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# The Application of Question Chain in High School English Reading Teaching

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**Abstract:** An important task of high school English reading teaching is to cultivate students' thinking quality and promote the development of students' higher-order thinking. Aiming at the current high school English reading teaching in which the activities and tasks of lower-order thinking take up a large proportion, the inability to really promote the development of students' higher-order thinking through reading, and the fragmentation of students' knowledge, this paper aims at the application of problem chain in high school English reading teaching. to help promote the development of students' thinking quality.

**Keywords:** Problem chain; High school English; Reading teaching; Quality of thinking

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## 1. Introduction

As one of the core qualities in English, thinking quality refers to the ability and level of logical, critical and creative thinking, including the ability to analyse specific phenomena in language and culture, to sort out and summarize information, to construct new concepts, to analyse and deduce the logical relationship of information, to correctly evaluate various ideas and opinions, and to express one's own views creatively. The question chain aims to give full play to the leading role of the teacher, guide students to follow the author's thinking step by step, layer by layer, to improve the effectiveness of the classroom.

## 2. Question chain design that points to the quality of thinking

This paper takes the reading lesson of Unit 5 The value of money, which is a compulsory part of English in high school of the Renjiao version, as an example. According to the three stages of pre-reading, reading. After reading three stages, explore how to design a chain of questions that point to the quality of thinking and improve thinking ability.

### 2.1 Analysis of teaching materials

The topic theme for this unit is: the value of money. The reading text for this unit is Act 1, Scene 3 of the play A Million Pounds. The Million Pound play is adapted from the short story The Million Pound, written and published by American writer Mark Twain in 1893. The novel tells the story of an American boy, Henry Adams, who has a strange encounter in London. The author uses exaggeration, irony and humour to outline the scandalous behaviour of different characters in front of the "million pounds", just like a satirical picture of the world, which makes people laugh. The author also ruthlessly exposes the cruel reality of the money-oriented British capitalist society at the beginning of the 20th century, which also reflects the sadness of the whole society.

### 2.2 Class design

#### 2.2.1 Pre-reading introduction to the theme, stimulate known

An introductory question chain is a chain of questions designed by the teacher to introduce the topic of the text and arouse students' interest. In the introductory stage of the classroom, teachers often design the question chain in order to introduce the topic efficiently and stimulate students' interest in reading. They not only help students to have a preliminary understanding of the target language, but also activate students' existing cognitive schemas and life experiences related to the topic. In this lesson, before reading the text, the teacher designed the following question chain:

Q1: What can you see in the picture?

Q2: How do you feel if you had a million bank note?

Q2: What would you do If you had a million pound bank note?

Firstly, students were presented with the picture of two men holding a cheque in their hands in the article, and then Q1 was used to draw students' attention to the theme of the article. Q2 focuses on students' emotions, mobilizes students' emotions and triggers students' thinking.

the change of the main character's emotions is also a key factor in the drama, and Q2 can mobilize students' senses and promote their further thinking. Q3 is an open-ended question, which is close to the students' life and closely related to the main idea of the article. It aims to further mobilize students' illustrations and prepare them for the next reading. It can be seen that the chain of introductory questions can effectively stimulate students' internal motivation and encourage them to actively participate in classroom activities.

Reading is a step-by-step process of text interpretation, which requires teachers to design a hierarchical chain of questions that not only follow the connections between the information points, but also match the cognitive level of students (Liang Meizhen et al., 2013). In the reading link, this paper designs three levels of reading links:

(1) Level 1: Skimming the article to grasp the characteristics of the genre

Q1: What can you predict from the title? What kind of the text is the passage?; Q2: What the basic elements of a play?; Q3: Can you put the following events into correct order?

The two questions in this session are about the genre of the text, mainly because students have not been exposed to this kind of text before. Q1 is to activate students' knowledge of drama, Q2 requires students to skim through the content of the text and then have a basic understanding of the basic elements of drama. Q3 requires students to skim through the text quickly and rank the key events. This question aims to train students' ability to grasp key words to get the main idea of the text.

(2) Level 2: Read the text carefully to get the details of the text

The teacher takes the three questions in Q3 as the main line and guides students to sort out the details of the article through the design of the chain of questions, which are getting more and more difficult at the same time as students' thinking skills are developing. In response to the three events, the teacher designs the following questions:

A. The background of this play.

Q4: What bet did the the brother make?; Q5: Why did they make the bet?

Q4 mainly explains why the two brothers made the bet, and it also explains the background of the drama clearly, as one of the sub-questions in the context of the drama, students need to read the first part of the article carefully before they can answer this question, meanwhile, Q5 is the question that students need to answer immediately after they have finished answering the previous question, which is also the last part of completing the acquisition of background information of the article.

B. The Basic information of Henry.

Q6: Where does Henry come from?; Does he know much about London?; Q7: What did he do in America?; Q8: Why did he land in Britain?; How did Henry come to England?; Q9: What kind of person do you think Henry?

Q6 is the first sub-question of the second event, which gives basic information about Henry and basic knowledge about the place where the play takes place, and students can give their answers after reading the text. Q7 is also a description of Henry's basic information, but this question also sets the stage for his attitude towards the cheque in the following. Q8 in fact gives basic information about Henry and the reason why the two rich brothers chose him to make the bet, and is also quite important for students to know more about Henry. It is also the reason why the two rich brothers chose him to make the bet, and it is also quite important for students to know more about Henry. The last question is a summary of the first three questions. The rich brother gave Henry the note.

Q10: Why do they make the bet?; Q11: Why they choose Henry?; Q12: Why Henry didn't accept the note?; Q13: What Henry would do?

The design of this part of the question chain is mainly centred on the clue of the article's bet. Q10 requires students to go back to the beginning of the article and read it in order to answer the question, while Q11 and Q12 require students to further summarize the details of the article in order to answer the question more concisely and clearly, as compared with the first question, which requires students to extract the content of the text before they can further summarize the answer. Q13 is an open-ended question, in which students need to have a full grasp of the details of the text before they can think about answering the question. Level 3: Read the sentences carefully to grasp the change of mood of the task.

### 2.3 Expand your thinking and explore themes after reading

Liu Daoyi, Zheng Wangquan, et al. (2019) point out that the textbook uses texts such as *The Million Pound* to profoundly satirise gold worship, help students distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and put the task of educating people into practice. The textbook is a good example of this. Literature can not only cultivate students' humanistic feelings, but also help them appreciate the beauty of language in literature and develop their imagination and creativity. Although the textbook provides a script, teachers need to do a good job of in-depth teaching with the help of the original *Million Pound Appreciation*, digging out the spirit embodied in the novel, and sub-consciously implementing the task of cultivating morality and educating people. Exploratory question chain is a teaching strategy often used in the post-reading stage. It is a chain of questions designed to guide students to critically evaluate the text and cultivate higher-order thinking.

In the post-reading section of this lesson, the teacher has designed the following questions:

Q1: Why did the two brother ask Henry not to open the letter until 2 o'clock?; Q2: did the two brother really care about Henry? How do you know?; Q3: what does " bank note" mean by the author?

Q1 gives students the opportunity to reflect consciously, consolidates their understanding of textual information, and enhances the development of inductive, general and creative thinking (He, 2002). Q2 is a further deepening of q1, the answer to which can be supplemented with information from the text, but Q2 requires students to give in-depth thought to the text, based on the text and above the text, and students need to answer the question based on the text and above the text, and students need to analyse the character of the text. Q2 and Q3 ask students to infer the author's intention and to consider the main idea of the text.

### 3. Concluding

The question chain can stimulate students' enthusiasm for exploration by constantly creating problematic situations, creating an atmosphere, and stimulating their thinking with doubts. It is the artery that maintains students' interest in English reading, and plays an active role in high school English reading teaching, such as cultivating students' ability to retell and improving their ability to solve problems in task-based reading.

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