

Whole Book Reading Instruction: Strategy Analysis of Guided Reading, Advancement, and Interaction

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Abstract

This article explores the importance and practical methods of whole book reading as emphasized in the “Compulsory Education Chinese Language Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition).” Through systematically designed introductory, advancement, and discussion classes, teachers can effectively stimulate students’ interest in reading, enhance their comprehension abilities, and cultivate critical thinking skills. By providing detailed teaching cases, such as “The Story of Reynard the Fox” and “Charlotte’s Web,” this article demonstrates how to guide students from initial interest to in-depth content exploration and then to expanded reading experiences. These methods not only improve students’ reading skills but also foster a deeper appreciation for literature.

Keywords

Whole Book Reading, Reading Comprehension, Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

In recent years, the global education community has increasingly focused on cultivating students’ comprehensive reading abilities. In China, the “Compulsory Education Chinese Language Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)” particularly emphasizes the importance of whole book reading in enhancing students’ reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. This curriculum standard encourages students to broaden their reading horizons, select high-quality reading resources, and foster an interest in reading through whole book reading to improve their reading taste. Additionally, it sets specific extracurricular reading volume requirements to promote extensive reading outside the classroom.

Research has shown that whole book reading instruction significantly enhances students' reading motivation and comprehension abilities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The implementation of three fundamental class types—introductory reading, reading advancement, and discussion sessions—not only effectively stimulates students' interest in reading but also promotes a deeper understanding of the reading materials and expands their reading perspectives. The effective linkage between these class types collectively advances the goals of whole book reading instruction.

Although the benefits of whole book reading have been widely recognized, systematic research on the specific strategies and application effects of the three class types—introductory reading, reading advancement, and discussion sessions—in different teaching environments is still insufficient. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the specific teaching strategies of these three class types and propose some preliminary instructional design suggestions. It is hoped that these suggestions can provide educators with references for implementing whole book reading instruction in different environments, thereby enhancing students' interest in reading and their comprehensive reading abilities.

2. Strategy Analysis of Guided Introductory Reading Classes

In the “introductory reading” phase, carefully selected book introductions and refined teaching strategies aim to maximize students' reading interest. The core of this stage is how to effectively utilize the teacher's guidance to create positive expectations for reading, thereby motivating students to actively explore the book's content and laying a solid foundation for in-depth reading and understanding.

2.1. Engaging Introductions to Spark Interest

In exploring whole book reading instruction, the effectiveness of introductory reading classes significantly depends on the ability to spark students' interest in reading. This paper suggests using teaching strategies based on students' everyday experiences to effectively integrate with the book's content. The core of this method is to leverage students' prior knowledge of specific themes or stories, such as animal stories, to connect these with new reading materials, thereby capturing students' attention and promoting active exploration of the reading material.

Research has shown that introduction strategies closely related to the book's theme can significantly enhance student engagement. For example, when introducing books on scientific exploration, presenting scientific phenomena or questions from daily life—such as why the sky is blue or the mechanism of photosynthesis—can quickly capture students' attention and naturally lead them into the scientific discussions in the book. Similarly, when introducing historical books, displaying historical images or artifacts related to the book's content can effectively stimulate students' curiosity and prompt them to delve deeper into

the historical context depicted in the book.

These teaching strategies, based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, emphasize building a bridge between students' existing knowledge and new knowledge, providing a smooth path into the world of the book (Afflerbach, 1990). This method not only enhances the interactivity and diversity of the course but also fosters students' intrinsic interest in reading and their desire to explore the book's content in depth.

2.2. Utilizing Book Covers for Initial Perception

In whole book reading instruction, the elements of the book cover—images, titles, and contents—not only provide students with initial clues about the story but also play a crucial role in sparking their reading interest and guiding their understanding of the text structure.

Studies have demonstrated that visual and textual information on book covers can effectively arouse students' curiosity and stimulate their willingness to read the entire text (Artelt, Schiefele, & Schneider, 2001). For example, presenting key characters or classic scenes from the cover of "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" can effectively pique students' interest in exploring the story's background and character relationships. By posing questions and using the table of contents to predict the plot, teachers can further enhance students' understanding of the book's theme and style.

Additionally, using schema theory—particularly how existing knowledge frameworks influence the understanding of new information—can explain how the book cover serves as an effective tool to guide students into deeper reading. The information provided by the book cover acts as an initial framework, helping students connect new reading material with their existing knowledge and experience, thereby promoting a deeper understanding and critical thinking about the book's content.

Therefore, it is recommended that educators effectively utilize the various elements of book covers when designing introductory reading classes to create a richer and more engaging reading experience for students. This will naturally encourage students to delve deeper into the book's content, making in-depth exploration a natural process.

2.3. Delving into Texts and Appreciating Excerpts

In the introductory reading classes of whole book reading, strategies for initial text exploration and perception are designed to spark students' interest in reading and facilitate their preliminary understanding of the book's content. Based on text interaction theory and constructivist learning theory, educators can adopt teaching strategies that promote student-text interaction and stimulate students' interest in exploring reading materials. The core of this teaching strategy is for teachers to carefully select suitable text excerpts based on students' interests and the core content of the book, and to guide students in pre-

dicting, imagining, and exploring the text through guided questioning and group discussions.

For example, when introducing “The Story of Reynard the Fox,” teachers can focus on key plot points, guiding students to explore possible interactions between Reynard and other characters, thereby promoting logical thinking and understanding of character relationships.

To effectively implement these teaching strategies, teachers need to consider students’ reading levels and background knowledge, adjust teaching methods accordingly, and ensure the achievement of teaching goals through continuous interactive feedback. This paper emphasizes the importance of interaction between educators and students, as well as between students and texts, and leverages constructivist learning theory to reinforce the role of active exploration and knowledge construction in sparking reading interest and initial understanding.

In summary, employing text exploration and perception strategies in introductory reading classes can effectively spark students’ interest in whole book reading and facilitate their preliminary understanding of the book’s content. This gradually builds a connection between students and the book, thereby stimulating their intrinsic motivation to read and strengthening their strong desire to complete the entire book.

2.4. Building Suspense and Recommending Further Reading

In the exciting climax and concluding stages of introductory reading classes, building suspense and recommending further reading can significantly ignite students’ enthusiasm for reading. According to Ryan and Deci’s self-determination theory, this strategy can effectively meet students’ needs for autonomy, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation. At the same time, providing comprehensive and in-depth information about the book, such as awards, professional reviews, and the book’s unique aspects, offers a well-rounded insight into the book, enhancing students’ perception of the reading material’s value and further boosting their interest in reading.

In the concluding stages of introductory reading classes, imparting reading strategies and techniques to students and developing a detailed reading plan reflect Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development theory. By setting reading periods, daily reading durations, and specific page goals, teachers can match students’ current abilities with their potential development, promoting progress in reading skills.

Specifically, in analyzing cases like “The Story of Reynard the Fox,” guiding students to engage in critical thinking—exploring whether Reynard’s success is due to his intelligence or the greed of his victims—not only encourages students to think actively during reading but also lays the foundation for in-depth advancement classes. As emphasized by Paul and Elder, the cultivation of critical thinking promotes cognitive development at all levels.

Therefore, to comprehensively enhance students' reading interest and critical thinking abilities, educators should employ a variety of teaching strategies, including but not limited to methods that stimulate intrinsic motivation, design activities that meet students' needs for autonomy, and tasks that promote critical thinking.

3. Strategy Analysis of Whole Book Reading Advancement Classes

As upper elementary students face increasingly lengthy books, their initial enthusiasm for reading may gradually wane due to the extended reading process, leading to reading fatigue for some students. Additionally, some students may encounter difficulties in deeply understanding the book's content due to limited comprehension skills, thereby affecting overall reading effectiveness. Given this situation, the reading activities and guidance provided by teachers in the classroom become crucial. These teaching strategies aim to help students more comprehensively and deeply grasp the content of the books. Through such strategies, teachers can effectively assist students in overcoming challenges encountered during the reading process, improve reading efficiency and knowledge depth, and ensure that students achieve knowledge accumulation and in-depth understanding during reading activities.

3.1. Interactive Q&A and Progress Control

In this teaching phase, teachers employ interactive Q&A or group quiz mechanisms based on the core plot of the book to deeply analyze students' understanding of the text and adjust reading teaching strategies accordingly (Bano, Jabeen, & Qutoshi, 2018), thereby stimulating students' interest in reading. This method can draw on the Socratic questioning theory, which involves posing open-ended questions to guide students in deep thinking and discussion. For instance, in the advanced reading course of "Grimm's Fairy Tales," using a "knowledge quiz" model aims to assess students' grasp and internalization of story details.

Using "Hansel and Gretel" as an analysis object, teachers might pose guiding questions: What clever strategies did Hansel and Gretel use to fend off the witch in the forest? How did they devise and execute strategies to safely find their way home? Such inquiries not only promote review and deepened understanding of the story plot but also encourage strategic thinking and discussions about the characters' courage. This discussion method not only enhances students' comprehension of story details but also effectively motivates them to continue reading, thus facilitating effective reading activities.

3.2. Sharing Insights and Solving Doubts

In this teaching stage, the importance of early preparation for students is emphasized, such as creating hand-copied newspapers, mind maps, or study sheets. This approach aligns with Constructivist Learning Theory (Balci, Uyar, & Buyu-

kikiz, 2012), which emphasizes students constructing their knowledge to understand and assimilate information. In the case of “Charlotte’s Web,” students, through collective collaboration, adopt innovative methods to reinterpret and explain the story’s main theme—Charlotte assisting her friend Wilbur with wisdom and courage—and share their analyses and emotional feedback within the group. Teachers share their insights on the story, providing students with profound guidance and exemplars.

During the reading process, students are encouraged to raise their doubts and questions in the reading advancement class. Through collaborative discussions and problem-solving sessions, not only are specific queries resolved, but a more profound collective understanding of the book’s content is also fostered. This interactive learning method not only ignites students’ enthusiasm for learning but also improves the overall quality and depth of the reading process, significantly optimizing teaching outcomes.

3.3. Retelling the Plot and In-depth Reading of Excerpts

After conducting a comprehensive evaluation of students’ reading progress, educators guide students to structurally retell the content they have read. This strategy aims to promote systematic review and comprehensive analysis of chapter content and effectively highlight the core plot by assigning precise subtitles to each chapter. This method can draw on Cognitive Load Theory, which suggests that breaking down information reduces cognitive load and promotes more effective learning. Using “Journey to the West” as an example, this work, constructed in a chapter-by-chapter format, each chapter title integrates key characters and events, providing educators with an effective method to help students review and organize the chapters they have read.

To deepen understanding of the plot, educators should select key passages from the text and analyze them from various perspectives, such as themes, plots, characters, and language styles, to stimulate students’ critical thinking and discussions, guiding them toward in-depth reading. “Robinson Crusoe,” as an adventure novel exploring courage, wisdom, and humanity, provides a rich analysis text. Educators can choose decisive passages of Robinson’s survival on the island, guiding students to explore the cause-and-effect relationships, processes, and outcomes to deeply understand Robinson’s character development and transformation. Simultaneously, they can encourage students to perform annotation reading, extracting and systematizing key information to clearly outline the main storylines. Such reading strategies not only enhance students’ deep insights into the text but also hone their analytical and synthesizing abilities.

3.4. Summarizing Methods and Assigning Tasks

To improve the efficiency and quality of in-depth reading, selecting appropriate reading strategies is key. In the final stage of the reading advancement class, students need to compile and present the reading techniques they have imple-

mented, such as using mind maps to organize book plots, deepening content understanding through story retelling, and practicing annotation and summary reading. Based on students' reading performance and progress, educators will assign subsequent reading tasks.

Continuous monitoring of students' reading progress is indispensable in collective reading activities. The arrangement and duration of reading advancement classes should be flexibly adjusted according to the actual reading conditions of students, ranging from brief thematic discussions to more in-depth analyses. To promote student participation in reading, educators can adopt innovative methods, including creating bookmarks, reading reports, and designing reading record cards. Gaining parental support is equally important; educators can encourage parents to participate in their children's reading journey by distributing notes or letters.

4. Strategy Analysis of Interactive Book Reading Discussion Classes

4.1. Summarizing the Plot and Reviewing Content

At the beginning of an in-depth discussion of a whole book, it is essential to provide a comprehensive overview of the book's main content. Using the table of contents to summarize the plot is an effective strategy, as it encapsulates the primary content and quickly outlines the story's framework. This allows teachers and students to efficiently connect the core events of the book. Additionally, creating mind maps or plot chains to list and connect major events helps reveal the book's central themes. For example, by drawing a map of the protagonist's activities in "Robinson Crusoe," students can better understand the story's development.

Using "The Tale of the Frog and the Tadpole" as an example, the teacher can present selected illustrations from the book and guide students to briefly recount the story using these illustrations. This approach captures students' attention and helps them quickly review and understand the plot, laying the groundwork for in-depth analysis of character traits and story structure. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory emphasizes that with appropriate support, students can accomplish tasks beyond their independent capabilities. This strategy effectively promotes a comprehensive understanding of the book's content, providing a solid foundation for subsequent discussions and learning activities.

4.2. Introducing Topics and Presenting Reports

In discussion and sharing sessions for whole book reading, students play the leading role while the teacher acts as a facilitator. Teachers should carefully select entry points and topics based on the book's characteristics to stimulate students' interest and critical thinking (Barron, 2017). By designing multiple guiding topics, teachers can ensure students explore the book's content from various perspectives.

These topics include: overall impressions of the book, helping students develop comprehensive understanding; memorable scenes, enhancing memory and practicing language appreciation; discussing the protagonist's character traits, understanding their importance to the overall book; what students learned from the story, focusing on the central theme using the "extracting the main idea" strategy; mixed feelings about a character, encouraging personal opinions; relating the story to their own life experiences, sharing similar emotions or situations, a key goal of whole book reading; and raising questions after reading, fostering critical thinking and independent thinking skills.

For example, in discussing "Charlotte's Web," the teacher might ask, "What impression did Charlotte leave on you?" to guide students' responses. Then, in collaborative groups, students select text passages describing Charlotte's language, actions, and expressions for annotation and summary, finally presenting their findings to the class. This topic-driven approach sets high standards for topic design. Teachers must accurately grasp the core objectives of whole book reading and fully understand the "reading skills" involved to ensure high-quality discussion and sharing sessions.

4.3. Expanding Reading and Deepening Understanding

To enhance students' reading experience of "The Story of Reynard the Fox," teachers can guide students to explore works with similar themes, such as "Charlotte's Web." Both works explore themes of friendship and sacrifice, highlighting the emotional bonds between animals and humans from different perspectives. Recommending works with similar themes broadens students' reading horizons and deepens their understanding of the original work's themes.

Following "Straw House," recommending other works by Cao Wenxuan, such as "Bronze and Sunflower" and "Root Bird," allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the author's literary style and intellectual depth. Reading different works by the same author helps students better grasp the author's literary philosophy and appreciate how similar themes or emotions are expressed through different texts.

When designing whole book reading sharing sessions, attention should be paid to the following points: ensuring the classroom layout is clear and activities are age-appropriate; creating diverse classroom activities to promote participation from all students, avoiding an over-focus on presentations by a few. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also ensures every student gains knowledge and inspiration from the activities, further deepening their understanding and appreciation of the reading material.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the significance and practical methods of whole book reading as emphasized in the "Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)." Through systematically designed introduction, ad-

vancement, and discussion classes, educators have successfully stimulated students' interest in reading while enhancing their comprehension and critical thinking skills. Using specific teaching cases, from "The Story of Reynard the Fox" to "Charlotte's Web," this paper demonstrates how to guide students from initial interest to in-depth content exploration and then to expanded reading experiences, with each step aimed at deepening students' understanding of the text.

These teaching strategies not only improve students' reading skills but also foster a love for literature and an appreciation for its nuances (Hadar, 2017; Horowitz-Kraus & Hutton, 2017; Roe, Smith, & Burns, 2011). Whole book reading is not merely a teaching method but a journey of the mind, leading students into a broader ocean of knowledge and allowing them to experience the boundless charm of reading. The promotion of whole book reading strategies is crucial for enhancing students' literacy and overall development. This systematic approach to reading instruction provides students with both intellectual and emotional growth, better preparing them for future academic and life challenges.

Therefore, the implementation of whole book reading strategies has far-reaching implications for the development of students' comprehensive language skills and their holistic growth. Future research could further investigate the long-term impacts of these strategies on students' academic performance and personal development, thereby contributing to the field of educational methodology.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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