

Strategies for Implementing "Integrated Teaching-Learning-Assessment" in the Context of English Core Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the National English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020) has sparked widespread attention and resonance in the field of secondary school English teaching. Delving into the study and application of the new curriculum standards has become a crucial entry point and lever for secondary school English teachers to renew their teaching philosophies, enhance teaching effectiveness, and advance the depth of education. The new curriculum standards provide important guidance on how secondary school English teachers should teach, how students should learn, and how to effectively integrate teaching, learning, and assessment, thereby delineating the direction of English teaching in the current era of emphasizing subject core literacy in quality education. The 2022 Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards explicitly mention the curriculum design concept of "integrating teaching and assessment," further deepening the intrinsic connections among teaching, learning, and assessment. Therefore, based on the guiding principles of "integrating teaching and assessment," this paper relies on the 2017 edition of the new curriculum standards and combines the practical situation of secondary school English teaching to analyze how to comprehensively understand the connotation of "integrating teaching and assessment" and how to implement effective teaching and assessment practices.

KEYWORDS

Integrated Teaching-learning-assessment; English Core Literacy; Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the unveiling of the 2017 edition of the new curriculum standard, there has been a surge in discussions surrounding the core literacy of English in the realm of secondary school teaching.^[1] Frontline educators and pertinent researchers are actively engaging in deciphering the pivotal insights embedded within the new curriculum standard, aiming to comprehend the trajectory of secondary school English pedagogy in China and further refine the objectives for talent cultivation. The content involved in English teaching is extensive and wide-ranging, requiring teachers to grasp it from multiple perspectives. Objectively speaking, whether it's the teaching by teachers, the learning by students, or the final teaching evaluation, all are very important as they directly or indirectly influence the cultivation of students' core subject competencies.^[2]

In the conventional landscape of English instruction, the roles of teachers, students, and assessment mechanisms often exist in silos, lacking interconnection and failing to coalesce into a cohesive framework that can holistically impact English pedagogy. This fragmentation, to some extent, hampers the efficacy of secondary school English teaching and undermines the genuine implementation of the principles of quality education espoused by the new curriculum standard. Consequently, it hinders the ability to effectively nurture language learners equipped with robust subject core literacy.

Primarily, within the traditional paradigm of examination-oriented education, instructors frequently encounter challenges in seamlessly integrating teaching methodologies with evaluation criteria in their pedagogical endeavors, all in pursuit of securing high scores in examinations. English instruction predominantly revolves around teacher-led approaches, relegating students to passive recipients of knowledge, thereby impeding their initiative and engagement in the learning process. Take grammar instruction, for example, where educators often overlook the pivotal aspect of "students' self-awareness of grammar leading to learning," confining instruction to mere enumeration of grammar rules and repetitive exercises. Such pedagogical practices diverge significantly from the ethos of "integrating teaching and evaluation" within the classroom context, resulting in a disconnect between teachers' instructional efforts and students' learning outcomes, consequently undermining the efficacy of language acquisition.

Furthermore, the evaluation frameworks that correspond to teaching and learning activities often exhibit inadequacies and discrepancies. Core competency is the educational value orientation of the national curriculum, which is primarily aimed at nurturing values in education formed under the framework of quality education. The core competencies advocated by the Ministry of Education are essential qualities and key abilities gradually developed by students through learning various subjects in schools, as well as the worldview, outlook on life, and values in line with the socialist core values established during the learning process.^[3] The new curriculum standard advocates for an evaluation approach that is "people-centric," "pervasive," and reflective of core literacy. A closer examination of the stipulations outlined in the new curriculum standard underscores the pivotal role played by evaluation frameworks in realizing the objectives of quality education. This paradigm resonates profoundly with the essence of "integrating teaching and evaluation," both emphasizing the imperative of cultivating individuals effectively, while stressing the importance of harmonizing teaching, learning, and evaluation processes. Only through this integrated approach can the three components synergistically influence secondary school English instruction, ultimately optimizing pedagogical outcomes.

2. ESSENCE OF INTEGRATED TEACHING-LEARNING-ASSESSMENT

The proposal of "teaching-assessment integration" arises from the new understandings of the functions of educational assessment and the relationship between teaching and assessment in the process of education reform worldwide in recent years.^[4] Exploring the implementation pathways and strategies of "integrated teaching and assessment" necessitates a comprehensive understanding of its underlying connotations. Broadly conceived, integrated teaching and assessment in secondary school English instruction refer to the seamless fusion of teaching, learning, and assessment throughout the instructional process. Teachers' objective and in-depth evaluation of students' learning process vividly interprets the "integrated classroom model of teaching and evaluation".^[5] Specifically, "teaching" encompasses the instructional activities undertaken by teachers, including their pedagogical philosophies, methodologies employed during classroom delivery, specifics of activity design and implementation, and utilization of instructional resources. Secondly, students' "learning" constitutes a pivotal component of the entire instructional process. Aligned with the core tenets of quality education and informed by research on language acquisition, it recognizes that language learning is not merely transmitted by teachers but actively acquired by students themselves. Thus, the purpose of teachers' "teaching" is to facilitate students' "learning," whereby students' attitudes, methods, and behaviors significantly influence the success of their learning endeavors. Moreover, the "assessment" aspect of integrated teaching and assessment extends beyond traditional evaluations such as homework assignments or examinations conducted by teachers after class. Here, "assessment" should encompass broader and deeper connotations and significance. The implementers of assessments are typically perceived as the teaching faculty, serving as a means to gauge students' mastery of the content learned. However, the concept of integrated teaching and assessment, as advocated by the new curriculum standards, indicates that the scope of assessment should extend

beyond evaluating individual student performance to encompass aspects such as teacher behaviors and instructional activities. The advocacy for integrated teaching and assessment in the new curriculum standards aligns with the inherent aim of cultivating students' comprehensive competencies. Furthermore, understanding the "integration" referred to in integrated teaching and assessment typically involves the amalgamation of multiple components within a process. The goal of integrated teaching and assessment is to ensure that teaching activities, students' learning processes, and corresponding assessment systems mutually support and promote each other, thereby contributing to the realization of quality education and the attainment of subject core competency objectives. In summary, integration, namely the integration of teaching and assessment, should become a whole. Teaching, learning, and assessment are integrated throughout the entire teaching process, revolving around the same teaching objectives, and focusing on achieving teaching objectives.^[6]

In implementing integrated teaching and assessment, teachers need to deeply contemplate and clarify questions such as "what to teach," "why teach," "how to teach," and "how to assess." These questions essentially cover various dimensions of integrated teaching and assessment. Only by elucidating the inherent logic of relevant terminologies is it possible to adopt effective implementation approaches based on actual teaching situations. Integrated teaching and assessment require teachers to fully integrate the elements of teaching, learning, and assessment, facilitating their mutual penetration and mutual promotion. During the teaching process, teachers should not only impart knowledge but also guide students in mastering learning methods and skills, fostering their ability for autonomous learning. Concurrently, teachers need to provide timely guidance and support to students during their exploratory learning processes, while comprehensively and promptly assessing students' learning processes. Only by organically integrating teaching, learning, and assessment can a truly effective integrated model tailored to the practical needs of English instruction be constructed, thereby effectively enhancing the teaching quality of English courses. The consistency among teaching, learning, and evaluation requires that the three aspects be organically structured, mutually constrained, and mutually promoted.^[7] While some teachers may address aspects of teaching and assessment within a single class session, very few can seamlessly integrate content from all three dimensions of teaching, learning, and assessment. Therefore, this remains an area worthy of contemplation and exploration for frontline educators and relevant researchers.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF "INTEGRATED TEACHING-LEARNING-ASSESSMENT"

Firstly, the adoption of integrated teaching assessment not only facilitates the advancement of students' core literacy but also promotes a holistic approach to education. The new curriculum standards emphasize the multifaceted evaluation of students' development in core literacy, which encompasses not only subject-specific knowledge but also critical thinking, communication skills, and creativity. Integrated teaching assessment aligns with this holistic educational approach by ensuring that teaching, learning, and evaluation are interconnected throughout the teaching process.^[1] By integrating these elements seamlessly, teachers can cultivate well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills and competencies needed to thrive in various aspects of life beyond academics. Moreover, integrated teaching assessment underscores the importance of personalized learning experiences tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. Recognizing that each student learns differently, teachers are encouraged to employ varied instructional strategies and assessment methods to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. This individualized approach fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and empowered to succeed. Additionally, integrated teaching assessment encourages ongoing reflection and adjustment in teaching practices to better address the evolving needs of students, ensuring that educational outcomes remain relevant and meaningful in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, integrated teaching assessment promotes a collaborative approach to teaching and learning. By involving

students in the assessment process, teachers empower them to take ownership of their learning journey and become active participants in their education. Students are encouraged to set learning goals, monitor their progress, and reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement. This collaborative feedback loop fosters a sense of accountability and engagement among students, leading to deeper learning outcomes and enhanced academic achievement.

In conclusion, integrated teaching assessment represents a paradigm shift in education, emphasizing the interconnectedness of teaching, learning, and evaluation. By embracing this approach, educators can create dynamic learning environments that foster student growth, engagement, and success. Through personalized instruction, collaborative learning experiences, and ongoing reflection, integrated teaching assessment lays the foundation for lifelong learning and empowers students to reach their full potential.

4. THE PROMINENT ISSUES EXISTING IN TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT.

Amidst the wave of new curriculum reforms, the advocacy and research surrounding the core literacy proposed by the new curriculum standards have shed light on some prominent issues in current educational practices.

Firstly, there is a gap between teaching and assessment. On one hand, frontline educators often believe that the key to enhancing students' academic performance lies in effective teaching methodologies. Consequently, considerable time and effort are devoted to instructional strategies, often overshadowing the importance of assessment. This is reflected in teachers' emphasis on delivering content and selecting teaching methods, while neglecting to adequately assess students' learning outcomes and progress. Consequently, issues such as "learning and forgetting," "lack of practice post-learning," and "failure to identify weaknesses" persist among students. The disconnect between classroom learning and post-class revision, coupled with the absence of a comprehensive evaluation system, diminishes students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Students who have gaps in their knowledge often disregard them without external prompting, while those performing well lack the incentive for proactive learning due to the absence of timely and effective feedback. On the other hand, in contrast to the former scenario, some teachers excessively prioritize assessment, overlooking how teaching can facilitate the transmission of knowledge and skills. Traditional classroom instruction often revolves around delivering new course content followed by repetitive exercises and subsequent assessment. This rigid approach hinders the cultivation of students' core literacy, deviating from the expectations of national and societal standards for quality education. Undeniably, addressing examination and academic pressures requires mastery of test-taking techniques for achieving high scores. However, examinations, including college entrance exams, possess inherent limitations. Therefore, optimizing the assessment system and promoting the implementation of core literacy within the existing examination framework warrant careful consideration and exploration by educators.

Secondly, there is a disconnection between teaching and assessment. This disconnect refers to the lack of alignment between the content and objectives of teaching and assessment. Advocating and advancing integrated teaching assessment is a response to this inherent disconnection. The desired educational framework is one where teaching and assessment are seamlessly integrated and aligned. The content taught in class, knowledge acquired by students, and post-class evaluations should all converge towards the cultivation of core subject literacy.

Thirdly, there is a lack of depth in teaching and assessment. Within the context of core literacy, an issue persists in English language education regarding the purpose underlying teaching and assessment. Presently, the cultivation of core literacy serves as both the objective of teaching and learning and the goal of assessment. While many researchers and frontline educators strive to align

their practices with this objective, a considerable number of teachers fail to recognize its significance. Even when implementing corresponding designs and activities for core literacy development, many educators only scratch the surface, failing to delve into its essence. This superficial approach may lead to inaccurate interpretations of new curriculum philosophies.

5. STRATEGIES OF IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATED TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Implementing "Teaching and Assessment Integration" is highly important and necessary, as it can significantly improve and optimize current teaching practices. Based on this premise, the author provides the following recommendations for strategies to implement teaching and assessment integration.

5.1. Focusing on Core Competencies and Delving into the Curriculum Standards.

Ma pointed out that one of the current teaching problems is that teachers fail to carefully study the curriculum standards and textbooks. They often stick to fixed methods regardless of changing circumstances, leading to a lack of in-depth analysis and accurate understanding of the goals that should be achieved in teaching content.^[8] The new curriculum standards, as a comprehensive guideline for education and teaching in the country, serve as a compass for educators and frontline teachers. These standards contain a wealth of information, and without careful study, it is difficult to grasp their essence. Core competency is the educational value orientation of the national curriculum, which is primarily aimed at nurturing values in education formed under the framework of quality education. The core competencies advocated by the Ministry of Education are essential qualities and key abilities gradually developed by students through learning various subjects in schools, as well as the worldview, outlook on life, and values in line with the socialist core values established during the learning process.^[2] The new standards emphasize that core competencies are not macroscopic course objectives but are based on overall curriculum goals, aiming to cultivate and develop students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and learning abilities after receiving high school English education. Therefore, teaching based on these four main aspects to promote students' comprehensive development is crucial for implementing quality education. Further studying the standards is not only a necessity for educational teaching but also an essential approach for related teaching research.

5.2. Clearing Teaching Relationship and Optimizing Teaching Effect

The relationship between teaching and learning is particularly crucial in the work of educators, as teachers need to have their own understanding of this relationship in order to arrange teaching activities and tasks effectively. For English teachers, understanding the connection between teaching and learning implies not only imparting knowledge but also, more importantly, guiding students to actively engage, explore, and construct knowledge during the learning process. Teaching is an interactive process, where teachers must create diverse learning environments and scenarios to stimulate students' interest and motivation for learning. Within the teaching process, teachers should serve as navigators and guides for students, aiding them in building knowledge frameworks and cognitive structures, and guiding them in applying acquired knowledge to solve problems and face challenges. Learning, on the other hand, involves students actively constructing knowledge systems and skill experiences through active thinking, exploration, and practice under the guidance of teachers. Teachers need to pay attention to students' learning dynamics, adjusting teaching strategies and methods promptly to meet the diverse learning needs and developmental levels of individual students. Therefore, understanding the relationship between teaching and learning entails continuous improvement of educators' educational philosophies and teaching skills, as well as ongoing

exploration and innovation of teaching models, all aimed at fostering students' comprehensive development and individual growth.

5.3. Optimizing Evaluation for Enhancing Teaching Models

English teachers can enhance teaching models through the rational application of assessment. Firstly, assessment should permeate throughout the entire teaching process, rather than being limited to one-off assignments or exams at the end of class. Teachers can employ various forms of assessment, including classroom discussions, group collaborations, project assignments, oral presentations, and more, to comprehensively understand students' learning situations. Secondly, assessment should focus on personalized development of students. Teachers can design different forms of assessment tasks based on students' interests, abilities, and learning styles to stimulate their learning motivation and confidence. Additionally, assessment should be timely and targeted. Teachers can provide timely feedback to students, guiding them to improve their learning methods and enhance learning outcomes. Moreover, assessment should be multi-dimensional, encompassing not only evaluations of knowledge levels but also assessments of thinking skills, innovation abilities, collaborative skills, and other aspects, to cultivate students' comprehensive literacy and core competencies. Lastly, assessment should align with teaching objectives and content. Teachers can design assessment criteria and methods based on curriculum standards and students' learning needs to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of assessment. Teachers should carefully examine the evaluation tasks of each class session, summarize them into unit assessments, and then achieve the teaching objectives.^[9] In conclusion, the rational application of assessment can help English teachers refine teaching models, promoting students' comprehensive development and personalized growth.

5.4. Focusing on Classroom Instruction and Designing Diverse Activities

Understanding "focusing on classroom teaching and designing diverse activities" means recognizing the importance of classroom teaching for students' learning outcomes and teaching quality, and taking corresponding measures. In secondary school English teaching, as a crucial entry point for implementing integrated teaching and assessment, "focusing on classroom teaching and designing diverse activities" is paramount. Teachers should fully utilize the classroom to accomplish teaching and assessment tasks. The performance information collected from the classroom is firsthand data, which is authentic and comprehensive.^[10] English teachers can attempt to conceptualize diverse classroom activities from the following perspectives. Firstly, teachers should gain insight into students' needs, interests, and levels to tailor appropriate teaching content and activities for them. Secondly, teachers can design diversified teaching activities such as games, group discussions, role-plays, etc., to stimulate students' interests and enhance their engagement. Additionally, utilizing various teaching resources such as textbooks, multimedia courseware, online resources, etc., can enrich teaching content and increase students' learning enjoyment. In classroom teaching, teachers should also encourage interaction and cooperation among students to cultivate their teamwork spirit. Flexibly applying different teaching methods, such as task-based teaching, inquiry-based learning, etc., can meet students' diverse learning needs. Lastly, providing timely feedback and evaluation to students can help them identify and correct errors promptly, promoting their learning and growth. Through these methods, teachers can effectively focus on classroom teaching, design diverse activities, improve teaching quality, and stimulate students' learning interests and motivation.

6. CONCLUSION

In the context of core literacy, the implementation strategy of integrated teaching and assessment is the key to promoting students' comprehensive development. Through the exploration in this paper, we can see that integrated teaching and assessment is not only an educational concept but also a transformation and innovation of teaching mode. In practice, teachers need to pay attention to

students' learning needs and the cultivation objectives of core literacy, fully integrate teaching, learning, and assessment, design diversified teaching activities and evaluation methods, and stimulate students' interest and initiative in learning. At the same time, teachers need to continuously improve their teaching abilities and professional qualities, actively explore teaching methods and evaluation methods suitable for students' characteristics and teaching environment, continuously optimize the teaching process, and achieve the goal of integrated teaching and assessment. With such efforts, we believe that integrated teaching and assessment will provide stronger support for the enhancement of students' comprehensive literacy and personalized development, and contribute more to the progress and development of education and teaching.

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