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Research Article

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Investigating Pre-Service Teachers' Understanding, Practices and Attitudes Towards Pre-Reading Instruction Stage

Wong Ming Har Ruth* and Amaya Munoz Cheung Cristina Ashley

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language Education, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

***Corresponding author:** Wong Ming Har Ruth, Assistant Professor; Department of English Language Education, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

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Abstract

Global educators categorised reading into pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages to facilitate reading. Specifically, pre-reading is substantially necessary for eliciting prior knowledge and promoting reading motivation. Nonetheless, there is scarce research focusing on pre-service English teachers' (PSETs) understanding, practices and attitudes towards the pre-reading instruction. Based on the investigation of 50 PSETs questionnaire responses and 5 PSETs' interview elaboration, PSETs' attitudes, beliefs, aims, activities used, and challenges are analysed in this paper.

Results show that PSETs have near absolute positive but ambivalent attitude due to multiple contexts. Additionally, PSETs have consistent beliefs, aims and high tendency to prioritise background building, vocabulary instruction, questioning and arouse reading interest, which interview revealed reducing unfamiliar cues and personal education experience largely contribute to these preferences. However, PSETs showed misalignment between their beliefs and actual employment of activities due to constraints and low self-efficacy. Moreover, PSETs tend to deprioritise diverse and high-level pre-reading activities, which are attributed to a torrent of contextual problems.

The results have shed light on the most-used approaches and challenges encountered to cater for effective pre-reading stage in real Chinese primary English classrooms. The challenges can be referred to the Education Bureau to spearhead the initiation of solutions for improving the reading approach to consolidate pre-reading culture. For teaching training universities, the constraints could be referred to re-evaluate the structure and content of pedagogy programmes.

Keywords: Pre-reading; ESL/EFL; Pre-service teachers; Attitudes; Classroom reading practices; Challenging components

Introduction and Experiment Design

Successful reading lessons are structured around pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading by instilling students' reading sub-skills and strategies at different comprehension processes [1]. To facilitate an easier reading process, pre-reading activities are substantially necessary for eliciting prior knowledge and promoting reading motivation [2]. Nonetheless, it is globally neglected in

English as Second Language (ESL) or English as Foreign Language (EFL) comprehension [3].

In Chinese English classrooms, the phenomenon of reading-lessons is based on information extraction tasks with ambiguous reading-stages [4]. Lee [4] commented that this reading-style contributes to reading resistance from young learners. Educators



argued this reading mode as undesirable, yet it is still a dominant lesson framework in primary schools [5].

Examining educators' beliefs, practices and attitudes is crucial for enhancing educational processes [6]. Nonetheless, there may be a disparity between professional knowledge in reading instruction and actual practices. Characteristics of teaching practice and attitudes greatly determines the quality of instruction and learning environment, ultimately influencing students' achievement [7,8]. Consequently, ESL teachers' practices and attitudes towards the pre-reading stage are highly relevant to learners' reading performance and motivation.

Therefore, it is worth analysing whether pre-reading, the motivation and schema-providing stage, is well understood, accepted and conducted by future Chinese ESL teachers. To understand and improve reading instruction, this study aims to conduct an in-depth investigation on Chinese English Pre-Service Primary Teachers' (PSETs) understanding, practices and attitudes towards the pre-reading instruction stage.

Literature Review

Purpose of pre-reading

Apart from schema-activation, the purposes of first-stage reading instruction in schools are manifold: building students' background knowledge and focusing attention [3,9]. ESL teachers own three important roles in pre-reading: guide, model and facilitator of success [2].

Too often, teachers ask students to read aloud text then neglect the necessity to provide a purpose for reading [10]; hence students lose reading direction and interest [11]. Teachers need to guide students in establishing purposes and setting goals for reading [2]. Additionally, vocabulary items and phrases should be introduced to reduce reading-interference due to complex language cues [12].

Model-wise, teachers' model and create opportunities for students to practice other strategies appropriate in pre-reading. For instance, guiding students in the prediction of text content, identifying main ideas of text, paying attention to text structure and creating mental images for the text [2]. Readers with sufficient formal schemata understand the rhetorical or organizational structure [13]. Likewise, readers who possess content area foster content comprehension. Ultimately, these sharpens students' textual awareness and ability to develop expectation of the text [12,14]. Third, set learners up for success by stimulating learners' interest and building students' confidence and motivation for reading [2].

Pre-reading strategies or activities

Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough [15] proposed three strategies: pre-questioning, pictorial context and vocabulary pre-teaching. Auerbach and Paxton [16] introduced 5 activities: semantic mapping, skimming for general idea, reading introduction and conclusion, ask students to write experience related to the topic, and write a summary of article after previewing.

Pre-questioning encourages readers making predictions by giving students a one-sentence summary of the text and inviting them to formulate some questions they believe the text would answer. Other strategies proposed by Auerbach and Paxton [16] involve students in text predication and schema activation. Another prediction-strategy "Anticipation Guide" is suggested by Herber [17], aiming to stimulate interest and activate partial schema.

To familiarise with linguistic cues, the simplest but ineffective method is word-by-word vocabulary instruction by showing meaning with visual aids [18]. Williams [10] proposed applying semantic mapping to show word-association, such as "money", "bank", "rich" and "poverty", then invite students to show additional contribution to the concept map. Additionally, select text keywords for "Word Splash" to form semantic-map, then invite student-pairs to guess content [19].

Graphic organizer "KWL chart" reaches most pre-reading purposes [20]. In the "K" section, students write what they already knew about the topic, activating students' schema. For "W", students note what they want to learn, setting ones' goals for reading and motivating oneself to read. For "L", students organize text information by summarising what they learnt.

Overseas teachers' attitudes, understanding and practice towards pre-reading

Researches showed teachers' ambivalent attitudes. Anaktototy and Huwae [21] reflected that over 80% Indonesian teachers had positive attitudes in application due to its benefits in building motivation, schemata activation and reading readiness. Not only do they believe pre-reading activities are a prerequisite for text instruction, they concur with its easiness and necessity to apply diverse activities. Time-wise, 90% of teachers disagree that this stage is a waste of time. Strikingly, Yusuf (2015) signified approximately 70% ESL primary educators see reading negatively. Most teachers revealed the low willingness to diversify instructional methods or go the extra mile to design teaching aids. Likewise, albeit the acknowledgement of uselessness, teachers possessed a slight negative attitude on account of complicated planning, ineffective time management and students limited linguistic competence [14].

Bamanger and Gashan [22] found a consistent relationship between Saudi Arabian teachers' beliefs and the teaching approaches they applied. Teachers believed most important teaching strategies aims to reduce language complexity before reading, i.e. "to guess the meaning of the ambiguous vocabulary", "to explain vocabulary items", and "to ask questions to check the comprehension of the text". The actual employed strategies are "to ask questions to check the comprehension of the text" and "to explain vocabulary items". Conversely, the less used activities are "discussing the background knowledge about the content of the text", "understanding the type of the text" and "predicting main idea of text".

Chinese teachers' attitudes, understanding and practices towards pre-reading

Most teachers focus on reducing unfamiliar language. An

English teacher in a case-study pinpointed “pre-task is important to arouse students’ interest and teach vocabulary.” [23]. Chong found vocabulary activities and video-watching were primary methods employed for language instruction and contextualization, respectively. Similarly, in a primary-student guided story reading scheme by Nayak and Sylva [24], teachers involved children by starting a brief story introduction. Specifically, they introduced words and themes to help anchor youngster’s attention. A similar situation was reported by Wong (2021), who observed English reading lesson and found teachers dedicated most time on vocabulary instruction and highlighting adjectives from texts [25].

Notwithstanding in-service teachers’ acknowledgement of pre-reading, these suggested a tendency among overseas and Chinese teachers heavily practising on vocabulary instruction, but very few applied complex activities to activate formal schema or organise reading process, namely skimming, anticipation guide, KWL chart, etc.

Challenges faced in selection of reading activities

Luo, Main, Lock, Joshi and Zhong [26] identified few factors that influenced Chinese primary EFL teacher’s beliefs and institutional practices on reading, including curriculum requirements, school context and teacher education.

Curriculum requirements consist of the need to cover prescribed teaching content and objectives. Western teachers ranked selected applicability to curriculum and curriculum requirement as the 2nd and 4th influencing factor, emphasizing their significant roles in alignment to curriculum [27]. Surprisingly, they played strong impediments to reading instruction. Luo et al. [26] unveiled the Chinese examination-oriented curriculum culture placed expectations on teachers to prioritize teaching methods geared towards exam preparation, ensuring students achieve favourable outcomes in the assessments; hence suffering heterogeneous reading activities.

Regarding school context, students’ general English proficiency is relevant. Likewise, Arias (2007) argued that it would be counterproductive when students encountered incapability of reading target language that goes beyond their level. Conversely, students restricted linguistic competence poses formidable hurdles on reading instruction [14].

Regarding teacher education, Cates-Darnell [28] stated teachers’ familiarity with reading, knowledge skills are key variables to effectively motivate and guide each student. However, teachers grappled with finite pedagogical knowledge to instruct reading [14].

Aside from the three factors by Luo et al. [26], text, including genre, vocabulary items and sentence structures were challenging components [27]. Another scholar explained vocabulary items are influencing components, as word recognition and well-developed language affects ability to make inferences and be self-correcting to solve comprehension problems [29].

Finally, yet importantly, time is another challenge offered by educators. Limited preparation and allotted class time were the

crucial hardships for applying complex reading strategies such as KWL charts, Anticipation Guides and semantic mapping [14]. Similarly, western teachers stated class time is always insufficient for reading and teaching texts [27].

Research Gap

Based on the literature, there is a theoretical assumption: PSETs prioritise teaching complex language cues as the major pre-reading practice. This highlights the need to explore the challenges that influence the adoption of other complex activities. On top of that, PSETs’ practice has not been previously researched.

Additionally, pre-service educators may view pre-reading slightly negatively due to tight curriculum, as inferred from previous research. Yet, there is insufficient research regarding PSETs’ attitude; hence further research is needed to reveal the attitudes.

Most importantly, the influencing challenges for general reading instruction mentioned by overseas in-service teachers fails to provide comprehensive representation of elements and difficulty involved in selecting pre-reading activities. Besides, the above studies did not reveal the detailed root causes behind the challenges encountered. Lastly, the methodologies of previous research, namely controlled experiments, lesson observations and case studies, do not adequately capture the full extent of the situation among PSET. For improving comprehension instruction, it is necessary to conduct interviews and questionnaires on an extensive scale to investigate PSETs’ understanding, practice and attitudes.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review and research gap, this study was guided by the following questions:

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of PSETs of the pre-reading instruction stage?

Research Question 2: What do PSETs think the purposes of the pre-reading stage are?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges that influence PSETs’ decision in choosing pre-reading activities or strategies?

The first question explored teachers’ attitude, whereas the subsequent two concerned teachers’ understanding and the impediments that exert influence on actual practice.

Research Methodology

Approach and Justification

This study adopted a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative research. To measure attitudes and practice towards pre-reading stage, a quantitative approach with questionnaires was conducted [30]. To develop practice and policies to improve pre-reading and teacher training program, researcher must understand how a phenomenon, namely challenges influencing choices of pre-reading, was experienced and understood by individual teacher [31]; hence a phenomenological research approach with interviews was used.

Procedure and Instruments

Referring to Ary et al. [30] and Creswell [31], two types of data were gathered: (i) questionnaires and (ii) interviews. For thorough analysis, data collection was sequential-designed and comprised two stages.

First Stage: Questionnaire

A mix of close-ended and open-ended questionnaires were designed to answer all three research questions. To answer RQ1, the first part of the questionnaire investigated PSETs' attitudes, which question design was partially based on research conducted by Anaktototy and Huwae [21]. For RQ2, the second part collected PSETs' pre-reading aims, beliefs and practices. Regarding RQ3, the third part investigated PSETs' challenges that influence their choices of activities. Survey questions for part two and three were considered with the above literature review regarding pre-reading purposes and activities.

The questions were supported by the 5-score Likert Scale, showing participants' extent of agreement towards each statement with these response-categories: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree and (5) strongly agree. Nunan [32] stated open-ended questions would collect more data by expanding breadth and range of inquiry. Therefore, open-ended questions were included after the second and third part for participants to share unlisted pre-reading purposes and activities respectively, if any.

The questionnaire was piloted with 3 students to examine any terms of ambiguous language and illogical sequence. Modifications were made before the actual study, including additional elaboration "students' diverse learning abilities, e.g. poor language proficiency" and "students' diverse learning style, e.g. traditional".

Design of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 52 items for the three research questions, with one open-ended question for each part. As no previous research had done similar topic, the questionnaire was not based on any theoretical framework but only the literature review.

- For RQ1, 12 items (attitudinal statements) were developed to represent each of the 5 attitudinal disposition categories summarised from literature review: "time", "willingness", "perceived benefits", "perceived necessity" and "perceived complexity", as well as the one additional component "confidence" to the scale of attitudinal measure.
- For RQ2, 2 sets of questions were composed of 29 items. 10 items (purpose statements) were repeatedly included in PSETs' "Beliefs" and "Aims", respectively. Moreover, 9 items were designed for collecting PSETs' practice of their pre-reading activities (rated by frequency).
- For RQ3, 11 items were included in PSETs' challenges with 5 categories: "teacher education", "time", "curriculum", "text" and "school context".

Participants

A total of 50 pre-service fourth year or above primary English teachers from a Hong Kong University participated in this study. These participants are pursuing either a BEd (English) or BA (Language Studies) and BEd (English) programme. They had completed at least one block practice and taken the primary pedagogy course on developing literacy skills.

Data Analysis for Questionnaire

Inspired by similar research conducted by Phuong and Trang [9], the quantitative data collected through questionnaires was subjected to the Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Descriptive Statistical Analysis, Independent Sample T-test, and Factor Analysis (PCA).

Second Stage: Interview

5 participants volunteered to take part in face-to-face or zoom individual interviews which took place two weeks after the completion of the questionnaire. To reach complementarity and expansion of data, random-sampling interviews were conducted based on the questionnaire to further measure influencing factors and teachers' practice. In response to all questions, interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. Participants were asked to explain and elaborate their understanding, practice and attitudes. Follow-up questions were asked to seek clarification. The interviews were audio-recorded upon the consent of participants and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative research generated comprehensive findings [33]. The questionnaire collected the general PSETs' attitude, practices and factors influencing activity choices. The participants' explanation in interviews unpacked the meaning behind the statistics of the questionnaire, which helped further clarify and elaborate the findings.

Data Analysis for Interview

The qualitative data from interviews were analysed with thematic analysis suggested by Marshall and Rossman [34]. Firstly, organise and familiarise with the data with the interview transcripts and audio-recording. Secondly, to code data after reducing and generating themes from the categorisation of factors and challenges. Lastly, to offer data interpretation through analytic memos.

Significance of Study

The study contributes to the development of teacher training programmes and the reading instruction approach in real Chinese primary English classrooms. The challenges can be referred to the Education Bureau to spearhead the initiation of solutions for improving the reading approach to consolidate pre-reading culture.

Ethical Concerns

Participants were fully informed about the aims of study. Prior to conducting any questionnaire and interviews, consent

was obtained. For questionnaire participants, they chose “agree” as a consent to participate in this study before proceeding to the questions. For interviewees, a consent form was signed for the purpose of audio recording. Additionally, participants were informed that the confidentiality of their personal information and safeguarded data, and all such information will be deleted once the research has been completed.

Research Results

RQ1: What is the attitude of PSETs for the pre-reading instruction stage?

By grouping the 12 attitude statements into the 6 attitudinal disposition categories (Table 1) and conducting the Descriptive Statistical Analysis, results revealed PSETs did not have an absolute positive but an ambivalent attitude towards pre-reading, with the overall attitude mean score not reaching to a positive agreement

level ($M=3.80$). The ambivalent attitude included PSETs' high willingness to teach pre-reading ($S3, M=4.36$) but low perceived necessity to conduct a full lesson ($S9, M=2.94$); PSETs' struggle might also be seen as they acknowledged the benefits of pre-reading ($S1, M=4.20$) and using diverse pre-reading activities ($S2, M=4.22$), but believed planning the pre-reading stage is somewhat troublesome ($S12, M=2.96$). From the interview, participants stated the benefits help “ease understanding of difficult vocabulary items”, “boost reading confidence” and “intrigue reading interest”. Aligned with statistical result, the interview also revealed the time-consuming nature, students' ability and a lack of collaboration made planning require extra effort. Representative views included:

“We don't have enough pre-reading resources because we seldom discuss it in co-planning.” (P1)

“Given the packed schedule, we give knowledge right away and go straight to the while-reading.” (P3)

Table 1: Attitude towards pre-reading (5-point scale).

Attitudinal categories	\bar{x}	σ	Rank
Overall Attitude	3.8	0.42	-
Perceived Benefits	4.21	0.53	1
Willingness	4.14	0.54	2
Perceived Necessity	3.9	0.84	3
Confidence	3.71	0.69	4
Time	3.5	0.61	5
Perceived Complexity	3.25	0.74	6

Table 2: Descriptive Statistical Analysis on the 12 attitude statements and their grouping.

Attitude categories	#	12 attitude statements	\bar{x}	σ
Perceived benefits	S1	I recognise the benefits of the pre-reading stage for reading instruction.	4.2	0.54
	S2	I recognise the benefits of using diverse pre-reading activities for reading instruction.	4.22	0.65
Willingness	S3	I am willing to teach the pre-reading stage.	4.36	0.56
	S4	I am willing to use diverse pre-reading activities.	4.12	0.59
	S5	I am willing to spend time on designing diverse pre-reading activities.	3.94	0.82
Perceived Necessity	S6	Pre-reading stage must be included before teaching how to read a text.	3.9	0.84
Confidence	S7	I am confident in teaching the pre-reading stage.	3.76	0.77
	S8	I am confident in using diverse pre-reading activities.	3.66	0.75
Time	S9	Pre-reading stage requires a full lesson (30-40 minutes).	2.94	1.06
	S10	Pre-reading stage is not a waste of time.	4.06	1.1
Perceived Complexity	S11	Pre-reading stage is easy to conduct.	3.54	0.81
	S12	Planning the pre-reading stage is not troublesome.	2.96	1.01

Additionally, PSETs also revealed a diverse attitude in perceiving necessity of pre-reading with the highest standard deviation among the 6 attitudinal disposition categories ($\sigma=0.84$). Echoed by interview results, some interviewees stated the benefits

makes pre-reading essential, whereas others pinpointed actual school practice discouraged the explicit division of reading stage. Selected statements are as below:

"Without this stage, it is hard for students to comprehend new contents without any support. there will be vocabulary items students don't know, it hinders the problem of understanding the passage"

(Participant 2 =P2).

"I have seen how in-service teachers usually teach reading, and I don't think they care about the pre-reading stage." (P4).

Participants stated the actual time they conduct the pre-reading

stage during their block practices before rating the 12 attitude statements. 26 participants chose "5-10 minutes", while 24 chose ">10 minutes". A Descriptive Statistical Analysis was performed to show the mean score on each of the 6 attitudinal categories from these 2 sample groups (Table 3) and an Independent Sample T-test was conducted with significance p-value (2-side) at 95% confidence level to test whether there is an equal mean in these 2 sample groups on each attitude (Table 4), with hypotheses H0: Two groups have equal mean and H1: Two groups have significant different mean.

Table 3: Descriptive statistical analysis on 6 attitudinal categories from 2 sample groups.

How long do you conduct the pre-reading stage for reading instruction?		N	\bar{x}
Time	5-10 minutes	26	3.42
	>10 minutes	24	3.58
Confidence	5-10 minutes	26	3.65
	>10 minutes	24	3.77
Willingness	5-10 minutes	26	3.99
	>10 minutes	24	4.31
Perceived Benefits	5-10 minutes	26	4.1
	>10 minutes	24	4.33
Perceived Necessity	5-10 minutes	26	3.77
	>10 minutes	24	4.04
Perceived Complexity	5-10 minutes	26	3.29
	>10 minutes	24	3.21

Results from the Independent Sample T-test showed only "Willingness" had significant different means from the 2 sample groups with mean difference of -0.318 at p-value within 0.05 ($p=0.036$). For the rest of 5 attitudinal categories, there were mean

differences but not statistically significant as p-values were all above 0.05. Hence, execution time cannot be explained by most of the attitudes except for "Willingness".

Table 4: Independent Sample T-test for Equality of Means.

Independent Samples Test									
t		t-test for Equality of Means							
		df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper	
Time	Equal variances assumed	-0.92	48	0.181	0.362	-0.16026	0.17421	-0.51052	0.19001
	Equal variances not assumed	-0.924	47.988	0.18	0.36	-0.16026	0.17352	-0.50914	0.18862
Confidence	Equal variances assumed	-0.592	48	0.278	0.556	-0.11699	0.19753	-0.51415	0.28018
	Equal variances not assumed	-0.584	40.261	0.281	0.563	-0.11699	0.20048	-0.52208	0.28811
Willingness	Equal variances assumed	-2.163	48	0.018	0.036	-0.31838	0.14718	-0.61431	-0.02244
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.163	47.699	0.018	0.036	-0.31838	0.14717	-0.61433	-0.02242

Perceived Benefits	Equal variances assumed	-1.62	48	0.056	0.112	-0.23718	0.14642	-0.53158	0.05722
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.623	47.952	0.056	0.111	-0.23718	0.14612	-0.53099	0.05663
Perceived Necessity	Equal variances assumed	-1.151	48	0.128	0.256	-0.27244	0.23674	-0.74843	0.20356
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.137	42.344	0.131	0.262	-0.27244	0.23953	-0.75572	0.21085
Perceived Complexity	Equal variances assumed	0.377	48	0.354	0.708	0.08013	0.21248	-0.34709	0.50734
	Equal variances not assumed	0.375	45.629	0.355	0.71	0.08013	0.21376	-0.35024	0.5105

RQ2: What do PSET think the purposes of the pre-reading stage are?

Descriptive Statistical Analysis was conducted on the score

participants gave to each purpose statement of the pre-reading stage. The mean scores were used to rank both (i) the importance of pre-reading purposes (beliefs) and (ii) PSETs' aims in pre-reading (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistical Analysis for "Beliefs" and rank by means.

Pre-reading is important for	\bar{x}	σ	Rank by \bar{x}
Building students' background knowledge	4.38	0.57	1
Stimulating students' interest	4.38	0.64	1
Reducing unfamiliar language cues, such as vocabulary items and sentence structures	4.32	0.68	3
Setting students' purpose and goals for reading	4.2	0.64	4
Building students' reading direction	4.18	0.63	5
Guiding students in the prediction of text content	4.18	0.69	6
Enhancing students' reading motivation	4.12	0.75	7
Guiding students in identifying the main ideas of text	3.98	0.71	8
Familiarizing students with the text structure	3.96	0.81	9
Guiding students to create mental images for the text	3.94	0.79	10

Table 6: Descriptive Statistical Analysis for "Aims" and rank by means.

Pre-reading is important for	\bar{x}	σ	Rank by \bar{x}
Stimulating students' interest	4.44	0.68	1
Building students' background knowledge	4.38	0.53	2
Reducing unfamiliar language cues, such as vocabulary items and sentence structures	4.22	0.74	3
Enhancing students' reading motivation	4.2	0.7	4
Guiding students in the prediction of text content	4.18	0.77	5
Setting students' purpose and goals for reading	4.08	0.75	6
Building students' reading direction	4.06	0.77	7
Guiding students to create mental images for the text	3.84	0.84	8
Familiarizing students with the text structure	3.84	0.84	9
Guiding students in identifying the main ideas of text	3.8	0.81	10

Top

The statistical data reflected high consistency between PSET's most chosen beliefs and aims, which are to "stimulate interest" ($M=4.38$), "building background knowledge" ($M=4.38$) and "reduce

unfamiliar language cues" ($M=4.22$).

Respondents explained these most used approaches are necessary for making reading inference, easing reading anxiety and staying attentive. Some pointed that:

"School usually teaches out-of-touch passage. For example, passages introduce Western activities that are not common here. To help them understand, we need to build students' background knowledge." (P2)

"Nobody wants to read the boring publisher passage." (P5)

Besides, PSETs stated introducing unfamiliar languages improves smooth and relaxed comprehension.

"Students have never come across those new words before. If not taught, they would feel puzzled." (P3)

Bottom

The results presented consistency between the PSET's lowest aims and beliefs, which are to "create mental images for the text" (M=3.98), "familiarize with the text structure" (M=3.96) and "identify the main ideas of text" (M=3.94). Respondents explained:

"I personally am not sure how to do these activities, so I would say not many people know how to conduct this activity. Besides, it's quite hard to reach this purpose for primary students." (P1)

"I don't recall these 3 approaches are taught by our university reading class." (P4)

These quotations revealed PSETs suffered a lack of teaching knowledge towards these strategies. Besides, it was clear that the teacher programmes did not strongly emphasize these activities in the primary literacy pedagogical course. Moreover, PSETs believed elementary learners may be incapable of acquiring these high-level

pre-reading strategies.

In addition, the infrequent use was also contributed by the ambiguous and non-sequential material design and Chinese English teachers' practice. Some PSETs pointed out that:

"The texts from publishers put the 'main idea' in the post-reading stage rather than the pre-reading stage. So, teachers would do the order backwards and avoid it." (P3)

"Teachers usually teach the text structure in the while-reading stage." (P5)

What's more, PSETs were asked the frequency they utilised the pre-reading activities/ strategies (Table 7). Results showed that "Questioning to motivate reading interest" and "Teach vocabulary items to reduce unfamiliar language cues" were the top 2 strategies PSETs used, which aligned with the Top beliefs of "Stimulating students' interest" (ranked #1) and "Reducing unfamiliar language cues" (ranked #3). However, results also revealed PSETs tend to deprioritize complex pre-reading strategies such as Word Splash (M=2.86) and KWL chart (M=2.84), despite "Building students' background knowledge" and "Setting students' purpose and goals for reading" were ranked first and fourth in terms of beliefs. The infrequent use of complex strategies and misalignment between the beliefs and strategies could be explained by the challenges discussed in RQ3. Reading the results at high-level perspective, the pre-reading activities adopted by PSETs were not diverse enough, only 2 out of 9 were used more than usual (M>4.0).

Table 7: Frequency on using pre-reading activities/ strategies.

Pre-reading activities/ strategies	\bar{x}	σ
I use Questioning to motivate reading interest	4.26	0.78
I use Teach vocabulary items to reduce unfamiliar language cues	4.22	0.89
I use Picture Walk to familiarize students with the content with visual aids	3.94	1.13
I use Videos related to the reading text to visualize the content	3.8	1.21
I use Teach sentence structures to reduce unfamiliar language cues	3.62	1.24
I use Anticipation guide to activate students' prior knowledge and build their curiosity towards the text	3.38	1.23
I use Skimming to guide students to get a sense of overall text structure and key concepts	3.32	1.19
I use Word Splash to help students predict the content and build background knowledge	2.86	1.43
I use KWL chart to organize the reading process and set a purpose for reading	2.84	1.27

RQ3: What are the challenges that influence PSETs' decision in choosing pre-reading activities or strategies?

Factor Analysis (PCA) on challenges encountered

Factor Analysis (PCA) with a forced five-factor outcome using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Results showed that a percentage of explained variance of 89.243, distributed over the five factor components, each explained 42.756, 16.516, 12.122, 10.157, 7.692 respectively (Table 8). The loadings of each factor component are greater than 0.4. The KMO value (0.703) is greater than 0.5, showing PCA reliability. Among these factors, text is the biggest

challenge when deciding diverse strategies, followed by teacher education, school context, time and curriculum requirements.

Text

Some PSETs stated teaching text types are not crucial, yet reducing unfamiliar cues are essential for fostering comprehension. Representative views included:

"We seldom focus on text types in primary schools." (P5)

"There's no point in teaching reading if you don't first help students understand the language." (P1)

Table 8: Factors analysis and the loading per item extraction: principal component analysis with varimax rotation with forced five-factor outcomes of challenges faced that influences choices of pre-reading activities.

Rotated Component Matrixa					
It is difficult to use diverse pre-reading activities/ strategies due to	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Text					
Difficult vocabulary items from text	0.954				
Difficult sentence structures from text	0.946				
Unfamiliar/ Untaught Text Type	0.566				
Teacher Education					
My limited knowledge level		0.932			
My limited teaching ability		0.913			
School Context					
Students' diverse learning style, e.g. traditional			0.924		
Students' diverse learning abilities, e.g. poor language proficiency			0.807		
Time					
Limited preparation time				0.918	
Limited lesson time				0.856	
Curriculum requirements					
Tight curriculum schedule					0.871
Numerous/ Hard curriculum objectives					0.868
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.					
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.					
KMO and Bartlett's Test					
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.					0.703
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square				385.725
	df				55
	Sig.				<.001

Conversely, personal practice, easiness of the strategies and a lack of knowledge determine the frequent activity uses; hence diverse activities are overlooked. They pointed out:

"I don't know how to use others besides these. They're also the easiest reading strategies to teach." (P4)

"I have no idea how to use different activities for text types in pre-reading." (P2)

Teacher Education

Regarding teachers' limited knowledge and ability, respondents shared:

"The content doesn't match with real-life students' ability, class time or curriculum requirement." (P1)

"I forgot everything... I only teach words or ask questions as I don't know how to use the complex activities" (P3)

Participants highlighted that the impractical and inapplicable content failed to align with the actuality. Additionally, the struggle to retain practical knowledge causes them to be unable to teach high-level, resulting in repeated activities.

School Context

Concerning students' learning style, respondents specifically stated:

"My students are so quiet. When I ask questions, they are not even interested in guessing or thinking..." (P4)

PSETs stated the education setting discourages students' active thinking and interest-driven mind set. Due to the bounded reading effectiveness it may bring, teachers are demotivated to use complex activities.

In terms of learner's ability, PSETs mentioned:

"It is hard to use tasks when students have different characteristics or special education needs (SEN), such as very-abled, less-abled, dyslexic, attention-deficient ..." (P5)

Apparently, the vast learning diversity poses challenges in planning assorted activities, which causes teachers to go for common strategies that easily balance between the learner needs and task complication.

Time

PSETs claimed the lessons are mainly used to complete major assignments and language tasks, as such teachers habitually overlook the necessity to conduct pre-reading strategies.

"Within 35 minutes, students have to do grammar exercises and text-book reading exercises." (P1)

Additionally, interviewees pinpointed non-teaching workload takes up a big proportion of time, leaving no space to brainstorm suitable complex learning strategies that aid students' level or difficulties; therefore, teachers adhere to ordinary and superficial strategies. Representative view included:

"We need to correct assignments, do admin stuff, communicate with parents etc. There's no time to plan for students' learning, that's why we mainly use vocabulary instruction and questioning." (P3)

Curriculum Requirements

Respondents revealed that reading assessments were heavily emphasised as the curriculum objectives, hence they went through pre-reading swiftly to plainly reduce unfamiliar language and arouse interest. Interviewees explained:

"There is too much assessment-based reading to do in class. We teach words and show pictures very quickly to save time." (P2)

"My placement school requires us to finish reading questions, rather than raising reading interest." (P5)

Moreover, PSETs struggled with the prioritization of tight curriculum schedules, in which schools have a high tendency to skip pre-reading instruction to keep up with the pace. Some stated:

"...When I was behind schedule, my practicum mentors said I better skip the pre-reading and jump into the reading activities." (P4)

Discussion

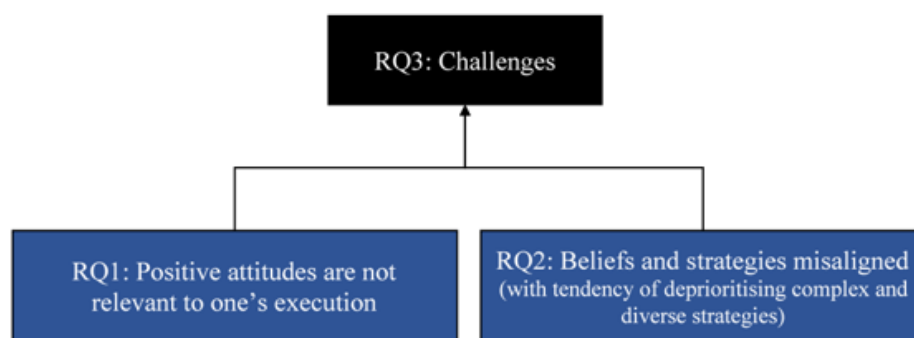


Figure 1: Illustration – cause and relationship between RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

By answering RQ1 and RQ2, this study found that (i) Positive attitudes are not relevant to one's execution and (ii) Beliefs and strategies misaligned with a tendency to de-prioritise complex and diverse strategies.

Ambivalent attitude

The ambivalent attitude towards pre-reading greatly aligned with the literature, in which the internal inconsistency in attitudes may be explained by contextual factors and constraints.

The juxtaposition between positive attitude towards pre-reading benefits and negative attitude due to the complicated and troublesome planning corresponds to literature [14,21]. It might be explained by a lack of collaboration. As cited in Chen, Elchert and Asikin-Garmager [35], East Asian teachers (EATs) unwelcome

collaboration as they feel pressured by the top-down mandate, staff appraisal and heavy workload caused (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Lam, 2001). Besides, EATs fail to see the correlation between collaborative planning and increased student performance (Hairon & Tan, 2017, as cited in Chen et al., 2018). Without collegial support and collaboration in resources planning, teachers spontaneously find solo pre-reading planning complicated.

Interestingly, given the above discrepancy, the low willingness among in-service teachers to diversify instructional methods (Yusuf, 2015), was not observed among Chinese PSETs. This discrepancy might be attributed to pre-service teachers' enthusiasm and idealism towards education [36], highlighting a developmental optimism towards innovative approaches.

This study revealed new findings: PSETs with high willingness might not deem it necessary to allocate a full lesson for such activities. Similarly, one's execution time also could not be explained by the positive attitude, such as one perceived more benefits might not necessarily spend more time in pre-reading. This divergence could be explained by the time-demanding nature of reading tasks and curriculum requirements. As schools provide no leeway to reduce curriculum content, teachers struggle to introduce creative and high-level learning in an inflexible and overloading environment. Plus, the brief lesson duration of 30-35 minutes is too short for innovative and problem-solving teaching, forcing teachers to split activities into segments or eventually skip them.

Understanding, practice and challenges encountered

This study found PSETs' beliefs and aims highly correlated. The strategies used also corresponded to literature [23,24] (Wong, 2021), where participants aim to anchor students' attention and interest by asking questions, and to reduce unfamiliar language cues by teaching vocabulary. For vocabulary instruction, Chinese teachers claimed to have little opportunities and time to teach them beyond reading instruction [37]. Besides, words and grammar are significantly assessed in elementary examinations, explaining the emphasis on reducing language cues. Moreover, other favourable pedagogies could be explained by preconception of reading instruction, which were defined by teachers' individual history and specific language learning experience [37,38].

Unexpectedly, this study found misalignment between PSETs' beliefs and strategies, which was non-consistent with literature [22,39]. For instance, "building background knowledge" ranked first in beliefs, yet utilising "Word Splash to build knowledge" was the second-least chosen strategy. It is reasonable to deduce PSETs rather employ straightforward strategy for the similar purpose, namely questioning and video-watching, than using relatively complex activities due to time constraints.

The selection of strategies and de-prioritisation of complex strategies were heavily bounded by many constraints. From the Factor Analysis, the challenges encountered were consistent with literature. It has been proven that all components have significant influence on deciding pre-reading activities.

Corresponding to Ho [40], PSETs' lack diversity for pre-reading approaches and grapple with applying complex activities. The findings of challenges encountered for "text" showed PSETs' preference for uncomplicated strategies. It is argued that teachers with high self-efficacy engage in trying new pedagogical techniques to improve practices and promote process-oriented student learning [41]. Given PSETs' low self-efficacy, it is possible low confidence ($M=3.66$) impacts their comfort level in using diverse reading strategies and hence are prone to utilizing familiar but complex and new strategies.

Additionally, packed curriculum schedules and objectives were consistent with Watkins and Otsenson [27]. PSETs were forced to drill reading exercises or skip pre-reading instruction. The plausible explanation is the culture of preparing for reading

written examination under the packed curriculum [26,42]. Though curriculum guide emphasizes helping students learn to construct and apply knowledge, the dominant culture makes classroom practices stressing 'the accumulation of academic knowledge', instead of developing the high-level skills to predict, organise and summarise reading progress [43]. Therefore, the imbalance overshadows the development of high-order and creative reading activities.

School contexts regarding students' ability are on par with literature. Aside from the counterproductive reading effect due to students' low English proficiency [14,44], PSETs shed light on the difficulty of planning for diverse learning ability and SEN students. The probable justification is heavy workload and lack of resources to plan [45]. In terms of students' passive style, it may be due to East Asian teachers' didactic and spoon-feeding approach promoting surface learning and shallow thinking, causing students' shyness and unwillingness to participate in class tasks [46]. It has been long criticised that surface learning demotivates students to develop critical thinking hence bringing low-quality outcomes [47], explaining teachers' low utilisation of high-level thinking reading activities.

Most importantly, this study found many difficulties encountered, namely text and students' learning diversity, are closely ascribable to teachers' characteristics and education. While Chinese teachers scored the lowest self-efficacy and incompetent inclusive practices among multi-nations, local universities provide only one course that covers the basic information to support SEN learners [48]. Regarding teacher education, PSETs complained that the university's course impracticality causing their limited knowledge and ability for applying diverse activities, which aligns with Putri and Aminin [14]. According to Zhao, Joshi, Dixon and Huang [49], one rationale is that many Chinese universities' pre-service education courses failed to enhance specific cultivation of reading pedagogical techniques, therefore incapable of integrating such knowledge and skills into instruction for students.

Among all components, students' background, curriculum and time are unmanageable cultural and contextual adversities, where text and teacher education can be resolved. To enhance PSETs' skills in teaching differentiated students, the university could introduce more micro-teaching practices, targeting the design of activities for diverse-ability students under finite time.

Limitations

The methodology suffers a small sample size of 50 participants. There is a necessity for future studies to increase the sampling size to maximise data representation. Additionally, the 5-score Likert Scale increased the participants' tendency to choose 'undecided', which might affect the statistical results. A 6-point scale should be used to avoid such tendency in future study.

Conclusion and Implication

This research aims to investigate PSETs' understanding, practices and attitudes towards pre-reading. Research results

establish that PSETs have already experienced the challenges in conducting pre-reading during block practices, despite the high benefits have been recognised by PSETs and academically documented by many researchers. Execution time of pre-reading was observed to have low dependency on one's positive attitudes due to the PSETs' ambivalent attitudes derived from the challenges. Also, PSETs' beliefs towards pre-reading misaligned with their selection of pre-reading activities along with a tendency to deprioritise complex activities. This is because the selection was heavily bounded by reality constraints: text, teachers' education, school context, time, and curriculum requirements.

Regarding university teaching training programmes, the structure of pedagogical courses should be re-evaluated and put more emphasises to guide the PSETs to design students'

assessment according to reality constraints, such as time boundary and students' diverse abilities. Regarding education policy, "Fine-tuning" has been an evolving approach adopted by the Education Bureau for many years. A top-down refinement on "Reading across the Curriculum" should be promoted with a feasible blueprint to alleviate the current problems to consolidate the pre-reading culture. Future researches could spearhead the feasibility of these suggestions.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of Interest.

APPENDIX

Appendix I. Questionnaire

Background information:

1. Have you conducted Field Experience in Primary Schools?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Which programme are you currently studying in?
 - BEd (EL)
 - BA (Lang Studies) & BEd (EL)
3. Which year of study are you in?
 - Year 4
 - Year 5
4. Have you completed ENG 3261 (Primary ELT Methods II: Developing Literacy Skills) course?
 - Yes
 - No
5. How many Fields Experience practices have you participated in?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - More than 2
6. How long do you conduct the pre-reading stage for reading instructions?
 - < 5 minutes
 - 5-10 minutes
 - 10-20 minutes
 - 20-30 minutes

Part A: Attitude towards pre-reading stage (for RQ1)

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Pre-reading stage must be included before reading a text.					
Pre-reading stage is easy to conduct.					
Planning the pre-reading stage is troublesome.					
I believe pre-reading requires a full lesson (i.e. 35-40 minutes).					
Teaching pre-reading stage is a waste of time.					
I am willing to teach the pre-reading stage.					
I am willing to use diverse pre-reading activities.					
I am willing to spend time on designing diverse pre-reading activities.					
I am confident in teaching the pre-reading stage.					
I am confident in using diverse pre-reading activities.					
I recognise the benefits of the pre-reading stage for reading instruction.					
Using diverse pre-reading activities are beneficial for reading instruction.					

Part B1: Understanding towards pre-reading purpose (for RQ2)

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Pre-reading is important for...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Building students' background knowledge					
Setting students' purpose and goals for reading.					
Enhancing students' reading motivation					
Reducing unfamiliar language cues, such as vocabulary items and sentence structures.					
Guiding students in the prediction of text content					
Guiding students in identifying the main ideas of text					
Guiding students to create mental images for the text					
Building students' reading direction					
Stimulating students' interest					
Familiarizing students with the text structure					
Others: _____					

Which purposes of pre-reading do you usually aim for in the real-life primary classrooms?

I reach _____ the most.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Building students' background knowledge					
Setting students' purpose and goals for reading.					
Enhancing students' reading motivation					
Reducing unfamiliar language cues, such as vocabulary items and sentence structures.					
Guiding students in the prediction of text content					
Guiding students in identifying the main ideas of text					
Guiding students to create mental images for the text					
Building students' reading direction					
Stimulating students' interest					
Familiarizing students with the text structure					
Others: _____					

Part B2: Understanding pre-reading activities (for RQ2)

I use ...

	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Often (3)	Usually (4)	Always (5)
KWL chart to organize the reading process and set a purpose for reading.					
Questioning to motivate reading interest.					
Anticipation guide to activate students' prior knowledge and build their curiosity towards the text.					
Videos related to the reading text to visualize the content.					
Word Splash to help students predict the content and build background knowledge.					
Picture Walk to familiarize students with the content with visual aids.					
Skimming to guide students to get a sense of overall text structure and key concepts.					
Teach vocabulary items to reduce unfamiliar language cues.					
Teach sentence structures to reduce unfamiliar language cues.					

Part C: Challenges influence your choice of pre-reading activities/ strategies in a primary classroom (for RQ3)

It is difficult to use diverse pre-reading activities/ strategies due to...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
My teaching ability					
My knowledge level towards reading					
Limited lesson time					
Limited preparation time					
Difficulty level of vocabulary items from text					
Difficulty level of sentence structures from text					
My students' learning style					
My students' learning abilities					
Numerous/ Hard curriculum objectives					
Tight curriculum schedule					
Others: _____					

Appendix II. Interview Transcript (Q= Researcher's questions, A=Participants' responses)

Participant 1

Q: Why do you think planning the pre-reading is troublesome?

A: The planning is usually done together by 2-3 teachers in co-planning. But in co-planning, we catch up on the learning progress or discuss how to help some common learning problems in a unit. Very little time are used to talk about other things. So... we don't have enough pre-reading resources because we seldom discuss it in co-planning.

Q: Why do you rank these activities at the bottom?

A: To be honest... I personally am not sure how to do these activities, so I would say not many people know how to conduct this activity. Besides, it's quite hard to reach this purpose for primary students.

Q: Why do you think "vocabulary instruction / reduce unfamiliar language" is in the top 3 beliefs, aims and activities?

A: There are quite a lot of new or hard words in reading text. There's no point in teaching reading if you don't first help students understand the language.

Q: Can you explain how teacher education such as knowledge and skills are challenges?

A: Though the course taught a lot of useful activities, I find them quite hard to use in real-life. That's because the content doesn't match with real-life students' ability, class time or curriculum requirement.

Q: Why is time a difficulty faced when you choose pre-reading?

A: Within 35 minutes, students have to do grammar exercises and text-book reading exercises. It's impossible to do prioritise what I want to do in class.

Participant 2

Q: Why is pre-reading necessary?

A: Without this stage, it is hard for students to comprehend new contents without any support. there will be vocabulary items students don't know, it hinders the problem of understanding the passage.

Q: Why do you think building students' knowledge is the most important purpose?

A: School usually teaches out-of-touch passage. For example, passages introduce Western activities that are not common here. To help them understand, we need to build students' background knowledge

Q: Can you explain how "text type" poses as challenge when you choose activities?

A: I have no idea how to use different activities for text types in pre-reading. I don't think the course mentioned that.

Q: Why is curriculum objectives and schedule counted as challenges in choosing pre-reading?

A: There is too much assessment-based reading to do in class. We teach words and show pictures very quickly to save time

Participant 3

Q: Why do you think planning the pre-reading is troublesome?

A: There are really many problems... I usually don't have enough time to mark students' homework and make materials. That's because of the teaching schedule... Given the packed schedule, we give knowledge right away and go straight to the while-reading.

Q: Why is teaching vocabulary is so important?

A: Primary kids are developing their vocabulary word bank. Students have never come across those new words before. If not taught, they would feel puzzled.

Q: Why are these purposes ranked (create mental images for the text/familiarize with the text structure/ identify the main ideas of text) as the least important one?

A: The texts from publishers put the "identifying main idea" in the post-reading stage rather than the pre-reading stage. So, teachers would do the order backwards and avoid it. Also in practicums, I never get to try them.

Q: Can you explain why teacher knowledge and skills is one of the challenges faced?

A: I forgot everything. I only teach words or ask questions as I don't know how to use the complex activities.

Q: Why is time a difficulty faced when you choose pre-reading?

A: Teachers have so many things to do after class. We need to correct assignments, do admin stuff, communicate with parents etc. There's no time to plan for students' learning, that's why we mainly use vocabulary instruction and questioning.

Participant 4

Q: Can you explain why pre-reading is necessary?

A: No, I do not think it is really necessary.

Q: Oh, really. Can you explain a bit more?

A: I have seen how in-service teachers usually teach reading, and I don't think they care about the pre-reading stage. Sometimes I skip them too because there's no time.

Q: Why do you rank these activities at the bottom?

A: They're so difficult and... I don't recall that these 3 approaches are taught by our university reading class.

Q: Can you explain how "vocabulary/ sentence structures in the text" poses as challenge when you choose activities?

A: It's not really difficult, but because I don't know how to use others besides these. They're also the easiest reading strategies to teach.

Q: Why is students' learning style a difficulty?

A: My students are so quiet. When I ask questions, they are not even interested in guessing or thinking... that makes me not interested in trying new things.

Q: Why is curriculum objectives and schedule counted as challenges in choosing pre-reading?

A: Schools really care a lot about keeping on the right track with learning. When I was behind schedule, my practicum mentors said I better skip the pre-reading and jump into the reading activities.

Participant 5

Q: Why do you think stimulating interest is one of the most important purposes?

A: The texts we read don't make kids interested. Nobody wants to read the boring publisher passage, that's why you got to spend time on this.

Q: Why are these purposes ranked as the least important one?

A: These hard strategies couldn't be used in primary schools as students cannot handle them... also, teachers usually teach the text structure in the while-reading stage.

Q: Why is text type a difficulty?

A: We seldom focus on text types in primary schools.

Q: Why is diverse learning ability a difficulty?

A: I know it really helps when you design differentiated worksheets for them, but time is really limited. Also, it is hard to use tasks when students have different characteristics or special education needs, such as very-abled, less-abled, dyslexic, attention-deficient.

Q: Why is curriculum objectives or schedule a difficulty?

A: Schools care about on-schedule so much. My placement school requires us to finish reading questions, rather than raising reading interest. So you can imagine how difficult it is to add extra tasks.

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