

How to Cultivate Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in Senior High English Teaching

Yixin Ou

School of Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, Nanchong 637009, China
Email: 1306479590@qq.com

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Abstract

The new curriculum reform has proposed new teaching objectives for English learning in senior high, with autonomous learning ability becoming an important aspect of student ability development. Students need to know not only what to learn but also how to learn. Based on the theory and characteristics of autonomous learning, and combined with the current status of autonomous learning among students in senior high English teaching, this paper proposes four ways for cultivating autonomous learning ability: strengthen learning motivation and clarify learning objectives, transform English teaching beliefs and enhance subject literacy, utilize information technology platforms to cultivate good learning habits and create a positive learning environment to guide students in independent thinking.

Keywords

Autonomous learning; senior high school; English teaching

1. Introduction

In high school English teaching, we face several challenges, particularly in the area of fostering students' independent learning abilities. Although educators have deeply recognized the importance of autonomous learning, there are still numerous issues that persist in the actual teaching process: lack of student motivation for autonomous learning, poor English learning habits among students, outdated teaching beliefs among teachers and inadequate utilization of information technology in language teaching.

2. Purpose and Significance of the study

The core of high school English teaching lies not merely in imparting linguistic knowledge, but more importantly, in cultivating students' comprehensive language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills. Autonomous learning ability, as a student-centered learning approach, emphasizes autonomy and initiative in the

learning process, encompassing diverse elements such as independent thinking, self-planning, logical organization, and so forth. These elements collectively foster students' independent and autonomous learning capabilities, contributing significantly to the enhancement of their comprehensive abilities.

2.1. Stimulates Students' Autonomous Awareness and Learning Interest

Cultivating autonomous learning ability in high school helps ignite students' autonomous awareness and spark their interest in learning. As students' progress to high school, their academic load intensifies, and the pace of learning accelerates, necessitating the ability to discern the importance of subjects and prioritize course content, which is precisely what autonomous learning entails. With the ever-increasing course workload and mounting pressure, teachers can no longer devise individualized learning plans for each student based solely on their own experience. This gap is filled by students' autonomous learning abilities, which extend beyond mere previewing and reviewing course content to encompass deep understanding of the material and fostering a genuine interest in the subject.

2.2. Enhances English Key Competencies and Promotes Holistic Development

Cultivating autonomous learning ability is in line with the zeitgeist, benefiting both the enhancement of students' English key competencies and their holistic development. In the new era, English key competencies are crucial for talent cultivation, playing a pivotal role in the new round of curriculum reform. By nurturing these competencies, students are equipped to grow into well-rounded individuals and lay a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

2.3. Improves Classroom Teaching Quality

As society progresses economically and educational concepts evolve, traditional rote teaching methods hinder not only students' learning interest and autonomy but also their physical and mental health, personal development, and, significantly, the improvement of teaching quality. To meet the demands of the new era, high school students should, under the guidance of teachers, engage fully in English learning, leveraging their initiative and interest to develop good learning habits. This, in turn, ensures a steady enhancement of both classroom teaching quality and students' autonomous learning abilities.

3. Problem identification

3.1. Autonomous Learning Theory

The concept of autonomous learning has garnered academic attention prior to the 1980s, with Henry Holec being one of the earliest scholars to introduce the notion of

autonomy into foreign language teaching. It refers to a student's capacity to actively and proactively complete learning tasks without external interference. Holec (1981) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." And he further characterizes it as the "ability to manage one's own learning," manifesting in five aspects: the ability to function independently, possessing a set of skills to guide self-directed learning, an innate capacity suppressed by the institutional learning environment, a willingness to accept responsibility for one's own learning, and the authority to determine one's own learning direction. Little (1991) views learning autonomy as the "ability to work independently, make critical decisions, and implement independent actions." Candy (1991) believes that AL is not merely a skill but also a personal quality, encompassing both the ability and willingness of learners to organize their own learning.

3.2. Characteristics of Autonomous Learning

- Purposefulness: Students must have a clear learning objective, understanding why, what, and how they are learning. This serves as the prerequisite for AL.
- Initiative: Students actively engage in all aspects of the learning process, including formulating study plans, gathering learning materials, selecting learning methods, and evaluating learning outcomes.
- Independence: Throughout the learning process, students demonstrate a strong sense of subjectivity, fully exploiting their subjective initiative.
- Reflectiveness: Students regularly summarize and reflect on their learning process, objectively assessing learning outcomes, analyzing existing issues, identifying causes, and subsequently adjusting and improving learning strategies to enhance learning efficiency.
- Creativity: In the learning process, students maintain a positive mindset and innovative spirit, utilizing creative thinking to identify, analyze, and solve problems, thereby achieving the goals of deep learning and fostering AL abilities.

4. Problem solutions

4.1. Strengthen learning motivation and clarify learning objectives

Learning motivation is the driving force behind autonomous learning. Students will only actively invest time and effort in learning if they develop a strong interest and motivation for it. Therefore, teachers should first adopt various methods to stimulate students' interest in learning, such as creating lively and engaging teaching scenarios, selecting teaching content that is close to students' lives, conducting diverse classroom activities, and encouraging students to actively participate and experience the joy of learning. Simultaneously, teachers should guide students to correctly understand the importance of English learning and build confidence in mastering the language. In addition to having a strong learning motivation, students must also

clarify their learning objectives. Teachers can guide students to set both short-term and long-term learning goals based on their individual situations. These goals should be specific, measurable, challenging, yet not beyond students' actual abilities, to avoid dampening their enthusiasm for learning.

4.2. Transform English teaching beliefs and enhance subject literacy

The Curriculum Standards propose cultivating students' key competencies in English. Therefore, the goals and design of high school English classroom teaching need to revolve around fostering students' autonomous English learning abilities. High school English teachers should strengthen their understanding of new concepts and requirements and enhance their awareness of cultivating students' autonomous learning abilities. On the one hand, teachers should focus more on developing students' autonomous English learning abilities and devote more energy to this end. On the other hand, English teachers should also make students consciously recognize the importance of developing their autonomous learning abilities, thereby enhancing their awareness and capabilities in this area.

4.3. Utilize information technology platforms to cultivate good learning habits

With the mature application of multimedia, the Internet, and other information technologies, teaching methods have gradually shifted towards information-based instruction, providing positive conditions for students' autonomous learning. Teachers can guide students to collect various learning resources from visual and auditory perspectives, select their preferred methods for self-study and review, expand their learning space, and develop habits of self-study and review. Students can also learn English through their preferred methods based on personal interests, broadening their horizons.

4.4. Create positive learning environment to guide students in independent thinking

High school English teachers should provide a positive and inspiring learning atmosphere to stimulate students' willingness to actively participate and engage. In such an environment, when faced with challenges, students will not immediately seek teachers' answers but will be encouraged to independently delve into the problems and find solutions through exploration and communication. This teaching strategy not only arouses students' desire for active exploration but also helps cultivate their critical thinking abilities and problem-solving skills. Firstly, it improves the learning atmosphere for students; secondly, it stimulates students' active participation in learning activities.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the autonomous learning of English is one of the elements of the key competencies of English, which lays a solid foundation for students to realize life-long learning. In senior high English teaching, teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability, actively change their own ideas, improve personal teaching quality, ignite students' enthusiasm for active learning, shape their dynamic ability of autonomous learning, so as to make a solid foundation for the overall development.

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