

A STUDY ON LEARNING PLANS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS BASED ON THE BIG CONCEPT-TAKE GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at researching learning plans of Senior High School English textbooks based on the big concept, promoting the overall English teaching design of Senior High School, and encouraging students to carry out deep study. It mainly uses discourse analysis method for English unit teaching designs, arranges the content of unit teaching reasonably, and promotes the quality of English teaching in high schools through a complete unit theme teaching. This study, by sorting out the connotation, characteristics and relevant literature of big concept, takes Unit 4, Compulsory 1 of New Yilin Senior High School English textbooks as an example to explore the overall teaching design of units pointing to deep study. Findings of the research include: learning plans of Senior High School English textbooks based on the big concept makes English teaching from scattered to interrelated, promoting students' deep study, and implementing core English literacy; learning plans based on the big concept are quite beneficial to the development of both teachers and students.

Key Words: Big Concept, Learning Plans, Unit Teaching Design Of English, Core English Literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, the birth of the “big concept” comes both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, nowadays, the most challenging and difficult problem is how to put the term “core disciplinary literacy” in full and effective implementation. What does the term “core disciplinary literacy” mean? According to Li and Lv (2018), “core disciplinary literacy” is a term, representing the concept of nature and students as a whole, which is in turn linked with the term “big concept”. Without the big concept, lessons are always of low quality, and the content is also awful in depth, with only the addition of textbooks, not to mention its quality.

Apart from the theoretical needs of the “big concept”, practical problems are the crucial conditions that lead to its existence. For one thing, well-rounded development is necessary in the contemporary society, which appeals to overall development, or integrated teaching. For another, students are facing some inevitable problems in the present education.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationally, Clark (1997: 94) points out that concepts are big ideas that connect small ideas, and he also holds that concepts are equal to big ideas. Because they are the basis of their own cognitive framework or structure. Whiteley (2012) emphasizes that the big concepts are the basis of understanding everything, and they can be regarded as meaningful models to be used as a connection of scattered points. Erickson (1995: 57) believes that big concepts are the core disciplinary concepts. However, they are abstract and based on facts. Wiggins, Mctighe and Alexandria (2005: 66-78) point out that big concepts are the basis of the theory called curriculum center. The ideas, subjects, debates, theories, principles and many other aspects can be connected with meaningful points. At the same time, they are the critical points of using such knowledge in different situations. In terms of discipline, Charles (2005) defines the big concepts as the center of maths learning. Big concepts can connect every point into a whole, and maths is regarded as a unitary group covered with various concepts. From the perspective of scientific education, Harlen (2010: 1-6) comes up with fourteen big concepts related to scientific education. He reckons that big concepts can explain and predict the notions of objects and phenomena in a bigger range. Nevertheless, concepts are either big or small, while big concepts are merely a relative notion. Though these concepts are not called “big concept” or “big idea”, they make up the “big concept” and enrich the connotation and significance of the “big concept”.

As to studies at home, Li (2020) puts forward “upper-seat concept”. It means big concepts are located in the higher level. Therefore, it can be involved in the lower level, which can be more applicable to the objects or phenomena. Regarding “big concepts”, Dun and He (2019) refer to some principles, ways, theories and so on that can reflect the essence of the discipline, which are located in the center of the discipline. Wang *et al* (2021) hold that the big concept is the similar meaning of deep study. It is a general concept in the educational field, which displays different characteristics in different disciplines.

The author holds the belief that big concept is a kind of knowledge. As to this kind of knowledge, on the one hand, it can improve the structure of points with the help of big concepts, for the purpose of making them concise but refined. On the other hand, it can take full advantage of big concepts to break down the barriers between each discipline. With the aim of getting connected with each discipline and getting in touch with social life.

3. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS* BASED ON BIG CONCEPTS

3.1 Determining and explaining the big concept

According to the initial introduction of this unit, it is not difficult to find the topic of this unit is about friendship. First of all, predicting the content about friendship is of necessity. The author here gives a few examples of the content. What does a good and enduring friendship need? Good qualities of good friends and the way to maintain each other’s friendships; students can share their own experience of friendships; then teachers give some valuable advice to those students who have difficulty in this regard. When this topic can be pulled up to the height of world outlook, value and view of life, or just to say, to the height of life, they can be defined as a big concept.

If teachers read the unit more carefully, they will grasp the core of this unit more precisely. Instead of putting the emphasis on Amy’s problems of friendships with Jenny, teachers should shift their teaching ways to grasp the main theme —— friendship.

In each section of this unit, there are different sub-concepts, which can be linked to be a big concept at the top level. Therefore, different sub-concepts of this unit are listed as follows, the author explains them one by one.

In the first section — *Welcome to the Unit*, the sub-concept is to construct students' structure of knowledge about friendship.

In the second section — *Reading*, the big concept is to get students themselves into the real context, rather than just to know the answer to the questions of the passage. After all, learning is not just for the mastery of literal textual materials, but for putting oneself into the real situation, keeping track of the reason, process and consequence. At the same time, thinking the problem itself is also a crux, if you were the main character, how would you consider or address it?

In the third section — *Grammar and Usage*, the sub-concept is to learn the sentence structures and language points, then one can use these points to express oneself, whether the thought or the problem. Taking this unit as an example, students should master the relative pronouns that can be used in restrictive relative clauses to express their experience of friendship.

In the fourth section — *Integrated Skills*, the sub-concept is to learn about the good qualities of good friends and use the same structure to speak out students' own thoughts.

In the last but one section — *Extended Reading*, the sub-concept is to know the importance of friendships for people, students can understand the importance of friendships for themselves and build on a right outlook of life or world.

In the last section — *Project, Assessment, and Further Study*, this section is always ignored by both teachers and students. Nevertheless, this section has its own specific sub-concept, which is to learn the original friendships of celebrities, such as Libai and Dufu. How is their friendship? And of course, students can accumulate more knowledge about friendship, ranging from the movies to novels, all of which can be included. This can be the complementary section of the whole unit, which can make the big concept of this unit more integrated.

3.2 Designing the questions based on the big concept

After determining the big concept and explaining each specific objective of each section, it is high time that students should receive, accept and internalize the big concept. At the same time, teachers ought to make up their minds to design some questions of high quality based on the big concept.

In the first place, as to the first section — *Welcome to the Unit*, teachers can design some open discussions for students to introduce the topic friendship. Teachers can know a little about the students' personal relationships through the discussion. At the same time, teachers can get to know whether students have trouble with getting along with others or not, if it is true, teachers can give some suggestions to students. During the process, both teachers and students can predict the content about this lesson. They can construct their knowledge framework of friendship ahead of time, helping teachers master the basic level of their students.

Next, as for the second section — *Reading*, there are some questions remaining to be solved. (1). What's the problem of the teller, and summarize it in their own words within twenty words. This question can accomplish the specific objective of this section, thus mastering the big concept in an indirect way. Moreover, this question can improve the reading and speaking competence. (2). If you were the teller, how would you feel about this matter? After some thought, students can have a general idea of the following suggestions given to the teller. (3). What's the response of the teller's other friends? This procedure can help students reflect on their own suggestions, learning the strengths of different sides, thus paving a way for the trouble that they would be confronted with in the future.

What's more, in terms of the third section — *Grammar and Usage*, teachers should make a list of some examples using relative pronouns. After all, grammar and the usage are indispensable for English learning.

In this unit, grammar is shown through the sentences of the article. It is more accessible for students to master and remember the grammatical rules in the real context. Teachers can ask students to conclude grammatical rules through the form of filling the blanks.

In the fourth section — *Integrated Skills*, teachers can play the radio to check students' understanding of friendship. Of course, teachers can exercise the sensitivity of students on the trouble and solutions of friendship, accumulating adequate experience for the future. After listening, teachers give a task to students. They can ask students to take full advantage of simple sentences or the structures from the listening to correct their primary words they say in the first lead-in section of this class. In this way, students can add extra content to the structure of the big concept of this unit.

In the last but one section — *Extended Reading*, teachers should pay attention to leading students to appreciate the beauty of argumentative articles and to feel the importance of friendships in their lives. At the same time, teachers can make students conclude and add the significance of friendship based on the big concept. Maybe teachers can summarize the structure of argumentative articles, too, making students excellent enough to master more deeper knowledge.

Last but not least, in the section — *Project, Assessment, and Further Study*, adding some history to the big concept in this unit makes it more unabridged. Teachers give students some time to have a short discussion to search for the friendship of historical celebrities from what they know inside and outside their textbooks. Then they are able to communicate with each other in the class, instead of awkward silence or sub-participation. By taking every aspect, from the past to today, from home to overseas, from books to real life, into consideration, big concepts can be more comprehensive.

3.3 Summarizing big concepts

After analyzing each specific objective of different sections, teachers should sum up the big concept and sublimate every specific objective to the extent that can be connected with the big concept. Teachers can't forget the connotation of big concepts. They are abstract and integrated conceptions. The author takes the most important, also the least memorable section —

Integrated Skills, as an example. In this section, its specific objective is to show the qualities of a real or a good friend. How does it sublimate to the big concept? Considered from another aspect, these qualities can induce lasting friendship, helping students show good influence on the outlook on world, the view of life and the outlook of value. In this way, specific objectives are connected with the big concept of this unit.

In this unit, the author draws the conclusion that big concept is to grasp the influence of friendship on the outlook of life, value, and world. Then it is unfolded by the problems, solutions, importance, qualities, related stories and so on. Meanwhile, expressing students themselves with advanced structures is also included.

3.4 Evaluating both big concepts and students

With regard to the big concept, teachers must play a role of positive attitude to the life, society, and world. They should function as a leading role. Therefore, getting up on the right side is a compulsory lesson for teachers. Without doubt, correcting students' wrong attitudes towards those three issues is an integral part.

Put it in another way, it is taken for granted that students should get an in-time response of their answers in the class. As a matter of fact, this doesn't mean it is limited in the class. As a matter of fact, it is obliged for teachers to correct them either in real life or in other situations anytime.

4. DESIGN OF LEARNING PLANS OF *GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS* BASED ON THE BIG CONCEPT

4.1 Information about learning plans

Nowadays, there are too many learning sheets, or some sheets called leading learning sheets existing. They don't always accord to what they express. Real learning plans are designed for students. Their main bodies are students rather than teachers.

Here, what the author says is a real learning plan, which is based on the original learning sheets, paying attention to the learning process of students. Teachers can make good use of these learning plans to know about the state of students. With regard to those students who pretend to be learning or spend time learning in vain, teachers can see through them easily, which can enhance the efficiency of class greatly.

Students don't receive information from teachers passively but take the initiative to acquire knowledge. They can improve their abilities to acquire knowledge, to apply knowledge that has been learned to address the practical problems occurring in real life.

The initial purpose of a learning plan is to help students study autonomously. Students can construct their structure of knowledge. This learning plan can reduce the efforts of teachers to explain knowledge better than before. In the former class, teachers are like mothers of students, they have to demonstrate each specific knowledge, itch to chew up the food in their mouths, then feed up their children. Although it is a simile, its meaning is rather obvious and visualized. These learning plans shift the teaching ways to let students themselves discover and explore the

knowledge they are anxious to know. At the same time, they can accumulate the experience accordingly.

Next, it is high time that the author should say something about the form of learning plans. They are no longer a pile of excessive knowledge or numerous exercises. On the other hand, they are unfolded from the only topic, concentrated on the learning process. Teachers can design some procedures or tasks in their learning plans. Certainly, learning objectives, the subjects of the required topic, construction of knowledge, and the assessment of teachers are all included.

But all of the learning plans don't mean that traditional learning sheets will be totally replaced. Appropriate exercise and explanation or demonstration are of vital significance. After all, contemporary learning plans are just the complement to traditional learning sheets. Teachers can't forget the expanse that they should leave in the learning plans when they design, either. A moderate expanse, also called white space, can give students space to write down their thoughts, or to increase the knowledge they construct, extracting abstract conceptions more conveniently.

4.2 Designing learning plans of *Getting Along with Others* based on the big concept

Combined with the big concept, learning plans are the framework of each part in this unit, they are the abstract extraction from this unit. The design of these learning plans can be also called deeper study. This way of study attaches great importance to a learning way that integrates conclusion, lifelization, and structuralization. It highlights the essence of learning and the application of knowledge, in pursuit of the value to educate and guide people. Facing such a complicated objective of education, it is very difficult for teachers to finish it in just one class hour. Since it is impossible for teachers to construct the big concept for students in such a short time. Even if when they lead students to discuss the nature of big concepts, students can't get the level of application or transfer.

Therefore, deeper study advocates teachers to put up a knowledge structure. This structure must be comprehensive, guided by the topic of this unit, related contents, and clear logic. During this process, teachers should dig up the knowledge of textbooks, not only textbooks, but also other teaching resources. Simultaneously, they must take care of the needs of students. Thus, the structure can be of high quality, linked to the topic tightly, and with a right sense of value judgement.

The author thus takes *Getting along with Others*, (Unit 4, Compulsory Book One, senior high school English textbooks, Yilin Press) as a case. The author will explore the mind and the train of thoughts about designing learning plans of this unit from three aspects: learning content, learning objectives, learning ways.

4.2.1 Integrating teaching contents and determining teaching objectives

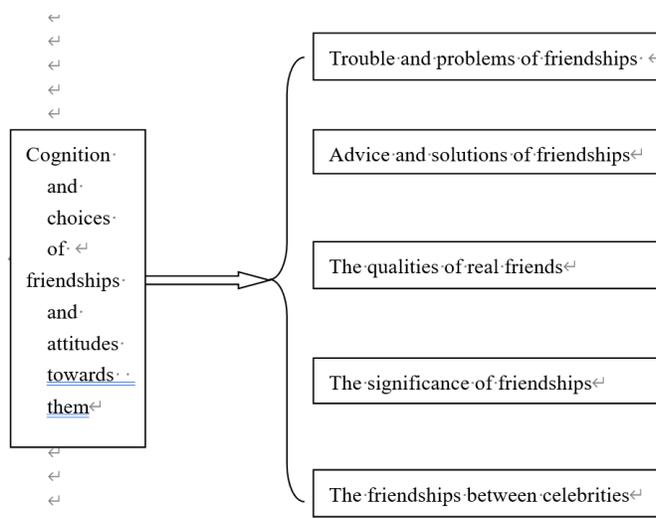
According to the title, "*Getting along with Others*", it is not difficult for students to decide on the topic of this unit, "friendship". Therefore, teaching content of this unit about friendship is in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1 Content arrangement of “friendship” topic of this unit

Section	Type	Content	Subject
Welcome to the unit	Video	Teenagers’ difficulties in maintaining friendships	Problems of friendships are inevitable
Reading 1	Reading	Amy’s problems of friendships with Jenny	Friendships are on the rock
Reading 2	Reading	Cindy and David give advice to Amy	Suggestions on dealing with the problems
Grammar and usage	Reading	Explain the meaning of a true friend with relative pronouns	The meaning of a real friend
Integrated skills	Listening + reading	Tim’s minds of what makes a good friend	The qualities of a good friend
Extended Reading	Reading	Three fruits of friendship	The importance of friendship
Project, Assessment, Further Study	Self-study	The friendship between Li Bai and Du Fu	The friendship between historical celebrities

According to the whole content of this unit, the author makes a list of it and then determines the subject of each section which is related to the big concept based on the content. To introduce the topic “friendship”, one of the relationships between people in contemporary society, trouble and problems of friendships are inevitable, suggestions and solutions of which exist accordingly. Friends are also of no exceptions. They are divided into two kinds: true or good friends, and false or bad friends. How to distinguish them is a crucial subject. Finally, since people have their own friends, what functions can friends bring up? What is the significance of friendship? Now, Diagram 1 shows the integration of subjects.

Diagram 1 Integration of subjects



4.2.2 Designing learning activities based on the teaching content and objectives

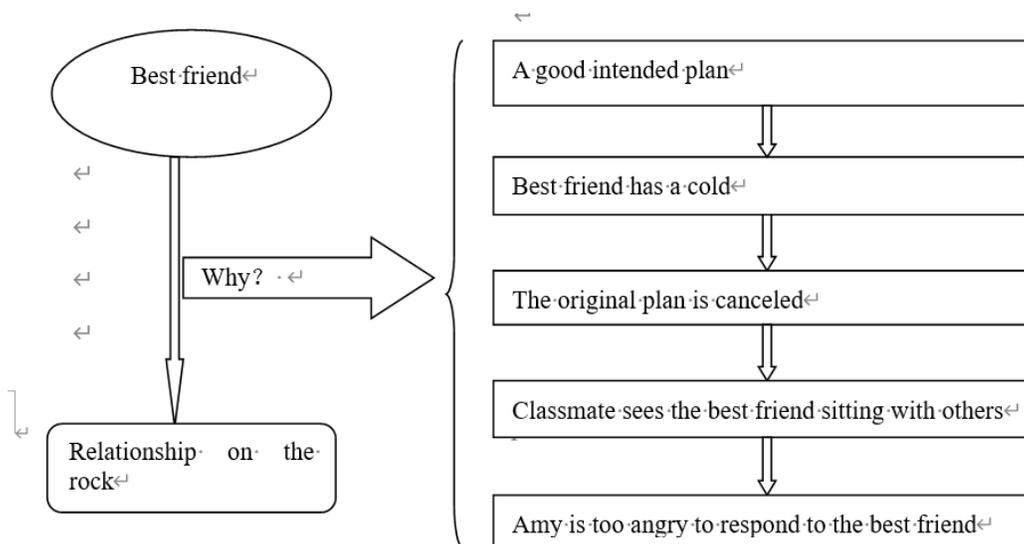
The realization of learning objective is up to the level of the deep study of every student. Next the author takes the first reading text “Friendship on the rock: Please advise” as an example. Then the author explores how to realize deep study during the process of teaching in the specific text.

The passage “*Friendships on the rock: Please advise*” mainly tells about the problems of Amy about the friendship with her best friend. They planned to see a film at the cinema one day at the beginning. But her best friend had a cold the next day. As a consequence, they didn’t go to the cinema. To Amy’s surprise, her classmates saw her best friend sitting with another girl in a cafe. Therefore, Amy was so angry that she didn’t respond to any of her best friend’s messages online. She thought she was tricked, she also thought her best friend told a lie to her, maybe a form of betrayal. Then Cindy and David give her suggestions.

As a narrative article, this text is written in the third person. It is made up of two parts, one of which is about Amy’s trouble, the other about Cindy’s and David’s suggestions. The main body is composed of four paragraphs, which can be divided into three parts. Part One is Paragraph One, which tells the relationship and the intimate degree of Amy and her best friend. Part Two is Paragraph Two and Paragraph Three. It mainly tells the process or the reason why Amy and her best friend have trouble with their friendship. Part Three is the last paragraph, which is about the result of their trouble and Amy’s attitudes towards this matter.

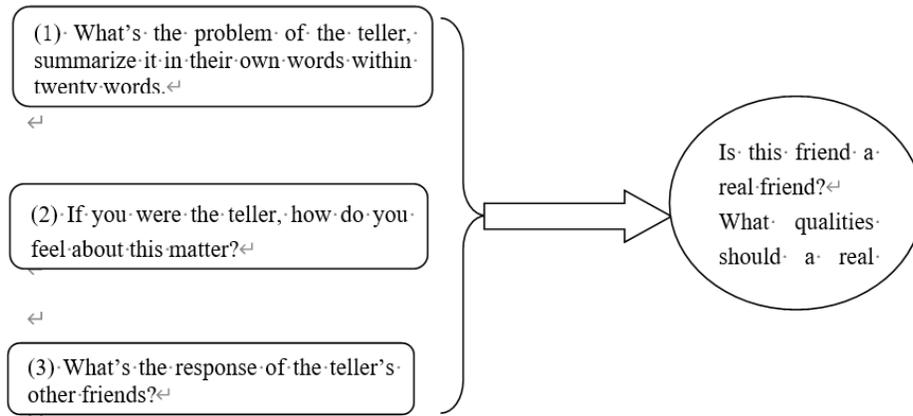
The author analyses the whole text, and sorts out the structure diagram based on the former analysis (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2 Analysis of Reading: Part 1



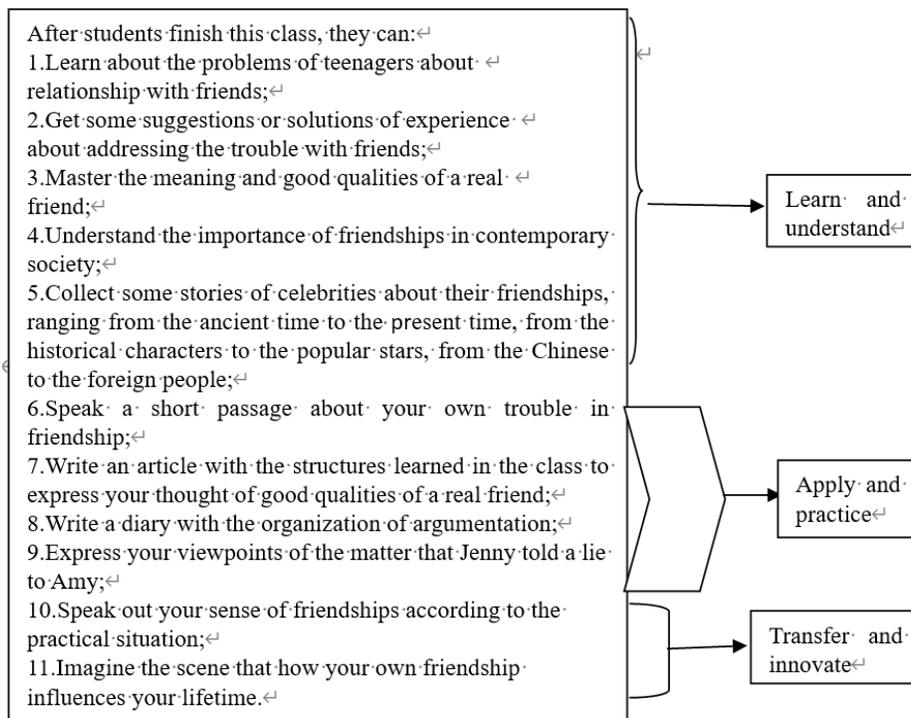
After analyzing the whole plot of this story, to better understand the text, teachers ask students some more questions. They hope these questions can help students grasp the big concept. Questions are as follows (Diagram 3):

Diagram 3 The question chain of Reading



The passage “*Friendship on the rock: Please advise*” is mainly about the trouble of Amy about her friendship with her best friend. The learning objective of this unit that “friendships are necessary in our life, and problems are inevitable accordingly” must be realized. Therefore, how to maintain friendships or address the problems are of crucial importance. Building on a right sense of friendship is its ultimate learning objective. Diagram 4 shows its specific teaching objectives of this unit under the guidance of big concept.

Diagram 4 Specific teaching objectives of this unit



To sum up, during the learning process of this unit, students construct cognitive structure,

emotional attitude, and value judgement centered on friendship gradually through the continual participation in a series of activities in an active way. It lays the foundation for the formation of the core literacy.

Assessment is also the important part of deep study. It is not only the assessment of the level of deep study, but also it is the evaluation of the process and result of deep study. Moreover, it is the continual reflection and revision of the objective of deep study. In the activities of teaching and assessing, teachers can determine the points of assessment through the behaviors of students that they show in the class. For example, teachers can observe whether students can identify the trouble of Amy, whether students can find out the solution to the trouble, whether students can express their own viewpoints about the matter, whether students can build on a right sense of friendship or not and so on. According to the results, teachers can judge the conditions of students, ranging from the understanding of the content to the grasp of the subjects. Teachers can also use the table of students' self-assessment (Table 3) to guide students to reflect and assess the fruits of their own learning based on the learning objectives. In this way, students can pave a way for themselves to conclude and improve themselves in the future.

Table 3 Students' self-assessment

Self-assessment of learning fruits		Name:		
Evaluation contents	Excellent	Good	Average	Needs improvement
(1)I can tell the story of Amy and her best friend.				
(2)I can give Amy some suggestions to addressing this matter.				
(3)I can speak out my problems in my friendship.				
(4)I can summarize the good qualities of a real friend.				
(5)I can write a passage about my real friend with the relative pronouns.				

(6)I can tell the importance of friendship.				
(7)I can speak out some stories about the friendship of celebrities.				
(8)I can make a scrapbook about relationship.				
(9)I can talk about my sense of relationship.				
(10)I can imagine the sense of relationships will have some influences on my lifetime.				
My plan of review and improvement:				

During the evaluation of the learning of this unit, teachers should pay attention to such questions as whether students can form the structure or framework of knowledge as to each subject of every part, whether they can use the new knowledge to express his viewpoints of friendship, whether they can state the good qualities of a real friend and build on a right sense of friendship, and whether teachers can teach students to sort out the knowledge they learn with the help of making a mind map. Teachers can use the way of showing in groups to observe the conditions of students' behaviors. During the process, teachers can check the development of the core literacy from multiple dimensions. Then teachers can give guidance and feedback in time to ensure abundant practice in the core literacy.

Observed from the upper case, teaching plans are based on the big concept which attach great importance to the creation of thematic situations and the deep reading of the texts. These learning plans put emphasis on building relations with existing knowledge. Teachers should design activities centering in challenging tasks. Then teachers should lead students to explore the real meaning to realize the development of minds from shallower to the deeper. Finally, teachers construct relatively stable cognitive structure, emotional attitudes, and value judgments.

5.CONCLUSION

Learning based on the big concept is more efficient under the guidance of the learning fruits of *Getting along with Others* (Unit 4, Compulsory Book 1, senior high school English Textbooks, Yilin Press). This way of learning can give students a general idea of the unit. It can help students construct the structure of knowledge more easily. Although it is an abstract concept, it is of great

importance to the value of students, especially in the future. Learning plans based on the big concept are more vivid. It is more obvious for students to grasp the general learning objective with the help of learning plans. What's more, these learning plans provide more specific learning objectives of this unit, even to the extent of each part, each discourse.

Some suggestions on the teaching based on the big concept are as follows:

First of all, all related content should be integrated in teaching. Teachers should grasp the general idea of knowledge structure. Traditional teaching only pays attention to the learning and consolidation of the singular discipline. It restricts the vision of the solutions to real complex questions in the life. They can't get the better experience of study. However, learning plans based on the big concept have the attribute of being central, lasting, transferable and so on. They help students master the general idea of the knowledge structure and understand the big concepts of discipline, to the realization of requirements of learning.

Secondly, learning plans based on the big concept should be problems-oriented. Learners interact with others or intensify inner thought in real and specific situations. Then they can understand problems and address them. Different situations need different solutions. Therefore, students need to devote more time and energy to the addressing of real problems. Interests are also inevitable. The big concept can make students consider the nature of conceptions deeply and arouse their interests slowly. This way can accelerate the speed of systematicness of knowledge and apply the new learning points to other situations. According to a required order, teachers can design and organize more learning activities with the help of different types of problems. Students can improve their literacy of analyzing and addressing problems with the integration of disciplinary contents and disciplinary abstract conceptions.

Last but not least, teachers must apply a balanced assessment into the teaching process. Traditional learning puts emphasis on the results rather than process. The assessment of traditional learning plans is absolute and singular. It ignores the efforts of learners, so it isn't fit for students to develop. Learning plans based on the big concept are intended to promote the development of students autonomously. Students ought to break through the difficulties of problems and make compensate for the collection of knowledge system. A balanced assessment needs to set up a series of specific standards of assessment and provide multiple ways of assessing. Then it is convenient for students to make a self-assessment or peer-assessment. Therefore, it can get a balance between assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. In this way, it can overcome the corrupt practices of traditional assessing.

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