

An Experimental Study on English Reading Strategies Cultivation Among High Grade-Section Pupils

Yao Ma

Geely University of China, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610000

Abstract: This study aims to explore the effectiveness and necessity of cultivating reading strategies in primary school through comparing the results of reading tests before and after training in a Grade-5 English competition class that has undergone reading strategy training with those of a regular English class of the same grade that has not undergone training. The results show that the cultivation of reading strategies can significantly improve reading abilities. Therefore, teachers should strengthen their awareness of cultivating reading strategies and incorporate them into teaching, implementing regular and staged teaching of reading strategies.

Keywords: Reading Strategies; Primary School English; Reading Teaching

1. Background

Reading is an important input method for learning English and an essential part of English proficiency. In terms of reading, students in primary school are required to correctly read stories or short texts, understand simple stories and short texts with pictures by using visual aids. However, the reality is that many primary school students often lack vocabulary, language sense, comprehension ability with a slow reading speed. Reading strategies are one of the important factors affecting the improvement of English reading comprehension. Thus, it is necessary to cultivate appropriate reading strategies for students in elementary school based on their knowledge level and cognitive characteristics.

2. Core Concepts

2.1 Reading Strategies

The concept of reading strategies has been defined by various scholars. Grellet (1981) suggests that it is a learning strategy used to accomplish a specific reading task, while Johnson (1998) views it as a behavioral process taken by the learner to overcome difficulties in reading. Cohen A.D. (2000) defines reading strategies as methods and techniques adopted by readers to self-regulate, plan, and seek the best ways to solve reading problems efficiently.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

Urquhart (1998) categorizes reading strategies into two types: metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies include pre-reading strategies such as previewing and predicting, reading-in-progress strategies such as self-questioning and monitoring, and post-reading strategies such as self-evaluation and reflection. Cognitive strategies include skimming, scanning, close reading, inference, and so on. In terms of teaching methods, Taylor (1988) proposes a five-step approach: demonstration, guided practice, consolidation, practice, and application.

3. Experimental Research

This research intends to compare the reading ability test between the students in the English competition class in the senior section mainly for reading special training (Class A) and the students in the regular class (Class B) after one semester to observe the correlation between reading strategies and reading scores.

3.1 Pre-test

Before the beginning of the course, the teacher conducted a reading pre-test to both classes. The test involved the reading part, a total of 20 points, in which the question type was choice and judgment, and the type was divided into: direct information search, logical

inference, summary, etc. The scores of students had been recorded as well as analyzed with SPSS software. The results were as follows:

Table 1: Statistics of Reading Pre-test

Class	Numbers	Average Score	P
Class A	22	15.409	
Class B	22	14.727	0.220

As can be seen from Table 1: In the pre-test, the average score of the regular class was 14.727 points, while that of the competition class was 15.409 points. The average score of the two classes was not significantly different. Additionally, the P-value of the bilateral T-test was $0.220 > 0.05$, indicating no significant difference. The test results showed that there was little difference in English reading level between the competition class and the regular class, and the ability was similar, so the two classes can be selected for experiment.

3.2 Process

In the whole process of the experiment, the teacher carried on the routine reading teaching to the students of the regular class (Class B), the teaching content did not involve any explanation of reading strategy; while the competition class (Class A) was trained in reading strategies once a week for a total of 16 weeks. The whole idea of Class A was: from word to sentence, then text understanding. The training content was shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Reading Strategy Training Content

Time allocation	objectives	contents	strategies
Week 1-4 Part One: word study	Context clue	How to infer the meaning of a word from word, punctuation, and context	Semantic inference
	Stems and Affixes	commonly used roots and affixes knowledge introduction	Semantic inference
Week 5-8 Part Two: sentence reading	Introduction and comprehension	Search for key words in a sentence to determine the meaning and meaning of the sentence. Key logical words in a sentence (cause and effect, transition, progression...) judgment	Close reading inference
	Restatement and inference	How to use another sentence to explain, further read the meaning of the sentence.	Close reading inference
Week 9-12 Part Three :paragraph reading	Understanding the main idea	How to get the topic sentence.	summary
	Making a judgement	How to make judgments about ideas.	summary
	Drawing a conclusion	How to summarize information	summary
	Making an inference	How to read out the hidden meaning in the text.	summary
Week 13-16 Part four: article reading	Scanning	How to quickly get the key accurate information.	Comprehension
	Skimming	How to get general ideas quickly	Comprehension

According to the teaching steps proposed by Taylor, the specific implementation steps of the training process of reading strategies in teaching are as follows:

Step 1: Get ready to warm up. Teacher presented reading material to students. Let students read in advance, use their own experience to complete the reading. After completing the reading, the teacher asked basic questions to test understanding of the key information.

Step 2: Present and explain. Teacher guided the students to read again with the corresponding reading strategies, and demonstrated and explained the key points of the reading strategies, and the students cooperated to understand.

Step 3: Practice. The teacher selected a new passage and asked the students to use reading strategies to read it. After reading, teacher asked the key questions to compare the time and comprehension accuracy.

Step 4: Reflection evaluation. First, students did self-reflection on whether to use reading strategies and whether to improve reading speed and accuracy under the guidance of strategies. Then a group of four students had a discussion to study the value and blocking points of reading strategies in reading.

Step 5: Scale migration. Students used this reading strategy to complete new paragraphs, then outlined where the reading strategy was used.

3.3 Post-test

After the 16-week reading strategy training, the students of Class A had been familiar with reading strategies, and actively

tried reading strategies in daily reading. In order to test whether the students in Class A had improved their reading ability, teacher conducted a post-test for both classes. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the experimental results, the score was also 20 points, the type and difficulty of the questions were the same as the pre-test, and they were the only objective questions with answers. The scores of the students in the two classes were recorded and analyzed with SPSS software. The results were shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Statistics of Reading Post-test

class	numbers	Average Score	P
Class A	22	16.136	
Class B	22	15.091	0.038

As can be seen from Table 3, the average score of Class A was 16.136 points, and the average score of Class B is 15.091 points. In terms of the average score, Class A is 1.045 points higher than Class B. In addition, the P-value of bilateral t test was $0.038 < 0.05$, with significant difference. According to the results of the post-test, there was a difference in reading level between Class A and Class B, and the reading level of Class A is obviously better than that of Class B.

4. Conclusion and enlightenment

It can be seen from the experimental data that after a semester of reading strategy training, students' reading ability has been significantly improved. In fact, proper use of English reading strategies can not only make up for the deficiency of grammar and vocabulary knowledge of students in senior primary schools, but also obtain more effective and accurate information in a shorter period of time. More importantly, it is to cultivate students' correct reading habits and improve their reading ability. Therefore, the author proposes the following suggestions for the reading teaching in primary schools:

4.1 Establishing the awareness of reading strategy training

Due to the limitation of English teaching hours in primary schools, it is difficult to guarantee the time of special reading classes. Furthermore, teachers often only pay attention to the results of students' reading, and then make comments on wrong questions, lacking systematic guidance and training, which is not conducive to the improvement of students' reading ability. Therefore, primary school English teachers should recognize the importance of reading strategy teaching to improve reading ability, and establish the awareness of reading strategy training for students, especially for senior primary school students.

4.2 Integrating teaching materials into reading strategy training

The training of students' reading strategies should not be separated from the daily teaching. Teachers should integrate strategy training with daily teaching, and flexibly use reading strategies in the implementation process, closely follow the content of the article, and choose the strategies to practice. We can even innovate the teaching mode of reading class, enrich the teaching design of reading class, let the cultivation of reading strategies run through it, and design a new reading class form that meets the cognitive level of students and matches their ability base.

4.3 Promoting reading strategy teaching by stages and levels

Firstly, primary schools pay attention to the acquisition of information, so reading strategies pay more attention to how to capture direct information. Secondly, for the three different stages of reading, the reading strategies are taught respectively. For example, before reading, students predict the general meaning of the text through titles and illustrations. In reading, students are guided to use reasoning, prediction, summary and other strategies to examine details. After reading, the teacher guides the students to read the text again, dig out the connotation of the text by using clues or mind mapping with strategies such as comparison, reflection and evaluation, grasp the structure of the text as a whole, and finally realize the application and transfer of knowledge.

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