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The Intrinsic Relationship between the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model and Its Implications for Junior High School English Reading Teaching

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Abstract

The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) explicitly advocate the implementation of the "English Learning Activity View," which encourages students, guided by thematic meaning, to engage in a series of comprehensive,and practical English learning activities—namely, learning and understanding, applying and practicing, and transferring and innovating—to achieve the deep integration of language, culture, and thinking. Meanwhile, the 5E Instructional Model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate), originating from science education, has gradually gained attention from English education researchers for its emphasis on students' active construction, inquiry cycles, and conceptual change. This study employs theoretical analysis to explore the intrinsic relationship between the two theories. The findings reveal that both theories share a common foundation in constructivism, converge on a student-centered teaching philosophy, and follow the cognitive logic of "experience—inquiry—internalization—creation" in their practical pathways. Furthermore, the five phases of the 5E model are deeply isomorphic with the three categories of activities in the English Learning Activity View. Based on this relationship, the study proposes implications for junior high school English reading instruction: teaching objectives should shift from "knowledge acquisition" to "meaning construction"; activity design should move from "stacking discrete steps" to "creating a continuum of activities" ; the teacher's role should transform from "knowledge transmitter"to "learning activity designer"; and evaluation should shift from "result-oriented"to "process-embedded."

Keywords

English Learning Activity View; 5E Instructional Model; junior high school English reading; intrinsic relationship; teaching implications

1. Introduction

The release of the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) marks a new phase in China's English curriculum reform. The new standards explicitly advocate the implementation of the "English Learning Activity View," which encourages students, guided by thematic meaning, to engage in a series of comprehensive,and practical English learning activities—namely, learning and understanding, applying and practicing, and transferring and innovating—to achieve the deep integration of language, culture, and thinking (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). The introduction of this concept not only responds to the demands of competence-oriented curriculum reform but also poses new challenges for English reading instruction: How can we shift from traditional "knowledge transmission" to "meaning construction" ? How can reading instruction truly become a process of active inquiry and deep engagement for students?

At the same time, the 5E Instructional Model, originating from the field of science education, has gradually gained attention from English education researchers for its emphasis on students' active construction, inquiry cycles, and conceptual change. Centered on "inquiry," the 5E model guides students through five interconnected instructional phases, leading them to start from their existing experiences, discover new knowledge through inquiry, construct understanding, transfer and apply their learning, and ultimately form a deep understanding of concepts. This instructional paradigm aligns closely with the English Learning Activity View advocated by the new curriculum standards. However, the intrinsic relationship between the two and their integrated application in English reading instruction have yet to be systematically explored. This paper aims to reveal the intrinsic relationship between the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model and, based on this, propose implications for junior high school English reading teaching.

2. The Theoretical Connotations of the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model

2.1. The Core Essence of the English Learning Activity View

First, The core essence of the English Learning Activity View can be summarized as "three levels, three characteristics, and one guiding principle."

(1) Three Levels: The English Learning Activity View divides learning activities into three levels: learning and understanding activities (including perceiving and attending, acquiring and organizing, summarizing and integrating); applying and practicing activities (including describing and interpreting, analyzing and judging, internalizing and using); and transferring and innovating activities (including reasoning and arguing, criticizing and evaluating, imagining and creating). These three levels reflect the cognitive development pattern from input to internalization to output, characterized by hierarchy and progression.

(2) Three Characteristics: The English Learning Activity View emphasizes that

learning activities should possess "comprehensiveness, interrelatedness, and practicality."Comprehensiveness means activities should integrate multidimensional goals such as language knowledge, language skills, cultural awareness, and thinking skills; interrelatedness means activities should be connected to thematic meaning, student experiences, and learning content; practicality means activities should emphasize "learning by doing,"enabling students to construct meaning through practice.

(3) One Guiding Principle: The English Learning Activity View emphasizes "thematic meaning"as the guiding principle. Thematic meaning serves as the central thread of activities; all activities should revolve around exploring thematic meaning, guiding students to achieve deep learning through this exploration.

2.2. The Core Essence of the 5E Instructional Model

The 5E Instructional Model consists of five instructional phases, each with clear teaching objectives and strategies.

(1) Engage: This phase aims to stimulate students' curiosity and learning motivation, eliciting their existing experiences and laying the groundwork for subsequent inquiry. Teachers can create contexts by displaying pictures, videos, or posing thought-provoking questions to guide students' thinking.

(2) Explore: This phase is the core of students' active inquiry. Guided by materials and questions provided by the teacher, students conduct investigations, observations, and discussions to form preliminary understandings. The teacher's role here is to provide materials, observe, and guide, rather than to lecture directly.

(3) Explain: This phase is crucial for concept construction. Based on their inquiry, students attempt to explain what they have learned in their own words, while the teacher introduces scientific terminology at appropriate moments to help students form accurate conceptual understandings.

(4) Elaborate: This phase aims to guide students in transferring newly learned concepts to new contexts, deepening understanding and expanding application. Teachers can design extension tasks encouraging students to apply their knowledge to solve problems in novel situations.

(5) Evaluate: Evaluation runs throughout the entire instructional process, encompassing both formative and summative assessment. Teachers understand students' learning through observation, questioning, self-assessment, peer assessment, and adjust instruction accordingly.

3. The Intrinsic Relationship between the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model

3.1. Shared Philosophical Foundation

Both the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model are rooted in constructivism. Constructivism emphasizes the active construction of knowledge,

the social interactivity of learning, the authenticity of contexts, and the social negotiation of meaning. Both theories hold that learning is not a passive reception of information but an active process of meaning construction based on students' existing experiences.

The English Learning Activity View emphasizes that students actively construct knowledge under the guidance of thematic meaning by participating in comprehensive, interrelated, and practical learning activities. The 5E Instructional Model emphasizes that students actively construct concepts through inquiry activities in a process of "learning by doing".Both embody constructivism's core tenets: learner agency, the constructive nature of experience, and the authenticity of context.

3.2. Congruence in Teaching Philosophy

Both theories share a common commitment to a "student-centered" approach. The English Learning Activity View advocates a shift from "teacher-centered" to "learner-centered" instruction, emphasizing that teaching activities should center on students' language practice, with the teacher serving as designer, organizer, and facilitator of activities. The 5E Instructional Model explicitly requires teachers to shift from being "knowledge transmitters" to "learning facilitators," providing scaffolding and support during students' inquiry processes.

Furthermore, both theories emphasize the learning process rather than mechanical drills. The three levels of activities in the English Learning Activity View reflect the cognitive development pattern from input to output, from understanding to creation; the five phases of the 5E model reflect a learning cycle from activating experience to constructing concepts to transferring application. Both view learning as a continuous process of development rather than a one-time event.

3.3. Isomorphism in Practical Pathways

Both theories follow the cognitive logic of "experience—inquiry—internalization—creation" in their practical pathways. The learning and understanding activities in the English Learning Activity View emphasize students' perception and acquisition of texts (experience); applying and practicing activities emphasize students' analysis, judgment, and use of knowledge in context (inquiry and internalization); transferring and innovating activities emphasize students' creative expression in authentic contexts (creation). In the 5E model, the Engage phase leads students into a context (experience); the Explore and Explain phases guide students to inquire and construct (inquiry and internalization); the Elaborate phase guides students to transfer and apply (creation); and the Evaluate phase runs throughout, promoting students' metacognitive development.

3.4. "Isomorphism in Different Forms": The Correspondence between the 5E Phases and the Three Activity Categories

Through in-depth analysis, a deep "isomorphism in different forms" can be observed between the five phases of the 5E model and the three categories of activities in the English Learning Activity View—although their manifestations differ, their cognitive essence is isomorphic.

Correspondence between Engage and Learning & Understanding Activities: The Engage phase aims to activate students' existing experiences, elicit learning motivation, and guide them into the learning context; the "perceiving and attending" aspect of learning and understanding activities similarly emphasizes activating existing experiences and guiding students' attention to the text's theme. Both point to "context activation and text perception," laying the foundation for subsequent learning.

Correspondence between Explore/Apply and Learning & Understanding/Applying & Practicing Activities: The Explore phase emphasizes students forming preliminary understandings through inquiry; applying and practicing activities emphasize students analyzing and judging using their learning in context. Both point to "meaning construction in practical application," serving as a crucial link from "perception" to "internalization."

Correspondence between Explain/Elaborate and Transferring & Innovating Activities: The Explain phase emphasizes students constructing conceptual explanations based on inquiry; the Elaborate phase emphasizes transferring learned concepts to new contexts; transferring and innovating activities emphasize higher-order thinking such as reasoning, arguing, evaluating, and creating. Both point to "concept deepening and competence development," serving as the key to achieving deep learning.

Correspondence between Evaluate and the Integration of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment: The Evaluate phase runs throughout the instructional process, emphasizing observation and feedback on students' learning processes; the English Learning Activity View similarly emphasizes the integration of teaching, learning, and assessment, where assessment should be embedded throughout the learning process to facilitate learning. Both are aligned in their approach to evaluation.

4. Implications for Junior High School English Reading Teaching

4.1. Teaching Objectives: From "Knowledge Acquisition" to "Meaning Construction"

Traditional junior high school English reading instruction often focuses on "knowledge acquisition"—students' mastery of vocabulary and grammar and their extraction of textual information. Such objectives struggle to cultivate students' reading literacy or meet the requirements of competence development.

Drawing on the integration of the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model, reading instruction objectives should shift from "knowledge

acquisition" to "meaning construction." Specifically, teaching objectives should be set with "thematic meaning" as the central thread, unifying the entire 5E process. Teachers should, based on an analysis of the text's thematic meaning, design learning activities that guide students to explore that meaning, enabling them to naturally acquire language knowledge, develop reading abilities, and cultivate thinking skills through the process of exploration.

For example, when reading a text about "environmental protection," teaching objectives should not simply be "master relevant vocabulary, understand the text content." Instead, they should aim for higher-order goals such as "understand the significance of environmental protection, develop environmental awareness, and be able to propose environmental suggestions." Such goals can be progressively achieved through the inquiry activities across the 5E phases.

4.2. Identify Activity Design: From "Stacking Discrete Steps" to "Creating a Continuum of Activities"

In current junior high school English reading instruction, teachers often design multiple isolated activities, such as "vocabulary learning—skimming—scanning—answering questions—discussion and sharing." Although these activities take various forms, they often lack intrinsic logical connections, making it difficult to create a coherent learning experience.

Based on the integration of the two theories, activity design should shift from "stacking discrete steps" to "creating a continuum of activities." Teachers should, centered on the thematic meaning, embed the three types of activities (learning and understanding, applying and practicing, transferring and innovating) into the 5E inquiry cycle, forming a progressive and interconnected chain of activities.

In the Engage phase, learning and understanding activities can be designed to activate students' existing experiences and guide them into the thematic context; in the Explore and Explain phases, applying and practicing activities can be designed to guide students to construct meaning through inquiry; in the Elaborate phase, transferring and innovating activities can be designed to guide students to apply their learning in authentic contexts; in the Evaluate phase, reflective assessment activities can be designed to guide students to self-evaluate their learning process. Through this "continuum of activities," students can achieve deep learning through a coherent learning experience.

4.3. Teacher's Role: From "Knowledge Transmitter" to "Learning Activity Designer"

In traditional reading instruction, teachers often assume the role of "knowledge transmitter," explaining vocabulary, analyzing grammar, and interpreting texts. Under this role orientation, students remain in a passive receiving position, struggling to become active learners.Based on the integration of the two theories,

the teacher's role should transform from "knowledge transmitter" to "learning activity designer." Specifically, teachers should: in the Engage phase, design contexts that stimulate students' curiosity and guide them into the theme; in the Explore phase, provide materials and question scaffolds, observe students' inquiry processes, and offer timely guidance; in the Explain phase, guide students to articulate their understandings in their own language and introduce conceptual terminology at appropriate moments; in the Elaborate phase, design challenging extension tasks encouraging students to transfer and innovate; in the Evaluate phase, guide students to engage in self-assessment and peer assessment, promoting their metacognitive development.This role transformation requires teachers to possess higher professional competence, including a deep grasp of textual thematic meaning, keen observation of students' learning processes, and careful design of learning activities.

4.4. Teaching Evaluation: From "Result-Oriented" to "Process-Embedded"

Traditional reading instruction evaluation tends to be "result-oriented,"focusing on students' test scores and final products. Such evaluation fails to reflect students' learning processes accurately or provide effective feedback for instructional improvement.Based on the integration of the two theories, teaching evaluation should shift from "result-oriented" to "process-embedded," incorporating multiple assessment methods within the Evaluate phase to promote students' metacognitive development. Specifically, teachers should: in the Engage phase, use questioning and observation to understand students' existing experiences and learning motivation; in the Explore phase, observe students' inquiry processes to understand their thinking paths and difficulties; in the Explain phase, use students' responses and expressions to assess their conceptual understanding; in the Elaborate phase, use students' transfer and application performance to assess their ability to apply knowledge; in the Evaluate phase, guide students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment to cultivate their metacognitive abilities.

5. Conclusion

Although the English Learning Activity View and the 5E Instructional Model differ in their disciplinary origins and manifestations, they share a deep intrinsic relationship in terms of philosophical foundation, teaching philosophy, and practical pathways. Both are rooted in constructivism, emphasize a "student-centered" approach, and follow the cognitive logic of "experience—inquiry—internalization—creation." The five phases of the 5E model are isomorphic in different forms with the three categories of activities in the English Learning Activity View, providing a theoretical basis for integrating the two approaches.For junior high school English reading instruction, the integration of these two theories holds significant practical

value. It can help teachers transform teaching objectives, optimize activity design, redefine their role, and improve evaluation methods, thereby better implementing the new curriculum standards and cultivating students' English core competencies. Future research could further explore specific instructional strategies for integrating the two theories and verify their teaching effectiveness through empirical studies.

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