

# Study on the Optimization Strategies of English Graded Reading in Rural Junior High Schools

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**Abstract:** In order to better improve the reading ability of rural students and promote the development of junior high school English in rural areas, this paper describes the importance of graded reading in English teaching in rural areas, and tries to analyze the problems and deficiencies in junior high school English reading teaching from the perspectives of students, teachers and society. The main problems are that rural students lack a correct understanding of English learning, teachers lack graded reading teaching skills, and the teaching facilities in rural schools are poor. Based on this, this paper suggests that students should change their perceptions of English learning psychologically, teachers should master the skills of English graded reading and schools should provide a good English reading environment. This study finds that in rural English reading teaching, teachers need to take into account the cognitive ability of rural middle school students, the awareness of multi-level reading teaching and the teaching facilities of rural middle school. On the basis of teachers' awareness of multi-level reading teaching, reading materials suitable for students' multi-level reading are selected and the existing teaching reading materials and teaching facilities are used to pay attention to students' subjective initiative in class and extracurricular reading and stimulate students' interest in reading, so as to promote the gradual improvement of students' reading ability.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

In the context of rural revitalization, the development of rural education has become the top priority, and only when education is developed can the

countryside be developed. While rural basic education is weak, so teaching methods need to be improved, especially in English subjects, many teachers only pay attention to the superficial meaning of articles, the grammar knowledge of teaching and do not focus on cultivating children's reading ability. Today's teachers should focus more on develop-

ping children's reading and thinking skills, as well as motivating pupils to read and guiding them to read widely. As a result, many rural schools have begun to implement the hierarchical reading technique in order to increase junior high school students' English reading skills and address the problem of "high input, poor output" in junior high school English instruction. Graded reading is a reading strategy that divides books into different levels according to their difficulty, and provides students with appropriate levels of reading according to their actual reading level (Tang, 2017). Graded reading emphasizes the division according to children's abilities and the difficulty of reading, providing a new way of thinking for the teaching of English reading.

Although several rural junior high schools have embraced the teaching technique of hierarchical reading in recent years, there are numerous issues with rural students' English learning cognition. And they do not attach importance to the learning of English, there is a prejudice that English is difficult to read and English reading textbooks are difficult to read in thinking, resulting in hierarchical reading teaching cannot be carried out well. At the same time, rural English teachers do not really understand the meaning of hierarchical reading teaching, and schools lack the reading materials required for hierarchical reading, which are the reasons why English stratified reading cannot be carried out well. Therefore, this paper mainly aims at the problems existing in the hierarchical reading of English in rural junior high schools, and proposes some strategies to optimize the teaching of hierarchical reading, so that the hierarchical reading mode can play a greater role in the teaching of English in rural junior high schools.

## 1.2 Research Significance

In light of the current state of hierarchical English reading instruction in rural junior high

schools, this paper focuses on analyzing the problems that exist in the teaching of English stratified reading in rural junior high schools from three perspectives: students, teachers, and rural areas, and making recommendations for each. This study is conducive to the implementation and improvement of hierarchical reading in English. First, the awareness of hierarchical reading teaching of English teachers in rural junior high schools need to be enhanced, and the rural English teacher also need to teach according to students' aptitudes and respect the individual differences of them. Second, teachers are encouraged to alter students' perceptions of English reading, excite students' reading motivation and interest, and encourage them to read widely. The implementation of hierarchical reading teaching and the development of targeted teaching tasks, assignments, problems and evaluations for students of different cognitive levels are conducive to improving the enthusiasm of each student to learn (Lv, 2018). Third, It promotes both direct and indirect rural rejuvenation by fostering the development of rural English education. For rural schools, the optimization of each teaching link can provide a strong guarantee for the overall improvement and promote the development of rural education.

## 2 The Literature Review

With the implementation of rural revitalization strategy, it is necessary to develop and reform rural education. Rural basic education is weak and its teaching methods need to be improved, especially in English learning. Teachers only pay attention to the superficial meaning of articles and the teaching of grammar knowledge, but do not focus on cultivating children's reading ability. Nowadays, more attention should be paid to developing children's reading ability and cultivating children's thinking ability. Graded reading emphasizes the classifica-

tion of reading materials according to children's ability and difficulty, which provides a new idea for English reading teaching.

## 2.1 Domestic Research

The graded English reading of Chinese teenagers began in the 1990s. At that time, the domestic professional foreign language class press has published a number of graded readers, such as the Shanghai foreign language education press in the grade of Foreign Clubs-Oxford English reading, and foreign language teaching press introduced the "bookworm" series, they bring from the theory to practice to our young readers. Based on the research on graded reading in primary and middle schools, Chinese scholars point out that English graded Reading has its unique benefits in cultivating students' reading literacy.

Development Status and Countermeasures of Graded English Reading for Teenagers in China was written by Han Tianlin in 2019. This book points that the essence of graded reading system is to decompose readers' abilities of reading texts. I think this idea is quite correct. It is reasonable to read at different levels and arrange different readings, which promotes the physical and mental development of students and improves their English level. In this paper, the author proposes four aspects that can promote the development of graded reading in China. In my opinion, in addition to these four aspects, we should also consider the overall environment of English development in China, especially in rural and remote areas.

Wang Yuqi wrote The Influence of Graded Reading on Junior High School Students' English Reading Motivation in 2020. Under the leadership of the English teacher, the class students begin to learn and train graded Reading from the zero basis when they enter junior high school. They completed the questionnaire of English reading motivation before and after three months reading. Finally, it

has been discovered that graded reading can increase students' motivation to read and enhance their reading skills. Of course, the data in this book are from only one school and is not universal, but the changes of students before and after the study and the motivation level of English learning are recorded in detail.

Empirical Research and Enlightenment on The Cultivation of Middle School Students' English Reading Literacy by Graded Reading, is a book which was written by Zhang Jinxiu in 2018. Schools should not only create a relaxed atmosphere for reading, but also provide effective guidance. Teachers guide students to read extensively, provide graded reading materials and make good use of time in and out of class. This book fully explains that graded reading plays a significant role in the improvement of students' reading literacy, and proves this point by using various evaluation and evaluation.

Li Qiang and Hu Sasa wrote the Junior Middle School English Reading Teaching Practice in 2019. This book focuses on implementing the concept of graded reading from the aspect of individualized teaching. And it points out that teachers should construct teaching methods and choose different reading materials according to students' basic situation and understanding ability, in order to broaden students' reading career and improve their language sense. The book argues that there are two ways to choose reading materials, teachers and students. But this book only pays attention to students' interest needs, but does not pay attention to students' own ability and psychological logic at the present stage.

A Study on The Selection Strategy of Graded Reading materials for Middle School English written by Tang Si in 2017, this book focuses on the selection of materials and principles to explore and play the maximum benefits of graded reading. When selecting materials, we should choose

narrative articles and other styles appropriately according to students' acceptance of them, so as to avoid the content being too single. Teacher need to follow the interesting and typical principle to recommend books to students, to train students' graded reading ability and thinking. This article puts forward good suggestions on how to implement graded reading at present, and attaches importance to the selection of reading materials.

In short, English graded reading strategies need to be optimized from these aspects: students' interest, teachers' professional quality, material selection, school environment and teaching methods. In my research report, I will focus on analyzing how to improve the quality of graded reading in rural schools and how to optimize the methods.

## 2.2 Foreign Research

In 1836, William McGuffey, an American university professor, developed the first set of graded Reading standards for English and wrote graded Reading. It was later used as an elementary school textbook and sold hundreds of millions of copies in the United States between 1836 and 1960. Since then, the concept of graded reading has been widely accepted, and various standard systems of graded reading have emerged in European and American countries. Foreign scholars started their research on Graded English reading earlier and have established a set of appropriate standards for text suitability of reading materials. In the 1960s and 1970s, developed countries such as Britain and the United States tried to apply the graded reading model, which classified texts according to the reading ability and psychological characteristics of learners at different ages, and formulated a strict grading system for children's books.

The Benefits of Graded Reading is a book written by Mustafa Albay in 2017, which advises learners to do a lot of extensive Reading at an appropriate level. The purpose is to improve

students' Reading rate, vocabulary, motivation and general language ability. Extensive reading is an essential material for graded reading, which aims to enable learners to practice reading skills, expand vocabulary, and familiarize themselves with grammatical structures and discourse structures through repeated reading. Graded reading can stimulate learners' interest in learning, help them gain reading fluency, and promote their vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Yiyang Zou and Shaoyun Long wrote Effects of Graded Reading on Middle School Students' Reading Comprehension in 2019. This book examines the impact of graded reading on middle school pupils' reading comprehension. Students' anxiety can be decreased by selecting reading materials that are appropriate for their present reading abilities. This has some implications for junior middle school English instruction.

## 3 The Problems of English Graded Reading in Junior High Schools under the Background of Rural Revitalization

There is a phenomenon of time-consuming and inefficient English reading teaching in rural junior high schools in China, and English teachers spend a lot of energy explaining grammar and translation in reading teaching, but students' reading ability has not been significantly improved. Based on the research on graded reading in primary schools, Chinese scholars pointed out that English graded reading has its own unique characteristics in cultivating students' reading literacy (Zhang, 2018). According to the survey, the problems existing in the teaching of Graded English reading in rural junior high schools mainly exist in three aspects: student cognition, teacher teaching and rural school teaching conditions.

### 3.1 Students' Level

Disparities in rural and urban economic development have resulted in significant differences in rural and urban children's psychological cognition when learning English. Most urban children are born to learn Mandarin, and when they grow up, their parents will send them to bilingual kindergartens to learn a second language. For rural children, due to local economic constraints, parents do not realize the importance of language learning and children are born with a local dialect. Therefore, parents will not let children to learn spoken English. Because of this, students in rural areas do not accept English learning well psychologically. They only consider it as a subject that they must learn at school. Due to the difference in students' cognition, even teachers who are proficient in using layered reading skills cannot quickly improve students' reading interest and reading ability in a short period of time.

### 3.2 Teachers' Level

Teachers of English in rural junior high schools are unaware of how to teach layered reading in English. Most of the English teachers in rural schools are old and senior, and they are good at traditional English teaching methods and focus only on grammar knowledge and sentence structure in English reading. Moreover, most of the teachers' teaching methods are single, resulting in students can only passively accept knowledge in the classroom, which is not conducive to cultivating students' reading ability. For example, when analyzing and reading articles, teachers only mechanically translate and explain the articles, and they do not dig into the deep cultural background of the articles, resulting in students' understanding of the articles not being deep enough (Lv, 2018). Some teachers even employ the strategies to increase students' abilities rather than teaching and growing

students' reading skills and comprehension abilities. Therefore, teachers are one of the reasons why graded reading teaching cannot be carried out better

### 3.3 Society's Level

The state has given more attention to rural education since the rural revitalization strategy was developed. Only when education is developed can the economy develop rapidly, and education is the foundation of development. The economy and education are mutually reinforcing and interdependent, so the economic situation restricts education to a large extent. The phenomena of polarization in the reading level of urban and rural pupils is particularly visible in the English teaching of junior middle schools in China at the moment. Urban middle schools are very superior in all aspects of teaching resources, including senior teachers, a complete range of teaching AIDS, as well as a variety of guidance materials and guidance agencies. These advantages allow urban students to learn English earlier and better. In rural areas, due to the relatively backward conditions, English learning is relatively scarce in all kinds of teaching resources, and English learning has even become a subsidiary course (Li, 2018). Most rural English schools have poor teaching conditions, simple environments, and lack of teaching resources. At the same time, the status of English teachers is low in teaching, and many other teachers occupy English courses, resulting in insufficient English class hours to carry out English extracurricular reading classes.

## 4 The Optimization Strategies of English Graded Reading in Junior High Schools

In China, the new curriculum standards for Junior Middle School English was put forward the requirement of gradual and steady improvement of junior middle school students' reading ability, and

stipulated the reading goals of each level (Xiong, 2014). Therefore, the introduction of graded reading in our English teaching has a certain role in promoting students' reading level, and it enhances their interest in reading, and it also cultivates good reading habits. According to the problems that are arisen in the teaching of English stratified reading in China, such as the need to improve students' cognitive ability, teachers should have the awareness and teaching skills of hierarchical reading teaching, and the poor rural school environment need to be changed. This study is put forward some coping strategies and suggestions in terms of students' cognition, teachers' teaching and rural school facilities.

#### **4.1 To Change the Thinking of Rural Students in English Reading learning**

Cognitive ability is the basic ability required by people to engage in a certain activity, and it is an important condition for determining whether the activity can be successfully completed (Yuan, 2021). The relevance of English learning, the cognition of growing reading skill, and the ability of psychological receptivity are all examples of cognitive variations among pupils. First of all, the recognition of the importance of English learning depends on the students' growing environment and the influence of those around them. Therefore, as an English teacher to achieve home-school co-education with parents is needed. Teachers have the responsibility to change the perception of the importance of learning English among influential people around students, and to work with parents to change students' views on English learning. Parents play an important role in the growth process of children, they should understand some knowledge about graded reading and know their children's reading level, only by this can help parents to choose books suitable for children's reading level (Qi, 2015). Meanwhile, parents can improve

children's reading ability in a targeted manner. By reaching a consensus with parents, students are reminded that English learning is also important in today's society, whether at school or at home. Secondly, in the English learning of rural junior high schools, students like to attribute the improvement of reading ability to the study of English grammar knowledge and the recitation of texts. In fact, the improvement of English reading ability is mainly manifested through the degree of comprehension of the article. Therefore, students themselves should understand that improving reading ability is not only to learn systematic grammar knowledge, memorize a large number of words, but also to be able to understand the deep meaning of the article. Each student then has a psychological difference in English learning. Some students believe that learning English is solely for the purpose of passing an exam. As long as they memorize grammar and words, their reading ability will naturally improve. However, this is not the case, the improvement of English reading ability depends on our large amount of reading and memory, and only a strong interest in English can support us to read widely. Language proficiency is determined by how much vocabulary and grammar a person knows. Graded readers are vital materials for undertaking extensive reading because they allow students to practice reading skills while also reinforcing previously learned vocabulary (Albay, 2017). Finally, if you want to change students' understanding of English learning, you need teachers, parents and society to work together.

#### **4.2 To Train Excellent Teachers for Rural Junior High Schools**

The teaching of graded reading has been significantly influenced by rural English teachers. Tiered reading instruction is mainly aimed at the school's English extracurricular reading curriculum, and teachers play a leading role in teach-



ing. First and foremost, teachers must be knowledgeable about graded reading instruction. And only when teachers believe that graded reading teaching is conducive to cultivating students' reading ability can they be implemented in English extracurricular reading teaching. Secondly, teachers need to master the skills of hierarchical reading teaching. And in the teaching of hierarchical reading, they should teach according to students' aptitudes, taking into account the personality and interest differences of each student to select reading materials, respect the main position of students, and stimulate students' motivation to read. Although there are many external reading materials, how to choose reading materials suitable for students is a big problem (Qi, 2016). What's more, teachers need to attract students until they are willing to read, insist on reading, and take the initiative to read. Teachers should then urge pupils to take an active interest in English learning in their regular English classes.

#### 4. 2. 1 To Raise Teachers' Awareness of Teaching English Graded Reading

Develop English instructors' hierarchical reading awareness and emphasize the relevance of teachers' leading roles in the classroom. English hierarchical reading teaching has not achieved good teaching results in rural areas yet, and there are also certain problems among rural English teachers. First, English teachers do not attach importance to English extracurricular reading, they only pay attention to the explanation of textbook articles, and pay too much attention to grammar knowledge and sentence patterns. As a result, schools should rethink the traditional teaching role and improve in-service teacher training. Second, due to a shortage of English teachers in some rural schools, many English teachers are not English majors, but are forced to teach English due to a shortage of English teachers in schools and teach-

ers in other subjects. In response to this phenomenon, schools should take timely measures to arrange courses and recruit excellent English teachers, so that teachers of each subject can perform their duties. Teachers should have a good sense of graded reading instruction and promote the improvement of students' reading ability since it plays such an important role in growing students' English reading ability.

#### 4. 2. 2 To Master the Skills of Teaching English Graded Reading

Teachers who want to achieve good teaching results in English reading teaching need to master the skills of layered reading teaching. More systematically, teachers need to grade the reading text and the readers' ability, and then match these two aspects, which is the essence of graded reading (Han, 2019). First, teacher need to grade the students. Firstly teacher provide students with multiple short essays, let students draw out words they don't know and sentences they don't understand in the essay, and ask two questions about the content of the article. Then, the pupils must respond realistically based on their own understanding. Teachers determine the range of possible levels for the class based on the students' vocabulary and the accuracy of the question answers. For the student's level, students are stratified and assigned reading material with different levels of difficulty. When recommending reading materials for students according to their level, the teacher selects at least three levels of reading materials from the book corner, and provide the same list of books to students of the same level. Secondly, teachers need to fully consider the differences in students' personalities and interests when assigning reading materials, stimulate students' initiative in learning, and let them read happily. Then, in addition to layered reading instruction outside the classroom, teachers should pay attention to in-class read-

ing. Teachers should always remember that “it is better to teach people to fish than to teach people to fish,” and they should educate pupils reading abilities when teaching book reading. For example, for intensive reading, we must first look at the article as a whole, draw out words and sentences that we do not know, and then consult the dictionary for a second reading. The second reading, we must combine the problems after the article to understand the text, and then carry out the third reading, when reading, we must find the deep meaning of the article and be able to write after reading. For another example, for extensive reading materials, we usually have to adopt a general reading method, only requiring students to read the general idea of the article, and do not pay attention to new words and grammar knowledge. The above example focuses on illustrating that when Teaching Reading, English teachers should pay attention to the main position of students and guide students to master the skills of reading learning independently. Finally, in English education, teachers should foster students’ interest in learning. Only those who have a strong interest in English as a language will be able to study it more effectively. Therefore, teachers should protect students’ curiosity. Teachers have a critical role in teaching English layered reading, thus mastering the techniques of teaching English graded reading is essential.

### **4.3 To Improving Teaching Facilities in Rural School**

The teaching facilities of rural township schools are rudimentary and the school environment is poor, resulting in the inability to carry out hierarchical reading teaching of English. English graded reading is mainly a method for extracurricular reading, due to the shortage of rural resources and the lack of English extracurricular reading materials, graded reading teaching has encountered

difficulties. Furthermore, rural junior high schools lack adequate storage facilities for English reading materials. In view of the above phenomenon, and with the help of rural revitalization, we should increase the investment in rural schools and improve the teaching environment and teaching equipment of schools. First, school need to establish a book corner. Junior high schools have established three book corners according to grade, and the difficulty and variety of reading materials in each grade should be different. According to the characteristics of students’ psychological development and the ability to accept knowledge, to distribute reading materials for each grade, such as providing seventh grade students with some story picture books and English jokes, so as to cultivate students’ interest. These picture books should also be graded according to the personality and ability differences of seventh grade students, which will be conducive to the progress of English graded reading. Second, the school provides English reading experience exchange sessions. After each English extracurricular reading class, the students will get together to exchange the English books they read, use the domino effect to influence more students. In other words, the excellent students will drive the students who are working hard, generate a strong interest in English reading learning, and improve the students’ English reading ability at a high speed and effectively. The findings show that graded reading is conducive to arousing students’ reading interest and cultivating their positive reading attitude because of the rich content and lively classroom environment (Zou & Long, 2019). Students’ anxiety can be reduced by using graded reading resources that are tailored to their present reading ability. In the context of rural revitalization, the development of rural schools is just around the corner, so the teaching of English hierarchical reading will be better implemented.



#### 4.4 To Evaluate at Each Stage

We can assess teachers' teaching effectiveness and students' English reading aptitude in English graded reading instruction. Measurement is conducive to teachers to adjust the teaching process in a timely manner, to adjust reading materials, and conducive to students' understanding of their own reading ability. Students' English level is the premise and reference for the teaching of graded reading. When carrying out classroom teaching, teachers should choose scientific and effective methods to evaluate the learning characteristics and English level of students, so as to summarize the students' reading style and reading needs (Li & Hu, 2019). First of all, we can use diagnostic tests, multiple essays and questions to assess the students' initial reading ability. And record the students' vocabulary mastery and the degree of understanding of the general meaning of the article, and use this as a reference point. Secondly, to measure the student's reading ability after insisting on reading outside the classroom for a period of time, at this time, prepare three short texts of different difficulty. The first short text should be the same as the short text in the diagnostic test, which is conducive to measuring whether the English reading ability has improved after this period of learning, and the reference point compared to the English reading ability. The difficulty of the second and third short texts gradually increases. The purpose is to measure how much the reading ability of the student has improved, how much the current student's reading ability is after this period of reading. Teachers can rate students' reading ability according to the measurement, and measure it once every time after a period of learning, which is conducive to teachers selecting reading materials for students, and also conducive to improving students' interest in reading. After each measurement is completed, students who improve their abilities are

rewarded, their psychological reinforcement is carried out, and the probability of reading in English outside the classroom is strengthened. Of course, teachers will give rewards to students who improve their abilities is also conducive to motivating other students, using the role model effect to drive the whole class to pay attention to English reading and comprehensively improve students' English reading ability.

Therefore, in specific rural English graded reading teaching, teachers need to learn graded reading teaching skills, establish strict evaluation criteria and stimulate students' interest in learning in daily classroom. In order to create a good reading atmosphere, schools should provide English book corners and English reading meetings. Students will modify their perceptions of English learning and mobilize their learning enthusiasm in a positive reading environment.

## 5 Conclusion

English graded reading teaching plays a great role in the teaching of English in rural junior high schools. Graded reading has a history of nearly thirty years in English-speaking countries (Wang, 2020). Given the popularity of graded reading in Chinese middle schools, it is worthwhile to explore the extent to which graded reading can boost middle school students' motivation to read English and deepen teachers' and students' understanding of graded Reading English. It is also beneficial for teachers to employ more effective teaching techniques in order to boost students' reading motivation and quality of reading. The two most challenging challenges are cultivating junior high school English teachers' graded reading teaching awareness and changing students' psychological cognition of English learning. This study identifies problems through three aspects: teachers, students and rural schools, this research focuses on scientifically

identifying problems and solving them. As a result, cultivating the English graded reading abilities of rural teachers is vital in the teaching of rural English, and teachers employ these teaching skills to boost students' enthusiasm in English learning. Students are rated and given appropriate reading materials based on their personality differences and skill levels on this premise. After each English extracurricular reading cycle, the teacher evaluates the student's reading ability according to the meticulous assessment standards, and adjusts the reading plan for the next reading cycle according to the assessment results. All in all, in the teaching of English in rural junior high schools, teachers should comprehensively consider many factors to change students' cognition of English learning and stimulate the motivation for active learning, and gradually improve students' reading ability in graded reading teaching, so as to promote the development of rural English education.

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# 农村初中英语分层阅读优化策略研究

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**摘要:**为了更好地提高农村学生阅读能力,促进农村地区初中英语的发展,本文阐述了农村英语分层阅读在英语教学中的重要性,尝试从学生、教师、社会三个层面分析初中英语阅读教学存在的问题与不足。问题主要表现在农村学生缺乏对英语学习的正确认知,教师缺乏分层阅读教学技巧以及农村学校的教学设施简陋等方面。基于此,本文提出学生要从心理上改变对英语学习的认知,教师要掌握英语分层阅读教学的技巧和学校应提供良好的英语阅读环境。本次研究发现,在农村英语阅读教学中,教师需要考虑到农村初中学生的认知能力,阅读分层教学的意识以及农村初中学校的教学设施。在教师具有分层阅读教学意识的基础上,选择适合学生分层阅读的阅读材料以及利用学校已有的教学阅读材料和教学设备,注重学生课内与课外阅读的主观能动性并激发学生的阅读兴趣,促进学生的阅读能力逐步提高。

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