

# Implications of High School English Reading Teaching in the Context of the New Curriculum Standards

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## Abstract

English reading, as one of the five major skills including listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing, has always been emphasized by English teachers. With the deepening of the new curriculum reform, high school English reading teaching faces new requirements and goals. However, there are still some issues in the classroom practice of English reading teaching. This paper aims to delve into the implications of high school English reading teaching under the new curriculum standards, aiming to shift students from mere test-takers to genuine readers. Firstly, the paper reviews the requirements of the new curriculum standards for high school English teaching, emphasizing the focus on core literacy, adhering to a people-oriented educational philosophy, and giving special attention to the importance of reading. Secondly, by analyzing the perspectives of both teachers and students, the current situation of high school English teaching is comprehensively examined, revealing the challenges faced by educators and students in adapting to the changes brought by the new curriculum standards. By comprehensively applying these insights, we hope to promote the reform of high school English reading teaching, cultivating students with more profound thinking, innovative capabilities, and interdisciplinary literacy. Teaching students how to read is an integral part of this process.

## Keywords

**New Curriculum Standards; High School English Reading; Core Literacy; People-oriented Deep Reading; Critical Thinking; Reading Strategies.**

## 1. Introduction

In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the "General High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020)" (hereafter referred to as the new curriculum standards). With the continuous evolution of the era, the Chinese education system has undergone a series of reforms, with the implementation of the new curriculum standards becoming a focal point of this transformation. Against this backdrop, high school English reading teaching, as a core component of the language discipline, faces higher expectations and broader challenges (Jiang,2022; Gao,2023). This paper aims to delve into the implications of high school English reading teaching under the new curriculum standards, focusing on cultivating students to become genuine readers rather than mere test-taking machines.

Firstly, we will analyze the requirements of the new curriculum standards for high school English teaching, with a particular emphasis on its highlighting of reading. Secondly, we will conduct an in-depth examination of the current state of high school English teaching from the perspectives of both teachers and students. Finally, we will propose how high school English reading teaching should unfold under the guidance of the new curriculum standards, aiming to transform students into navigators of deep reading. This includes fostering reading interest and awareness, guiding deep reading and critical thinking, emphasizing the cultivation of reading strategies, and strengthening interdisciplinary learning (Guthrie & Wigfield,2012). These

suggestions are intended to guide educators and students in exploring new teaching paths, making English reading teaching more aligned with the needs of the new era, and providing more profound support for students' comprehensive growth. Through an in-depth exploration of this theme, we hope to offer valuable insights for the improvement of high school English reading teaching and contribute to the advancement of our country's high school English education towards a better future.

## **2. Relevant Requirements of the New Curriculum Standards**

### **2.1. Centered on Core Literacy**

In the "General High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020)" (hereafter referred to as the "English New Curriculum Standards"), the concept of upholding core literacy as the foundation remains, serving as the curriculum pivot and overarching various sections of the standards. In English education, the implementation of this concept requires students to cultivate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural comprehensive literacy through reading. Core literacy not only includes the improvement of language skills but also emphasizes the cultivation of students' abilities in critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation, enabling them to better address the challenges of future society (Sun,2022; Chen,2018). From the dimension of language skills, English learning allows students to acquire rich knowledge of the English language and basic skills in expression and information retrieval, enabling them to conduct efficient cross-cultural communication. From the perspective of thinking qualities, teachers, through effective teaching activities, can guide students to analyze acquired information, form personalized judgments, thereby strengthening students' critical and innovative thinking, and enhancing their abilities to identify, analyze, and solve problems. From the dimension of cultural character, students with core English literacy exhibit good communication habits and abilities, engage positively in effective interactions with others, possess self-confidence and resilience, take responsibility for themselves and others, and demonstrate social awareness. From the dimension of learning abilities, teachers should gradually diminish their influence, helping students develop the habit of autonomously exploring knowledge using English thinking, setting learning goals, plans, and tasks that align with their practical situations, and cultivating a habit of active reflection. In this context, high school English reading teaching should break away from traditional knowledge transmission modes, emphasizing the development of students' information retrieval, integration, and innovation capabilities. Reading teaching centered on core literacy requires teachers to focus on students' individual development, guiding them to achieve autonomous learning through reading and cultivating sustained interest in English learning (Yu,2023). Through diverse text types and reading materials, students can better understand the world, enhance their understanding of different cultures, and achieve comprehensive development of core literacy in the English subject (Anderson,2003).

### **2.2. Reforming Curriculum Content and Assessment Methods**

Regarding curriculum content, under the theme of core literacy, the "English New Curriculum Standards" specifies the core content for compulsory education. It outlines six elements comprising the teaching content of the curriculum: theme, discourse, language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies. These requirements are based on the developmental characteristics of students in compulsory education and are linked to the features of the English discipline.

In terms of assessment methods, the English curriculum adheres to the principle of consistency in teaching, learning, and assessment, advocating a combination of formative and summative assessments. In student evaluation, a people-oriented approach is adopted, respecting

students' individuality and utilizing diverse assessment methods to provide students with a more comprehensive evaluation.

### **2.3. Upholding a People-oriented Approach**

The new curriculum standards emphasize a people-oriented educational philosophy, placing the holistic development of students at the core of education. In English education, this philosophy requires a focus on nurturing students' individuality, emotions, and innovative abilities, rather than solely improving language skills. In terms of reading teaching, adhering to a people-oriented philosophy requires educators to pay more attention to students' individual characteristics, inspiring their autonomous interest in English reading. This philosophy is manifested in teachers paying attention to students' interests and guiding them in selecting English reading materials that align with their personal preferences. By attending to students' individual differences, educators can better meet their learning needs and enhance their motivation to learn. In reading teaching, emphasizing students' emotional experiences and fostering their emotional connections through reading makes English learning more profound and extensive (Grabe,2004; Grabe & Stoller,2011).

Upholding a people-oriented philosophy also requires teachers to pay attention to students' cognitive development stages, employing differentiated teaching strategies to make reading teaching more aligned with students' cognitive levels and developmental needs. Through flexible teaching methods, teachers can ensure that each student finds a suitable learning path in reading, maximizing individual differences in development (Lei,2023;Xia,2023).

Overall, the new curriculum standards, upholding a people-oriented approach, demand a focus on cultivating students' individual development in English reading teaching, considering their interests and emotions, and guiding them in deep reading through more flexible and differentiated approaches. Under the guidance of a people-oriented approach, English reading teaching is no longer a mere transmission of knowledge but a reflection of students' individual differences and comprehensive development, enabling them to better adapt to the diverse learning needs of the future (Cai,2023).

## **3. Current Situation of Junior High School English Reading Teaching**

### **3.1. Teacher Aspect**

In high school English teaching, the role of teachers is crucial. However, some teachers are still confined to traditional teaching philosophies, focusing on test-taking skills while neglecting the cultivation of students' deep reading abilities. Teaching methods tend to lean towards rote memorization and lack guidance on reading strategies. Teaching attitudes are also influenced by exam pressure, excessively focusing on exam scores rather than the genuine development of students' language abilities.

Regarding teaching methods, there is an issue of traditional and singular teaching methods. In reading classes, students have diverse tasks, and high demands are placed on their abilities. However, in current reading classrooms, most teachers still adopt a teacher-centered approach, with teachers being active and students being passive.

In terms of teachers' qualifications, the quality of English teachers varies widely. Some teachers do not adequately understand and explore the teaching materials, unable to flexibly select and manage the materials in the classroom. At the same time, some teachers are unwilling or unable to deeply understand the requirements of the new curriculum standards. They continue to use traditional teaching methods, solely pursuing students' scores while neglecting the cultivation of students' comprehensive abilities as individuals. Additionally, some teachers, due to their insufficient qualifications, do not set high goals for themselves and cannot achieve full English

teaching. This can also affect students' learning methods, study habits, and the cultivation of their comprehensive abilities.

### **3.2. Student Aspect**

Students generally exhibit shallow understanding of reading in high school English learning, emphasizing surface information retrieval and lacking the ability for deep-level thinking about the text. They overly depend on teacher guidance, lacking the motivation for active learning. Students often lack interest and motivation for English learning, complaining that the English course lacks practical significance.

In terms of reading methods, the majority of students still use traditional top-down or bottom-up models. Solely using the bottom-up model forces students to read word by word, leading to slower reading speeds. When they encounter unfamiliar words, it interrupts their reading flow, preventing them from comprehending the meaning of the text. Excessive focus on details can cause many students to lose interest in reading. If students only use the top-down approach, they only have a superficial understanding, lacking details about events, characters, locations, etc., and missing the essence of reading.

Regarding reading habits, students often neglect the knowledge background of the text during reading, failing to use background knowledge to predict and infer the content. This results in students immediately looking up words in the dictionary when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, disrupting the coherence of their reading. If teachers do not obligate students to process and reflect on the text after reading, students may neglect subsequent processing and thinking about the content.

In terms of reading motivation, students lack motivation for reading. Firstly, most reading classes still primarily involve traditional teacher-led instruction. Teachers impart vocabulary or complex sentence grammar knowledge passively to students in class, and students passively accept knowledge. Over time, students may find reading classes lacking in interest. Secondly, in reading classrooms, students passively read at the teacher's request. Their purpose for reading English texts is not a genuine need for information or personal interest; instead, they read just to excel in English and obtain high scores. In a classroom lacking interest, students' lack of motivation for reading is not surprising.

## **4. Insights into High School English Reading Teaching**

### **4.1. Cultivate Reading Interest and Awareness**

High school English teaching should focus on stimulating students' interest in reading and guiding them to find joy and inspiration in reading. Teachers can guide students to choose English texts that align with their personal interests, using diverse literary works and scientific articles to spark strong interest in English reading. Simultaneously, increasing students' awareness of different text types enables them to better adapt to future diverse reading demands.

### **4.2. Guide Deep Reading and Critical Thinking**

Teachers should shift their teaching philosophy, no longer emphasizing knowledge impartation only but guiding students towards deep reading and cultivating their critical thinking about texts. By providing challenging texts, teachers can lead students to analyze and evaluate viewpoints in the text, fostering their ability to think independently. Encouraging students to ask questions, find answers, and form comprehensive understandings of the text promotes critical thinking.

### 4.3. Emphasize the Cultivation of Reading Strategies

High school English teaching needs to focus on cultivating students' reading strategies, enabling them to effectively handle various types of texts (Wibowo & Syafrizal, 2020; Macalister, 2014). Teachers can guide students in learning reading skills, including predicting, inferring, summarizing, etc., enhancing their adaptability when facing unfamiliar texts. Simultaneously, developing students' vocabulary and grammar levels improves their comprehension skills, better preparing them to tackle various reading challenges.

### 4.4. Balancing Text Comprehension and Language Learning

In the current high school English reading teaching, teachers often require students to employ specific reading strategies to comprehend texts. The understanding results are typically presented and assessed through written or graphical means. During this process, teachers primarily focus on whether the comprehension results are correct, but they often neglect the emphasis on which words and phrases the students understood to achieve these results. English teaching should not only guide students in understanding what content the author has expressed but should also guide them in understanding the language techniques the author used to enhance expression. This shift involves moving from merely asking "what" to asking more about "how" and "why".

Discourse is the primary vehicle for language learning. Language learners mainly encounter, understand, learn, and use language in real and relatively complete discourses. A good passage requires a logically clear hierarchical structure and clearly articulated content. Students need to grasp knowledge in aspects such as genre structure, semantic progression, and inter-sentence cohesion to accurately understand the text. The "new curriculum standards" also set high requirements for the discourse knowledge that high school students should master. Therefore, in the process of English reading teaching, teachers, while guiding students in information comprehension, must consciously incorporate discourse-related knowledge. They should guide students to perceive the genre structure, semantic progression, inter-sentence cohesion, and corresponding language forms of passages, organize this information, integrate language forms with topic functionality, appreciate the powerful expression of language, enhance semantic construction and expression, promote language accumulation and transfer, and improve comprehensive language application abilities.

### 4.5. Strengthen Interdisciplinary Learning

The new curriculum standards require students to possess interdisciplinary abilities, and high school English reading teaching should guide students in integrating English learning with knowledge from other subjects. Through diverse text types and interdisciplinary reading materials, students can develop more comprehensive cognitive abilities in English learning. Teachers can collaborate with teachers from other subjects to design interdisciplinary reading tasks, enhancing students' comprehensive understanding of different subjects.

### 4.6. People-oriented Teaching, Tailoring Education to Individual Differences

The current educational demand in China has shifted from "having education" to "having a good education." All the new requirements of the curriculum standards start with people, cultivating the comprehensive development of individuals. Therefore, teachers should pay more attention to students' individual development characteristics and tailor their teaching accordingly. Since students' personalities and abilities cannot all be on the same level, teachers need to design learning goals that fit their existing levels and actual needs. Teachers should combine different teaching methods while considering different learning needs. Before the reading class, teachers can prepare relevant learning resources related to the reading text for students to explore. This helps students have a general understanding of the topic background, facilitating their subsequent understanding of the reading text. Simultaneously, after gaining relevant

information, students have a clearer awareness of the problems they encounter and the goals they should choose in the reading text.

#### **4.7. Form Diverse Evaluation Methods to Achieve Students' Comprehensive Development**

Evaluation is a crucial aspect of English teaching. Under the pressure of exam-oriented education, evaluations mostly rely on scores as the sole criterion (Wang,2023). However, the new curriculum standards emphasize students' comprehensive development. Therefore, teachers need diverse evaluation methods to provide a more comprehensive assessment. Classroom assessment forms should adhere to four principles. First, evaluations need to be reasonably stratified. Second, adhere to the principle of humanization. Third, evaluation language should be concise and encouraging. Fourth, the subject of evaluation should be diverse, serving to motivate students, respecting individual differences, and achieving the comprehensive development of all students.

#### **4.8. Teachers Should Focus on Self-improvement (Teaching Philosophy) and Be Guides in Students' Learning Journey**

Teachers have traditionally held a central position in teaching concepts. However, according to the requirements of the new curriculum standards, the role and position of teachers have changed. Teachers transition from being at the center of teaching to being guides, playing a guiding role in students' effective learning. This requires teachers to prepare for lessons seriously, innovate teaching designs, and become guides, collaborators, and assistants in students' effective learning. While teaching students knowledge, teachers should also help them learn how to learn on their own and develop good learning habits. This places higher demands on teachers, requiring English teachers to continuously improve their own qualifications and teaching levels to meet the requirements of the new curriculum standards.

### **5. Conclusion**

The in-depth study of high school English reading teaching under the new curriculum standards has revealed the urgent need to cultivate students into genuine readers, teaching students how to read. On the educational path, we must not merely consider students as exam machines but focus on their individual development, interest cultivation, and overall competence enhancement. The philosophy of the new curriculum standards emphasizes "placing core literacy at the center" and "adhering to a people-oriented approach," calling for a transformation in high school English reading teaching – shifting students from passive knowledge recipients to active deep readers.

Firstly, the paper reviewed the requirements of the new curriculum standards for high school English teaching, emphasizing the centrality of core literacy and the commitment to a people-oriented educational philosophy, with special attention to the emphasis on reading. Secondly, by analyzing both teacher and student perspectives, it comprehensively examined the current state of high school English teaching, revealing the challenges faced by educators and students in adapting to the changes brought about by the new curriculum standards. Through the comprehensive application of these insights, we aim to promote the transformation of high school English reading teaching, fostering students with profound thinking, innovative abilities, and interdisciplinary competence.

In summary, the philosophy of the new curriculum standards points us in the right direction. High school English reading teaching needs to incorporate these principles, guiding students to transition from test-takers to genuine readers. This transformation requires English teachers to continuously enhance their professional qualifications, update their teaching philosophies, innovate their teaching designs, and practice different teaching methods. In the classroom,

teachers should adopt a student-centered approach, respect individual differences, and cultivate students into well-rounded individuals.

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