

# **Exploring the Teaching of Listening and Speaking in Senior High School EFL Classrooms through the Lens of Deep Learning: A Case Study of Unit 5: The Value of Money from the People's Education Press High School English Textbook (Book 3)**

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**Abstract:** In contemporary senior high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms., listening and speaking classes often face issues of fragmentation, superficiality, and oversimplification, with insufficient attention given to cultivating students' critical thinking and core competencies. The introduction of deep learning theory offers a new perspective for addressing these challenges and fostering the core competencies essential for English language development. This paper examines the integration of deep learning theory into the teaching of listening and speaking in senior high school EFL classrooms. Using Unit 5: The Value of Money from the People's Education Press High School English Textbook (Book 3) as a case study, the research constructs a teaching framework grounded in the six core features of deep learning. The study emphasizes the design of instruction that considers teaching content, learner characteristics, and instructional objectives, with a focus on fostering core competencies and higher-order thinking skills. The application of this framework demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting deep learning by encouraging meaningful engagement, facilitating knowledge transfer, and fostering creative expression. This research provides a practical model for enhancing English teaching practices in alignment with deep learning principles and the development of core competencies in students.

**Keywords:** Deep Learning; High School English; Listening and Speaking Instruction; Core Competencies

## **1. Introduction**

Listening and speaking are vital components of high school English education, essential for developing students' language proficiency and cognitive skills. However, traditional "score-centric" teaching practices often prioritize reading and writing at the expense of listening and speaking, leading to superficial classroom activities that fail to support comprehension, meaning construction, and problem-solving [1]. This imbalance hampers the development of students' core competencies and limits opportunities for independent thinking [2]. Addressing these shortcomings is a key challenge in curriculum reform aimed at cultivating English core competencies.

The revised National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) emphasize that teachers should guide students to deeply explore texts, construct structured knowledge, internalize linguistic and cultural content, and express viewpoints autonomously to achieve deep learning [3]. Deep learning, as a benchmark for 21st-century educational reform [4], provides new solutions to fragmentation and oversimplification in listening and speaking instruction, aligning with the goal of fostering core competencies [5]. It emphasizes inquiry, critical thinking, and reflection, requiring teachers to actively promote student engagement in deep learning [6]. Thus, teachers should actively guide students to engage in deep learning during listening and speaking instruction. This paper analyzes the theory and implementation of deep learning in English listening and speaking instruction. Using a teaching case, it explores practical strategies to cultivate students' core competencies in the English discipline based on deep learning.

## **2. Theoretical Foundations of Deep Learning**

The concept of deep learning was introduced by Swedish scholars Ference Marton and Roger Säljö in *The Nature of Learning Differences: Results and Processes* (1976). Building on Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, they identified two types of learning: surface learning and deep learning. Deep learning is an active, problem-solving approach that promotes deep comprehension and engagement, in contrast to the passive nature of surface learning [7]. Since then, deep learning has gained significant attention

in educational psychology and pedagogy. With advances in artificial intelligence and neural networks, it has also become central in computer science.

In *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* [8], five key characteristics of deep learning were identified: comprehension, proactivity, interactivity, contextuality, and constructiveness. Building on the theory of understanding and transfer, Jensen et al. proposed the Deep Learning Cycle (DLC) [9], which includes curriculum design, pre-assessments, creating a conducive environment, activating prior knowledge, acquiring and processing new knowledge, and evaluating learning outcomes. The evaluation phase guides curriculum redesign, offering a practical framework for fostering deep learning.

In China, He Ling and Li Jiahou were among the first to define deep learning, describing it as a process where learners critically integrate new ideas into existing cognitive frameworks, establish interconnections, and apply prior knowledge to solve problems [10]. Guo Hua (2019) identified five characteristics: activity and experience, association and structure, essence and variation, transfer and creation, and value and judgment [11]. Wang Qiang et al. (2021) added "internalization and communication," highlighting the role of activities like description and explanation in consolidating new knowledge and facilitating the transition from knowledge to skills [12].

### **3. Framework for High School English Listening and Speaking Teaching from a Deep Learning Perspective**

Based on the preceding analysis and the insights of Chinese scholars regarding the characteristics of deep learning, it can be concluded that deep learning encompasses six distinct features. High school English listening and speaking instruction from the perspective of deep learning should reflect these features. In designing instructional activities, the corresponding characteristics should be refined and implemented.

Activities and Experiences, as the core feature of deep learning, form the fundamental framework of classroom teaching and permeate the entire instructional process. This feature emphasizes the practicality and participatory nature of learning, aiming to ensure students' full engagement in the learning process through positive emotional involvement. It provides students with diverse scenarios and experiential opportunities, enhancing their initiative and motivation in learning. Listening and speaking activities create complex and authentic contexts for deep learning, requiring teachers to fully design and leverage such contexts.

Associations and Structure stress that teachers should conduct thorough analysis of both instructional content and students' prior knowledge. By fully utilizing audiovisual resources and setting comprehensive, layered, and interconnected instructional goals, teachers can activate students' existing knowledge and experiences to deepen their understanding of the topic. This feature focuses on organizing and structuring knowledge, helping students establish connections between new and prior knowledge, form systematic cognitive frameworks, and construct knowledge.

Internalization and Communication emphasizes the interconnection of listening and speaking activities while considering the continuity of real-life contexts. Through meaningful input and creative output, students internalize language use. This feature highlights the practical application of language, allowing students to achieve internalization and practical use of language knowledge through interactive communication [13].

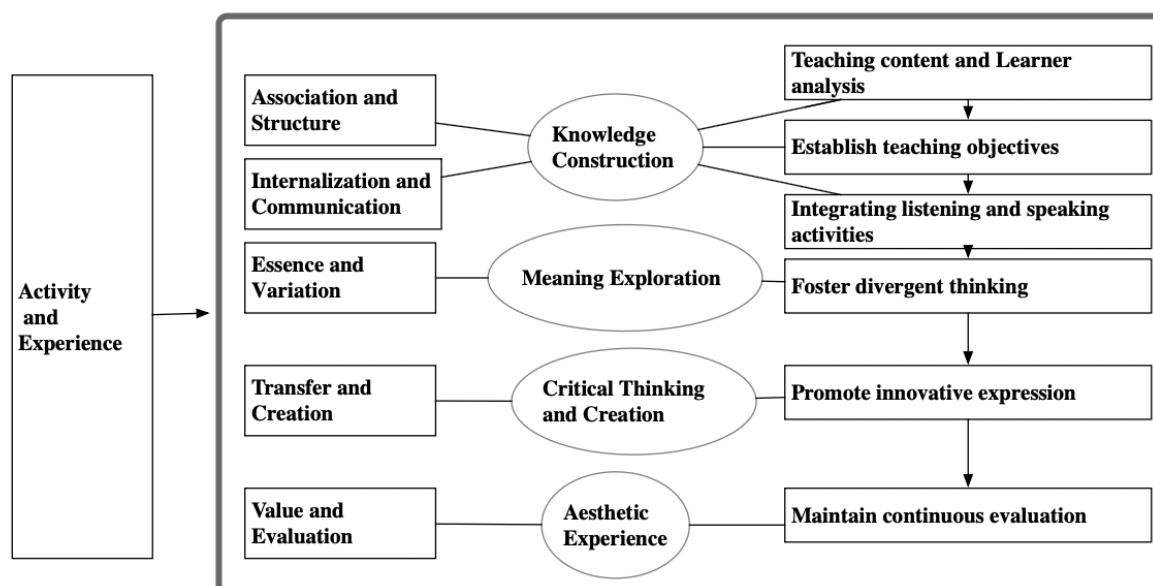
Essence and Variation focuses on students' comprehension of listening and speaking content, which is a key pathway for cognitive development and the transformation of linguistic knowledge into communicative competence. Teachers should guide students to analyze the relationship between learning content and real-life contexts, continuously engaging them in meaningful exploration and divergent thinking to develop cultural awareness. When students express authentic emotions, viewpoints, and experiences, they must not only use linguistic knowledge and skills but also employ logical thinking and creative abilities [14]. This feature emphasizes in-depth understanding and flexible application of knowledge, fostering students' critical thinking and cultural sensitivity.

Transfer and Creation, as a demonstration of deep learning outcomes, aims to enhance students' comprehensive competence in listening and speaking. The ultimate goal of deep learning is to apply newly constructed knowledge structures to solve real-world problems within authentic contexts. Teachers should integrate information technology to combine listening and speaking resources, create authentic contexts, promote knowledge transfer, encourage collaborative exchanges, and cultivate innovative expression. This

process helps students engage in critical and creative thinking. This feature highlights the importance of applying knowledge and fostering innovation, cultivating students' higher-order thinking skills.

Value and Evaluation underscores the significance of integrating instruction, learning, and evaluation. Teachers should focus on formative and process-based evaluation, ensuring continuous attention to the evaluation process. By fostering aesthetic appreciation and reflection, this feature ensures that instruction, learning, and evaluation work cohesively to develop students' integrated listening and speaking abilities, critical thinking, linguistic proficiency, and cultural awareness. It emphasizes diverse and comprehensive evaluation to ensure the learning process is thorough and meaningful.

In summary, based on the six features discussed above, six critical aspects should be considered when designing instructional activities: analyzing instructional content and students' prior knowledge, defining instructional objectives and key points, integrating listening and speaking activities, fostering divergent thinking, promoting innovative expression, and maintaining continuous evaluation. To present the teaching approach more intuitively, the researcher has developed a teaching framework for high school English listening and speaking instruction from the perspective of deep learning (as shown in Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Teaching framework for high school English listening and speaking instruction from the perspective of deep learning

#### 4. Designing Listening and Speaking Lessons Based on Deep Learning Theory

Drawing on the principles of deep learning and the activity-oriented view of English learning, this study presents a teaching design for the *Listening and Speaking* section of *Unit 5: The Value of Money* from the People's Education Press (PEP) High School English Textbook (Book 3). The design emphasizes detailed analysis of the listening text and learner characteristics, clear instructional goals, integration of listening and speaking activities, fostering divergent thinking, promoting innovative expression, and maintaining ongoing assessment. Below is a detailed explanation of the design and implementation process.

##### 4.1. Analysis of Teaching Content and Learner Characteristics

Before instruction begins, analyzing both the teaching content and learner characteristics is essential for promoting deep learning. Conducting a detailed analysis of the listening text enables teachers to identify the theme, communication context, and communicative functions of the text, synthesize fragmented information, construct a schema for the text, and uncover its deeper meanings. According to the recommendations in the *New Curriculum Standards*, this analysis should address three dimensions—**What**, **Why**, and **How**—as follows:

- **What:** The theme, content, communication context, communicative functions, and strategies of the listening text;
- **Why:** The speaker's intention, emotional attitude, or value orientation underlying the text.;
- **How:** The text's stylistic features, structural organization, and linguistic characteristics.

In this teaching example, *Unit 5: The Value of Money* falls under the thematic context of Man and Self. The Listening and Speaking section focus on the scenario: *A story of good deeds about you*. This scenario is authentic and highly relevant to students' real lives. The listening text narrates the story of Chen Liyan, who returned a lost wallet containing a large sum of money.

- **What:** The story is told from a third-person perspective, describing Chen's act of kindness in returning the money.
- **Why:** The purpose of the text is to convey the positive energy and core socialist values represented by this act of kindness, emphasizing that good deeds can inspire more good deeds.;
- **How:** The story is structured with an introduction (when, where, and who), beginning, development, climax, and conclusion.

The learner analysis is as follows: The lesson is designed for high school sophomores. Students' English proficiency may vary, with some demonstrating strong listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while others face challenges in vocabulary acquisition, grammar usage, and listening comprehension. The theme of good deeds and money resonates strongly with students, especially when tied to real-life situations and personal values. Students may already have a basic understanding of moral stories such as Chen's, but they may lack the ability to narrate their own stories of good deeds fluently in English. Teachers must guide students toward deep learning to achieve transfer and creativity. Overall, the content is closely related to students' daily lives and societal issues, effectively encouraging them to reflect on the value and meaning of money.

#### 4.2. Teaching Objectives and Key Focus

Based on an in-depth reading of the text and the above analysis, the following instructional objectives and key focus areas are established:

##### 4.2.1. Teaching Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- **Language Competence:** Summarize the main content of the story based on the worksheet after listening to the beginning part, demonstrating their ability to extract key information and organize ideas logically.
- **Thinking Capacity:** Analyze the plot structure logically after listening to the remaining part, demonstrating the ability to interpret narrative elements and sequence events coherently.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Narrate a personal story of a good deed using the "story mountain line" to express personal values and cultural understanding, connecting learning to their own lives and moral reflections.
- **Learning Ability:** Reflect on good deeds in their surroundings to develop independent observation and learning skills, fostering awareness of social responsibility and the real-world application of knowledge.

##### 4.2.2. Key Focus

- **Important Points:** Summarizing the main content of the story after listening to its beginning, which requires extracting key details and organizing ideas logically.;
- **Difficult Points:** Narrating a personal story of a good deed using the "story mountain line" to express values and cultural understanding, connecting the story to personal experiences and reflections.;

#### 4.3. Teaching Activities and Design Intentions

Based on the analysis above, the instructional process integrates several critical elements: integrating listening and speaking activities, fostering divergent thinking, encouraging innovative expression, and maintaining ongoing assessment to achieve deep learning.

##### 4.3.1. Integrating Listening and Speaking Activities

In language learning, listening and speaking are closely intertwined. Listening serves as a means of input, allowing students to acquire linguistic knowledge, cultural context, and communicative functions, while speaking acts as a means of output, enabling students to express and interact with the content they have heard. Integrating listening and speaking activities aims to break down the barriers between the two, allowing them to complement and reinforce each other. For instance, in this lesson, the teacher introduces the lesson by creating a real-life context (A story of good deeds about you), preparing students for subsequent listening activities and ensuring that listening and speaking activities are seamlessly connected.

#### 4.3.2. Fostering Divergent Thinking

In the while-listening phase, students are guided to analyze the moral implications embedded in Chen Liyan's story. By focusing on key moments that enhance critical thinking, teachers encourage students to progress from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking. For example, students are asked a sequence of increasingly challenging questions:

Q1: What happened when Chen Liyan found the wallet?

Q2: How did Chen Liyan respond when the owner did not come back?

Q3: Why did Wang Zheng decide to raise money for Chen's daughter?

Q4: What can we learn from Chen Liyan's refusal to accept the reward?

#### 4.3.3. Encouraging Innovative Expression

In the speaking phase, students are encouraged to apply their knowledge creatively. Having already learned the "story mountain line" in the previous listening activity, students are guided to process the content further by independently and collaboratively constructing their own narratives. By linking the lesson content to their personal experiences, students engage in meaningful transfer and innovation.

#### 4.3.4. Maintaining Ongoing Assessment

As with the integration of listening and speaking activities, assessment is embedded throughout the lesson. Teachers provide diverse forms of feedback and encourage students to engage in peer evaluation using a checklist during the speaking phase. Teachers also actively participate in the evaluation process to guide and refine student performance. Based on the above analysis, the following checklist can be designed.

Table 1: Peer Evaluation Checklist for Students

Items	Statements	Scores (0-5)
Structure	clear and organized ( Beginning、 Development、 Climax、 Ending )	
Content	Good deeds	
Significance	positive/persuasive	
Performance	fluent and smooth	
	Proper body language	
	Speak loudly	

Based on above analysis, the following teaching steps can be designed:

#### Step 1: Lead-in (3 mins)

##### 1. Learning Activity: Free Talk

Teacher asks students to list some good deeds they have done and provides an example to guide them.

Students share their personal experiences of good deeds.

##### 2. Design Intention:

The free talk activity connects directly to the listening task later in the lesson. By sharing personal experiences, students build a foundational understanding that prepares them for the narrative and speaking tasks.

**Integrated Focus:** Encourages integrating listening and speaking activities, promotes engagement, and activates prior knowledge.

3. Level of Activity: Learning and Understanding (Perceiving and Noticing).

**Step 2: Pre-listening (5 mins)**

1 Learning Activity: Prediction

Teacher displays the title of the listening passage (*A Story of Good Deeds*), along with an image or key words (e.g., wallet, kindness, reward).

Teacher briefly introduces the context: “This is a story about a person who found something valuable and how they dealt with the situation.”

Students look at the displayed information and make predictions by answering guiding questions:

What do you think the person in the story found?

How do you think they responded after finding it?

What might happen next in the story?

Teacher records student predictions on the board for reference during the listening task.

2 Design Intention:

The prediction activity creates anticipation and curiosity, motivating students to listen actively to confirm or adjust their predictions.

**Integrated Focus:** Encourages divergent thinking by allowing students to explore multiple possible storylines and outcomes.

3 Level of Activity: Learning and Understanding (Anticipating and Hypothesizing).

**Step 3: While-listening (10 mins)**

1 Learning Activity: Listen for the Main Idea (5 mins)

Teacher plays the first part of the recording and asks students to complete the corresponding task on their worksheets.

Teacher provides a listening strategy: *Use WH questions (who, what, when, where, why) to identify the main idea.*

Students listen, complete the worksheet, and summarize the main idea of the story.

2 Learning Activity: Listen for the Plot Details (5 mins):

Teacher plays the second part of the recording and asks students to answer higher-order thinking questions:

What happened when Chen Liyan found the wallet?

How did Chen Liyan respond when the owner did not return?

Why did Wang Zheng decide to raise money for Chen’s daughter?

What can we learn from Chen Liyan’s refusal to accept the reward?

Students listen and respond to these questions on their worksheets.

3 Design Intention

Repeated listening helps students identify the main idea and understand the story’s details, promoting comprehension at both surface and deeper levels.

**Integrated Focus:** Encourages students to progress from basic comprehension to critical thinking (low-order to high-order thinking). This step also lays the foundation for discovering the *story mountain line*.

4 Level of Activity: Learning and Understanding (Obtaining and Sorting Information).

**Step 4: Post-listening (7 mins)**

1 Learning Activity: Discover the Narrative Structure

Teacher asks students to analyze the story’s structure by identifying and matching specific events to its key elements (scene, introduction, development, climax, and ending).

Students work in pairs to complete this task with teacher guidance.

2 Design Intention:

Helps students deeply understand the story's narrative structure, providing a scaffold for constructing their own stories later in the lesson.

**Integrated Focus:** Strengthens the connection between listening and speaking, while fostering analytical thinking.

3 Level of Activity: Learning and Understanding (Summarizing and Integrating).

**Step 5: Speaking (18 mins)**

1 Learning Activity: Brainstorm and Gather Ideas (5 mins)

Teacher asks students to reflect on their own good deeds and write down key details (who, what, when, where, why) using the worksheet.

Students brainstorm individually to outline their story ideas.

2 Learning Activity: Practice and Peer Review (8 mins)

Students practice narrating their story individually first, then share it with a desk mate.

Peer feedback is provided using a checklist, focusing on aspects such as clarity, structure, and emotional engagement.

3 Learning Activity: Presentation and Class Evaluation (5 mins)

Selected students present their stories to the class.

Classmates evaluate the presentations using the checklist, while the teacher provides additional feedback.

4 Design Intention:

Encourages creative expression by allowing students to narrate personal stories.

Builds confidence through structured practice and feedback.

**Integrated Focus:** Promotes innovative expression and maintains continuous evaluation.

5 Level of Activity: Transferring and Innovation (Imaging and Creating).

**Step 6: Summary and Assignment (2 mins)**

1 Learning Activity:

Teacher guides students to summarize the lesson by discussing what they have learned about kindness and storytelling.

Assignment: Write a short story about another good deed (real or fictional) using the *story mountain line*.

2 Design Intention:

Consolidates key takeaways from the lesson and provides an opportunity for independent practice

**Integrated Focus:** Encourages reflection and supports continuous learning.

3 Level of Activity: Applying and Practicing (Internalizing and Using).

**5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Deep learning, as an essential tool for advancing curriculum reform, provides a new perspective for achieving the educational objectives of the English discipline. Based on the theory of deep learning, this paper designs high school English listening and speaking lessons. Within the framework of deep learning, teachers can focus on several aspects during lesson design, including the analysis of teaching content and learner, setting instructional objectives and identifying key and difficult points, integrating listening and speaking activities, fostering divergent thinking, encouraging innovative expression, and maintaining continuous evaluation. These strategies aim to transform teaching from fragmented to interconnected, from knowledge transmission to practical application, and from surface-level to deep-level learning. Through active engagement and meaningful learning activities, students can enhance their core competencies. The instructional design of English listening and speaking lessons oriented toward deep learning replaces isolated, superficial, and fragmented learning approaches with integrated and cohesive learning. It particularly highlights the active role of students in the learning process, driving learning towards a deeper understanding

of essential concepts and solving problems, thus achieving knowledge transfer and innovation.

In the future, more research is expected to explore the theoretical and practical applications of deep learning in English education, contributing collectively to the realization of the educational objectives of the English discipline.

## **Appendix**

### **Listening and Speaking**

Recently, a cleaner by the name of Chen Liyan has made the headlines for her generous and honest act.

The 45-year-old Chen was sweeping the floor at Taiyuan Railway Station early last Tuesday morning when she found a small plastic bag near a chair and discovered 100,000 yuan inside. Chen was shocked but she was determined to return the money to its owner.

When interviewed by the local paper yesterday, Chen said, "I would have felt bad if I had kept the money. After all, the owner might have needed it badly."

While working, Chen watched carefully for anyone who might have been the owner. She waited for over two hours, but having no luck, she went to the nearest police station to turn the money in. There, it was finally returned to its owner, Wang Zheng.

Wang thanked Chen repeatedly and apologized for the inconvenience, even offering her 5,000 yuan as a reward. To his surprise, however, Chen refused, believing that it would be wrong to accept money that she had not earned.

But what is even more surprising, perhaps, is that Chen's daughter, 16-year-old Liu Xia is currently seriously ill. Chen had already spent the last of her savings on the ongoing treatments and has also taken out a large loan.

Fortunately, Ma Dongbao, who works at the police station, stepped in. Living in the same apartment building as Chen's family, Ma was well aware of Chen's difficulties. When Wang was told about Chen's situation, he decided to set up a fundraising website to pay for Liu's hospital bills.

Chen Liyan's example shows a different way of thinking about money. Money is important, but to people like Chen, it definitely isn't everything. And that's a great attitude to take.

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