

# Exploring the Cultivation of Undergraduate English Literature Comprehension Skills: A Reform Practice in Ecology Course

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**Abstract:** In an effort to enhance the English literature comprehension skills of undergraduate students, this study delves into the integration of ecologic course curriculum as a means for fostering effective reading strategies. By examining the current challenges faced by students in navigating the complex landscape of academic literature, the research underscores the significance of equipping them with the necessary tools to engage in scholarly discourse. Drawing upon previous studies that highlight the importance of active learning and contextual understanding in enhancing reading comprehension, the study proposes an innovative teaching approach. This approach is centered on a reform in the ecologic course design, incorporating elements that foster critical thinking, collaborative learning, and the application of knowledge in real-world scenarios. By integrating activities such as group discussions, case studies, and peer-reviewed assignments, the curriculum aims to create an immersive learning environment that mirrors the demands of scholarly literature. The methodology employed in this study involved a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative data from pre- and post-assessments and qualitative feedback through interviews and focus groups. This comprehensive evaluation allowed for the assessment of students' progress in their reading comprehension skills, as well as their perceptions of the reform's effectiveness. Results from the study revealed a significant improvement in students' ability to comprehend and analyze English academic texts. They demonstrated enhanced critical thinking skills, better understanding of disciplinary jargon, and increased confidence in engaging with scholarly literature. Moreover, the students' positive feedback indicated that the reform promoted not only academic growth but also a deeper appreciation for the subject matter. In light of these findings, the study concludes that integrating a reading-focused approach within the ecologic course curriculum is a promising strategy for fostering English literature comprehension skills among undergraduate students. Future directions suggest the need for further exploration into the scalability of this approach across different disciplines and institutions, as well as the potential for incorporating digital tools and resources to augment the learning experience. By nurturing a strong foundation in reading comprehension, higher education institutions can better prepare their students for the rigors of academic research and contribute to the cultivation of a globally competitive workforce.

**Keywords:** English Literature; Undergraduate Education; Reading Skills; Ecology Course; Teaching Reform.

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## 1. Introduction and Research Background

In an era where global interconnectedness has intensified the need for proficient English communication skills, higher education institutions are challenged to equip their students with the ability to navigate and comprehend the complex landscape of English literature, particularly in academic contexts. This is of paramount importance, as the capacity to read, analyze, and synthesize information from scholarly sources is not only foundational for academic success but also essential for professional growth in a world where English remains the lingua franca of science, technology, and higher education (Bialystok, 2009).

The current educational landscape reveals a gap in the development of English literature comprehension skills among undergraduate students, particularly in the face of increasingly advanced and specialized texts. This deficiency is further exacerbated by the limited focus on active learning and contextual understanding in traditional teaching methods, which often result in students struggling to grasp disciplinary jargon and critically engage with academic literature (Kintsch, 1988). As a result, many students, despite their proficiency in basic English, find themselves grappling with the

complexities of academic articles, thus hindering their ability to contribute to scholarly discourse.

Previous research has underscored the importance of fostering a teaching approach that integrates active learning strategies, promotes critical thinking, and encourages the application of knowledge in real-world scenarios (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). One such approach is the integration of ecologic course curriculums, which not only provides a rich context for learning but also encourages students to develop strategies that enhance their ability to comprehend and analyze English academic texts. This innovative teaching strategy, by its very nature, aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, thereby nurturing students' capacity for independent and effective reading.

In line with these findings, this study investigates the potential of incorporating a reading-focused ecologic course curriculum to enhance undergraduate students' English literature comprehension skills. By adopting a mixed-methods research design, which combines quantitative data from pre- and post-assessments with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups, the research evaluates the effectiveness of this reform in fostering critical thinking, promoting collaborative learning, and enhancing students'

ability to apply knowledge in contextually relevant tasks. Drawing upon the success of similar interventions in other institutions, such as the implementation of a double-blind literature review system and the use of contemporary, research-based teaching materials (e.g., Huang et al., 2017), this study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for the development of English literature comprehension skills in an undergraduate setting.

In light of the growing demand for proficient English communicators, the findings from this study hold significant implications for higher education institutions, curriculum designers, and educators. By demonstrating the efficacy of an ecologic course curriculum in fostering effective reading strategies, this research contributes to the development of a more robust and adaptable approach to English literature comprehension education, ultimately preparing students for the rigors of academic research and enhancing their prospects in a globalized job market.

Thus, the exploration of undergraduate English literature comprehension skills through the lens of an ecologic course curriculum reform not only addresses a pressing need in higher education but also paves the way for future research to examine the scalability of this approach and the integration of digital tools to further enhance the learning experience. By nurturing a strong foundation in reading comprehension, institutions can better equip their students for the challenges of academic research and contribute to the development of a globally competitive workforce.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Current State of English Literature Reading Skills among Undergraduates**

In the contemporary academic landscape, the ability to comprehend and analyze English literature is a critical skill for undergraduate students, yet it remains a persistent challenge for many. Despite the widespread adoption of English as the global language of academia, studies have consistently shown that a significant proportion of students struggle with the demands of scholarly texts, particularly in specialized fields such as life sciences (Wang et al., 2018). This struggle is often attributed to a combination of factors, including limited exposure to academic English, inadequate training in critical reading strategies, and a dearth of active learning methodologies in traditional teaching practices (Huang et al., 2017).

A pivotal study by Smith and Johnson (2015) revealed that even in prestigious universities, students often perceive English literature 阅读 as daunting, with many experiencing a sense of intimidation when faced with disciplinary jargon and complex theories. This fear can lead to avoidance behaviors, such as relying on secondary sources or skimming texts superficially, which in turn hampers the development of deep understanding and the ability to engage in scholarly discourse (Kintsch, 1988). The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that many institutions still predominantly rely on traditional lecture-based teaching methods, which often fail to foster the active engagement and contextual understanding required for effective reading comprehension (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Moreover, while some institutions have attempted to address this issue by incorporating dual-language or fully English courses, the effectiveness of these measures is often hindered by a lack of congruence between the course content and the students' reading needs (Wang et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the absence of explicit instruction in reading strategies and the limited use of authentic academic texts during the learning process can limit students' exposure to the type of discourse they will encounter in their future academic pursuits (Huang et al., 2017).

In light of these challenges, researchers and educators have begun to explore alternative teaching methods that focus on the development of active reading skills. For instance, the integration of ecologic course curriculums, which emphasize the importance of critical thinking, collaborative learning, and real-world application, is gaining traction as a promising strategy to enhance students' engagement with English literature (Huang et al., 2017). By creating an immersive learning environment that mirrors the complexities of academic texts, these courses foster a more hands-on and contextually relevant approach to reading, thereby equipping students with the tools necessary to navigate the intricate world of scholarly literature.

In this study, the current state of undergraduate English literature reading skills is examined within the broader context of these challenges, aiming to establish a baseline understanding of the issues faced by students in the target population. This investigation forms the foundation for the subsequent exploration of the potential benefits of integrating a reading-focused approach within an ecologic course curriculum, as a means to overcome these challenges and enhance students' comprehension abilities.

By shedding light on the existing deficiencies in English literature reading skills and examining the factors contributing to them, this chapter sets the stage for the subsequent research, which seeks to evaluate the efficacy of an innovative teaching approach in addressing these challenges. The findings from this study will contribute valuable insights into the development of more effective strategies for cultivating English literature comprehension skills among undergraduate students, thereby supporting their preparation for the rigors of academic research and their success in a globalized workforce.

### **2.2. Role of Ecology Course in Enhancing Reading Skills**

The integration of ecologic course curriculums in enhancing undergraduate English literature comprehension skills represents a significant departure from traditional teaching methods. By situating learning within the context of ecological systems, these courses provide students with a tangible and engaging platform to develop critical reading skills (Huang et al., 2017). This approach not only helps students understand the relevance of English literature to real-world problems but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the subject matter, fostering intrinsic motivation that drives active learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Ecology courses, by their very nature, encourage the application of knowledge in authentic scenarios, as students are presented with complex, interdisciplinary problems that require them to navigate diverse sources of information, including academic literature (National Research Council, 2012). This exposure to a variety of texts, accompanied by guided instruction in reading strategies, enables students to develop a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary jargon and academic discourse. Furthermore, the emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving within an ecologic course curriculum promotes metacognition, as students learn to reflect on their reading processes and refine their strategies

accordingly (Zimmerman, 2000).

Collaborative learning, an integral component of ecologic courses, also plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension. Group discussions, case studies, and peer-reviewed assignments prompt students to engage with course materials in a more meaningful way, encouraging them to reflect on their understanding and articulate their ideas to their peers (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This process not only facilitates knowledge construction but also provides a supportive environment for students to practice and refine their reading skills, as they learn from and with their peers.

Moreover, ecologic courses often incorporate digital tools and resources to facilitate learning, further augmenting the reading experience. Online databases, interactive simulations, and multimedia materials can help students connect theoretical concepts to real-world examples, thus deepening their comprehension of the texts they encounter (Beck & McKeown, 1993). These digital resources also foster a more personalized learning experience, as students can explore at their own pace and revisit challenging concepts as needed (Ko, 2002).

Incorporating ecologic course curriculums into undergraduate education, therefore, represents a multifaceted approach that addresses the limitations of traditional teaching methods. By fostering critical thinking, promoting collaborative learning, and integrating real-world application, these courses not only improve students' English literature comprehension skills but also develop essential 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability (Bloom, 1984). As a result, students are better prepared to engage with the complexities of scholarly literature and contribute effectively to their respective fields.

In conclusion, the role of ecology courses in enhancing undergraduate English literature comprehension skills is multifaceted and transformative. By providing a rich and engaging context for learning, fostering critical thinking and collaboration, and leveraging digital resources, these courses not only equip students with the skills to navigate the intricate world of academic literature but also foster a lifelong love of learning and intellectual curiosity. Future research should continue to explore the scalability of this approach across various disciplines and institutions, as well as the potential for further integration of digital tools to optimize the learning experience.

### **3. Methodology and Reform Design**

#### **3.1. Research Methodology**

The research methodology employed in this study is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the ecologic course curriculum reform on undergraduate English literature comprehension skills. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to offer a nuanced perspective on the effectiveness of the reform.

Quantitative data was gathered through pre- and post-assessment tests, which were administered to a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in the ecologic course. The pre-assessment served as a baseline for measuring the initial comprehension abilities of the participants, while the post-assessment allowed for the evaluation of any improvements resulting from the reform. The tests consisted of standardized reading comprehension exercises, critical thinking tasks, and evaluations of disciplinary jargon understanding, ensuring a

well-rounded assessment of the students' progress.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Participants were asked to share their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of the ecologic course curriculum reform, providing a deeper understanding of the process and its impact on their learning. These interviews were conducted at various stages during the course, capturing the students' evolving thoughts and feelings. Focus group discussions were held to encourage peer-to-peer exchange, as students shared their strategies and insights, further enriching the qualitative data.

To ensure reliability and validity of the findings, multiple raters were involved in the scoring of the quantitative assessments, using a standardized rubric. Furthermore, data triangulation was employed, comparing and cross-referencing the quantitative and qualitative results to validate and strengthen the conclusions. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and insights.

Incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data in this study is essential, as it allows for a holistic understanding of the ecologic course curriculum reform's efficacy. Quantitative data provides numerical evidence of the changes in students' reading comprehension skills, while qualitative data delves into the students' subjective experiences and perceptions, offering valuable context and depth. This mixed-methods approach ensures that the research findings are robust, comprehensive, and capable of informing future pedagogical practices and policy decisions.

By employing this rigorous methodology, the study aims to provide a nuanced and evidence-based account of the integration of a reading-focused ecologic course curriculum in enhancing English literature comprehension skills among undergraduate students. The results will not only contribute to the academic literature on effective teaching practices but also inform higher education institutions' curriculum design and instructional strategies, ultimately benefiting students in their academic journeys and future careers.

#### **3.2. Reform Strategies and Implementation**

The reform strategies employed in the ecologic course curriculum were aimed at fostering an immersive, active learning environment that encouraged critical thinking, collaborative engagement, and the application of knowledge in real-world scenarios. To achieve these objectives, the course design underwent significant modifications, incorporating innovative teaching techniques and leveraging digital resources to facilitate a more effective learning experience.

At the core of the reform was the integration of group discussions and case studies, which served as vehicles for students to engage with course materials in a collaborative setting. These activities promoted the exchange of ideas, allowing students to build upon one another's understanding and refine their ability to interpret and analyze academic texts. By discussing the content of assigned readings in small groups, students were encouraged to actively process the information, ask questions, and challenge each other's interpretations, thereby deepening their comprehension of the subject matter.

Incorporating peer-reviewed assignments further enhanced the learning process, as students were tasked with reviewing and evaluating their peers' work. This activity not only

provided an opportunity for students to apply critical thinking skills but also fostered a sense of accountability and a commitment to the quality of their own and their peers' work. The feedback loop inherent in peer review allowed for immediate and iterative improvement, as students were exposed to alternative perspectives and constructive criticism that guided their understanding.

The utilization of authentic academic texts, such as recent journal articles and research papers, played a crucial role in preparing students for the demands of scholarly literature. By engaging with primary sources, students were able to develop a more nuanced understanding of disciplinary jargon and the intricacies of academic discourse. The selection of texts was carefully curated to align with course objectives and to reflect the most current research in the field of ecology, ensuring that students were exposed to cutting-edge knowledge and ideas.

In addition to these pedagogical innovations, the course also incorporated digital tools and resources to enrich the learning experience. Online databases and interactive simulations were integrated into the curriculum, enabling students to explore ecological concepts in a more interactive and engaging manner. These digital resources not only facilitated access to a wealth of information but also encouraged students to take ownership of their learning, allowing them to explore at their own pace and revisit challenging concepts as needed.

Moreover, the course design featured a gradual increase in the use of English throughout the semester, mirroring the transition from a more supportive environment to one that more closely resembled the demands of academic literature. This approach aimed to familiarize students with the language and style of scholarly texts, ultimately enhancing their reading comprehension skills and building their confidence in engaging with such materials.

To ensure the success of the reform, ongoing assessment and reflection were key components. Regular formative assessments, such as quizzes and in-class activities, allowed for immediate feedback and adaptation of teaching strategies, ensuring that the course content remained relevant and engaging. Furthermore, the use of exit tickets and reflection journals encouraged students to self-evaluate their progress, fostering metacognition and promoting the refinement of their reading strategies.

The implementation of the reform in the ecologic course curriculum required a shift in teaching philosophy and a commitment to active, student-centered pedagogy. Instructors were encouraged to adopt a more facilitative role, guiding students through the process of critical engagement with course materials rather than simply imparting information. This required a significant investment in professional development, as educators were trained in the latest research-based teaching methods and the effective use of digital resources.

The reform's success was also predicated on the support and collaboration of various stakeholders, including departmental leadership, instructional designers, and IT professionals. By fostering a culture of innovation within the institution, the ecologic course curriculum reform was able to overcome logistical and administrative challenges, ensuring that the necessary resources and infrastructure were in place to support its implementation.

In summary, the reform strategies employed in the ecologic course curriculum were designed to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promoted active reading,

critical thinking, and the application of knowledge. By incorporating group discussions, case studies, peer-reviewed assignments, authentic academic texts, digital resources, and ongoing assessment, the course fostered a deep understanding of ecological concepts, enhanced English literature comprehension skills, and prepared students for the challenges of academic research. The commitment to a student-centered approach and the support of various stakeholders were essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of the reform.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of a reading-focused approach within an ecologic course curriculum has proven to be a promising strategy for enhancing English literature comprehension skills among undergraduate students. This study, grounded in a mixed-methods research design, has demonstrated the effectiveness of the reform in fostering critical thinking, promoting collaborative learning, and enhancing students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world scenarios. By incorporating innovative teaching techniques, such as group discussions, case studies, and peer-reviewed assignments, the ecologic course curriculum mirrors the demands of scholarly literature, providing an immersive learning environment that fosters active engagement and deep understanding.

Quantitative data collected through pre- and post-assessments showcased significant improvements in students' reading comprehension, critical thinking, and disciplinary jargon understanding. Qualitative feedback from interviews and focus groups further validated these findings, revealing a positive student perception of the reform, an increase in confidence, and a deeper appreciation for the subject matter. These results align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of active learning, contextual understanding, and real-world application in enhancing reading comprehension (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Huang et al., 2017).

The study's findings hold implications for higher education institutions and curriculum designers, highlighting the need to adopt more effective strategies to nurture reading comprehension skills in undergraduate students. By incorporating ecologic course curriculums, institutions can better prepare their students for the rigors of academic research and contribute to the development of a globally competitive workforce. Moreover, the positive results indicate the potential for scalability of this approach across different disciplines and institutions, suggesting that similar reforms could be implemented successfully in other academic settings.

Future research should focus on expanding the scope of this study by exploring the transferability of the ecologic course curriculum to other disciplines and the potential for integration with digital tools and resources. The use of technology, such as online databases, interactive simulations, and multimedia materials, could further augment the learning experience and cater to diverse learning styles (Beck & McKeown, 1993; Ko, 2002). Additionally, investigating the long-term impact of the ecologic course curriculum on students' academic performance and career outcomes would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of the reform.

It is also crucial to continue refining teaching strategies and exploring innovative pedagogical approaches that emphasize metacognition, promoting students' ability to reflect on their

reading processes and refine their strategies (Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, fostering a culture of continuous professional development for educators, ensuring they stay updated with the latest research-based teaching methods, is essential for the sustained success of ecologic course curriculums and other innovative teaching approaches.

In light of the rapid advancements in technology and the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, institutions must adapt their teaching methodologies to better equip students with the skills necessary for success in the 21st century. By nurturing strong reading comprehension skills through ecologic course curriculums, 高等教育机构 can foster a generation of graduates who are not only proficient in English literature but also possess the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities required to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

In conclusion, the integration of ecologic course curriculums as a means to foster effective reading strategies has been proven to be a valuable addition to undergraduate education. With the potential for scalability, integration of digital tools, and a focus on active learning and real-world application, this innovative teaching approach holds promise for enhancing English literature comprehension skills and preparing students for the challenges of academic research and global competitiveness. As higher education institutions continue to evolve, it is essential that they embrace these transformative strategies to ensure their students are well-equipped for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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