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A Study on the Application Strategies of Task-Based Language Teaching in High School English Reading Instruction

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Abstract: Reading serves as a vital method for cultivating students' comprehensive English proficiency and critical thinking skills; however, traditional English reading classroom activities often lack diversity. This resulting in low student engagement. Knowledge acquired in such settings tends to be fragmented and purely text-based, failing to enhance students' overall literacy. The new round of curriculum reform further mandates that high school English reading courses adopt a student-centered approach, cultivate students' core subject competencies. And emphasize the development of reading skills, critical thinking abilities. And cultural awareness, thereby against this backdrop, applying the Task-Based Language Teaching to high school English classrooms can effectively address the shortcomings of traditional reading instruction and elevate students' reading proficiency and competence. Task-based teaching, guided by specific tasks, enables students to acquire knowledge and develop competencies through task completion. Therefore, this paper explores application strategies for task-based teaching in high school English reading classes based on its theoretical foundations and practical significance; it illustrates specific implementation steps through a real-world case study, aiming to leverage the strengths of this teaching approach to promote knowledge mastery, enhance language proficiency. And elevate students' overall competencies.

Keywords: Task-based Language Teaching; High school English reading; Application strategies; Student-centered learning; English reading competence

1. Introduction

The new curriculum standards set higher expectations for students' English proficiency development, and placing particular emphasis on cultivating their autonomous learning abilities. Innovative thinking. And inquiry skills, thereby against this backdrop, high school English teachers must not only impart knowledge but also empower students to actively acquire and apply it, constructing their knowledge networks through practical application; task-based teaching, grounded in constructivism. Advocates task-oriented classroom activities where students actively learn and construct knowledge through task completion [1]; therefore, applying task-based teaching in high school English reading classes enhances students' reading abilities while cultivating innovative thinking, independent learning skills, and collaborative capabilities, thereby fostering their overall development [2].

2. Overview of Task-Based Language Teaching

2.1. The Meaning of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching was proposed by N. S. Prabhu in the early 1980s. Its core principle involves designing authentic language tasks that enable students to learn language through task completion, emphasizing learning by doing-that is, mastering language skills through practical use, thereby it requires teachers to create appropriate

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language learning contexts based on students' actual circumstances, teaching content. And instructional objectives. While setting reasonable learning tasks [3]. This approach stimulates students to engage in self-directed learning, deepen their thinking. And genuinely master language knowledge [4].

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based teaching, as an educational philosophy, rests upon a profound theoretical foundation.

2.2.1. Constructivist Theory

Constructivism posits that learning is an active process of knowledge construction. Learners actively build their knowledge systems through interaction with the external world and integration of personal experiences [5]. Knowledge is not passively received but acquired through practice and experience [6], hence task-based language teaching, grounded in constructivism, designs learning tasks aligned with students' cognitive development levels, hence it enables learners to actively explore. Practice. And apply language during task completion, thereby promoting language knowledge acquisition and cognitive development [7].

2.2.2. Social Interaction Theory

Social interaction theory posits that language learning is a process of social interaction. Learners enhance their language abilities through interaction with others (such as teachers or peers), aided by scaffolding [8]; simultaneously, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory emphasizes that tasks learners can accomplish with assistance represent the critical area for language development [9]. Task-based language teaching achieves this by setting appropriate learning tasks and having students complete them in groups [10]. Through peer communication and collaboration, learners leverage others' support to fulfill tasks, thereby enhancing language proficiency through interaction. This approach stimulates learner interest and improves learning outcomes.

3. The Significance of Task-Based Language Teaching in High School English Reading Instruction

3.1. Enhance learning interest and increase classroom participation

In traditional reading classrooms, teachers occupy a dominant position, dictating the depth and pace of knowledge delivery. While students are often defined as passive recipients of information [11]. Lacking opportunities for discussion, exchange. And independent thinking, students exhibit low engagement and limited mental activity in class [12]. They frequently grow weary of such lessons, perceiving reading instruction as tedious and uninspiring [13], and applying task-based teaching methods to English reading classrooms can effectively transform this situation, hence in task-based teaching, the teacher's role shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator; guide, and and resource provider [14], and by designing appropriate yet challenging learning tasks and offering diverse learning resources, teachers create varied platforms for students to apply knowledge in practice, and this approach allocates more time and opportunities for students to engage in independent inquiry, collaborative exchange, and deep thinking, thereby effectively cultivating their self-directed learning abilities, collaborative communication skills, and critical thinking capabilities. Students, too, are no longer passive recipients of knowledge, and in completing these learning tasks. They must review and integrate what they have learned while engaging in active thinking and exploration. This process not only deepens students' understanding and application of knowledge but also significantly enhances their interest in learning and their participation in the classroom [15].

3.2. Optimize reading methods and enhance reading proficiency

In traditional English reading classrooms, teachers typically employ teaching methods that involve focusing on explaining vocabulary meanings and usage before reading. During reading, students are asked to translate the text. After grasping the general meaning of the article, students are then required to mechanically memorize key words and phrases from the reading passage. Alternatively, students are made to practice translation exercises using these vocabulary items in contexts lacking meaningful context, and in this learning process, students lack independent thinking and analysis of the text content. Their reading and critical thinking skills remain underdeveloped. Moreover, Without contextual support. Rote memorization and isolated language application fail to enable students to truly grasp the form, meaning; and usage of language, hence applying task-based teaching methods to actual reading classes enables students to read with specific tasks in mind. Teachers assign distinct tasks before. During; and after reading based on instructional objectives, and driven by these tasks at each stage, students proactively consider how to apply content from the text to complete these tasks, and this approach optimizes reading strategies, deepens comprehension and analytical skills. Elevates reading proficiency, and and fosters independent learning. Simultaneously. It helps students develop effective learning methods through practice, supporting their long-term academic growth.

3.3. Stimulate curiosity and cultivate innovative thinking

In traditional reading instruction models, teachers overly rely on a lecture-based teaching approach, hence teachers explain knowledge from the podium while students below can only passively absorb it. This stifles students' interest in learning, making the process tedious and discourages active thinking, hence over time. This leads to students lacking innovative thinking and inquiry skills, thereby task-based teaching, however, provides students with a series of learning tasks closely related to the reading text. This approach offers students a direction for inquiry and reflection; this allowing them to develop innovative thinking and investigative abilities while completing these tasks. Motivated by these text-related tasks, students engage more actively in reading, meticulously analyzing the structure and content of the text to grasp its deeper meanings. Task-driven focus directs their attention toward problem-solving and in-depth inquiry. This sustained, proactive engagement in critical thinking during the learning process stimulates their minds, ignites their passion for exploration. And cultivates their innovative awareness and capabilities.

3.4. Promote team communication and foster a spirit of cooperation

In task-based teaching, setting diverse and tiered tasks and conducting them in small groups can effectively enhance learning outcomes and strengthen students' collaborative spirit, thereby in reading classes, after designing reading tasks, hence teachers should divide students into different groups, helping them assign tasks within each group based on individual interests, strengths. And ability levels. Guiding students to complete tasks through discussion and exchange subtly improves their cooperative skills. During collaborative inquiry. Students continuously analyze learning tasks while exchanging ideas and debating solutions, and this process bridges gaps between peers, fosters peer-to-peer interaction. And encourages cooperative exchange and mutual assistance, and through such exchanges, students generate more ideas, cultivating their cooperative spirit and enhancing reading learning outcomes.

4. Application Strategies of Task-Based Language Teaching in High School English Reading Instruction

4.1. Set authentic and real-life tasks

Tasks are the core of task-based teaching. When designing and implementing tasks, teachers should adhere to principles of authenticity and real-life relevance, selecting learning tasks closely tied to students' daily lives. These authentic, concrete tasks should spark students' interest in learning and ignite their passion for inquiry. Furthermore, before initiating tasks, teachers must create authentic contexts conducive to task completion, enabling students to immerse themselves in integrating and applying learned content to accomplish tasks and solve problems, thereby this approach enhances students' mastery of knowledge and practical application skills, and consider the reading lesson *The Wild Within* from the *Understanding Ideas* section of Unit 6 *Survival* in the *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press English Elective Compulsory Book 1*. This reading explores human development versus animal survival—a theme within the broader human-nature relationship. It discusses the current state of wildlife, the survival challenges and threats they face. And the adverse impacts of human development on wildlife. After students complete reading analysis and comprehension, the teacher can assign a discussion task to facilitate knowledge transfer and application. This task involves students. In small groups. Discussing the reasons for wildlife appearing in urban areas and the potential hazards their presence may pose, based on the case of wildlife sightings in a Shanghai residential community. Students are then asked to identify practical methods to aid wildlife survival using their own experiences and knowledge, thereby following the discussion, one member from each group presents their findings to the class in the form of a speech. This task closely connects the article's content with students' daily lives; this providing an excellent platform for them to apply and demonstrate their language skills after learning theoretical knowledge. It helps students achieve comprehensive mastery and flexible application of the subject matter.

4.2. Set diverse and tiered tasks

In task-based reading classrooms, students must engage in activities centered around learning tasks. Therefore. Teachers should design diverse learning tasks to stimulate students' enthusiasm and interest; such as news interviews, thereby role-playing, thereby drama performances, speech contests. Poster creation, hence and debates, hence simultaneously, due to differences in students' background knowledge. Cognitive levels, interests. And learning needs, teachers must fully consider individual variations when designing and implementing tasks, thereby tasks should be tiered according to students' actual needs and ability levels, ensuring every student gains something from the activities. This approach enhances students' motivation and confidence, thereby take the reading lesson *After Twenty Years* from the *Developing Ideas* section of Unit 4 in the *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press's English Compulsory Book 1* as an example, hence this text recounts how criminal Bob disguises himself to meet his friend Jimmy for a reunion after twenty years, only for Jimmy to arrest him due to his police duties, thereby the content falls within the thematic context of *People and Society*. After comprehensively assessing the students' overall situation. The teacher should design tiered learning tasks to meet the needs of different students; teachers can tailor reading tasks into foundational, advanced, hence and extension tasks based on student proficiency levels; for students with weaker English foundations. Tasks may involve summarizing characters, settings. And plot elements, thereby for students with intermediate English proficiency, and tasks could involve presenting the entire plot development using a *Story Mountain* mind map; while for advanced learners, tasks could require articulating their views on whether Jimmy is a qualified friend and what qualities you believe a good friend should possess. This tiered approach ensures every student fully comprehends the text, provides opportunities for all to express their ideas, enhances classroom engagement, deepens understanding of the text and unit themes. And fosters collective progress among students.

4.3. Respect students' central role and encourage group discussion and collaboration

In task-based reading classes, teachers should respect students' active role, encouraging them to proactively identify, analyze, and solve problems while providing ample opportunities for discussion and presentation. Throughout this process, teachers must fulfill their responsibilities in guiding, assisting, monitoring, and evaluating students, enabling them to engage in self-directed reading learning under task-oriented guidance to develop and enhance their language skills; during task implementation, when learning tasks are complex, hence teachers should leverage students' agency by organizing group-based learning and inquiry activities, thereby this approach enhances learning efficiency while developing independent thinking and teamwork skills, and consider the reading instruction for *The Monarch's Journey from the Understanding Ideas* section of Unit 5, *Into the Wild*, in the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press's English Compulsory Book 1, and this expository text details the long-distance migration of the North American monarch butterfly, fitting within the human-nature thematic context. After students complete the text, teachers can assign a round-table conference task focused on monarch butterfly conservation. Working in groups, students assume one of four roles-moderator, monarch researcher, thereby reader. Or monarch butterfly-and discuss conservation strategies from their assigned perspective. Driven by this task, students embodying different roles will proactively consider conservation methods from their assigned viewpoint. Integrating knowledge from the text and background experience. Conducting the activity as a conference provides a realistic scenario where students have ample opportunity to express ideas, collaborate with peers. And listen to others' opinions and suggestions; this process deepens students' impression and comprehension of the reading material, enhances their critical thinking and reading proficiency, fosters strong collaborative skills. And promotes the comprehensive development of their overall literacy.

4.4. Expand Task-Based English Reading Teaching Resources

In the context of the new curriculum reform, teachers should increase opportunities and time for student-centered learning. Extracurricular learning content should also be expanded. Encouraging students to read more relevant materials outside the classroom to broaden their knowledge horizons. Learning tasks should motivate students to think critically and foster collaboration among peers, thereby cultivating reading habits and cooperative spirit. This approach continuously enhances students' initiative and self-directed learning abilities, ultimately improving their reading proficiency and effectiveness. In this era of rapid information technology advancement, teachers must develop proficiency in utilizing emerging technologies to support student learning. For instance, after completing a reading lesson on an article, teachers can employ artificial intelligence to gather supplementary materials related to the text's theme for students to explore during their free time. Additionally, teachers can assign reading tasks through recorded micro-lessons, prompting students to complete these activities while reading. The task-based approach encourages deeper reflection and analysis of the text, thereby ultimately enhancing students' reading proficiency.

5. Practical Application of Task-Based Language Teaching in High School English Reading Classes

Practice has shown that integrating task-based teaching methods into high school English reading classes can stimulate students' interest in reading, encourage active thinking, optimize reading strategies; and significantly enhance reading skills and proficiency. Take the reading instruction *Travelling around* in Unit 2 of the People's Education Press High School English Compulsory book 1 as an example, this section illustrates the practical application of task-based teaching methods in high school English reading classrooms.

5.1. Unit Analysis

The thematic context of this unit is Humans and Nature. All multi-modal texts in this unit are closely tied to the topic of tourism, covering content such as attraction introductions, travel planning, trip preparations, hence and tourism industry development. Through studying the unit texts, and students will gain knowledge about tourist attractions and travel planning. Learn to describe destinations from multiple perspectives, develop targeted itineraries based on travel destinations. And enhance their planning skills and language expression abilities.

5.2. Content Analysis

The reading section comprises two main parts, thereby the first part consists of an introductory text covering Peru's geographical location, topographical features, tourism resources, and cultural history. The second part features a tourism brochure for Peru, detailing four distinct travel itineraries showcasing the country's unique attractions.

5.3. Student Analysis

Freshmen entering high school exhibit high enthusiasm for learning, strong desire to express themselves, and active classroom participation. They show considerable interest in travel topics. Through prior English studies, and they have accumulated foundational language knowledge, enabling basic communication with relatively high accuracy and fluency. However, at this stage, they have limited travel experience and are unfamiliar with foreign attractions. Most students lack basic knowledge about Peru's geography, culture. And customs. They also do not know what elements should be included in a travel plan. How to develop a reasonable itinerary. And are not very familiar with expository texts or travel guide materials.

5.4. Learning Objectives

- 1) After reading this introductory article about Peru, students will deepen their understanding of the country and broaden their horizons.
- 2) Extract the core content from expository and travel guide texts, grasping their textual characteristics and linguistic features.
- 3) Learn to introduce other travel destinations from perspectives such as geographical location. Tourist attractions; culinary culture, and and local customs after reading the article.
- 4) Master the use of travel brochures and attraction profiles to research destinations, learn to search various resources, and and independently develop a reasonable travel plan based on the chosen destination.

5.5. Teaching Process

5.5.1. Pre-task Stage

During the introduction, the teacher first plays a video showcasing Peru's tourist attractions. This allows students to gain an initial understanding of the country's geography, history, culture. And landscapes through visual media, immersing them in its scenic beauty and sparking their interest in reading. The teacher then poses the question: 'Besides videos, what other methods can help us learn about Peru?' This naturally transitions into the text content.

5.5.2. Task Implementation Stage

Before students begin reading, the teacher assigns the reading task: "Imagine you are a tour guide introducing Peru to your visitors. What aspects would you highlight?" After clarifying the task, the teacher guides students to read two texts-an introduction to Peru and a travel guide-and provides a table summarizing basic information about Peru,

including its location, geographic features, history, and language (see Table 1). Students work in groups to summarize the content of both texts in the table.

Table 1. Information Summary Table for the Reading Task on Peru.

Category	Information
Location	_____
Geographic features	1. _____
	2. _____
	3. _____
History	In the 1400s and 1500s: _____ From the 1500s to 1821: _____
Language	_____

Students are required to extract key information from the texts and complete the table by filling in the blanks collaboratively, and they then proceed with the reading task with a clear division of labor within their groups. Each group member is responsible for summarizing one aspect of Peru's characteristics and presenting the information in tabular form. After completing the task, the teacher invites several groups to present and share their completed tables and guides the class to summarize the stylistic features and linguistic characteristics of the two texts.

Within this specific context, students' reading motivation is significantly enhanced. Completing the reading task in groups fosters collaboration and communication among students; this thereby improving both reading efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, presenting the reading results in a tabular format helps students systematically organize the structure and content of the text, and this deepens their understanding of both the content and stylistic features of the reading materials.

Next, the teacher assigns the second task: as a tour guide. Please create personalized travel plans for Peru based on the characteristics of the four tourists below, thereby and explain the reasoning behind each plan, and within their groups. Students must first carefully analyze and document the different tourists' needs, review previously learned information about Peru. And gather additional relevant knowledge. They then arrange suitable attractions. Sightseeing sequences, hence transportation methods, travel routes, dining arrangements, and accommodation options based on each tourist's requirements. Subsequently, the teacher randomly invited students to the front to share their plans. Having students create itineraries tailored to different tourists' needs helps them apply learned knowledge to real-world scenarios, honed their abilities to gather, filter, and synthesize information. And enhanced their language expression skills through public presentation.

5.5.3. Post-task Stage

During the post-task phase. The teacher assigns tasks at varying difficulty levels, thereby this allowing students to select one based on their ability, and students choose one of the following three tasks: 1. Share a memorable travel experience in English. 2. Create an Ideal Travel Plan in English, thereby including destination introduction. Budget allocation, transportation, dining. And lodging arrangements, presented as a PowerPoint. 3, hence write an English narration script introducing a tourist attraction, covering its historical background, and unique features, cultural significance, etc. And present it via a recorded video. Allowing students to select tasks suited to their abilities stimulates their learning interest, thereby enhances learning outcomes. And promotes individualized development.

6. Conclusion

In the context of the new era, applying task-based teaching methods to high school English reading classes can significantly boost students' enthusiasm for reading. Task-oriented English reading instruction guides students to actively engage in critical thinking. This thereby enhancing their cognitive abilities and effectively improving reading

proficiency, and completing tasks in small groups greatly promotes communication and collaboration among students, strengthening their teamwork spirit and skills. Therefore, high school English teachers should design authentic, diverse. And tiered learning tasks while fully considering individual student differences; during task implementation, teachers should create realistic contexts conducive to task completion and provide varied learning resources to support student learning, hence this approach builds a new English reading classroom that fully engages students' enthusiasm, thereby promoting their cognitive development, thereby this enhancing their language application skills, hence and achieving the goal of cultivating their comprehensive literacy.

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