

Enhancing Children's Print Reading Motivation through Interest-Oriented Approaches

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Abstract:

With the development of information technology, more and more students, parents, and teachers are focusing on electronic reading. While the shift towards electronic reading is well acknowledged, its impact on the intrinsic motivation for reading printed books among children remains underexplored. This study analyzes how electronic devices and insufficient reading environments influence children's preference for print over digital books. For example, the functions of smartphones and other electronic devices are very rich and powerful and schools and families do not offer a comprehensive reading atmosphere or philosophy. The findings reveal that despite the convenience of digital formats, printed books significantly enhance reading comprehension and focus, which are crucial for developing lifelong reading habits. Based on these results, the paper recommends strategies to foster a reading environment that aligns with children's personal interests and reduces electronic distractions. These strategies aim to revitalize interest in printed books and promote sustained reading engagement among students.

Keywords: Electronic reading; printed books; reading habits; reading motivation

1. Introduction

With the development of information technology, more and more students, parents, and teachers are focusing on electronic reading. Electronic reading indeed provides many conveniences for students, such as more efficient book selection and convenient reading anywhere. However, for students, reading printed books is very important because it can improve their reading abilities, such as understanding text and enhancing focus. These benefits can gradually help students become lifelong readers [1].

Currently, electronic products not only serve as substitutes for printed books but also have many entertainment functions that occupy a significant amount of students' time. Additionally, some reading environments, such as those provided by schools and families, do not offer a comprehensive reading atmosphere or philosophy. These factors contribute to a lower volume of printed book reading among students [2].

At present, research on cultivating children's ability and habits of reading printed books often focuses on compulsory activities in schools and home literacy environments, such as reading comprehension activities, which are external factors influencing children's printed book reading. Besides these reasons, the intrinsic motivation of students for reading cannot be ignored. Students are more likely

to choose books that match their interests. Therefore, students' interests and preferences play a crucial role in their willingness to read printed books [3].

However, research on children's intrinsic motivation driven by personal interests is still limited. This paper primarily studies how to cultivate children's reading of printed books under interest-driven conditions.

2. Reasons for the Lack of Interest in Print Reading Among Children

2.1 The Impact of Electronic Devices

The use of modern electronic devices is becoming prevalent at increasingly younger ages, meaning many students prefer to use these devices in their leisure time, especially smartphones. There is a correlation between smartphone use and reading interest, implying that using smartphones can lead to a decrease in reading interest [4]. Additionally, the functions of smartphones and other electronic devices are very rich and powerful; for instance, students can access information resources, use various chat software, browse short videos, or play games. However, students' self-discipline is generally weaker compared to adults, so when students immerse themselves in the entertainment features of electronic devices, they tend to extend their usage time involuntarily, which makes it easier to distract

them from interest in printed books.

Moreover, extensive electronic reading also occupies much of students' reading time. However, the choice of electronic reading is due to its many advantages, such as the ability to access desired books at any time, and online book resources are generally more abundant than those in physical bookstores or libraries. But depending on the purpose of reading, when the goal is to cultivate children's interest and ability in reading, the advantages of electronic reading may not be real advantages. Because rich print reading can better enhance students' reading abilities [5].

2.2 Mismatch Between Print Reading Materials and Children's Reading Interests and Abilities

Firstly, many schools' mandatory reading lists do not match students' interests, making it difficult for students to persist in reading. The types of reading materials are very diverse, generally divided into fiction and non-fiction. To increase students' reading volume, schools impose mandatory reading lists and quantity requirements. However, each student's interests and hobbies vary, and if schools uniformly require students to read only a few or a dozen types of extracurricular mandatory readings, this significantly affects students' reading interests, hindering the continuation of extracurricular reading activities [6].

Secondly, for some students with relatively weak reading abilities, being required to read books beyond their reading capabilities can also lead to a gradual loss of interest in reading. For instance, observations show that younger elementary students (grades 1-2) often have higher requirements for reading aids, such as phonetic texts, colorful pictures, or large and loosely formatted text. If they are asked to read books without phonetic annotations and full of text, it greatly increases their reading apprehension. Additionally, for some children who have lower reading abilities compared to their peers, such as having a limited vocabulary and weak text comprehension, more attention needs to be paid to their reading interests and abilities, otherwise, it will greatly reduce their future reading possibilities [7].

2.3 Family Reading Environment and Philosophy

Currently, in some middle-class families, more and more parents value the cultivation of early reading in children. For example, conducting parent-child reading activities at home or teaching literacy before school age plays a crucial role in cultivating students' reading interests. However, after entering elementary school, as schoolwork intensifies, many families gradually reduce their daily parent-child reading activities, and parents prefer to have

their children spend a lot of time completing school homework. More importantly, when children read with their parents at home, the books chosen by parents often match the children's interests. However, as children gradually reduce their parent-child reading time at home, it not only reduces print reading but also loses a great opportunity to cultivate and sustain reading interest.

In some impoverished families and areas, many left-behind children or children from economically disadvantaged families cannot have a stable reading environment at home. Firstly, purchasing reading materials requires financial support, which is often a neglected expense for these families. Secondly, a stable reading environment requires consistent parental involvement, but due to livelihood issues, most of their parents need to work away from home and do not have fixed time to accompany their children in reading; finally, the expectations for students' academic levels and reading abilities are relatively low in impoverished areas and families, and many children have to do additional chores from a young age, occupying their extracurricular time. These factors contribute to why these students fail to establish a good connection with print books from a young age.

3. The Importance of Print Reading

3.1 Advantages of Print Reading

Print reading has irreplaceable characteristics. According to research by Myrberg, print books make it easier for readers to establish a physical and emotional connection with the material [8]. While reading print books, readers can feel the texture of the paper, see the ink of the print, and even smell the unique aroma of books, which are experiences that digital reading cannot provide. These sensory experiences deepen the reader's immersion, making the reading process more vivid and enduring.

Additionally, print reading helps maintain longer periods of focus. Compared to digital reading, print books do not have interactive ads or notifications, allowing readers to maintain a static and deep state of reading. This is particularly important for children as they are at a crucial stage of developing reading skills and habits. A distraction-free environment can help them better understand and absorb content. Therefore, for the development of children's reading abilities, schools and parents need to be clear about the current goals of fostering students' reading. It involves enabling students to read independently and deeply, gradually becoming lifelong readers. The unique advantages of print reading help students continuously improve their reading abilities by immersing them in deep reading.

3.2 Print Reading Promotes the Development of Reading Skills

Reading skills are the cornerstone of learning, encompassing basic vocabulary comprehension and more complex information processing abilities such as critical thinking and logical reasoning, which are crucial for personal academic and career development [9]. Print books, by providing coherent text and structure, require readers to engage in deeper thinking and understanding during reading, which is difficult to achieve with quick browsing or fragmented reading.

Through extended periods of deep reading, students enhance their understanding and critical thinking skills, which are vital for their academic achievements and future career development. The use of print books, especially in early childhood education, supports the development of reading skills due to its characteristics that promote deep reading, thereby laying a solid academic foundation for students.

3.3 Print Reading Facilitates the Development of Long-Term Reading Habits and Lifelong Readers

Firstly, print reading more easily facilitates textual understanding and knowledge acquisition. Print reading makes it easier to grasp the details and content of the text for deep thinking, forming a memory, and organization of the overall logical structure of the books [10]. Secondly, compared to digital reading, print books are relatively thicker in binding. If students need to complete a book of about 200 pages, they need to persist over a period, and the sense of accomplishment after finishing the book makes it more likely for them to want to read another book, creating a positive cycle. Moreover, the sensory experience and operability of print books are better. For elementary students, they are more likely to use colored pencils to make notes or fold pages. Most importantly, many parents of elementary students limit their children's use of electronic devices. Thus, for these reasons, print reading more easily fosters persistent reading habits, thereby helping readers become lifelong readers.

3.4 Beneficial for Eye Protection

Firstly, print books are not luminous bodies and do not pose a threat of blue light to vision. Prolonged exposure to blue light can cause eye fatigue, especially for students in their growth stages, potentially affecting their vision [11]. Secondly, prolonged staring at screens can cause dry eyes because reading on screens for extended periods reduces the frequency of blinking [11]. However, print reading does not have these issues. Moreover, compared to digital reading, which requires a fixed posture and angle, print

reading offers the flexibility to change postures frequently, which can reduce physical strain and improve circulation. This flexibility helps maintain the reader's comfort over longer reading sessions. Print reading allows for adjustments in reading posture at any time, allowing readers to immerse in a more comfortable and natural reading environment. This adaptability is particularly beneficial in preventing the development of posture-related discomfort such as neck or back pain. During reading, the pressure on the eyes is significantly reduced. Finally, print reading is usually done under natural light, which better protects vision. This natural lighting is more harmonious with the human circadian rhythm and reduces the risk of disrupting sleep patterns, a common issue with artificial lighting from screens.

4. Enhancing the Cultivation of Children's Reading Interest through Collaborative Education Mechanisms

4.1 Interest-Driven Motivation for Children's Reading

Children's motivation to read is very important as it relates to whether they can engage in effective or proactive reading. Children's reading motivation can be divided into two parts: intrinsic motivation from an involvement perspective and extrinsic motivation from an achievement perspective [12]. This paper focuses on children's intrinsic motivation driven by their interests. However, a very important factor affecting intrinsic motivation is reading interest. Enhancing students' reading interests can be achieved in multiple ways. Teachers and parents need to pay attention to each student's interests, including their personality traits, hobbies, and reading goals. Tailored reading recommendations should be made based on individual student preferences. For example, some students may be very interested in the scientific aspects of butterflies, and parents and teachers can recommend butterfly-related science or literature books that match these students' reading interests. Starting from personal reading interests makes it easier for students to engage in print reading.

Tailored reading lists should also match each student's reading difficulty level. Besides considering students' reading interests, schools and parents should also pay attention to each student's current reading ability. For instance, younger elementary students in China might prefer reading materials with aids like phonetic annotations or colorful pictures, which can reduce reading barriers and lessen their apprehension towards reading. Moreover, for students whose reading abilities are below average compared to their peers, teachers, and parents need to focus on

their actual reading levels and provide appropriate reading support. If these students are also required to read the same mandatory books as their peers, it would increase their apprehension and hinder the cultivation of their reading interests.

4.2 Increasing Collaboration Between Schools and Families to Develop Personalized Reading Activities

Personalized reading activities should be developed for different students (both in school and at home). Since most of a child's upbringing occurs within school and family settings, optimizing the reading environment in both areas is crucial [13]. For instance, schools can enhance reading corners and organize reading activities based on different reading themes. Children who are interested in specific themes are more likely to participate, gradually boosting their reading interest. At home, parents should pay attention to their children's reading interests and capabilities, provide appropriate book lists, or allow students to actively make their reading plans. This not only cultivates students' reading interest but also extends their reading time after school, gradually fostering reading habits.

It is also necessary to improve cooperation and interaction between schools and families to ensure effective communication between teachers and families and continuous monitoring and tracking of students' reading progress. For families that value fostering children's reading, parents are often more aware of their children's current reading levels, preferences, and proactive reading plans. At this point, parents need to communicate with teachers to ensure the effective implementation of these plans. However, in impoverished areas or families that do not place a high value on reading, schools play a crucial role in cultivating students' reading interests and abilities. Teachers need to pay more attention to these students and provide appropriate reading support [14].

4.3 Controlling Excessive Use of Electronic Devices

Print-based reading not only enhances students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary acquisition but also significantly influences their academic performance in other subjects and overall personal development. This study emphasizes the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation, particularly interest, in sustaining engagement with printed materials. Delving into strategies such as personalized reading programs, tailored book recommendations, and enhanced school-family partnerships, this research seeks to improve reading proficiency and foster a lifelong reading habit. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of print reading on critical thinking skills and emotional

empathy, highlighting how students who engage with printed texts tend to exhibit deeper analytical abilities and a greater capacity for understanding diverse perspectives. The research also assesses the effectiveness of print-based reading interventions across different demographic groups, aiming to identify whether certain strategies are more beneficial for specific populations. This approach not only personalizes learning but also makes it inclusive, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to develop a love for reading regardless of their background. The findings will provide valuable insights for developing effective interventions to cultivate children's lifelong reading by addressing diverse learning styles and preferences, offering a roadmap for educators and policymakers to tailor educational practices that align with the evolving needs of the digital age while preserving the benefits of traditional print media.

5. Conclusion

Print-based reading not only enhances students' reading comprehension but also significantly influences their academic performance in other subjects and overall personal development. This study emphasizes the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation, particularly interest, in sustaining engagement with printed materials. By delving into strategies to cultivate reading activities centered around students' interests, such as personalized reading programs, tailored book recommendations, and enhanced school-family partnerships, this research aims to improve reading proficiency and foster a lifelong reading habit. The findings will provide valuable insights for developing effective interventions to cultivate children's lifelong reading.

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