Study on Teaching Techniques to Improve Chinese Children's Early Reading Fluency

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Abstract: This paper discusses the problems that exist in the development of early reading fluency among children in first-tier cities in China, including unclear reading goals, inappropriate selection of reading materials, inadequate teaching methods, and unscientific reading environment. Through on-site experience, open interviews, observation, case studies, and surveys, the author analyzes these problems and proposes corresponding solutions from seven aspects: cultivating reading skills as the core, emphasizing phonemic awareness in teaching, creating a reasonable teaching environment for early childhood reading, setting up a reading area, creating a psychological environment conducive to cultivating children's reading skills, emphasizing the guiding significance of early childhood reading, and creating successful reading experiences for young children. These suggestions and solutions provide relevant decision-making and guidance for kindergartens, parents, and teachers to carry out early reading activities, which have important value for promoting the development of children's early reading fluency in China.
Keywords: Early Childhood, Reading, Skills, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency

1. Introduction

Excellent reading ability is the cornerstone of children's future learning achievements and career success, and high-quality education is the guarantee of children's learning and reading skills, which has been the whole consensus of the education concept in China's first-tier cities.

This paper examines the issues related to the development of early reading fluency among children in first-tier cities in China and proposes several solutions. Through methods such as on-site experience, open interviews, participatory and non-participatory observation, case studies, and surveys, the author identifies problems such as unclear reading goals, inappropriate selection of reading materials, inadequate teaching methods, and unscientific reading environment.

After analyzing these issues, the author puts forward recommendations and solutions from seven perspectives: cultivating reading skills as the core, emphasizing phonemic awareness in teaching, creating a reasonable teaching environment for early childhood reading, setting up a reading area, creating a psychological environment conducive to cultivating children's reading skills, emphasizing the guiding significance of early childhood reading, and creating successful reading experiences for young children.

These recommendations and solutions have important value in promoting the development of children's early reading fluency and can provide relevant decision-making and guidance for kindergartens, parents, and teachers to carry out early reading activities. Therefore, this paper has some reference value in improving the early reading level and literacy of Chinese children.

2. Relevant theoretical support and literature review

2. 1 Connotation of Reading Fluency

Reading fluency refers to the ability of readers to read texts or language quickly, accurately, naturally, and coherently. Reading fluency includes not only the ability to recognize words and understand language but also various factors such as reading speed, intonation, rhythm, pronunciation, and grammar. Early childhood education experts generally agree that in order for children to read and write fluently, they need to develop the following abilities:

Firstly, automatization: the ability to read words accurately and effortlessly.

Secondly, expression: the appropriate use of intonation and rhythm.

Thirdly, speed: the ability to read at a speed that suits the reader's purpose or the type of text.

Fourthly, pacing: the ability to read phrases or words smoothly and fluently, without hesitation or repetition.

In short, fluent readers are able to read texts correctly, with appropriate volume, intonation, and pauses, and at an appropriate speed. This makes reading a more automatic process, allowing children to focus their attention more fully

on understanding the words they are reading. In contrast, children with poor language fluency often read word-by-word, which can be very difficult and distracts their attention from understanding the text.

2.2 Theory of Reading Automation

In 1974, American cognitive psychologists LaBerge and Samuels proposed the theory of human self-regulated information processing, also known as the automation theory, in the information processing of human reading. The theory assumes that human cognitive function is similar to that of a computer, with letters and words flowing into the reader's brain through the visual system. Therefore, the human brain has the ability to process multiple tasks simultaneously, but due to limited processing capacity, human attention needs to constantly switch to meet different task requirements. If a task requires a lot of processing power, then the processing power of another task will also be limited. During reading, the reader's attention needs to switch back and forth between decoding text and understanding the meaning of the text. Once the reader cannot encode words smoothly, attention cannot be focused.

The theory of reading automation is based on training to enable readers to quickly and accurately read large amounts of text. It is based on the following principles: first, reading is an automated process; second, automation can be improved through practice. The training of reading automation includes both reading speed and comprehension. The applications of the theory of reading automation include improving learning efficiency and reading comprehension ability, as well as enhancing children's reading fluency.

2.3 Relevant Literature Review

2.3.1 International research on the learning process of early reading in children

Most of the discussion on the early reading and learning stage of children focuses on the development of Chinese foundation and literacy ability before receiving formal literacy training. In the discussion of early childhood literacy start, such as Nittrouer's (1992) analysis points out that language development in early childhood still a long time, and it is still making progress in the lower grade of primary schools in China. Huttenlocher and Smiley (1987) pointed out that the ability to understand words in early childhood is faster than the ability to spell words. Children can understand the meaning of words at the age of one, and children's common vocabulary increases after the age of two, but there are large individual differences. The discussion on the development level of basic discourse power in early childhood, such as Chaney (1992) et al., shows that the development of early discourse will is greatly related to age, and most children's understanding of the basic structure of language speech has begun to develop at preschool age. Bryant (1974) put forward that the vigorous development of children's early discourse will be closely related to the vigorous development of basic discourse power. The in-depth study of Liberman (1974) pointed out that children's literacy level is related to their ability to break vocabulary into phones. Nino's (1986) research points out that parents can support young children reading levels to flourish, his research also shows that teachers or parents use the way of reading for children's early reading skills of rapid development is very helpful, in improving the ability to read and writing educational resources use, rural residents and rich families and no big difference, poor parents have the advantage of cultivating children early childhood reading skills rapid development.

These research results suggest that children's language development and reading ability gradually develop with age, and there are certain individual differences in this development. In addition, these studies also indicate that factors such as family education and teacher's teaching methods may have an impact on children's language and reading development. However, it should be noted that these research results are based on specific samples and research methods, and therefore may not have universal applicability. For example, the samples of these studies may come from specific cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, which may affect the research results. In addition, these research methods may also have limitations, such as biases or measurement errors in the testing tools used.

2.3.2 International research on children's reading difficulties

Shaywitz (1992), found that approximately 75% of children who meet the criteria for the ability-achievement discrepancy have poor reading and writing abilities. If their reading and writing abilities are the only focus, these children may be considered to have reading difficulties.

Francis (1996), focused on two subgroups of children from different ethnic backgrounds. The study showed that if one subgroup's reading and writing abilities were below the national standard for their age group, and another subgroup had a significant gap between their reading and writing abilities and the national (or international) technical standards, both subgroups of children faced reading difficulties.

Overall, these studies highlight the prevalence of reading difficulties among certain groups of children and the importance of accurately assessing reading and writing abilities using appropriate standards. However, it is important to note that these studies were conducted on specific subgroups of children, and the findings may not be generalizable to other populations. Additionally, the studies did not explore potential causes or interventions for reading difficulties.

2.3.3 International research on the factors affecting reading

Hess and Holloway's (1984) study found that the family reading environment has a significant impact on reducing reading difficulties, while August and Kakuta's (1997) study suggests that if the parents of preschoolers are primarily native speakers of a non-English language, they may have difficulties learning to read English books.

However, there are also some issues with the study. Firstly, it does not provide information about the sources and specific contents of the research, which makes it difficult for readers to evaluate the reliability and applicability of these conclusions. Secondly, the article does not provide any data or empirical research, but only cites the conclusions of other studies, thus lacking its own research and data support. In addition, the article did not address other factors that may contribute to reading difficulties, such as specific neurobiological factors or reading instruction methods.

2.3.4 International research on the prevention and intervention of reading difficulties

The authors Snow and Tabors (1996) suggest that parents or leaders should use reading activities as a way of family entertainment to promote children's reading enthusiasm. Their survey showed that all fluent and positive reading attitudes come from families that view reading activities as a source of happiness. It is also necessary for parents or family educators to provide guidance on early childhood reading, or to understand the importance of early childhood education. However, while the authors mention the positive impact of family reading activities, they do not explore other potential factors such as cultural background, learning difficulties, and reading teaching methods that may also affect young children's reading development.

2.3.5 International research on early reading teaching

Currently, research on early reading instruction generally includes the following aspects: first, the cultivation of children's reading ability. Galda (1984) believes that drama teaching (game-based teaching) is suitable for early reading instruction of children. This method can provide a selective, controllable, and challenging environment to help frontline teachers encourage children to create themselves and think about the environment. Second, teaching children to pronounce accurately. Lundberg (1998) pointed out that children who receive special phonological awareness training can master reading faster than those with similar backgrounds but different training. However, Galda (1984) and Lundberg (1998) did not explore the implementation strategies and effectiveness of these teaching methods, nor did they consider other factors that may affect early reading instruction, such as family environment and cultural factors.

3. Research and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The paper outlines the practical directions for educational research and qualitative research methods, as well as the application of mixed methods in studying the actual situation of early childhood reading in China. Qualitative research refers to observing human language, behavior, and memory in natural contexts, and using falsifiable tests to verify research conclusions. The focus of qualitative research is to study the actual functioning of daily life by further investigating everyday life scenes and the personality of social worlds or organizations. The researchers used a mixed methods approach to conduct quantitative and qualitative surveys to determine the actual situation of early childhood reading in China. They also conducted field visits and interviews with over a dozen teachers and parents in multiple early childhood education institutions.

3.2 Respondents of the Study

3.2.1 Selection of individual cases

Based on the requirements of scientific research, this project selects first-tier cities in China as experimental examples and various kindergartens in early childhood education facilities as experimental samples. Chongqing, China was chosen as the sample city for this study. The early childhood education infrastructure in Chongqing includes:

A. Office kindergarten. It is a public institution with small and large classrooms, three students per class, and less than 20 students each class, located in the urban core. Children from the district government who attend school in good condition.

B. Belonging to the primary urban area on behalf of the private school. There are seven preschools, each with approximately 30 students, for a total of approximately 200 youngsters. Offer training in child care from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The majority of children's family income comes from the working class, and the conditions are typical.

C. The Early Childhood Bilingual Learning Center, It is operated by a private training unit, which oversees four preschool classrooms and sixty children. This bilingual facility for youngsters is of upper medium class.

D. The International Early Education Center is the answer. The upscale neighborhood surrounds the city government. There are nine preschool classes and two daycare courses, with an average of five to ten students per class, all of which are private and in good condition.

E. Private, kindergarten. A total of seven preschool classrooms have been formed in various regions, primarily to serve children from working-class families. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. child care services.

F. Non-primary urban school districts. There are five kindergartens, and their overall conditions, along with the low family income of the neighboring inhabitants, place them in the bottom category.

G. Private kindergarten. there are five kindergarten classrooms, around one hundred children, and the youngsters come from impoverished homes.

H. Private training institution. Institutions for early childhood education in secondary urban areas Is a private training institution, and all parts of the seven existing preschool courses and Primary School Bridge Classes are of a moderate level.

I. Stands for a facility for early childhood education. There is a private early education agency in Montessori, but not all classes are Montessori. There are two ordinary care classes, generally no more than ten students per class, two teachers per class, a parent-child centre, and all facilities are on the same level.

3.2.2 Observation subjects and interviews were selected

Selection of research location and interview targets is primarily determined by research target sampling. Glass and Strauss (1967) believed that qualitative research uses a theoretical sampling approach that allows for personally entering the research site and expanding the field of information collection as much as possible, while examining and studying the relevance of information, understanding the research objectives of the research site, and how to increase one's research insight. In order to gain a deeper understanding of early childhood reading teaching, the researcher attempted to interview teachers of different grade levels and ages in the Chongqing area.

3.3 Data Gathering Instrument

The data collected is a case study, quantitative research, while data is also drawn from field observations, records, and interviews qualitative research. An integrated approach is applied to the study from different perspectives of early childhood reading.This includes methods such as interviews, observations, and quantitative research.

Furthermore, an interview protocol was used to gather the data from semi-structured interviews. Both the questionnaire and interview protocol are attached below in appendices.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher visited the campus within a specified time period, observed and recorded the teaching activities of preschoolers in small, medium, and large classes, conducted interviews, and collected materials. The researcher also voluntarily took photos and promised to minimize the impact on classroom teaching and campus staff, which was approved. The relevant data is as follows:

Table 1 Time record of field visits and interviews in nine early childhood education institutions of different nature

No.	Date	Circumstances
A	2021-2022	Before and after more than ten times into site observations and interviews
B	Sep 2021, Oct 2021,and Mar 2022	Before and after three times, into the site for observation
C	Nov 2021	Two field observations
D	Mar 13 and Mar 20, 2022	Before and after the two observational interviews there
E	Oct 2021 and Apr 2022	Before and after the two observations made there
F	May 2022	One observation was made there
G	May 2022	One observation was made there
H	May and June 2022	Four observational interviews were conducted there
I	Sep 2021	The observational interviews were conducted four times

Table 1 shows the quantity, dates, and conditions that provided rich teaching and early reading materials for the study. The researchers consulted many books and other materials about early childhood education, reviewed collected photos, and conducted a comparative analysis of Chinese early childhood education theories and real-life scenarios.

Table 2 Basic information table of interviews with preschool teachers

Name	Classes and grades	Record of formal schooling	School-age	Position
Xiong teacher		postgraduate	Six years	department head
Huang teacher	the top class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	In 10 years	senior teacher
Li teacher	the middle class in a kindergarten	postgraduate	Three years	teacher
Lin teacher	the middle class in a kindergarten	postgraduate	Five years	teacher
Qian teacher	the middle class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	Three years	teacher
Qiu teacher	the top class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	Five years	Director of teaching and research
Ran teacher	the middle class in a kindergarten	postgraduate	In eight years	senior teacher
Teacher fang	Primary and secondary classes	undergraduate course	Three years	teacher
Teacher wang	the bottom class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	Three years	teacher
Teacher zhang	primary school	postgraduate	In 2 years	teacher
The teacher	the bottom class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	In 1 year	beginning teacher
Xiao garden long		undergraduate course	In 12 years	kindergarten leader
Xiao teacher	the bottom class in a kindergarten	undergraduate course	In 1 year	beginning teacher

Table 2 shows the basic information of the interviews with preschool teachers, including their surnames and given names, the class and grade they are teaching in the school, their formal education records, years of teaching experience, and their current positions.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of demographic questions and main research questions. The demographic questions include the age of children, age and qualifications of teachers. The age of children ranges from 3 to 9 years old. They show the frequency and percentage of participants' responses.

Table 3

Most important aspects of a child's early reading

Indicators	Mean	Rank
word recognition	2.41	7
writing	4.05	2
phoneme	3.11	6
paper book	3.59	4
Read smoothly	3.43	5
reading comprehension	3.95	3
Personalized reading instruction	4.75	1

The table 3 indicates the most important aspects of a child's early reading. The table shows the aspects with mean and ranks. The aspects are word recognition, writing, phoneme, paper book, read smoothly, reading comprehension and personalized reading instructions. These are mentioned according to ranks from 7 to 1. Word recognition as 7, writing as 2, phoneme as 6, paper book as 4, read smoothly as 5, reading comprehension as 3. However, personalized reading instructions as 1 in rank.

Table 4

Reading Family Instruction in Early Childhood

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
I would be willing to often use the early childhood reading guidance methods	4.09	Agree	1
I think the instruction method for early childhood reading is very easy to use	3.75	Agree	6
I need the help of a professional to use the instruction method of early childhood reading	3.66	Agree	7
I think the multiple functions of the early childhood reading guidance approach are well integrated	3.86	Agree	4
I think most people can quickly learn to use early childhood reading instructions	3.77	Agree	5
In using the instruction method of early childhood reading, I felt confident	3.91	Agree	3
I need to learn a lot to learn how to use the early childhood reading instruction method	3.95	Agree	2
Composite Mean	**3.85**	**Agree**	

Legend:4.50 – 5.00 –Strongly Agree, 3.50 – 4.49 –Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 – Same As; 1.50 – 2.49 –Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly Disagree

Table 5

Differences in Assessment in Reading Family Instruction in Early Childhood when grouped to Profile Variables

Indicators	F-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Child's Age	10.806	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Age	6.961	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Degree	2.236	0.064	Significant	Reject
Attitude toward early childhood reading	5.523	0.004	Significant	Reject

Approach if the kindergarten will accompany the children to read to the parents in the form of tasks	0.133	0.876	Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Benefits of early reading to children	12.579	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Child's reading status	21.238	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Assessment of the child likes reading	1.911	0.127	Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Usually, read with their children when at home	7.795	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Things to do when your child invites you to accompany her to read with her	22.391	<00.001	Significant	Reject
Time do you usually choose to read with your children	12.365	<0.001	Significant	Reject
In the process of reading with your child, your real state is	0.861	0.482	Not Significant	Failed to Reject
The frequency with which you read with your child	31.788	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Length of time you read with your child	1.190	0.315	Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Number of children's books in your home	4.259	0.006	Significant	Reject
Difficulties in reading independently at home	1.066	0.363	Not Significant	Failed to Reject

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05; R – Rejected; FR – Failed to Reject; S – Significant; NS – Not Significant

There is a significant difference in reading family instruction in early childhood when grouped to child's age, age, attitude towards early childhood reading, benefits of early reading to children, child's reading status, usually read with their children when at home, things to do when your child invites you to accompany her to read with her, time do you usually choose to read with your children, the frequency with which you read with your child and number of children's books in your home since the computed p values are less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, reading family instruction in early childhood differs when grouped to child's age, age, attitude towards early childhood reading, benefits of early reading to reading status, usually reading with their children when at home, things to do when your child invites you to accompany her to read with her, time do you usually choose to read with your children, the frequency with which you read with your child and number of children's books in your home.

4.2 Discussion of Teaching Skills of Reading Fluency
4.2.1 Teacher demonstration reading
The value of teacher demonstration reading lies in its ability to provide children with examples, clearly and specifically informing children of what fluent reading should look like. Before reading, demonstrate to the children, first link the pictures and events together, and then tell the story to help children recall what they have seen. Therefore, for preschool children, the significance of teacher demonstration recitation is to let children listen to the material, get in touch with the material, and train their attention. The best way is to let preschool children read aloud or share reading materials with them.

4.2.2 Performative reading
Curiosity is the driving force of learning. To cultivate children's reading ability, we need to stimulate their reading interest and desire through performative reading, so that reading becomes a joyful activity for them. When children's motivation for reading is fully stimulated, reading becomes a happy thing. Therefore, teachers should understand children's psychological characteristics, adapt to their physical and mental needs, and conduct reading training through performative reading in forms that children enjoy, in order to improve the interest and vividness of reading, making it more lively, diverse, rich, and colorful, and enabling children to learn actively and effectively.

Performative reading not only improves fluency but also has great benefits for children's reading interest, comprehension level, and storytelling skills. Therefore, this is a method that teachers are willing to adopt. When children reach a certain level of reading fluency requirements, teachers often guide them to read aloud through children's stage plays to strengthen their training in reading fluency. Performative reading is shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 below.

Figure 1 Example of a performance scene: I am a fierce dragon (Left)
Figure 2 Example of a performance scene: Story recitation (Right)

Figure 3 Performance scene: Speech competition (Left)
Figure 4 Scene of repeated reading: Teacher guiding children to read repeatedly (Right)

4.2.3 Group Reading
Group reading training is usually conducted by the teacher after demonstration or reading together with the children. After repeated and deliberate practice, children can read fluently. If there are still children who are not passing, let them join a group and read with their peers. The key to this group reading is to allow children to communicate with each other and respond to their peers' reading status.

4.2.4 Repeated Reading
Repeated reading is a common way for children to independently complete reading training. Scientific research has proven that repeated reading of reading materials that children are interested in can greatly improve their reading fluency. At the beginning, the materials for repetitive reading exercises for children should be concise, short, and highly predictable. As the child's repetitive reading gradually achieves a certain effect and a correct mastery rate, the difficulty of the materials should be gradually increased. See Figure 4 for an illustration.

5. Results and Discussion

Through the research and data collection of early reading teaching in first-tier cities, the methods to improve the teaching techniques of early reading fluency of Chinese children mainly include the following:

(1) Emphasizing the cultivation of reading skills
Reading ability is a comprehensive ability in a sense, and from the perspective of skills, effective early reading teaching must follow the development law of human reading ability, starting from the most basic skills and progressing gradually. From observed practices, these skills are integrated throughout early reading teaching, whether it is guiding children to read aloud, practicing poetry and rhymes, or organizing children to perform and decorate vocabulary walls.

(2) Valuing the teaching of phonological awareness
The importance of phonological awareness has been widely recognized by teachers and occupies a very high proportion in early childhood reading teaching. In practical education, teachers often use methods such as phoneme

segmentation, sound blending, phoneme subtraction, sound addition, and phoneme substitution to cultivate children's phonemic awareness. In the selection of language materials, rhyming poems and songs are often chosen, which often contain many complex words. By repeatedly reading such poems, children's phonological awareness can be strengthened and improved.

(3) Creating a reasonable teaching environment

In the process of creating a teaching environment suitable for reading, teachers first need to select high-quality reading materials for children and create a reasonable teaching context. The reading materials for early childhood reading teaching in China are generally divided into non-verbal picture books, textbooks with rich images, and textbooks dominated by images and supplemented with language. These reading materials are vivid, impressive, and often repeat words and sentences. Additionally, the language content is lively and simple, making it easy to read and popular among children. Moreover, since early childhood reading learning is a comprehensive activity that integrates reading, memory, thinking, understanding, and the development of various abilities, it is necessary to create a teaching context that is closely related to reading.

(4) Setting up a scientific reading area

To create a comfortable reading environment for children, teachers not only need to carefully consider which reading content to choose, but also how to present the reading and pay attention to the number and placement of teaching materials. They can also create a quiet, comfortable, and enjoyable reading environment for children by arranging a reading area. The reading area is usually quiet, with sufficient lighting, children's bookcases and desks, various symbols and items that can stimulate children's Chinese reading, as well as pictures, children's writing works, vocabulary labels of different items, children's books, etc.

(5) Creating a favorable psychological environment for reading

Teachers often read to children, interact with them through text, and create writing opportunities for them, allowing them to express themselves naturally with words, regardless of whether their spelling is accurate or their writing is neat, helping children recognize the function and value of words. The teacher's careful guidance and support enable children to gradually become active users.

(6) Reinforcing early reading guidance

Parents' guidance on their children's reading is a key factor in cultivating children's reading habits and skills. The key to guiding children's reading is to stimulate their reading interest, grasp the main reading methods, cultivate good reading habits, and cultivate independent reading awareness. The means by which teachers guide early childhood reading are usually diverse, with reading, questioning, and introduction being commonly used.

(7) Creating successful reading experiences

An important task of early elementary school reading instruction is to help children develop the confidence and methods necessary to learn from printed books. This includes making children willing to pursue knowledge and making them believe that they are successful learners. For children, all knowledge learning is boring, and because of their difficulty in concentrating and their limited attention span, it is difficult for them to persist in reading and learning. However, once children can find joy, feel joy, and experience achievement in the learning process, they can develop a strong interest and enthusiasm and consciously engage in reading and learning. Therefore, creating a good reading experience for children can greatly stimulate the non-intellectual factors of children's reading and learning, and mobilize their learning motivation, enthusiasm, mindset, and other aspects of learning to read.

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