

Practical Exploration of Reverse Teaching Design of High School English Writing—Based on the Perspective of Big Ideas: A Case Study of Unit 1 Teenage Life

Wei Min

Liaocheng University, Liaocheng, China

Keywords: Big Ideas; Reverse Teaching Design; High School English Writing

Abstract: Big Ideas don't belong to a specific discipline and knowledge. As a concept, it can reflect the essential characteristics of the discipline. Reverse Teaching Design can give full play to students' subjective initiative, enrich teaching content, and enhance the teaching interaction between teachers and students. Based on the literature on Big Ideas and Reverse Teaching Design, this paper takes the writing teaching design of Unit 1 Teenage Life as an example, and explores the practical approach of Reverse Teaching Design of high school English writing from the perspective of Big Ideas. Based on the concept of Big Ideas, this paper explores the design of reverse teaching of English writing from four stages: refining the unit theme, formulating teaching objectives, clarifying evaluation methods, and designing teaching activities.

1. Introduction

The promulgation and implementation of the General High School English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020) (hereinafter referred to as the New Curriculum Standard) marks a new stage in the reform of Chinese basic education curriculum. For the first time, the New Curriculum Standard uses the term "Big Concept", emphasizing "taking the Big Concept of the subject as the core, structuring the curriculum content, and contextualizing the curriculum content with the theme as the guide"^[1]. Reverse Teaching Design can give full play to students' subjective initiative and enhance the rich diversity of teaching content, which also plays an important role in strengthening the classroom interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the practical exploration of the reverse teaching design of high school English writing from the perspective of Big Ideas.

2. The Relationship between Big Ideas and Reverse Teaching Design

2.1 The Concept and Significance of Big Ideas

Big Ideas can be traced back to the discipline structure movement advocated by Bruner^[2]. Erickson clearly defines Big Ideas, he points out that big ideas, as an abstract generalization, are ideas that arise on the basis of facts, can be transferred, and are expressions between concepts^[3]. The big concept is at the core of the discipline, it is a superordinate comprehensive concept, and it is the concept of the

concept. Li Gang and Lv Lijie points out that "the concept of discipline is an abstract deep-seated and transferable concept" [4]. Wang Qiang believes that the big concept, as a way of thinking and a key viewpoint, embodies the essence of the discipline and is a conceptual anchor that can help students dig deeper into the core of the discipline[5].

To sum up, as a concept, the Big Ideas can reflect the essential characteristics of the discipline, which occupies the core position of the discipline and constitutes the skeleton of the discipline. Big ideas are central, abstract, migrative, and persistent.

The meaning of Big Ideas refers to the teaching significance of Big Ideas. Wang Qiang points out that for teachers, Big Ideas can be the core concepts that govern instructional design[6]. For students, Big Ideas are the cognitive structures that are generated after learning, the methods and ideas to solve problems, and the values that have a profound impact. Big ideas can help teachers to cultivate people with virtue in the teaching process, pay attention to the meaning of the theme, analyze the relationship between the sub-themes in the unit, help students form big ideas, lay the foundation for students to explore the key knowledge of the subject, transform their abilities, and form their literacy, and serve the fundamental task of cultivating people with virtue.

2.2 The Concept and Stages of Reverse Teaching Design

Reverse Teaching Design is student-centered, focuses on students' perspectives, and takes students' needs as the guide. Reverse Teaching Design attaches great importance to cultivating students' ability to learn independently, and by giving full play to students' autonomy, in order to achieve the expected learning effect. The core idea of Reverse Teaching Design is "student-centered", which requires teachers to focus on promoting students' reflection, helping to construct frameworks and encouraging positive thinking.

The application of Reverse Teaching Design is divided into three stages: determining teaching objectives, designing evaluation criteria, and implementing teaching activities.

(1) Determining teaching objectives. Teaching objectives are the starting point and end point of teaching activities, and the effects and standards that need to be achieved after learning are achieved, and the determination of teaching objectives must be based on the core literacy of the discipline and the curriculum standards of the discipline. Reverse instructional design requires teachers to translate curriculum standards and instructional objectives into questions that explore important ideas and promote students' understanding.

(2) Designing evaluation criteria. After determining the teaching objectives, it is necessary to further think about how to test the students' experience and gain the distance from the teaching objectives. In Reverse Teaching Design, the learning evaluation standard refers to the basis and standard to help teachers test students' learning results. And according to this standard, teachers always pay attention to the learning process of students, test students' learning, and guide students to learn independently, which is the second key stage of reverse instructional design.

(3) Implementing teaching activities. After the objectives and evaluation criteria are determined, the third stage of Reverse Teaching Design is the selection of teaching content and the implementation of teaching activities. Through the design of teaching activities, it helps students understand the discourse and learn deeply to achieve the teaching objectives.

2.3 The relationship between Big Ideas and Reverse Teaching Design

Reverse Teaching Design begins with the end in mind and governs teaching objectives, evaluation, and activities. Teachers should first analyze the course content, determine the learning results that students can achieve in this unit, that is, the learning objectives, and then use this as a starting point to design reasonable evaluation methods and standards, and finally integrate the teaching objectives

and evaluation methods to design effective teaching activities, so that the direction of learning, how to evaluate, and how to teach is unified. Before designing the teaching objectives, teachers need to summarize and extract the core knowledge structure of the discipline that can be integrated and transferred in this unit, so as to highlight the application and transfer of core knowledge. Before determining the teaching objectives and presupposing students' learning outcomes, it is necessary to deeply study and analyze the multimodal texts of the unit, identify and determine the thematic context to which the unit belongs, the theme group, the specific content that students need to understand, and the structured knowledge and skills that students need to master that can be transferred to new situations and solve new problems.

3. Reverse Teaching Design of High School English Writing from the Perspective of Big Ideas

This case is selected from the Reading for writing part of Unit 1 Teenage Life, a compulsory course of PEP high school English textbook. Based on the perspective of Big Ideas, the reverse teaching design of English writing was carried out from four stages: refining the unit theme, formulating teaching objectives, clarifying evaluation methods, and designing teaching activities.

3.1 Refining the unit theme

The Reading for writing part of this unit involves a discourse, which is Susan Luo's reply. The discourse type is an application essay, which mainly introduces Susan's advice on the confusion of teenagers. Worried friend asks Susan for help about his friend Chen Lei's addiction to computer games. Susan suggests that he talk to his friends and encourage him to try some new hobbies to help him solve problems together.

The topic of this writing is "Teenagers' Troubles and Suggestions". The purpose is to help students learn how to write a suggestion letter. The theme is "Adolescent Life", and the thematic context is "People and Self", which aims to learn about campus life. The writing content is designed to be close to students' life and create a real context, which can reduce students' anxiety when they first enter school.

As shown in Table 1, the teacher guides the students to build up the big idea behind the meaning of the theme "Adolescent Life" from multiple dimensions. Students need to construct three core learning dimensions layer by layer: Understanding the problems and challenges faced by others and giving their own advice; Understanding their own study and life objectively and truly; Planning their study and life with a positive and sunny attitude to achieve a better self.

Table 1: Teaching contents of writing

Discourse	Type of discourse	Genre	Discourse content	Discourse topic	Thematic context
Write a letter of advice	Practical writing	Letter	Susan's advice for Teenagers' Troubles	Discuss the problems and challenges faced by teenagers, and give suggestions to achieve better oneself.	People and Self

3.2 Formulating teaching objectives

Teaching objectives are the direction of teaching, including unit teaching objectives and lesson teaching objectives. The formulation of teaching objectives should focus on Big Ideas, follow the principles of operability and detectability, and reflect the literacy formed by students after completing a certain lesson (Wang Qiang, 2021)^[6]. On the basis of the integration and combining of the unit content, the teacher refines the big ideas and formulates the unit teaching objectives. Then, based on a clear

grasp of the content of the unit, the teacher locates the position of the taught discourse in the unit and its role in the formation of big ideas, helps students gradually build Big Ideas, promotes students' deep learning, and then forms a deep understanding of the topic.

Focusing on the Big Ideas of the unit, the teacher deeply analyzes the teaching content, accurately locates the position of the discourse, and formulates teaching objectives (like Table 2) to promote students' in-depth learning.

Table 2: Teaching objectives based on Big Ideas

Teaching contents	Teaching objectives
Write a letter of advice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn about the problems faced by Worried friend and the advice Susan offers. 2. Give advice on the problems and challenges faced by peers. 3. Summarize the structure and language characteristics of a suggestion letter and learn to write a letter of recommendation.
Unit teaching objectives: Learn the problems and challenges that adolescents may face in life, and master the methods to solve problems and cope with challenges; Plan study and life with a positive attitude to achieve a better version of oneself.	

3.3 Clarifying evaluation methods

After determining the unit theme and teaching objectives, the teacher should clarify the evaluation method accordingly, which runs through the whole process of teaching. Firstly, the existing schemas in students' minds were activated through brainstorming, and the extraction of students' relevant vocabulary and opinions was tested to improve students' initiative. Secondly, the mind map is used to test whether the suggestions given by students in response to the problem are focused and logical, and whether the scaffolds provided can help students complete the writing task. Thirdly, by observing students discussing how to give their own suggestions and reasons for the dilemmas and problems faced by others, they were evaluated to see if they could apply what they had learned to solve practical problems. Then, through the method of class questions, teachers determine the students' grasp of the structure of the recommendation letter, including date, greeting, body, close, signature, letter format and language characteristics. Finally, developing a self-evaluation form (as shown in Table 3). Through the self-evaluation scale, teachers can not only understand the students' writing learning in this lesson, adjust and improve the writing teaching plan in the next stage, but also help students understand the wonderfulness of their suggestion letter writing and the areas that need to be improved, and better evaluate themselves.

Table 3: Self-evaluation scale

Self-evaluation scale				
Name:		Class:		
Self-evaluation content	Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
All the parts of a letter are included and organized in a good order.				
The writer gives reasons for the advice.				
The writer uses proper expressions to give suggestions.				
The writer uses commas and stops correctly.				
The handwriting is easy to read.				

3.4 Designing teaching activities

After the teaching content and objectives are determined, the design of teaching activities is the key. Through the design of teaching activities, it helps students understand the discourse and learn deeply, so as to achieve the teaching objectives. The following is an example of writing teaching to illustrate the design of teaching activities.

3.4.1 Pre-writing activities

(1) Contextual introduction

Teacher plays the video "Zehao's Troubles" and guides students to think the following questions: What's the problem of Zehao? What did he do when he has a problem? By allowing students to watch and think, the class is introduced to the topic in the interaction with students—"Teenagers' Troubles and Suggestions". The video is close to students' lives, and closely related to students. It is easy to resonate and think about by students, and make students have something to say.

(2) Brainstorming

According to the topic "Teenagers' Troubles and Suggestions", the teacher continues the context and guides the students to discuss their own worries and feelings in the groups. The teacher then invites the student representatives to share in front of the class. Brainstorming activity activates the existing schemas in students' minds and helps students to extract the relevant vocabulary and ideas of the topic. And at the same time, it is close to students' lives and take students as the main body of class.

(3) Divergent thinking

Students work in a group and select a classmate's troubles to discuss in the group. The members of the group give their own suggestions and reasons according to the students' troubles. The Teacher invites students to present and share in small groups. According to the students' presentations, the teacher selects representative examples, presents the students' troubles and suggestions with the help of mind maps, and then constructs the main body of writing. The mind map constructed by the teacher needs to be focused and logical. This activity stimulates students' perspectives, helps students sort out the content and structure of their writing. And the teacher provides sufficient scaffolding to help students complete their writing tasks.

(4) Establish a framework

Students are guided to analyze the structure of the reply letter written by Susan as a model text. The teacher reminds students to pay attention to the letter format, such as date, greeting, body, close and signature, and then focus on the body section to help students establish a writing framework. The framework should include the following parts, such as date, greeting, body, close and signature. The body section is the main part of the letter.

3.4.2 While-writing activities

Completing writing

Through a series of pre-writing activities, students have clarified the purpose, object and content of writing, and their enthusiasm for writing has been fully stimulated. In addition, through the construction of scaffolds, students have mastered the relevant corpus, established a writing framework, and preliminarily formed their own recommendation letters. At this time, the teacher should clarify the specific requirements of writing, give a writing template, and let students complete the writing task with the help of the scaffolds. The teacher should also remind students to pay attention to the details of writing during the writing process, such as tenses, letter formatting, word spelling, writing norms, etc.

3.4.3 Post-writing activities

(1) Self evaluation

After completing the writing, the teacher asks the students to check their own writing. The main focus is on whether the content is smooth, whether the structure is clear, and whether the format is right. Students should pay attention to the accuracy of word spelling, eliminate grammatical errors, and check whether the writing is neat.

(2) Peer evaluation

Feedback is very important in writing teaching class. Feedback is an important part of improving students' essay writing, and the main purpose is to help revise their essays and improve the quality of their essays. Feedback is an essential part of teaching writing. Teachers let students give peer feedback based on the peer evaluation scale (like Table 4), and guide students to quickly grasp the key points and make efficient evaluations. Through peer evaluation, students can not only learn each other's opinions and expressions, but also pay attention to the mistakes in the writing and reflect on their own writings.

(3) Perfect the final draft

After completing the peer evaluation, the teacher checks the writings of all the students in the class and makes comments on them. According to the peer feedback and teacher feedback, students revise mistakes in their writings and improve the expressions, and then complete the final draft of the writing. Peer feedback and teacher feedback work together to improve students' writing.

Table 4: Peer-evaluation scale

Peer-evaluation scale			
Name of the appraised:	Name of the evaluator:	Class:	
Evaluation content	Score	Score	Total score
Content: 1. Appropriate expressions are used when giving advice 2. Reasons are clarified when giving recommendations	6		
Structure: The article is clearly structured and the letter is properly formatted	3		
Grammar: Use grammar correctly (one point is deducted for grammatical errors in one sentence)	2		
Spelling: Spell words correctly and use upper and lower case	2		
Punctuation: Use proper punctuation	1		
Handwriting: Neat handwriting	1		

4. Conclusion

Based on Big Ideas, the teacher should start from the four stages of refining the unit theme, formulating teaching objectives, clarifying evaluation methods, and designing teaching activities, deeply analyze the teaching materials, form an overall perception of the unit teaching content, and refine the unit theme. Then the teacher should determine the unit teaching objectives and lesson teaching objectives, formulate learning evaluation methods according to the teaching objectives. Finally, the teacher should design and implement relevant teaching activities. In the teaching process, teachers should also pay attention to giving full play to students' initiative, enriching teaching content,

enhancing teacher-student interaction, guiding students to learn deeply, and ultimately improving students' core literacy in English.

References

- [1] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2020). *The Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School English (2017 Edition, 2022 Revision)*. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- [2] Bruner, J. S., & Lufburrow, R. A. (1960). *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [3] Erickson, H. L. (2008). *Stirring the head, heart, and soul: Redefining curriculum and instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- [4] Li Gang & Lv Lijie (2018). *Grand Concept Curriculum. Design: A curriculum architecture that focuses on the implementation of core competencies in the subject*. *Research on Educational Development*, 38 (Z2), 35-42.
- [5] Wang Qiang, Zhou Mi, Jiang Jingli & Yan Chibing (2020). *Analysis of English subject teaching design based on the concept of the big picture*. *Curriculum, Textbooks, and Teaching Methods*, 40 (11), 99-108.
- [6] Wang Qiang, Zhou Mi & Cai Mingke (2021). *Overall teaching design of high school English units based on the concept of grandeur*. *Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools (Middle School Chapter)*, 44 (01), 1-7.