



ความเข้าใจและการนำแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการ ไปใช้ในห้องเรียนของครูภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาตอนต้นในประเทศจีน English Teachers' Understanding and Implementation of Large-Unit Integrated Teaching in Chinese Middle Schools

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บทคัดย่อ

การปรับปรุงหลักสูตรการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐานครั้งล่าสุดของประเทศไทยได้ส่งเสริมการนำแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการมาใช้ในการออกแบบการจัดการเรียนรู้ ด้วยแนวคิดนี้ครูจะออกแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้ที่บูรณาการหลายวิชาเข้าด้วยกันโดยเชื่อมโยงกับสถานการณ์ในชีวิตจริง การศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจความเข้าใจและการนำแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการไปปฏิบัติของครูภาษาอังกฤษระดับมัธยมศึกษา โดยมุ่งเน้นที่การกำหนดวัตถุประสงค์การออกแบบเนื้อหา กิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ บทบาทในชั้นเรียน การเลือกใช้สื่อ และแนวปฏิบัติในการประเมินผล ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยคือครูภาษาอังกฤษ จำนวน 6 คน จากการคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจงเพื่อการสัมภาษณ์และการวิเคราะห์แผนการจัดการเรียนรู้ข้อมูล ใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาเชิงคุณภาพแบบนิรนัย ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ครูทั้งหมดตระหนักถึงคุณค่าของแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการ หน่วยการเรียนรู้ที่ออกแบบโดยครูที่มีประสบการณ์มีวัตถุประสงค์การเรียนรู้ที่ชัดเจน มีกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ที่สอดคล้องเชื่อมโยงกันและกลยุทธ์การประเมินผลที่เป็นระบบ ในทางตรงกันข้ามครูที่ยังขาดประสบการณ์ประสบปัญหาในการแปลงวัตถุประสงค์ของหลักสูตรระดับกว้างไปสู่แผนการสอนที่เป็นรูปธรรม ครูกลุ่มนี้ใช้ระดับการมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมเป็นเป้าหมายในการประเมินมากกว่าผลลัพธ์การเรียนรู้ที่แท้จริง และวิธีการประเมินผลยังคงเน้นการเตรียมสอบเป็นหลัก งานวิจัยนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าความสำเร็จในการนำแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการไปปฏิบัติไม่ได้ขึ้นอยู่กับการยอมรับของครูต่อการปฏิรูประบบการจัดการเรียนการสอนดังกล่าว แต่ยังขึ้นอยู่กับความสามารถในการแปลงหลักการของหลักสูตรไปสู่แนวทางการสอนที่มีความสอดคล้องเชื่อมโยงกัน ผลการศึกษานี้เน้นย้ำถึงบทบาทของกระบวนการคิดของครู ความรอบรู้ด้านการวัดและประเมินผล และการตีความหลักสูตร ในการสนับสนุนการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบบูรณาการในลักษณะหน่วยการเรียนรู้ขนาดใหญ่ให้มีความสอดคล้องและเป็นไปในทิศทางเดียวกัน อีกทั้งยังให้ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครู แนวทางของหลักสูตรและมาตรฐานการประเมินผลที่ชัดเจนยิ่งขึ้นอาจช่วยสนับสนุนการนำแนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการไปปฏิบัติให้มีประสิทธิผลมากยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ : แนวคิดการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบหน่วยการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการ, การสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศจีน, ความเข้าใจของครูผู้สอน, การนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ

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Abstract

The recent basic education curriculum revision in China has promoted the use of a large-unit integrated teaching approach in designing instruction. Using this approach, teachers design a unit that integrates several subjects related to real-life situations. This qualitative study aims to explore middle school English teachers' understanding and implementation of large-unit integrated teaching, focusing on objective setting, content design, learning activities, classroom roles, material selection, and assessment practices. Six English teachers were purposively selected for interviews and lesson plan analysis. Data were analyzed through deductive qualitative content analysis. The results of the research revealed that six teachers were aware of the value of the large-unit integrated teaching approach. The teaching units designed by experienced teachers had clear learning objectives, coherent teaching activities, and systematic assessment strategies. In contrast, novice teachers had trouble transforming broad course objectives into specific teaching plans. They often use the degree of participation in activities as the assessment goal rather than actual learning outcomes, and the assessment method is examination-oriented. The research shows that the successful implementation of large-unit integrated teaching depends not only on teachers' acceptance of the reform but also on their ability to translate curriculum principles into coherent instructional practices. The findings highlight the role of teacher cognition, assessment literacy, and curriculum interpretation in supporting coherent implementation of large-unit integrated teaching. And provides implications for teacher professional development. Clearer curriculum guidance and assessment standards may further support effective large-unit integrated teaching implementation.

Keywords: large-unit integrated teaching, English language teaching in China, teacher understanding, policy implementation

Introduction

Large-unit integrated teaching (LUIT) refers to an instructional approach that organizes teaching around a complete and coherent unit structure. In this structure, learning objectives, content, activities, teacher-student roles, and the materials and assessments are systematically combined rather than taught as isolated courses (Lao, 2024). LUIT was formally promoted in the 2022 English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education in China (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2022). LUIT is based on constructivism and integrated curriculum approaches, advocating the use of contextualized teaching to connect objectives, content, activities, classroom roles, and assessment, thereby achieving effective learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

LUIT in English teaching focuses on the ability to combine various language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in meaningful contextual settings (Lyu, 2025). Existing

studies advocate that language learning should be combined with real contexts, but few explore how teachers can interpret and implement the concept of integrated curriculum in the classroom. Teachers actively interpret and enact curriculum policies in classroom practice. Therefore, teacher cognition and curriculum interpretation are crucial for establishing instructional coherence across instructional components (Borg, 2015). Teachers' understanding of curriculum reform influences the way they transform policy expectations into classroom practice, making teacher cognition a key intermediary between curriculum policy and teaching implementation.

Previous studies have shown that LUIT can enhance students' classroom participation and promote authentic language use in real-world contexts (Lyu, 2025). However, these studies mainly focused on students' learning outcomes and teaching design, providing insufficient exploration of how teachers understand and implement LUIT in real classrooms. Instructional coherence refers to the alignment and consistency across different instructional components within the teaching process and is considered necessary for effective curriculum implementation (Fiegener & Adams, 2024).

Despite these benefits, several challenges remain in implementing LUIT in English classrooms. The learning outcomes of students cannot be well-assessed at the system level because there are no clear guidelines to follow (Lao, 2024). At the school level, teachers often lack high-quality teaching materials and do not collaborate, which limits their ability to innovate with the help of LUIT further; the heavy teaching loads and large class size hinder the practicality of student-based activities on the classroom level and add even more complications to the execution process of LUIT (Deng et al., 2024).

Few existing studies have explored how teachers' conceptual understanding of LUIT shapes instructional coherence across the teaching process. Since curriculum reform ultimately depends on teachers' classroom enactment, exploring teacher cognition and implementation is necessary (Cao, 2025). Therefore, this study explores Chinese middle school English teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT, focusing on instructional coherence in classroom practice. By doing so, it provides empirical evidence from a Chinese middle school context and contributes to a better understanding of how curriculum reform is enacted in classroom teaching.

Objectives

1. To explore Chinese middle school English teachers' understanding of the large-unit integrated teaching approach, including their perceptions, beliefs, and theoretical knowledge.
2. To examine how Chinese middle school English teachers implement the large-unit integrated teaching approach in their classrooms, focusing on teaching strategies, instructional design, and lesson planning.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to explore middle school English teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because this study aimed to describe teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT in a real educational context, rather than generating theories or developing in-depth case explanations. Semi-structured interviews and lesson-plan analysis were used as the primary methods of data collection.

1. Participants

This study adopted purposive sampling, and six middle school English teachers with experience implementing LUIT were selected as research participants. The participants were recruited from a public middle school in Qingdao City, Shandong Province, China. The school was selected because LUIT had been implemented across all middle-school grades, ensuring that all participants had experience with the LUIT under investigation. Qingdao was selected because it represents a typical urban public middle-school context in China where LUIT has been actively promoted following recent curriculum reforms. To ensure variation in teaching experience, the sample included two teachers from each grade (grades 7-9). In each grade, one teacher was classified as "experienced," defined as having more extensive experience in implementing LUIT and participation in external professional development programs, while another teacher was classified as "novice," defined as having one to three years of LUIT implementation experience, mainly engaging in school-based training. Following previous research on teacher development (Tsui, 2003; Bertram, 2023), teaching experience and participation in professional development activities were used as indicators to distinguish novice and experienced teachers. Six research subjects are sufficient to obtain detailed and in-depth research data and distill common patterns, which is in line with the research positioning of this qualitative and descriptive study that focuses on in-depth exploration rather than statistical generalization. The distinction between novice and experienced teachers was

for analytical exploration rather than for statistical comparison. (Table 1)

Table 1

Participants' Background Information

Teacher	Gender	Age	Teaching position	Years of adopting LUIT	Professional development
P1	Female	24	Grade 7 English Teacher	Novice—one year	School-based training
P2	Female	28	Grade 9 English Teacher	Novice—2 years	School-based training
P5	Female	32	Grade 8 English Teacher	Novice—3 years	School-based training
P3	Male	36	Grade 7 English Teacher	Experienced—5 years	External training and lectures
P6	Male	49	Grade 9 English Teacher	Experienced—10 years	External training and lectures
P4	Female	50	Grade 8 English Teacher	Experienced—more than 10 years	External training and lectures

2. Research Instruments

2.1 Semi-Structured Interview

This study mainly used semi-structured interviews as the data collection method to deeply explore teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT. The interview consisted of 16 questions focusing on teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT across six teaching dimensions. For example: "Could you explain what large-unit integrated teaching is?" "How do you select and organize content within a large unit plan to ensure logical connections between courses?" The interview outline was reviewed by two university English teaching experts to guarantee content validity. The interviews were conducted online, and each lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Participants were informed of the study purpose and confidentiality and provided consent before the interviews.

2.2 Lesson Plans

The research collected 18 lesson plans of the three units used by each respondent in the classroom as supplements to the interview data to achieve triangulation. The analysis of teaching plans adopts the same six dimensions as interview analysis: teaching objectives, teaching content, classroom activities, roles of teachers and students, teaching

materials, and evaluation methods. Based on the interview data, the teaching plan was analyzed to test the consistency and differences between teachers' understanding of the LUIT concept and their classroom implementation.

3. Data Collection

Six participants were interviewed individually, totaling 6 sessions. The interviews were all conducted online and took 30-45 minutes, with no follow-up interviews. They were recorded with the participants' consent. The interview was carried out in Mandarin to ensure clarity and accuracy. The participants then provided three lesson plans as Word or PDF documents. Participants were assured that participation was voluntary.

4. Data Analysis

All interview data were first transcribed in Chinese and then translated into English, with cross-checks conducted to ensure translation accuracy. This study employed qualitative content analysis following Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), using a deductive approach. Rather than generating categories inductively from the data, the analysis was guided by six predefined analytical dimensions derived from the conceptual framework of LUIT: teaching objectives, content, learning activities, teacher-student roles, teaching materials, and assessment. These dimensions were established before data analysis and served as the initial coding framework for analyzing both interview transcripts and lesson plans. The analysis involved organizing data, coding interview transcripts and lesson plans according to the predefined dimensions, comparing coded data across participants and data sources, identifying similarities and differences within each dimension, and integrating findings into the final report. Initial codes within each analytical dimension were generated and refined through repeated comparison across participants and data sources. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories within each analytical dimension. The resulting interpretations were repeatedly compared with the interview transcripts and lesson plans to ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' understanding of LUIT and their classroom practices.

Following Lincoln and Guba (1985), this study adopted multiple strategies to ensure the credibility of the research: triangulation was carried out by using interview data and lesson plans to compare teachers' cognition of LUIT with their implementation practice. Second, member checking was completed by inviting participants to review the interview transcripts and verify the accuracy of the recorded information. Third, peer debriefing was conducted through regular discussions with the research supervisor during coding, category refinement, and interpretation of the findings. Whenever discrepancies arose during the analysis, the

original interview transcripts and lesson plans were revisited to ensure accurate interpretation. Finally, throughout the research process, reflexivity was maintained by using analytical memos, which recorded coding decisions, emerging interpretations, and the researchers' reflections. These procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transparency of the research process.

Results

Although there were significant differences between novice and experienced ones, the six research subjects exhibited both common characteristics and individual differences. The findings were presented according to the predefined analytical dimensions.

1. Teachers' Understanding of Large-Unit Integrated Teaching

Across all six cases, participants described LUIT as an approach that emphasized capacity development, thematic organization, and holistic learning, though their explanations varied.

1.1 Competency-Oriented and Long-Term Learning Goals

Three novice teachers, P1, P2, and P5, described the learning objectives in a rather general way. For instance, P1 set its goals as thinking ability, collaboration ability, and practical application ability. P2 mentioned, "In my class, the teaching objective is not only to cultivate students' language skills but, more importantly, to foster their critical thinking and collaborative abilities." (P2, personal communication, July 10, 2025) In contrast, experienced teachers (P3 and P6) more clearly applied the principle of reverse design in their interviews and lesson plans and clarified more specific ability-oriented results. As P3 stated, "I usually first determine the ultimate learning objective, such as solving specific problems in students' daily lives, and then reverse design the entire unit." (P3, personal communication, July 10, 2025) This distinction was also obvious in their teaching plans. However, this difference was not absolute. Compared with the other novice teachers, P5 demonstrated a stronger awareness of competency-oriented teaching, although this understanding was not fully reflected in the submitted lesson plans.

1.2 Thematic Integration and Real-Life Relevance

The data of six research participants showed that LUIT needs to rely on real themes and meaningful contexts to construct units and pay attention to the integration of language skills and teaching content. This feature was also confirmed in the analysis of teaching plans. Among the 18 teaching plans, 12 took real tasks as the core of unit design: P1

and P3 set up collaborative tasks in the "My School Life" unit, requiring students to design campus optimization plans. P6 took the ninth-grade environmental theme unit as the carrier and organized teaching through debate and action planning tasks. The interview data also supported this view. P6 proposed: "When students engage in practical tasks, such as debate activities or project design, the learning effect is better than merely doing exercises." (P6, personal communication, July 10, 2025) In addition, in the "Global Citizenship" unit of Grade 8, P4 and P5 relied on classroom activities integrating global issues to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness.

1.3 Holistic and Interdisciplinary Perspective

Participants consistently understood LUIT as an interrelated teaching framework; however, their explanations of "holistic" varied. In this study, "holistic" was not only reflected in the integration of language skills but also in the consistency of the key teaching elements of the whole unit (such as learning objectives, content, and tasks). As P2 explained, "I try to organize unit learning step by step, from vocabulary input to discussion among students, and to completing the writing task in the end." (P2, personal communication, July 10, 2025) However, this mainly reflected procedural sequencing rather than fully developed holistic integration. In contrast, P3 and P6 demonstrated a more detailed understanding by integrating interdisciplinary elements such as values education and environmental issues. Although P1 and P2 demonstrated an emerging awareness of holistic unit planning, this understanding remained largely procedural and was not consistently reflected in the lesson plans.

1.4 Shift in Teacher and Student Roles

Three experienced teachers (P3, P4, and P6) regarded teaching "promotion" as a teaching process carried out relying on scaffolds. As P3 stated: "My role in the classroom is more like that of a facilitator. I guide the students and assign them tasks, but they need to be responsible for completing the learning tasks." (P3, personal communication, July 10, 2025) While novice teachers (P1, P2, P5) had a relatively superficial understanding of student-centered instruction, simply equivalent to teachers reducing classroom lectures. P2 stated: "In my opinion, being student-centered means giving students more time to speak up, but I don't know how to effectively guide them." (P2, personal communication, July 10, 2025) Although respondent P5 only partially employed the scaffolding strategy, it still attempted to motivate students through discussion-based activities, demonstrating that teachers were gradually establishing a student-centered teaching concept.

2. Teachers' Implementation of LUIT in Classroom Practice

The teaching designs of experienced teachers (P3, P4, P6) showed a high degree of consistency in the interview content and lesson plans, while the teaching implementations of novice teachers (P1, P2, P5) were more fragmented. The essence of the implementation differences between the two lay in the different instructional coherence models, rather than being solely determined by teaching experience. However, there was no clear boundary between the implementation levels of the two types of teachers: some novice teachers could reach the implementation level of experienced teachers in terms of theme integration, experiential activity design and textbook application, while experienced teachers encountered implementation difficulties in some teaching links. Therefore, this study can only summarize the overall implementation trends of two types of teachers and cannot take teaching experience as the absolute basis for evaluating the effectiveness of LUIT implementation.

2.1 Objectives

Three experienced teachers in this sample (P3, P4, and P6) expounded specific and measurable learning goals consistent with LUIT principles, whereas novice teachers (P1, P2, and P5) described goals that were broader and less operational. P3 had explicit learning outcomes that included such statements as, "students will be able to apply the structure of persuasive language to present their opinion on environmental problems" (P3, personal communication, July 10, 2025). For instance, the teaching plan objectives submitted by P1, P2, and P5 were general and lacked clear assessment criteria. However, P1 included several competency-related outcomes in interview, although these were not consistently operationalized in the lesson plans.

2.2 Content Design and Thematic Sequencing

All six teachers integrated unit themes into their teaching. Analysis of the lesson plans indicated that experienced teachers (P3, P4, P6) demonstrated stronger thematic sequencing and coherence across lessons than novice teachers (P1, P2, P5). P6 pointed out: "I do my best to connect every class. Students mainly first understand the basic content and then gradually learn on this basis. In this way, by the end of the entire learning unit, students can complete more complex tasks." (P6, personal communication, July 10, 2025) Novice teachers' lesson plans basically follow the sequence of the established textbooks, with limited expansion of themes. As P1 said, "My classroom content mainly follows the sequence of textbooks. When I connect different courses with larger topics, I face considerable difficulties" (P1, personal communication, July 10, 2025). Although novice teachers had set teaching

themes, the class time was only implicitly related and lacked a clear connection and progressive design. Nevertheless, this distinction is not entirely consistent. Although P2 is a novice teacher, they have demonstrated a strong sense of theme integration and attempted to connect teaching content based on social issues.

2.3 Learning Activities

Among the 18 lesson plans, 14 had identified activities based on projects or experiences. However, there were differences among the task sequence, cognitive requirements, and practical application scope, as well as the complexity and integration degree. In P3's "Green Campus" unit and P6's "Environmental Protection Plan" unit, students were guided to apply language skills to real problem-solving situations through activities such as debates and poster design. P3 and P6 believed that "participating in practical tasks such as debates and cooperative projects can enable students to have a better learning experience and outcome." (P3; P6, personal communication, July 10, 2025) Novice teachers had differences in implementation. P5 also designed a Model United Nations activity that reflected experiential learning and thematic integration. However, the connection among objectives, implementation, and assessment remained weak.

2.4 Teacher and Student Roles

Experienced teachers (P3, P4, P6) assisted students in learning by means of stratified scaffolds, planned inquiry activities, and systematic guidance. P4 said, "In class, I'm not the one who answers all the questions. On the contrary, I attempt to enhance students' ability to solve problems independently by setting tasks and guiding them to find the correct answers to the questions." (P4, personal communication, July 10, 2025) On the contrary, the understanding of novice teachers (P1, P2, P5) is relatively limited. P1 indicated that "Most of the time, teaching time is reduced and structured teaching guidance is not provided to students" (P1, personal communication, July 10, 2025). Despite these differences, P2 also combined group tasks and classroom discussions to enhance students' participation.

2.5 Instructional Materials

Among the 18 lesson plans, 10 incorporated authentic materials with strong real-world relevance, which included materials such as TED talks, UN videos, and real case studies. P3, P4, and P6 had mentioned: "For the selection of materials, I choose videos or real cases related to the theme, so that students can experience the use of English in real scenarios as if they were there" (personal communication, July 10, 2025). In contrast, novice teachers (P1, P2, P5) tended to choose simple materials such as short video logs and campus websites,

and the consistency between materials and teaching objectives was insufficient. A novice teacher said, "I try to use some real materials related to students' daily lives, such as videos, etc., but it's very difficult for me to find learning materials that truly align with the course objectives". (P2, personal communication, July 10, 2025). Despite this overall pattern, some novice teachers tried to integrate real resources. For instance, P2 used real videos and online materials for reports. However, it was still difficult to align resources with the overall objectives of the unit.

2.6 Assessment

Assessment reflected the implementation differences between novice and experienced teachers. Experienced teachers P3, P4, and P6 had implemented a multi-stage assessment that integrated diagnosis, formative, and summative assessment. 9 lesson plans also supported this segmented assessment design. P6 mentioned, "I not only evaluate students based on their test scores but also pay more attention to their performance and ability development during the learning process." Conversely, novice teachers P1, P2 and P5 only used traditional evaluation methods such as tests and classroom records, which focus on the evaluation of language knowledge and ignore the comprehensive ability. P5 said, "I usually rely on tests, exams and classroom performance to evaluate students because it's more direct, but it doesn't fully reflect the overall ability of students." (P5, personal communication, July 10, 2025; P6, personal communication, July 10, 2025) However, the distinction was not absolute, as P5 had attempted to incorporate classroom performance assessment despite relying mainly on exam-oriented evaluation.

During the data analysis process, the focus was on cases of deviation and contradiction: novice teacher P2 and P5 demonstrated outstanding ability-oriented and experiential teaching qualities in multiple dimensions, while there were also implementation differences within the group of experienced teachers. These cases helped ensure that the survey results reflect the patterns within the sample rather than the fixed distinction between novice and experienced teachers.

Discussion

This study explained teachers' understanding and implementation of LUIT from the perspective of teachers' cognition and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), focusing on how teachers establish coherence across instructional objectives, activities, materials, classroom roles, and assessment. Consistent with Borg (2015), teachers' cognition (beliefs, knowledge,

and decision-making) shaped teachers' interpretation of curriculum reform and mediated the relationship between curriculum policy and classroom practice. Consistent with Shulman (1986), PCK supports teachers in transforming curriculum concepts into coherent instructional practices. The findings show that instructional coherence is the key to the implementation quality of LUIT. Although all teachers recognize LUIT's teaching philosophy, there is a significant gap in their ability to coordinate teaching objectives, activities, materials, the roles of teachers and students, and assessment, and to build an integrated and coherent teaching system. This suggests that instructional coherence is an important criterion for distinguishing the in-depth implementation of LUIT from its shallow fragmented implementation.

1. Teachers' understanding of large-unit integrated teaching

Although all participants supported LUIT, there were significant differences in their understanding of how to transform course concepts into coherent instructional designs. These differences indicate that teachers' understanding of LUIT cannot merely remain at the level of identifying with the concepts of curriculum reform. From the perspective of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), teachers also need to transform the abstract course requirements into coherent teaching designs and classroom practices.

The above differences reflect the transformation trend from knowledge-transmission teaching to competency-oriented learning (Bertram, 2023). According to the PCK theory, merely acknowledging the concept of quality-oriented education is far from enough. Teachers need to coordinate goals, activities, materials, the roles of teachers and students, and evaluations to build an integrated teaching framework. Therefore, the coherence of teaching is the core link connecting the theoretical cognition of LUIT and classroom practice. At the same time, the implementation of LUIT is not merely about adjusting teaching strategies, but also requires teachers to complete the transformation of their teaching cognitive concepts (Tajeddin & Mansouri, 2024). Its in-depth implementation requires a shift from teaching methods to competency-oriented teaching thinking.

2. Teachers' implementation of large-unit integrated teaching

A key finding of this study is that instructional coherence presents a continuous gradient rather than as a binary condition. Teachers do not fully implement or fail to fully implement LUIT, but rather demonstrate different levels of integration when coordinating teaching objectives, activities, materials, classroom interactions, and evaluations. This perspective can precisely distinguish the implementation levels of LUIT and explain the phenomenon where some teachers have similar ideological cognition but significant

differences in classroom practice.

This result reflects that teachers often regard project-based and collaborative activities as the external signs of innovative teaching, but the effectiveness of such activities depends on whether they can be integrated into a coherent teaching process to achieve the unification of goals, tasks, and assessments. Coherent design can build a progressive learning context and cultivate students' qualities, while scattered activities are difficult to ensure long-term learning. Although some teachers agree with the LUIT concept, their teaching remains fragmented. The root cause lies in their insufficient ability to interpret courses and design tasks, and the exam-oriented evaluation model restricts the overall construction of teaching. The application of teaching materials also reflects the value of coherent thinking: teaching materials are not fixed texts but resources that serve the unit's goals and the cultivation of qualities. Teachers with an overall design awareness will reconstruct teaching materials in combination with students' learning conditions and unit objectives; conversely, they use the materials in a fragmented manner.

Assessment is one of the most visible indicators of instructional coherence because it reveals whether instructional goals, learning activities, and expected learning outcomes are aligned. Systematic competency-oriented teaching integrates formative and summative assessment, considering both the learning process and the outcome. Superficial implementation mostly relies on classical methods such as tests and class observations, which emphasize results rather than process support (Bertram, 2023). When the classroom focuses on competency development while the assessment is based on exams, the resulting misalignment may disrupt instructional coherence and weaken the effectiveness of LUIT implementation.

The findings reflected the tension between competency-oriented curriculum reform and traditional examination-oriented evaluation culture. This assessment pattern also helps explain why instructional coherence remains difficult to achieve in practice. The current evaluation focuses too much on language accuracy while neglecting comprehensive abilities (Lao, 2024), which limits the evaluation to fragmented language knowledge and deviates from real communicative performance, thus restricting the full implementation of LUIT.

Overall, instructional coherence is the core criterion for evaluating the quality of LUIT implementation. Previous studies have mostly focused on unit themes, tasks, and literacy goals, while this study points out that the key lies in whether various teaching elements can be integrated to form a unified system. It is not only an essential trait of high-quality

instructional design but also the core path for the implementation of competency-based curriculum reform in the classroom, which can provide a theoretical basis for related research to distinguish between in-depth implementation and shallow application.

Recommendations

Implications of the Study

The results of this study can provide references for curriculum reform, teachers' professional development and school-based unit teaching design. Teacher training should focus on enhancing teachers' ability to design coherent teaching. Schools can provide corresponding support through unit collective lesson preparation, peer observation and teaching research guidance, especially helping novice teachers refine their abilities in course interpretation, teaching task design and competency-oriented evaluation.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research can incorporate samples of teachers from different regions, school types and years of teaching experience to test the generalizability of the conclusions of this study. Based on the comparative study of multiple educational scenarios, it is possible to further explore the impact of curriculum support, evaluation culture and teaching and research collaboration on the implementation of teaching coherence in LUIT.

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