

The Development Trend of Activity-based Teaching Approach in English Reading Instruction in Chinese Junior High Schools

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[**Abstract**] This study systematically reviews the relevant theoretical and practical research on activity-based teaching methods both at home and abroad, and makes an in-depth investigation of its potential in enhancing students' reading interest, promoting in-depth understanding, and cultivating critical thinking. At the same time, in combination with the actual situation of Chinese education, a comprehensive analysis is carried out on the advantages and limitations of activity-based teaching methods in junior high school English reading teaching. Finally, this study, based on the existing research and practical experience, looks ahead to the future development trends of activity-based teaching methods in junior high school English reading teaching in China, and puts forward practical suggestions: first, optimize the activity design to make it more targeted and effective; second, strengthen teacher training to improve their ability to design and implement activities; third, make full use of information technology to innovate activity forms and provide students with a richer and more personalized learning experience. It is expected that through these efforts, this study can provide useful references for improving the quality of junior high school English reading teaching in China, effectively enhance students' reading interest and ability, and lay a solid foundation for students' future learning and development.

[**Key words**] activity-based teaching method; junior high school English reading teaching; development trend; core competencies; teaching design

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1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the importance of English as an international language is becoming ever more pronounced. English reading, as a crucial component of English learning, is not only an important way for students to acquire knowledge and understand different cultures, but also a key element in cultivating their language skills, thinking abilities, and cultural awareness. However, for a long time, Chinese junior high school English reading teaching has generally suffered from problems such as students' low interest in reading, weak reading comprehension abilities, and monotonous teaching methods. These issues severely restrict the improvement of students' overall English proficiency.

To effectively address the above problems, the domestic education sector has begun to introduce and explore various new teaching methods in recent years. Among them, the activity-based teaching method, as a student-centered teaching model that emphasizes interaction and participation, has received increasing attention. Activity-based teaching emphasizes students' main role in the learning process, stimulating students' interest and promoting active participation through the design of rich and diverse activities, thereby improving learning outcomes.

This paper aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for relevant researchers and frontline teachers by deeply exploring the development status and future trends of activity-based teaching methods in Chinese junior high school English reading teaching. This aims to promote the effective application of activity-based teaching

methods in junior high school English reading teaching and ultimately enhance students' English reading abilities and comprehensive qualities.

2 Current situation and challenges of English reading teaching in junior high schools

While making certain achievements, English reading teaching in Chinese junior high schools currently faces many challenges. These challenges are mainly reflected in three levels—students, teaching methods, and evaluation systems—which are interconnected and jointly restrict the improvement of students' English reading abilities and overall qualities.

2.1 Student level: low reading interest, lack of initiative and in-depth analysis skills

Students' low reading interest and lack of initiative are primary factors restricting the effectiveness of reading instruction. In the traditional English reading teaching model, teachers often dominate, and students are in a state of passively accepting knowledge, lacking autonomy and a sense of participation. In terms of textbook content selection, there are also problems of insufficient timeliness and interest, making it difficult to stimulate students' intrinsic reading motivation. In addition, the long-standing examination-oriented education model has led students to view reading as a tool for coping with exams, rather than a means of acquiring knowledge and broadening horizons. This utilitarian learning purpose further suppresses students' interest in English reading.

At the same time, students' reading comprehension abilities are generally weak, and they lack the ability for in-depth analysis. In the reading process, students are often limited to understanding the literal meaning, and it is difficult for them to deeply explore the deeper meaning of the article and engage in critical thinking. Insufficient mastery of reading strategies makes it difficult for students to effectively cope with reading materials of different types and difficulties. A lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge also becomes a stumbling block for students in the reading process, leading to hindered reading fluency and increased comprehension difficulty.

2.2 Teaching method level: single methods, lack of innovation

The singularity and lack of innovation in teaching methods are another important factor restricting the effectiveness of reading teaching. Traditional English reading teaching methods mainly revolve around vocabulary and grammar explanations and text translation, lacking interactivity and interest. Teachers occupy an absolute dominant position in the classroom, and students' participation is not high, lacking opportunities for autonomous learning and cooperative learning. This teacher-centered teaching model is not conducive to students' active thinking, active exploration, and personalized development. In addition, the application of information technology in English reading teaching is not widespread or in-depth enough, failing to fully utilize modern technological means to provide students with diverse learning resources and experiences.

2.3 Evaluation system level: single methods, lack of comprehensiveness

Traditional English reading evaluation methods mainly use test scores as the sole standard, making it difficult to comprehensively reflect students' reading abilities and development potential. The evaluation content focuses too much on the examination of grammar and vocabulary, ignoring the evaluation of students' ability to use reading strategies, critical thinking abilities, and comprehensive language application abilities. This one-sided evaluation system not only fails to effectively stimulate students' learning interest and enthusiasm, but also intensifies students' examination pressure, further deviating from the essential goals of reading teaching. The evaluation method lacks process and motivation, making it difficult for students to obtain timely feedback and guidance, and unable to fully recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, thus affecting their learning enthusiasm and sustainability.

3 Theoretical basis and practical research of activity-based teaching method

3.1 Theoretical basis of activity-based teaching method

The theoretical basis of the activity-based teaching method mainly comes from constructivist learning theory, humanistic learning theory, and activity theory.

Constructivist learning theory believes that knowledge is not directly acquired through teacher instruction, but is actively constructed by learners through their interaction with the environment. Activity-based teaching methods emphasize the student's main role in the learning process, encourage students to actively participate and actively explore through the design of various activities, thereby constructing their own knowledge system.

Humanistic learning theory emphasizes people-orientation, respecting students' individual differences, and focusing on cultivating students' self-confidence and self-esteem. Activity-based teaching methods focus on students' interests and needs, providing personalized learning experiences, stimulating students' learning motivation, and thus promoting their all-round development.

Activity theory believes that learning is a purposeful and conscious activity. Learners achieve their learning goals by participating in activities. Activity-based teaching methods emphasize the practicality and contextuality of learning, and improve students' learning effectiveness by designing authentic and meaningful activities to connect learning content with real life.

3.2 Practical research on activity-based teaching method at home and abroad

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted a large number of practical studies on activity-based teaching methods, proving that it has a significant effect on improving students' learning outcomes.

Foreign scholars generally believe that activity-based teaching methods can effectively improve students' learning interests, participation, and outcomes. For example, the research by Johnson & Johnson (2009) shows that cooperative learning in small groups, as an important activity-based teaching method, can improve students' academic performance, promote their interpersonal skills and teamwork spirit. The research by Slavin (2014) also confirms that cooperative learning can improve students' learning motivation and enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Domestic scholars have also actively explored and practiced activity-based teaching methods. For example, Yang Xiaozhe (2005) proposed a teaching design theory based on learning activities, emphasizing the importance of activity design in teaching. Lu Zhiping (2012) re-examined the design of curriculum learning activities from the perspective of activity theory, and proposed problems such as the lack of activity subjects, the uniformity of activity media, and the closed nature of the activity process.

4 Advantages and limitations of activity-based teaching methods in junior high school English reading instruction

4.1 Advantages of activity-based teaching methods in junior high school English reading instruction

Stimulating Students' Reading Interest and Enhancing Learning Motivation: Activity-based teaching methods, through the design of diverse and enriching activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and reading competitions, connect learning content with real-life situations, making the learning process more vivid and engaging. This stimulates students' reading interest and enhances their learning motivation.

Promoting Active Student Participation and Cultivating Self-directed Learning Abilities: Activity-based teaching methods emphasize the students' central role in the learning process, encouraging them to actively participate in activities and explore proactively, thereby cultivating their self-directed learning abilities.

Improving Reading Comprehension Skills and Developing Critical Thinking: By designing various activities, activity-based teaching methods guide students to think deeply and analyze the deeper meaning of articles, thereby improving their reading comprehension skills and developing critical thinking.

Cultivating Collaboration Skills and Enhancing Team Spirit: Activity-based teaching methods emphasize collaborative learning, encouraging students to exchange ideas and help each other in collaboration, thereby cultivating their collaboration skills and enhancing team spirit.

Promoting Language Application Skills and Improving Overall Quality: Activity-based teaching methods

provide students with opportunities to use language through the design of various activities, thereby improving their language application skills and promoting the development of their overall quality.

4.2 Limitations of activity – based teaching methods in junior high school English reading instruction

High Difficulty in Activity Design, Requiring Teachers to Possess High Professional Qualities: The effective implementation of activity–based teaching methods requires teachers to possess high professional qualities and be able to design activities that meet teaching objectives and stimulate students’ interest based on their actual situations.

Complex Activity Organization, Requiring Teachers to Possess Strong Organizational and Management Skills: The implementation of activity –based teaching methods requires teachers to possess strong organizational and management skills and be able to effectively organize students to participate in activities and control classroom order.

Difficult Activity Evaluation, Requiring Teachers to Develop Scientific and Reasonable Evaluation Criteria: The evaluation of activity–based teaching methods requires teachers to develop scientific and reasonable evaluation criteria that can comprehensively reflect students’ learning outcomes and development potential.

Long Activity Implementation Time, Potentially Affecting Teaching Progress: The implementation of activity–based teaching methods requires a long time, which may affect teaching progress. Teachers need to reasonably arrange teaching time.

Limited Activity Resources, Requiring Teachers to Actively Develop and Utilize Resources: The implementation of activity –based teaching methods requires rich activity resources. Teachers need to actively develop and utilize various resources, such as online resources, textbook resources, and community resources.

5 Development trends and suggestions for activity–based teaching methods in Chinese junior high school English reading instruction

5.1 Development trends

Activity Design Will Pay More Attention to Students’ Individualized Needs: Future activity–based teaching methods will pay more attention to students’ individualized needs and design more targeted activities based on students’ interests, levels, and learning styles.

Activity Forms Will Be More Diversified, Integrating Information Technology: Future activity–based teaching methods will pay more attention to the diversification of activity forms and integrate information technology, such as using multimedia courseware, online platforms, and online games, to provide students with richer learning experiences.

Activity Evaluation Will Pay More Attention to Process–oriented Evaluation and Diversified Evaluation: Future activity–based teaching methods will pay more attention to process–oriented evaluation and diversified evaluation, focusing not only on students’ learning outcomes but also on their learning processes and development potential. Evaluation methods will be more flexible and diverse, such as adopting a combination of student self–evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation, to comprehensively reflect students’ learning situation.

Activity Resources Will Be Richer, Realizing Resource Sharing: Future activity–based teaching methods will pay more attention to the richness of activity resources and realize resource sharing. Teachers can use online platforms, teaching and research activities, and other channels to share activity design experiences and jointly develop activity resources.

Activity Implementation Will Pay More Attention to Teachers’ Professional Development: Future activity–based teaching methods will pay more attention to teachers’ professional development, improving teachers’ activity design ability, organizational and management ability, and evaluation ability through training, seminars, and other activities.

5.2 Development suggestions

In order to better promote the application of activity-based teaching methods in Chinese junior high school English reading instruction, the following suggestions are put forward:

Strengthen Theoretical Research and Improve the Theoretical System of Activity-based Teaching Methods: Strengthen theoretical research on activity-based teaching methods, deeply explore their core elements, basic principles, and implementation strategies, and build a theoretical system of activity-based teaching methods that conforms to China's national conditions.

Strengthen Practical Exploration and Promote the Successful Experience of Activity-based Teaching Methods: Strengthen practical exploration of activity-based teaching methods, encourage teachers to actively try, accumulate experience, summarize laws, and promote the successful experience of activity-based teaching methods.

Strengthen Teacher Training and Improve Teachers' Professional Qualities: Strengthen teacher training, improve teachers' activity design ability, organizational and management ability, and evaluation ability, so that teachers can skillfully use activity-based teaching methods.

Strengthen Resource Construction and Provide Rich Activity Resources: Strengthen activity resource construction, develop and utilize various resources, such as online resources, textbook resources, and community resources, to provide teachers with rich activity resources.

Strengthen Evaluation Reform and Establish a Scientific and Reasonable Evaluation System: Strengthen evaluation reform, establish a scientific and reasonable evaluation system, comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes and development potential, and stimulate students' learning interest and enthusiasm.

Strengthen Inter-school Cooperation and Realize Resource Sharing and Experience Exchange: Strengthen inter-school cooperation, establish collaborative learning communities, promote the communication and learning among teachers, realize resource sharing and experience exchange, and jointly promote the development of activity-based teaching methods.

Utilize Information Technology to Innovate Activity Forms and Teaching Methods: Make full use of information technology to innovate activity forms and teaching methods, provide students with richer learning experiences, and improve learning effects. For example, multimedia courseware can be used to present vivid reading situations, online platforms can be used for online reading and discussion, and online games can be used to stimulate students' learning interest.

6 Conclusion

Activity-based teaching method, as a student-centered teaching model that emphasizes interaction and participation, has significant advantages and great potential in improving the quality of English reading teaching in junior high schools. Although there are still some challenges in the application of activity-based teaching methods in Chinese junior high school English reading teaching, with the deepening of theoretical research, the advancement of practical exploration, and the improvement of teachers' professional qualities, activity-based teaching methods will surely play an increasingly important role in Chinese junior high school English reading teaching.

By strengthening theoretical research, practical exploration, teacher training, resource construction, and evaluation reform, we can better promote the application of activity-based teaching methods in junior high school English reading teaching, thereby stimulating students' reading interest, improving their reading comprehension ability and overall quality, and contributing to the cultivation of innovative talents with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills.

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