

Article

A Study on the Design of English Reading Instruction in Senior High School from the Perspective of Cultivating English Core Competence

Yanli Shen^{1,*}

¹ China West Normal University, Nanchong, China

* Correspondence: Yanli Shen, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China

Abstract: The revised English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools underscores that the primary objective of secondary education is to continually enhance students' overall quality while emphasizing the cultivation of core competencies, which encompass language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning capacity. Within high school English education, reading occupies a paramount position as a fundamental avenue for developing these competencies. Drawing upon Multiple Intelligences Theory and Humanistic Theory as theoretical foundations, this study employs classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis as research methods to systematically investigate the reading instruction practices and instructional design approaches of ten English teachers at a senior high school in Ziyang, Sichuan Province, China. The research addresses three central questions: whether teachers incorporate core competence cultivation into their reading lesson designs, what key factors influence the development of students' core competencies during reading instruction, and how core competencies can be effectively integrated into English reading teaching design. The findings reveal that although teachers demonstrate commitment to improving students' language proficiency, the cultivation of cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability remains notably insufficient in practice. Four primary contributing factors are identified: the prevailing influence of exam-oriented education, limitations in teachers' pedagogical philosophy, inadequate time management during instructional activities, and insufficient analysis of students' learning conditions. This study offers valuable insights to guide high school English teachers in designing more effective reading instruction and supports them in holistically nurturing students' English core competencies.

Keywords: core competence; english reading; instructional design; senior high school; english teaching

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Research

The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) formally introduced the core competency framework for the English discipline, which has since garnered increasing scholarly and pedagogical attention. Both academic researchers and English educators prioritize its development, dedicating efforts to enhancing students' core English competencies. As a pivotal component of this endeavor, the English reading course serves as a critical platform for cultivating such competencies. The importance of integrating core competency objectives into English reading instruction is widely acknowledged. Despite extensive domestic and international research on core competencies, practical implementation in classroom settings remains challenging for educators [1]. Therefore, it is essential for English teachers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the discipline-specific core competencies and adopt them as the guiding principle in designing reading instruction, thereby advancing the reform and development of contemporary English curricula.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

With the establishment of the core competency framework for the English discipline, educators recognize the necessity of cultivating students holistically across four interrelated dimensions: language ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness, and learning ability. This study aims to investigate how core competency principles can be effectively applied in high school English reading instruction, identify key factors influencing the development of these competencies, and address practical challenges in designing reading lessons that foster core competency while enhancing overall teaching quality [1, 2].

English holds an increasingly important position in global communication, and reading remains a central component of English teaching and learning. The introduction of the English discipline's core competency framework has generated widespread scholarly interest and emerged as a prominent focus in educational research. Integrating core competency theory with English reading instruction enriches theoretical discourse on competency development and provides methodological reference for future English education studies. This study contributes to deepening and expanding the theoretical understanding of English core competency, thereby strengthening its pedagogical relevance and classroom applicability. It aligns with the broader educational goal of cultivating both academic excellence and ethical character within English language education. By embedding core competency development throughout the reading instruction process, the study explores innovative teaching approaches, advances pedagogical thinking, and offers actionable insights for educators [3]. It supports teachers in refining their instructional design and systematically incorporating core competency principles into everyday classroom practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Key Concepts

2.1.1. English Subject Core Competency

The concept of 'core competency' emerged from international educational research initiatives [4]. It was first introduced in collaborative work by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of the European Union, with foundational development beginning in 1997. This framework has since gained broad recognition globally. Building upon this international foundation, China formally advanced its own conceptualization in 2014 through the policy document 'Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Implementation and Fulfilling the Fundamental Task of Moral Education and Talent Cultivation'. This document provided a precise definition of core competency as the essential qualities and abilities students require to support lifelong personal development and responsible social engagement. In 2016, China published the 'Core Competences for Student Development in China', which organizes student development into three interrelated dimensions: cultural foundation, independent development, and social participation. These dimensions are further articulated through six key qualities—humanities literacy, scientific literacy, learning ability, healthy living, responsibility, and practical innovation.

Systematic exploration of discipline-specific core competencies in English language education in China commenced in 2015. A pivotal discussion on this topic took place at the 19th Academic Annual Meeting of the Foreign Language Teaching Professional Committee of the Chinese Society of Education, where emphasis was placed on curriculum refinement, integrated language skill development, and the centrality of core competencies. The 2017 'English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School' established the English subject core competency as the foundational orientation for curriculum design and implementation. It represents the discipline-specific interpretation of broader student core competencies and outlines clear expectations for student capability development. The standards define four interrelated components. Language ability refers to the capacity to comprehend and convey meaning effectively across diverse

social contexts; it serves as the foundational element supporting the other three components. Cultural awareness entails balanced understanding and appreciation of both Chinese and global cultures, fostering respectful cross-cultural perspectives and dispositions. Thinking quality reflects students' development in logical reasoning, critical analysis, and creative problem solving. Learning ability encompasses students' capacity to consciously select, adapt, and apply effective English learning strategies, broaden their learning resources, and continuously improve learning outcomes. Together, these four components guide the development of proficient language users equipped for meaningful participation in an interconnected world [5].

2.1.2. English Reading Teaching Design

English reading remains a central focus in English language instruction. When designing reading lessons, teachers should prioritize learners' developmental needs and adapt classroom activities accordingly. Reading instruction design entails the systematic conceptualization and organization of pedagogical components, as well as the selection of appropriate teaching strategies grounded in curriculum standards, learner profiles, textual features, and contextual constraints [6]. A comprehensive lesson plan typically specifies learning objectives, anticipated challenges, instructional methodologies, procedural steps, and time allocation. Drawing on the core principles of the current curriculum framework and the distinctive characteristics of English teaching design, this study defines English reading teaching design as the intentional process through which teachers analyze the linguistic content, structural organization, and learners' readiness levels of reading texts to formulate clear objectives, identify key difficulties, and develop an effective instructional sequence aimed at enhancing students' reading proficiency and fostering their subject-specific core competencies.

2.2. *Research on English Core Competency*

As early as 1993, efforts to cultivate foundational competencies began, aiming to support the holistic development of all students in ideological and moral awareness, cultural and scientific literacy, practical skills, and physical and mental well-being. In 2001, national guidelines for basic education were issued, marking a key stage in advancing quality-oriented education. It has been emphasized that English core competency should include creative thinking and the ability to address complex challenges, with creative thinking recognized as a central objective in future-oriented English education. Further conceptualization identifies four interrelated dimensions: language proficiency, cultural competence, cognitive development, and learning capacity. To fully understand English core competency, it is essential to begin from the distinctive educational value of the discipline itself.

To sum up, while theoretical work on English subject competency remains limited, some studies have explored its pedagogical application. Current discourse centers largely on conceptualizing English subject literacy, yet integration into curriculum design and classroom practice remains underdeveloped. Although curriculum initiatives led by subject specialists have yielded pilot teaching experiments, such implementations are still rare in everyday instructional settings [4]. Therefore, there is an urgent need for applied research focused on English subject competency to narrow the theory–practice gap and strengthen the effectiveness of English education.

2.3. *Research on English Reading Teaching Design*

2.3.1. Research on English Reading Teaching Design Abroad

Internationally, teaching design is closely aligned with prevailing language learning methodologies. Existing research indicates a progressive deepening of inquiry into English reading instruction, offering valuable insights for pedagogical development in China [7]. Emphasis has been placed on analyzing reading materials through the lens of textual semantic structure, encouraging educators to explore the underlying viewpoints and intentions conveyed by authors. Teaching goals must be clearly defined, while instructors are expected to conduct thorough self-assessments of their competencies,

learner needs, and instructional motivations. Differentiated reading strategies have been systematically examined, including fostering learner motivation, enhancing reading fluency, strengthening vocabulary comprehension, selecting appropriately leveled texts, and implementing formative evaluation of the reading process. Specific recommendations for reading-oriented lesson planning have also been advanced, urging teachers to establish clear instructional priorities and select reading materials that align precisely with learners' developmental requirements and the intended reading objectives. Collectively, international scholarship in this domain has developed earlier and more comprehensively, providing a robust foundation of theoretical and practical guidance for refining English reading teaching design within domestic educational contexts.

2.3.2. Research on English Reading Teaching Design at Home

In the mid-1980s, China began to pay attention to the field of instructional design, though early research primarily involved translating foreign papers and monographs on the subject. A search for 'the teaching design of English reading' on CNKI reveals that most studies design effective teaching activities grounded in established theoretical frameworks, with a focus on cultivating subject-specific core competencies within English reading instruction. The majority of this research centers on classroom implementation, while a limited number examine core competency development through systematic collection and analysis of actual reading lesson designs. English teaching design is understood as a comprehensive process in which teachers formulate objectives, instructional procedures, pedagogical strategies, and technological applications based on analyses of learner characteristics and foreign language learning needs, followed by evaluation and iterative refinement. Evaluation should incorporate diverse criteria and methods, and feedback mechanisms enable timely adjustment of instructional plans. Effective English reading instruction aims to foster efficient reading habits by equipping students with evidence-based reading strategies aligned with contemporary understandings of reading processes. Emphasis has also been placed on developing students' higher-order thinking skills, including logical reasoning, critical analysis, and comparative evaluation, as essential components of English subject competence [3]. The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition) further emphasizes discourse-centered reading instruction: teachers are encouraged to design and implement lessons anchored in authentic discourse, guiding students to examine textual structure, linguistic features, and expressive functions to deepen comprehension and communicative competence.

3. Theoretical Basis

3.1. Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, an influential educational framework developed in the mid-1980s, has achieved broad international recognition [3]. First systematically presented in a seminal work published in 1983, the theory posits that human intelligence is not unitary but comprises at least seven distinct, relatively independent cognitive capacities. Subsequent scholarly development expanded this framework, with an eighth dimension—naturalistic intelligence—formally incorporated in 1996. This conceptual shift has prompted widespread reflection across educational practice, encouraging a more holistic and pluralistic understanding of human potential. As a result, pedagogical approaches increasingly emphasize diversified assessment and instruction aligned with varied cognitive strengths. In English language education, core competencies are structured around four interrelated dimensions, a configuration that resonates with the multidimensional nature of intelligence. Yet reading instruction often prioritizes linguistic proficiency while underutilizing other cognitive pathways. Integrating this theoretical perspective into English reading pedagogy supports the comprehensive development of core competencies and enables the strategic deployment of varied instructional methods.

3.2. Humanistic Learning Theory

Humanistic psychology emphasizes self-actualization as the inherent potential of individuals, independent of external educational influence. A widely recognized framework organizes human needs into a hierarchical structure, positing that higher-level needs become salient only after foundational physiological and psychological requirements are satisfied. Consequently, effective teaching necessitates attention to learners' basic well-being and the provision of supportive, empathetic, and respectful learning environments. The four dimensions of English subject core competency align closely with this perspective, and their development should proceed progressively alongside the cultivation of language proficiency [8]. Meaningful learning, as conceptualized within this tradition, prioritizes the holistic engagement of learners—integrating cognitive processing with affective experience—rather than focusing solely on measurable outcomes. Instruction must therefore be learner-centered, treating students' thoughts, emotions, and lived experiences as central to pedagogical practice, rather than reducing learning to performance metrics such as grades or test scores. This perspective holds broad relevance for contemporary educational practice, underscoring the goal of nurturing well-rounded individuals—a principle fully compatible with the integrative aims of English subject core competency.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Questions

The new curriculum standard emphasizes the development of students' English core competence; however, classroom practice often prioritizes linguistic knowledge instruction, leading to insufficient attention to the other three dimensions [6]. As a foundational component of English education, reading instruction plays a vital role in cultivating core competence. This study therefore investigates the following three research questions through classroom observation and teacher interviews:

1. To what extent do teachers incorporate the cultivation of core competence when designing reading lessons for senior high school students?
2. What are the primary factors influencing the development of students' core competence during senior high school English reading instruction?
3. How can core competence be effectively integrated into the design of English reading instruction at the senior high school level?

The first question is addressed through analysis of instructional design documents, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. Drawing on the framework of English subject core competence outlined in the new curriculum standard, the study examines teachers' conceptual understanding and practical implementation to determine whether and how core competence is considered in lesson planning and delivery. The second question is explored using the same dual-method approach: interviews identify perceived challenges and contextual constraints, while classroom observations capture real-time student engagement and pedagogical implementation issues. The third question synthesizes findings from the first two: based on identified gaps and barriers, the study proposes targeted, practice-oriented strategies to strengthen the integration of core competence in senior high school English reading instruction design.

4.2. Research Objects

To address the three issues outlined previously, this study selects ten English teachers from Grade 1 of Ziyang Middle School as research participants. The selection is grounded in several considerations: the researcher completed a three-month internship at Ziyang Middle School from March to June 2023, enabling sustained observation and engagement; Ziyang Middle School maintains a high standard of education within the region, enhancing the credibility of the collected data; and Grade 1 senior high school students at this institution are currently using the latest edition of the FLTRP high school English textbooks, aligning with the core principles of the updated curriculum standards. All ten participants are female English teachers—two hold master's degrees and eight

hold bachelor's degrees—and each has accumulated at least five years of teaching experience.

4.3. Research Methods

4.3.1. Interview

Ten English teachers from Grade 10 at Ziyang Middle School participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The interviews aimed to explore their understanding of the English subject's core competencies and their strategies for integrating these competencies into reading instruction design. The interview questions were as follows, and participants responded based on their professional experience:

1. Are you familiar with the core competencies defined for the English subject?
2. Is it necessary to articulate core competencies for the English subject? Please explain your view.
3. How do you incorporate the English subject's core competencies into your reading lesson planning?
4. What challenges impede the effective development of English subject core competencies in practice?
5. How would you design reading instruction to more effectively cultivate students' core competencies in English?

4.3.2. Analysis of Sample Reading Teaching Designs

Instructional design refers to the conceptual framework and operational blueprint for systematically integrating teaching elements into a coherent whole [4, 9]. It entails selecting appropriate teaching strategies aligned with curriculum requirements and the specific characteristics of learners, including the formulation of clear learning objectives, identification of potential instructional challenges, selection of suitable pedagogical methods, sequencing of instructional activities, and rational allocation of time. This study analyzes ten representative reading lesson plans drawn from the latest edition of the FLTRP Senior High School English Compulsory Textbook, Volume 2, covering thematic areas such as food, festivals, culture, tourism, sports, and nature. To examine how English core competencies are cultivated in reading instruction, the analysis is grounded in the four interrelated dimensions of English core competence—language proficiency, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability—as defined in the national curriculum framework. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the stated teaching objectives in these lesson plans correspond to the proficiency expectations articulated in the English Curriculum Standard for General Senior High Schools.

4.3.3. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation serves as a key method for analyzing how teachers design and implement English reading instruction. The data collected through direct observation are highly authentic and contextually specific, enabling the researcher to directly assess how English subject core competencies are integrated into reading lesson design and enacted in actual classroom practice. This approach also facilitates identification of factors that impede the development of these competencies. In this study, ten high school English teachers were selected as participants. With their informed consent, each teacher's reading lesson was observed and systematically documented. The researcher recorded instructional procedures and teaching activities, evaluating the extent to which the lesson—across pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading phases—supports the cultivation of students' core competencies, guided by a structured classroom observation table. Analysis of both the implementation of core competency development and the challenges encountered yields actionable insights for refining English reading pedagogy. The observation framework is grounded in the developmental objectives specified in the current English curriculum standards, with emphasis on the four core disciplinary competencies.

The classroom observation scale is presented in Table 1, where ★ denotes the degree of alignment between teaching activities and the development of students' English core

competencies: ★ indicates no alignment; ★★ indicates minimal alignment; ★★★ indicates partial alignment; ★★★★ indicates substantial alignment; ★★★★★ indicates full alignment.

Table 1. Classroom Observation Scale

Core competency of English subject Teaching procedures	Language ability	Cultural awareness	Thinking quality	Learning ability
Pre-reading				
While-reading				
Post-reading				

4.4. Research Procedure

To investigate the cultivation of English subject core competency in high school reading instruction and the factors influencing its development, a study was conducted from March to June 2023 with the aim of identifying and addressing existing challenges. This comprehensive research process consisted of three sequential stages: preparation, implementation, and analysis and synthesis of findings.

Preparation Stage: Prior to data collection, the 2017 Edition (2020 Revision) of the English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools was thoroughly reviewed. The standard underscores the importance of developing students' English core competency, particularly through discourse-based learning [10]. As a foundational component of the English curriculum, reading instruction plays a pivotal role in fostering this competency. Consequently, designing effective English reading lessons has become a key professional responsibility for subject teachers and an urgent pedagogical priority. After reviewing relevant literature and assessing the practical significance of the topic, the research focus was refined to examine challenges encountered in implementing competency-oriented reading instruction and to propose evidence-informed improvement strategies and recommendations.

Implementation Stage — Observation: To gain firsthand insight into how English subject core competency is nurtured in actual classroom settings, the author observed and documented reading lessons delivered by ten participating English teachers, following their informed consent. Observations centered on instructional design features, teaching activities, and students' in-class engagement and responses.

Implementation Stage — Instructional Design Analysis: Following classroom observations, the author examined the lesson plans prepared by the ten teachers. Using the four dimensions of English subject core competency specified in the current curriculum standard as an analytical framework, the extent to which each teacher integrated these competencies into their reading instruction was systematically evaluated and recorded.

Implementation Stage — Teacher Interviews: To explore teachers' understanding of English subject core competency and ascertain whether and how they incorporated its development into their reading lesson designs, semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with all ten participating teachers.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1. Analysis of Classroom Observation

Based on observations of ten teachers' instruction across reading lessons from Unit 1, the author documented how students' core competencies were cultivated during these classes, as summarized in Table 2 (As shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Classroom Observation Records

English core competency Title of the Article	Language ability	Cultural awareness	Thinking quality	Learning ability
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Unit 1 A child of two cuisines	★★★★	★		★
Unit 2 The real Father Christmas	★★★★	★★	★	★★
Unit 3 A game for the world	★★★★★		★★	★
Unit 3 Running to a better life	★★★★			
Unit 4 Understanding ideas: When Hamlet meets Peking Opera	★★★★	★★	★★	★★
Unit 4 Developing ideas: Good book, bad movies?	★★★★★	★	★	★
Unit 5 Understanding ideas: Blogging Australia	★★★★			
Unit 5 Developing ideas: Coast to coast	★★★★★		★	★★
Unit 6 Understanding ideas: Sharks: dangerous or endangered	★★★★			
Unit 6 Developing ideas: What's really green?	★★★★		★	

Analysis of the classroom observation records reveals several consistent patterns and areas for improvement. While all ten English teachers demonstrate alignment with the conceptual framework of English subject core competencies, implementation across the four competency dimensions shows variability and certain limitations. This section presents a systematic analysis of the observation data structured around those four dimensions.

Language ability: All ten teachers consistently emphasize vocabulary and grammar instruction as foundational to reading comprehension. Each unit centers on a distinct thematic focus, and teachers explicitly connect linguistic elements—such as key lexical items and grammatical structures—to the textual content [11, 12]. To foster language expression, teachers incorporate peer-based activities, including small-group or adjacent-desk discussions. However, as this is primarily a reading-focused lesson, oral production remains integrated within comprehension tasks rather than developed through dedicated speaking practice.

Cultural awareness: Teachers' attention to cultural dimensions varies significantly depending on the textual content. For instance, the article 'Running to a Better Life' (Unit 3) contains minimal cultural references, limiting opportunities for intercultural exploration. In contrast, 'When Hamlet Meets Peking Opera' (Unit 4) explicitly bridges Western and Chinese cultural traditions; in such cases, teachers actively guide students in comparative analysis to deepen appreciation of both cultural systems and reinforce confidence in Chinese cultural identity [13]. Overall, the scope for cultivating cultural awareness is constrained by the thematic range of the prescribed texts.

Thinking quality: Teachers regularly pose text-based questions to stimulate cognitive engagement. However, classroom observation indicates that some students struggle to interpret question intent, resulting in hesitation or disengagement. Additionally, many questions remain at the level of factual recall rather than prompting higher-order reasoning. Effective questioning should prioritize cognitive demand and student accessibility, ensuring alignment with learners' developmental readiness and instructional objectives.

Learning ability: Instructional strategies predominantly target reading comprehension, supplemented by group discussion. Yet roles within these groups are often undefined, leading to uneven participation and diminished motivation among some students. Post-class assignments are largely limited to vocabulary and grammar reinforcement exercises. Consequently, students show limited development of

autonomous learning strategies and insufficient capacity for self-directed English study outside class hours [14, 15].

5.2. Analysis of Instructional Design

The reading instruction designs of 10 English teachers are analyzed according to the four dimensions of English subject core competencies, with results summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of Instructional Design

Teaching content	Analysis
Unit 1 A child of two cuisines	The instructional design lacks the analysis of learning situation, and the problems designed by the teacher cannot well exercise the students' thinking quality. The activities of vocabulary knowledge and grammar knowledge account for a large proportion, and the cultivation of cultural awareness is not much.
Unit 2 The real Father Christmas	The teaching design effectively addresses the cultivation of students' English core competency. Specifically, the nurturing of language ability is evident in the explanation of vocabulary. Furthermore, group discussions and related activities aimed at stimulating cultural reflection contribute to the development of students' thinking quality and learning ability.
Unit 3 Understanding ideas: A game for the world	The teacher attaches great importance to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, and uses questions to promote the teaching of reading, so as to cultivate students' thinking and learning ability. The teaching content does not involve cultural aspects.
Unit 3 Developing ideas: Running to a better life	The teacher pays too much attention to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, and the teaching link is simple. The teaching goal does not mention the cultivation of students' learning ability, so it is difficult to stimulate students' thinking by asking questions.
Unit 4 Understanding ideas: When Hamlet meets Peking Opera	The teacher embodies the four dimensions of English subject core competence in the teaching objectives. In teaching activities, cultural knowledge is supplemented to some extent. Teachers design discussion sessions for the content of articles to cultivate students' thinking quality.
Unit 4 Developing ideas: Good book, bad movies?	The teacher attaches great importance to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, focusing on the improvement of students' language skills. The corresponding cultural knowledge is supplemented, but cooperative learning is relatively less.

Unit 5 Understanding ideas: Blogging Australia	The teachers in this class lacked analysis of the learning situation, and the teaching content focused on the development of language skills. Teachers' background introduction to Australia is too little, and students' participation in group discussion is not high.
Unit 5 Developing ideas: Coast to coast	The teacher overly focuses on language knowledge instruction and fails to sufficiently cultivate students' thinking quality and learning abilities in their teaching objectives.
Unit 6 Understanding ideas: Sharks: dangerous or endangered	The teacher explained many words and expressions about animal protection, focusing on developing students' speaking and reading skills. The class lacks group discussion and cooperation, broad goals of emotional attitude and values, and lacks academic analysis.
Unit 6 Developing ideas: What's really green?	The teacher focuses on explaining vocabulary expression, stress, and language skill training in green living. The class cultivates students' collaborative learning abilities through organizing group discussions, but lack knowledge supplementation on green living.

Analysis of the 10 English teachers' instructional designs reveals several recurring patterns and areas for improvement. While all teachers demonstrate a foundational understanding of English subject core competencies and intentionally incorporate them into reading instruction, emphasis varies significantly across dimensions. Language ability receives the strongest focus, particularly through extended attention to core vocabulary and grammatical structures; however, opportunities for students to practice expressive language use remain limited [16, 17]. Regarding cultural awareness, textual analysis tends to overlook deeper cultural layers, resulting in minimal transmission of cultural knowledge to students; this limitation is partly attributable to the inherent cultural neutrality of certain source texts. With respect to thinking quality, most lesson plans lack purposefully designed activities that foster higher-order cognition; teacher-posed questions predominantly derive directly from the text, constraining opportunities for critical or reflective engagement. Learning ability—the least emphasized dimension—is primarily addressed via classroom interactions and homework, yet even collaborative tasks such as group discussions often lack clearly defined individual roles and responsibilities, thereby impeding effective, student-centered, and cooperative learning.

5.3. Analysis of Interview

To investigate the perspectives of 10 senior high school English teachers on instructional design for reading instruction and to identify key factors influencing the development of English proficiency, structured interviews were conducted. The interviews focused on two central themes: teachers' understanding of the core competencies of the English subject, and their approaches to integrating and enhancing these competencies within reading instruction. The following questions guided the interviews:

1. Are you familiar with the core competencies of the English subject?
2. Do you consider it essential to emphasize and foster the core competencies of the English subject? Please explain your reasoning.
3. How do you incorporate the core competencies of the English subject into your reading instruction design?
4. What factors do you perceive as hindering the development of English subject core competencies?

5. How would you design reading instruction to effectively cultivate students' core competencies in English?

Interview findings revealed variation in teachers' conceptual understanding of English subject core competencies. While most teachers recognized the term, few could accurately articulate its definition. A small number identified its four-dimensional structure, yet several were unable to specify all four dimensions. Such inconsistencies in understanding influenced teaching design, often resulting in ambiguous or misaligned instructional objectives. Despite differing levels of familiarity, all ten teachers affirmed the importance of establishing and implementing English subject core competencies. For instance, one teacher noted that these competencies represent a contemporary developmental goal aligned with broader educational reform objectives. Regarding integration into reading instruction, some teachers reported challenges in operationalizing the competencies, while others explicitly structured their lesson objectives around the four dimensions to ensure alignment. On barriers to implementation, six teachers cited exam-oriented pressures, emphasizing the centrality of student grades and test performance [11]. Three highlighted difficulties arising from the increased complexity of newly adopted textbooks, coupled with insufficient depth in curriculum interpretation and limited mastery of the core competency framework. Additional constraints mentioned included time limitations, students' learning habits, and resource availability. In response to how reading instruction might better support competency development, five teachers stressed the need for deeper engagement with the latest curriculum standards and more rigorous instructional planning. Others emphasized thorough textbook analysis, explicit attention to textual thematic meaning in light of curriculum expectations, and consistent post-lesson reflection.

6. Conclusion

This paper presents a comprehensive evaluation of how English subject core competency is cultivated in high school English reading instruction, drawing on classroom observations and teacher interviews. It identifies key barriers to effective implementation and proposes actionable strategies for integrating core competency more meaningfully into reading teaching designs.

Findings indicate that while teachers demonstrate foundational awareness of English subject core competency and attempt to incorporate it into reading instruction, their understanding and application often remain surface-level. School-based teaching and research activities frequently center on this concept, yet pedagogical integration tends to lack depth and flexibility. Teachers report persistent constraints—particularly time pressure and assessment demands—that limit sustained engagement with the full scope of core competency. In practice, current reading instruction disproportionately emphasizes language ability and linguistic knowledge, with comparatively little attention devoted to the other three dimensions: cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Class time is routinely allocated to explicating vocabulary, grammar, and textual details, and homework assignments predominantly reinforce these linguistic elements.

Four interrelated factors impede the effective cultivation of English subject core competency in reading teaching design. First, the pervasive influence of exam-oriented education constrains curricular flexibility and pedagogical innovation. Second, entrenched teaching philosophies hinder conceptual reinterpretation and adaptive implementation of core competency. Third, insufficient classroom time management limits opportunities to balance skill development across all competency domains. Fourth, inadequate analysis of students' prior knowledge, learning needs, and developmental readiness undermines responsive instructional planning.

To strengthen competency-oriented reading instruction, teachers can strategically reallocate classroom time—even within existing assessment frameworks—to create space for cultivating the non-linguistic dimensions of core competency. Greater intentionality in sequencing and pacing of activities, coupled with ongoing reflection on instructional effectiveness, supports more balanced development. Equally important is systematic

attention to learners' diverse backgrounds and evolving capacities, enabling teaching designs that are both rigorous and responsive.

Appendix

Appendix a: Classroom Observation Scale

Core competency of	English subject	Language	Cultural	Thinking	Learning
Teaching	ability	awareness	quality	ability	
procedures					
Pre-reading					
While-reading					
Post-reading					

Appendix B: The Interview Outline

1. What is your understanding of the core competencies associated with the English discipline?
2. Is it necessary to articulate core competencies for the English discipline? Please explain your reasoning.
3. How are core competencies for the English discipline integrated into reading lesson design?
4. What factors impede the development of English subject core competencies?
5. How might reading instruction be designed to effectively foster students' core competencies in English?

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