

# Study on Question Chains in Junior High English Teaching for Thinking Quality

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**Abstract:** English is an important subject in junior high school education. With the continuous deepening of curriculum reform, higher and newer requirements are put forward for junior high school English teaching. That is, teachers should not only focus on the teaching of basic language knowledge, but also cultivate students' core literacy in English subject. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2022 Edition) points out that the core literacy of students to be cultivated in English courses includes language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Among them, thinking quality refers to the individual characteristics of human thinking, which is reflected in the level of students' understanding, analysis, comparison, inference, evaluation, creation and other aspects. The improvement of thinking quality helps students learn to find, analyze and solve problems, and make correct value judgments on things. At present, it is very effective and feasible to ask questions of different depths and levels in the form of question chains in English classroom teaching to promote the improvement of thinking quality. However, in the actual English teaching process, there are still some problems worthy of discussion and improvement in the effective application of question chains. This paper will analyze teaching cases, put forward the problems of question chains in junior high school English classrooms and explore their solutions, so as to improve students' English thinking ability, enlighten students' wisdom, improve students' comprehensive English level, expand students' cultural literacy, let students learn more official English knowledge, thus reducing the occurrence of "Chinglish" in their English learning, and lay a good foundation for long-term English learning in the future.

**Keywords:** Junior High School English Classroom Teaching, Thinking Quality, Question Chain.

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## 1. Introduction

Junior high school English teaching usually focuses on improving students' English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. However, with the development and progress of the times, it can be seen from the new curriculum reform in 2022 that the teaching objectives of junior high school English are no longer limited to these five skills, but pay more and more attention to the improvement of English ability and thinking quality. Because students learning knowledge may be able to cope with current problems, but the improvement of thinking quality can promote students' knowledge transfer and flexible handling of more complex and changeable problems in the future. Modern English teaching methods also tend to interactive and task-based teaching, encouraging students to learn English through participation and practice, and teaching methods have become more and more "active"[2] Thinking quality refers to the individual characteristics of human thinking, which is reflected in the level of students' understanding, analysis, comparison, inference, evaluation, creation and other aspects. At present, applying question chains to English classroom teaching, asking questions of different depths and levels in the form of question chains to promote the improvement of thinking quality and improve students' participation and practical ability is very effective and feasible. A question chain is a series of systematic, relevant and situational sequential questions designed by teachers based on teaching objectives and combined with students' "zone of proximal development" to promote students' thinking activities. [3]The essence of the question chain is the thinking chain, and the smallest unit is the question. Question chains can be divided into main questions and sub-questions. A series of sub-questions under the main question are the "scaffolding" to

solve the main question and also the "scaffolding" to promote the development of students' thinking [4]. The main bodies of the role of the question chain are both teachers and students, who jointly participate in completing the knowledge construction around the teaching objectives. Applying question chains to junior high school English classroom teaching has become an indispensable part of many classrooms. As a bridge connecting the thinking activities of teachers and students, questioning runs through the whole classroom teaching activities and is an important way to stimulate students' learning interest and promote the development of students' thinking. However, in the actual English teaching process, there are still some problems worthy of discussion and improvement in the effective application of question chains. Research questions: 1. What difficulties are there in the application of question chains in actual English teaching? 2. What are the impacts of question chain teaching on students' thinking quality? 3. How to effectively apply question chains to junior high school English teaching to improve students' thinking quality? This paper will carry out case analysis, summarize the problems in the application of question chains in actual English classroom teaching and put forward solutions, which will help teachers effectively use question chains in English teaching to improve students' thinking ability.

## 2. Theoretical Support

Meaningful learning refers to the process in which the new knowledge represented by symbols can establish non-artificial and substantive connections with the appropriate ideas existing in the learner's cognitive structure. When the new knowledge is reasonably connected with the original cognitive structure, meaningful learning occurs [1]. Substantive connection refers to the non-literal connection

between new and old knowledge, which is established on the basis of logical relationship and is an internal connection; Non-artificial connection means that this connection is not arbitrary or artificially imposed, but a reasonable or logical connection between new knowledge and relevant concepts in the original cognitive structure. Effectively using question chains to combine new and old knowledge and build a bridge between them, so that students can think and carry out meaningful learning, which not only helps to understand new and old knowledge, but also promotes the improvement of thinking quality.

The teaching objective is the starting point and destination of teaching, and all teaching activities should be designed around the teaching objective. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives divides educational objectives into three aspects: cognitive domain, affective domain and motor skill domain [7]. In the cognitive domain, Bloom divides the cognitive process into six thinking levels: memory, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creation. Teachers can ask students questions with “what”, “why” and “how” to cultivate students' transformation from low-order thinking to high-order thinking.

### **3. Deficiencies in the Application of Question Chains in Junior High School English Classroom Teaching**

By watching online junior high school English classroom teaching lessons, it can be found that the following problems generally exist in the application of question chains in junior high school English classroom teaching:

#### **3.1. Lack of Pertinence of Question Chains**

Through observing and learning teaching videos, it is found that some teachers lack pertinence when asking questions, and students' cognitive differences are not fully considered. The problem design fails to meet the students' cognitive development law. For example, designing “why” or “how” questions before reading is challenging for students. Failing to consider the students' zone of proximal development means that the thinking quality cannot be effectively improved. When designing question chains, teachers need to respect the students' existing cognitive structure, and the difficulty of the questions should be appropriate. If the difficulty of the questions is not appropriate, it may affect the students' learning interest and effect.

#### **3.2. Lack of Openness of Question Chains**

Teachers' questions in junior high school English classes are mostly repetitive low-level thinking questions, and teachers blindly pursue the number of questions while ignoring the questions themselves. For example, asking “what's Lily's favorite food?” in reading classes and “What colour is Tom's cup?” in listening classes. These low-level questions only about memory and understanding are in the majority, which is not meaningful learning and cannot effectively promote the learning of students' thinking quality. This reflects that teachers lack the depth and breadth of questioning in class, and the questions they ask cannot develop students' thinking. Question chains should have the characteristics of openness and divergence to drive students to think actively and promote the improvement of their English thinking.

### **3.3. Obvious Lack of Progression in Question Chains**

A good question chain can enable students to form a coherent and hierarchical thinking process in the process of solving problems. However, sometimes teachers may not pay attention to the relevance between questions, resulting in students' thinking jumping when solving problems and unable to form a complete and progressive understanding. Some teachers lack the overall grasp of the questions when designing the question chains, and design the questions in order to make up the number of questions, resulting in the random setting of questions and less connection between questions. The question chain should progress from easy to difficult, guiding the students' thinking to develop in depth. If the progression of the question chain is not clear, it may affect the students' in-depth understanding and analysis of the text.

## **4. Improvement Strategies for the Application of Question Chains**

### **4.1. Analyze the Learning Situation and Pay Attention to Students' Cognitive Situation**

When designing question chains, teachers should pay attention to the English cognitive level of junior high school students, understand and investigate students' acceptance and participation in questions, and design question chains based on students' actual learning situation, so as to truly give play to the effect of question-oriented reading teaching. Teachers must consider the whole class, carefully design hierarchical question chains according to the text being taught, and meet the actual learning needs of students at different levels through gradually progressive and interlocking questions. This means that teachers need to consider the individual differences of students and design questions of different difficulties and types to meet the needs of different students.

### **4.2. Study the Textbook Deeply**

The new curriculum standard points out that teachers should carry out effective teaching design starting from the textual study. In the process of textbook interpretation, teachers should start from the textbook and learning situation, carry out textbook interpretation, explore the internal logic line of the textbook, understand the writing intention and structure of the textbook, and grasp the core knowledge points and skill points in the textbook to design question chains. In the process of in-depth text study, deeply interpreting the textbook and exploring the internal logic line of the textbook can help teachers sort out the text context and grasp the text framework.[5] Teachers can be inspired in the process of deeply excavating the textbook in the class preparation link, and develop more types of questions combined with Internet resources, which can effectively make up for the defect that the question chain lacks openness.

### **4.3. Deeply Grasp the Teaching Objectives and Ensure the Integrity and Hierarchy of Questions**

Teachers should design overall questions with the teaching objectives as the core, ensure that the question chains are designed around the teaching objectives, and each question should serve the realization of the overall teaching objectives. The question chain should go from macro to micro, from whole to part, and help students build a knowledge

framework.[6] Secondly, it is necessary to ensure the hierarchy of the question chain. When designing questions, different levels of cognitive needs should be considered, from the acquisition of basic information to in-depth analysis, evaluation and creation. The question chain should include questions of different levels such as memory, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creation to promote the cultivation of students' thinking quality [8].

## 5. Summary

The new curriculum standard puts forward more clear and specific requirements for the cultivation of thinking quality, that is, developing thinking in language learning and promoting language learning in thinking development. It can be seen that in English classroom teaching, the development of thinking quality runs through the whole process, and the effective driving factor in this process is the teacher's classroom questioning. To sum up, if we want to effectively apply question chains in junior high school English teaching, the application of question chains in junior high school English reading teaching requires teachers to carefully design, deeply study the textbook, understand students and develop questions, so as to ensure that the question chains are logical, hierarchical and open. In this way, students' learning ability and thinking quality can be effectively improved. Using question chains for teaching, carefully designing questions, and gradually guiding students to analyze, think about and solve problems, so as to promote the cultivation of students' thinking quality.

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