master plays a very important role in the reading circle. The word master needs to check the difficult words in the text, but the word master does not only inform the members of the group about the Chinese interpretation of the words, but also organizes the meaning of the words (including the English interpretations), the lexical nature, the fixed collocation and other aspects of the word, to help the members of the group to grasp the meaning and form of the word in the text, to understand the word comprehensively, and to enrich the

vocabulary accumulation of the members of the group. In the text “what’s in a name?”, students are also required to master certain English vocabulary or phrases, such as “a feast for the eyes”, philosophy, military, evidence and so on. Through learning, students’ language knowledge will be further improved.

4) Passage person: The passage person is mainly responsible for analyzing the sentences and paragraphs in the text. A reading text contains many sentence forms, and the passage person will analyze them further to better help group members understand the structure of the text and promote the improvement of students’ writing. For example, in the text “what’s in a name?” students will be able to understand and master the use of past participles as determiners and object complements and apply them in authentic contexts.

5) Summarizer: The summarizer is mainly to summarize the material, and this process can help students to have a more intuitive understanding of the overall content. By summarizing the text, the summarizer can take time, place and other key words as the fulcrum, guide students to cooperate and jointly draw a timeline, further grasp of the structure of the text, and promote the development of students’ creative thinking and dialectical thinking skills. With the help of the timeline, students can retell the paragraph in chronological order and internalize the target language in time.

6) Connector: The main task of connector is to connect textual knowledge with real life, which is an important purpose of core literacy education. This step can promote students’ practical application of English learning. Based on the content of this unit, students can learn about the origins of the different names of the UK and the similarities and differences of the constituent countries, understand the relevant thematic vocabulary, familiarize themselves with the logic of paragraphing and writing techniques, and learn to use the target language to describe the history of a country and the origins of its different names in chronological order.

3.4 Discussion

In the discussion session, members of each group can actively express their own views and personal opinions. During such process, students can not only improve their oral expression skills, but also further deepen their love of English reading (Qi, 2021, pp. 341-350). Secondly, the idea of each member of the group is unique, so the views of students may differ from each other and need to be communicated and negotiated, which improves the students’ critical thinking ability.

3.5 Evaluation

Evaluation will be conducted after the discussion, using a combination of teacher evaluation, students’ self-assessment or students’ mutual evaluation. First, the teacher will evaluate the students’ performance based on the observation of the students during the activity. Secondly, when each reading activity is completed, the teacher needs to guide each member of the group to evaluate each other, and the main evaluation includes the performance of the activity, the reading level, and the mastery of knowledge, etc. The use of mutual evaluation can not only effectively stimulate the students’ desire to perform better, but also allow students to enter the learning state quickly, and gradually form a healthy competition within the classroom, which plays a key role in the development of students’ thinking and

improvement of reading level (Wang, Pang & Feng, 2021, pp. 90-96).

4. Conclusion

Reading circle helps to break the static, single, passive reading mode and create an active reading activity. The reading circle model is used in English reading teaching, which is oriented to the students' interest, on the basis of which the English reading teaching activities are carried out by stimulating students' reading interest. This model allows students to continue to develop personal reading skills and master reading methods by reading English materials and sense the emotions expressed in the materials. By playing the role, the students can not only show their personalized sides, but also can develop their divergent thinking, then in a subtle way gradually forming thinking habit and good reading habits, and English reading ability.

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