



# Overall Teaching Design and Implementation of Middle School English Units Guided by Theme Significance

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## Abstract

In middle school English instruction, traditional teaching methods often concentrate on isolated language points, which can create challenges for students in applying their language knowledge. In response to this issue, the unit holistic teaching method has emerged, offering students a coherent learning framework by integrating various knowledge points from the text. Unit-based teaching emphasizes the reorganization of dispersed language elements into a cohesive whole when designing teaching objectives. Through this integration, teachers can enhance students' understanding of textbook content and reinforce their learning of essential vocabulary and sentence structures. Consequently, this article presents relevant research on the overall design and implementation of middle school English units, guided by thematic significance.

## Keywords

Middle school English; Whole unit teaching; Theme significance guidance; Instructional design

## 1. Introduction

In today's information age, the concept of English teaching is undergoing profound changes. The overall teaching design of the unit guided by the theme significance, as an emerging teaching model, emphasizes a student-centered approach and promotes the comprehensive development of students' English learning through in-depth exploration of the theme. This article aims to explore the theoretical basis, implementation strategies, and application in middle school English teaching under the guidance of thematic significance, in order to provide new perspectives for English teachers.

## 2. Problems in the traditional English teaching model

### 2.1 The overall teaching mode is too outdated

In the traditional English teaching mode, middle school classrooms often fall into a backward teaching mode. Teachers tend to adopt a single and boring teaching method, the teacher-centered indoctrination teaching model, which over time makes the English classroom, which should have been full of fun, boring. Teachers often only focus on the presentation of written knowledge, neglecting the interactivity of language learning. Classroom efficiency is not only low, but it also weakens students' interest in learning English. In the teaching process, teachers often avoid expanding extracurricular knowledge, fearing that exceeding the teaching plan will affect classroom progress. Excessive caution limits students' knowledge horizons, making it difficult for classroom knowledge to be effectively extended. At the same time, in order

to maintain classroom order, teachers have to spend extra time and energy, further weakening the quality and effectiveness of teaching. The frame-based teaching mode limits the breadth of students' learning knowledge, reduces their learning motivation, and thus hinders the overall improvement of students' English grades (Ke Ting, 2024).

## **2.2 The overall learning enthusiasm of students is not high**

In the traditional English teaching mode, the low enthusiasm of students for learning often stems from the singularity of the teaching mode and the dominant position of teachers, resulting in a lack of participation among students in the learning process. In the classroom, the immersive teaching of teachers often makes students passive listeners, lacking effective interaction with teachers, and the one-way information transmission method makes students feel that their needs are ignored. At the same time, teachers often fail to consider students' actual acceptance ability when giving lectures. The teaching speed is too fast, making it difficult for students to keep up, lacking time for thinking, insufficient knowledge absorption, and poor learning outcomes. Students have a high level of resistance and are easily distracted in class, even leading to self-destructive behavior, which seriously affects the improvement of their English proficiency.

## **3. Overall teaching design of middle school English units guided by theme meaning**

### **3.1 Theoretical basis of thematic meaning teaching method**

The thematic meaning teaching method refers to guiding students to use language in real contexts through themes, thereby enhancing the practicality of language learning. The theoretical basis of the thematic meaning teaching method mainly includes constructivist theory and situational learning theory. Constructivist theory emphasizes the subjectivity of students, believing that knowledge is acquired through their active construction. In language learning, students should construct language knowledge in specific thematic contexts through activities such as exploration, discovery, and collaboration. The theory of situational learning holds that mastery of knowledge cannot be separated from real situations, and learning should be carried out through the actual use of language. Therefore, the thematic meaning teaching method helps students master language knowledge and internalize language learning by setting real and specific thematic contexts.

### **3.2 The overall teaching characteristics of middle school English units guided by thematic significance**

In high school English teaching, unit-based teaching guided by thematic significance is an efficient and effective teaching method. Students are able to learn language in a coherent context.

Firstly, the theme-led teaching model helps to build the intrinsic connections between knowledge. In high school, students already have a certain foundation in English, and what they need more is the ability to apply what they have learned to practical situations. By teaching around a theme, students can better understand how language knowledge is interconnected and how to apply it to different contexts. For example, when studying the theme of "environmental protection", students can deepen their exploration of environmental issues and improve their creative expression ability through activities such as discussions and writing after learning relevant vocabulary and expressions.

Secondly, the theme-led teaching mode can stimulate students' interest in learning. High school students are actually eager to learn about issues that are closely related to their lives. By selecting topics closely related to students' lives, teachers can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and make them more willing to actively participate in the learning process. For example, when studying the theme of "cultural differences", teachers can guide students to explore the differences in festivals under different cultural backgrounds, increase students' understanding of cultural diversity, and promote their cross-cultural communication skills.

Thirdly, the theme-led teaching model helps improve students' comprehensive language proficiency. In the overall teaching of the unit, students need to use various methods such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing to complete learning tasks. For example, under the theme of "healthy living", students may need to read relevant English articles, listen to expert lectures, participate in group discussions, and even write research reports to improve their reading comprehension and writing abilities, as well as exercise their listening and oral expression skills.

Fourthly, the theme-led teaching model emphasizes students' self-directed and cooperative learning. Students can choose learning content according to their own needs and engage in self-directed learning. Meanwhile, students can collaborate with their peers to complete learning tasks together (Li Juyuan & Hou Wenlan, 2024).

### **3.3 The overall teaching framework guided by thematic significance**

The overall teaching under the guidance of thematic significance aims to achieve multidimensional cultivation of students

through the selection of themes, integration of textbook content, and teaching activities. Teachers need to choose suitable teaching themes based on curriculum standards and actual situations. The selection of a theme should have the following characteristics: it should have a certain cognitive challenge, stimulate students' thinking, and be able to deepen from multiple perspectives in actual teaching. After the theme is determined, teachers should design teaching content based on the significance of the theme. Specifically, teachers need to construct a series of reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities related to the theme, so that students can obtain language input in the theme context and output language through activities such as theme discussions, debates, and speeches, thereby consolidating and applying language knowledge in real contexts. The design of teaching activities should fully consider students' language abilities, adopt diverse teaching modes such as task-based, project-based, and inquiry-based, and improve students' learning outcomes. In teaching design guided by thematic significance, evaluation is no longer a single assessment of students' language knowledge but should cover the development of students' language application ability, cultural understanding ability, and thinking ability in the process of thematic learning. By combining formative and summative evaluations, teachers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning situations, improve teaching based on evaluation feedback, and ensure the effective implementation of teaching concepts guided by thematic significance in practical teaching (Gao Xiaoyan, 2024).

## **4. Implementation strategies for overall teaching of middle school English units under the guidance of thematic significance**

### **4.1 Choose exploratory topics**

In the overall teaching design of middle school English units guided by thematic significance, choosing exploratory themes can stimulate students' learning motivation and enable them to closely link learning content with their daily lives. For example, the "Unit 1 A New Start" unit in Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press English Compulsory One revolves around the theme of "New Starting Point", which is closely related to students' upcoming middle school life and covers rich grammar points, providing students with a comprehensive language learning platform. In this unit, students need to learn how to describe their school life, new friends, and new environment, which are closely related to their upcoming high school life and can stimulate their sense of participation. Teachers can guide students to learn relevant vocabulary and expressions through discussions and sharing of their experiences, such as "introduce oneself", "make friends", and "describe the school", to improve students' oral expression and listening comprehension abilities. In addition, teachers can design some exploratory learning activities to encourage students to delve deeper into broader topics related to the "new starting point", such as the differences between high school life and middle school life, how to adapt to new environments, and how to plan their own learning plans. In terms of grammar teaching, teachers can design some grammar exercises related to students' actual lives based on the theme content, such as using the present simple tense to describe daily activities, using the future simple tense to express plans, etc. Through practice, students can consolidate and deepen their understanding of grammar, and learn how to apply it correctly in practical contexts (Cai Ying, 2023).

### **4.2 Guide students to ask questions**

In the overall teaching design of middle school English units guided by thematic significance, by encouraging students to ask questions around the selected theme, teachers can stimulate students' curiosity and help them think deeply from multiple perspectives. For example, in the "Unit 2 My Day" unit of Compulsory One, teachers can use the theme "My Day" which is closely related to students' daily lives to guide students to ask questions. Teachers can stimulate students' interest by displaying pictures of scenes related to their daily lives, such as waking up in the morning, on the way to school, attending classes at school, and activities after school. Images provide rich context and a foundation for students to ask questions. Teachers can guide students to think and ask questions, such as "What time do you usually wake up?", "What is your way of going to school?", "What is your favorite subject?", etc. In guiding students to ask questions, teachers can emphasize language points such as time expression and daily activity description, such as using adverbs like "usually", "sometimes", and "every day" to describe daily activities, and using the general present tense to describe daily habits. Teachers can also encourage students to use newly learned vocabulary and grammar structures to express their views and ideas through questioning, such as "How do you usually spend your weekends?" or "Describe your favorite class." At the same time, teachers can design exploratory activities, such as group discussions, to allow students to use language in practical contexts, ask questions, and find answers. Through scientifically designed exploratory tasks, teachers can stimulate students' curiosity and make them more engaged in exploring the theme.

### **4.3 Using multimedia methods**

The use of multimedia tools is an important way to improve teaching effectiveness. For example, in Unit 3 A Day Out,

teachers can use multimedia technology to closely link teaching content with students' actual lives, creating a vivid and intuitive learning environment. In this unit, teachers can use multimedia to display pictures and videos of various outdoor activities, such as outings, picnics, museum visits, etc., which are closely related to the unit theme of "Going Out for a Day" and can attract students' attention and enhance their interest in learning. Through multimedia presentations, teachers can more intuitively introduce relevant vocabulary to students, such as "picnic", "museum", "hiking", etc. At the same time, they can also showcase specific scenes of some activities through videos to help students better understand and remember. Meanwhile, teachers can utilize multimedia resources such as animations, songs, games, etc. to assist in teaching grammar and sentence structures, making abstract language knowledge easier to understand. Multimedia tools also play an important role in handling difficult knowledge points. For example, when teaching the 'past simple tense', teachers can play an animated video about students' past experiences, allowing them to naturally perceive and understand the usage of tenses while watching. In addition, multimedia tools can also be used to create scenarios and simulate real language usage environments. For example, when teaching Unit 4 Shopping, teachers can use videos that simulate shopping scenarios to help students learn how to communicate in English during the simulated shopping process. Thus improving students' oral communication skills and enhancing their practical use of language (Yang Jiao, 2023).

#### 4.4 Teacher guidance and feedback

On the one hand, teacher guidance is the main factor in promoting effective learning and deepening understanding among students. Taking the "Unit 5 Do you like bananas?" unit in Compulsory One as an example, teachers can guide students to explore topics related to "healthy eating" through a series of activities. In the process of exploration, teachers need to play a guiding role and help students clarify the direction of exploration. For example, teachers can ask questions such as "What is a balanced diet?" or "How can we maintain a healthy lifestyle?" to guide students to think about core concepts related to the topic. Teachers can provide some inquiry methods, such as guiding students on how to use library resources, Internet search, or group discussion to collect and analyze information. Teacher guidance is not only about asking questions but also about encouraging students to delve deeper into the topic. Teachers can provide further materials, such as articles on healthy eating, interview videos with nutritionists, or relevant statistical data, to help students understand the topic more comprehensively. In addition, teachers can encourage students to conduct on-site investigations, such as visiting local supermarkets, observing and recording the types and nutritional values of different foods, and broadening students' horizons.

On the other hand, after students complete their exploration, teachers should provide targeted feedback, pointing out students' strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback includes guidance on grammar and language usage, such as 'Remember to use the comparative form when comparing two things', as well as evaluations of logic, such as 'Your argument is well structured, but could you provide more evidence to support your point?'. Through feedback mechanisms, students can better understand their shortcomings in the exploration process and continuously improve.

The combination of teacher guidance and feedback can help students understand the meaning of the topic more systematically, thereby achieving a higher level of language proficiency. Teachers should listen to students' perspectives, and adjust guidance methods and feedback content based on their learning progress, so that students can continuously discover new knowledge through exploration, enjoy the learning process, and ultimately achieve dual improvement in language and thinking abilities.

### 5. Conclusion

When exploring the overall teaching design of middle school English units under the guidance of thematic significance, we focused on the organization of teaching content and delved deeper into the role of teachers in the teaching process. By guiding students to ask questions, using multimedia tools to enrich teaching content, and providing timely and effective feedback, teachers can stimulate students' interest in learning and promote their deep understanding of the knowledge they have learned. The implementation of the whole unit teaching mode requires teachers to constantly update their teaching concepts, flexibly apply diverse teaching strategies, and adapt to constantly changing educational needs.

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