



An Investigation into the Practice of Senior High School English Reading Teaching from the Perspective of the Task-Based Teaching Method

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Abstract

Task-based teaching plays a crucial role in enhancing students' English reading literacy. This paper elaborates on the concept and function of task-based teaching and, drawing on specific lesson examples, explores its pedagogical practice in senior high school English reading. By structuring the teaching process into three stages—"pre-task," "while-task," and "post-task"—the study aims to facilitate students' deep understanding of the text theme meaning, promote the dual de-velopment of reading ability and thinking quality, and ultimately improve students' English reading literacy.

Keywords

Task-Based Teaching; English Teaching; Reading Literacy; Senior High School English

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) emphasize that English language skills are a vital component of communicative competence. These skills encompass listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing, along with their integrated application. Among them, reading ability serves as the foundation and prerequisite for the development of other skills. The depth, breadth, and richness of reading are critical factors in enhancing students' thinking quality (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Task-based teaching, which emerged in the 1980s, is a teaching mode that designs learning content into various communicative tasks to plan, organize, and implement classroom activities (Chen, 2014). However, several problems still exist in current college English task-based reading teaching. First, the roles of teachers and students are often misdefined. Many teachers have not fully grasped the core essence of task-based teaching and continue to adopt a traditional indoctrination-style

approach, focusing on teacher explanations and text analysis in class rather than returning the initiative in learning to students. As a result, students passively receive knowledge, lacking opportunities for independent inquiry and collaborative discussion, and are unable to actively construct meaning in multi-text reading. This leads to insufficient learning motivation and low levels of participation. Second, the task-based teaching design is unreasonable. According to the application results of relevant experimental model constructions, the task-based teaching mode, characterized by its strong hierarchical structure, rich teaching links, and complex evaluation system, places higher demands on the time allocated for reading instruction. Compared with the traditional classroom mode, task-based reading instruction involves a refined arrangement of each stage—from text introduction, resource expansion, and corpus analysis to review and feedback. This detailed structuring affects the time distribution and outcome evaluation of teaching activities to some extent, thereby constraining the overall teaching progress. This study, based on a specific lesson example, explores the pedagogical practice of task-based teaching in high school English reading. Through the three stages of pre-task, while-task, and post-task, it aims to achieve a deep understanding of topic meaning, enhance students' Reading Ability, and cultivate their core competencies for English subject, thereby promoting the effective improvement of teaching efficiency.

2. Research on Task-Based Language Teaching

Existing literature indicates that many frontline teachers both in China and abroad have conducted research on the task-based teaching method. Internationally, Wang Yan (2024) employed research methods such as questionnaire surveys and teaching experiments to explore its role in cultivating senior high school students' English subject literacy. Yuqing Li (2022) conducted a detailed analysis of a demonstration lesson in a Chinese senior high school to investigate the implementation of the task-based language teaching method in English reading teaching. Similarly, Pengyan Wang (2022) illustrated its application in high school English reading teaching by designing a reading lesson.

Domestically, numerous researchers have examined the effectiveness of applying the task-based teaching method in senior high school English reading teaching through pedagogical practice. Researchers such as Liu and Wang (2021), and Hou (2022) demonstrated through practical teaching cases that the task-based teaching method in senior high school English reading teaching helps enhance students' proactiveness and develop their comprehensive English application ability. Hao (2023) conducted a study involving first-year students and teachers from a senior high school in Hanzhong, using research methods including questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and interviews, to investigate the current situation of cultivating students' key competencies in senior high school English reading

classes that adopt task-based teaching under the framework of key competencies. It can be seen that scholars at home and abroad have explored the application of the task-based teaching method in English reading teaching from multiple perspectives, including theoretical interpretation, lesson example design, and empirical investigation. These studies have laid a solid foundation for the present research. However, existing studies still focus primarily on verifying teaching effectiveness and exploring instructional models, while practical research that integrates specific lesson examples and systematically implements the pre-task, while-task, and post-task teaching links to deeply explore topic meaning and promote the cultivation of key competencies remains insufficient. Based on this, the present study, drawing on specific lesson examples, conducts an in-depth exploration of the pedagogical practice of task-based reading in senior high school English reading. The aim is to provide practical insights for optimizing the reading teaching process, enhancing students' reading ability and subject-related key competencies, and promoting the construction of a high-efficiency classroom.

3. Overview of the Task-Based Language Teaching

3.1. Concept of the Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching refers to a classroom approach in which teachers and students collaboratively complete various tasks, enabling students to acquire the target language naturally, enrich their communicative vocabulary, and improve their foreign language proficiency (Shen , 2005). This model takes specific tasks as the driving force for learning, uses the entire process of task implementation as the main thread of instruction, and evaluates teaching effectiveness based on the quality of task completion. It advocates “learning through use and promoting learning through use,” emphasizing cooperative interaction and active participation as the primary learning modes. By fully highlighting the student' s central role, it aligns with the student-centered philosophy and is highly consistent with the direction of the new curriculum reform.

3.2. The Role of the Task-Based Language Teaching

3.2.1. Stimulating Students' Learning Motivation and Cultivating Autonomous Inquiry and Problem-Solving Ability

Task-based teaching takes specific reading tasks as its starting point, while such reading tasks inherently involve gaps in knowledge, ability, skills, information, and cultural understanding. To complete these tasks, students must actively collect information, organize and synthesize it, and solve problems around the task, thereby effectively mobilizing their proactiveness. Clear task objectives enable students to perceive the value of learning, and through experiencing success and confronting their shortcomings, they are motivated to learn and develop an intrinsic drive for self-improvement, which strengthens their learning motivation.

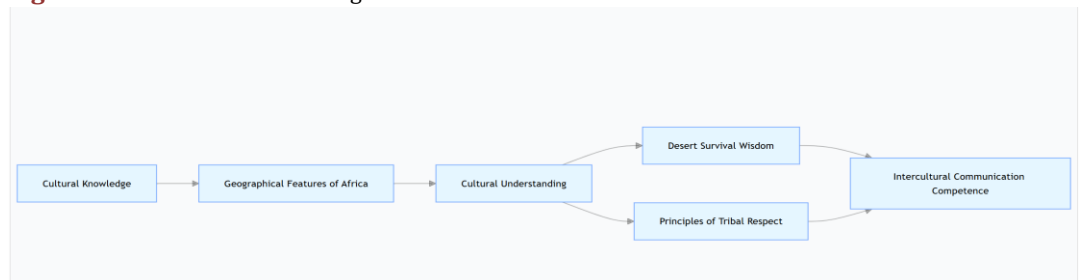
3.2.2. Enhancing Students' Comprehensive Qualities to Promote the Development of Language Application and Collaboration Abilities

In task-based teaching, students are required to assume corresponding responsibilities and specific roles. Through information exchange and opinion sharing in group activities, they cultivate a spirit of solidarity and collaboration as well as the ability to apply communicative strategies in cooperative work. Completing tasks involves the synthesis and application of various language skills and knowledge, which helps students improve their comprehensive language application ability. Moreover, engaging in diverse task activities captures students' attention, facilitates the practical application of theoretical knowledge, stimulates innovative thinking, broadens their English horizon, and further enhances their independent learning and cooperative inquiry ability, thereby strengthening their core competencies for English subject.

4. Application Strategies for Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching is generally divided into three stages or steps: pre-task, while-task, and post-task. Taking the reading text "An Adventure in Africa" from unit 2 of the grade 10 lower volume of the 1st edition as an example, this text belongs to the genre of letter writing. Its main content is that Toby writes a letter to his good friend Aihua, telling her about the travel plan to Africa that he and his brother made for the summer vacation. As the theme of this text is overseas travel, it broadens students' horizons, helps them learn about the customs and cultures of different countries, and fosters their globalization thinking. Consequently, it effectively enhances their cultural awareness and cross-cultural cognitive competence, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Cultural Understanding for Intercultural Communication



4.1. Pre-task Stage

4.1.1. Cultural Background Lead-in

The classroom introduction marks the beginning of the entire teaching activity and plays a crucial role, usually lasting no more than five minutes. This stage aims to be concise, engaging, and directly connected to the theme, enabling teachers to quickly capture students' attention and effectively stimulate their learning interest. The introduction can take various forms, such as reviewing old knowledge, free

discussion, multimedia presentation, and heuristic questioning. Its purpose is to clarify the theme of the teaching content and guide students to quickly enter an appropriate learning state (Xu, 2025).

In this stage, the teacher presents pictures or documentary clips of African natural scenery and wild animals, such as selected segments from Wild Africa, to guide students in guessing the travel destination and the content of the activities, and then answering the following two questions:

Q1: What do you know about Africa?

Q2: Do you want to travel to Africa? Why or why not?

The purpose of this step is to activate students' existing knowledge base, stimulate their interest in reading, and encourage them to use English to enhance their language proficiency. At the same time, it aims to broaden their understanding of African customs and practices, which differ from local culture, foster their cultural awareness, and establish both cognitive and emotional foundations for subsequent tasks.

4.1.2. Eliminating language barriers

Teachers guide students in learning and practicing the key vocabulary of the lesson through methods such as picture presentations and English-to-English translations.

Table 1. Words and Phrases

advantage 冒险, 冒险经历	arrange 安排	desert 沙漠, 舍弃	
fight 航班	camel 骆驼	extraordinary 不同寻常的	
dusty 尘土飞扬的	shade 阴凉处	brilliant 明亮的	
flashlight 手电筒	altogether 总共	protection 保护	
rough 汹涌的	helmet 头盔	supply 提供	
in case 万一	backpack 背包	defense 防御	
wildlife 野生动物	photograph 照片	atmosphere 大气层	
scare 使恐惧	life jacket 救生衣	African 非洲的	
up close 靠近地	mount 山峰		

SelectBased on the text content, important phrases and highlighted words (see table 1) are selected for students to gain a basic understanding and awareness. The aim is to help students comprehend and grasp the fundamental meanings of the vocabulary as well as their meanings in specific contexts. After completing this task, students will be able to read and understand the basic meaning of the text fluently in subsequent learning, thereby enhancing their language ability.

4.2. While-task Stage

4.2.1. Structured Reading

The first subtask requires students to skim the text to quickly identify the African place names that Toby passed through and to draw an African travel route map.

These place names are key information points in the text. By locating them, students can understand the structure and coherence of the narrative, thereby enhancing their comprehension of the text and expanding their knowledge of textual organization. After completing this task, the teacher presents the route from entering the Sahara Desert to reaching Amboseli National Park, emphasizing the important details at each key point, such as the winding road after Marrakech, the boundless desert landscape of Merzouga, and the vehicle incident near the campsite. The aim is to cultivate in students the courage to face the uncertainties of life.

Before starting the second task, the teacher first guides the students to reflect on the five basic elements of a travelogue text: “Where did you go?”, “What did you see?”, “Who did you meet?”, “How did you feel?”, and “What did you learn?”, in order to facilitate their comprehension of key reading points. Afterwards, students answer the following questions:

Q1: Who did Toby meet at Amboseli Park?

Q2: How did Toby feel after the vehicle accident?

By setting structured questions, students are reminded to use skimming techniques to grasp the text’s flow, organize the narrative according to its characteristics and basic elements, and extract the main information. This task aims to cultivate students’ learning ability to flexibly apply different reading strategies.

4.2.2. Close Reading and Analysis

In this stage, students are required to conduct a close reading of the text on the basis of skimming, capturing its details. The teacher guides students to reread the entire text, encouraging them to outline its overall structure and identify the topic sentence of each section through group discussion. Students are then directed to closely examine the passages depicting African savanna animals and the natural environment, focusing on the participle form of verbs such as chewing, pulling, and flapping, as well as rhetorical devices including personification, parallelism, and key verb phrases. They analyze how the author employs language details to portray the impressions and experiences of the journey. For example, the text states, “We saw elephants chewing grass quietly, pulling branches from trees, and flapping their huge ears in the hot wind.” Students are expected to identify similar structures and discuss the vivid imagery and dynamic effects conveyed through these participle forms.

By conducting an in-depth analysis of language details, students are guided to understand how the author employs specific verbs to depict the continuity and vividness of actions, thereby mastering the writing skill of “using verbs to represent dynamic scenes.” At the same time, students are encouraged to grasp the distinctive descriptions of the desert and grassland in the text, effectively reconstructing their understanding of the natural scenery of the African continent. This process not only enhances their language perception ability, literary

appreciation ability, and thinking depth but also provides language material and an expression paradigm for subsequent writing output.

4.2.3. Group Cooperative Debate

Group debate: “Is it advisable for a teenager to travel alone to an unfamiliar country?”

This group cooperative debate integrates reading and speaking in an organic way through group-based activities, fostering students’ cooperative learning spirit while enlivening the classroom atmosphere. By placing students of different proficiency levels in the same group, they can support one another and progress together, ensuring a relatively synchronized pace of the activity. Through preparing arguments for both sides, engaging in real-time responses, and delivering concluding statements, students develop their dialectical thinking, language organization ability, and cooperative communication ability. Completing this task also enables students to reflect on different perspectives during the debate, deepen their multidimensional comprehension of the theme “adventure travel,” and enhance their cross-cultural awareness and safety awareness.

4.3. Post-task Stage

4.3.1. Writing Training

Based on the knowledge learned in this lesson, write a personal travel experience log titled “My Adventure in China.” In the next class, conduct a peer review. Each pair of students should exchange their logs and, using the teacher-provided evaluation scale—which includes criteria such as content completeness, language accuracy, structure clarity, and creativity—assign a score and provide one positive comment along with one suggestion for improvement. Students should then revise their work according to the feedback and submit the final version.

This task, designed in the form of post-reading writing, selects a theme from the native culture that corresponds to the exotic culture presented in the source text, thereby complementing its content. It aims to further enhance students’ understanding and appreciation of their native culture, foster respect for different cultures, and cultivate an inclusive attitude toward cultural diversity, ultimately strengthening their intercultural communication awareness and competence. The peer review stage helps enhance students’ collaborative learning ability and reader awareness, ultimately promoting the simultaneous development of their comprehensive language application ability and creative expression ability.

4.3.2. Simulated Dialogue

The simulated dialogue should focus on language communication competence transfer, transforming the language knowledge from the text into practical conversational ability rather than simply retelling the plot. For example, based on

the learned content, students work in pairs, playing the roles of traveler Toby and his friend Aihua. The scenario is that Aihua has just received a letter from Toby sent from Africa and is very curious about the adventurous experiences described in it. Students are required to conduct a simulated dialogue around the following questions (each participant should speak at least four to five turns):

1. Aihua asks Toby about the most unforgettable experience he had in Africa and the reason for it.
2. Aihua asks whether Toby encountered any dangers or difficulties during his journey and how he dealt with them.
3. Toby gives Aihua one piece of advice for future solo travel and explains the reason behind it.

During the dialogue, students should make full use of the target vocabulary and expression structures learned in this lesson. Each group will have three minutes to prepare before giving a class presentation. After the students complete their simulated dialogue, the teacher will conduct a multidimensional evaluation of each group's discussion results, followed by error correction and summary.

Through role-play and simulated dialogue in authentic contexts, students are guided to reproduce, consolidate, and flexibly apply the language knowledge and expression strategies from the text. This process deepens their emotional engagement with the travel theme and enhances their safety awareness, thereby improving the fluency and appropriateness of their language communication. Teacher evaluation and timely feedback provide students with a clear direction of learning improvement, strengthen their sense of purpose and achievement in learning, and promote the coordinated development of language ability and thinking quality.

4.3.3. Self-Assessment

Based on their learning process and task performance in this lesson, students independently complete a self-assessment form (see Table 2). The form includes the following dimensions, each rated on a five-point scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree):

Table 2. self-assessment form

Assessment Dimension	Description	Score (1-5)		
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Language knowledge	I can accurately understand and use the key vocabulary and sentence patterns from this lesson.		
Reading skills	I can use strategies such as skimming and close reading to grasp the structure and details of the text.		
Task participation	I actively participated in tasks such as the group debate and simulated dialogue.		
Cooperative learning	I can communicate effectively and collaborate with group members through appropriate division of work.		
Theme understanding	I have gained a deeper understanding of the theme "adventure travel."		
Self-reflection	My greatest gain from this lesson is _____, and what I need to improve is _____.		

5. Conclusion

This study Through quantitative self-assessment and open-ended reflective summaries, students are guided to identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby enhancing their sense of purpose and responsibility in learning. The teacher's collection and analysis of these reflections also provide authentic teaching feedback, offering empirical evidence for optimizing task design and teaching strategies, and promoting mutual improvement in both teaching and learning.

In summary, applying the task-based teaching mode to senior high school English reading teaching is not only a concrete practice of implementing the new curriculum reform concept but also an important approach to effectively improving the quality of English reading teaching. Through the systematic design of the three stages—pre-task, while-task, and post-task—this study enables students to actively engage in pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities under the guidance of tasks, thereby becoming the true agents of English reading. During the reading process, students are able to exercise their learning initiative, purposefully engage with the text from multiple perspectives to construct knowledge, and simultaneously develop their thinking skills and pragmatic competence, thus effectively enhancing the overall effectiveness of English reading teaching. At the same time, this teaching mode places higher demands on teachers' professional competence. Teachers should develop a thorough understanding of the connotations and implementation procedures of task-based teaching, attend to the individual needs of students, and employ appropriate tasks to facilitate students' deep comprehension of reading materials. Through this process, students can accumulate reading experience and strategies, thereby enhancing teaching efficiency and realizing the full value of the task-based teaching mode.

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