

# Teaching Strategies for Senior High School English Reading based on Deep Learning

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## Abstract

English reading plays a pivotal role in senior high school education. To enhance learning outcomes, it is crucial to adopt deep learning approaches in English reading instruction. This methodology encourages students to engage in critical thinking, apply knowledge, and appreciate textual significance. Taking the text "Time for a change?" as an example, this paper explores teaching strategies for senior high school English reading based on deep learning principles. These strategies prioritize nurturing learners' English core competencies, fostering higher-order thinking, and enabling independent problem-solving. Through layered text analysis, knowledge transfer, and practical application, learners deepen their understanding and enhance their reading abilities. Additionally, the paper emphasizes self-reflection and multidimensional evaluation, guiding learners to view learning as a continuous process and adjust strategies accordingly.

## Keywords

Deep Learning; English Reading Teaching; Teaching Strategies.

## 1. Introduction

Since the reform of the high school English curriculum, the issue of teacher-centered teaching methods has been improved to some extent, providing learners with more opportunities for participation and experience. However, problems such as fragmentation, superficiality, and labeling still exist in English reading instruction, as teachers have neglected the cultivation of learners' critical thinking and proper values (Wang, 2021). This results in learners only scratching the surface of knowledge points after reading, failing to transfer and apply their knowledge, and being unable to appreciate the thematic significance and deeper implications of the text. With the implementation of the new high school English curriculum standards, the question of how to effectively cultivate learners' higher-order thinking and develop their autonomous learning abilities in high school English reading classes has attracted widespread attention from numerous scholars and front-line teachers. The proposition of deep learning offers a new perspective for addressing the issues in high school English reading instruction and nurturing learners' core competencies in the English discipline. Deep learning refers to a meaningful learning process where learners, guided by teachers, actively engage in deep processing of the information provided, engage in highly immersive thinking, and continuously expand and extend their learning. Its core feature is higher-order thinking, while it also emphasizes the cultivation of individuals, which aligns well with the relevant concepts of the new curriculum standards.

Based on the concept of deep learning, this paper aims to explore teaching strategies for high school English reading and attempt to construct a deep learning-based teaching model for high school English reading. By designing meaningful learning activities, learners are encouraged to experience the joy of language learning through participation. These activities facilitate the construction of knowledge networks through association and structuring, allowing learners to delve into the essence and variations of language. Simultaneously, the model cultivates learners'

value judgments and cross-cultural communication skills. With these objectives, the paper hopes to enhance learners' English reading abilities, foster their critical thinking and innovative capabilities, and lay a solid foundation for their future learning and development.

## **2. The Concept and Features of Deep Learning**

Deep learning was initially proposed by American educators, who believed that deep learning implies that learners should pay more attention to the connections between learning contents, focus on understanding, and the significance of the learning process. The American educators, Marton and Saljo (1976), were the first to differentiate between shallow and deep learning. They argue that learners tend to rely more on rote learning than shallow learning. Biggs (1999) summarized "deep learning strategies," which encompass designing standards, conducting assessments, fostering a positive atmosphere, activating prior experience, acquiring new knowledge, engaging in deep processing, and evaluating outcomes.

In China, deep learning is defined as the ability of learners to critically accept new ideas and knowledge based on deep understanding, and integrate these new acquisitions into their existing cognitive frameworks. They are not only capable of perceiving the intrinsic connections among knowledge but also adept at applying this knowledge flexibly to new learning contexts. Guo (2016) views deep learning as learners' active and voluntary engagement in learning, through which they achieve comprehensive personal development and healthy growth through meaningful learning processes. She identifies five prominent characteristics of deep learning: activity and experience, association and structure, essence and variation, transfer and creation, as well as value and evaluation. Although deep learning is defined from various perspectives, its common denominator lies in its orientation toward the development of higher-order thinking. It requires learners to actively construct structural knowledge based on understanding and, through the engagement of higher-order thinking, creatively analyze and express ideas. Furthermore, it involves the meaningful learning process of transferring internalized knowledge into real-world contexts. Deep learning in the English language focuses on how to apply critical thinking to solve complex problems in the real world.

## **3. Relationship between Deep Learning and English Reading Instruction**

Deep learning refers to the process of deepening learners' understanding of academic knowledge on the basis of ensuring full comprehension, establishing new knowledge and ideas with critical characteristics, integrating more diversified content into their original cognitive structures, and thereby achieving effective transformation of old and new knowledge (Luo, 2021). This ultimately enhances learners' learning abilities and optimizes their learning outcomes. In the context of English reading instruction, deep learning has been widely applied. It emphasizes learners' profound understanding and critical thinking of reading materials, encouraging them to delve deeply into the meanings and arguments presented within the texts. This not only fosters higher-order thinking skills but also enables learners to grasp the main idea, structure, and details of an article more effectively. Moreover, deep learning in English reading allows learners to transfer their linguistic knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and reading skills into new contexts for creative application. The cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills of learners in language learning are of great significance in cultivating talents with a global perspective in the new era (Wang et al., 2021). This contributes to improving their ability to use language in different contexts and enhances their innovative capacity. By questioning, inquiring, and reflecting on the texts, learners deepen their understanding and cultivate the ability to think independently and solve problems. Deep learning emphasizes active engagement, wholehearted involvement, and meaningful learning processes, which align well with the New English Curriculum Standards that stress student-

centered instruction, exploration of thematic meaning, and development of critical and innovative thinking. Integrating the characteristics of deep learning with English reading instruction serves as a prerequisite for exploring strategies for designing effective reading instruction.

In conclusion, deep learning and English reading are closely linked. Implementing the principles of deep learning in English reading instruction can significantly boost learners' reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and innovation, laying a solid foundation for their future academic pursuits.

#### **4. Teaching Strategies for Senior High School English Reading based on Deep Learning**

This part will provide a detailed explanation using the English reading instruction of “Time for a change?” from unit 2 of the new textbook for senior high school English, Book 2, published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, as an example. The focus will be on how deep learning principles can be integrated into English reading instruction to enhance learners' comprehension, critical thinking, and engagement with the text.

##### **4.1. Determine Learning Objectives and Clarify Core Issues**

Senior high school English reading instruction, centered around deep learning, ought to prioritize nurturing learners' English core competencies by emphasizing their active engagement, fostering the development of higher-order thinking skills, and enabling the spontaneous construction of the ability to individually solve problems (Wang, 2022). In the process of devising learning objectives, teachers ought to integrate reading discourse, deep learning, and learning activities, ensuring that these objectives serve not merely as goals for learning, but also as reliable scaffolds for learners throughout their learning journey.

As for the text of “Time for a Change?”, the text initiates with a social observation about the shift in place for family dinners during the Spring Festival celebrations. Subsequently, it delves into two letters written by two individuals. These two persons, differing in age and occupation, articulate contrasting perspectives. Despite their differing choices of places for the family dinner, both cherish the time spent with their families. The purpose of this article is to stimulate learners' deep thinking, enable them to comprehend the profound meanings of traditional festivals, and analyze the changes in customs of traditional festivals brought about by the evolution of times. After carefully studying and analyzing the text, teachers need to formulate corresponding learning objectives based on the article's position within the unit, its connections with other units, as well as the actual teaching content and learners' situations, as follows. By the end of the class, learners will be able to:

- (1) sort out the factual information in two letters, including who they are, what points of view they hold, and why they think of that.
- (2) compare two different opinions and analyze the true meaning of celebrating traditional festivals by answering a chain of questions.
- (3) summarize the structure of two letters within the help of the teacher and apply it to their own writing.
- (4) logically express views on another change in the Spring Festival and foster a dialectical view on it through deep thinking.

The above learning objectives are student-centered, starting from the shallow information of the text and gradually transitioning to deeper information, guiding learners to analyze the article layer by layer and think deeply.

## 4.2. Establish Connections between New and Existing Knowledge

Deep learning theory emphasizes the connection between new and prior knowledge. Teachers should reasonably integrate resources and create personalized thematic contexts to help learners link their existing knowledge with new knowledge, continuously updating and refining their knowledge structure, and stimulating learners' interest in learning before reading (Chen, 2024). In the text of "Time for a Change?", teachers can create personalized thematic contexts by asking learners to reflect on their own experiences or opinions related to the celebrations of the Spring Festival. For example, learners can be prompted to share their thoughts on what they usually do during the Spring Festival and what may be changed in the Spring Festival. This not only activates learners' prior knowledge but also activates their reading interest.

Additionally, teachers can use visual aids to visually represent the connections between new and existing knowledge. These aids can help learners see the big picture and understand how the information in the text fits into a broader context. By integrating these strategies, teachers can effectively activate learners' interest in English reading and facilitate deep learning through the establishment of meaningful connections between new and prior knowledge.

## 4.3. Analyze the Text Layer by Layer and Explore the Essential Connotation

Deep learning emphasizes that learners should not be satisfied with merely mastering superficial knowledge, but should explore the deep logic behind knowledge, grasp the essential relationship between knowledge, and be able to draw inferences about other cases, thereby promoting the development of thinking quality. In senior high school English reading classes, teachers should guide learners to analyze the text layer by layer and understand the connections and differences between paragraphs. When designing the process of reading teaching activities, teachers should follow the principle of gradual progress and deepen from the shallow to the deep information of the text, triggering learners to think deeply and build logical frameworks. Besides, to assist learners in understanding, mastering, and transferring knowledge, teachers need to design holistic, interconnected, and progressive learning activities (Fu et al., 2023).

In the text of "Time for a Change?", teachers can first design a skimming activity, allowing learners to find the topic sentence of each letter so that they can quickly grasp the main idea of the article and obtain the most intuitive information, and then transition to a chain of questions, enabling learners to grasp the textual information in a gradual and deepening manner through each question. Teachers should design questions that are interconnected and progressively challenging. For example, teachers can design the following questions:

- (1) What is the primary concern expressed in the first letter?
- (2) How does the author of the second letter respond to the concerns raised in the headline?
- (3) Can you identify any common themes or issues discussed in both letters?
- (4) In what ways do the authors of the letters express their opinions and emotions?
- (5) Why do we celebrate traditional festivals?

Based on the above five questions, learners are guided to think deeply about their own experiences step by step. The first two questions are designed to guide learners to identify the different views of the two letters on whether to eat New Year's Eve dinner at home or in a restaurant and analyze the reasons for their different views from a dialectical perspective. Learners are facilitated to find out the significance of having the New Year's Eve dinner by answering the third question. Through in-depth analysis of the text, it is found that as times change and people's ideologies evolve, the place for having the New Year's Eve dinner also shifts accordingly. Yet, despite the change in venue, the essence of family reunion and the joyful festive atmosphere remain constant, which is the significance of celebrating the Spring Festival. Question four directs learners to consolidate the structure of the two letters, assisting them in

structuring their own compositions effectively. The last question guides learners to analyze the significance of celebrating traditional festivals by combining their own experiences and the information provided in the text. The five questions guide learners to deeply reflect on their experiences, analyze differing views on New Year's Eve dinner locations, understand the significance of family reunions during the Spring Festival, consolidate letter structures, and explore the meaning of celebrating traditional festivals through personal experiences and text analysis.

By asking these interconnected and progressively challenging questions, teachers can guide learners to engage in deep reading and critical thinking, encouraging them to explore the multifaceted aspects of the text and construct their own meanings based on their understanding and experiences. This approach not only enhances learners' comprehension and retention of the textual information but also cultivates their critical thinking skills and ability to apply knowledge to new situations.

#### **4.4. Emphasize the Transfer of Knowledge and Enhance Practical Abilities**

The feature of deep learning emphasizes that learners can apply what they have learned and transfer this knowledge to solve various complex problems encountered in the real world. When designing teaching steps, teachers should closely integrate with learners' real-life experiences, follow up on topics that learners are concerned about, leverage their existing life experiences, and guide them to transfer their knowledge to different subjects and apply it in real life (Zhang, 2022). They should combine the knowledge they have learned in the classroom with their practical experience.

For instance, in the text "Time for a Change?", teachers can guide learners to engage in post-reading writing activities, stimulating their creativity and imagination. They assign a composition that aligns with the theme of the reading text and, before writing, instruct learners on writing skills such as essay structure, the use of transitional phrases, and consistency in tense. After completing their writing tasks, learners conduct peer reviews, followed by the teacher correcting errors in their compositions. Theme-based writing not only enables learners to appreciate the significance of celebrating traditional festivals more deeply but also fosters the enhancement of their language expression abilities, effectively transferring this experience to other similar contexts for better application and expansion of their linguistic skills. Additionally, teachers can lead learners in an engaging discussion on an intriguing topic: "Change and Constancy," which involves a dialectical view of social development. Learners are encouraged to freely express their opinions, engaging in discussions that are logically rigorous and well-organized.

#### **4.5. Reflect on Classroom Behavior and Implement Scientific Evaluation**

The feature of deep learning emphasizes that learners should continuously reflect on their learning process, conduct multidimensional assessments of their performance, and dare to criticize and question. Teachers should actively guide learners to participate in self-evaluation, peer-to-peer evaluation, and other activities so that they can view learning as a continuous, long-term process, and be able to adjust their learning strategies in a timely manner based on feedback from teachers and classmates, test their learning outcomes, gradually master learning methods, and develop their own learning styles. For example, teachers can implement a comprehensive and objective evaluation system through a series of well-designed classroom activities, such as collecting feedback from learners before, during, and after reading. For those learners who perform well, teachers will give timely encouragement and rewards to stimulate their motivation to continue to improve. In addition, when learners are confused about the content they are learning, teachers should provide timely guidance to help them overcome difficulties and ensure that every student can make substantial progress in knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

The application of deep learning principles in senior high school English reading instruction holds immense potential for enhancing learners' comprehensive abilities. By prioritizing student-centered instruction and fostering critical and innovative thinking, deep learning aligns well with the New English Curriculum Standards. Through detailed analysis of the text "Time for a Change?" from Unit 2 of Book 2 of the new senior high school English textbook published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, this paper has illustrated how deep learning can be integrated into English reading instruction. By determining learning objectives that prioritize nurturing learners' English core competencies and actively engaging them in the learning process, teachers can guide learners to think deeply and analyze the profound meanings of texts. Establishing connections between new and existing knowledge through personalized thematic contexts and visual aids further stimulates learners' interest and facilitates their understanding. Moreover, analyzing the text layer by layer and exploring its essential connotation encourages learners to grasp the deep logic behind knowledge and develop their thinking quality. Emphasizing the transfer of knowledge and enhancing practical abilities through post-reading writing activities and theme-based discussions not only fosters learners' language expression abilities but also allows them to apply their learning in real-world contexts. Additionally, reflecting on classroom behavior and implementing scientific evaluation through self-evaluation, peer-to-peer evaluation, and teacher feedback ensures that learners view learning as a continuous, long-term process and adjust their learning strategies accordingly.

In conclusion, integrating deep learning principles into senior high school English reading instruction significantly boosts learners' reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and engagement with the text. This approach not only aligns with the demands of the New English Curriculum Standards but also lays a solid foundation for learners' future academic pursuits and personal development.

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