

Lesson Plan: A Day's Wait

Distribution of Responsibility

解敏	Teaching Rationale, Analysis of Teaching Background
曹旭丹	Teaching Content, Methods, Goals, Tools, Process, Assessment, Flowchart

1 Rationale

Reading is well-documented as a complex process. It is difficult to monitor the reading process in that it occurs invisibly in human being's brain and concerns a large amount of psychological activities. Reading, therefore, is difficult to teach. Despite the difficulties, reading, a fundamental language skill, has been paid great attention to by teachers and researchers. In China, English reading is the key course both in high school and university levels. To teach reading, actually, means to teach integrative skills rather than the reading per se. Hence, reading is often considered the most demanding to teach. After examining the theories we have learnt, exchanging ideas with Dr. Yang and reflecting on our own experience of teaching and learning, we designed this practicum by mainly considering the four aspects: materials selection, schema theory, combination of extensive and intensive reading, and integration of reading and writing. Each of them will be discussed in detail in the following parts. Some reading strategies, such as, top-down and bottom-up, skimming and scanning and guessing the words from the context will also be mentioned in the parts concerned.

1.1 Material Selection

Selecting materials is the first step of teaching. Of course, in most occasions in China, there is a textbook for the teacher to follow. But that does not mean that the teacher should follow it blindly. It is up to the teacher to decide which part should be the focus, which part should be read extensively or skipped over according to the specific learning and teaching context. The proper selection of reading materials is the premise of successful teaching. The reading material used in our practicum, Hemingway's short novel *A Day's Wait*, was carefully chosen for the following two

reasons.

1.1.1 Teaching reading through literary works

Literary works are a good choice for reading materials. Excellent literary works are the gem of a language and the crystallization of a culture. Literary works have long been introduced into national language teaching, for instance Luxun's novels in China, Shakespeare's works in Britain and Moliere's writings in France. And teaching reading through literary works is nothing new in foreign language teaching, especially in the reading course for English majors. For example, *Contemporary College English* published by foreign language teaching and research press includes many excerpts written by famous writers. But as far as we know, original literary works seldom appear in college English textbooks. The reason may be that literary works are supposed to be too difficult for non-English majors to read. We were enlightened by Dr. Yang's opinion that literary works can be brought into college English teaching in that there is no gap of English learning between majors and non-majors.

1.1.2 Simple but not simplified text

By distinguishing simple and simplified texts, Brown is against using simplified materials which refers to those modified texts to meet the language proficiency of students and are lack of original flavor (2001, p. 299). There are a lot of simplified novels used in foreign language teaching in China. Although their function cannot be totally denied, they should be carefully chosen, especially for a lesson not only to teach reading skills but also to appreciate the language.

A Day's Wait reflects Hemingway's simple and concise language style. And the meaning between the lines is profound. Learners would not only appreciate the beautiful language, but also ponder deeply over the profound philosophy of life. Their interest would be aroused because the text could stimulate learners' thinking and challenge their cognitive abilities as well.

1.2 Schema theory

The theme of schema theory is that the reader brings his own experience and background knowledge into the printed words. "Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world (Clark & Silberstein, 1977)." This theory implies that the teacher should provide some background knowledge where necessary to scaffold the students' understanding of the text. This top-down processing is important for successful reading comprehension. Based on this theory, a brief introduction of Hemingway's lifetime, his main works and his writing style was provided before the students were asked to read. And the picture and the

plot also served this purpose.

1.3 Combination of extensive and intensive reading

Roughly speaking, extensive reading is to get general comprehension, while intensive reading is to learn. The College English reading course should combine extensive reading with intensive reading, because in real life we need to read both for quantity and for quality. In the following, the efforts we made in combining extensive reading with intensive reading would be introduced in detail. The reading strategies concerned in each task would also be mentioned.

1.3.1 Extensive reading

We designed two extensive reading tasks. One was to read for gist, whereas the other was to locate specific information and to synthesize information. During extensive reading, our aim was to let the students have an overall understanding of the text as well as to train the students' ability of skimming and scanning, which was a fundamental reading strategy.

The first task was to grasp the gist of text, which is often used in reading lesson. The question was not difficult to answer as long as the students went through the text carefully. A picture and a plot were also provided beforehand to facilitate students' understanding.

The second task was designed to push the students to comprehend the text deeper. The three questions concerning the details of the text were to train the students' ability to scan, while the last question concerning the whole text was to test whether the students had the overall grasp of the text. The last question concerning the whole text was different from the one in the first task in that it was more challenging and could not be answered without deep understanding of the text.

1.3.2 Intensive reading

The intensive reading was based on the extensive reading. In this part, our attention was turned to the two paragraphs describing the hunting scene. The reason was that the two paragraphs play an important role in the whole text and the language is beautiful. And we believed that it was unnecessary and impossible to cover the whole text in intensive reading. Based on our teaching objective, we designed two tasks in this part.

The first task was the discussion of the function of the two paragraphs. In order to figure out their function, the students must put the two paragraphs in the whole context. The whole structure of the text would be clearer through the discussion. In addition, this is a referential question that does not have a definite answer. Referential question may increase the amount of learners' talk (Brock, 1986) and thus promote learner-centered teaching.

The second task was about the vocabulary learning. This was a bottom-up reading rather than top-down. Vocabulary knowledge has been proved in many studies closely related to reading abilities (Schoonen et al., 1998). It is, therefore, necessary to incorporate vocabulary teaching into reading course. But the principle is that the teacher should not teach a large amount of vocabulary directly at one time (Grabe & Stoller) so that learners would not feel overwhelmed. Our teaching of vocabulary had a focus. Firstly, we called students attention to those words describing snow. Students might be familiar with most of the words. If they did not know some of them, we encouraged them to guess the meaning from the context. Our purpose was to let students systematically learn these words and appreciate the language as well. Next, our focus was on the distinction between the three synonyms which are high-frequency words that are useful in oral and written English.

1.4 Integration of reading and writing

Foreign language teaching is often divided into four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the actual language use, the four skills, however, are never separated. This requires the teachers to integrate the skills in one lesson while having a focus on one. On the one hand, we mostly learn to write by reading. So it is reasonable and natural to incorporate writing into reading lessons. On the other hand, by practicing writing, we read more thoroughly and carefully. This can be proved by our own experience of writing journals. Therefore, we designed the writing task of retelling the story from the boy's perspective. We had three purposes for this writing task. Firstly, the students could read the text more carefully through the writing task. Secondly, the students' creativity and imagination were stimulated. Thirdly, the students' writing ability was trained.

To sum up, this reading practicum was carefully designed in respect of the material selection, the introduction of background knowledge, the combination of intensive and extensive reading and the integration of reading and writing. Top-down and bottom-up reading strategies were well reflected in the practicum. The practicum was a training of comprehensive abilities in that it covered introduction of background knowledge, language appreciation, analysis of text organization, enhancement of reading strategies and training of other skills such as speaking and writing.

2 Analysis of Teaching Background

2.1 Teaching background

The material selection was based on the analysis of learners' language proficiency and interest. The teaching procedures were rooted in our interpretation of learner' needs. Since learners had relatively high language proficiency, the tasks were challenging to different degrees so that they would not feel bored. Our aim was to train the students' comprehensive abilities including appreciating the language, detecting the text organization, reading strategies and other skills such as speaking and writing.

2.2 Learning background

Learners are the second year non-English majors. Although their English levels differ, most of them, having learnt English for at least seven years, are advanced learners. Generally speaking, their motivation to study English reaches the highest in the second year because they are supposed to pass CET 4 (College English Test, Band 4) in this year. Their English course is divided into two sub-courses: one is comprehensive English which aims at comprehensive language competence training with reading as the focus; the other is speaking and listening. Our practicum is the former.

3 Teaching Content

3.1 Topic: A Day's Wait

3.2 Source of the material: Downloaded from the internet.

3.3 About the passage:

- a) This article consists of 1065 words, which is neither too long nor too short for a teaching practicum.
- b) The words in this article are concise and simple, and difficult words are very few.
- c) It is one of Hemingway's typical stories which mainly consist of conversations, because of which we think this article is appropriate to teach many students such as sophomore non-major English learners, academy students (freshman English major students or sophomore non-major English learners), etc. So it is suitable to any "advanced" level students who have good English foundation.

3.4 Level of difficulty 1→10 (easiest → most difficult) : 6

3.5 Duration: 50 minutes

4 Teaching Methods

4.1 Combination of extensive reading and intensive reading.

4.2 Integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

5 Teaching Goals

5.1 Goals for knowledge:

- a) All the students get some knowledge of Hemingway's works, life and writing style.
- b) All the students understand what "Iceberg Theory" is.
- c) All the students learn how to appreciate a classic literary work, from perspectives of lexicology, syntax, semantics, rhetoric, organization, and so on.
- d) All the students master some new words, such as brush, varnish, slither, etc. and make out differences among the three words: slip, slide and slither.

5.2 Goals for skills:

- a) Skimming. During the extensive reading, students are expected to get the general idea of the passage. The students will be asked to read it quickly to find out the main characters, setting, plot of the story, and to answer some general questions like: why is the boy so worried? The title is A Day's Wait, what is he waiting for? So they need to grasp the theme and general idea of this article while ignoring much unrelated or too detailed information.
- b) Scanning. Four comprehensive questions will be asked during the intensive reading period. Through this practice, the students can better scan an article to quickly and correctly find answers to specific questions.
- c) Writing skill. This is the second main skill to train apart from reading, so writing activities are apparently more than those of speaking and listening. The teacher will ask the students to use adjectives they learnt just now to describe the winter in Beijing. After reading this article, the students will be asked to write a composition on the basis of the story, which can efficiently test their understanding of this article and train them to flexibly use various phrases and sentence patterns to state one same story.
- d) Speaking skill. The students will have many chances to express their own ideas, for instance, in the extensive reading part, they can freely answer questions raised by the teacher; in the intensive reading part, they have some discussion time during which they can discuss questions freely with

their partners.

e) Listening skill. The students will listen to the recording read by a native speaker for three times. In the first time of listening, they will be required to find out the functions of two paragraphs, which can train their extensive listening skill. In the second time, they will be required to underline all the adjectives describing winter, which can train their intensive listening skill. The third time of playing, in fact, is mainly aimed to train the students' speaking, since they will be asked to read follow the recording.

6 Teaching Tools

6.1 PPT

Advantages:

- a) It can better facilitate both teachers and students to make clear of the whole organization of the class.
- b) It can help the students see clearly what the teacher is talking about. If the words are too small, teachers can enlarge them immediately.
- c) The colorful slides can present a more vivid class for the students.
- d) Teachers can emphasize important parts or points by enlarging or bolding them.
- e) It is time-consuming. Teachers need not to write down important words on the blackboard which will take some time, and the students of course do not have to wait for teachers to write word by word.

6.2 Pictures

The advantage of using pictures is obvious, that is, they can directly and vividly show what the teacher is describing. For example, pictures of Hemingway and his books in different periods can arouse the students' interests at once.

6.3 Recording

- a) Two passages selected from the article are read by a native speaker. It is a little bit faster than the speed of normal daily conversation.
- b) The recording is used in many ways: one is to train the students' extensive listening skills, another is to train the students' intensive listening skills, and the last is to train their speaking skills.

7 Teaching Process

Table 1

Procedure	Time	Activities	Objectives
Warm-up	8 min	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The students brainstorm the works wrote by Hemingway. The teacher shows relevant pictures. 2) Introduction of Hemingway's whole life. 3) The students brainstorm his writing style, and the teacher introduces Iceberg Theory. Cite <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> as an example, suggesting that the old man and the sea symbolize man in general and the vicious force of the nature respectively, and man, the weaker, with his courage and will power, conquered the nature, the stronger. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To activate the students' previous knowledge of Hemingway's works and experiences. And to let the students get more knowledge of this author. 2) To make the students be familiar with Hemingway's writing style. 3) To warm the students up for reading one of Hemingway's stories.
Lead-in	2 min	Look at a picture and guess what happens to this little boy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To cause the students' curiosity of the story. 2) To help the students be ready to read the article.
Extensive reading	10 min	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Read through the story in 3 minutes and find out the answers to these two questions: "Why is the boy so worried?" "What was the boy waiting for?" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To train the students' ability of skimming. 2) To urge the students to read for meaning.

		2) Read the whole article again in 3 minutes and find out the characters, setting, and plot of this story.	
Intensive reading	25 min	<p>1) Read through the story again in four minutes and answer four questions after reading:</p> <p>a. Why did the father think that the boy was sick?</p> <p>b. How did he behave while his father was reading to him?</p> <p>c. What caused the misunderstanding between the boy and his father?</p> <p>d. Do you think the boy's behaviors showed courage or fear? Why?</p> <p>2) Listen to the recording and then discuss the functions of two paragraphs describing the scene of hunting.</p> <p>3) Listen to the recording again, and underline the adjectives describing winter. The teacher guides the students to appreciate the beauty of these adjectives and then ask them to write a short paragraph to describe the winter in Beijing using these adjectives.</p> <p>4) Explain language points in these two paragraphs, such as some other difficult words, different</p>	<p>1) To train the students' ability of scanning.</p> <p>2) To urge the students to get detailed information.</p> <p>3) To help the students better understand the structure of this novel.</p> <p>4) To let the students appreciate the beautiful language and learn to use it in their writing.</p> <p>5) To train the students' writing and speaking skills.</p>

		uses of similar words, and so on. 5) Listen to the recording again, and ask the students to read follow the recording.	
Writing assignment	5 min	Retell the story from the boy's point of view in about 300 words. Try to detect the boy's mental activities. Here is the beginning. I got a headache in an early morning. I heard the doctor tell my father that I had a temperature of 102 degrees. I began to worry because....	1) To combine reading with writing. 2) To let students guess the mental activities of the boy.

8 Assessment

8.1 Informal assessment

In the whole process of teaching, every answer from students will be evaluated respectively. Every teacher has his or her own way of evaluating the students' performance in the classroom, and we use the following four oral standards in Table 2.

Table 2 Assessment standards

Not bad.	Answers which are not so satisfying.
Good!	Short answers to a simple question, correct but no sign of further thinking and extending.
Very good!	Answers with brilliant idea and personal thinking.
Excellent!/Perfect!/fantastic!	Well-organized answers to difficult questions.

The standards do not involve too negative ones such as wrong, bad, etc, the purpose of which is to encourage the students to answer questions actively and try as hard as possible to avoid hurting their self-confidence.

8.2 Formal assessment

8.2.1 Assessment on teaching

The students will be asked to fill in the following table to evaluate the teachers' teaching after class. Please tick (√) the relevant standard and write down the reason why you like or do not like it.

Table 3 Sheet for assessment on teaching

part	I like it.	Average	I don't like it.	Why
Lead-in				
Extensive reading				
Intensive reading				
Assignment				

The purpose of this assessment is to collect the students' opinion to the teachers' teaching, which can better help teachers know the students' real feeling so that improve their future teaching.

8.2.2 Self-assessment

How well do you perform in the classroom? Please tick (√) the relevant standard, Excellent, Good or Average and list the problems you have met in the process of listening to the class as well as doing your homework.

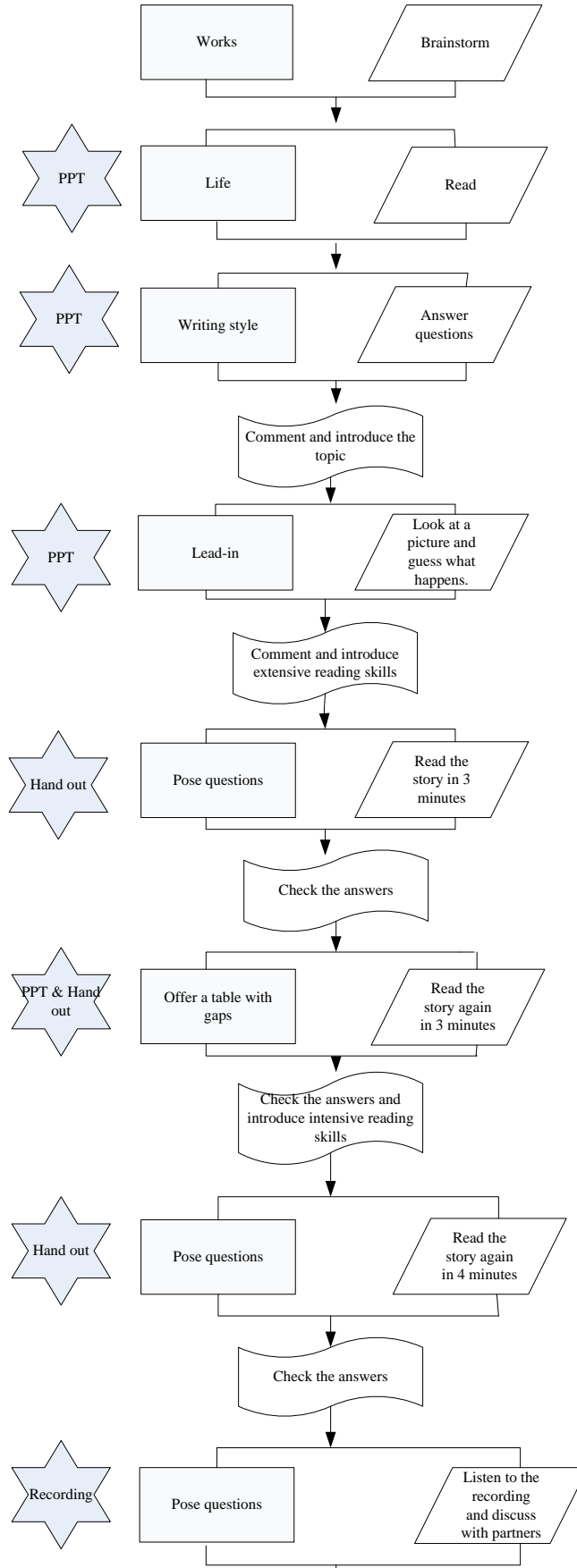
Table 4 Self-assessment sheet

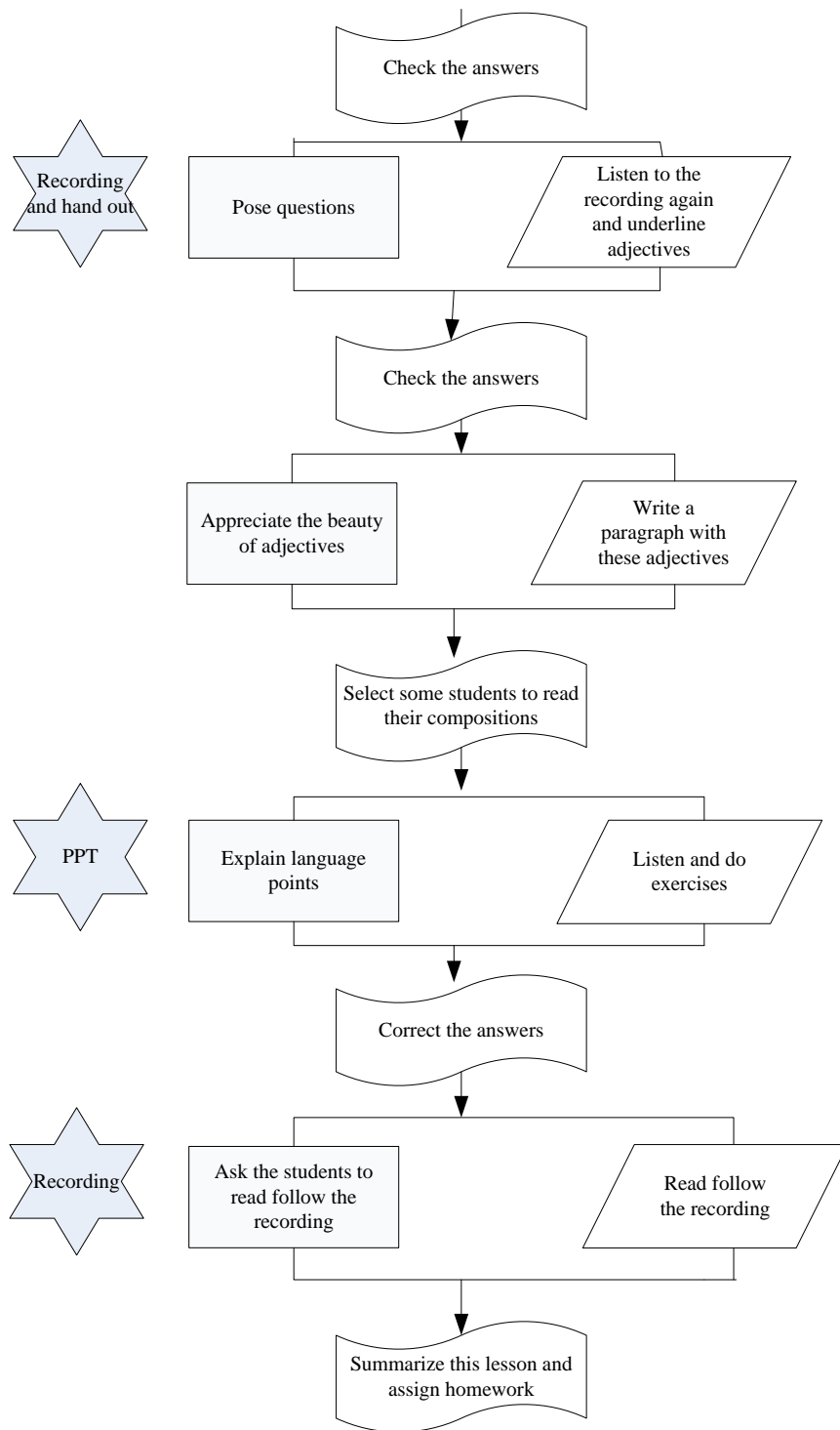
Part	Excellent	Good	Average	Problems you meet: 1. 2. 3.
Brainstorming in the Lead-in part				
Answering questions				
Discussion with partners				
Homework writing				

This is designed to raise the students' awareness of self-reflection, and to know clearly how well they perform during the class and doing homework. The ultimate purpose of self-assessment is to encourage the students to recognize themselves and improve in learning process independently.

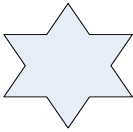


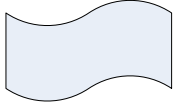
9 Teaching Flowchart (See Figure 1)

Figure 1 The Teaching Flowchart





The meaning of signs and acronyms in this flowchart

	Teaching aids
	Teacher activities
	Student activities
	Teacher logic

10 References

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