

# Designing English Reading Course for Senior Primary School Students

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## Abstract

English reading ability is important in elementary English teaching as an essential part of the English teaching in primary schools. The new standard of English advocates teachers to guide the students to participate in English reading, and experience the fun of English reading, then try to stimulate the students' interests in reading, raise the students' study habits in the right way and find out effective learning strategies. Therefore, the paper discusses English reading and divided the discussion of English reading classes of primary school students into three stages, namely: before reading, while-reading and after-reading. The paper concludes with an explanation of the basic methods in English reading classes and possible effective teaching strategies that might help educational stakeholders in the primary English reading classes.

**Keywords:** Design strategy, Effectiveness, English reading, Learning aims

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## Introduction

English reading ability is the core skill of linguistic competence. Elleman and Oslund (2019) wrote that Reading comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities in which humans engage, making it difficult to teach, measure, and research. Despite decades of research in reading comprehension, international and national reading scores indicate stagnant growth for adolescents. Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah 2013 stated that “The improving number of international communications, traveling and studying abroad, students need to learn four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing for their success. But reading comprehension is one of the main important elements for their English language learning”. Anastasious and Griva 2009 also put it that “Reading strategies are of interest not only for what they reveal about the ways readers manage their interaction with the text, but also for how the use of strategies is related to effective reading comprehension”. Andersson 2004 wrote that “With strengthened reading skills, second/foreign language (L2) learners of English tend to make greater progress in other areas of language learning. Reading should be an active, fluent process involving the reader and the text in building meaning”. Still emphasizing on the importance of reading, Fauzi and Hanifah (2019) stated that “Reading is one of the skills in English that has to be mastered by the students when they are learning English”. Okkinga et al (2018) stated that “Many studies have demonstrated positive effects of reading strategy interventions on reading comprehension and previous meta-analyses established that the effects of these interventions are quite large”. Spörer and Schünemann (2014) also stated that “Moreover, a growing body of research is examining how reading comprehension can be facilitated by the use of self-regulated reading strategies”. Well English reading ability can not only help to extend the linguistic knowledge for the learners, increase the culture comprehension, but also promote the development of listening, reading and writing. In primary schools, reading is an important link in teaching English, which can not only enlarge students' vocabulary, but also enable students to understand the cultural background, living customs, thinking habits and the characteristics of English language in the process of reading. The new curriculum standard advocates guiding students to experience the fun of

English reading, stimulating students' interest in reading, and cultivating students' good study habits and effective learning strategies. Because reading strategies are an important part of English learning strategies, students' correct reading strategies can not only improve reading speed, deepen reading comprehension and improve learning ability, but also have certain significance for students' development. As for the importance of the English reading ability, the teachers should pay more attention to the cultivation of reading skill. However, during the study, it doesn't show there is enough attention to the reading cultivation, most teachers make efforts on the listening and speaking part, and lack of the theory cognitive and practice guidance on English reading teaching, which then lead to the result that students can't apply to the English reading when they enter in the higher grade, obviously they have difficulties. As the other aspect, the promotion of the reading ability is a progress which should be a step by step from nothing to something. Therefore, it needs a large amount of guidance from teachers and suitable reading material. Generally speaking, reading comprehension has to go through a bottom-up process and a top-down psychological process. Bottom-up refers to the understanding of words and phrases, while top-down refers to the use of reading skills such as background knowledge and reasoning. Therefore, in the English reading of the upper grades of primary schools, we can follow the three steps design of "before reading-during reading-after reading", that is, guess the content by browsing before reading, and then from skimming to intensive reading until we understand the whole article.

## **Design Before reading**

### *1. Topic Selection*

#### *1.1 Topic selection should be appropriate to student life.*

A good beginning is half the battle. As the first link of English reading class, the correct topic selection directly affects students' learning effect. According to the survey statistics, there are three main types of English reading that pupils dislike: the title is too difficult, the scope involved is too far, and the content of the article is not interesting. "Too difficult" means that the educational significance of the article is too difficult, and there are

too many proper nouns, which make it difficult for students to understand. "Too far away" means that there is a clear gap between the situation or emotion described in the article and the students' real-life situation, so that students can't integrate into the article. "Not funny" is most students' evaluation of the article. If students have no taste in learning and can't tell the highlights of the article, they won't be able to learn. Most of the reading is not typical enough, the narration is general, and it is difficult to attract primary school students. The more background knowledge a reader brings to a text, the easier it is to comprehend the text. Núñez Pardo and Téllez (2009, P.3) wrote that "Teachers have realized that a whole industry has been built up around changing teaching resources and methodologies. Considerable attention is now being paid to developing instructional materials and recognising the importance of teaching resources and strategies used to maximize students' language learning".

Therefore, before designing English reading, we should understand and respect students' feelings, choose reading materials that students like, try our best to fit students' life and let students learn in fun.

### *1.2 Topic selection should have practical significance.*

Reading is an activity with strong comprehensiveness, perceptiveness and sensibility, so the topic selection of English reading in modern primary schools should fully reflect the organic combination of students' ability development. With students as the main body, clearly, intensively and comprehensively determine the reading objectives, select reading materials that are suitable for primary school students' level and have certain educational significance, and then guide teachers from three aspects: knowledge and ability, process and method, emotional attitude and values according to the teaching objectives. Using modern educational technology, we can broaden the channels for students to learn and apply English, broaden their knowledge and cultural horizons, and develop their awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication.

## *2. Import*

### *2.1 Preliminary Import to Arouse Interest*

"Interest is the best teacher." Interest is the internal force to promote learning and a powerful driving force for students to learn. Bruner said, "The best stimulus for students is their interest in the textbooks they have learned." The age characteristics of primary school students are strong curiosity, strong imitation, active nature and relatively short duration of intentional attention. Learning language itself is rather monotonous and boring, and the teaching method of teachers' speaking and students' listening is bound to make students' interest in learning disappear. As long as the students are interested in something, they have a thirst for knowledge, are willing to touch it, and devote themselves to learning and exploration with enthusiasm, and change "studying hard" into "learning happily", thus achieving twice the result with half the effort. Without interest, there will be no thirst for knowledge, and learning enthusiasm will be greatly reduced, thus directly affecting the learning effect. Brantmeier (2002) suggested that one of the most effective reading strategies is when "the reader thinks about what s/he knows about the topic of the passage, finds the topic interesting, guesses what some words mean". Therefore, teachers' inspiration and guidance play a key role in English reading teaching in primary schools. Teachers should be good at using skills to guide students into reading happily. Before reading, teachers can talk about related topics, or show related pictures, objects, etc., to arouse students' interest in reading, deepen their understanding of the background of the reading object, and at the same time relax their nervousness before reading. For example, when the reading content involves professional problems, the teacher can ask the students first: "What does your father do? What about your mother?" This kind of related question or playing an English song about occupation, etc., can make students feel the relevant reading content. This can not only be directly and easily introduced into reading, but also fully arouse students' interest in reading and create favorable conditions for the following reading.

## *2.2 Deep import to Get to the Point*

This is the input stage of reading materials, from perception to understanding. Pupils' perception of things is not very accurate. Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012) stated that "Reading strategies are of interest for what they reveal about the way readers manage their interaction with written text, and how these strategies are related to text comprehension". Teachers must know and master this feature of students, put forward specific requirements for students, and read effectively with teachers as the leading factor and students as the main body. Therefore, teachers can guide students to observe the illustrations in reading and expand their imagination. In primary school English reading, there are a lot of illustrations, which is a kind of potential cultural background knowledge and a summary of reading content. It can quickly help students understand the main content of the article, grasp the main line and understand the main meaning contained in the article. Some reading without illustrations or illustrations cannot well reflect the main meaning of the article. Teachers can skilfully transfer relevant background knowledge to students by using free talk, and try to make students grasp the main clues of the article through dialogue. That is to say, only when the teacher gives correct and in-depth guidance can students fully and correctly understand the main idea of the article and read it effectively.

## *2.3 questioning-developing thinking*

"Learning begins with thinking, thinking comes from doubt." Classroom questioning is the most direct interactive activity between teachers and students, and teacher-student interaction is the most direct, simple, effective and commonly used teaching method. Therefore, teachers should strive to create a relaxed, equal and harmonious classroom atmosphere, and stimulate the enthusiasm of primary school students to dare to think, speak and do. First of all, encourage primary school students to spread their imagination wings and not be afraid of being unconventional. Other cognitive strategies recommended by Nolan (1991) were self-questioning and prediction. According to Nolan (1991), self-questioning directed the reader's attention to critical aspects of the text, thus increasing understanding of important textual elements. According to the reading content, teachers can use various

ways, or with the help of physical objects, visual AIDS, etc., or use rich, beautiful and vivid teaching languages, set up situations and ask questions, so that students can have the need to read and read with purpose. Reading is the attraction of understanding written information, and it is dominated by a certain purpose or need, so there must be no shortage of asking questions. For example, the content of the article is about environmental problems. Teachers can first draw a green symbol and then ask questions:

What does the sign mean here?

Where can you find this sign?

What can we do to protect the environment?

Why is the color green?

## **Design While-reading**

### *1. Reading*

#### *1.1 Preliminary Understanding Articles*

Reading methods include scanning, skipping, intensive reading and extensive reading. First of all, students read the text quickly according to the problems and tasks that teachers put forward before reading. On the basis of teacher's guidance, through reading the title or the first sentence, we can grasp the context of the text as a whole, understand the main idea of the text, find out the key words and central sentences, have an overall impression of the content, structure and the author's writing intention of the article, and get a preliminary understanding of the article. At the same time, teachers can check students' reading comprehension by judging whether the main information of the text is true or false, or asking questions and answers briefly.

#### *1.2 Difficulties in Learning and Mastering*

Vocabulary is the foundation of English learning. Scientific reading and memorizing words can enlarge students' vocabulary. Sinatra and Dowd (1991), for example, argued that by understanding how the writer used grammar, the reader would have a direct key to unlocking the meaning of a word. The reader should also use semantic clues such as restatement, use of

examples and summary clues when guessing the meaning of a new word. Tavakoli (2014) put it that "Comprehension is the ability to go beyond the words, to understand the ideas in a text and the relationships that exist between those ideas". When students are reading, they often encounter some new words, which affect their reading speed and make it difficult to understand the article. In fact, most of the new words can be guessed from the relationship below. For example, "She is absent because she is ill." Because she is ill, she can guess that "absent" means absent, and so on. That is to say, in reading, teachers should guide students to find such problems, pay attention to the relationship between words and contexts, and make reasonable guesses. Besides words, of course, students are also trapped in long and complicated sentences in reading. Learning grammar requires rigorous logical thinking and some rules to be kept in mind. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' observation and reasoning ability, so that students can consciously discover and master rules in many language phenomena; Simply telling students boring grammar knowledge points will only increase students' reading burden, and make them lose their interest and motivation in reading, so that they can cope at random. Therefore, teachers can guide students to sum up a rule through many sentences, or extend many sentences according to a rule to explain and analyze sentences and improve reading efficiency.

## *2. Thinking*

### *2.1 In-Depth Study of Articles*

Intensive reading of the text is the most critical link in an English reading class. Students should not only read the text, but also understand it. We should not only clarify the main context of the text, but also systematically study the language, sentence patterns and discourse structure. Teachers should guide students to read articles carefully and fully understand them. They should not only tell students what, but also teach students how, teach students the ability to acquire knowledge and lay the foundation for lifelong development. Of course, teachers can also design various tasks to promote reading, make students' reading thinking more active, and effectively promote students' reading comprehension. For example, when reading



weather, you can design such questions: Read the first paragraph and answer: Which season do you like best? Why? Read the third paragraph and answer: What can we do in summer? What about the USA?

## *2.2 Guidance-Integration of Ideas*

After the first few links, we should achieve the sublimation of reading. Zhang (1993) stated that “The importance of background knowledge has been examined by schema theorists. According to schema theory, comprehension is an interactive process which involves assimilation of new knowledge into existing schemata and accommodation of existing schemata to fit new knowledge”. Through reading, teachers not only need to guide students to integrate ideas, develop students' innovative thinking, and comprehensively improve and summarize articles; It is also necessary to teach students learning strategies, let them know how to read effectively in English reading, and encourage students to expand the amount of extracurricular reading. For example, listening and reading can be combined to guide students to learn, so that students can imitate reading aloud, self-reading aloud, group reading aloud and other forms to deepen their understanding of the article.

## **Design After-reading**

### *1. Inspection*

#### *1.1 Games*

After-reading activities mainly have two purposes. One is to carry out various thinking activities according to the reading content, and encourage students to combine the reading content with their own experiences, knowledge, interests and opinions; The second is to learn language knowledge, integrate reading skill with other language skills, and train students in comprehensive language skills. As we all know, primary school students are naturally active and willing to participate in games. If knowledge can be dissolved into a game, students can practice what they have learned in a relaxed and happy way via games, and learn English by skipping, the learning effect will be twice the result with half the effort.

Through just a few minutes of game practice, students' enthusiasm can be aroused, the classroom atmosphere is lively and orderly, the learning interest is strong, and the teaching quality is improved. For example, in PEP textbooks for the fifth grade of primary school, Zoom and Zip talk about their favorite seasons and what they can do. In this reading, after teaching the whole article, the teacher can skilfully design the "turntable" game to consolidate knowledge, divide the students into four groups: spring, summer, autumn, winter, and then there are four seasons on the turntable, and the students in this group will introduce the characteristics of the season and so on, which season they turn to.

### *1.2 Practice*

Practice is the language output stage. In order to firmly remember what you have learned and prevent forgetting, you need to do various forms of training, so that knowledge can be strengthened in memory traces and form a strong connection. However, students' understanding that mastering knowledge does not mean being able to use knowledge, nor does it mean forming skills and skills for using knowledge. It is not enough to deepen students' understanding and memory of knowledge only by thinking, but also to guide students to practice or operate with their mouths and hands. Students' ability to use knowledge is gradually developed and perfected during repeated practice, from the initial inability, inaccuracy and unskilled to the comparative ability, accuracy and skilfulness. However, in order to enable students to master reading skills smoothly, we should not only pay attention to the number of exercises, but also improve the quality and methods of exercises. The practice methods are as follows:

1. Ask questions about the text.
2. Have a dialogue about the content of the text.
3. Retell the text.
4. Role-playing.
5. Written expression, rewriting, continuation, abbreviation, expansion and writing experience of the text content, etc., improves students' writing level, integrates reading and writing, and improves and cultivates students' skills in these two aspects.

## *2 Application-Contact Life*

An important goal of reading is to guide the application of learned knowledge to real life, so that knowledge can be consolidated and expanded. This requires teachers to design colorful activities in combination with real life, exercise students' practical ability, improve their ability to control language and enhance their sense of innovation. After an English reading class senior primary schools, teachers must properly assign tasks to students, so that students can practice what they have learned repeatedly in real life. For example, design the time of daily English in campus, and communicate in English between teachers and students within the specified time; Design the daily English time for family English, and then use English for communication between parents and children within the specified time, and so on.

## **Conclusion**

English reading in senior primary schools is an important way to accumulate vocabulary, and effective reading teaching strategies are the key to effective reading. Cultivating pupils' English reading ability is a gradual and complicated process. Interest is the driving force, developing good reading habits is the premise, and guiding reading skills is the key. In short, in order to improve the effectiveness of English reading teaching in senior primary schools, teachers should change their ideas, take senior primary school students as the main body and teachers as the leading factor, strengthen the training of senior primary school students' English reading skills, adopt discourse teaching method, introduce effectively before reading activities, adopt appropriate questioning teaching techniques, effectively ask questions throughout the whole reading process, strengthen training after reading to consolidate, and at the same time, encourage reading after class, and form a set of scientific teaching habits and persevere until the aims and goals of reading are achieved.

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