

On the Generation and Solution Strategies of "Core Question" in Reading Teaching

Shunyu Yao

School of Teacher and Education, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210000, China.

Abstract

There were some shortages in previous Reading teaching, such as too many questions, lack of hierarchical distinction and so on. In view of this situation, Beisenherz and Dantonio put forward the "Core Question Method" to regulate and integrate questioning and answering in Reading teaching at the formal level. From the perspective of Literature and Art and Psychology, this thesis will explore how the "core question" should be generated and solved in specific Reading teaching context.

Keywords

Core question; generated; solved.

1. Introduction

In terms of the form of Reading teaching, it should be a process of dialogue, communication and reflection between teachers and students. As a "bridge" connecting the three elements, "questioning" plays an irreplaceable role. However, in previous Reading teaching, the questions raised by teachers are often fragmented, low-level and superficial. These questions that lack logical integration are scattered in the whole process of Reading teaching, which is not conducive to comprehensive and in-depth learning of texts.

Based on this situation, Dantonio and Beisenherz put forward the "Core Question Method" in 2001. "Core Question refers to the question that can concentrate, guide and regulate students' initial results"[4]. It is an effective generalization and integration of low-level questions, which is conducive for students to really involve in the text and to think and comprehend. However, in the specific context of Reading teaching, the following points must be taken into consideration when it comes to how "core question" should be generated and solved.

2. The Generation of the Core Question Must Focus on the Essential Content of the Text

The "core question" in Reading teaching is the integration of low-level and fragmented questions. The integration are reflected in two aspects. On the one hand, from the essential attribute of the "core question", compared with fragmented questions it must focus more on the internal elements of the text. On the other hand, students' should have a deeper thinking mode towards "core question". Therefore, based on these two considerations, the generation of "core questions" must focus on the essential content of the text.

In this thesis, the author define the essential content of the text as "combining the writer's choice and intention towards complex emotions and value judgement ". In other words, from the perspective of Literature and Art, it is the author's inner soul appeal and purpose of creation, and it is a projection of Archetype and Motive.

Previous questions in Reading classes such as "What kind of story does the text tell?" "What rhetorical devices are used in the specific chapters of the text?" "What is the function of the specific words in the text?" These problems are superficial and only focus on the discourse level of the text. According to Benjamin Bloom's six cognitive educational goals: "knowledge,

understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation"[5], the clarification of the external plots of the text and perception the specific words belong to the the first two levels of cognitive activities,"knowledge" and "understanding", which can not enable students to get a deeper understanding in Reading learning.

In order to make students get rid of mechanical repetition of obvious knowledge, and to let students have deep understanding towards the writer's intention and values, on the basis of the integration of fragmented questions, the "core question" must touch the images and implications of the text, that is to say it should touch the Motive that is frequently clarified since the formation of "Literature". "Motive" is the origin factors that repeatedly appears and constructed in certain literature field. Only when "core question" touch the Motive can "analysis, synthesis and evaluation" be truly integrated into students' thinking activities. For example, in the teaching of John Galsworthy's *Quality*, the "core question" can be "how can the Gessler Brothers survive?" It's a question of great value. The Gessler Brothers made boots of such high quality that they seldom needed to be replaced. So they can not earn enough money to support themselves and finally they died because of their adherence to quality. The truth told by the text is Gessler Brothers really died, while the question "how can the Gessler Brothers survive?" allows students to further rethink the causes of death of the Gessler Brothers in the contradiction, so that they can meanwhile know the values the writer merged into the characters. Secondly, before students can answer this "core question", they need to read the text repeatedly and carefully; analyze and synthesize the plot and metaphorical meaning and form their own understanding of the text.

Student's thinking and attempting to solve the "core question" need the comprehensive application of multi-level thinking activities. The thinking and understanding of the Motive can enable them to read the text from a higher perspective, so that the teaching of Reading can be effective and profound.

3. The Core Question Must Be Directed at Two Dimensions: Form and Content

As a language form fixed by writing, text must contain two dimensions: form and content. The form of the text includes style, rhetoric devices and layout, etc. The content of the text includes plot, environment, characters' image, theme and value judgment, etc.

As the direct material for students to learn in Reading class, the understanding of both form and meaning is very necessary for students. Although the fragmented and low-level questions in previous teaching also focus on form and content, in general, the questions like "How many parts can the text be divided into? What stories does it tell?" This kind of questions separate form from content. Clive bell, a famous British aesthetician in formalism, put forward the concept of "meaningful form". Form and content, as two elements of the text, are not separated from each other but permeated with each other. The author's deep spiritual value is not only implied in the contents of the text. The characteristics of the text can reflect the author's state of mind, such as E.E. Cummings' poem *A Leaf Falls*, he deliberately separate words apart into letters instead of using Defamiliarization method or word games, which create confusion form that can best reflect the poet's loneliness.

Due to the complex relationship between form and content, the determination of "core question" must be based on the form and content. It is necessary for students to comprehensively analyse the content as well as form of the text to think questions like "why does the author use such themes to narrate or express emotions?" "Why does the author create such layout for the article?" Therefore, in order to make the "core question" include two aspects, teachers need to make clear the "target reader consciousness" of the text, that is to say who are the intended readers of the text. In the communication field of "author-reader", the author will

adjust his strategies in writing the text according to who the intended readers are. For example, authors who adhere to Enlightenment often use simple narrative mode to achieve his own purpose of "enlightenment stupid people"; while Aesthetician writers regard their texts as unique works of art and strive for the expression of pure beauty, so they often use poetry to transform the texts into "self-projection".

"Core question" refers to the content and form of the text, which not only make Reading teaching more effective, but also enable students to have a fundamental change in literary awareness and reading strategies, so that they can pay attention to the text content and meanwhile pay attention to the form.

4. The Process of Solving the Core Question and Teacher'S Constant Adjustment Towards Presupposition and Transformation of Meaning

The proposal of "core question" does not mean that teachers, who are the major role in Reading teaching, can completely not participate in the teaching process. The proposal of "core question" is to provide more efficient support for teachers, students to communicate in terms of the text. Students' deep thinking towards "core question" is the process that they constantly construct and adjust their cognition to the text. While in this process, teachers must give students necessary help according to the overall teaching process. So how can teachers ensure that they can give students substantial help in reading and thinking while giving them answers and reminders? The following two points need to be noted:

First, answer presupposition and adjust presupposition. After the generation of "core question", teachers must have their own answers to the question by using their relevant teaching knowledge and excellent literature professionalism. The answer presupposition formed in this process is the most powerful teaching resource for teachers to carry out in Reading teaching. The "presupposition" does not mean "absolute correct or standard answer", the essential difference between the two is the presupposition answers by teachers allow students to ask questions, it is to provide professional support for teaching and solving the "core question" based on the professionalism of the teachers. While the so-called "standard answer" deprived of the students the rights to reflect, it is adverse to Reading teaching. The answer presupposition of teachers is not invariable, in the specific teaching process, students' answers may not be considered in teachers' pre-class thinking, while the answers may be very valuable. In this situation, teachers need to adjust their own presuppositions, think about how students form the answers while answering questions, and make appropriate changes in the later teaching process.

Secondly, meaning transformation. Meaning transformation also contains two aspects: on the one hand, after students give their own answers to the "core question", teachers need to analyse and evaluate the answers, and feedback the better part of the presupposition answers to the students, so that the students' can adjust their overall cognition and incorporate teachers' explanations into their cognition of the "core question". On the other hand, in the formation process of the answers with the development of teaching, teachers need to adjust their presupposition answers according to students' specific answers, and set auxiliary questions centering on "core question" to adjust students' direction of thinking.

References

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