

# Research and practice of cultivating college students' English reading ability under the new situation

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**Abstract:** English is the world's largest language and plays an important role in international communication. Developing English reading ability is one of the important goals of college English teaching, and improving the English reading ability of college students is an important task of English teaching. With the application of English in real life and work, more English educators pay more and more attention to students' English reading ability. How to better cultivate college students' English reading ability under the new situation is more and more emphasized by the national education department. This paper focuses on the current situation, existing difficulties and the causes for the cultivation of college students' English reading ability, and provides guidance for college students' English reading teaching under the new situation from the dimensions of academic English reading ability cultivation and practical English reading ability cultivation. While improving relevant abilities, it not only attaches importance to language knowledge, but also cultivates students' full understanding of the relevant knowledge of cultural background.

**Key words:** new situation; college English; reading ability training; research and practice

## 1 Research on the current situation of college students' English reading ability cultivation

As one of the important basic skills of language ability, the cultivation of reading ability plays a crucial role in improving the comprehensive English level. English reading ability literally seems to focus more on "reading". In fact, language is the comprehensive embodiment of listening, speaking, reading, writing and other abilities. Therefore, we should work together to improve their English reading ability from all aspects. However, at the present stage, some teachers and students have a poor understanding of English reading ability, which results in their inability to effectively combine English reading ability with other application abilities, and eventually leads to the imbalance of English level development, largely restricting the improvement and development of English reading ability.

### 1.1 The current status of college English reading ability

Throughout the public college English courses, they are mainly divided into two sections: "reading and writing" and "audio-visual theory". As most teachers are slow to update their concepts, they take lecturing as the core in the teaching process and spend more time on it, resulting in students being unable to fully "read" or "write" and assignments are often formalized with a lack of effective communication, causing reading ability to stagnate. According to the traditional teaching theory of English reading, reading is a passive "decoding" process from the beginning to the end of the article.

The premise of reading an English material is to understand the most basic elements such as the words and phrases in the text, followed by grammar, sentences, and finally the discourse. This method seems reasonable, but in fact, it cannot stimulate students to play their understanding and creative thinking in the process of English teaching. It only memorizes isolated language elements by rote. The real knowledge is only superficial language phenomena such as grammar, rather than chapter information. The above reading mode is likely to produce the following three disadvantages: first, students have developed the habit of relying on the dictionary in the reading, and they are unable to grasp the key points and central ideas of the reading materials, which leads to the understanding deviation; second, the reading method is incorrect, slow and attentive, requiring word for word translation into the mother tongue, which results in information deviation in the process [1].

### 1.2 The dilemma of cultivating reading ability in college English and its causes

According to years of teaching in colleges and universities and investigation and analysis, it is found that most vocational college students have no solid English foundation, with poor English reading habits, single reading methods and a lack of diversity and other problems. These problems are the main factors leading to the low English reading ability of college students.

First, students lack basic knowledge of the language. The author has done a simple survey for each department. The statistical results show that more than half of the students believe that insufficient vocabulary is a major factor in the reading level, followed by the confusion of phrase meaning and weak grammatical knowledge. In view of the influence of basic knowledge on English reading comprehension, the author sent questionnaires to 60 students from 5 universities, among which 37 students think that their reading ability is poor, and the most important reason is the lack of English vocabulary. At present, whether they are students majoring in English or other departments, they can not jump out of the cycle of rote learning in the process of English foundation learning. However, the effect of rote learning is not obvious, and it is easy to forget after learning. In the long run, students' confidence in learning English is seriously frustrated, which eventually leads to a gradual loss of interest in English and a failure in the cultivation of their reading ability [2].

Second, bad reading habits affect reading speed. Unscientific reading habits refer to the habit of reading incorrectly. Most students have developed deep-rooted bad habits during their studies, which has seriously affected the speed of English reading. According to the survey data, 63.15% had the habit of reading, 57.11% had the habit of exercising, and 53.01% had the habit of writing. Students rely too much on pronunciation and ignore the understanding of the meaning, which hinders the improvement of English reading efficiency, and eventually leads to the inadequate depth and breadth of reading comprehension.

Third, the reading method is too single. During the work process, people will encounter various problems. In order to ensure work efficiency, people will flexibly adjust their working methods. English reading is the same, and there is no fixed reading method. We should change our reading method in time according to the specific situation such as reading materials, reading requirements and our own status. For example, when facing the content of academic literature with great difficulty, we should use the intensive reading method, and the difficult points can be read back, in order to better understand the connotation of the article. However, many students treat all reading materials "equally" in the actual process of the reading. Whether it should be general reading or fast reading, they uniformly adopt the method of intensive reading. During the reading process, students focus their time and energy on individual words and sentences, resulting in confusion about the them and focus of the text, therefore failing to complete the reading task within the limited time.

## **2 The basic principle of cultivating college students' English reading ability under the new situation**

Under the new situation, more and more English teaching researchers join in the research of cultivating English reading ability. The feasibility of English reading ability cultivation can be tested by developing an instructional program and adopting a variety of methods. Through years of teaching practice and research, the author suggests that college students' English reading ability should be cultivated based on the following three principles.

#### 2.1 Skill training: the transformation from single skills to composite abilities

English reading teaching is a systematic project, including two sub-systems of English language knowledge and language ability, covering listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. These abilities are intertwined, mutually restricted and complementary to each other, so it should not be allowed to talk about reading alone without the five English skills. The practical significance of learning English lies in the ability to listen, speak, read, write, and translate. It is essential to understand that students should not only be able to express and translate what they comprehend, but also develop all five skills simultaneously. Only by cultivating these abilities together can students truly integrate into the English learning process and use it naturally and flexibly. Therefore, the concept of curriculum integration advocated by the new situation is of great significance in cultivating students' comprehensive English ability [3].

#### 2.2 Time extension: from reading and learning to workplace employment

If it is difficult for the teaching in primary and secondary schools to get rid of the shackles of exam-oriented education in the short term, then higher education should have a long-term vision. Therefore, in English reading teaching, teachers should not only guide students to master skills and improve their English reading abilities, but also consciously use reading information and reading skills to serve students' future life and employment. The purpose of teaching in colleges and universities is to lay a foundation for students' future life and career, which requires teachers to take the market demand as the guidance, rather than treating English reading teaching as a task of textual research and examination. The talents trained by any university should eventually go to the society, engage in their own work, and transform the knowledge learned in the school into practical ability to better guide the work and life. Therefore, English reading teaching must be transformed to workplace employment.

### **3 The practical path of cultivating college students' English reading ability under the new situation**

#### 3.1 Cultivation of academic English reading ability

At present, there is a lack of research on academic English reading in China, focusing on the analysis of article structure, vocabulary and genre of general academic English. Academic English teaching is based on the theory of cognitive language learning. In fact, it is an English teaching of the integration of professional knowledge and academic language skills, which will contribute to the teaching of language. In the process of selecting academic English textbooks, linguists should comprehensively consider the factors such as content genre, background knowledge, as well as language skills, deeply analyze students' learning needs, interests and hobbies, and select the corresponding course content according to the analysis results [4].

##### 3.1.1 Cultivation of general academic reading ability

The knowledge learned by junior university students is the basic content, and the professional knowledge is very little involved. Therefore, it is necessary to take the cultivation of general academic English reading ability as the focus at present stage, that is, to master the basic reading skills. For example, students should flexibly distinguish the application of intensive reading and extensive reading, learn to skip skimming, and speculate the general idea according to the context. In addition, proper reading of short academic articles with certain professionalism can lay a foundation for the cultivation of reading ability of professional materials. In addition to the task of completing the amount of reading, students should also

learn to appreciate and evaluate the reading materials, so as to achieve the flexible application of reading strategies. Since the general textbook rarely involve professional content, the cultivation of reading strategies can be taken as the core of this stage of teaching. Reading strategy and teaching content are closely linked, which should not be trained separately, and need to be integrated into the whole teaching process. Therefore, teachers must combine the actual situation of students, and make overall arrangements for the training content in accordance with the objectives from the overall situation.

### 3.1.2 Cultivation of professional academic reading ability

After a long period of growth and accumulation, senior students have mastered professional knowledge to a certain extent, improved their interest in professional knowledge, and are particularly inclined to learn popular information and cutting-edge knowledge. At this time, we must grasp the opportunity to carry out the cultivation of professional reading ability. In the specific training, we should start from the following three aspects: first, through the reading of long professional articles, students should deeply understand the key points and details of the content; second, they should identify the reliability and credibility of the information source, and third, students should learn the skill of critical reading. Through the reform of current college English textbooks, students' professional academic reading ability can be improved. For example, reasonably balancing humanities and social sciences, professional knowledge content, and appropriately integrating professional knowledge, basic English can not only improve students' English reading skills, but also make them master professional knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the reading materials, and teachers themselves should constantly optimize the knowledge system and improve their personal teaching level.

## 3.2 Practical cultivation of English reading ability

### 3.2.1 Master the solid basic language knowledge and vocabulary teaching

For the difficulties in the vocabulary teaching in English reading instruction, the author summarizes the following breakthrough path: one is to pay attention to the application of vocabulary and achieve four "links", including linking to the CET 4, linking to students' reality, linking to English learning theme and linking to college students' learning life. The second is to integrate the meaning, usage and mutual relationship of the vocabulary into the context, so that students can understand the vocabulary more accurately and understand its deep meaning. The third is syntax teaching. If vocabulary is the foundation of English reading, then to really improve the reading comprehension ability, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the syntactic structure or learn to apply it flexibly. If the knowledge of syntactic structure is not in place, it is difficult to really improve the reading ability. For example, "Another way of addressing issue of unemployment due to NAFTA is to rely on certifications and the awarding of benefits under the NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance Program (NAFTA-TAAP), which provides employment services, training, and income support to eligible workers. This is a relatively complex and simple sentence. The backbone of the sentence is "Another way is to rely on certifications and the awarding of benefits". Thus, just learn to analyze the syntactic structure of the material, the so-called long and difficult sentence will also be easily solved. The fourth is chapter structure teaching. Understanding the general idea and main idea of the article is the most basic reading comprehension requirement. If the general meaning of the article cannot be understood, it is difficult to dig out the deep meaning of the content of the article. Therefore, in the process of English reading teaching, teachers need to regard the analysis of material structure as the key content, analyze the significance of the article from the perspectives of article theme, structure distribution and writing characteristics, guide students to comprehensively understand the meaning of the text and chapter, and cultivate students' basic skills of analyzing paragraph pattern and chapter structure. By gaining an overall understanding of the theme of the article, students can improve their comprehension ability and logical thinking skills in English learning. This requires teachers to pay attention to the development of discourse analysis activities and discourse reconstruction activities, and combine knowledge transmission

with skill training closely, so as to promote students' mastery of language knowledge and improvement of reading skills in a subtle way.

### 3.2.2 Learn background knowledge and language culture

Any article has its corresponding background and language culture, which can be finely divided into authors, customs, historical events, writing periods, etc. The more thoroughly the students understand the background knowledge and language culture, the better their understanding of the text. In short, students' existing cultural background knowledge reserve plays a crucial role in English reading, which makes it necessary for the teacher to provide shock, send students brainstorming as a goal, and encourage students to understand the meaning from the title, key points, and words, so that they can accurately determine the theme, genre, etc. of the article based on their existing knowledge. The difference in the theme and genre of the article will also make the differences in the length structure, words and sentences [5]. Therefore, students can understand the background knowledge of the article by themselves and interpret the content of the article through language and culture, which is conducive to an in-depth understanding of the article and paves the way for the subsequent study. Therefore, on the basis of guiding students' accuracy, teachers should also pay attention to the cultivation of students' interest in reading, guide students to read different types of English articles independently, constantly extend their scope of knowledge, and enable students to learn how to flexibly apply different reading methods to different types of articles, so as to better guarantee the effectiveness of reading [6].

## 4 Conclusion

With the rapid development of information technology in China, the reform of college English reading teaching is imperative. The author believes that the cultivation of college English reading ability should establish a student-oriented teaching system, strengthen the language basic skills, pay attention to the learning of Chinese and Western culture, the Chinese and Western language habits, so that students can clearly understand and accurately grasp the use of language forms, flexibly apply different reading methods and skills to promote the improvement of reading ability. English reading teaching is not something that can be seen overnight. It is a systematic project covering many contents. It is not enough to rely on the efforts of either party alone; it requires the joint efforts of teachers and students. Only in this way can we truly achieve ideal effect of promoting the cultivation of English reading ability.

### Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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