

# Research on Holistic Unit Teaching Design Methods for High School English under the Guidance of Thematic Significance

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**Abstract:** With the continuous advancement of the new curriculum reform, senior high school English teaching has also opened the way for transformation from “traditional” to “quality.” Under this background, thematic significance-guided holistic unit teaching has been widely used, showing great vitality in promoting the improvement of senior high school English teaching effect and promoting the cultivation of students’ core qualities. This paper expounds on the connotation value of the holistic unit teaching of senior high school English based on thematic significance and discusses its effective design principles and methods, hoping to provide some references for teachers.

**Keywords:** High school English; Holistic unit teaching; Thematic significance guidance; Connotation value; Principles and methods

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## 1. Introduction

Holistic unit teaching is a subversion of the previous teaching mode of “class-hour doctrine.” It can promote students’ holistic unit thinking and learning and effectively promote their unit practice and innovation, benefitting the cultivation of their English literacy. It is clearly pointed out in the “English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools” that students’ exploration of the significance of the topic is the most important content of students’ language learning, which directly affects students’ comprehension of the discourse, level of thinking development, and effectiveness of language learning <sup>[1]</sup>. In this regard, in the process of promoting holistic unit teaching, the majority of teachers should also pay attention to the design of thematic significance guidance, so as to comprehensively promote the improvement of students’ English learning effect, promote the cultivation of their core English literacy, and enhance their better growth and development.

## **2. Connotation values of holistic unit teaching of senior high school English based on the guidance of thematic significance**

### **2.1. Connotation analysis**

First of all, the main emphasis of holistic unit teaching is to promote the teaching process around the core concept of “unitization,” focusing on multi-class integrated teaching to guide students to comprehensive thinking, learning, and practice, so as to help them build a unitized thinking framework and promote the cultivation of their thinking ability and core literacy <sup>[2]</sup>. Combined with the characteristics of senior high school English textbooks, it is itself arranged in a “unitized” way, which also lays a foundation for the promotion of holistic unit teaching. This teaching mode mainly aims at promoting the cultivation of students’ English thinking and application ability through unit teaching. The whole teaching of power supply based on thematic significance further clarifies the key role of the unit theme in holistic unit teaching <sup>[3]</sup>. This mode requires teachers to create a theme based on the whole content of the unit in the teaching process, and then take it as a guide to promote students’ language knowledge learning and language skills cultivation, so that students can gain more knowledge, happiness, and growth in English class.

### **2.2. Value implication**

#### **2.2.1. Improving English teaching effect**

According to the actual situation of senior high school English teaching, the problems of content fragmentation and target dispersion in the past high school English teaching have directly affected the effect of English teaching. The holistic unit teaching guided by thematic significance can effectively change this situation and comprehensively promote the improvement of the teaching effect <sup>[4]</sup>. Specifically, under the promotion of this model, teachers can strengthen the relationship between class hours and carry out integrated teaching based on thematic guidance, which effectively solves the problems of content fragmentation and target dispersion in previous teaching, so that students can deeply understand the relationship between various departments, promote the construction of their subject knowledge network, and promote the English teaching effect to a higher level.

#### **2.2.2. Cultivating students’ core literacy**

At present, core literacy education has become an important content and direction of senior high school English teaching reform. While emphasizing core literacy education, the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools also clearly point out that students’ exploration of the significance of the subject is the most important content of their language learning, which directly affects their comprehension of the discourse, their thinking development level and the effectiveness of language learning <sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, from this perspective, holistic unit teaching guided by thematic significance can create a comprehensive English unit learning activity and help students actively learn English language knowledge and make innovative use of English skills, thus promoting the cultivation of their language skills, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability as well as facilitating the cultivation of their English core qualities.

#### **2.2.3. Promoting education and teaching reform**

The holistic unit teaching based on thematic significance is an important starting point to promote the reform of senior high school English teaching. Under this model, teachers’ teaching concepts will be changed, that is, they will pay more attention to integrated, unitized, and theme-based teaching than before, which is also conducive to students’ learning and growth and can promote the quality-oriented reform of senior high school English. At the

same time, under the promotion of this model, teachers will fully integrate and utilize various teaching resources based on the overall idea of thematically guided units, and ensure the teaching effect through scientific and effective teaching method design, so as to ease the modernization reform and development of senior high school English education and teaching.

### **3. Principles of holistic unit teaching design of senior high school English guided by thematic significance**

#### **3.1. Principle of biological nature**

Since the CPC Central Committee and The State Council issued “China’s Education Modernization 2035,” the beginning of the modernization of education has been officially kicked off, which also points out the direction for the modernization of high school English teaching. In the new era, the modernization of senior high school English teaching should not only be modernized in concept and method but also be “student-oriented” and build a modern English teaching system for students, so as to help students acquire good quality habits and discipline literacy while learning English knowledge and skills in school <sup>[6]</sup>. Therefore, when promoting the holistic unit teaching of senior high school English guided by thematic significance, we should also carry out innovative design from students’ perspective, so that students can better learn, grow, and develop.

#### **3.2. Principle of situationality**

The holistic unit teaching of senior high school English guided by thematic significance should follow the principle of “situationality,” especially the creation of corresponding language situations based on the unit theme, so as to stimulate students’ interest in learning and promote students’ understanding and application. The new curriculum standard clearly points out the importance of situation creation, which is an important way to ensure the effect of English teaching and promote the cultivation of students’ core qualities <sup>[7]</sup>. In this regard, in the holistic unit teaching process of English, we should also create corresponding situations based on the guidance of thematic significance, so that students can feel the fun of using English in the situation and experience the skills of using English to consolidate their English foundation, improve their comprehensive English skills, and cultivate their English literacy.

#### **3.3. Principle of interactivity**

As a language subject, English has high requirements for students’ communication and interaction. At the same time, actively promoting students’ communication and language use can better cultivate their English skills. In this regard, in the holistic unit teaching process of senior high school English guided by thematic significance, we should also actively guide students to communicate and interact, create a positive learning atmosphere, stimulate students’ awareness of English use, cultivate their awareness of independent learning and knowledge use, so as to ensure the effect of English teaching and help students to grow and develop in an all-round way <sup>[8]</sup>.

### **4. Holistic unit teaching design method of senior high school English guided by thematic significance**

#### **4.1. Focusing on the unit theme and formulating the unit teaching objectives**

Goals are the forerunners of actions. It is clearly pointed out in the new curriculum standard of senior high

school English that teachers should fully innovate the teaching mode and method, make overall arrangements for teaching activities, and actively promote core quality education. In this regard, in the teaching process, we should formulate the unit teaching objectives based on the unit theme, ensure the efficient and scientific promotion of subsequent teaching, and lay the foundation for the cultivation of students' core quality of English<sup>[9]</sup>. Specifically, in the teaching process, we should define the knowledge objective and core quality objective of teaching based on the unit theme content, focusing on the four dimensions of core quality such as language ability, quality of thinking, cultural awareness, and self-learning ability to design the objective and ensure the promotion effect of English teaching and core quality education through clear goal guidance. Taking the teaching of "The Media" as an example, this unit mainly expounds on the use of media, including the use of different types of media, the advantages and disadvantages of media, and so on. In the teaching process, we should fully read the content of the unit and grasp the overall context of the unit, on this basis, clearly identify the teaching theme of "people and media," and then formulate corresponding teaching objectives based on this unit theme, laying the foundation for the improvement of subsequent teaching effects. For example, we can design the following teaching objectives: First, be able to master the relevant words and sentences of this unit, focusing on how to use the relevant sentence patterns and phrases; Second, be able to deeply understand the content of the unit text, can say the specific description of each text; Third, be able to express their own views and opinions on the topic of "human and media" on the basis of mastering words and sentences. Through the design of the above teaching objectives, students can have a theme basis for learning and a clear learning direction, so as to promote the cultivation of their comprehensive English skills and core literacy<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### **4.2. Focusing on the unit theme and creating the unit teaching situation**

Situation creation is the basic principle and method of English teaching. In the process of promoting holistic unit teaching guided by thematic significance, we should also combine this principle and method to create a variety of learning situations, promote students' thinking and exploration, and lay a foundation for their better communication and learning. First of all, we can create corresponding "problem situations" based on the unit theme to trigger students' thinking and exploration<sup>[11]</sup>. As we all know, questions, as the most direct and effective medium of communication between teachers and students, and between students and students, are the key to ensuring the teaching effect. Therefore, we should also design questions scientifically in teaching, and stimulate students' learning interest and thinking vitality through interesting questions. For example, when teaching "Festivals and Customs," based on the theme of "festivals and culture" in this unit, we can design the following questions: "What are the traditional Chinese festivals?" and "What are these holiday customs?" Through these questions, we can create a life-oriented English question situation, strengthen the connection between English teaching and students' lives, and trigger students' interesting thinking and active exploration. On this basis, we can also put forward the question "What festivals and customs are discussed in the article?" based on the teaching content of the unit, "How do you feel about this?" and other questions, so as to help students think and explore deeply, strengthen their unit understanding ability, and cultivate their thinking quality and innovation ability. Secondly, we can create an "information technology situation" based on the current background of educational informatization, and use modern technologies and methods that students favor to stimulate their interest in learning and promote their understanding and improvement. For example, when talking about "Natural Disasters," the content of this unit is about natural disasters. As many students lack sufficient knowledge of natural disasters, they may not understand the content of this unit deeply. In this regard, in the teaching process, we can rely on multimedia, micro-lessons, and other technical means to display the corresponding video clips,



so that students can deepen their English impression and feeling in the audio-visual integration and colorful information situation, so as to promote their English learning and core quality cultivation <sup>[12]</sup>. In addition, we can also create informatized game situations based on English software to promote students' English learning and ability improvement. For example, we can use software such as Bai Ci Zhan to carry out "English word quick memory" games, etc., in order to stimulate students' interest in English learning and ensure the effect of English teaching.

### **4.3. Focusing on the unit theme and enriching the unit learning activities**

In the process of senior high school English teaching, in addition to theoretical teaching, we should also pay attention to students' English practice and actively create various and interesting English practice activities to promote their knowledge use and strengthen their comprehensive ability. To be specific, we can create some "big activities" based on the unit theme to promote the integration of students' "reading," "thinking," and "writing," so as to provide a guarantee for the implementation of core literacy education <sup>[13]</sup>. For example, when talking about the unit content of "Be Sporty, Be Healthy," we can design "fun practice" activities based on the unit theme of "health and vitality." Here we can first create a number of 4–6 English groups based on the students' English foundation, in order to promote the comparison and competition between groups, enhance the mutual communication and learning between the members of the group, and create a good learning atmosphere. On this basis, we can arrange the creative activity of "sports and health," guide students in each group to collect relevant materials after class, and jointly design personalized English tabloid newspapers or English short videos, so as to further stimulate students' innovative exploration and thinking awareness. In addition, we can also guide students to carry out a "family health survey" around the theme of "health and vitality," understand the health status of their family members, formulate corresponding "healthcare plan" for them, and then write a "health survey report" combining their English knowledge. This can not only stimulate students' interest in English learning and knowledge application but also cultivate their quality of thinking and social responsibility, stimulate their inner truth, goodness and beauty, which is killing two birds with one stone.

### **4.4. Focusing on the unit theme and improving the unit teaching evaluation**

As an important part of high school English teaching, teaching evaluation has a direct impact on teaching results. The significance of doing this part well is not only to enable us to better understand students' learning situation and implement teaching reform, but also to lead students to a suitable learning road and promote their growth and development. However, the traditional English teaching evaluation is mostly based on the result evaluation and the lack of scientific and reasonable design also affects the actual effect of English teaching. In this regard, we should also improve the teaching evaluation in holistic unit teaching guided by thematic significance, give full play to the role of evaluation in educating people, and promote the growth and development of students <sup>[14]</sup>. First of all, on the basis of focusing on the unit theme and teaching activities, we should implement the process evaluation well, pay attention to students' learning attitude, thinking quality, knowledge application ability, cultural literacy, and innovation awareness in the learning process, and then evaluate and guide them, so as to build the process-based and quality-oriented teaching evaluation standards and help the cultivation of students' core qualities <sup>[15]</sup>. Secondly, on the basis of traditional teacher evaluation, we should actively introduce self-evaluation, mutual evaluation, group evaluation, and other evaluation modes into the teaching, so as to provide students with diversified learning ideas and help them find their own learning path. For example, we can organize unit theme practice activities for students, guide students to evaluate each other, and promote students' communication and

interaction. Mutual evaluation among various groups is promoted, so that students can exchange views and ideas with each other, and promote their mutual communication and overall improvement.

## 5. Conclusion

In a word, it has become an important direction of senior high school English teaching reform to carry out holistic unit teaching based on thematic significance guidance in the new era. In this regard, teachers should deeply grasp the connotation value of this model, and on the basis of adhering to the principles of nature, context, and interaction, build a new overall teaching system based on thematic meaning through effective teaching design and deployment, effectively improve the interest and effectiveness of English teaching, and stimulate students' interest in English learning to lay a solid foundation for the cultivation of their English literacy and comprehensive quality.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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