

# Research and Exploration on Cognitive-Approach-Based English Reading of Middle School

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**Abstract:** Cognitive approach is based on the cognitive rules of students. It advocates the role of students' intelligence in language teaching. By consciously learning the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar knowledge, it can understand the cognitive language process of acquiring foreign language learning and adapting to foreign language learning. In favor of the development of learning interests and enthusiasm, and foster creative thinking. Based on the cognitive theory foundations of psychology, linguistics and pedagogy, this paper analyzes the cognitive process of language comprehension, language ability training and language application, and puts forward the application strategy of cognition approach in middle school English reading teaching, establish the student-centered teaching mode, adhere to learning English on the basis of understanding, allow students to make language errors and give appropriate guidance, and use a variety of approaches to create the real language environment.

## 1. Introduction

Cognitive approach originated in the United States in the mid-1960s and emerged as the opposite of audiolingual approach. In the 1960s, the rapid development of science and technology, the tough competition in the international political, economic, military and scientific fields required a large number of high-level talents who could directly carry out international scientific and cultural exchanges. Inappropriately adapting to the needs of this situation, the foreign language teaching community demands higher and higher voice to replace the audiolingual approach. The basic theoretical subjects such as psychology, pedagogy and linguistics in the United States have also developed greatly. The foreign language teaching method system provides the solid foundation, and cognitive approach emerges with the right moment require.

Chinese middle school English teaching reform has achieved fruitful results for many years, but it also faces many practical problems. Exploring appropriate teaching methods, reforming English reading in middle schools and universities, and improving English application skills have become an urgent task in English teaching. Cognitive approach believes that language is a creative activity governed by rules. The habit of language is to master rules rather than form habits. Cognitive approach advocates the role of learner intelligence in language teaching. By consciously learning the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar knowledge, understanding and grasping the rules of language control, and from the aspects of "listening, speaking, reading and writing", comprehensively, creatively use language and emphasis on grammar learning and the development of intellectual grammar translation. Based on the theoretical basis and main principles of cognition, this paper explores the specific application of cognition in the teaching of English reading in middle schools and universities, stimulates students' self-learning and enthusiasm, enhances the comprehensive use of English, and helps the reform of English reading in middle schools and universities.

## 2. Theoretical Basis of Cognitive Approach

Cognitive approach is applied to the teaching of English reading in middle schools and

universities. It has its profound theoretical foundation and mainly includes the following three parts:

(1) The theoretical basis of psychology. Cognitive psychology is a kind of psychological thought that rises in the west. The core mechanism of human behavior is the internal psychological process between input and output. It also has a certain connection with western traditional philosophy. The main feature is the emphasis on knowledge. The role is that knowledge is the main factor determining human behavior. English teaching guided by cognitive psychology is a process of developing and cultivating language ability. It should fully combines the learner's inner language ability with the existing cognitive structure, and cultivates the ability of using the existed cognitive structure to analysis materials.

(2) The theoretical basis of linguistics. The linguistic foundation of cognitive approach is derived from the transformational grammar theory founded by the famous linguist Chomsky. He believes that language is a kind of innate mechanism unique to human beings. It should not only study language behavior, but also study language ability. The transformation of generative grammar is the theory of language ability. Under the guidance of transformation and generative grammar, cognitive approach focus on students' understanding of grammar rules, internalization of rules, and creative use of language. Students no longer simply respond to stimuli or mechanically imitate, but fully exert their intellectual effects.

(3) The theoretical basis of education. In the books such as Curriculum Theory and Teaching Theory, American educator Bruner puts forward the "learner-centered" teaching theory, that is, in the teaching process, students should master the basic knowledge structure and give full play to the students with initiative. Students are no longer passive and negative receivers of knowledge, but initiative and active knowledge explorers. In the process of teaching, teachers pay attention to the initiative and enthusiasm of students to explore knowledge. As the center of the classroom, teachers no longer carry out simple knowledge infusing, but create relevant situations, so that students can acquire knowledge independently.

### **3. Cognitive Approach Accord with Language Teaching**

Anderson believes that the human brain has a holistic structure, and the language acquisition mechanism is actually part of the overall cognitive system. Sentence is not a static coding of merely speech. It is a behavior in which one side carries a specific communicative purpose and communicates with the other side in the specific language environment. This requires mastering a wider range of knowledge than the language itself. In addition to the most basic social and cultural knowledge, it is also necessary to understand the infiltration of non-linguistic factors into language, as well as the constraints and restrictions on communication. This is the pragmatic rule. In short, in speech communication, the speaker and the listener must share some basic knowledge, including word rules and grammar rules. The strength and weakness of language ability are closely related to the cognitive structure of the speaker's knowledge and rules of language and the proficiency of mastering the language. From this perspective, cognitive approach are suitable for language teaching.

(1) Cognitive approach conforms to the rule of language memory. For language use, memory plays a very important role at all levels. In-depth information processing is superficial, simple or complex, and the information is isolated or connected. The effect of processing information is useful or useless, which has a great impact on the memory effect. Memory is not only an important part of re-encoding, re-decoding, re-inputting and re-extracting, but also the premise and condition. Therefore, the memory effect is improved, and the language learning effect is improved. From this point of view, cognitive and scientific teaching methods and strategies will inevitably affect learners and help learners to form good memory effects.

(2) Cognitive approach conforms to the rule of language learning. Language learning is a meaningful and controlled learning process. If you only rely on more listening and speaking, let the learners summarize the rules and principles, only focus on cultivating the learning habits of the target language. It takes a long time, consciously and continuously, not only time-consuming, but also putting into a lot of energy. Learning with controlled characteristics requires high-level strategy

selection and processing of the learned items, and uses specific method to activate cognitive ability. For language learning, it is not just to remember the language form of a certain target language. It is also necessary to know how to use a language form that expresses thoughts and feelings, conforms to context and conforms to expression habits.

(3) Focus on the comparison between the mother tongue and the target language. Cognitive linguistics does not pay much attention to the systemic and systematic features of grammatical theory. In terms of form and meaning, cognitive linguistics pays more attention to meaning, emphasizes that conceptual structure is at the center of language expression; emphasizes on meaning and emphasizes grammar phenomenon, not at the structural form of grammar. It should be noted that cognitive linguistics is based on the common experience and cognition of human beings. When analyzing the certain linguistic phenomenon, it always tries to refer to or observe related phenomena in other languages, and through comparison methods to find the differences between different languages.

#### **4. Teaching Process of Cognitive Approach**

The English learning process is a process of continuous integration of new and old language knowledge, and also a process of transforming language ability from theoretical knowledge to applied ability, and this combination and transformation must be realized through the students' own activities. Specifically, it includes three processes:

(1) Language understanding. An active and positive process of constructing meaning in the mind with the help of auditory or visual linguistic materials. Language understanding relies on existing knowledge and experience to reveal the meaning of linguistic materials. Cognitive approach emphasizes the understanding of linguistic phenomena and rules and is the basis for learners to engage in language activities. All the practitioners' practice and use of language are based on understanding, and only in this way can they be called "meaningful learning." Before the teacher can explain the new knowledge, it is necessary for the students to review the knowledge already learned, introduce the new teaching content, and help the students to carry out comparative analysis of the old and new knowledge, and deepen the understanding and learning of the new knowledge. It should be noted that the cognitive approach requires students to understand the new language rules, not only relying on the teacher's explanation, but also the students' subjective initiative under the guidance and guidance of the teachers, so that the students can discover the grammar rules themselves.

(2) Language ability training. Language ability refers to the ability to master the language, can speak or understand the grammatical sentences; can discriminate ambiguous sentences; can judge the same surface form, but the actual semantics are different; can understand the surface form is different, but the actual semantics similar sentences; and language skills such as "listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating". According to the cognitive approach, people have the innate language skills and potential. On the basis of students' understanding of language knowledge and rules, focus on cultivating language comprehensive ability. Comprehensive ability development can only be achieved through conscious and organized language training. Therefore, the language ability training phase has two purposes, to examine students' understanding of the language rules and knowledge they have learned, and develop students' ability to use all aspects of language. Unlike the listening and speaking method, cognitive approach advocates expressing thoughts, feelings and meaningful exercises, opposes formal mechanical exercises, and emphasizes the purpose and operability of classroom activities.

(3) Language application. As a communication tool, language is ultimately aimed at language application. The goal of middle school English is to develop students' comprehensive English application ability, especially the ability of listening and speaking, so that students can communicate effectively in English in the future study, work and social interaction, while enhancing their ability to learn independently and improve their comprehensiveness. Cultural literacy to meet the needs of social development and international exchanges. At this stage, the main focus is on self-directed learning, which fosters students' language application skills in

listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pay special attention to the cultivation of communicative competence in autonomous languages, and pay attention to the cultivation of creative language communication skills after separated from the textbook. Therefore, the training of specialized language communication skills rather than textbooks is very important. The main methods include: conversation, topic discussion, coherent dialogue, self-narration, oral composition, special speech, role playing, on-site essay, oral translation. The key is to create the positive language environment that mobilizes each student's interest and participation.

## **5. Application of Cognitive Approach in Middle School English Reading Teaching**

At present, the teaching of English reading in middle schools and universities is still centered on teachers, with the aim of exam-oriented education. Students' language comprehensive application ability is not enough, students' innovative thinking and independent thinking ability are lacking. Cognitive approach provides an effective way to solve these problems. The specific implementation also needs to apply the following strategies:

(1) Establish the student-centered teaching mode. The teacher-centered teaching mode ignores the importance of the learner's own internal factors to language learning, ignoring the importance of factors such as feeling, perception, memory, judgment, reasoning, learning, imagination and concept formation for understanding language. Student-centered is one of the principles of cognitive approach, fully mobilizing the subjectivity and enthusiasm of students. Play the main role of students is to encourage students to actively participate in language activities and to exert intellectual factors, rather than treating students as passive language recipients. Teachers care about the differences in learning and involve all students in the teaching process. Conduct more language practice and create opportunities for students to communicate in large numbers. Due to the limited time of classroom teaching, students must have a planned extracurricular study. In addition to helping students master English knowledge and develop students' language skills, teachers' classrooms are more important to guide students' scientific learning methods and develop independent learning ability.

(2) Persist in learning English on the basis of understanding. Language learning is a creative process. Language can only be used on the basis of understanding the language system. Language cannot be imitated without activating the cognitive process. Teachers should be conscious of cultivating students' mastery of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, and mastering linguistic knowledge by learning and analyzing language forms. Teachers must pay attention to grammar explanations, because understanding grammar rules is conducive to language learning, and learners' language foundation is based on the understanding of linguistic rules. Teachers should guide students to use inductive and deductive methods to discover the basic structure of language in a specific language environment. New grammar rules can be learned by comparison, contrast, explanation, example, and demonstration. Teachers give students appropriate exercises to consolidate their understanding of new knowledge, help students remember and skillfully use these grammatical rules, and complete the process of understanding the language. The teacher guides the students to engage in language communication activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the specific language environment.

(3) Allow students to make language errors and give appropriate guidance. American linguist Noam Chomsky believes that language learning follows the behavior of "hypothesis-testing-correction". Making mistakes is a method used by learners to test hypotheses about the nature of language. This view is the point of cognitivism on linguistic errors. Language errors in the learning process are inevitable and acceptable. Cognitivism believes that when learning reaches a certain level and the learner's language knowledge matures, the error will automatically disappear. The language structure that could not be mastered suddenly and clearly understands that the information that was difficult to organize naturally cooperates with each other. The emergence of this situation may be that the learner uses the new structure to interpret the new content, or the learner reorganizes the stored knowledge and adjusts the structure. Cognitive approach points out that teachers should treat students' language errors with tolerance and peace, and allow mistakes.

This is the embodiment of the "people-oriented" concept in the teaching process.

(4) Create the real language environment in a variety of ways. Using advanced teaching equipment and modern teaching methods to create a real environment for language learning and practice. In the teaching content, abandon the "textbook-based" approach, develop textbooks for the purpose of capacity-building, appropriately increase or decrease the content according to the actual teaching situation, and supplement the auxiliary materials related to the teaching content to reflect the development of language and language. The real context used, coordinating the relationship between language basics and language application capabilities. During the teaching process, English newspapers, audio and video materials are selected to help students to imitate quickly and effectively. In terms of teaching methods, network multimedia technology is widely used, and broadcasting, recording, projection, film and video are used to create a learning environment with pictures and texts combined with vivid images. In extracurricular activities, students are encouraged to participate in various English practice activities to promote the transformation of language knowledge into language skills, to consciously train their English communication skills, and to gradually improve their language skills.

## **6. Conclusion**

Cognitive approach, as a teaching method that will comprehensively develop "listening, speaking, reading and writing", requires teachers to put students in the main position in the whole process of English teaching, so that students can carry out a large amount of training around the content of the textbooks, and finally break away from the teaching materials. Conduct communicative language activities and develop the practical application skills of the language. The shortcomings are therefore also referred to as "modern grammar-translation method". Because the application of cognitive approach is not long, some theories are still in the stage of formation and development, the teaching system is still further improved, and there is no supporting textbook that is compatible with the theory. In the practice of English reading teaching in middle schools and universities, English teachers are needed to make adjustments according to the specific teaching environment.

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