

Analysis on Developing English Speaking Through Reading in Junior Middle Schools

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Abstract: In terms of English education, much research has been done on the combination of reading and writing, but there are relatively few studies on the combination of reading and speaking. In this study, the combination of reading and speaking in English through activities was expounded. The effect of this teaching mode was studied based on students' understanding of the subject, practical application, and transfer of knowledge. The goal of this teaching mode is to develop students' core literacy and to enable them to interpret and utilize text resources. With these as objectives, teachers can design lessons and evaluations that require students to verbally explain what they understand after reading lessons and guide students in a stepwise manner, from superficial text understanding to in-depth understanding and eventually to thinking beyond text learning, so as to promote the integration and development of students' language skills, cultural awareness, thinking, and learning ability.

Keywords: English learning activities; Junior middle school; Reading lessons; Oral activities; Core literacy

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1. Introduction

Through classroom observation and analysis, the new English teaching mode has been highlighted in many studies since the new curriculum reform. The traditional simplistic teaching and mechanical learning method of the English language has been transformed into "independent, cooperative, and inquiry" learning. However, in the process of implementation, due to teachers' inadequate understanding of the new learning concept, there are some misunderstandings in the setting of learning goals and content, selection of learning methods, and evaluation of learning results. The students are still not proficient in English, especially in oral expression like daily conversations, and they are incapable of delivering well-structured sentences.

When it comes to post-reading activities, the most likely thing we would think of is writing activities. There are not many lessons in which reading and speaking are organically integrated, resulting in a relatively inefficient development of speaking skills through reading lessons. In recent years, with the gradual and comprehensive implementation of human-computer dialogue in English listening comprehension in junior high schools, teachers have begun to emphasize on how to improve students' oral skills through reading. Nevertheless, there are still many problems in spoken English output after reading in actual classroom, such as the lack of vocabulary, lack of content, overly simple sentence pattern, inaccurate expression, lack of continuity and logic in expression, and many more. In addition, due to the lack of understanding of the text, there is no valuable or in-depth discussion on the text. As a result, students lose interest in the subject, and their learning initiative and efficiency reduce. The reasons for the aforementioned problems are that reading and speaking are taught separately and reading is only taught up

to the comprehension level, falling short of in-depth analysis, evaluation, and creation. Therefore, this paper presents some effective ways to cultivate students' oral skills in English reading teaching through activities, tap the educational value of reading texts, organically integrate oral output into reading lessons, and allow students to be guided by the theme of the text. Through careful design and guidance from teachers, students can express their thoughts verbally, which in turn improves their language skills, thinking, cultural awareness, and learning ability.

2. Role of reading and speaking activities

Activities based on the combination of reading and speaking not only encourage active learning, knowledge combination and application, and learning through analogy, but also promote the improvement of students' higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills. This teaching mode focuses not only on the learning results, but also the learning state and process.

2.1. Collaboratively revitalizing other course content through dynamic oral expression and learning strategies

According to the needs of the core literacy training objectives, the "2022 Compulsory Education Edition New Curriculum Standards" has introduced a course content integrating six elements: thematic context, discourse type, language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies. Therefore, it is clear that language skills and learning strategies will revitalize not only language knowledge and cultural knowledge, but also thematic and discourse knowledge, highlighting the significance of each element to students' development ^[1]. In reading lessons, teachers should encourage students to read conversations intensively and carefully, make structural analyses of the conversations, and convert reading into speaking by learning from "what to read" and "how to read it out" to "what to say" and "how to say it." In this way, students will be able to analyze texts critically and in an in-depth manner. Therefore, by incorporating speaking in English reading lessons, students' oral expression and ability to think critically can be improved.

2.2. Evaluating students' comprehension of the text through oral expression

Among the five language skills (listening, speaking, reading, watching, and writing), reading, listening, and watching are comprehension skills, while speaking and writing are expression skills. Therefore, the training of combining reading and speaking can also be understood as reflecting the degree of students' understanding of the text and knowledge construction as well as the practical application level of critical thinking through oral expression. Teachers can evaluate students' level of reading through their oral expression and evaluate their learning progress from aspects like what they understand and express, what will they do or not do after understanding the text, and many more. Teachers can then provide timely feedback and the necessary support according to their problems and needs, thus achieving the teaching objectives and eventually the goals of education ^[2].

2.3. Using question chains to guide oral expression to promote deep learning

Question design is an important aspect in English reading in which it is crucial for generating thoughts and improving comprehension ability. Effective questioning can guide students to have a higher level of thinking. Therefore, question chains are widely used as a tool for developing critical thinking in teaching.

The theory of deep-thinking states that learning is not only a cognitive process, such as individual perception, memory, and thinking, but also a social construction process rooted in social culture, historical background, and real life ^[3]. Bloom's classification of levels of cognitive dimension in *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* indicates that there are two types of learning: shallow and deep learning. He divided

learning into six levels, which are remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Among the six levels, knowing and understanding are considered shallow learning, while the four higher levels (applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) are considered deep learning. These levels not only involve memory, but also focus on the application of knowledge and problem-solving [4]. In reading comprehension, teachers can carefully design question chains to guide students from knowing and understanding to critical and creative expression beyond the text. There are different ways to classify the types of questions: literal, inferential, and assimilative questions. These three types of questions are based on Bloom's six levels of learning, which are prerequisites in students' reading, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Correspondence table of question type, cognitive level, and thinking level [5]

Question type	Literal		Inferential		Assimilative	
Cognitive level	Memorize	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Integrate	Evaluate
Thinking level	Concrete thinking		Critical thinking		Creative thinking	

Being able to ask appropriate questions is a critical skill that foreign language teachers must have. Answers to questions at different levels not only reflect different cognitive levels, but also compel students to think further and help students visualize their thoughts clearly. Teachers should ask constructive questions and questions that can help students organize their thoughts, such as those that can relate the text to students' life based on what they understand, as well as use questioning as an important method to develop students' language expression and deep-thinking skills.

3. Principles of English oral skills through reading

3.1. Thematic education

Themes provide contextual categories for language learning and curriculum education, while texts carry language knowledge and cultural knowledge expressing those themes. Thematic context is one of the six elements of English course content. All activities that combine reading and speaking should be carried out in a certain thematic context. In that way, the core literacy of students can be cultivated throughout the process.

3.2. Using text as the basis for interpretation

According to Wang, the perspective and depth of text interpretation determine the quality of the lessons and ultimately students' learning level. Huang believes that the development of critical thinking in students must be based on texts. The essence of English reading lessons is to develop their reading skills and improve their thinking quality in the process of interpreting, understanding, and experiencing the texts, that is, to cultivate their skills in terms of perception, prediction, acquisition, analysis, generalization, and comparison.

3.3. Taking students as the main body

Teachers should be a guide to students in the classroom rather than a leader. Teachers should "return the classroom to the students," pay close attention to students' performance, provide timely guidance and assistance, stimulate students to think, and encourage students to actively express structured knowledge. For instance, teachers can prepare a sample of questions and answers and demonstrate how the conversation goes; the students will then be asked to converse with each other based on the template given. During this activity, teachers should take the opportunity to inspire and help them through the process. This would improve their language and interpersonal skills.

3.4. Constructing a well-connected teaching, learning, and evaluation system

According to the new curriculum standard, teaching, learning, and evaluation are closely related and interdependent in education. Therefore, teachers are to think about what to teach, why they are teaching it, and how to evaluate the outcomes of the lessons as well as establish a well-connected and systematic “objective-activity-evaluation” structure. Besides, teachers should integrate teaching and evaluation by designing their lessons based on the teaching objectives and reflect the dynamic, developmental, comprehensive, and formative characteristics of teaching evaluation in their lessons or activities [2]. Hence, when designing English speaking activities after reading, teachers should determine the concepts and content, analyze the learning situation, set goals, and choose appropriate teaching and evaluation methods (Figure 2).

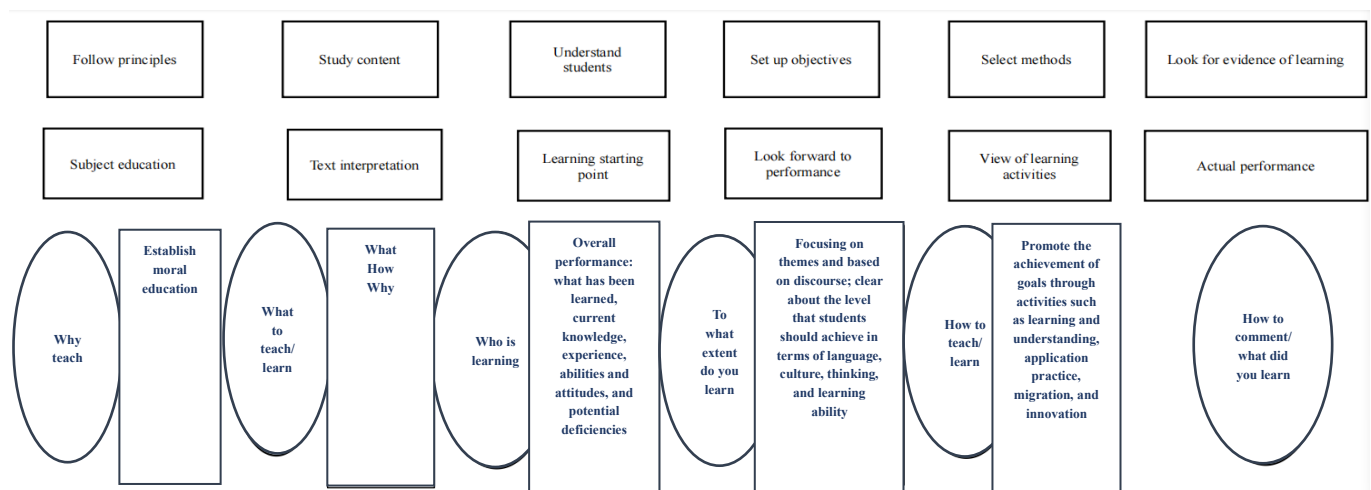


Figure 2. Design ideas for the integration of “teaching-learning-evaluation” [6]

3.5. Taking the goal of the “third-level pragmatic knowledge” of the curriculum standard as the basis

Pragmatic knowledge refers to the ability of accurately understanding others and expressing oneself. The “third level of pragmatic knowledge” of the curriculum standard requires one to understand the emotions, attitudes, and opinions of others and also be able to express those of their own using language [2].

3.6. Achieving the “third-level academic quality” standard of the curriculum standard

Academic quality standards provide an important basis for teachers to carry out literacy-oriented classroom teaching and evaluation. Academic quality refers to the academic performance of students after completing a course, reflecting the core literacy requirements [2]. The comprehensive performance of students’ core literacy in different stages of schooling should be tested, which may be helpful to teachers to grasp the direction, method, and depth of teaching and evaluation. The test results may also help teachers in grasping the macro goals of core literacy, implement them into unit teaching and class hours, and ensure the coherence among the objectives, content, and methods. In this case, the lesson design is mainly based on the language comprehension and expressive skill requirements of eighth and ninth grades [2].

4. Developing English writing and speaking skills through activities

The new curriculum standard advocates the practice of English learning activities by “integrating learning and thinking, with innovation as the foundation.” Adhering to the concept of “learning through experiencing, applying through practice, and innovating through transfer,” students are encouraged to focus on real situations and problems, apply what they know, and participate in a series of language learning and application activities. The integration and development of one’s own language knowledge, language skills,

cultural connotation, thinking, value orientation, and the application of learning strategies should be encouraged. The combination of observation, reading, and theory in English learning activities should be based on the text and students' knowledge [2].

4.1. Design of oral activities in reading and comprehension activities

Learning and comprehension activities mainly include perceptual attention, acquisition and sorting, as well as generalization and integration. It is necessary to create real and reasonable learning situations and tasks, activate students' existing knowledge, introduce language and cultural knowledge, identify the problems that need to be solved, and encourage students to form connections between learning topics and existing knowledge and experience, to discover their own cognitive gaps, and to look forward to the next lesson. Classroom teaching and learning activities should have clear logical relationships to help students construct knowledge.

4.1.1. Creating realistic and reasonable learning situations and tasks, and promoting students' expression of themes through perception and attention

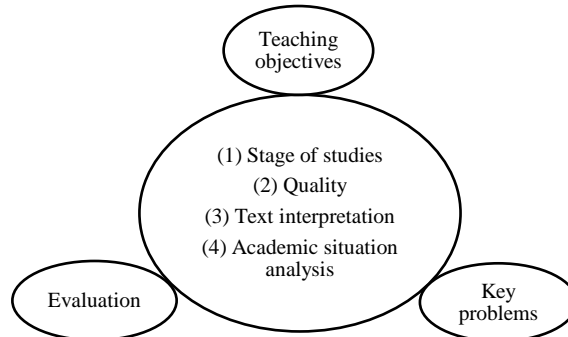
According to Jiang, the tasks given in class should be related to the students' existing knowledge and experience, so that students can relate the content to their lives, thereby stimulating their interest and desire to learn. They can then mobilize what they know, explore the meaning of the theme, and independently construct, consolidate, and transfer new knowledge, as well as participate in practical activities centered on communication and expression. In this way, their contextual and pragmatic awareness can be enhanced, and they can use what they have learned to analyze and solve problems.

Taking the People's Education Press (PEP) English textbook *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 7: Do you think you will have your own robot? Section B, 2b* [7] as an example, pre-reading videos, music, and pictures can be used to illustrate real situations. Tasks can then be assigned to students to help them understand the meaning of the topic, form new knowledge structures, and output information through spoken language.

This text is an expository text, and the theme is science and technology under the category of human and society. The content of the discourse introduces the status quo of robots and different predictions for future development. By reading the text, students will be able to gauge the usual structure and language used in expository texts, thereby stimulating their interest in science, encouraging them to study harder, and eventually inspiring them to create a better tomorrow with their own wisdom. Based on the analysis and investigation above, the text can be taught using the following structure (**Figure 3**).

Before reading the text, students are required to answer several questions by watching relevant videos, understanding the theme of the text, and paying attention to Musk's predictions about life in the future. Students can observe the text titles and pictures to further understand the topic of the text and answer those questions through group discussions. Through these activities, their prior knowledge about robots will be activated, and students will be able to learn future tenses and other text-related vocabulary in the prediction of the future with robots, as shown in **Figure 4**.

The main idea of the text can be understood through a quick read of the text, in which students can gather specific information and understand the current situation as well as the future of robot development. This will stimulate their love for science and help them realize the importance of learning basic knowledge and cultivating innovative thinking.



The students' understanding of the text can be evaluated through classroom observation of oral and written expression, peer discussion, personal retelling and interpretation, and many more. In a way, they will also be able to understand the current and future application of robots and dialectically analyze its impact on human life.

What is the article mainly about?
 What is the main idea of each paragraph?
 What can robots do these days?
 What are scientists' opinions on future robots?

Figure 3. Frame diagram of instructional design for reading class of *“English” Go for it! Volume 1, Grade 8, Unit 7, Section B, 2b*

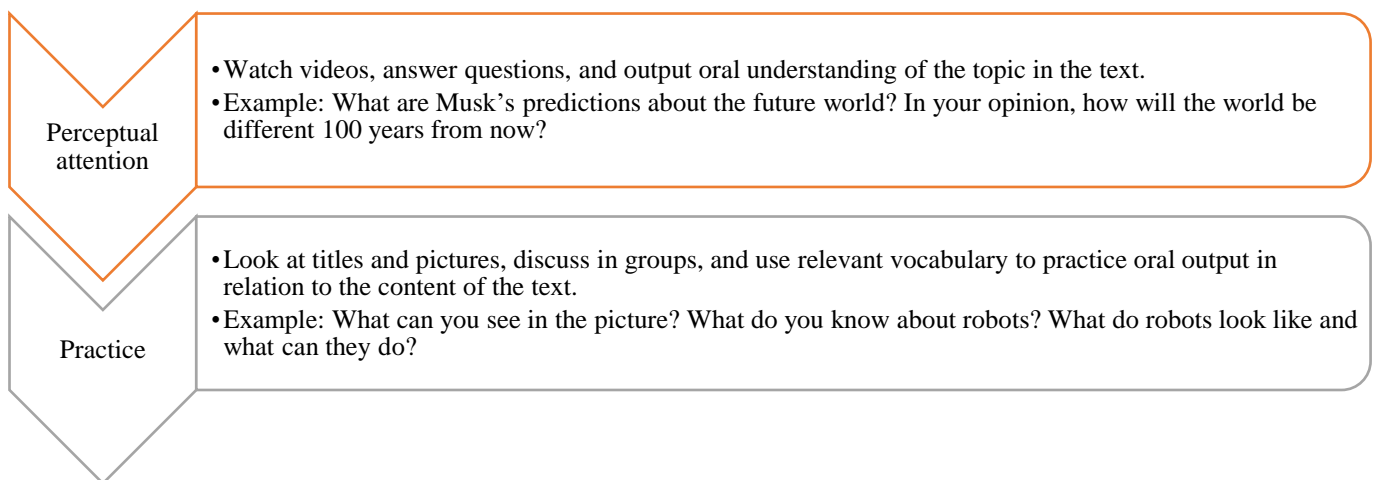


Figure 4. Learning and understanding activities

Evaluation: Teachers should evaluate whether the students' answers to Musk's prediction of the future are comprehensive and specific and whether the language used is correct. While listening to the discussions carried out, teachers should evaluate whether the students can understand the topic and use the correct vocabulary, sentence structure, and future tenses to express themselves.

Design intent: Let students to feel that the learning content is closely related to their own lives, stimulate their own interest, mobilize what they know, and explore the meaning of the theme. Teachers can supplement some core vocabulary around the theme if needed, pave the way for background knowledge, and trigger students' cognitive conflicts and reading expectations. Besides, this activity also helps teachers gauge students' prior knowledge of certain topics and identify their zones of proximal development.

4.1.2. Guiding acquisition and sorting, generalization and integration, and expression of structured knowledge through question chains

Under the guidance of a theme, relying on the text, and being goal-oriented, question chains would help develop students' language learning and skills and help them express their learning at different stages.

4.1.2.1. Obtaining and sorting out specific information in the discourse, and performing oral output exercises on the specific content of the discourse

By reading a text and understanding the main message from the questions that point to key information in the text, students can acquire and sort out information, establish connections between scattered information, and form structured expressions based on the topic. Examples of questions are shown below.

- (1) What can robots do?
- (2) What are robots like and what will they be like in the future?
- (3) What opinions on future robots are mentioned in the article?

4.1.2.2. Summarizing and integrating the discourse structure, and carrying out oral output exercises

Students can read the text in detail and then obtain and summarize the status quo and future development of robots in the text by answering the questions. Besides, they will be exposed to different views on the futuristic development of robots.

Table 2. Questions in each paragraph of “English” Go for it! Volume 1, Grade 8, Unit 7, Section B, 2b

Paragraphs	Main questions
Paragraph 1	Introduction: What are robots like in movies?
Paragraph 2	Today's robot: What can robots do today?
Paragraph 3	Future-disagreement: Will robots think like humans in the future?
Paragraph 4	Future-prediction: What will robots be like in the future?

Students will then summarize and integrate the discourse structure, draw out a mind map of the discourse and retell the main content of the discourse according to the mind map.

- (1) Read the passage again and draw a mind map of 2b (**Figure 5**).
- (2) Retell 2b with the help of the mind map.

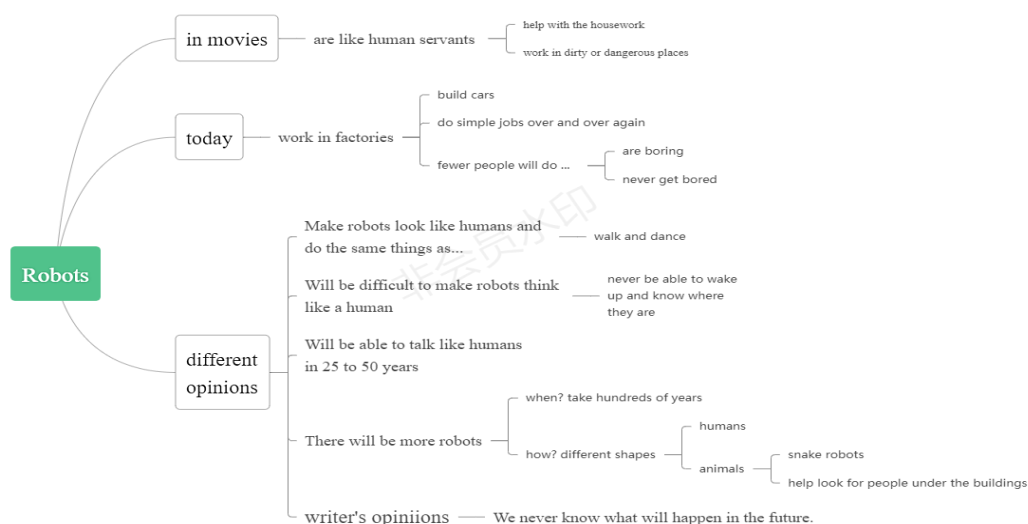


Figure 5. Mind map of *Go for it! Volume 1, Grade 8, Unit 7, Section B, 2b* [2]

Evaluation: The teacher evaluates whether the students can retell the main content of the text correctly, fluently, and logically through observation and simple and continuous questioning. In addition, the vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in relation to the theme, and the accuracy of expression are evaluated. In this way, the problems in the learning process can be identified in a timely manner, and this would help students achieve the preset teaching goals.

Design intent: Let students acquire, sort out, summarize, and integrate basic information about robots and the different views on the futuristic development of robots as well as use mind maps to construct and present the information. Mind maps help students understand the content of the discourse as well as summarize and integrate the content structure and language characteristics of the discourse. By building an information chain bracket, students will learn to expand words into sentences according to this information chain, from sentences to paragraphs, from paragraphs to articles, and eventually to verbally reproducing the text, thereby improving their English expression ability.

4.2. Oral English design in reading application practice activities

Applied practice activities mainly include description and interpretation, analysis and judgment, as well as internalization and application. Through speaking activities, students will be able to internalize language knowledge and cultural knowledge, deepen their understanding of cultural connotation, consolidate structured knowledge, and promote the transformation of knowledge into skills. After learning and understanding the text, the initial output is carried out by retelling the main content of the text, setting up question chains, role-playing, and other forms.

In this study, several texts from the PEP English textbook *Go for it!* are used as examples to discuss some effective strategies for the design and implementation of English oral activities after reading.

4.2.1. With the help of visual tools, the main content of the text is described and explained

Different articles have different structural characteristics due to their different genres and themes, providing us with the possibility of transforming text into different forms of structured graphics. For example, we can use mind maps, timelines, table structure diagrams, and even comic strips to transform texts into pictures according to the different characteristics of the text to help students sort out and integrate information.

4.2.1.1. Using mind maps to carry out post-reading retelling activities

For example, in the PEP English textbook *Go for it, Grade 7, Volume 1, Unit 8, Section B, 2b* [8], Thanksgiving in North America is presented under the theme of holidays and celebrations, which is under the category of people and society. A mind map can be drawn to sort out the structure of the article, as shown in **Figure 6**.

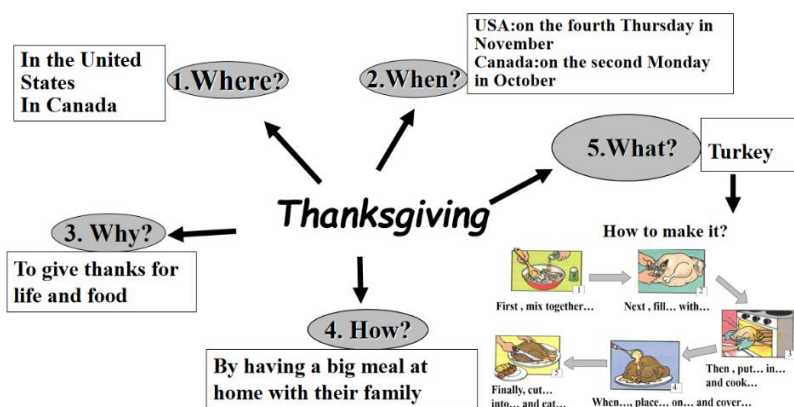


Figure 6. Mind map of Unit 8 Section B, 2b Thanksgiving in North America [2]

4.2.1.2. Using comic strips to retell after reading

For example, in the PEP English Textbook *Go for it! Grade 7, Volume 2, Unit 12, Section B, 2b* [7], the theme of the text is harmonious coexistence of man and nature, which is under the category of man and nature. The text presents an interesting and unique experience of a person who encountered a snake when camping by a lake in the rural area of India during a weekend. Comic strips can be used to sort out the structure of the text and retell it, as shown in **Figure 7**.

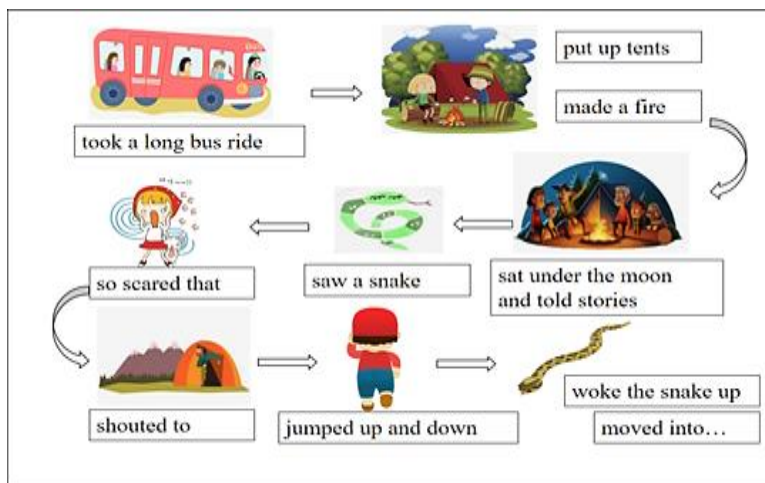


Figure 7. PEP English Textbook *Go for it! Grade 7, Unit 12, Section B, 2b* in the form of comic strip

4.2.1.3. Using a timeline diagram to retell a text after reading

For example, in the PEP English textbook *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 5, Section B, 2b* [8], the theme of appreciation of Chinese and foreign art forms and cultures, which is under the category of people and society, is presented. The text explains the origin, achievements, and reasons for the popularity of the cartoon character “Mickey Mouse” in American culture. In this case, a timeline diagram can be used to help students retell the text, as shown in **Figure 8**.

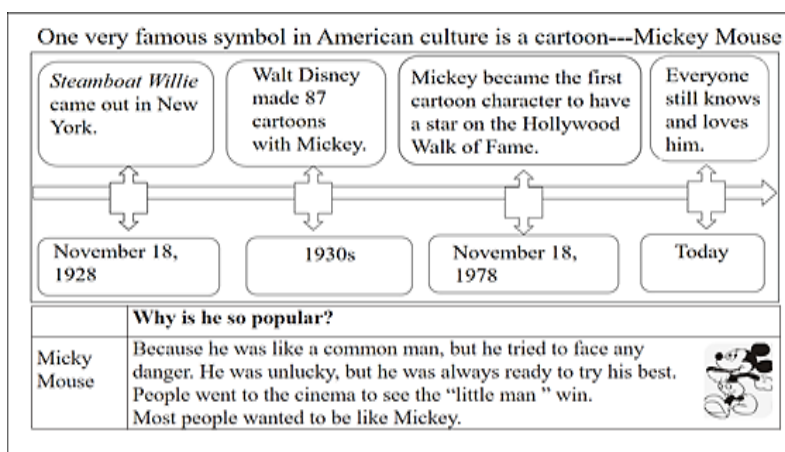


Figure 8. Timeline diagram of PEP English textbook *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 5, Section B, 2b*

4.2.1.4. Using an information table for post-reading retelling activities

For example, the theme of the text in the PEP English textbook *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 3, Section B, 2b* is interpersonal communication under the category of people and society. The text describes the similarities and differences between Jeff Green, Huang Lei, and Mary Smith, as well as their opinions on friends. The text can be retold using a table, as shown in **Figure 9**.

	Opinions	Similarities	Differences
Jeff Green	You don't need a lot of friends as long as they're good. (the same)	They are both quiet.	—
Huang Lei	It's not necessary to be the same. (different)	They both like sports.	Larry is taller and more outgoing. Larry plays tennis better. Larry is less hard-working. Huang Lei gets better grades.
Mary Smith	I don't really care if my friends are the same as me or different.	They can talk about and share everything.	Carol is really kind and very funny.

Figure 9. Content of PEP English textbook *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 3, Section B, 2b* in a table

After introducing several activities for speaking after reading according to different article genres and themes, the students' ability to describe or explain can be evaluated based on the dimensions below.

- (1) Integrity of content: The student is able to describe the main content of the article with his/her structure diagram.
- (2) Accuracy: The student is able to retell the main content of the article with correct vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar.
- (3) Logic: The text is retold by using appropriate vocabulary with logical relations.
- (4) Fluency: In the process of retelling, the student is able to avoid pauses and repetitions in an effort to keep the sentences smooth and coherent.

4.2.2. Optimizing question design, and analyzing and judging based on text content

In reading activities, by setting hidden questions or question chains in the text, students can analyze and evaluate the reading materials so as to cultivate logical and critical thinking. Taking a text in *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 7, Section B, 2b* ^[8] as an example, the question chain allows students to think critically and express their opinions based on the text. As explained earlier in section 4.1, four questions are posed to help students understand what robots are like in movies, in real life, and in the future. Based on the text, scientists also have differing opinions on the question: "Will robots think like humans in the future?". Some believe that robots will be able to think like humans, while others believe that robots will never be able to think like humans. This is a very controversial topic. After reading the text, students will be eager to express their opinions based on their own cognition. In order to help students express themselves clearly and improve their thinking, a chain of questions is designed, as shown in **Figure 10**.

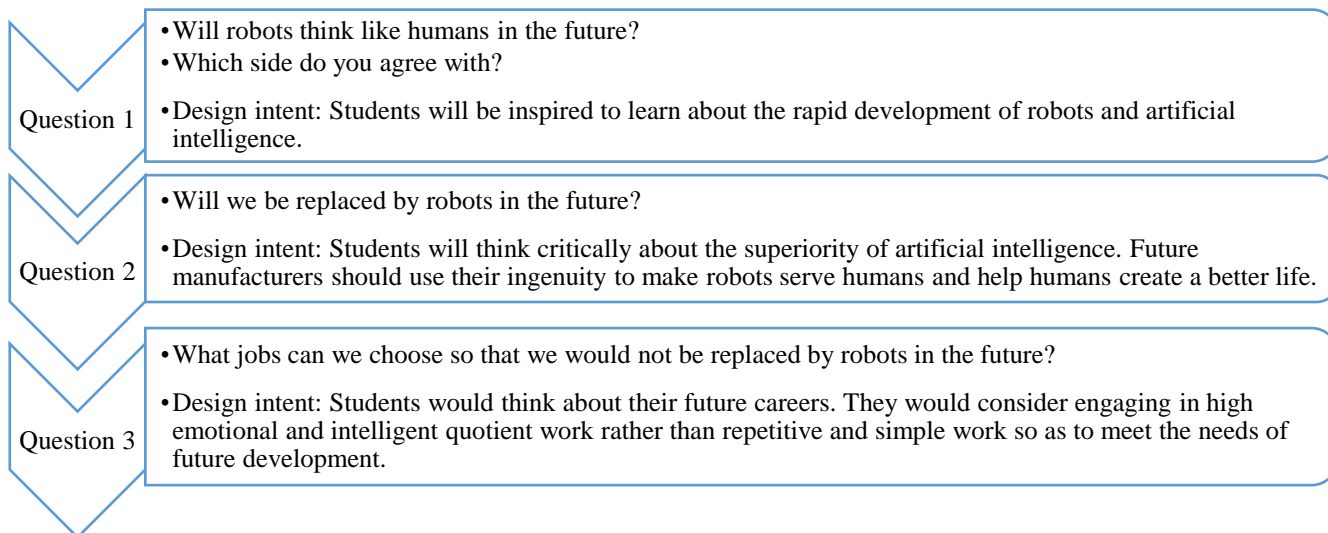


Figure 10. Design of question chain after reading the text in *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 7, Section B, 2b*

Evaluation: When students express their opinions freely according to the question chain, the teacher should encourage students to be bold in expressing themselves by accepting their answers as long as they are reasonable and well-founded.

4.2.3. Through role-playing, internalize and apply what you have learned, and deeply express the emotions of the characters in the text

Role-playing is a commonly used form of oral English activities. For narrative texts, dramatic texts, and news story texts with many characters and dialogues, post-reading role-playing can be used so that students can retell the content of the text. In this way, students will be encouraged to imagine and make reasonable innovations, enriching the text content and expressing the emotions of the characters.

For example, in the PEP English textbook *Go for it! Grade 7, Volume 2, Unit 3, Section B, 2b* “Crossing the River to School,” there is a news article with the theme of changes in hometown under the category of people and society, which is based on a true story of children going to school by a ropeway in a remote mountainous area in China. The students can retell the news story by sorting out of the article, as shown in **Figure 11**.

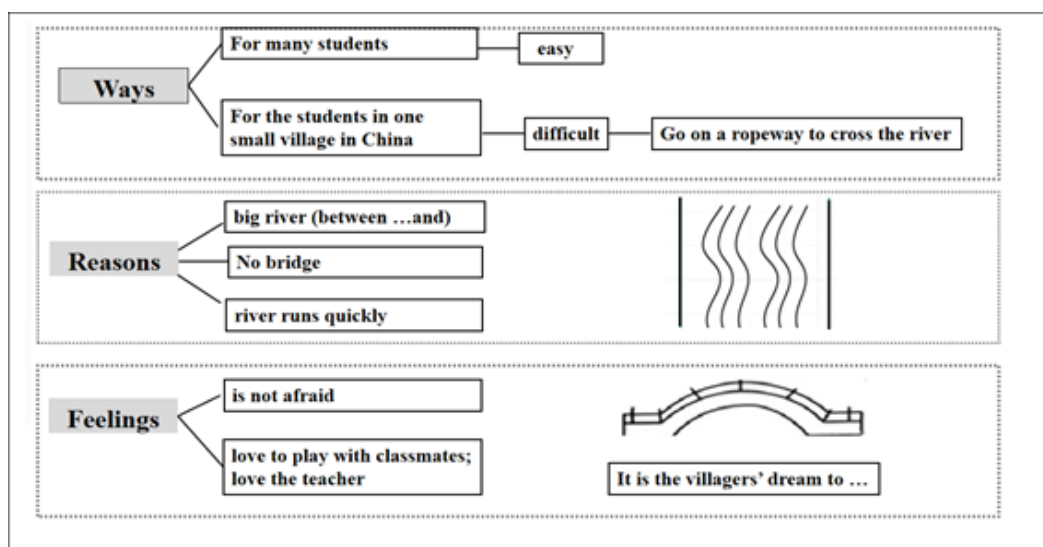




Figure 11. Mind map of *Unit 3, Section B, 2b* “Crossing the River to School”^[2]

On this basis, we can design two role-plays to interpret the different scenarios of Liangliang’s interviews in 2010 and 2022, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Different scenarios of Liangliang’s interviews in 2010 and 2022

2010	2022
The interview can be enacted based on the dialogue given.	By supplementing the government’s report on bridge and road repairs and watching the video of the dramatic changes in people’s lives in the Nu River today, the scenario when the reporters interviewed Liangliang is imagined.
<p style="text-align: center;">Role-play the interview.</p> <div style="border: 1px dashed gray; padding: 10px;"> <p>Reporter: How do you get to school, Liangliang? Liangliang: ...go on a ropeway... Reporter: Are you afraid? Liang liang: No./ Because I love/ my school / my teachers. / play with my classmates. Reporter: Is it difficult for you to go to school? Liangliang: Yes, it is. Reporter: Do you want to have a bridge? Liangliang: Yes. It’s our dream. Reporter: I’m sure your dream can come true.</p>  </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interview Time.</p> <p>Choose at least 4 questions to make an interview with Liang liang.</p> <div style="border: 1px dashed gray; padding: 10px;"> <p>Reporter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢How do the students in the village get to school now? ➢What’s the benefit of building the bridge? ➢What makes the great changes happen? ➢How do people feel now? ➢What’s your biggest dream now? ➢What else do you want to say? ...  </div>

Through the role-playing activities, the students will not only understand the difficulties that Liangliang faced when going to school, but also feel the significant changes in life after more than 10 years. From this, students will realize that they should be optimistic and filled with gratitude in life, thus learning how to cherish life. Teachers can observe from the students’ language, performance, and creativity whether they have a deep understanding of the text and its value.

4.3. Design of innovative speaking exercises in reading lessons

The speaking exercises should help develop reasoning and argumentation, criticism and evaluation, as well as imagination and creativity. Students should be guided to reason and demonstrate the value orientation behind the text as well as the attitude and behavior of the protagonist. Students will then understand the world from different perspectives and be able to express emotions, attitudes, and opinions rationally.

For example, the theme of *Unit 8* “Have You Read Treasure Island Yet?” in the PEP English textbook is literature and art under the category of human and society. *Section B, 2a–2e* is the reading board. By reading articles, obtaining detailed information, consolidating information, and grasping the core idea of each paragraph in the article, students will be able to summarize the general idea of the article. Students will be able to analyze why patriotic music has the power to change lives, and then associate it with other types of music and share their understanding of the power of music. In this way, they will develop a positive attitude toward life.

4.3.1. Developing reasoning and argumentation abilities based on what is learned from the text

Based on their understanding of the power of music, students can use the viewpoints and language in the text and discuss in groups about their understanding of famous sayings about music by Confucius and Einstein as well as explain the reasons.

- (1) “If I were not a physician, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I know that the most joy in my life has come to me from my violin.”—Albert Einstein
- (2) “Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.”—Confucius

Design intent: Students can associate music quotes and stories, transfer them, think and share their understanding of the power of music, make simple verbal evaluations based on the content, viewpoints, and attitudes of the written text, and explain the reasons.

4.3.2. Developing the ability to evaluate viewpoints, empathize with others, and express critically

Teachers should guide students to analyze the meaning of the text and the emotional attitude of the protagonist in an in-depth manner, think rationally, and critically evaluate the text. Since critical thinking itself is a kind of high-level thinking process that requires certain questions, it is necessary to design a question chain ^[6]. Teachers can set the following question chain according to the emotions of the protagonist in the text:

- (1) Play some patriotic music for the students to listen to and ask the students to guess what song the protagonist (Sarah) listened to.
- (2) Ask the students to share how they felt when they were listening to the music.

Design intent: Students will grow to enjoy music, guess the song Sarah listened to, further understand the content of the text, appreciate and feel the charm of patriotic music from the perspective of the protagonist, learn to appreciate different cultures, and form positive cultural concepts. Students will also be able to verbally express the theme of music with clear views and logic.

4.3.3. Thinking beyond the text, and imagining and creating expressions

After understanding the profound meaning of the text, students will learn to imagine and express their views and opinions creatively.

- (1) Students can write their own stories with music and then discuss and share in groups.
- (2) Students can share their music-related stories with the help of the following questions:
 - (i) What is your favorite kind of music and songs? Why?
 - (ii) Who is your favorite musician? Why?
 - (iii) What is the power of music for you?

Design an evaluation rubric like the one shown in **Table 4**. Adequate support should be offered to students to improve their English expression, help them achieve the education goals, and synergize teaching, learning, and evaluation so as to promote student development.

Table 4. Evaluation rubrics of students’ imagination and creation of oral expression

Pronunciation (2 marks)	Content (5 marks)	Logic (3 marks)	Total (10 marks)
Clear pronunciation.	Able to use words and phrases from text and add extra words and phrases. For example, the importance of (a) “It reminds us that...” (b) “It brings us back to...”	Use clear logical words such as the following: First, ..., Second, ..., Last but not least,	

Design intent: Problem-oriented; students’ imagination and expression will be stimulated beyond the text through the problem chain. Besides, students will be able to use the language learned in the text to describe and introduce the people and things around them verbally as well as express their emotions, attitudes, and opinions appropriately.

4.3.4. Comprehensively applying what they have learned and know, and expressing their views and opinions through discussions and debates

Students should be guided to understand the deeper meaning of the given text, evaluate the article, and use critical thinking methods, such as reasoning and analysis, to express their views and opinions.

Among the articles in PEP English Textbook *Go for it!*, there are articles that are debatable and require one's own interpretation. For example, when reading *Grade 8, Volume 1, Unit 3, Section B*, Jeff Green, Huang Lei, and Mary Smith gave different views on the topic "Should friends be the same or different?". Jeff Green believes that good friends are like a mirror, expressing his favor for friends who are similar to himself; Huang Lei, on the other hand, used the example of a mutually beneficial relationship between himself and his friends to express the view that good friends do not have to be the same; Mary Smith expressed that she does not care about whether her friends are the same as herself or not since a true friend is someone who reaches out to you when you are in trouble. Through reading the text, students can fully express their views on this topic. As another example, in *Go for it! Grade 8, Volume 2, Unit 3, Section B, 2b* ^[7], the text concerns two parents discussing the topic "Should students do housework?", each having their own opinions and giving their own reasons. Such topics are closely related to students' lives. After reading the text, students will have their own opinions based on their life experiences and what they have learnt. Students can then express their views via open discussion or debate.

5. Conclusion

The activity of combining reading and speaking is a comprehensive and creative classroom learning activity. It not only exercises and improves students' ability to analyze, summarize, and integrate information from a text, but also helps in developing their high-level thinking ability, including reasoning, critical evaluation, imagination, and creation. Therefore, for English reading lessons in junior high schools, teachers should strengthen the design of oral activities after reading, cultivate students' ability to relate to the texts and the author, and form their own thoughts. Besides, these activities will help students build a proactive learning attitude, improve their key abilities, and develop their character and English core literacy. Therefore, teaching strategies that combine speaking and reading are proposed to encourage English speaking. Besides, several methods to cultivate students' critical thinking and language ability through reading and speaking activities are also proposed to improve their oral expression. The teaching that follows the laws of students' cognitive development is operable. However, lessons combining reading and writing still need to be studied and implemented according to different text types and learning situations as well as further optimized and improved in practice.

Disclosure statement

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