



Reading Strategies, Motivation, and Self-efficacy of Chinese EFL College Students

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Received: 15 Jun 2023; Received in revised form: 12 Jul 2023; Accepted: 19 Jul 2023; Available online: 27 Jul 2023

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Abstract— English teaching emphasizes refining students' reading skills, particularly evident in China's education system where the value of reading is consistently highlighted throughout various stages and exams. However, the existing pedagogical methods aimed at improving reading aptitude have not yielded the expected results. Graduates often fail to meet the professional reading standards required by employers, indicating a significant research gap that needs attention. This study aimed to address this gap by investigating how reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy impact English comprehension among college students. Using a descriptive correlational approach, data was collected from 468 non-English major Chinese college students through a survey. The findings revealed that female participants and those with over a decade of experience employed more effective reading strategies and demonstrated higher reading motivation. Additionally, students from the Computer Studies department and those with more than ten years of experience exhibited stronger self-belief. The study showed a highly significant correlation between these three variables, indicating that improved reading tactics are associated with increased reading motivation and self-belief. Moreover, higher motivation levels among students were linked to enhanced self-confidence. In conclusion, the study recommends a reading program to enhance the reading comprehension of college students learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords— College English, Motivation, Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies, Self-efficacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading, an essential skill in English language acquisition, is a significant focus of the Chinese education system, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Assessments ranging from school entrance exams to the College English Test for Band 4 and Band 6 attest to its importance (Wang & Guan, 2020). However, despite this emphasis, there seems to be a disconnect between the desired outcomes and the reality. Recent employer surveys revealed that a significant percentage of certificate holders, specifically only 39.9%, were deemed proficient in reading professional English literature (Li & Wang, 2021). This deficiency signals that current pedagogical approaches might not be effectively developing reading abilities, particularly for non-English

major students, thereby necessitating an exploration of effective reading strategies.

In response, the educational research community has invested considerable effort into understanding reading processes, especially strategies that enhance comprehension. Research has focused on identifying and analyzing the reading techniques used by successful readers, contrasting successful and unsuccessful readers, and evaluating the tangible impacts of reading strategies on reading scores. Such studies have provided valuable insights into effective pedagogical interventions and how structured instruction in reading strategies can influence learners' comprehension (Li & Zhang, 2020; Wu & Wang, 2021; Hu, 2017).

However, a considerable research gap persists

regarding how reading strategies intertwine with motivation and self-efficacy, particularly in EFL contexts where language and cultural barriers are additional hurdles. Reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy are distinct yet interconnected components that affect EFL reading comprehension. For example, reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, and contextual analysis, guide learners through complex texts, making reading more engaging and less strenuous (Chen, 2021). Motivation acts as the catalyst for students to engage with a text persistently, even when faced with challenging sections (Wang, 2019). Self-efficacy, on the other hand, reflects a student's confidence in their reading abilities, influencing their approach to texts, their use of reading strategies, and ultimately, their comprehension outcomes (Zhou, 2020).

This study aims to examine the relationship between these three components among Chinese EFL college students, a demographic facing significant demands for English reading competence. It is critical to understand these relationships to foster competent readers and promote effective reading instruction. Previous studies suggest that reading comprehension success is anchored on the synergistic interaction of reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy (Wu, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2022).

Despite the high importance accorded to reading in key examinations, the gap between expected outcomes and actual abilities of students is concerning. Thus, this research, by focusing on reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy, assumes significant importance. The study seeks to illuminate the combined influence of these variables on reading comprehension. The insights could guide the creation of effective interventions aimed at enhancing reading skills among Chinese EFL college students, impacting instructional practices, curriculum design, and policy decisions.

In summary, the emphasis on reading skills in the Chinese EFL context is substantial. However, the mismatch between the high importance placed on reading in examinations and the dissatisfaction voiced by employers suggests that current instructional methods may not be effectively fostering these skills. This study aims to bridge this gap by delving into the intricate dynamics of reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy among Chinese EFL college students. In doing so, it hopes to inform instructional practices and assessment design, thereby assisting students in developing the reading proficiency needed for future success.

II. METHODS

2.1 Participants

This research selected its participants via an online questionnaire, specifically designed for college students taking the College English course at a university located in Shaanxi province, China. The participants comprised both first-year and second-year students, ensuring a range of experiences and perspectives to enrich the research. Notably, the participants hailed from four different departments within the university: the School of Accounting, School of Humanities and Education, School of Computer Science, and School of Business. This diversity in academic disciplines offered an interesting perspective to analyze the intersection between English language learning and various fields of study.

Several factors were considered to decide the appropriate sample size for this study, including a margin of error of 4.5%, a confidence level of 95.5%, and an anticipated response distribution of 50%. Additionally, the Admissions Office of Xijing University estimated that the total number of first and second-year students from the four schools was around 8,000. Using the Raosoft calculator, the study found that the ideal sample size would be 468 participants. This size was deemed adequate to yield a representative sample, capable of delivering reliable findings.

The participants in this study were not newcomers to English language learning. They had already received formal EFL instruction for a period of twelve to fourteen years. This implies that they already had a substantial base in English, as they had been engaged with the language throughout their primary and secondary education. The diversity in English language learning exposure also created an opportunity to investigate the relationship between the length of language learning, proficiency levels, and learning strategies among college students.

2.2 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative analysis method to explore the factors affecting the comprehension level of Chinese EFL college students. The investigation focuses on three primary variables: reading strategies, reading motivation, and self-efficacy. Initially, personal information of the students is collected to assess how demographic factors and background characteristics influence reading comprehension levels.

Three distinct instruments are used to evaluate the variables in this study. Firstly, the Survey of Reading Strategies Questionnaire is employed to measure reading strategies. Additionally, the Reading Motivation Questionnaire, adapted from Wang and Guthrie (2004), assesses students' motivation to read. Moreover, the

English Self-efficacy Questionnaire, developed by Raven Richardson Piercey (2013), serves as the basis for the reading self-efficacy questionnaire.

The reliability of the instruments is tested using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. As a result, all variables show Cronbach's Alpha values within the "Acceptable" to "Excellent" range, indicating reasonably to highly reliable measurements.

To ensure reliability and validity, the questionnaire is translated into Chinese and a pilot study is conducted. Following this, the final version of the questionnaire is distributed to the participants, and data collection takes place using the Questionnaire Star platform and other online methods.

Data from the questionnaire are organized into tables and assessed using weighted mean and verbal interpretations of the Likert scale. Furthermore, Spearman Correlation Analysis is utilized to evaluate relationships among reading strategies, reading motivation, and self-efficacy. Additionally, the t-test is used to examine significant differences between and among the variables. Consequently, the results are analyzed, interpreted, and conclusions are drawn based on the analysis. Ultimately, recommendations for future research are provided.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Summary of Reading Strategies, Motivation and Self-efficacy

Table 1 Summary Table on Reading Strategies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Global Reading Strategies	3.00	Agree	3
2. Problem Solving Strategies	3.05	Agree	1
3. Support Reading Strategies	3.02	Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.02	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 1 summarizes survey results and assessment scores collected on different reading strategies, using a Likert scale to measure participants' agreement or disagreement towards a set of statements on a symmetric scale. The

average scores for all three types of strategies are around 3, falling within the "Agree" range. This suggests that respondents generally find these strategies effective and useful.

Problem-solving strategies received the highest rating with a weighted mean of 3.05. These tactics help readers overcome comprehension challenges by revisiting difficult passages, looking up unfamiliar words, or proceeding with the text and returning to problematic areas later. The top ranking highlights the perceived value of problem-solving strategies in promoting understanding.

Support reading strategies closely follow with a weighted mean of 3.02. These strategies enhance comprehension and memory of the text through activities like note-taking, highlighting key parts, summarizing, and engaging in discussions. The second-place ranking emphasizes their importance in consolidating understanding.

Global reading strategies rank third with a weighted mean of 3.00. These encompass broader tactics such as setting reading goals, previewing the text, and relating it to pre-existing knowledge. While ranked lower, they remain significant for reading comprehension.

Effective reading strategies play a crucial role in successful comprehension. Various comprehension methods, from basic to advanced, have been identified, and research shows a positive relationship between metacognitive reading strategies and comprehension. A study by Manh & Phan (2021) on Vietnamese undergraduates learning a second language found increased awareness of these strategies led to better comprehension of reading content.

Table 2 Summary Table on Motivation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Intrinsic Motivation	2.94	Agree	2
2. Extrinsic Motivation	3.06	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.00	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 presents a summary of reading motivation, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as primary indicators. The composite mean value of 3.00 indicates that participants generally agree that both forms of motivation significantly affect their reading habits.

Intrinsic motivation, with a weighted mean of 2.94, represents internal urges or enthusiasm for reading, driven by personal gratification, intellectual curiosity, and the pleasure of gaining knowledge. Participants concur that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in their reading behavior, although it ranks second in importance.

Extrinsic motivation, with a weighted mean of 3.06, encompasses external factors like incentives, acknowledgments, and avoiding adverse outcomes, and notably influences reading practices. This form of motivation occupies the top spot, suggesting it may have a somewhat stronger effect on reading motivation compared to intrinsic factors in this research.

Existing research highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in shaping reading behaviors, with intrinsic motivation strongly associated with academics, self-confidence, and cognitive engagement (Soemer & Schiefele, 2018). It positively predicts reading achievement and correlates with diverse reading strategies (Wang et al., 2020). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation shows lower correlations with academic, self-confidence, and cognitive engagement and may have varied effects on reading achievement (Soemer & Schiefele, 2018; Wang et al., 2020). The impact of extrinsic motivation on the use of reading strategies remains unclear.

In conclusion, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play pivotal roles in driving reading behaviors, with intrinsic motivation having a slightly greater influence. Nevertheless, the relationship between these motivations and reading behavior is complex, influenced by various additional factors. The significance of extrinsic motivation, particularly the use of incentives, remains a topic of ongoing investigation (MSEd, 2022).

Table 3 Summary Table on Self-efficacy

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Mastery Experiences	2.76	Agree	2
2. Social Persuasions	2.68	Agree	3.5
3. Vicarious Experiences	2.92	Agree	1
4. Physiological States	2.68	Agree	3.5
Composite Mean	2.76	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents a summary of self-efficacy, featuring four key indicators: mastery experiences, social persuasions, vicarious experiences, and physiological states. The composite mean of 2.76 indicates that respondents widely agree that all four indicators significantly influence their self-efficacy, highlighting the importance of personal accomplishments, observed experiences, social feedback, and emotional responses in building confidence in their abilities.

Vicarious experiences rank highest with a weighted mean of 2.92, demonstrating their significant impact on self-efficacy. Observing others succeed or being told about their mastery plays a vital role in shaping self-efficacy beliefs, as supported by various studies, including those by Meade (2019) and Sc (2017).

Mastery experiences rank second with a weighted mean of 2.76, indicating that personal achievements are crucial in shaping self-efficacy beliefs.

In the third position, both social persuasions and physiological states share a weighted mean of 2.68. Respondents agree that receiving positive feedback from others and experiencing emotional reactions contribute similarly to their self-efficacy.

Overall, the participants display a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of self-efficacy. They recognize the significance of personal achievements, lessons learned from observing others, and the impact of social feedback and emotional responses on self-efficacy. These elements synergistically boost their confidence in performing tasks effectively and reaching their goals, enriching their perception of self-efficacy. Notably, studies by Unrau et al. (2017) and Alharbi (2021) also highlight the positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and reading performance, emphasizing the importance of fostering self-efficacy to improve outcomes.

3.2 Profile-based Reading Strategies, Motivation and Self-efficacy

Among the total respondents, 295 individuals were females, while 173 were males, indicating a majority of female participants. The School of Computer Science had the most respondents, comprising 30.1 percent of the total, largely due to its higher student enrollment. As for English learning experience, 51.3 percent reported having studied for over 10 years, while 38.0 percent had 6-10 years of experience.

Significant differences were observed when grouping respondents according to sex and English learning experience. Females and those with more than 10 years of experience demonstrated superior reading strategies compared to others. Similarly, when grouped based on sex (except for extrinsic motivation) and English

learning experience, females and those with more than 10 years of experience displayed higher levels of motivation in reading.

Additionally, significant differences were observed when considering the respondents' school (except for vicarious experiences) and English learning experience (except for physiological states). Specifically, those enrolled in the School of Computer Science and those with more than 10 years of experience exhibited greater self-efficacy.

Overall, the study highlights the influence of sex, school, and English learning experience on profile-based reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy. The findings emphasize the importance of considering these factors when assessing and addressing reading-related outcomes in the context of language learning.

3.3 Relationship among Reading Strategy, Motivation and Self-efficacy

Table 4 Relationship Between Reading Strategies and Motivation

Global Reading Strategies	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Intrinsic Motivation	.605**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	.647**	0.000	Highly Significant
Problem Solving Strategies			
Intrinsic Motivation	.661**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	.706**	0.000	Highly Significant
Support Reading Strategies			
Intrinsic Motivation	.760**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation	.735**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

In Table 4, noteworthy findings reveal a robust correlation between reading strategies, including global, problem-solving, and support strategies, and motivation, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The statistical analysis confirmed the significance of these relationships, as indicated by the low p-values, underscoring the substantial and meaningful connections between all strategies and both forms of motivation. These

findings emphasize the importance of considering how different reading strategies can significantly impact and interact with students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to read effectively.

Among the various strategies, support reading demonstrated the strongest correlation with reading motivation, indicating high levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Additionally, both global and problem-solving strategies showed significant correlations with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, suggesting that these strategies are associated with heightened motivation for reading among the participants.

Studies by Roomy and Alhawsawi (2019) and Wang et al. (2020) support these findings, showing that employing various reading strategies enhances reading habits and motivation. Additionally, McRae and Guthrie (2013) suggest that providing challenging tasks can further boost motivation for reading.

Table 5 Relationship Between Reading Motivation and Self-efficacy

Intrinsic Motivation	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Mastery Experiences	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Persuasions	.650**	0.000	Highly Significant
Vicarious Experiences	.699**	0.000	Highly Significant
Physiological States	.302**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation			
Mastery Experiences	.689**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Persuasions	.597**	0.000	Highly Significant
Vicarious Experiences	.719**	0.000	Highly Significant
Physiological States	.296**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 5 reveals a moderate direct correlation between reading strategies and self-efficacy, supported by significant p-values. Worldwide reading strategies show highly significant correlations with all four self-efficacy components, with vicarious experiences displaying the most substantial correlation.

Problem-solving and support reading strategies exhibit meaningful correlations with all four components of self-efficacy, highlighting their significance in shaping learners' confidence. Among the self-efficacy components, vicarious experiences demonstrate the strongest correlation, emphasizing the substantial impact of observing others' successes on one's self-belief. On the other hand, physiological states exhibit the lowest correlation, indicating that learners' emotional responses and physiological states may have a comparatively weaker influence on their self-efficacy beliefs.

Recent studies by Naseri (2012), Almohammadi (2023), Mohammed (2022), and Altumigah and Alkhaleefah (2022) contribute valuable insights to the field by providing empirical evidence that supports the positive association between reading strategies and self-efficacy among learners. These findings affirm that learners who actively engage in a diverse range of reading strategies tend to cultivate stronger self-efficacy beliefs.

Table 6 Relationship between Motivation and Self-efficacy

Intrinsic Motivation	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Mastery Experiences	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Persuasions	.650**	0.000	Highly Significant
Vicarious Experiences	.699**	0.000	Highly Significant
Physiological States	.302**	0.000	Highly Significant
Extrinsic Motivation			
Mastery Experiences	.689**	0.000	Highly Significant
Social Persuasions	.597**	0.000	Highly Significant
Vicarious Experiences	.719**	0.000	Highly Significant
Physiological States	.296**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p -value < 0.01

Table 6 presents the correlation between reading motivation and self-efficacy. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors are significantly related to self-efficacy, particularly mastery experiences, social persuasions, and vicarious experiences, showing strong relationships.

For intrinsic motivation, mastery experiences, social persuasions and vicarious experiences exhibit robust

positive relationships with self-efficacy, while physiological states maintain a statistically significant connection. In the case of extrinsic motivation, mastery experiences, social persuasions, and vicarious experiences also show strong positive correlations.

Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and motivation. Sener and Erol (2017) identified a significant connection between self-efficacy and motivation among EFL learners. Ma et al. (2018) emphasized the influence of self-efficacy on intrinsic motivation and language proficiency.

IV. PROPOSED OUTPUT

A reading program to improve EFL college students' comprehension has been proposed, targeting reading strategies, motivation, and self-efficacy. It consists of nine Key Result Areas, addressing problem-solving strategies, support reading, global reading, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, vicarious experiences, mastery experiences, social persuasions, and physiological states.

To achieve its objectives, the program outlines strategies tailored for each area. For instance, problem-solving activities, discussion-based learning, real-world scenarios, and guided reading sessions are employed to enhance problem-solving strategies. Relaxation exercises, stress management techniques, and self-care practices are utilized to address physiological states.

Clear success indicators are defined for each area, such as improved ability to solve complex reading comprehension problems or reduced stress and anxiety levels. The implementation of the program is a collaborative effort, involving reading teachers, peers, and parents, working together to ensure its success.

The ultimate goal is not only to develop proficient readers with enhanced reading comprehension skills but also to elevate their motivation and self-efficacy levels. By instilling faith in their abilities to conquer learning tasks, the program aims to empower students and foster a deeper sense of mastery and confidence.

V. CONCLUSION

The study showed a majority of female respondents with over ten years of English learning experience, with the School of Computer Science highly represented. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations played essential roles in motivating reading behaviors, with a slight preference for extrinsic factors, suggesting potential benefits of incorporating external rewards and recognition to enhance reading habits.

The respondents showed a comprehensive

understanding of self-efficacy, recognizing the significance of personal achievements, learning from others, social feedback, and emotional responses in building confidence. Females and those with over ten years of experience demonstrated better reading strategies and higher reading motivation. Moreover, students from the School of Computer Science and those with more than ten years of experience had better self-efficacy. The study found strong correlations between the three variables, indicating that improved strategies positively influenced reading motivation and self-efficacy.

The proposed EFL reading program includes holistic reading strategies, intrinsic motivation, and fostering self-confidence through discussions. Higher education English educators may benefit from incorporating real-world scenarios and problem-solving techniques. University administrations could consider adopting and testing these strategies to improve academic comprehension.

Future researchers can expand the study by exploring educators' perspectives, introducing new variables, analyzing participant attributes, and using qualitative research methods. To enhance the reading program, incorporating regular assessments, contextual learning, culturally relevant materials, personalized learning plans, and critical thinking skill development are recommended. Adequate training for educators in EFL teaching strategies and core program elements is vital for successful implementation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the sustained support of numerous individuals. The researcher expresses heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Eleonor Magadia for invaluable professional guidance, Dr. Beverly Caiga for insightful counsel on the dissertation title, Dr. Precy Guerra for discerning suggestions and meticulous feedback on the manuscript, and Dr. Analie Pateña for addressing the statistical data. The researcher expresses deep gratitude to her family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey. Each contribution was essential, and the researcher recognizes the privilege of being surrounded by such an inspiring community.

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