

Reading Strategy Instruction in Secondary Schools in China

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Abstract : Reading literacy has become a powerful tool for academic success and an essential goal of education. The ability to read is not only fundamental for pupils' academic success but also a prerequisite for successful participation in today's vastly expanding multi-literate textual environment. It is also important to recognize that, in many educational settings, students are expected to learn a foreign/second language for successful participation in the increasingly globalized world. Therefore, it is crucial to help learners become skilled foreign-language readers. Research indicates that students' reading comprehension can be significantly improved through explicit instruction of multiple reading strategies. Despite the wealth of research on how to enhance learners' reading comprehension achievement by identifying an enormous range of reading strategies and techniques for assisting students in comprehending specific texts, relatively scattered studies have centered on whether these reading comprehension strategies and techniques are used in classrooms, especially in Chinese academic settings. Given the central role of 'the teacher' in reading instruction, the study investigates the degree of importance that EFL teachers attach to reading comprehension strategies and their classroom employment of those strategies in secondary schools in China. It also explores the efficiency of reading strategy instruction on pupils' reading comprehension performance. As a mix-method study, the analysis drew on data from a quantitative survey and interviews with seven teachers. The study revealed that the EFL teachers had positive attitudes toward the use of cognitive strategies despite their insufficient knowledge about and limited attention to the metacognitive strategies and supporting strategies. Regarding the selection of reading strategies for instruction, the mandated curriculum and high-stakes examinations, text features and demands, teaching preparation programs and their own EFL reading experiences were the major criteria in their responses, while few teachers took into account the learner needs in their choice of reading strategies. Although many teachers agreed upon the efficiency of reading strategy instruction in developing students' reading comprehension competence, three challenges were identified in their implementation of the strategy instruction. The study provides some insights into reading strategy instruction in EFL contexts and proposes implications for curriculum innovation, teacher professional development, and reading instruction research.

Keywords : reading comprehension strategies, EFL reading instruction, language teacher cognition, teacher education

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