



# An Investigation of English Analytical Reading Skills Problems and Enhancement Strategies for Undergraduate Chinese Students at Guangxi University

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## Abstract

The purposes of this study were: 1) to investigate problems of English analytical reading skills of undergraduate Chinese students at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages, 2) to construct enhancement strategies for English reading skills of undergraduate Chinese students at Guangxi University of foreign language. The research employed a mixed-methods approach. The sample group in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 217 Chinese students and 38 teachers at Guangxi University of Foreign Language in the academic year 2025. Data collection utilized questionnaires to identify analytical reading difficulties and focus group discussions to evaluate proposed development strategies. The findings revealed that both students and teachers rated analytical reading problems at the highest level (mean scores ranging from 4.20 to 4.45 on a 5-point Likert scale), with the most significant challenges including difficulty distinguishing facts from opinions, lack of confidence in critical analysis, and struggles with identifying main arguments and supporting evidence. Key problems identified were vocabulary limitations, insufficient exposure to authentic English texts, over-reliance on translation strategies, and inadequate metacognitive reading strategy instruction. The study developed a comprehensive four-chapter framework for enhancement strategies focusing on: (1) learner-centered skill building and metacognitive development, (2) instructor guidance and innovative pedagogical approaches, (3) supportive classroom management and collaborative learning environments, and (4) authentic materials and comprehensive assessment methods. The proposed strategies were validated by three specialists with Index of Congruence (IOC) values ranging from 0.66 to 1.00, confirming their suitability for implementation. This research contributes to understanding analytical reading challenges specific to Chinese EFL learners and provides evidence-based enhancement strategies that can be adapted across similar educational contexts.

**Keywords:** English analytical reading skills problems, Enhancement Strategies, undergraduate students at Guangxi University

## 1. Introduction

English plays a pivotal role in higher education as it is the medium through which much

of the world's academic knowledge is disseminated. Among the four core skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing analytical reading is particularly essential for undergraduate and graduate students. Analytical reading enables students to go beyond surface-level comprehension, allowing them to evaluate arguments, interpret meanings, and synthesize ideas across multiple texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). At Guangxi University, undergraduate Chinese students are required to engage with a wide range of English-language academic texts, including journal articles, research reports, and textbooks. However, many students struggle with analytical reading skills due to limited vocabulary, difficulties in identifying main ideas, and insufficient strategies for critical evaluation of texts (Liu, 2020). These challenges hinder their ability to conduct research effectively, complete assignments, and prepare for further studies abroad. Teachers also face difficulties in teaching analytical reading, as they must balance large class sizes with the need to provide individualized support. Furthermore, teaching materials often emphasize literal comprehension rather than critical interpretation and evaluation (Zhang, 2021). Consequently, there is a pressing need to investigate the problems that students encounter in English analytical reading and to develop methods that can enhance their ability to critically engage with academic texts. This study is designed to identify the main problems in English analytical reading among undergraduate Chinese students at Guangxi University and to propose practical development methods that can support both students and instructors in improving reading performance.

## 2. Literature Review

Analytical reading is widely recognized as a higher-order skill that goes beyond literal comprehension of text. While general reading emphasizes understanding vocabulary, sentences, and explicit information, analytical reading requires readers to evaluate arguments, detect assumptions, and synthesize ideas across sources. According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), analytical reading is an active, critical process in which learners engage with text at both cognitive and metacognitive levels. Within Bloom's revised taxonomy, analytical reading corresponds to the higher levels of analyzing and evaluating, where students must examine rhetorical structures, assess evidence, and form judgments (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2018). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, especially in China, this distinction is crucial because students often stop at literal comprehension and lack training in deeper, evaluative reading skills (Zhang, 2021). Theories of reading comprehension also provide a strong foundation for analytical reading. The bottom-up model emphasizes word recognition, grammar decoding, and syntactic parsing. However, this approach often produces slow, surface-level comprehension, especially when readers lack sufficient vocabulary. The top-down model highlights the role of prior knowledge and schema activation, where readers use contextual cues to infer meaning. Kintsch's Construction-Integration model represents the interactive view, in which readers construct meaning by integrating linguistic input with background knowledge (Kintsch, 2018). Analytical reading aligns closely with this interactive model because it requires readers not only to process text but also to connect it with existing knowledge, evaluate its logic, and monitor comprehension. Another theoretical aspect is the role of vocabulary, inference, and schema. Nation (2020) emphasizes that academic vocabulary is the backbone of successful analytical reading, and students typically need 8,000–9,000-word families to comprehend university-level texts. Without sufficient vocabulary, students rely heavily on translation and dictionary use, which interferes with higher-order thinking. Schema theory (Carrell & Eisterhold, 2020) further explains how background knowledge structures

comprehension. If students lack relevant schema, they may misinterpret arguments or fail to connect ideas across texts. Thus, both linguistic and cognitive foundations determine how well students engage analytically with reading materials. Metacognition and strategy awareness also play a pivotal role in analytical reading. Skilled readers plan their approach, monitor comprehension while reading, and evaluate outcomes afterward. Flavell's model of metacognition and more recent work by Anderson (2020) stress that metacognitive awareness enables students to adopt problem-solving strategies when comprehension breaks down. Li (2022) demonstrated that explicit critical thinking instruction enhances both metacognitive awareness and analytical reading performance in Chinese EFL contexts. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2019) argue that analytical reading cannot be separated from critical thinking because both involve questioning assumptions, evaluating logic, and identifying bias. In addition, affective factors such as reading anxiety and self-efficacy influence analytical reading performance. Jiang (2023) found that Chinese undergraduates with higher reading self-efficacy performed significantly better on analytical reading tasks and experienced less cognitive overload, while high anxiety hindered performance. These findings suggest that instructional methods must address not only cognitive strategies but also learners' motivation and confidence. Taken together, the literature confirms that analytical reading is a multidimensional skill shaped by vocabulary knowledge, schema, inference, metacognition, critical thinking, and affective variables.

### **3. Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University
2. To propose the strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skills.

### **4. Research Methodology**

#### **4.1 Population / sample group**

In this research project, Guangxi University was selected as a case study. The population in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 500 Chinese students and 38 teachers at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages in the academic year 2025.

The sample groups in this research project were 217 Chinese students and 38 Teachers at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages in the academic year 2025. The sample size (n) was obtained through the Krejcie & Morgan. (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). In addition, the participants were obtained through the Simple Random Sampling Technique.

#### **4.2 Research Instrument**

The two main research instruments were: 1) a questionnaire was employed for the investigation of problems of English analytical reading skill of graduate Chinese students studying at Guangxi University. All questions or items in the questionnaire were evaluated for their correctness and suitability in terms of IOC by the three specialists which were found in the range of 0.66 -1.00, and 2) a set of questions for a focus group discussion meetings were used for the evaluation and approval of the strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skill at Guangxi University.

#### **4.3 Data Collection**

For this research project, the researcher himself collected the data and information from the sample groups. The sample groups were informed of the purposes of the data collection,

then make an appointment with the researcher. The researcher must mail or submit a letter of permission signed by the researcher's advisor to the university in advance to ask for permission to collect the data. In addition, the comments towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skill at Guangxi University were collected from the 3 specialists participating the focus group discussion meeting.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

For the data and information collected from the questionnaire concerning problems of English analytical reading skill of graduate Chinese students studying at Guangxi University, they were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation (S.D.). In addition, the information and data towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skill at Guangxi University from the focus group discussion meeting were analyzed through the content analysis then used for the evaluation and approval of the development strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skill at Guangxi University

## 5. Findings

### Part 1: English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University

**Table 1** English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University (Students)

| Items                                                                   | n=217     |      | Level of problems |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-------------------|
|                                                                         | $\bar{X}$ | S.D. |                   |
| 1) I have difficulty identifying the main argument of a text.           | 4.29      | 0.21 | Highest           |
| 2) I cannot distinguish between facts and opinions                      | 4.31      | 0.14 | Highest           |
| 3) I struggle to analyze the author's purpose or perspective.           | 4.30      | 0.15 | Highest           |
| 4) I cannot make inferences or draw conclusions from texts.             | 4.26      | 0.12 | Highest           |
| 5) I find it hard to recognize supporting evidence in reading passages. | 4.32      | 0.13 | Highest           |
| 6) I lack vocabulary to fully understand analytical texts.              | 4.25      | 0.21 | Highest           |
| 7) I often misinterpret complex or abstract ideas.                      | 4.20      | 0.15 | Highest           |
| 8) I have difficulty comparing and contrasting different viewpoints.    | 4.22      | 0.12 | Highest           |
| 9) I read too slowly and cannot analyze within time limits.             | 4.26      | 0.20 | Highest           |

|                                                                       |             |             |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 10) I lack confidence when asked to critically analyze English texts. | 4.40        | 0.16        | Highest        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                          | <b>4.30</b> | <b>0.18</b> | <b>Highest</b> |

According to table 1, it is indicated that the students rated the problems of English reading comprehension at the highest level at the range of  $\bar{X}$  4.20 (SD=0.15) –  $\bar{X}$  4.40 (0.16).

**Table2:** English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University (Teachers)

| Items                                                                               | n=38        |             | Level of problems |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
|                                                                                     | $\bar{X}$   | S.D.        |                   |
| 1) Your students have difficulty identifying the main argument of a text.           | 4.30        | 0.21        | Highest           |
| 2) Your students cannot distinguish between facts and opinions                      | 4.31        | 0.13        | Highest           |
| 3) Your students struggle to analyze the author's purpose or perspective.           | 4.45        | 0.15        | Highest           |
| 4) Your students cannot make inferences or draw conclusions from texts.             | 4.25        | 0.12        | Highest           |
| 5) Your students find it hard to recognize supporting evidence in reading passages. | 4.20        | 0.18        | Highest           |
| 6) Your students lack vocabulary to fully understand analytical texts.              | 4.25        | 0.21        | Highest           |
| 7 Your students often misinterpret complex or abstract ideas.                       | 4.21        | 0.14        | Highest           |
| 8) Your students have difficulty comparing and contrasting different viewpoints.    | 4.25        | 0.16        | Highest           |
| 9) Your students read too slowly and cannot analyze within time limits.             | 4.25        | 0.21        | Highest           |
| 10) Your students lack confidence when asked to critically analyze English texts.   | 4.40        | 0.16        | Highest           |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                        | <b>4.32</b> | <b>0.18</b> | <b>Highest</b>    |

According to table 2, it is indicated that the teachers rated the problems of English reading comprehension at the highest level at the range of  $\bar{x}$  4.20(SD=0.18) –  $\bar{x}$ 4.45 (0.15).

## **Part2: Strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skills for graduate Chinese students at Guangxi**

The Enhancement strategies for graduate Chinese students are composed of 4 chapters; namely, chapter 1: About Learners, chapter 2: About Instructors, chapter 3: About classroom

management, and chapter 4: About teaching-learning materials and assessment: All the 4 chapters were approved by the three specialists (One Thai professors and two English native speakers) in terms of correctness and suitability of the contents. All the 4 chapters were evaluated and approved by the three specialists; therefore, they could be used as guidelines for the development strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skill of graduate Chinese students in China.

## 6. Conclusion

The title of the research is “An Investigation of English Analytical Reading Problems and Enhancement Strategies for graduate Chinese Students at Guangxi University”. The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University, and 2) to propose the development strategies enhancing students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University. In this research project, Guangxi University of Foreign Languages was selected as a case study. The population in this research project was divided into 2 groups, namely, 500 graduate Chinese students and 38 teachers in the academic year 2025, The sample groups in this research project were divided into 2 groups; namely, 217 undergraduate Chinese students and 32 teachers Guangxi University in the academic year 2025. The main research instruments were a questionnaire and a set of questions for a focus group discussion meeting for the approval of the constructed enhancing students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University. In this research project, Guangxi University was employed as a case study. The researcher selected the Guangxi University as a case study since the researcher has a connection with people there. This helped facilitate the data collection. For this research project, the researcher myself collected the data and information from the sample groups. The data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), and standard deviation (S.D.).

The findings from the investigation of the problems of English analytical reading skills experienced by graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University indicated the students rated the problems of English analytical reading skills at the highest level at the range of  $\bar{x} = 4.21$  (SD=0.18) –  $\bar{x} = 4.45$  (0.19). Moreover, it was also indicated that the teachers rated the problems of English analytical reading skills at the highest level the range of  $\bar{x} 4.20$ (SD=0.18) –  $\bar{x} 4.45$  (0.15). It can be said that the students and teachers at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages rated the problems of English reading skills of graduate Chinese students at the highest level.

The constructed strategies to enhance students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University.” are composed of four chapters; namely, chapter 1: For Learners of English Analytical Reading, chapter 2: For Instructors of English Analytical Reading, Chapter 3: For Classroom Management, chapter 4: For Teaching – Learning Material and Assessment. The constructed the development strategies to enhance students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University were accepted and approved by the three specialists, then it can be used as the development strategies to enhance students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University.

## 7. Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that both students and teachers at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages consistently rated English analytical reading problems at the highest level, with mean scores ranging from 4.20 to 4.45 on a 5-point Likert scale. This unanimity between student self-assessment and teacher observations validates the severity and

pervasiveness of analytical reading challenges in this educational context. The most critical problem identified was students' lack of confidence when asked to critically analyze English texts (mean = 4.40), indicating a fundamental psychological barrier that extends beyond technical skill deficits. This finding aligns with the broader pattern of Chinese students' educational background, which traditionally emphasizes receptive learning and memorization over critical questioning and independent analysis. The high anxiety levels associated with analytical reading tasks create a cycle where students avoid challenging texts, thereby limiting their exposure to the very materials that could develop their analytical capabilities. Vocabulary limitations emerged as another significant barrier (mean = 4.25-4.32), particularly affecting students' ability to engage with complex academic texts. This challenge is compounded by students' difficulty in distinguishing between facts and opinions (mean = 4.31), suggesting that the problem extends beyond lexical knowledge to encompass critical thinking skills and discourse awareness. The inability to recognize rhetorical structures and argumentation patterns indicates that students lack the analytical framework necessary for engaging with sophisticated academic discourse. The research revealed that students struggle fundamentally with higher-order reading processes, including identifying main arguments, recognizing supporting evidence, making inferences, and analyzing author's purpose or perspective. These difficulties reflect what can be characterized as a surface-level processing approach, where students focus on literal comprehension without developing the analytical depth required for academic success. This pattern is particularly problematic in university contexts where students must engage critically with research literature, evaluate sources, and synthesize information from multiple texts. Time management and reading speed concerns (mean = 4.25-4.26) further compound these analytical challenges, suggesting that students have not developed the fluency necessary for efficient processing of complex texts. The over-reliance on word-by-word translation strategies, rather than meaning-focused approaches, contributes to both speed limitations and comprehension difficulties. This finding indicates that traditional grammar-translation teaching methods may have inadvertently hindered the development of more effective reading strategies. The research also highlighted systemic instructional challenges, with limited exposure to authentic English texts outside classroom settings and insufficient emphasis on analytical reading practice in current curricula. The exam-oriented educational environment prioritizes literal comprehension questions over critical analysis tasks, creating a mismatch between instructional focus and the analytical skills required for academic success.

The constructed "The development strategies to enhance students' English analytical reading skills of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University" were composed of four chapters; namely, chapter 1: For Learners of English Analytical Reading, chapter 2: For Instructors of English Analytical Reading, Chapter 3: For Classroom Management, chapter 4: For Teaching – Learning Material and Assessment. They were accepted and approved by the three specialists, then it could be used as a guideline for the development strategies to enhance students' English analytical reading skill of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research instruments used for data collection included: A questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended items designed to measure reading challenges, confidence levels, and language use frequency, and a set of semi-structured interview questions that allowed for deeper exploration of personal reading difficulties and learning preferences.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 For the application of the findings into practice, English analytical reading problems of graduate Chinese students at Guangxi University and the Strategies enhancing students'

English analytical reading skills for graduate Chinese students at Guangxi need to be reported to the responsible administrators of the university so that they will order the English teachers to apply the findings into the English teaching and learning systems of the university.

8.2 For further studies, research on the investigation of problems of English speaking, reading and writing skills of Chinese students at Guangxi University in China is suggested to be conducted. The enhancement strategies for English speaking, reading and writing skills and learning motivation of Chinese students at Guangxi University in China are suggested to be constructed.

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