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Strategies for English Writing Teaching in Senior High School Based on the Deep Learning Theory

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Abstract

Deep learning is an effective path to cultivate students' key competence and build high-quality English classrooms. Targeting four prominent difficulties in senior high school English writing teaching, this paper takes six core characteristics of deep learning as the theoretical framework and selects the writing module of Unit 6 from Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press Book 2 as a teaching case. It proposes five targeted teaching strategies to transform students' surface mechanical writing into deep autonomous learning. The teaching design centered on deep learning can effectively stimulate students' writing motivation, help them construct systematic genre knowledge, and improve their comprehensive English writing ability.

Keywords

Senior High English Teaching; Writing Teaching Strategy; Deep Learning; English Subject Core Competencies

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standard for High Schools states, "The curriculum starts from students' learning interests, life experiences and cognitive levels, advocates the learning styles of experience, practice, engagement, cooperation and communication as well as the task-based teaching approach, develops students' ability to use the language comprehensively, and makes the process of students' language learning a process of forming the positive affective attitude, taking the initiative in thinking, practicing bravely, and forming the independent learning ability." This guideline sets the core direction for senior high English teaching, focusing on both linguistic competence and all-round competency development.

Writing teaching is a key component of senior high English education, and the adoption of continuation writing as a new test type has raised higher requirements for students' writing ability and overall English quality. To meet these requirements, teachers need to innovate writing teaching modes and push students' English

learning from surface-level to deep learning.

However, current writing teaching still faces four notable difficulties. First, students lack interest in writing. Second, they have not mastered systematic writing knowledge of structure and language expression. Third, they struggle to express thoughts in depth. Fourth, they find it hard to apply learned knowledge in actual writing.

Deep learning theory emphasizes student-centered learning, structured knowledge construction and in-depth thinking, and promotes the transformation from knowledge to ability and then to literacy (Wang et al., 2021). Aligned with the curriculum standard, this theory offers feasible ideas for solving the above problems. Based on six characteristics of deep learning and the writing lesson of Unit 6 from FLTRP Book 2, this paper explores targeted teaching strategies for senior high English writing.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. The Definition and Features of Deep Learning

The concept of deep learning was first proposed by American scholars Ference Marton and Roger Saljo in 1976. Based on reading tests with college students, they divided learning into surface-level learning and deep-level learning: the former focuses on mechanical memorization and repetitive training, while the latter emphasizes in-depth understanding, practical application and critical thinking.

Domestic scholars further expanded the theory. Guo Hua defined deep learning as a meaningful learning process where students participate actively and achieve full development, and summarized five core features: activity and experience, association and structure, essence and variation, transfer and creation, value and judgement. On this basis, Wang et al. (2021) added the sixth feature — internalization and communication, pointing out that learners internalize external knowledge through interactive input and output activities.

This paper takes the above six features as the analytical framework, and explores practical writing teaching strategies combined with the writing lesson in Unit 6 of FLTRP Book 2.

3. Teaching Strategies Based on Six Deep Learning Features

Combined with the six characteristics of deep learning and the four dilemmas in current senior high English writing teaching, this part puts forward targeted teaching strategies following the basic process of writing class, and takes the writing lesson of Unit 6 Earth First from FLTRP Book 2 as a specific example.

3.1. “Activity and Experience” -Design Varied Activities to Stimulate Writing Interest

The “activity and experience” feature highlights students’ dominant role in learning,

and emphasizes their active participation and personal experience in the learning process (Wang et al., 2021). In the pre-writing lead-in stage, teachers can set real situations related to the unit theme to connect students' daily life with writing tasks and reduce their writing anxiety. Meanwhile, diversified activities such as group discussion, brainstorming and theme-related video watching can help students accumulate writing materials and arouse their willingness to express.

In this lesson, teachers can set a real situation: the local government calls on the public to protect the environment, and students need to write a persuasive letter on an environmental issue. Before writing, students discuss common environmental problems in groups and sort out a preliminary writing outline under the teacher's guidance.

3.2. "Association and Structure", "Essence and Variation" - Master Writing Knowledge Through Model Essays

"Association and structure" and "essence and variation" require teachers to integrate relevant learning content, connect students' existing experience with new knowledge, help them link scattered language points, form a knowledge network and store it in memory in a structured way. To promote deep writing, teachers can provide model essays and guide students to analyze their structure, content and thematic meaning with mind maps, so as to help students build systematic writing knowledge.

In this lesson, after the discussion on environmental issues, teachers guide students to analyze the structure of the persuasive letter model essay in Unit 6. The model essay takes the "Clear Your Plate" campaign as its theme, and its core structure can be applied to environmental-themed writing. Students summarize the structure of a persuasive letter, including address, writing purpose, reasons, specific measures, action appeal and conclusion, and record the framework with a mind map.

3.3. "Internalization and Communication" - Deepen Writing Content Through Question-based Discussion

Internalization and communication means students absorb and internalize new knowledge structures through interactive activities to achieve deep learning (Gu, 2024). After mastering the basic structure of model essays, students need to apply the framework to their own writing and enrich the content through progressive question-based discussions. These questions should be designed from the surface to the deep level around the theme, and students need time to digest and internalize the discussion results.

In this lesson, after the model essay analysis, teachers guide students to discuss the following questions in groups:

Q1: What environmental problem do you choose to write about?

Q2: What are the causes of this environmental problem?

Q3: What solutions can be put forward for the problem?

Q4: What actions do you hope people will take?

After the discussion, students think about the structure and content of their essays independently and start to write.

3.4. "Value and Judgement" - Promote Writing Reflection Through Revision and Review

"Value and judgement" emphasizes that students reflect on and evaluate their learning content, process and results, make value judgments on their own experience and form correct values (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, revision and editing are necessary after writing. The evaluation subjects should be diversified, including self-review, peer review and teacher review, and the evaluation should cover both the written drafts and students' overall performance in class.

In this lesson, after finishing the persuasive letter, students first review and edit their own essays, and use colored pens to mark grammatical and structural mistakes. Then they exchange drafts for peer review, mark excellent expressions and put forward revision suggestions. In this process, students can not only get modification advice, but also learn good writing skills from peers. Finally, teachers give professional feedback on the revised drafts after class.

3.5. "Transfer and Creation" - Consolidate Writing Knowledge With Transferable Creative Homework

"Transfer and creation" focuses on learners' ability to transfer learned knowledge to real social situations and participate in problem-solving practice (Wang et al., 2021). To solve the problem that students easily forget writing structures and genre skills, two types of homework can be assigned. First, open writing tasks allow students to express their ideas freely and creatively. Second, transfer training tasks, such as writing a recommendation letter with the skills learned from persuasive letters, help students build comprehensive genre knowledge and develop creative thinking.

4. Conclusion

Teachers ought to attach importance to the cultivation of students' writing competence in senior high English teaching. Faced with four common writing teaching dilemmas, teachers can design complete writing lessons guided by six features of deep learning.

Diversified pre-writing activities stimulate students' writing willingness; model essay analysis based on mind maps helps students accumulate systematic writing structures and language expressions; hierarchical group discussion guides students to form in-depth writing content. After writing, multi-subject revision activities push students to reflect on their own writing weaknesses, while transfer and creation homework consolidates long-term memory of genre knowledge and develops creative thinking.

This set of teaching activities can shift students' mechanical surface writing to deep learning, solving the problems of low writing interest, scattered language knowledge and superficial expression. This research only adopts a single unit persuasive letter lesson as the case, and subsequent research can expand to more writing genres to enrich relevant teaching design paths.

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