



## On the Practice Teaching of English Reading

Yonghong Gao

School of Foreign Languages, Shandong University of Finance

Jinan 250014, China

E-mail: yhgao1048@sina.com

### Abstract

The main task of practice teaching of English Reading is to train students' independent reading ability and good reading habits. Extra-curricular reading of English literature and English newspapers and magazines plays an active role in improving English reading ability. The principle of selecting reading materials, the scope of selection and the organization of teaching are essential to effective practice teaching. The practice teaching of English Reading can not only cultivate among the students a self-learning ability, but also allow students to expand horizons through a wide range of extra-curricular reading, and learn more about the society and culture of the nations related to teaching.

**Keywords:** English Reading, practice teaching, English literature, English newspapers

English Reading (English Extensive Reading) is a course which carries out a great deal of reading practice and training. But the teaching time of English Reading is limited, there are only two hours per week, thus, extra-curricular reading has become particularly important. Extra-curricular learning and practice is an extension and expansion of the classroom teaching, it is an important way of training and developing students ability. If teachers can guide correctly and effectively organize students to read some of English literature and English newspapers, practice teaching can not only cultivate students' good reading ability, but also enable them learn more socio-cultural and natural background knowledge related to teaching and expand horizons through a wide range of extra-curricular reading, at the same time develop their noble humanistic spirit.

### I. The principle of selecting reading materials

According to Xiao Liquan, selecting reading materials should follow seven principles: 1. The principle of moderate difficulty. 2. The principle of the-more-the-better. 3. The principle of applicable content. 4. The principle of diversity. 5. The principle of linguistic authenticity. 6. The principle of combining learning with acquisition. 7. The principle of sense of success. It is necessary to ensure an appropriate level of difficulty when choosing reading materials. They should not be too difficult, not too easy, neither. In a sense, the more reading materials, the better. Only through reading a large number of language materials can the changes from quantity to quality be achieved, students' reading ability could be improved. What's more, reading materials should be varied, could meet the needs of the majority of students, so that students can get a sense of achievement. Only in this way can students be more likely to concentrate on reading. In short, the choice of reading materials must proceed from actual conditions, and also keep in view the overall development of students and long-term interests.

Christine Nuttall suggests that we use the acronym **SAVE** to summarize the main criteria for choosing extensive reading materials:

*S Short.* The length of the book must not be intimidating. Anyone undertaking extensive reading for the first time need short books (articles) that they can finish quickly, to avoid becoming bored or discouraged.

*A Appealing* The books (articles) must genuinely appeal to the intended readers. It helps if they look attractive, are well printed and have (colored) illustrations—more pictures and bigger print for elementary students. They should look like the books we buy from choice, not smell of the classroom—notes and questions unobtrusive or excluded.

*V Varied* There must be a wide choice suiting the various needs of the readers in terms of content, language and intellectual maturity.

*E Easy* The level must be easier than that of the course book. We cannot expect people to read from choice, or to read fluently, if the language is a struggle. Improvement comes from reading a lot of easy material.

### II. Reading English literature

#### 2.1 Reading literature plays an active role in improving English reading ability

##### 2.1.1 Reading literature, developing and stimulating interest in reading, expanding vocabulary

Reading literature can mold our temperament and open up our spirit space. English literature, especially novels, can deeply move readers, infect the readers' emotions with their distinct characters, the vivid language and the plot of ups and downs. They give vent to our own emotions, let us shed tears, smile and laugh, love and hate. How can such kind of

reading not arouse the readers to read with a strong desire and great interest? Literature is based on language as a tool to reflect the life vividly, to express the author's social awareness and emotion with a variety of literary forms, its language arts is one of the qualities to attract readers. Take English literature, it attaches much importance to being real, simple, it uses unaffected language, at the same time, it creates a large number of new words, new structures, pursues fantasy effect, pushing the language expression to the limits. Reading literary works can greatly expand the vocabulary and understand its language arts virtually.

### 2.1.2 Reading literary works, improving English reading comprehension

Reading literature is a kind of independent reading behavior for students, they can "walk" in a book in a relaxed mentality, to get to know all sorts of characters who are coming one by one, in groups, with the imprint of history, disseminating a rich culture and following the rhythm of the times. In the process of reading, a variety of reading skills can be applied to, such as skimming, scanning, study reading, guessing word and so on. While reading the chapters which are attractive, you can read repeatedly to appreciate the characters' inner world, to grasp the complicated and touching plot, to understand the writer's some sort of complex permeating in the book. Reading minor or dull plot, you can read superficially like a dragonfly skimming over the water, using scanning to search for the paragraphs and expressions of the story needed for convergence in order to continue the development of understanding of the story. Encountered new words which are difficult to understand, you can guess meanings according to the context of the story and the characters' dialogues. As for passages with simple plot and few new words, you can use skimming. In short, by reading literature, we can not only train students in a variety of reading skills, but also train students' appreciating ability to read. Nevertheless, it is more effective to improve reading ability in active reading than reading in order to practice reading skills.

### 2.1.3 Reading literature to understand the culture of English-speaking countries, enriching the soul

Reading literature can make people able to understand society and reflect on life. Literature is a cultural manifestation, is the aesthetic reflection of life and times, is the essence of culture and civilization. Novels have entertainment features, more importantly, a fine novel bears the weight of mainstream values of a nation, a civilization and an era. What it expresses is a social and moral concern. In addition, literature can enrich the human soul. Literature is a heart-to-heart communication, it can lead us most deeply close to the human soul, and can more clearly show the meaning of life. Reading literature will be a moving experience. Literary works, especially the classics, have beautiful language, clever structure, real environment description and realistic character delineation. With the praise of the true, the good and the beautiful, the slashing of the false, the evil and the ugly, the comprehensive perspective of various strata of society, the care of human fate, as well as the strong desire of Health, literature give readers enlightenment and shake, thinking and incentives, which have high aesthetic value. Reading literature is a richness of their knowledge, and a richness of their souls, either.

## 2.2 The selection and reading of English literature

The Steering Committee of Foreign Language Teaching of Colleges and Universities has recommended 118 books for English majors of the institutions of higher learning, including 49 English Literature, 41 American Literature, 7 Canadian Literature, 9 Australian literature, 12 Chinese culture, such as: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*; Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*; Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* and *The Golden Notebook*; F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*; Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, which are all fine literature.

Reading literary works can be easy-to-digest, from the simple to the original step-by-step. The requirements for English Reading II by The Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities are: to read simple materials equivalent of *Thirty-Nine Steeps* (a simplified version) as well as *Reader's Digest*; requirements for English Reading IV are to read international news coverage equivalent of the *Newsweek* of the United States, to read the original literature equivalent of *Sons and Lovers*. The main task of English Reading practice teaching is to train students in independent reading skills and good reading habits, so that they can be ready to learn for high grades. In our University, the practice teaching of English reading is throughout the first two years, a total of 15 hours. Students are required to choose 15 easy-reading books from the recommended, they can borrow from the library or search to read from Internet. The formative results are: reading notes, reading reviews, book report, summary etc., a total of 15 papers each student. Students can be completed 0.5 credits after finishing their reading tasks.

## III. Reading English newspapers and periodicals

### 3.1 The significance of reading English newspapers and periodicals

#### 3.1.1. Reading English newspapers, expanding vocabulary

Newspaper Reading provides an expanded vocabulary for students in an effective way. Students can be exposed to today's hottest up-to-date vocabulary. Such as: 1. GFC. This word stems from the Global Financial Crisis, it is the first letters of these three words, currently it refers to the global finance crisis in 2008. 2. Toxic debt. This word is related to

GFC, which means the initial borrowing is all normal, then the debt becomes worthless, such as the subprime mortgage which triggers GFC of the United States. 3. Machinima. It means “three-dimensional computer video”. This word is synthesized by “machine” and “cinema”. 4. Mockbuster. It refers to the low-cost film which mocks similar title of large tracts. Large tract is “blockbuster”. 5. Bromance. It refers to non-sex between two men in intimate relationships. It is the synthesis of two words: brother (brother) and romance (romantic), bro + mance. 6. Bff, three initials from Best Friend Forever. 7. Celeblog, refers to “star blog”. 8. Generation Z, which means the generation born after 2000. This generation has the characteristics of liking computer technology, Internet, mobile communication, at the same time, like to do various things that affect the purchasing decision of parents, they grew up in dual-career families, also known as the New Silent Generation. Reading English newspapers also gives students repeated opportunities to read new words. For example, when the global financial crisis in 2008 broke out, it is reported repeatedly so that we come into contact with a great deal of the financial crisis-related vocabulary and terms. When Obama was elected as President of the United States, we could appreciate a large number of political, economic, social and other fields’ vocabulary around the first black American president’s campaign and election

### 3.1.2 Reading English newspapers and periodicals, intimately contact with Western society and culture

Reading English newspapers and periodicals is, for most students, a gate that opens to the world. Newspapers have the characteristics that are closer to the era, the public, the reality and the daily life. As English teaching and learning materials, newspapers and periodicals have the significant advantages with original content, modern language, plentiful data, and practical terms. Besides learning the latest and most live English language, reading English newspapers can also track the latest political, economic and cultural dynamics of the world and the resulting new knowledge from the press, so that students have more opportunities to be closely contact with the West cultural society. By reading English newspapers and periodicals, students can sense the world without leaving home. It can be said that reading newspapers and periodicals can enable students to develop vision and understanding of exotic customs, enrich their knowledge, and enhance their cultural self-cultivation. In addition, the long-term reading of English newspapers and periodicals can virtually develop sensitivity to cultural factors, the formation of a cross-cultural awareness, and reduce the cultural phenomenon of negative transfer in language learning process.

### 3.1.3 Reading English newspapers, to master reading skills, improve reading ability

Long-term reading of English newspapers and periodicals can also improve students’ reading skills and reading comprehension. A news story is composed of headline, lead, body and ending. The headline is the heading printed in large letters above a story in a newspaper, it must lure its readers to spend enough time for the lead, if not the whole story, so we say that a headline usually meet two requirements—to capture the essence of the event and to attract readers’ attention. Like headlines, leads which are often the first one or two paragraphs of a news story, must also capture the essence of the event and lure readers into the story. Usually the body of a news story has inverted pyramid structure, the pyramid structure and multi-foot tripod structure. Inverted pyramid structure is mostly used in modern English news. Mastering the discourse structure of news reporting can quickly improve speed-reading capabilities such as skimming, scanning, etc.

### 3.2 *The choice of English newspapers and periodicals*

First of all, the choice of English newspapers and periodicals should meet the needs of teaching. It is desirable to choose some of the latest, most popular, and most representative articles as supplementary teaching materials. Here are the Websites of some major newspapers and magazines at home and abroad, which are free of charge at any time browsing:

**China Daily:** <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>

**21st Century:** <http://www.21stcentury.com.cn/?c=21st>

**The Times (UK):** <http://www.thetimes.co.uk>

**The Daily Telegraph (UK):** <http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk>

**The Observer (UK):** <http://www.observer.co.uk>

**The Financial Times (UK):** <http://news.ft.com/home/rw>

**The Guardian (UK):** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

**The Economist (UK):** <http://www.economist.com>

**Daily Mirror (UK):** <http://www.mirror.co.uk/>

**The Sun (UK):** [www.thesun.co.uk](http://www.thesun.co.uk)

**The New York Times (U.S.):** [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

**Washington Post (U.S.):** [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

**Los Angeles Times (U.S.):** [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)

**International Herald Tribune:** www.iht.com

**Christian Science Monitor** (U.S.): www.csmonitor.com

**USA Today** (U.S.): www.usatoday.com

**Time** (U.S.): www.time.com

**Fortune** (U.S.): www.fortune.com

**Reader's Digest** (U.S.): www.rd.com

**Newsweek** (USA): www.Newsweek.com

**Business Week** (U.S.): www.businessweek.com

### 3.3 Reading English newspapers and periodicals

English newspaper reading is an extension of extra-curricular reading, a kind of independent reading behavior. The role of reading teacher is to organize and guide. First of all, the teacher must be clear about the purpose of reading English newspapers, taking into account the timeliness of newspaper articles, being familiar with features of English newspaper style, understanding different reporting methods of news stories, and give students the guidance necessary to read. Secondly, the teaching methods are diversified. Teaching in practice should adhere to the student-centered teaching principles, to stimulate students' interest in reading through various forms. Such as: 1. Writing reading report. Teachers introduce a number of integrated topics, current events, etc. requiring students to collect relevant information to read, and then write a newspaper report. 2. Writing news comments. Allow students to read newspapers of their own interest, or reading teacher chooses some newspaper articles of a moderate level of difficulty, to let students read and write news comments. 3. Regular organizations of newspaper report exchange. Newspaper report exchange can develop students' analytical ability, thinking ability, the ability to put forward ideas and innovative capabilities. It is beneficial to organize newspaper report exchange regularly.

In short, the reading of English literature and English newspapers and periodicals plays an irreplaceable role in enhancing students' reading ability, promoting their cultural awareness and improving their cross-cultural communicative competence. The practice teaching of English Reading has bright prospects: the effective development of the practice teaching of English reading is bound to play a positive role in improving the quality of English Reading.

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