

A Survey on the Development Status of English Reading Character of Senior One Students

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Abstract

This paper takes the first-year students of a high school in Sichuan as the research object, and investigates the development status of the English reading character of the first-year students in high school. The results of the study show that: (1) The English reading character is at a middle level, which needs improving. (2) Gender differences will not affect the development of students' English reading character. (3) There is a correlation between the level of students' English reading character and English achievement. English reading character has a positive impact on English achievement. This paper analyzes the correlation between English reading character and gender and English achievement, and puts forward corresponding suggestions according to the development situation of students' English reading character, which is expected to provide assistance for the cultivation of middle school students' English reading character.

Keywords

English Reading Character, Teaching Suggestions, High School

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standard for General High Schools (2017 Edition) puts forward the concept of "developing core literacy in English", which mainly includes four elements: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability; moreover, it emphasizes the fundamental task of "establishing moral education" and highlights the characteristics of the integration of "instrumental and humanistic" in high school English (MOE, 2018). It also emphasizes the fundamental task of "establishing moral education" and highlights the unified characteristics of "instrumentality and humanism" of the English subject in high school (MOE, 2018). After the concept of cultivating students' core literacy in English was proposed, the concept of English reading literacy was put forward one after another. English

reading literacy is composed of English reading ability and English reading character. English reading character is proposed to pay more attention to students' emotions and behaviors in English reading, which to a certain extent makes up for the shortcomings of traditional teaching that emphasizes skill development over emotional motivation, which fits the concept of cultivating disciplinary core literacy and achieving students' all-round development.

2. Research Background

With the continuous exploration and improvement of foreign language teaching, foreign language learners' foreign language reading habits and foreign language reading experiences are playing an increasingly important role in the reading process, which is why the traditional concept of reading ability is gradually being replaced by the new concept of "reading literacy".

PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Study) defines "reading literacy" as "the ability of young readers to construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read for learning, for participation in school and everyday reading communities, and for pleasure" (Mullis et al. 2009: 11). The ability to comprehend, use, evaluate, and reflect on texts (OECD, 2019).

In other words, "reading literacy" includes not only the elements of "reading ability", such as the corresponding knowledge, skills, and strategies involved in decoding textual information and comprehending textual content, but also the motivation, attitudes, and habits of reading, which contribute to the development of the whole person. The quality of reading includes motivation, attitudes and habits that promote the development of the whole person.

Wang Qiang and Ao Narentuya (2015) proposed a theoretical framework of English reading literacy for Chinese primary and secondary school students based on foreign concepts and connotations of reading literacy and the characteristics of English learning conducted by primary and secondary school students in China. Based on this, Wang Qiang and Professor Chen Zehang (2017) clarified the theoretical framework of the goal of developing English reading literacy among Chinese primary and secondary school students. According to the framework, English reading literacy includes two major components: "English reading ability" and "English reading character", which means that English reading literacy includes not only the reading ability that students need to have, but also the comprehensive literacy that students need to have to promote their whole-person development.

English reading character involves two elements: English reading experience and reading habits. Reading habits are divided into reading quantity, reading frequency and reading methods, while reading experience includes reading interest, reading motivation, reading attitude and self-assessment of reading. In general, English reading character refers to the behaviors and qualities that individuals gradually cultivate and develop in the process of English reading activities, which are stable and conducive to improving English reading ability. Several studies have shown that English reading character plays a positive role in improving students' English reading ability, bringing into play their potential, fostering independent learning, and promoting their overall development.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research questions

This study intends to answer the following questions.

- (1) What is the current status of the English reading character of first-year high school students?
- (2) Does gender difference affect students' English reading personality development?
- (3) Is there a correlation between students' English reading personality and their English performance?

3.2. Research Subjects

Students in the first grade of a high school in Sichuan were used as the subjects of this study. This study randomly distributed 120 questionnaires, 112 valid questionnaires were returned, and the recovery rate of this questionnaire was 93.3%. The subjects of this survey, male students accounted for 59 and female students accounted for 53, with an average age of 16 years old.

3.3. Research tools

The research instruments for this study include English reading character questionnaires, observations, interviews and English test papers for high school students. The questionnaire used in the study was borrowed from the questionnaire used by Xinyan Li (2021) in her English reading character survey study of high school students.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The current situation of English reading character development

The English reading character questionnaire for high school students uses the Likert scale scoring method, and the values 1~5 indicate how well the description of each item matches the respondent's situation, with 1 being completely disagree and 5 being completely agree. Scores of 1 to 2.4 are low, 2.5 to 3.4 are moderate, and 3.4 to 5 are high. Higher scores represent higher English reading character.

As shown in Table 1, the mean value of the overall concept of English reading character of senior students was 3.01, indicating that the overall English reading character of high school students was at an intermediate level. The standard deviation is 0.85, which indicates that the students' English reading character as a whole does not fluctuate much and is relatively stable.

Table 1. Results of descriptive analysis of the overall concept of English reading character

Name	Topic	Sample Size	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
English Reading Character	23	112	3.01	0.85	1.53	4.80

Table 2. Results of descriptive analysis of specific dimensions of English reading character

Name	Topic	Sample Size	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
Reading Habits	8	112	3.24	1.09	1.00	4.93
Reading Behavior	5	112	3.48	0.84	1.00	5.00
Reading Frequency	1	112	3.32	1.61	1.00	5.00
Readership	2	112	2.92	1.39	1.00	5.00
Reading Experience	15	112	2.79	0.78	1.00	4.80
Reading Attitudes	5	112	2.51	1.02	1.00	5.00
Reading Interests	5	112	3.34	1.05	1.00	5.00
Self-assessment	5	112	2.52	1.08	1.00	5.00

As shown in Table 2, the mean values of students' reading habits and reading experiences were 3.24 and 2.79, respectively, which were both at a medium level, but students' reading habits were significantly better than their reading experiences. Among them, the mean value of reading behavior is 3.48, which is at a high level. Students' reading experience is at a moderate to low level, as evidenced by low attitudes toward reading (2.51) and self-assessment (2.52). In addition, the standard deviations of reading volume, reading frequency, reading attitude, reading interest, and self-assessment were large, and the dispersion of the subjects' data was large, indicating that students' development in these dimensions varied widely.

In general, the English reading character of senior high school students is at an intermediate level overall, but the development of each dimension of English reading character of high school students is uneven. Students' English reading habits need to be strengthened, mainly because of the lack of reading outside of class, and students' reading experiences need to be improved.

4.2. An Analysis of Gender Differences on High School Students' English Reading Character Development

The author will analyze whether there are differences in the overall and specific dimensions of English reading character development by gender, with the following results.

Table 3. An analysis of the differences between genders in the overall development of English reading character

Name	Gender	Number	Average value	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(Two-tailed test)
English Reading Character	Boys	59	2.95	0.91	-0.765	0.446
	Girls	53	3.08	0.79		

According to the results of the independent samples t-test in Table 3, it can be seen that the mean value of English reading personality of girls is slightly higher than that of boys, but the significance test of the difference in English reading personality by gender is 0.446 (>0.05), which indicates that there is no significant difference in the overall development of English reading personality among students of different genders.

The analysis of the differences in the development of specific dimensions in English reading personality by gender showed that the mean value of each dimension was slightly higher for girls than for boys, but the significance of the difference in each dimension by gender was greater than 0.05, indicating that there were also no significant differences in the development of specific dimensions of English reading personality by gender.

4.3. Correlation Analysis of Students' English Reading Character and English Achievement

(1) Correlation analysis of the overall concept of English reading character/reading habits, reading experience and English achievement

In the analysis of quantitative data in foreign language teaching research, correlation coefficients with absolute values below 0.2 are the lowest correlations, between 0.2-0.4 are low correlations, between 0.4-0.7 are higher correlations, between 0.7-0.9 are high correlations, and above 0.9 are the highest correlations.

Table 4. The correlation between the overall concept of English reading character/reading habits, reading experience and English achievement

	English Performance	English Reading Character	Reading Habits	Reading Experience
English Performance	1			
English Reading Character	.45**	1		
Reading Habits	.47**	.95**	1	
Reading Experience	.33**	.88**	.70**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

As shown in Table 4, there was a positive correlation between students' English achievement and English reading character, with a higher correlation between the two. Among them, the correlation between reading habit and English achievement is stronger than the correlation between reading experience and English achievement. In addition, there was also a significant positive correlation between reading habits and reading experience with a high correlation coefficient of 0.70.

(2) Correlation Analysis of Specific Dimensions of English Reading Character and English Achievement

Table 5. Correlation Analysis of Specific Dimensions of English Reading Character and English Achievement

	English Performance	Reading Behavior	Reading Frequency	Readership	Reading Attitudes	Reading Interests	Self-assessment
English Performance	1						
Reading Behavior	.33**	1					
Reading Frequency	.44**	.30**	1				
Readership	.39**	.42**	.82**	1			
Reading Attitudes	.33**	.62**	.55**	.66**	1		
Reading Interests	.20*	-0.05	.23*	.23*	0.15	1	
Self-assessment	.21*	.53**	.44**	.54**	.64**	0.13	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 5, reading behavior, reading frequency, reading volume, reading attitude, and reading interest all showed significant positive correlations with English achievement. Among them, English achievement had the strongest correlation with reading frequency, followed by reading quantity, reading behavior, reading attitude, reading interest, and self-assessment. Within English reading character, the six dimensions were largely significantly and positively correlated with each other. Among them, this data analysis revealed no correlation between the dimensions of students' interest in reading and reading behavior and self-assessment.

(3) Regression Analysis of Students' English Reading Character and English Achievement

To investigate whether English reading character affects English performance, the author conducted a regression analysis of English reading character and English performance, and the results are as follows.

Table 6. A one-dimensional linear regression analysis of the overall concept of English reading character and English achievement

Variables Prediction	β	t	P	R^2
English Reading Character	0.43	5.04	0.000	0.18

Dependent variable: English performance

As shown in Table 6, the standardized coefficient β for English reading character was 0.43 and $p < 0.001$, and the model-adjusted R^2 value was 0.18, indicating that English reading character was a positive predictor variable of English achievement, explaining 18% of the variance in English achievement. That is, the higher the students' English reading character, the higher their English scores.

5. Teaching suggestions

Based on relevant literature review and survey data analysis, the author concludes that there are various factors affecting students' English reading character development, such as students' own English ability, heavy classroom pressure, teachers' single teaching method, and social and family environment. In view of the current situation that students' English reading character needs to be improved, the author makes the following suggestions for high school English teaching.

5.1. Teachers change their teaching philosophy and promote reading outside the classroom

Under the pressure of high school coursework, teachers tend to use fragmented reading and pay more attention to the explanation and training of knowledge points in their daily teaching, failing to respond to the call of curriculum standards that teachers should guide students to actively carry out extracurricular reading activities in their actual teaching. From this study, it is found that students' English reading character has a positive influence on their English performance, and the cultivation of students' English reading character and the improvement of students' English performance do not conflict with each other, and the two can promote each other. Therefore, teachers need to change their traditional teaching philosophy and actively implement extracurricular reading activities.

5.2. Update teaching methods and develop independent reading skills

To develop students' English reading character, scholars have proposed many effective teaching methods. Teaching methods such as continuous silent reading, graded reading, whole book reading, literature circles and inquiry-based learning have been proven in experiments to stimulate students' interest in reading, cultivate good reading habits and enhance independent reading skills in English reading teaching, and all these methods are conducive to developing students' English reading literacy. Teachers should be brave enough to try new teaching methods, change the conventional model of reading for the sake of doing questions and focusing on developing students' reading skills, cultivate students' independent reading and independent learning abilities, and promote students' lifelong reading and whole-person development.

5.3. Establish an extracurricular reading program to build a good reading atmosphere

Most students do not have much autonomy and self-discipline to read outside of class. As one of the main environments for students' learning, schools play an important role in creating a positive reading atmosphere and developing students' English reading character. Schools can purchase foreign language graded reading materials suitable for students, establish foreign language book corners or school foreign language libraries (Wang Qiang & Ao Narentuya, 2015), or set up optional reading courses to provide students with rich, interesting and appropriate reading materials and

a good reading environment. Schools can also set up special activities such as campus reading clubs and reading days to increase students' participation in reading and stimulate their interest in reading.

6. Conclusion

This study found that the overall English reading character of senior students is at an intermediate level, but the development of specific dimensions is uneven, and the development of students' English reading character should receive more attention. In the context of a society that places great emphasis on grades, the development of students' English reading character and the improvement of students' English grades are not conflicting, but rather complementary and mutually reinforcing. Schools and teachers need to change the traditional concept of learning for achievement and provide conditions for the development of students' English reading character to promote their whole-person development.

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